stakeholder participation in schools

literature review

Education Support Program

Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe

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Abbreviations

CSR	Comprehensive School Reform
ESP	Education Support Program
GO	Governmental Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development xx
OSI	Open Society Institute
SBM	School-based Management
SEE	South-East Europe
SEN	(child with) Special educational needs
SES	Socio-economic status

1 Executive summary

For the purposes of this report, "participation" means the involvement of all or any relevant stakeholder groups (students, family, teachers, other local community members) in any kind of school management or decision making. We do not primarily mean participation in the sense of students merely attending school or in the sense of students taking part in out-of-school activities such as sports (see box)..... 9

This review represents a snapshot in the development of the research program described below; partly on the basis of these findings, the program research theme, definition of key concepts etc have been further refined. This document has *not* been updated accordingly: it represents the thinking of the research team at the end of 2007..... 9

On September 15, 2007, the Education Support Program launched a new initiative entitled "Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe". The project aims to address the problem of rising disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes continue in South East European (SEE) countries. 9

To address those concerns, the Education Support Program supported the development of an initiative aiming (1) to better understand the ways in which stakeholders' participation are engaged in school level governance, by carrying out national surveys of school directors; and (2) and to support sustainable initiatives on local, national and regional level to improve quality and inclusion though enhancing stakeholders' participation in school governance. 9

The project will take three years, divided into two phases of approximately 18 months each. 9

The present literature review aims to provide a background to Phase 1 as described above. The research theme at the time this report was commissioned was: stakeholder participation in elementary-school decision-making and the role of school level leadership in promoting participation. 10

After consideration of the relevant studies it was decided that the relation between participation and educational outcomes is from the point of view of research so intertwined with educational processes that other factors will also need to be considered, in particular the effects of school autonomy on the input side and student performance and educational equity on the outcomes side. Outcomes such as student performance are also of primary interest to education ministries and international agencies Including connections between participation and these outcomes at least in the research narratives if not also in the research design, may also make the research more relevant to those stakeholders. 13

Nevertheless participation remains the primary focus of this review and of the planned research. 13

The review findings are as follows. 17

Education in developing and transition countries was seen as being faced with an undesirable choice – providing education for all or providing quality schools. More recently, some theorists and practicioners are claiming that one can have ones cake and eat it, i.e. provide quality education for all. 18

Another approach to understanding how some schools perform better than others and perhaps even to be able to provide quality education for all, i.e. to answering both

the key challenges is provided by the concept of school autonomy or school-based management. 18

Autonomy is relevant to participation because if increasing participation means other stakeholders (parents, community, students) getting more of the cake, then increasing school autonomy means getting more cake to share out. Both traditional school management and other stakeholders may be interested in reform packages which combine increased autonomy and increased participation. 19

SBM is often presented as a reform which devolves control not only to schools in general but also specifically to parents, students and other community stakeholders, both via school boards and directly. However parents and students tend to come last in SBM thinking and SBM often does not result in genuinely increased participation for them. 19

children from poorer families tend to score do worse at school *because* their parents tend to feel less involved in their children's education, may provide a less education-friendly home environment and may have poorer quality links with school. 21

New research confirms that the quality of the home-school relationship can vary between ethnic groups in the same school with marginalised groups coming off worse 22

Recent work and some hard empirical evidence has highlighted improving parental involvement as a very promising strategy not only to improve student educational outcomes overall but as a factor especially suited to helping socially excluded children and children with special needs to overcome educational disadvantage. In fact in some cases, parents get involved spontaneously in order to counteract real or perceived inequalities. 22

Indeed, positive connections between parents and teachers can be reconceptualised as social capital 22

- many parents in South-East Europe may not initially see themselves as playing an important role in their children's education 23
- Active parents also report that it tends to be the same old faces who get involved and that it is difficult to involve parents with less education. 23

There are some useful models of participation of parents of disabled children in schools in southeast Europe. 24

The values, attitudes, capacities and behaviour of school directors strongly influence the character of school-based governance structures and school culture. If school directors do not subscribe to the principles of educational equity, school-based governance structures and school culture are not likely to be inclusive and sensitive to educational equity. If they do not welcome parent or student participation, they are less likely to happen. If they do not understand the importance of parental involvement, they may not create conditions where it can flourish. 24

We know that leadership affects variables like teacher job satisfaction, school climate and even classroom practices; and we know that of course classroom practices affect learning outcomes. But it is not clear that if or how leadership directly affects learning outcomes. One reason maybe that it is hard to conceptualise, let alone measure, what makes good leadership. One attempt involves the concept of transformational (as opposed to transactional) leadership. 24

There is a substantial body of evidence for the direct effects of leadership on outcomes, although the effects tend to be quite small. 25

It is also important to remember that schools especially in transition countries are faced by a constant agenda of reform; transformational school leadership is seen as being appropriate to help schools navigate this agenda. 25

Increased student participation might seem to be an obvious way to involve students more in school life and also to help students to learn to take part in a democracy, and perhaps to turn the tide of increasing youth indifference towards formal political activity. The school organization could be a laboratory for learning about democratic living 26

Many western nations think of themselves as having achieved democracy fully, though they teach the principles of democracy in a pedantic way in classrooms which are themselves models of autocracy. This is not acceptable 26

Citizenship and human rights education and related models are relevant to this study insofar as they go beyond merely disseminating declarative knowledge and lead to or are part of active student participation. Human rights education has been popular in the Balkans and other transition areas since 1990, most frequently as a result of NGO input. The sustainability of some of these initiatives is questionable; however, they might provide a jumping-off point for participation initiatives. 27

Children in transition countries do not necessarily know less about the contents of citizenship education than children from Western countries. 28

Involvement in school councils and other forms of student participation is very strongly related to measures of civic engagement 28

All over the world, the level of youth interest in formal political activity is seen to be declining, to be at least partially compensated by growing participation in more informal, one-off, and spontaneous forms of political action. 29

Genuine encouragement for student participation must be prepared to cope with nonconformist responses. 29

Student participation seems to be the orphan of empirical literature on the effects of participation in schools. while there are plenty of insightful well-meaning texts, there are very few pieces of research which meet academic standards. 29

Anyone wanting to increase student participation, especially with younger children, should be aware of some of the relevant work from social developmental psychology and in particular the meaning which participation has for children at different ages. 30

Suggested research theme: the regulation and extent of equitable implementation of parental participation (in decision-making, in extracurricular activities, and in the education of one's own children) in state elementary schools; in relation to school level factors and to the attitudes and beliefs of school principals; both at national and international level. 34

A number of conclusions and recommendations are made at the end of the report.

2 Introduction

2.1 ESP mission

The Education Support Program (ESP) and its network partners support education reform in countries in transition, combining best practice and policy to strengthen open society values. ESP works to facilitate change in education and national policy development. Support is focused in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, the Middle East, Russia, South Asia and Southern Africa.

ESP has offices in Budapest, London, and New York and previously had an office in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where it was known as Open Society Education Programs-South East Europe (OSEP-SEE). The Budapest office now oversees work in South Eastern Europe as well. Past work of OSEP-SEE can be accessed at www.osepsee.net.

Mission

The way a society organizes its resources to provide a quality education, particularly for vulnerable children, is a fundamental marker for democracy and open society. In 2006, the Open Society Institute refocused its education mission to advocate against global disparities in provision and to promote access for children who are denied their right to quality education.

The mission of OSI's Education Support Program is to promote justice in education, aiming to strengthen advocacy, innovation, and activism in three interconnected areas:

- Combating social exclusion: equal access to quality education for low income families; desegregation of children from minority groups; inclusion and adequate care for children with special needs.
- Openness and accountability in education systems and education reforms: equitable and efficient state expenditures on education; anticorruption and transparency; accountable governance and management.
- Open society values in education: social justice and social action; diversity and pluralism; critical and creative thinking.

The three main elements of ESP's program strategy are:

- To build on the momentum of the mainstream education reform process (especially Education for All, Fast Track Initiatives, and Millennium Development Goals) particularly in order to develop in-country capacity.
- To critique education systems and reforms in terms of how they discriminate against the most vulnerable sections of society, presenting threats both to education justice and to democracy.
- To demonstrate good practice, build networks, local ownership and civil society through programs and advocacy in regionally-focused strategies.

Information on ESP is available at www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/

2.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this report, "participation" means the involvement of all or any relevant stakeholder groups (students, family, teachers, other local community members) in any kind of school management or decision making. We do not primarily mean participation in the sense of students merely attending school or in the sense of students taking part in out-of-school activities such as sports (see box).

"School principals" are also referred to as "head teachers" or "school directors".

Although in British English the "pupils" is preferred for school students (and "students" is reserved for higher education students) the term "students" will be used throughout.

Useful model: five levels of student paraticipation. Thomson and Holdsworth[75] suggest a five-level model continuum of participation from being physically present at school (lowest level) via involvement in formal school decision-making (level three) to community activism (highest level) (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003)

2.3 About this review

This review represents a snapshot in the development of the research program described below; partly on the basis of these findings, the program research theme, definition of key concepts etc have been further refined. This document has *not* been updated accordingly: it represents the thinking of the research team at the end of 2007.

