



newsletter

IPPE Special issue

Participation of parents: which rights ?

The participation of
parents:
an indicator for
« quality education »

The governance of education systems is a key issue for quality education. The European Commission says that « a greater participation of stakeholders, social partners and civil society is a priority ». Besides, it considers parents' participation as one of the quality indicators.

This is in that perspective that the IPPE project (Indicators of parents' participation in compulsory education) was developed. It thus consisted in building indicators with the aim of measuring the parents' participation within the European education systems.

To avoid any controversy on the concept of participation, the consortium adopted a rights-based approach to education, not only regarding the methodology of research but also data processing.

We took as a starting point two studies carried out by Eurydice. Parents' rights

are divided into two categories : individual rights and collective rights.

« Individual » parents' rights consist of three different rights :

- the right to choose the school they want for their children
- the right of appeal, which gives them the opportunity to show their opposition to certain decisions taken by the school authorities
- the right to information, concerning progress made by their children, the organization of the school system in general and the one of the school in particular.

The so-called « collective rights » consist mainly of the right to participation for parents in the organized formal structures of the education system.



Meeting of the IPPE project members - Bergamo University (Italy)

Which indicators?

Ten indicators were selected: two for each individual right and four for the collective rights. These indicators were then applied to the seven countries, partners in the project : Belgium, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Indicators of the right to information

- What information is made available to parents and among this, which one is mandatory ?
- Is information adapted to the characteristics of parents in the school ?

Indicators of the right of choice

- Is there a diversity of school projects ?
- Are there financial measures allowing parents « to choose for their children schools, other than those established by public authorities? » [article 13 PIDEESC, al. 3 and 4]

Indicators of the right of appeal

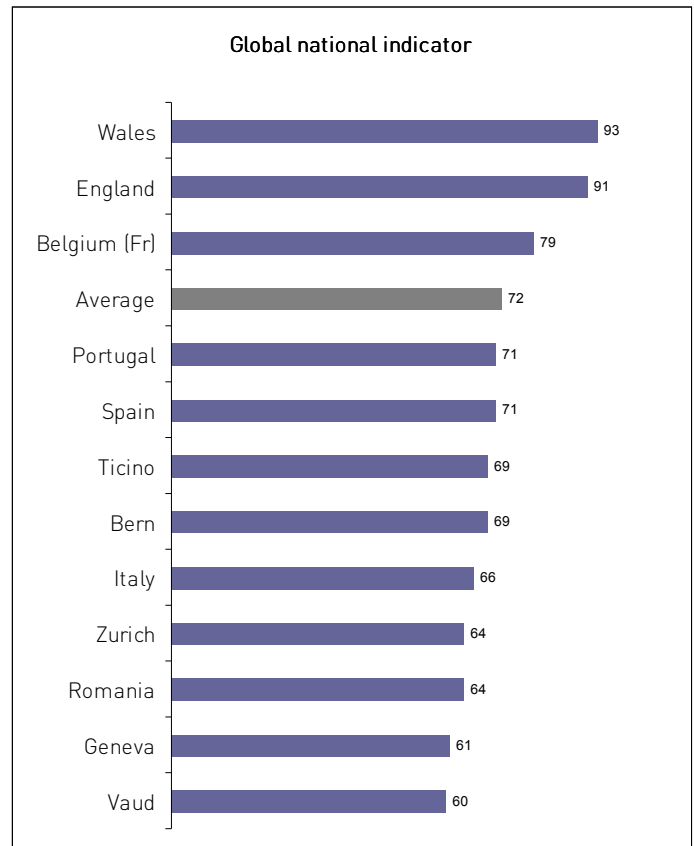
- Are there any mechanisms allowing parents to exercise their right of appeal and on what subjects ?
- Are these mechanisms, if any, effective?

Indicators of the right to participation

- Are there any bodies of parents' participation (board of governors, school board, etc.) and what are their competences at the different levels ?
- In participation bodies, what kind of representation is provided for parents (minority, equal, majority) ?
- Does the state regularly collect the views of parents ?
- Is there a training module for parents ?

We developed a **global indicator** which takes up data collected for the ten indicators. Despite notable differences between states, results showed a significant legislative development in matters of individual and collective rights of parents in compulsory education. This is especially true for the right of appeal and, to a lesser extent, the right to information.

Great Britain (Wales and England) and Belgium are the countries where the analysed rights are the most favourable to parental involvement. In contrast, all other



countries show values below the average which is 72 points.

Regarding the right to information, a great diversity appears when it comes to assessing the school or adapting the information to the parents' characteristics.

Regarding the right of choice, the key point of the funding of schools « other than those established by public authorities » shows the greatest variation.

As for the right of appeal, this one is the most homogeneous.

Finally, the right to participate: it gets the lowest score because of the overall weakness of participative bodies in the countries covered by the study.

You can find more information on the IPPE project on the website : www.leonardoippe.eu

A publication on the results will be available in March from the publisher *l'Harmattan* : **Parental involvement in school. An innovative approach to quality education.**

Simplified indicators : 15 countries of the EU

In order to have a broader view, we expanded our research to eight other countries : Germany, Austria, Cyprus, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden.

