

# Challenges and recommendations for parental involvement in school and preschool activity

**Eszter SALAMON**  
President

**European Parents' Association (EPA)**

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# Introduction

## EPA -

### *THE European Parents' Association*

- founded in Milan in 1985
- more than 50 member associations, 32 countries
- from Iceland to Cyprus, from Malta to Norway
- representing 150 million of European citizens
- offers organised representation for parents at European institutions and bodies
- link together national parental associations - co-operation and sharing best practices
- ... most concerned about **parents in education**



# Core paradigms of EPA

- **Parents' rights are nested and positively linked to the rights of the child**
  - **Parents need to participate in public education to be informed, asked, involved**
  - **Parents are the primary educators of their children!**  
... at least they have the potential
  - **Parents need encouragement and support.**
- ➔ demands on family, social and educational policy-making!



# Legal Basis - UNCRC

## *Article 5*

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.



# Legal Basis - UNCRC

## *Article 18*

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.



# Legal Basis - UNCRC

2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.



STUDENT

EDUCATION/  
SCHOOL-  
PARTNERSHIP

PARENT

TEACHER



EPA-The Voice of Parents in Europe

# Participation of School-Partners

- **Legal background**
- **Culture/Tradition of interaction**
  - **individual relation**  
parents - child - teacher
  - **Classroom/group level**  
parents - children - teacher(s)
  - **school level**  
head teacher - parents - students - teachers
  - **administrative/governmental level**  
representatives of all groups - civil servants





# Child participation

## Nothing about them without them

- Legal basis is the UNCRC
- ALL children are entitled to be part of decision making
- Children over 2 are capable of making decisions about their learning
- Challenges:
  - Find the right form and methodology for real participation
  - Prevent older students from overtaking decision making from younger children



# Article 12

- 1. 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.
- 2. For this purpose, the child shall **in particular** be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and **administrative proceedings affecting the child**, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.





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# Main challenges

- empower parents
- empower teachers
- empower students
- empower school leaders
- find the way to involve ALL
- in a meaningful way
- balance between individual and community needs
- counterbalance previous personal experience



# Participation at school level

Both students and parents have to have a decisive role in eg.

- Nomination, evaluation and dismissal of school head and teachers
- Curriculum design
- Organisation of the school year and day
- School meals
- Choice of course books and other school material
  - Parents must have a final say on anything that costs families money
- Extracurricular offer



# History of involvement

## 1. PTA (Child rights committee (Portugal))

- often a formality
- disappearing, outdated
- often teacher dominated, always only includes parents that are teacher friendly - not possible to involve all

## 2. Coffee and cake + fundraising committee

- ,Tame' parents, often hand-picked by the school head
- Getting benefits for their own children

## 3. Parent majority school board

- Decisive role at school level
- Role of the school head

## 4. Parity committee

- parents, children and staff



# Participation at system level

- Decisive role in
  - Legal framework for education
  - Budget
- State responsibility for making representative participation possible
  - Organising the framework
    - For representative national organisations' participation in decision making
    - Offering fora for all voices to be heard
  - Providing operating costs directly or on a subsidiarity basis
  - Providing for empowering representatives





# Recommendations

- Consider forms of involvement (Joyce Epstein + NPC-p)
- Organised on peer-to-peer basis
- Structures reflecting that teachers and parents are (nearly) never on the same page - „you are always the ally of your child” (Vekerdy)
  - Bottom-up representation for both parents and students (Parents’ Parliament and Student Parliament, both electing representative body)
  - Teachers as employees - trade unions
  - Teachers as professionals - professional NGOs
- Create a tetrahedron consultation system



Thank you  
for your attention!

[www.euparents.eu](http://www.euparents.eu)

[president@euparents.eu](mailto:president@euparents.eu)



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