However, one short section on community participation has been deleted.

On September 15, 2007, the Education Support Program launched a new initiative entitled "Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe". The project aims to address the problem of rising disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes continue in South East European (SEE) countries. To address these issues a series of international meetings, with the participation Open Society Institute related representatives of 10 SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia) were held. OSI-related representatives of 10 SEE countries identified the following common priorities that should be addressed by OSI in the region:

a. Inequity in education, more precisely the gap between existing policies and their implementation, and the neglect of various forms of discrimination (e.g., in relation to minorities, special needs etc.);

b. Insufficient participation by stakeholders -- particularly students and parents -- in education systems.

To address those concerns, the Education Support Program supported the development of an initiative aiming (1) to better understand the ways in which stakeholders' participation are engaged in school level governance, by carrying out national surveys of school directors; and (2) and to support sustainable initiatives on local, national and regional level to improve quality and inclusion though enhancing stakeholders' participation in school governance.

The project will take three years, divided into two phases of approximately 18 months each.

1. **Phase One will identify priorities and provide evidence for the advocacy-oriented second phase.** In particular, Phase One will focus on gathering first-hand evidence on stakeholder participation in schools and the role of school principals (directors) in implementing stakeholder participation.
2. Phase One activities are divided into two groups:
    a. national surveys of school directors (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia (including Kosovo, which is treated as a separate country for the purposes of this report) will participate in the surveys, with school directors being interviewed in each) to discover
        i. the nature and extent of stakeholder participation in schools: when did which group participate and/or was invited to participate, with what results

ii. if present, the extent to which stakeholder participation is inclusive

iii. the school directors' attitudes towards and beliefs about stakeholder participation; what they perceive to be advantages and disadvantages of participation, reasons for and against it, resources they have or would need for participation, relevant partnerships

iv. in particular, their attitudes towards and beliefs about inclusive participation, i.e. whether in each stakeholder group, all members of that group can/do participate equally without regard to gender, ethnicity, disability, etc.

b. action research to document existing community-based initiatives which may include participatory components, and are successful in improving educational quality and inclusion.

3. Phase Two will design and carry out targeted programs based on the findings of the first phase, in collaboration with national government and non-government organizations, OSI network programs, and international partners.

2.3.1 Research theme

The present literature review aims to provide a background to Phase 1 as described above. The research theme at the time this report was commissioned was: stakeholder participation in elementary-school decision-making and the role of school level leadership in promoting participation.

2.3.2 Objectives

In particular this review is tasked to:

- Review earlier and recent academic and professional work on the research theme (stakeholder participation in school decision-making and the role of school level leadership in promoting participation) in order to be able to position the planned research project in relation to existing research.
- Identify basic operational definitions of core concepts relevant to Phase one survey activities.
- Identify similar surveys and studies with emphases on conceptual definitions, methods and research results.
- Summarize the state of the art by analyzing and interpreting results and identifying areas in which further research would be beneficial

2.4 Relevance to ESP mission

Stakeholder participation is relevant to all three of the areas set out in the ESP Mission (section 2.1 in the present report) and in the context of that mission raises new questions which this report will attempt to answer:

- Combating social exclusion – *how can participation increase inclusion?*
- Openness and accountability – *how can participation increase openness and accountability?*
- Open society values in education: social justice and social action; diversity and pluralism; critical and creative thinking: *how can participation contribute to social justice and social action?*

2.5 Participation in a human rights perspective

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (*Convention on the Rights of the Child* , 1989) is partially or completely ratified by all the countries of the region. Article 12 of the Convention mentions participation:

> States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

And also in Article 13:

> The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

However, in general, stakeholder participation in education is a principle which is not explicitly guaranteed in international conventions.

3 Method: the studies reviewed

In order to identify published works relevant to the research theme (stakeholder participation in school decision-making and the role of school level leadership in promoting participation), this review initially identified several hundred documents, nearly all of them accessed via internet search (primarly using google scholar and ebsco "academic search premier"). The search queries were primarily appropriate combinations of these phrases:

- "pupil participation"
- "teacher participation"
- "parent participation"
- "parent involvement"
- "parental participation"
- "parental involvement"
- meta-analysis OR review
- "school-based management"
- school AND autonomy

The documents found in this way were narrowed down to about 75 which were considered to be directly relevant to the Research Theme according to the following considerations. The Findings section of this report is based on these 75 studies.

School type: studies primarily on private schools were not included nor were studies primarily on tertiary education. However, although the focus of the project is on grades 1-8, studies on public secondary schools and studies on pre-school education were included if the findings were considered to be of particular value and relevance.

Priority was given to documents which:

- presented empirical evidence of high quality, i.e. including as many as possible of the following features:
    - using large samples
    - using a longitudinal or experimental or quasi-experimental design or using a comparison group
    - published in a peer-reviewed journal
- were meta-analyses or systematic reviews of several primary studies
- included information from transition countries. However information specific to the Participating Countries (see section 2.3) was not included as these was covered by the Country Reviews.

Priority was also given to information from countries from the non-English-speaking world. This was in order to counteract the bias introduced by the fact that the searches were primarily carried out in the English language. No special effort was made to identify research related to OSI.

The annotated bibliography is available at www.proMENTE.org/ESPreview. The links in that bibliography go directly to online versions of those documents which are freely available.

4 Background: the policy context

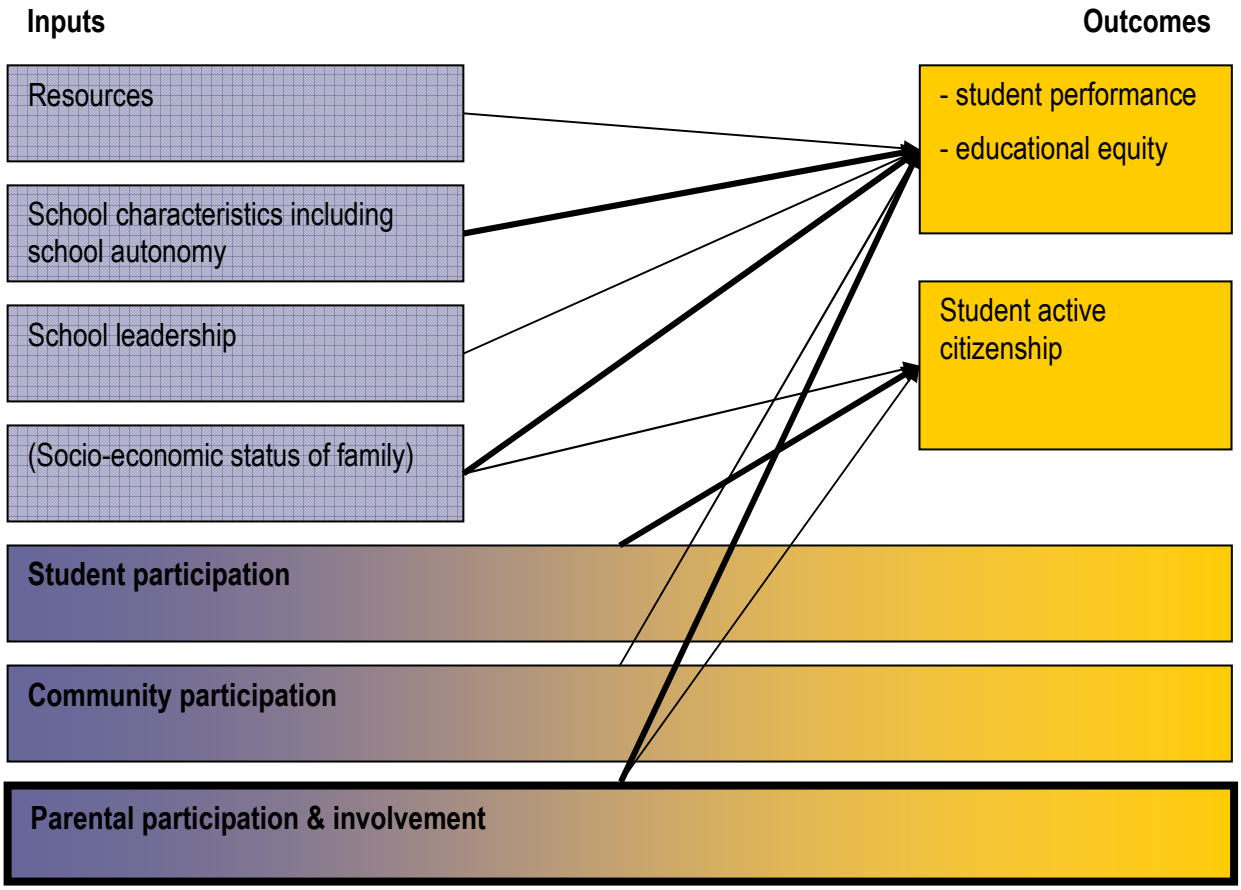
4.1 Participation embedded in other education quality issues

After consideration of the relevant studies it was decided that the relation between participation and educational outcomes is from the point of view of research so intertwined with educational processes that other factors will also need to be considered, in particular the effects of school autonomy on the input side and student performance and educational equity on the outcomes side. Outcomes such as student performance are also of primary interest to education ministries and international agencies Including connections between participation and these outcomes at least in the research narratives if not also in the research design, may also make the research more relevant to those stakeholders.

