

Education Support Program Initiative  
Advancing Education Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe



South East Europe Cross-Countries Survey of Principals' Views



FUND FOR AN OPEN SOCIETY - SERBIA

# School Governance and Social Inclusion

## Involvement of Parents

# South East Europe Cross-Countries Survey of Principals' Views



# **School Governance and Social Inclusion**

**Involvement of Parents**

## **South East Europe Cross-Countries Survey of Principals' Views**

**Daniel Pop  
&  
Steve Powell, Gordana Miljević, Johana Crighton**

**2009**

Edited by: Gordana Miljevic

Language editor: Laura Thorogood

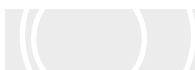
Published by: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education, Center for Educational Policy Studies

For the publisher: Janez Krek, Dean

DTP: Impressum d.o.o.

Printed by: Štamparija Svetlost d.o.o.

©2009



## Foreword

This publication is the first in a series presenting the results of a multiyear regional research and evidence-based advocacy initiative “Advancing Education Quality and Inclusion” in South East Europe (SEE).

The initiative was launched in 2007 following a series of international meetings with members of the Open Society Institute, education government and civil society representatives of the 10 SEE countries (Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia). This initiative is funded by the Education Support Program of Open Society Institute and jointly implemented with the Center for Education Policy Studies (CEPS, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education), the National Soros Foundations and the Education Civil Society Organizations in the above SEE countries.

Despite the considerable improvements in national legislations on anti-discrimination and democratic school governance, disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes in SEE countries continue to exist. The Advancing Education Quality and Inclusion initiative was created to address these persistent disparities. The aforementioned representatives of the all 10 SEE countries have identified insufficient and inadequate involvement of the parents in school governance as a common issue affecting the equality of access to high-quality education. The gap between legislations and policies on parents’ involvement in school governance and their implementation raises concerns about the extent to which the equitable provision of education can be achieved in the schools in the newly developed education systems in the SEE region.

The equitable provision of education is intrinsically linked to the quality of school-level governance. Extensive worldwide research and evidence of practice has demonstrated that inclusive school level governance where the parents are given the opportunity to participate in shaping school policies has a positive impact on school climate and student learning. A true partnership between school and parents directly improves the chances for students to have access to a quality education, which all children in democracy are entitled to.

To determine the course of action to take with the goal of decreasing disparities and bridging the policy-practice gap, it was necessary to:

Better understand the opportunities created by school leadership for parents to participate in school life and to assess the extent to which equal opportunity for parental participation in school life is promoted;

and

Learn about parents’ needs, expectations and experiences regarding their influence on school life and the school efforts to engage them.

With these goals in mind, two comprehensive, robust scientific surveys were conducted.

The first took place in 2008 with a sample of 2,273 principals of primary schools (attended by students aged 6 to 15) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro,

Romania, and Serbia. Those principals in the aforementioned countries participated in an hour long, face-to-face structured interviews. The survey was preceded by: 16 focus group meetings with school principals, a pilot survey of the final survey instrument, and one large-scale coordination meeting with researchers in each of the eight participating countries. The cross-national principals' survey report, appearing on the following pages, provides a panoramic view of what schools are achieving or failing to do to promote an inclusive and democratic environment for students and parents in each of the listed countries.

The English translations of the summaries of the principals' survey reports for each of the participating countries will appear in the 2nd publication of this series. All the countries produced comprehensive survey reports in their respective languages which are available at [www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/outputs.htm](http://www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/outputs.htm). Some of the participating countries undertook local initiatives to promote school-parents partnership. These examples will be also presented in the 2nd book.

The second survey, conducted in 2009 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia, looked at the flip side of the school-parent relationship – the parents' views. This survey provides a panoramic view of parental participation in schools from the perspectives of parents, parent representatives in school government bodies and principals in each of those countries. Face-to-face household surveys of representative samples of parents (N=9600) in 320 public schools covering grades one to eight, including booster samples of Roma parents are combined with interviews with principals and parent representatives on related topics in the same schools. This survey was preceded by 60 focus group meetings (30 groups with average parents, 20 groups with disadvantaged parents, including Roma parents and 10 groups with parent representatives of school government bodies) and a pilot survey of the final survey instrument.

