

Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe
Survey on elementary school children parents' attitudes towards and
views on parental participation in schools.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title

Survey on elementary school children parents' attitudes towards and views on parental participation in schools.

Acknowledgment

The research team would like to thank the following:

- The 1143 parents and 30 school principals who kindly found time to take part in the survey.
- The 12 Ministries of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina who all kindly agreed to allow the study to take place in their schools.
- “PULS” marketing and public opinion research agency who conducted the survey on time and to the highest standards.
- The Education Support Program (ESP), financed by OSI (Open Society Institute), which was in charge of the regional project.
- Igor Repac at Centre for Educational Policy Studies – Slovenia, who helped us at every stage of the survey.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ESP (Education support program)

OSI (Open society institute)

SEE (South East Europe)

B&H (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

PTA (parent-teacher association)

Purpose

This report presents the results for Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) of a survey on elementary school children parents' attitudes towards and views on parental participation in schools. For the purposes of this report, "parental participation" means the involvement of parents in school decision-making, in extracurricular activities, and in the education of their own children.

This research is part of "Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe", a project of the Education Support Program (ESP), which is financed by OSI (Open Society Institute). The project aims to address the problem of rising disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes continue in the South East European (SEE) countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Similar surveys were carried out in the other nine countries and will be reported separately. The plan is to have a three year project in several phases. During the first phase empirical research was conducted in order to better understand the capacity, values, positions and activities of school principals with respect to participation at the school level in selected countries of South East Europe. In the second phase, the attention turned to finding out more of the attitudes and experiences of parents in respect of involvement in school.

Methodology

Field research was conducted by Puls, marketing and public opinion research agency from 21th Dec 2009 to 28th Jan 2010.

Target population:

A) Parents of elementary school children (mainstream parents), B) Parents members of the school boards and / or parent's council in the same school, or parents members of the parent-teacher association (PTA), P) School principals in each of the same schools, E) Socially excluded parents

The sample was comprised of 1143 parents of children attending primary school. Of the total number of parents, 60 were Roma parents.

569 parents from the urban area, while 574 parents from rural areas.

422 respondents were parents of children who attend schools that work according to the Bosnian curriculum, 367 respondents were parents of children attending schools that work according the Croatian curriculum, and 354 respondents were parents of children attending schools that work according to the Serbian curriculum .

32 directors of elementary schools participated in the study.

Towns / Villages in which parents and directors were interviewed: Banja Luka, Bileća, Bristova Derventa, Đulići, Fajtovci, Grude, Ilijas, Kalošević, Kamberi, Kiseljak Kočerin, Kostajnica, Livno, Maglaj, Mišić Han, Mostar, Obudovac, Osijek , Osmaci, Prisoje, Rodoč, Sarajevo, Sovići, Stolac, Tarčin, Tuzla, Vitina, Živinice

Findings

Figure 1¹ shows that parents say that the school mostly invited them for group or individual meetings at school, they were sent written information less frequently, and they were almost never invited to take part in decision-making or volunteering at school during the last year. The Roma parents say that they were receiving fewer invitations to school meetings, and less written information from school in comparison to the mainstream sample of parents.

¹ Scale measurement: 1 = Never; 2 = Once, 3 = 2-3 times; 4 = more than 3 times (last school year)

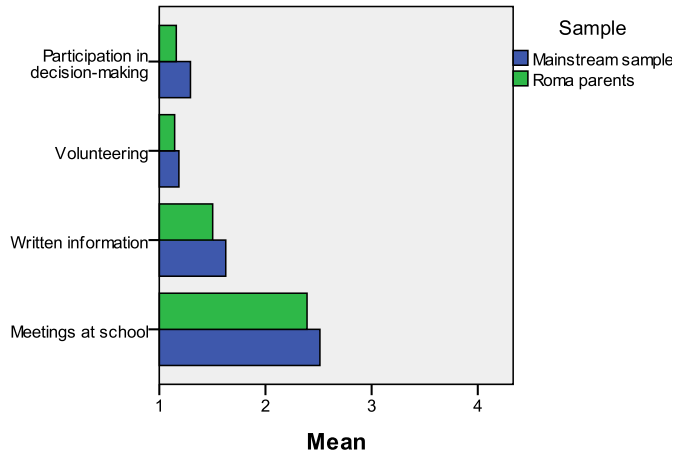


Figure 1 How often did the school invite parents to various forms of participation?