Nevertheless participation remains the primary focus of this review and of the planned research.

This approach is also consistent with ensuring that potential improvements on one outcome should not be won at the expense of others. For example, as parents with higher socio-economic status tend to be participate in schools more, it is important to ensure that promoting participation is done in an equitable way.

4.2 Simple model of the inputs and outcomes relevant in this study



This very schematic diagram is not much more than a list of inputs and outcomes and certainly does not do justice to the complexity of the educational factors in which the issue of participation is embedded. However it does serve as a basic starting-point for organising the coming chapters (the inputs[1] on the left-hand side correspond to the

[1] Socio-economic status is not strictly an input, but is listed along with all the other factors on the left-hand side as it can function as an (exogenous) explanatory variable in models predicting the outcomes.

main headings in findings chapter). "Student performance" and "educational equity" are presented in a single box because they are, especially from the point of view of OSI, strongly interlinked. In fact it is impossible to even measure student performance without implicitly making an assumption about the importance of equity: how is one to aggregate performance data for different students in order to arrive at an overall score? Are performance scores to be simply averaged, or is the education system also tasked with producing at least a few very high scorers; and how much are we prepared to accept a lower band of very poor performers who are in a state of educational and social exclusion? The model also makes clear that for OSI, participation is an end in itself, i.e. these three boxes are both inputs and outcomes.

One criticism of this model is that it ignores the actual process of education, for example instruction factors. However instruction factors tend not to feature in the studies reviewed, probably because they are more complicated to measure.

Although there are many more complex and sophisticated models in the literature, there is probably none which is generally accepted.

4.3 Summary: "Major" and "minor" programs

Programs affecting stakeholder participation in schools can be seen as belonging to one of two kinds. On the one hand, there are large-scale and generally well-funded programs which aim at increasing autonomy and/or implementing wholescale school reform, covering all or a significant proportion of schools in a country. These programs are comprehensive approaches which attempt to increase school effectiveness, often by increasing autonomy and improve school leadership as part of a complex packages of reforms. The effects of participatory components such as parental involvement are often not recorded or analysed separately (Desimone, 2002). Nevertheless because of the scale and frequency of these programs and the importance they have in national policy they may have a significant impact on stakeholder participation and will be covered in this report.

Distinction between kinds of programs potentially improving stakeholder participation

	Major programs	Minor programs
Initiated by	Ministries; World Bank and other development banks	School and/or NGO
Number of schools affected in each country	Many	Few
Primary reason	Increasing school effectiveness	Increasing participation and possible effectiveness
Overall quality of research results	Very good; mostly quantitative	Limited; mostly qualitative
Quality of research results on participation	Patchy	Limited; mostly qualitative

On the other hand there are generally smaller-scale programs and initiatives aimed at increasing or improving stakeholder participation (usually parents or students and more rarely both together).

For the purposes of this report we will refer to these programs as major and minor programs respectively.

The *evidence base f*or the effects of school autonomy and participation is split into two in a way which broadly corresponds to this distinction between major and minor programs. On the one hand, there is very substantial evidence that larger scale programs aimed at increasing school autonomy and/or implementing wholescale reform, when done well, is beneficial not only in terms of increasing school effectiveness but also that it is cost-effective compared to other methods xx. There are many major studies, with good methodological standards, some funded by the World Bank and using economic methods of analysis - see (The World Bank, 2007). However, these studies tend to exclude school environment variables, especially in developing countries (J. Scheerens, 2005). There is more limited evidence for positive effects of stakeholder participation in particular as part of these reforms. These studies will be covered in the findings chapter

in the present report. Research on school-level factors and school leadership in particular will be included in the same chapter.

On the other hand, there are a large number of studies which focus specifically on the effects of stakeholder participation; some cover the smaller-scale programs mentioned above and some are cross-sectional surveys but these tend to be of lower methodological standard and use smaller samples.

4.4 Policy context in South-East Europe

4.4.1 Useful model: *glocalisation*

Many authors are concerned with the inappropriate application of education reform models from the West, and particularly from the United States, to other contexts. (J. Scheerens, 1999). The fact that global trends are reaching each and every country more quickly and that each no country is sheltered from the implications the increasingly free movement of capital around the world, i.e. the fact of globalisation, does not mean that national responses do not need to take into account national contexts. The principle of "glocalisation" (Robertson, 1995) (formed from the words "globalisation" and "localisation") makes this clear and provides a meaningful principle in particular for the context of South-East Europe.

4.4.2 Transition

The education systems in the Balkans until 1990 were in general centralised, as they were in most non-Western countries, (Jimenez & Sawada, p. iii), with most major decisions being taken at the level of State or regional ministries. Education management was a highly policitised affair (Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 5)

Some mechanisms for stakeholder participation were in place, primarily:

- Opportunities for feedback to parents on their children's progress in the form of parents' meetings
- Limited student participation in the form of elected class representatives with certain responsibilities but little voice
- Parents' councils or parent representation on school boards.

Schools in former Yugoslavia were (and to some extent still are) governed by a School Board, consisting of the school director and three people the director appoints. Schools also had a Parent Council, Teacher Council and, in the case of secondary schools, a Student Council. However these Councils were very limited in influence (Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 5).

On the other hand, educational traditions gave teachers substantial authority in the eyes of parents and children and education was seen more as something which teachers gave to students rather than as a process requiring the active participation of many stakeholders.

The education system in former Yugoslavia 1974-1989 was in comparison relatively decentralized.

Following 1990, education systems came increasingly under the influence of Western initiatives and Western world-views and to some extent Western programming. At the same time, they had to cope with a very difficult transition period. This was true all over the region and particularly in the area of former Yugoslavia during and after the slow and mostly violent collapse of the country, during which each new constituent entity followed its own path to adapt to new and often difficult circumstances[2]. The period after 1990 follows a path of *glocalisation*:

> … education reform has followed a common sequence, beginning with (1) a period of euphoria and experimentation with external models in an atmosphere of new-found freedom; followed by (2) a phase of cautious reappraisal of external models; and (3) as fatigue sets in, an attempt to give reforms a more national flavour (UNICEF, 2007, p. 10).

[2] Kosovo report xx

One of the biggest challenges was and still is increasing access to education especially for children with special needs and for minority children, above all Roma (OECD, 2006a).

As far as participation is concerned, "Teaching methods that encourage participation and individual development" was listed as the very first of twelve steps identified by the influential UNICEF / Innocenti report "Education for All?", (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. MONEE project, 1998), and steps 4 and 5 were:

> 4. Re-stimulation of extra-curricular support by schools;
>
> 5. Increased parental and community involvement in education; (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. MONEE project, 1998)

5 Findings[3]

The review findings are as follows.

The main headings follow the main educational inputs listed in the inputs/outcomes diagram in the previous chapter.

5.1 The first challenge: explaining why some schools and some students perform well

Modern school effectiveness research was for a long time dominated by the impact of the research findings of Coleman et al. (1966), supported by the findings of Jencks et al.(1972), according to which educational attainment, while systematically associated with the socio-cultural and socio-enconomic background of the student, is not systematically related to school and instruction characteristics. This would mean that schools are powerless to change exclusion and that schools can do nothing to change a world in which children's futures are limited by the same ceilings which limited their parents.

Nevertheless, the academic consensus built on the above studies has been repeatedly put under scrutiny over the last thirty years and a much more differentiated picture of the factors affecting differences in school achievement, including parental participation, has emerged.

A good overview to school effectiveness research and its history is given in (R. J. Marzano, 2001) whereas Scheerens (2005) conducts something approaching a meta-analysis of more recent studies.

5.1.1 Are schools inefficient?

School effectiveness research presents education as a very inefficient process from the perspective of production-function models (for an introduction see (Hanushek, 1995)) in the sense that much of the investments made in schools have not been shown to provide, or even have been shown not to provide, meaningful benefits. A classic example is class size: quite surprisingly, very many studies have shown that smaller classes are not necessarily better than larger classes. This result has been replicated (and to a lesser extent disputed) in literally hundreds of studies and now recently confirmed in analyses of Pisa data (Maasoumi, Millimet, & Rangaprasad). On the other hand, investment in teacher education and in school facilities have been shown to pay off, especially in developing countries.

