

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

Kosovo

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PARENTS' VIEWS ON PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL LIFE IN KOSOVO

Shkelzen Gashi & Dukagjin Pupovci

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their deepest appreciation to:

- Mr. Steve Powell from proMENTE Research for valuable methodology related advice and selfless assistance in data processing and interpretation.
- Mr. Igor Repac from the University of Ljubljana for hard work in organizing the research activities and ensuring coordination between national research teams,
- Mrs. Gordana Miljević from Open Society Institute - Budapest for initiating and planning this Regional Project and closely following its implementation,

Purpose

The objective of this survey is to present parents' views on school-parent cooperation.

Methodology

The survey was carried out by means of direct interviews conducted by Ipsos Strategic Plus, following qualitative analysis of parental participation in Kosovo, and analysis of legal infrastructure.

The population of the study consisted of the following groups:

- A) Parents of primary-school children,
- B) Parents – members of school councils or parents' councils in the same schools as A,
- C) School principals,
- D) Socially excluded parents.

Sample size:

School sample: 32 schools in total

Sample A: 1,141 parents in total

Sample B: in each school, one School Council and four Parents' Council members were randomly selected for interviewing from among members of respective councils.

Sample P: Principals of each of 30 schools, plus 2 principals of 2 schools with socially excluded parents (32 principals in total),

Sample E: 2 samples of 30 socially excluded parents in 2 schools (60 socially excluded parents in total).

Table 1. Distribution of school sample according to geographic variable and urban/rural criterion

<i>Geographical Region</i>	Parental survey			Principals' Survey		
	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Center	313	163	150	11	6	5
South-East	240	98	142	10	5	5
West	588	192	396	11	5	6
Total Kosovo	1141	453	688	32	16	16

For the purpose of this study the schools were randomly selected from among those where principals participated in a previous survey on principals' views of parental participation. The sample was stratified according to geographic regions (Center, South-East, West) and urban/rural criterion. Selection was random and proportional to number of students in a school. Principals were interviewed face-to-face.

The selection of parents was also random and based on school catchments area. Surveyors interviewed parents (mother or father, and, in particular cases, guardians) having at least one child aged 8-14 in a sampled school. Parent members of school councils and parents' councils were selected randomly from lists submitted by school principals. All parents were interviewed face-to-face.

Main Findings

- Socially excluded parents are disadvantaged in communication with the school, and this particularly applies to parents from marginalized ethnic groups (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians). They are less frequently invited to attend individual parental meetings
- More than a half of average parents have never received any information on the way the child should be helped with homework, or any information on school regulations. It is interesting that the proportion of parents in urban areas having received this type of information is double of the proportion of parents in rural areas. Also, almost half of parents have not received any progress report during the previous academic year.
- In terms of their attitudes, most of the parents consider the school needs to ask them to help their children with homework, even if there is somebody in the family who can do that. Mothers are more involved in helping their children with homework than fathers, and this proportion increases among socially excluded families.
- More than half of the parents (52%), mainly average parents and those involved in school structures, state that during the previous academic year they were not invited to help with any sport, social&cultural activities – plays, concerts , field trip . On the other hand, 75% of socially excluded parents were invited at least once to help with school activities. With regard to help with teaching, 100% of socially excluded parents confirmed they were not asked to provide it, just as vast majority of average parents.
- Almost half of the average parents were invited more than three times to help with school infrastructure improvement or maintenance, what is not the case with 92% of socially excluded parents. However, half of the parents from both categories confirm they would provide this type of help if they were asked to do so.
- Most of the parents were never asked for their opinion regarding the financial management in the school, and this applies to all parents from socially excluded groups. In general, opinion of socially excluded parents on any matter related to school business was solicited only in isolated cases if any.
- Average parents very rarely (12-18%) tend to influence any school decision, either individually or in group with other parents. On the other hand, socially excluded parents do not even try to influence school decisions.
- Parents tend to be more open in expressing their opinion in one-to-one meetings with teachers as compared to parent meetings.
- All socially excluded parents confirmed that neither they nor their family members have ever been elected in school council or parents' council, although more than a half of them think they are capable of doing that.
- Most of socially excluded parents feel that teachers are unwilling to communicate with them. in general, parents think that teachers are too busy to communicate, and this percentage is higher in rural areas.
- 75% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian parents think that schools can put more efforts to help their children

- Most of the parents think that the school and parents should jointly make sure that children are happy at school and that they are making progress. However, the vast majority of socially excluded parents claim that their children do not like going to school.

Recommendations

From the above conclusions recommendations are divided into three categories.

For schools:

1. Schools should develop procedures for meetings with parents, specifying the dynamics, preparation of teachers and parents, and content of such meetings. Group/thematic meetings should become a practice as well as individual meetings with parents. An action research undertaken in four Kosovo schools demonstrates that such procedures are prone to advancing communication with parents. It is necessary to train teachers manage different types of meetings with parents and their use for advancing teaching and learning in school.
2. In addition to parents' meetings, schools should organize regular information about the children's progress and general school matters using other media, like messages transmitted through students, e-mail, etc, particularly for cases requiring immediate parental attention.
3. Schools should engage in raising awareness of parents on their role in the school and should train them to exercise such a role. Also, parents should be aware that their role in relation to children is not exercised only by request from the school, but should be regularly exercise in the benefit of the children by taking pro-active instead of reactive position. A progress may be achieved if parental meetings are structured to convey messages that mobilize parents..
4. Parents need greater support from the school side in order to help the students in improve learning outcomes, because, even if they are willing to do that, they lack necessary knowledge and skills. By advancing communication with parents, schools should think of modalities for offering assistance to parents what can be achieved through information sessions.

For governmental sector:

1. Since Pre-University Education legislation change is in process, more attention should be paid to democratizing school governance by delegating more responsibilities to school and ensuring higher participation of parents in school life. On the other hand, more support needs to be provided to Kosovo Education Parental Council, re-established in 2009 after few years of inactivity.

2. To continue with financial decentralization to the school level by increasing responsibility of schools for managing their own finances and by creating additional possibilities for financial contributions of parents to schools.
3. To encourage schools to improve their communication with parents by supporting activities of professional, governmental and non-governmental institutions in developing manuals and guidelines that help this process.

For non-governmental sector:

1. To work on raising awareness of parents on their role in the school and other levels. As a consequence, awareness raising activities should be organized in the school level as well as other levels such as: municipality, region and country.
2. To work on building the capacities of the parents' associations in all levels in order to help increase the influence of parents in school life. These associations should be trained to work with parents and their representatives in schools in building their capacity to better serve their role and responsibility.
3. To promote good practices of parental inclusion in the school life by creating opportunities to benefit from them.