The parents say that they respond to the invitations to school meetings almost each time, and that either they or someone from their family read the written information received from the school almost every time. Even though they were almost never invited to take part in volunteering at school during the last year, on average, the mainstream sample of parents says that they respond to the invitation to volunteer at school almost every time, while the Roma parents responded once during the last year, on average (Figure 2)².

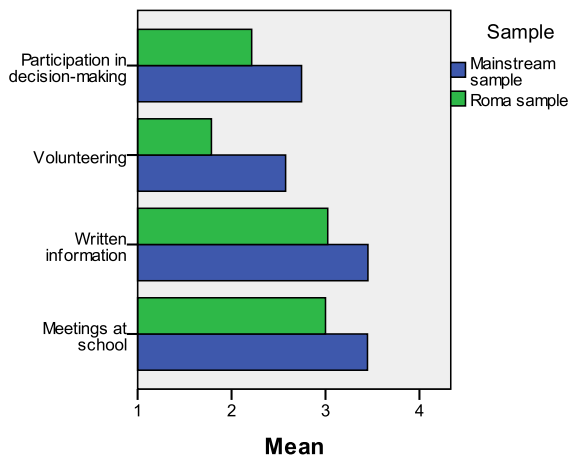


Figure 2 Response to various forms of participation

² Scale measurement: 1 = Never; 2 = Once; 3 = Most times; 4 = Every time

Almost all parents agree that it is necessary for the school to invite parents for individual or group meetings at school. Also, the parents think that the school should send written information (feedback on child's progress, school or class newsletter, written information on other things such as health, drugs, violence...).

The parents least agree that asking for their help in school maintenance, organization of events, classes and school service activities is something the school should be requesting from parents.

Generally speaking, the parents believe that the school should probably ask for their opinion when making decisions on administering the school

The principals think that the number of invitations sent to parents is significantly larger than the parents' perception of the number of invitations to various forms of participation in the school life and work during the last year. There is especially significant difference in perception of the participation in decision-making when, on average, the parents say that the school didn't invite them at all during the last year, while the principals think that they invited them at least once.

In relation to the parents, the principals think that the parents respond less frequently to the invitations to individual and group meetings at school. On the other hand, the principals perceive the response of the parents to participation in decision-making at school, as well as various form of volunteering, much higher in relation to parents' perception.

Unlike parents, the principals are more convinced that the school should invite parents to volunteer at school, that is, to help with school maintenance or infrastructure, or organization of sports – social – cultural activities, as well as that the school should ask the parents for their opinion on school administration.

In general, the Roma parents feel less involved in the school life in comparison with other parents.

The Roma parents are, on average, less satisfied with how much their child is happy at school, as well as their influence to and communication with school, in comparison with others.

Almost one third of the Roma parents (28.6%) say that the school doesn't treat them with respect, while only one percent of mainstream parents say the same thing.

The parents who receive most invitations to meetings at school are more satisfied with their communication with the school, that is, with the quantity and quality of information, as well as various ways in which they can get involved in the work of the school ($r=.209$, $p=.000$).

The parents who are invited by the school to take part in making the school related decisions are more satisfied with the communication they have with school, and think that they have more influence in the school.

In comparison with the parents, the principals are more convinced in the parents' lack of interest to participate in school activities; they think that the parents do not have time to learn about the school activities, and that parents do not know how to communicate with parents.

In comparison with the principals, the parents see their conflicts with the school and bad communication skills of the teachers as an obstacle to their bigger participation in the school life and work. On the other hand, the principals see the parents' lack of interest, time and communication skills as an obstacle to bigger parents' participation.

Although one could think that the parents see school as an obstacle to their participation, while the principals see parents, one should point out that the levels of agreement with the mentioned statements are very small, and all the mentioned statements, most probably, do not pose a real problem related to the parents' participation (Figure 3)³.