5.1.2 The power of site and place

Against this background, researchers in the last two decades have set out to look for less obvious variables which might explain the differences between efficient and inefficient schools. One approach is to deny that there *are* any such systematic factors measurable and meaningful across a whole country. In their analysis of the weaknesses of school effectiveness research, (Luyten, Visscher, & Witziers, 2005) point out that it tends to ignore factors outside the classroom which influence learning. Uniform, centrally developed reform policies and strategies will not lead to the desired educational change in all schools. They argue that schools differ so much in performance (and in the causes underlying their performance), capacity for change, and contextual characteristics, that school improvement efforts should consider leveraging the "power of site or place" by increasing performance monitoring internally (King & Özler, 1998; J. Scheerens, 1999). Parents and other stakeholders have a major role to play here.

This localist approach suggests school effectiveness research which attempts to locate factors contributing to effectiveness on a global level is doomed to failure because individual schools and contexts are so different. The challenge would be to best adapt schools to their unique contexts; and the involvement of all stakeholders might be the best way to do that. Perhaps indeed it will never be possible to identify universally relevant factors (Glass, 1979).

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[3] Thanks to Daniel Pop for contributions to the first part of this chapter

In South-East Europe, decentralisation has been taking place at least since 1990, but quite slowly. The follow-up (UNICEF, 2007) to the above-mentioned UNICEF / Innocenti report (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. MONEE project, 1998) notes:

> From the equity point of view, this slow progress is not necessarily unfavourable: 'real' decentralization often means that weaker localities have less money. (UNICEF, 2007, p. 13)

5.2 The second challenge: increasing both access and quality (having one's cake and eating it too)

> … at-risk factors are cumulative, and often inter-generational. One or two risk factors might be surmountable . *e.g.* being ill, unemployed, or a single parent . but if a third is added, such as the birth of a disabled child in an at-risk family, there will be a rapid descent into deprivation unless prompt, targeted help is available. Thus, if a SEN child is born into a Roma family with unemployed parents living in poverty, the life chances of *all* members of that family are negatively affected and their social exclusion will be more severe. Prompt, targeted, positive action is needed, rather than the all too common response of blaming the child (and the family) for low educational attainment.(Crighton & Kowar, 2007, p. 15)
>
> "Parents said that, until their child reached school age and had the good fortune to be in a sympathetic and inclusive school, they had received no practical advice, and no support, in caring for their special needs child. As a result, they felt isolated, left to struggle in poor conditions with no one to turn to."(Crighton & Kowar, 2007, p. 16)

Education in developing and transition countries was seen as being faced with an undesirable choice – providing education for all or providing quality schools. More recently, some theorists and practicioners are claiming that one can have ones cake and eat it, i.e. provide quality education for all.

The key is seen to be to introduce two approaches more familiar from economics – increasing choice and providing incentives (Hanushek, 1995). Giving vouchers to parents so that they can chose where they will have their children educated, though frequently criticised as taking capitalist principles too far into education, does have a participatory spin-off in that it tends to interest schools more in involving parents (Rodríguez & Hovde, 2002, p. 12).

School-based management (SBM) is increasingly seen as one way to implement these two key elements. It will be described in the next section.

5.3 The effects of autonomy and school-based management (SBM)

Another approach to understanding how some schools perform better than others and perhaps even to be able to provide quality education for all, i.e. to answering both the key challenges is provided by the concept of school autonomy or school-based management.

SBM can be seen as an application of the U.S. education model prevalent since the 17th century. SBM represents decentralisation in the sense of subsidiarity: decisions are taken at closest practicable level to where their effects are felt.

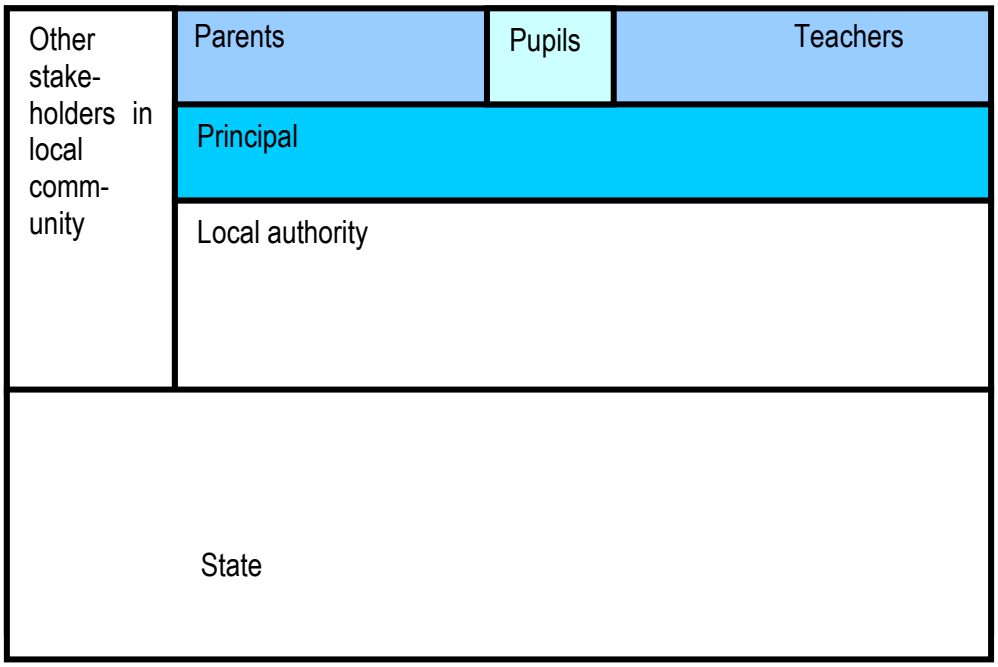
SBM is a blanket term for a wide variety of different approaches: an overview is given in (Cotton, 2001).

Key arguments for school autonomy, Walker (Walker, 2002):

- competition for students can improve schools, so that school choice for users is an important institutional feature
- decentralization can make the education system more nimble by exploiting voice and participation

5.3.1 How autonomy and participation are related

Schematic representation of different stakeholders' shares in decisions affecting in a particular school



This very schematic model provides a way for thinking about how different stakeholders can have different shares in decisions affecting a particular school, in the way that a cake can be divided up into slices of different sizes.

Autonomy is relevant to participation because if increasing participation means other stakeholders (parents, community, students) getting more of the cake, then increasing school autonomy means getting more cake to share out. Both traditional school management and other stakeholders may be interested in reform packages which combine increased autonomy and increased participation.

Eskeland tells this story in an economically more sophisticated way: "Student learning can be raised by school autonomy and parental participation through separate channels. Increased school autonomy increases the rent that can be distributed among stakeholders at the school, while institutions for parental participation (such as a school board) empowers parents to command a higher share of this surplus, for instance through student learning" (Eskeland, 2007, p. i).

5.3.2 SBM programs

School autonomy is increasingly seen as a priority in many countries – Australia, Britain, New Zealand, the United States, Spain, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Hong Kong, Mexico and South Africa. Later, China, Japan and Southeast Asian countries e.g. Thailand (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004) Latin America followed.

SBM as a movement began to be adopted as the result of a 1976 citizens' initiative in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004, p. 292). It has also been also adopted as a response to the breakdown of centralist systems. Implementation varies from country to country but is often supported by the World Bank and other development banks.

5.3.3 Evidence for effectiveness of SBM

There is evidence that SBM is more effective in changing governance and organisational structure than in changing classroom practices as such.

SBM is often presented as a reform which devolves control not only to schools in general but also specifically to parents, students and other community stakeholders, both via school boards and directly.

However parents and students tend to come last in SBM thinking and SBM often does not result in genuinely increased participation for them.

SBM is not always effective in driving reform or in addressing exclusion – (Walker, 2002)

While some claim (Jimenez & Sawada, p. 1) that there is relatively little empirical evidence in developing countries to document the merits of school-based management, there is a growing number of exceptions, with positive assessments of SBM coming from:

- Indonesia: James, King and Suryadi (1996)
- the Philippines: Jimenez and Paqueo (1996)
- Thailand: (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004)
- A report on an El Salvador SBM program, EDUCO, (Jimenez & Sawada) concludes that it was successful in rapidly expanding education access to poorer families without dropping educational standards and also the programs succeeded in substantially increasing parent involvement in school management.
- A report from Nicaragua shows that its school autonomy program was somewhat effective in increasing the areas of school decision-making available to the school (Nicaragua Reform Evaluation Team, 1996, p. 17) also, autonomy *de jure* does not appear to have any impact on student test scores. However, another autonomy variable which measures the actual level of decision-making by the school is positively associated with student test scores. In particular, schools that exert greater autonomy with respect to teacher staffing and the monitoring and evaluation of teachers appear to be more effective in raising student performance (King & Özler, 1998).