The cross-national parents' survey report and the summaries of each of the participating countries report will be published in number 3 and 4 respectively in the series.

The materials presented in all the books and other information related to the project are available at [www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/outputs.htm](http://www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/outputs.htm).

Both surveys have yielded a tremendous amount of important data. To best utilize the collected data, the Education Support Program of Open Society Institute has organized an Individual Research Competition for the young researchers preferably from the countries that participated in the survey. The twenty five research grants have been awarded with the primary purpose of gathering additional information from the survey data which can be used to support education reform, policy development and strategic planning. The research papers produced so far are of the superb quality and shed additional light on how policy makers and educators can improve education for all students, particularly those from vulnerable groups, in each of the ten SEE countries. These papers will be published in separate volumes.

It is hoped that this publication, as well as subsequent ones, will be of interest and use to all education stakeholders in our joint efforts to build and sustain an inclusive school governance and establish a meaningful partnership between school and parents in SEE countries. This will be a huge step on the road toward providing access to a high quality education and expanding opportunities for all children.

Gordana Miljevic  
Senior Program Manager  
Education Support Program  
Open Society Institute

## Acknowledgments

The survey of School Principals was the collaborative effort of educational experts and researchers. The authors and the editor of this publication wish to thank all the school principals that gladly responded to the questionnaire and volunteered their precious time for this purpose. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Ministries of Education in the eight surveyed countries for their agreement with the survey. We are grateful to the country teams in the participatory countries for their support and effort in the research process. Our special thanks go to Johanna Crighton and the members of the initiative's advisory committee for their guidance and critical comments. In addition, we thank Growth for Knowledge (GfK) and IMAS for conducting the field work in the eight surveyed countries. We also thank the project management, particularly Igor Repac for the extraordinary management support, which made coordination possible among researchers, Soros National Foundations, country teams and educational experts.

We are grateful to the Education Support Program and the Soros National Foundations from the participating countries for their support and sponsorship. Special thanks go to the Fund for an Open Society Serbia for hosting Education Support Program regional office for South East Europe and their extensive support to its work on the regional initiative. Last but not least, we would like to extend our gratitude to the General Education Sub-Board of the Education Support Program for their valuable comments and trust.

## **People Directly Involved in the Planning and Implementation of this Initiative**

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Dzenana Trbic

Snjezana Mrse

Lana Jurko

Suzana Gerzina

Igor Repac

Gordana Miljevic

### **POLICY BRIEF EDITOR**

Yoon Durbin

### **CENTRAL RESEARCH TEAM**

Veljko Djuric

Daniel Pop

Steve Powell

### **COUNTRY TEAMS**

Albania

Bardhyl Musai

Mimoza Gjika

### **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Esad Bratovic

Ivona Celebic

### **KOSOVO**

Dukagjin Pupovci

Nora Tafarshiku

### **MACEDONIA**

Suzana Kiradziska

Petar Atanasov

### **MOLDOVA**

Viorica Postica

Bezede Rima

### **MONTENEGRO**

Tamara Krivokapic

Maja Kovacevic

Milos Becic

### **ROMANIA**

Daniela Elena Nita

Ovidiu Voicu

### **SERBIA**

Tatjana Stojic

Jelena Vranjesevic

### **EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

Johanna Crighton

## Table of content

Foreword	3
Acknowledgments	5
People Directly Involved in the Planning and Implementation of this Initiative	6
Abbreviations and Acronyms	12
Executive summary	13
Section I. Background	17
Chapter 1: Introduction	17
Method: the studies reviewed	19
Background: the policy context	20
Findings	24
Conclusions and recommendations	40
Chapter 2: The Role of School Leadership	45
Key Questions	49
Framework of Analysis	50
Chapter 3: Survey Methodology	51
Survey planning	51
Target population	52
Sample design	52
Response rate	56
Section II. Findings	57
Chapter 1: Opportunities for parents to engage in school life	57
Benefits of parental participation in school life	58
Invitation of parents to engage in school life	60
Share of parents engaged in the most successful school activities	65
Chapter 2: Home-school communication	67
Barriers to parental participation in school life	67
Home-school communication initiated by school	72
School strategy to communicate with parents	79
Satisfaction with meetings with parents	80
Share of parents participating at school meetings	81
Chapter 3: School support for parents to help their children in education	85
Potential benefits of school support for parents to help their children in education	85