³ Scale measurement: 1 = Not at all; 2 = To a limited extent; 3 = To some extent; 4 = To a large extent

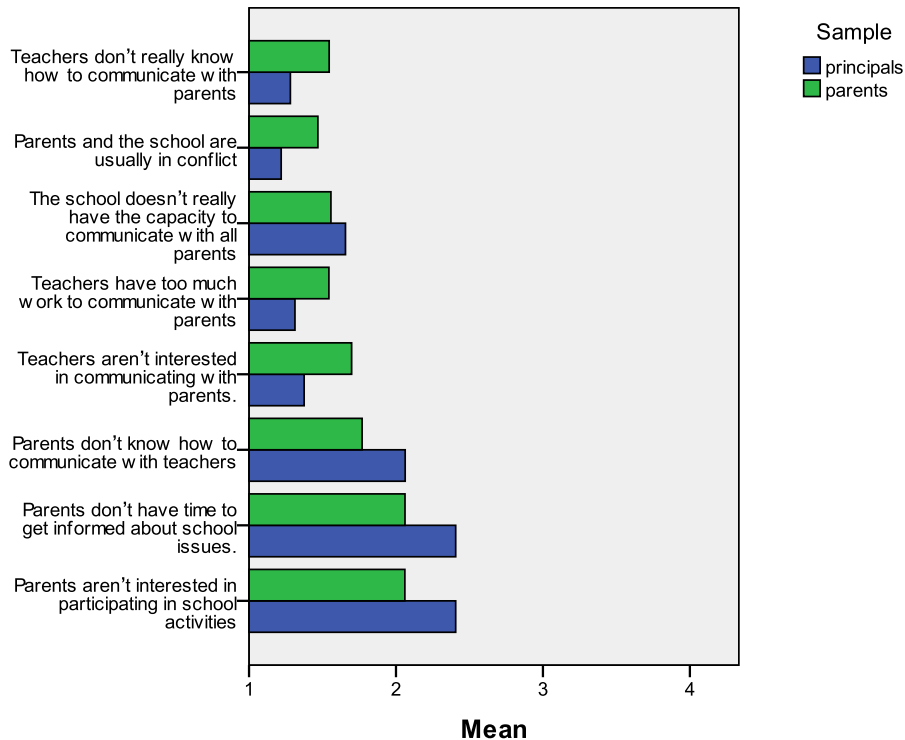


Figure 3 Barriers to participation

Recommendations

- Regular response to the school invitations to parent-teacher and information meetings does not present the only form of participation, therefore, it is necessary to stimulate and support the parents to self-initiate activities, and take the full responsibility of the key partner in their children's education.
- More frequent informing parents about the work of the Parent's Council, about the activities that are implemented in school, school development plans, the projects in which the school is involved, as well as the school long term objectives.
- As the parents' volunteering work is recognized as a desirable form of engagement of both parents and principals, it is necessary to determine the ways and possibilities of its organization.
- Organizing joint activities in schools (school staff, parents, students) in which a visible contribution to the school life will be given (for example: cleaning school

playground, sports playground, internal premises of the school, organizing workshops or lectures ...)

- The school/principal, in cooperation with the Parents' Council, can promote voluntarism in schools, inform both parents and students with good practice examples of voluntarism, and jointly define for which school life segments volunteering engagement is desirable.
- The school should point out to the parents what role they could have in educational process and in the life of school in general. That should be done by: notifications, through school newspapers or bulletins, within lectures, at joint meetings.
- Enabling parents to participate in defining school goals and school policy could encourage desirable partnership.
- Organizing additional meetings with parents belonging to Roma nationality which will be initiated by the school; including individuals from Roma community in communication between parents and school (representatives of Roma Association, for example, or the persons who are recognized as trustworthy persons who are influential in Roma community).
- Since almost one third of the Roma parents (28.6%) say that the school doesn't treat them with respect, additional education and/or advisory work with teachers and other school employees on the work with students/parents belonging to ethnic minorities should be organised in order to tackle this issue.