One of the most exciting SBM studies covered in terms of participation was a recent analysis by Gunnarsson et al (2004) of a substantial 1997 data set from 10 Latin American countries. This study analysed the effects of school autonomy (both *de jure* and *de facto*) and parental participation (in the broad sense of parental involvement and interest in the child's education) as inputs on student performance as output. The findings are quite surprising:

- De facto school autonomy varies substantially and does not depend so strongly on legislation. On the one hand, less well-resources schools are not in a position to implement, or perhaps even benefit from, autonomy even when it is forced upon them. On the other hand, more flexible schools even in *de jure* centralised systems go ahead and implement a degree of autonomy. This hypothesis was confirmed by the data.
- This result means that "devolution of power to local schools cannot be accomplished by central mandates, but must take into account local incentives and local capacity to manage schools" (Gunnarsson et al., 2004, p. 2).
- Consistent with this result, students in schools with de facto autonomy performed better than their peers. However when correcting for the extent to which schools exercised a choice to implement autonomy, this effect disappears. In other words, some previous results showing that students in more autonomous schools perform better may be an "artefact", i.e. may be due to a systematic bias: only better resourced schools are able to take advantage of autonomy.
- The level of parental involvement is also a good predictor of student performance. This is in spite of the fact that parental involvement in some cases actually increases in worse schools and/or with worse students, i.e. that at least some parents actually increase their involvement in order to compensate for perceived weakenesses. In other words, parental involvement can function as a spontaneous attempt to correct some aspects of inequity.
- Not only that, but parental involvement remains important for student performance even when correcting for the same kind of bias.
- Taken together, these results imply that parental involvement is more important for good student performance than school autonomy and that providing incentives for parental involvement is one of the most promising ways to increase student performance.

5.3.4 Comprehensive school reform (CSR)

Another closely related approach which can be seen as a further development of the effective schools movement is known as "comprehensive school reform" (CSR). It attempts to implement as many as possible of the factors identified by school effectiveness research, from strong leadership and staff development to parental involvement in a systematic and integrated package (Desimone, 2002).

5.3.5 Evidence for the effectiveness of CSR

A meta-analysis covering 29 of the most widely implemented models concluded: that CSR appears " promising and the combined quantity, quality, and statistical significance of evidence from three of the models, in particular, set them apart from the rest. … Schools implementing CSR models for five years or more showed particularly strong effects" (K. Leithwood & D. Jantzi, 2006).

- A similar approach known in Europe as Effective School Improvement (ESI) was subject to a meta-analysis by (Sun, 2007) using data from 8 European countries and arriving at encouraging results.

5.4 The effects of parent involvement in schools[4]

Parental involvement is quite a new factor on the school effectiveness scene; twenty years ago, in 1986, Good and Brophy (quoted in R. J. Marzano, 2001, p. 590) wrote: "The degree of home and school cooperation is likely to be an important determinant of student achievement. However, this "obvious" possibility has received little research attention. Whether parent-school communication differs in "more" and "less" effective schools is also unclear." Since then, a substantial body of evidence for the positive correlates of parental involvement has been accumulating.

"Parental involvement" and "parental participation" mean different things in different studies. Of the two, "parental involvement" seems to be most closely associated with research on school effectiveness and implies taking an active interest in one's child's education

Parental involvement indicators include

- good written information exchange between school and parents,
- parental involvement in policy and curricular decisions, and
- easy access for parents to administrators and teachers.(R. J. Marzano, 2001, p. 55)

"Parental participation" on the other hand is more likely to mean taking part in general school decision-making quite apart from the progress of one's own children. However as the terms may often overlap, both will be treated here under one heading.

5.4.1 Evidence for the effectiveness of parent involvement

5.4.1.1 SES and the importance of home environment

"The belief in the strong relationship between SES and achievement is so prevalent in the research literature that it is rarely questioned" (White, 1982, p. 471). In his reanalysis of the connection between SES and school achievement, White concludes by noting that the real variable of interest in studies of influences on achievement might be best described as home environment, home-school relationship or parental involvement. In other words,

children from poorer families tend to score do worse at school *because* their parents tend to feel less involved in their children's education, may provide a less education-friendly home environment and may have poorer quality links with school.

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[4] A useful source of free online information on parental involvement is provided in "The School Community Journal", available at the website of the Academic Development Institute, www.adi.org.

In 1998, the Court in the State of New Jersey judged the education authorities to have failed in meeting the needs of excluded communities and actually required them carry out a number of reforms, which led to a major program of decentralisation and school-based management (Walker, 2002). The program was assessed to have been successful in terms of changing management structures but of having limited impact in terms of increasing the voice of excluded groups and of students.

This provides for a much more optimistic perspective on SES than that considered from the perspective of previous research (e.g., Coleman and Jencks) or conventional wisdom. So if some low-SES parents (defined in terms of income, education, and/or occupational level) are very good at creating a home atmosphere that fosters learning (e.g., read to their children, help them with their homework, encourage them to go to college, and take them to the library and to cultural events), whereas other low-SES parents are not, perhaps programs can be designed to influence at least some of these factors.

New research confirms that the quality of the home-school relationship can vary between ethnic groups in the same school with marginalised groups coming off worse (Wong & Hughes, 2006, p. 657).

Recent work and some hard empirical evidence has highlighted improving parental involvement as a very promising strategy not only to improve student educational outcomes overall but as a factor especially suited to helping socially excluded children and children with special needs to overcome educational disadvantage. In fact in some cases, parents get involved spontaneously in order to counteract real or perceived inequalities.

Indeed, positive connections between parents and teachers can be reconceptualised as social capital (Wong & Hughes, 2006, p. 657). The concept of social capital has received a lot of attention in recent educational literature (Dika & Singh, 2002, p. 34), mostly as an explanatory variable. However it can also be seen as an outcome.

This approach is also supported theoretically by the concept of family resilience factors (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006)

In a substantial and more recent meta-analysis of many different factors influencing school achievement, (J. Scheerens & Bosker, 1997, p. 305) give the average effect size for Parent Involvement as .26 standard deviations, the fourth highest of nine factors.

Another metaanalysis shows that parental involvement, especially helping at home, has a substantial positive effect on student achievement (Jeynes, 2005) in amongst urban children. Parental involvement, as a whole, was associated with all the academic variables by about 0.7 to 0.75 of a standard deviation. This is true for both girls and boys and for mainstream and minority students.

These results might make parental involvement seem like a magic bullet which can help improve academic outcomes and address inequity at the same time as increasing social capital. Some educators (Hara & Burke, 1998) have increasingly identified parental involvement as the most important vehicle by which to elevate academic achievement from current levels. Against this background, it is still surprisingly underrepresented in policy in Europe. For example it is not mentioned in the 450-page OECD report "Education at a glance" which compares OECD countries on a long list of indicators of education (OECD, 2006b).

Some studies show that not only do parent involvement and school autonomy have separate positive effects on student outcomes, but that these two effects are multiplicative (Eskeland, 2007). A similar result is reported by Vegas (1999): in a study on voucher programs in Chile, teacher autonomy had positive effects on student outcomes only when decisionmaking authority was decentralized.

5.4.1.2 The effects of parental involvement programs

Longitudinal or quasi-experimental studies on parental involvement, which provide much better evidence for its effectiveness than cross-sectional studies, were subject of a meta-analysis by (Hara & Burke, 1998) who found them to be effective in terms of improving student attainment[5].

5.4.1.3 The CRS Parent School Partnership Program

The CRS Parent School Partnership Program, which has also been implemented South-East Europe and Armenia, will be mentioned here briefly as an example of how parent participation can be implemented (Catholic Relief Services, 2006). This program also included elements of community participation, and of student participation in some countries. Initially ten territories were covered, with five identified for further funding after 2003. CRS has an exit strategy whereby the PSCs should become sustainable without substantial donor input.

The evaluation of this program reports that:

- **many parents in South-East Europe may not initially see themselves as playing an important role in their children's education** (Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 7).
- Skills gains by parents were also reported (Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 8) alongside structural impact: during the program, about 500 PSCs were created; networks of PSCs were created; and legal recognition was achieved. However this legal recognition does not transfer any important decision-making powers to parents.
- The most involved parents in the parent-teacher councils reported scepticism from fellow parents who, as one parent stated, "Don't understand the concept of 'volunteer' and think that we must be receiving some money for our work" (Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 6).
- **Active parents also report that it tends to be the same old faces who get involved and that it is difficult to involve parents with less education.** There was also a perception of the PTCs as representative of a progressive, pro-European model which was welcomed by parents.

5.4.1.4 School boards

School boards can be seen as as a place where lay people from the community are invested with authority to govern schools (Land, 2002, p. 231). There is some substantial evidence that good schools tend to have good boards (Ranson, Farrel, Peim, & Smitih, 2005), but there is much dispute about whether the latter can help cause the former. Nevertheless they play an important role both in school-based management and parental involvement.

5.4.2 What affects parental involvement?

One study (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987) tested the hypothesis that varying levels of parent involvement would be related to variations in qualities of school settings, specifically school socioeconomic status, teacher degree level, grade level, class size, teachers' sense of efficacy, principal perceptions of teacher efficacy, organizational rigidity, and instructional coordination in a sample of 66 elementary schools distributed across a large mid-Southern state. Various combinations of the predictors accounted for significant portions of the variance in all parent involvement outcomes: parent conferences (52%), parent volunteers (27%), parent home tutoring (24%), parent involvement in home instruction programs (22%), and teacher perception of parent support (41%).