To do this, we developed simplified indicators based on the same structure that was used previously. A comparison with the seven partner countries allowed us to reach 82% of the school population in Europe, including Switzerland.

Indicators of the right to information

- What information is made available to parents?
- Is information adapted to the characteristics of parents in the school ?

Indicators of the right of choice

- Is there a diversity of school projects ?
- Are there financial measures allowing parents « to choose for their children schools, other than those established by public authorities? » (article 13 PIDESEC, al. 3 and 4)

Indicators of the right of appeal

- Are there any mechanisms allowing parents to exercise their right of appeal?

Indicators of the right to participation

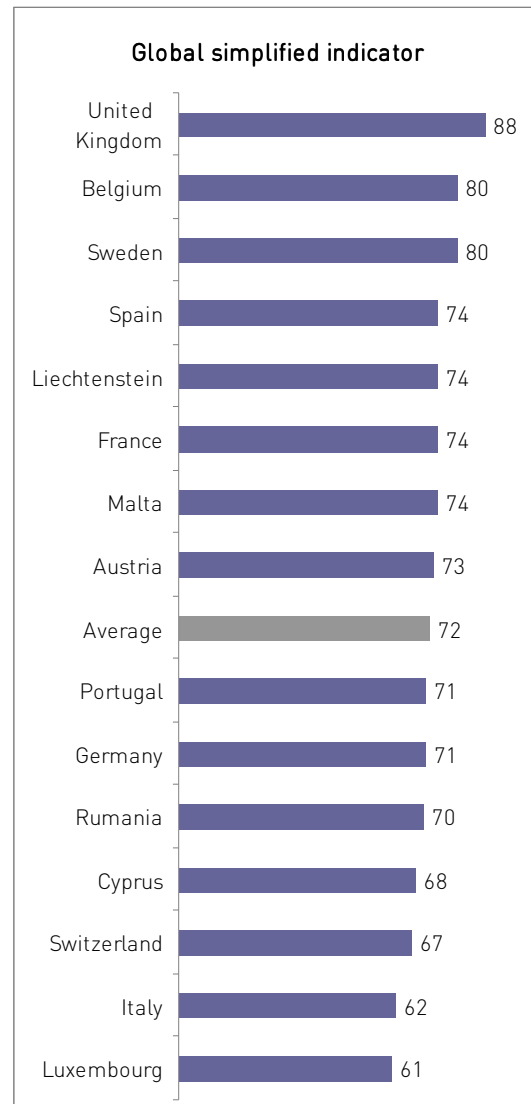
- Are there any bodies of parents' participation (board of governors, school board, etc.) and at which levels?
- Is there a training module for parents ?

Concerning the **global simplified indicator** we can consider that, for a study covering 15 countries, this variation is relatively low. More than half the countries are above average which is 72 points.

Analysis allows us to identify a trend in terms of parents' participation from a geographical point of view. Indeed, the three top ranking countries (United Kingdom, Belgium and Sweden) belong to the North of Europe. It is interesting to note that the United Kingdom and Belgium were already ahead of our detailed analysis on our global educator.

The other five countries show values above but very close to average so that they can't be considered as significant. The same applies for three countries that lie just below average : Portugal, Germany and Romania.

Only Italy and Luxembourg differ by more than 10 points of the EU average.



Members of the consortium

European Parents' Association (EPA)
 Pro-Dignitate Foundation – Portugal
 Institute of Educational Sciences - Romania
 Aberystwyth University – United Kingdom
 Bergamo University – Italy
 La Rioja University – Spain
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Le droit à l' éducation et à la formation aux droits de l' homme est un droit fondamental.

Conclusions : Conceiving new forms of participation

Our main conclusions are the following :

- Need to establish, at the European level, new schedules reflecting the expectations and views of parents, for example through the **Eurobarometer**. It is true that this lack of information is not specific to the participation of parents but concerns all European education systems. The European Council itself in *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training - ET 2020* - wants « well-functioning cooperation using new, transparent ways of networking (...) not only between the relevant EU institutions, but also with all relevant stake-holders, who have a considerable contribution to make in terms of policy development, implementation and evaluation ».
- Lack in EU countries of a **rights-based approach**, both in the field of the participation of parents as in the education system in general. Yet, this approach recognizes education as a human right as such, placing the child at the center of education policies.
- **Conceiving new forms of participation for parents** : extend the right to vote in the field of education like in the Swiss direct democracy, giving back to the parents themselves the management of schools like in the English *grant maintained schools*, promote the creation of schools directly run by parents, establish new

forms of governance such as *Charter schools*, and learning communities.

- Launching of a European Public Campaign to educate parents to participate in the framework of existing mechanisms and promote « active citizenship » in this field.



DG Éducation et culture

Programme pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie

Calendar 2011

- International public presentation session in Brussels
- Presentation of research findings to stakeholders of the 7 countries covered by the study
- Implementation of training modules for the use of indicators
- Launch of the Observatory of the participation of parents