5.4.3 Involvement of parents with children with special needs in South-East Europe

In the period 2003-2007 the OECD, in partnership with SEE education ministries[6], carried out a complex project entitled "Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe". This

[5] althought the effect sizes were, as was to be expected lower than those associated with the cross-sectional association between involvement and attainment.

[6] Education ministries from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

project focused on carrying out in-depth policy reviews of changes in national educational legislation; pilot activities in the field of statistics and data collection; various capacity building activities for model schools and direct data collection. It assessed the extent to which national anti-discrimination legislation had been improved. The evaluation report (OECD, 2006a) concluded that:

> The importance of the involvement of parents of disabled children in their education is very widely accepted by the ministries … sometimes parents may not be open-minded about having a child with disabilities and in the past parental involvement in education has been minimal. In many countries today parents are involved in school governance at various levels and can even support their children in classrooms. In addition, parents are frequently involved in the assessment of their children and can insist on their being kept in regular classes even though the support there may not be as good as it might be.(OECD, 2006a, p. 18)

This project created model schools with strong parental involvement. The follow-up visit reported:

> The involvement of parents is crucial and the team saw some good examples of collaboration between parents and teaching staff in model schools. In many places, there are active associations of parents of SEN children that not only provide mutual support and information, but serve as potentially powerful lobbying voices at the governmental level to modernise SEN provision and legislation.(Crighton & Kowar, 2007, p. 5)

There are some useful models of participation of parents of disabled children in schools in southeast Europe.

5.5 The effects of school leadership

5.5.1 Models of leadership

The values, attitudes, capacities and behaviour of school directors strongly influence the character of school-based governance structures and school culture. If school directors do not subscribe to the principles of educational equity, school-based governance structures and school culture are not likely to be inclusive and sensitive to educational equity. If they do not welcome parent or student participation, they are less likely to happen. If they do not understand the importance of parental involvement, they may not create conditions where it can flourish.

Educational leadership once meant the actions of school principals and maybe local authorities; now it is understood as a concept unifying all levels of leadership from the State to the individual teacher (Lewin, 2006, p. 38). In contrast to older the concept of instructional leadership, mainly used in the U.S. (Hoerr, 2008) in which the principal is the *principal* or most experienced teacher, *distributed leadership* is generated in the interactions of multiple leaders and followers (Ross & Gray, 2006). Over the last decades, teachers have correspondingly become more involved in leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

We know that leadership affects variables like teacher job satisfaction, school climate and even classroom practices; and we know that of course classroom practices affect learning outcomes. But it is not clear that if or how leadership directly affects learning outcomes. One reason maybe that it is hard to conceptualise, let alone measure, what makes good leadership. One attempt involves the concept of transformational (as opposed to transactional) leadership.

5.5.1.1 Transformational and transactional leadership

The essence of transformational leadership is dedication to fostering the growth of organizational members and enhancing their commitment by elevating their goals. In contrast, transactional leaders accomplish organizational goals without attempting to elevate the motives of followers or the human resources of the organization (Burns, 1978).

5.5.1.2 The school as a learning organisation

A further very influential model is that of the school as a learning organisation (Senge, 1990), a very promising model for schools hoping to increase their interaction with different stakeholders, but one that requires training in systems thinking (Thornton, Peltier, & Perreault, 2004).

5.5.2 Evidence

There is a substantial body of evidence for the direct effects of leadership on outcomes, although the effects tend to be quite small. A meta-analysis of 70 studies on the effects of leadership on student achievement (Waters, R. J. Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) found an average effect size (expressed as a correlation) of .25. In addition, 21 leadership responsibilities were identified, which mention elements of participation, primarily in the sense of teacher and possibly student participation but also in the sense of at least informing the rest of the community. For example, three of the top five responsibilities (ibid, p. 4) are

- Culture ("fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community cooperation")
- Input ("involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies")
- Outreach ("is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders")

Teachers in schools characterized by transformational principal behaviour are more likely than teachers in other schools to express satisfaction with their principal, report that they exert extra effort, and be more committed to the organization and to improving it (K. Leithwood, D. Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000). Leithwood et al. identified 20 studies providing evidence linking leadership to teacher outcomes. Although the results on some measures were mixed, the reviewers found that transformational leadership consistently predicted the willingness of teachers to exert extra effort and to change their classroom practices and/or attitudes. The most consistent findings link transformational leadership to organizational learning, organizational effectiveness, and organizational culture. Transformational leadership is strongly related to teacher commitment to community and parent involvement, and this effect is mediated by collective teacher efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 189).

5.5.3 The role of school leadership in managing autonomy and ensuring participation, quality and equity

Training for school principals and teachers is critical to successful implementation of both SBM programs (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004, p. 299) Programs to increase school autonomy often substantially change the role of school principals (Rodríguez & Hovde, 2002). Principals and/or school boards get new powers, e.g. to hire and fire teachers. Schools are their own budget units and principals become more accountable. Such programs present very substantial challenges to the most able principals (Gibton, Sabar, & Goldring, 2000) and involve principals seeing themselves as team member rather than team leader (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004, p. 295). "In terms of implementing participation, it is critical is that each stakeholder group sees the benefits of involving others,"(Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 8). In transition countries as elsewhere, the process of increasing school autonomy only deepens processes which have already been set in motion and involves the decomposition and reconstruction of vocational identitities (Brundrett et al., 2006).

It is also important to remember that schools especially in transition countries are faced by a constant agenda of reform; transformational school leadership is seen as being appropriate to help schools navigate this agenda. One study of perhaps the largest school reform program ever conducted (in the U.K.) shows direct effects of transformational leadership on classroom practices but not on student achievement: First, school leadership has an important influence on the likelihood that teachers will change their classroom practices. Second, transformational approaches to school leadership seem to hold considerable promise for this purpose. Third, there is a significant gap between classroom practices that are ‘‘changed’’ and practices that actually lead to greater pupil learning; the potency of leadership for increasing student learning hinges on the specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote. (K. Leithwood & D. Jantzi, 2006).

Bridges (1967) in "A Model for Shared Decision Making in the School Principalship" provides some still very relevant thoughts on how principals can implement participation in general and of teachers in particular. He postulates a "zone of indifference" within which an administrator's decision "will be accepted unquestionably":

> 1. As the principal involves teachers in making decisions located in their zone of indifference, participation will be less effective.
>
> 2. As the principal involves teachers in making decisions clearly located outside their zone of indifference, participation will be more effective.

.. (Bridges, 1967, p. 51)

Decisions that clearly fall outside the teachers' zone of indifference are those:

1. which have consequences for them
2. which are within the teachers' experience and competence
3. where teachers' acceptance is required
4. where their participation is necessary in order to reach a higher quality decision. (Bridges, 1967, p. 52).

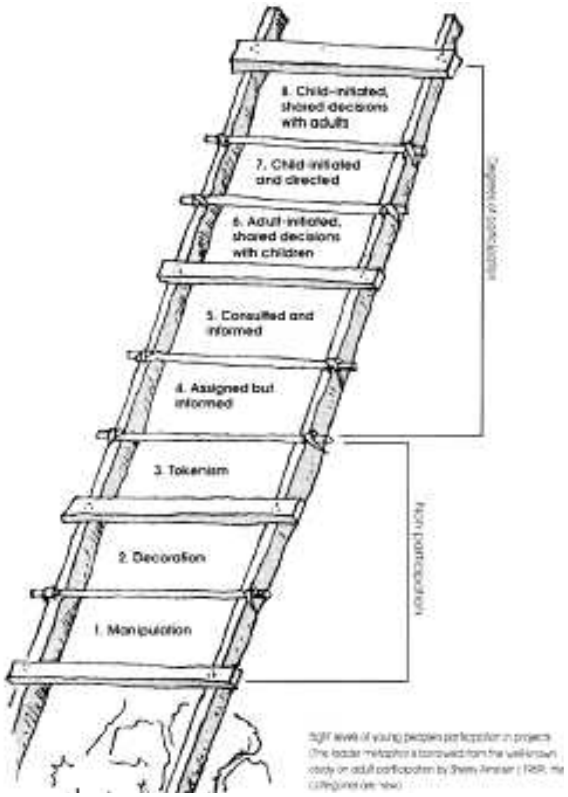
He also discusses three different decision-making styles which a principal can implement with teachers, which he terms " constitutional arrangements":

- the participant-determining (consensus of all concerned)
- the parliamentarian (majority control)
- and the democratic-centralist; (the teachers are involved in discussing the problem but the principal decides)

5.6 Student participation

5.6.1 The case for student participation in school on principle

Increased student participation might seem to be an obvious way to involve students more in school life and also to help students to learn to take part in a democracy, and perhaps to turn the tide of increasing youth indifference towards formal political activity. The school organization could be a laboratory for learning about democratic living (Roger & Johnson , 1994).



Mass media programmes about the right to a happy and secure childhood and to a happy and secure retirement cannot substitute for the actual experience of frank and honest confrontation between generations when perceptions, needs and interests differ, in a context of mutual acceptance of responsibility for each other. (Boulding, 1979, p. 89)

Many western nations think of themselves as having achieved democracy fully, though they teach the principles of democracy in a pedantic way in classrooms which are themselves models of autocracy. This is not acceptable (Hart, 1992, p. 4).

5.6.2 A warning: the "ladder of participation"

One seminal work in thinking on participation was (Arnstein, 1969) which is still relevant today. It deals specifically with the participation of excluded citizens and assumes that the

"haves" or non-excluded citizens do already participate. There are eight steps on the ladder. Even the bottom rung does not denote the lack of formal participation but its lowest, tokenistic form. The model casts a penetrating light on the dangers of "empty rituals of participation". The levels are, from the top down:

- Citizen control
- Delegated power
- Partnership
- Placation
- Consultation
- Informing
- Therapy
- Manipulation

Roger Hart (Hart, 1992) famously applied the model to child participation, though he later (Roger Hart, 2008) points out that the ladder is meant as a starting point for reflection rather than a universally valid model.

5.6.3 Child participation: avoiding tokenism

One of the best texts on child participation in general (rather than student participation in particular) is (Hart, 1992). He reminds us that adults always underestimate the ability of children to organise themselves. Unfortunately the most dramatic examples of children's ability for self-organisation are examples such as street gangs. He also gives a good example of what avoiding tokenism means in practice.

> The recent World Summit for Children held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York was an extremely large event with great logistical complexity. It would have been difficult to involve young people genuinely in the planning of such an event, but the organizers wanted to go beyond the normal involvement of children and youth as merely cute representatives of their age group. Roles were created which were important both functionally and symbolically. For example, a child was assigned to each of the 71 world leaders. As 'pages', these children became experts on the United Nations building and the event, and were able to play the important role of ushering the Presidents and Prime Ministers to the right places at the right times. Of course, the symbolic power of this was not missed by UNICEF, the press, or by the leaders themselves, and ample opportunities were given for photography. Nevertheless, the children's roles as pages were important and were clear to all. The children were proud to be serving at an event of such importance. Had they been asked to speak in order, somehow, to represent the views of children, this would have removed the example to the bottom rungs of the ladder, for these were the children of diplomats and were selected for convenience rather than to be representative of any particular group. To use them as pages was appropriate; to present them as spokespersons would have been yet another example of tokenism.(Hart, 1992, p. 11)

5.6.4 Democratic education, active citizenship and human rights education

Citizenship and human rights education and related models are relevant to this study insofar as they go beyond merely disseminating declarative knowledge and lead to or are part of active student participation. Human rights education has been popular in the Balkans and other transition areas since 1990, most frequently as a result of NGO input. The sustainability of some of these initiatives is questionable; however, they might provide a jumping-off point for participation initiatives. In keeping with the models of education prevalent in the area, human rights education has tended to be stronger on information input and weaker on encouraging implementation of those principles in school life.[7]

[7] xxadd citations from country reports

In a major survey of citizenship education in 28 countries at age 14, children from countries in transition from centralised systems did not score worse than Western countries. For example, children from Poland had the highest scores overall; Slovenia scored a little above average and Bulgaria a little below (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). The countries in the research planned for the present project were unfortunately not included.

Children in transition countries do not necessarily know less about the contents of citizenship education than children from Western countries.

Participation in school is a good way for children to learn that citizenship brings duties as well as rights in the spirit of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) – children learn about democracy by doing it.

5.6.5 Service learning

There is an abundance of evidence of the positive impact of service learning, a model combining education and civic service which is particularly popular in the U. S. and which involves elements of participation.

5.6.6 Participation in out-of-school civil society activities

Schools can stimulate student participation in out-of-school civil society activities such as voluntary work or membership of clubs or societies. However, in South-East Europe the image of volunteering is not currently very positive (Powell & Bratović, 2007).

5.6.7 What affects student participation

Involvement in school councils and other forms of student participation is very strongly related to measures of civic engagement (Jon Lauglo & Tormod Øia, 2007) but it is not clear to what extent the participation is a cause of these measures. The best education predictor of civic engagement of Norwegian secondary school students is not performance in school, but whether they hope and plan to progress to higher education, even after controlling for their family's cultural capital and social class (Jon Lauglo & Tormod Øia, 2007, p. 43).

> It is important for each of us wishing to encourage children's participation to be aware of child-rearing patterns since we are likely to have a middle class bias. Comparisons of child-rearing in many countries reveal that families with adequate economic resources tend to value independence and autonomy while low-income families place higher value on obedience from their children (Hart, 1992, p. 33).

5.6.8 Student participation: not implemented

While there are fascinating experimental schools throughout the world, there is no nation where the practice of democratic participation in schools has been broadly adopted. However the situation varies from country to country and is reported to be best developed in Northern European countries and Denmark in particular; there, student participation is guaranteed by law at all levels from the classroom to curriculum design (Davies & Kirkpatrick, 2000; Jon Lauglo & Tormod Øia, 2007). The single most important

Real-life levels of participation in school decision-making are low all over the world. One survey of school participation in 80 small school districts in the US (P. Schmuck & R. Schmuck, 1990) found no examples at all of student involvement in formal problem solving about the school's academic program and social-emotional climate.

In South-East Europe, "Interaction between students and teachers also bears the imprint of the previous system. The teacher is the central feature of the classroom and functions as the giver of knowledge, of which the students are expected to be passive and obedient recipients. Outside of this context, there has been little or no interaction between educators and students throughout the education system." (Catholic Relief Services, 2006, p. 5)

5.6.9 Why is there not more student participation in school?

Yet student participation is so rarely implemented to any real degree that it might make sense to look for reasons why not. The most fundamental reason seems to be that "as the primary socializing instrument of the state, schools are concerned with guaranteeing stability; and this is generally understood to mean preserving very conservative

systems of authority".(Hart, 1992, p. 37). A related reason is that teachers generally do not know how to facilitate student decision-making (Sheridan & Samuelsson, 2001, p. 188). And Hart points out that adults don't know how to respond to children's spontaneous initiatives.

All over the world, the level of youth interest in formal political activity is seen to be declining, to be at least partially compensated by growing participation in more informal, one-off, and spontaneous forms of political action. (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, pp. 10, executive summary). It is important to understand to distinguish these forms of action. school-aged children who adopt more traditional and formal forms of civic and political engagement differ from those who favour more spontaneous forms; the former tend to value school much more and come from backgrounds which respect formal political activity (Jon Lauglo & Tormod Øia, 2007, pp. 43-45).

"How to listen and learn, as well as to teach and lead, is the challenge for teachers, schools and their communities. "(Rudduck et al., 2003)

Genuine encouragement for student participation must be prepared to cope with nonconformist responses.

5.6.10 Student participation: not researched

Student participation seems to be the orphan of empirical literature on the effects of participation in schools. while there are plenty of insightful well-meaning texts, there are very few pieces of research which meet academic standards.

The most useful overview of studies specifically on student participation is provided by (Davies, Williams, & H. Yamashita, 2005). Seventy five studies, mainly from UK, were scrutinised. An annotated bibliography to support this study was also produced (Davies, Williams, & H. Yamashita, 2005) and is published separately online (www.carnegie-youth.org.uk).

A few results from that review are given here.

- In a 28-country cross-sectional survey, schools that model democratic practice were found to be most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement. (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p. 8 (executive summary))
- For preschool children, high pedagogical quality (externally assessed) was related to children's assessment that they had a larger ability to decide (Sheridan & Samuelsson, 2001).
- One of the few longitudinal studies on the effect of student participation in schools (Mitra, 2004) found positive effects of "student voice" activities on Agency, Belonging and Competence.

Learning benefits of participation (Mitra, 2004)

- students in more democratic schools were happier and felt more in control of their learning

- if students gave feedback on teaching, this had the twin effect of teachers' practice improving and students gaining in awareness of the learning process;

- participation enhanced skills of communication and competence as a learner;

- skills in specific curriculum areas such as citizenship improved, as well as in other curriculum areas.

- Initiatives will fail if teachers have too much control over student participation or if staff motivation is to use it to control rather than empower children, because this kind of participation quickly becomes boring for children. Initiatives can also fail if staff they represent too much extra work for staff. (Blake & Francis, 2004) London: National Health School Standard (DfES/DH).
- Childrens level of interest will not be consistent and will centre around "burning issues".
- Girls participate more than boys in the mainstream form of political activism. On the other hand, boys are much more likely to take part in Protest action by unlawful means which involves only a distinctly small minority of youths. (Jon Lauglo & Tormod Øia, 2007, p. 44)

5.6.11

The place of participation in child development

Anyone wanting to increase student participation, especially with younger children, should be aware of some of the relevant work from social developmental psychology and in particular the meaning which participation has for children at different ages. Younger children may want to be heard but are more reluctant to take on the responsibilities of participation. Gender also affects the way children get involved in school life. Participation depends on (and can also help stimulate) social and emotional development including self-esteem but most importantly on perspective-taking, as described by Hart, below.

> Developing between the ages of seven and twelve, a child begins to be able to step outside herself to take a selfreflective look at her interactions and to realize that other people can do the same thing. This phase of 'sequential perspective taking' means that two children now realize they can put themselves 'in each other's shoes'. They also recognize now that a person may have multiple or mixed feelings, such as being interested and happy, but a little frightened. This final phase means that they are beginning to understand that they and others are capable of doing things they may not want to do. These pre-adolescents, however, cannot simultaneously coordinate the perspective of self and others.
>
> The next stage, 'mutual perspective taking', is necessary for children to be able to organize themselves into enduring democratic groups. According to Selman, this 'generalized other' perspective arises between ten and fifteen years of age. Youth, thinking at this level, now spontaneously coordinate their perspectives with those of others.
>
> Beyond this mutual perspective-taking ability of adolescents Selman hypothesizes a higher level of 'societal-symbolic perspective-taking'. A person can now imagine multiple mutual perspectives forming a generalized societal, legal, or moral perspective in which all individuals can share. A person believes others use this shared point of view in order to facilitate accurate communication and understanding. This final phase, which can emerge at any time from the age of twelve on, is obviously the one to be desired for the most fruitful cooperative projects of children. (Hart, 1992, pp. 32-3)

Participation may also bring about a reduction in antisocial behaviour because it brings a feeling of ownership. Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist, demonstrated through the game of marbles that cooperation and mutual agreement between equals is necessary for the development of autonomy. He found that children learn a game of marbles not by accepting the authority of one of the players regarding the rules, but by developing the rules in a cooperative way (Hart, 1992, p. 35).

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions	**Recommendations: research**	Recommendations: programming
Identifying stakeholders and respondents		
Parents are the stakeholders whose participation in school life is best researched. Their involvement is strongly associated with important school outcomes.	**Focus on parents as main stakeholder group.**	Although programming could focus on parents as main stakeholder group, in parallel with the research, students and other community stakeholders could also be included.
While there is some research on parental participation in school governance, there is much more evidence of the positive role of parental involvement in the education process in general and the education of one's own children in particular.	**Define the concept of participation to include involvement in extra-curricular activities and the education of one's own children, as these factors are particularly interesting for policy makers.**	Activities could usefully include all these aspects.
Addressing school principals can be a cost-effective way of accessing one source of information on school context and practices in parent/student participation. The values, attitudes, capacities and behaviour of school directors strongly influence the character of school-based governance structures and school culture. If school directors do not subscribe to the principles of educational equity, school-based governance structures and school culture are not likely to be inclusive and sensitive to educational equity. If they do not welcome parent or student participation, they are less likely to happen. If they do not understand the importance of parental involvement, they may not create conditions where it can flourish.	**Focus on school principals as main respondent group.**	Programming may address many stakeholders. Additional research using parents and students as respondents could also be added.
Schools all over the world, and in particular in South-East Europe, are subject to continual and increasing reform pressure. School principals play a key role in the successful implementation of reforms. "Transformational leadership" in school principals may influence success of reform measures and successful implementation of participation.	**Consider including a measure of transformational leadership among school principals, although this concept is not especially suitable for self-report.**	Link participation to the debate on educational reform.
School autonomy		
School autonomy is relevant to participation because if	**Consider asking school principals about participation**	Focus attention on who benefits from school reform and

increasing participation means other stakeholders (parents, community, students) getting more of the cake, then increasing school autonomy means getting more cake to share out. Both traditional school management and other stakeholders may be interested in reform packages which combine increased autonomy and increased participation. However, the right to influence decision-making is not always accompanied by accountability. School principals may fear the involvement of stakeholders such as parents in decision-making to the extent that these stakeholders are not also accountable for decisions taken. Success at school reform may involve school principals coming to see themselves as team members rather than team leaders. "…how important it is to check who is being empowered when higher-level strings are loosened" (Eskeland, 2007, p. i)"	**in the context of school autonomy: is school autonomy increasing? Which stakeholders are involved, who is accountable?** **Ask about management of the participation process: do principals see themselves as team members or team leaders? Bridges (1967) "Model for Shared Decision Making in the School Principalship" could provide material for questionnaire items.**	school autonomy.
Measures to increase school autonomy may not be effective if they are not adapted to local circumstances.	**Ask how much leeway is available at school or municipal level to interpret or adapt reform initiatives and/or regulations on stakeholder participation.**	Leverage participation as a way to adapt autonomy programs to local circumstances. Advocate for at least limited implementation of external assessment in order to give parents and other stakeholders adequate information on school performance and equity. Emphasis should be on how each school can positively adapt to its particular circumstances rather than on which school is "the best". School-level performance monitoring can help.
Equity		
There are potential synergies between school autonomy and stakeholder participation.	**Do excluded groups benefit from increasing school autonomy?**	Leverage participation as a tool to ensure that we can have our cake and eat it too: increase access to education without decreasing quality.
Parental involvement, equity and learning outcomes are closely interrelated.	**All the main research topics should include sub-questions on equity. Any research focus on learning outcomes should also consider how those outcomes**	

	are distributed between included and excluded groups.	
Parental involvement can function as a spontaneous attempt to correct some aspects of inequity: when they see something wrong, they get involved.	**Do excluded groups use participation in order to positively influence their children's education?**	Programming should build on how parents do or might spontaneously intervene in education. Research can ask about whether parental involvement can be seen in this way.
Girls and boys tend to participate in schools in different ways, as do mothers and fathers and members of different ethnic groups.	**Consider asking whether mothers and fathers are involved in participation in different ways. Be open to the possibility that participation and autonomy mean different things to different social groups and are prioritised differently.**	Be aware of gender, class and ethnic differences in parent and student participation and try to work with them rather than against them. Encourage participation from a range of stakeholder groups but be wary about insisting on it.
Student outcomes and school effectiveness.		
There is very substantial evidence that parental involvement is not a "soft variable" but makes a major contribution to their children's performance. It is a "hot" and relatively new factor on the school effectiveness scene which may be more important for good student performance even than school autonomy and is arguably the single most cost-effective way to increase school quality and equity	**Asked principals about their perception of the relationship between parental involvement and student performance.**	The best way to implement and improve participation is not as an NGO-type project but at policy level: to show how it can add value to existing and planned large-scale education reform. For example, consider ways to provide incentives for parental involvement.
School effectiveness research concludes that it is hard-to-measure school-level variables which explain most of school outcomes	**Ask principals on which dimensions do schools differ with respect to the way they implement participation? What works and what doesn't work? Do these differences relate to school outcomes?**	leveraging the "power of site or place" and the paradigm of 'glocalization' whereby global trends are subject to the disposition brought about by local historical and cultural contexts … Increase local M&E
Student participation		
Participation by socially excluded children, when allowed to happen, tends to be less conformist and more "dangerous"		Encouraging genuine student involvement means being prepared to accept uncomfortable and perhaps unconventional student actions
Northern European countries have some of the best models for student participation.		Learn lessons from Northern European countries, particularly Denmark
Regional issues		
There is to our knowledge no substantial research	**Try to replicate, in South-East Europe, research results**	Highlight the potential cost effectiveness benefits of

replication in South-East Europe of the contribution of parental involvement to school outcomes.	**from the rest of the world on the positive contribution of parental involvement to student outcomes in order to provide a better evidence base for programming. This would mean gathering school level outcomes data. This could be politically very difficult but potentially produce exciting results which might be useful for advocacy and policy work.**	parental participation, and position the research as potentially providing crucial information on this topic
Roma are the main excluded group in the region.	**Include specific questions on participation of Roma parents and children, as well as other minorities.**	
Human rights education is relatively well-established in many countries in the region.		Link into existing models e.g. human rights education
Theory and practice		
The de facto level of implementation of participation and school autonomy may differ strongly from the level set out by central authorities. "devolution of power to local schools cannot be accomplished by central mandates, but must take into account local incentives and local capacity to manage schools" (Gunnarsson et al., 2004, p. 2)	**Which resources does the school need in order to implement participation successfully?** **What skills do individual stakeholders, including school level management, need?**	Train new skills in all stakeholder groups
Stakeholder participation is particularly vulnerable to tokenism (Arnstein, 1969).	**Consider using questions inspired by the "ladder of participation" model (Arnstein, 1969) in order to identify whether participation is tokenistic or genuine.**	

On the basis of the results from the literature review, the following research theme is suggested: the regulation and extent of equitable implementation of parental participation (in decision-making, in extracurricular activities, and in the education of one's own children) in state elementary schools; in relation to school level factors and to the attitudes and beliefs of school principals; both at national and international level.

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