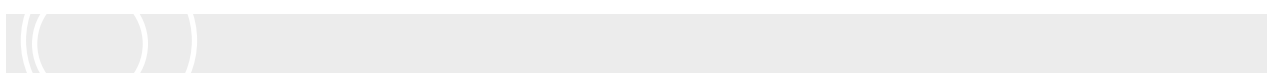




Support services provided by schools to parents to help their children in education . . . . .	89
Barriers to providing support services to parents to help their children in education . . . . .	93
<b>Chapter 4: Parents' involvement in school governance.</b> . . . . .	97
Principals' perceptions of the importance of parental voice in school life . . . . .	97
Decision-making authority attributed to Parents' Council . . . . .	103
<b>Chapter 5. Parents' influence on school life</b> . . . . .	107
Influence of Parents' Council on school life . . . . .	107
Parents' influence on school life . . . . .	111
Contribution of parent representatives on the School Board . . . . .	116
<b>Section III: Conclusions.</b> . . . . .	119
<b>References</b> . . . . .	122
<b>Appendices.</b> . . . . .	129
Appendix 1 - Summary of Focus Group Discussion Reports . . . . .	129
Appendix 2 – The survey instrument. . . . .	135
Appendix 3 – Letter to Ministries . . . . .	142
Appendix 4 Composite indicators. . . . .	143

## List of tables

Table 1 Conceptual framework of analysis . . . . .	50
Table 2 Sample design and confidence . . . . .	53
Table 3 School distribution in SEE countries . . . . .	54
Table 4 Survey response rate by country . . . . .	56
Table 5 Approach to communication with parents identified by Principals . . . . .	80



## List of Figures

Distinction between kinds of programs potentially improving stakeholder participation . . . . .	22
Schematic representation of different stakeholders' shares in decisions affecting in a particular school . . . . .	26
Figure 1 Factors that influence pupil attainmentd . . . . .	45
Figure 2 Conceptual model . . . . .	47
Figure 3 Perceived benefits of parental participation for overall school climate . . . . .	58
Figure 4 Parental participation and parents' attitudes towards school . . . . .	59
Figure 5 Perceived benefits of parental participation for overall support to school . . . . .	59
Figure 6 Perceived benefits of parental participation for pupils' educational performance . . . . .	60
Figure 7 Parents invited to organize ceremonies at school . . . . .	61
Figure 8 Parents invited to organize social activities at school . . . . .	61
Figure 9 Invitation of parents to provide teaching assistance . . . . .	62
Figure 10 Invitation of parents to organize support groups . . . . .	62
Figure 11 Invitation of parents to sponsor school activities . . . . .	63
Figure 12 Asking parents to fund-raise for school . . . . .	63
Figure 13 Asking parents to help other parents support their children . . . . .	64
Figure 14 Invitation of parents to represent school . . . . .	64
Figure 15 Share of parents engaged in the most successful school activity . . . . .	65
Figure 16 Parents' lack of interest as a barrier to communication with school . . . . .	68
Figure 17 Parents' limited time as a barrier to getting informed about school issues . . . . .	69
Figure 18 Parents' lack of communication skills as a barrier . . . . .	69
Figure 19 Lack of teachers' interest as a barrier to communication with parents . . . . .	70
Figure 20 Teachers' workload as a barrier to home-school communication . . . . .	70
Figure 21 Teachers' lack of training to engage with parents as a barrier . . . . .	71
Figure 22 Parents and teachers' inability to communicate with each other as a barrier . . . . .	71
Figure 23 Overall conflictual atmosphere between parents and school . . . . .	72
Figure 24 Frequency of School Principal-parents meetings . . . . .	73
Figure 25 Frequency of written evaluation sent to parents on pupils' performance . . . . .	74
Figure 26 Frequency of information provided to parents on curriculum . . . . .	74
Figure 27 Frequency of information sent to parents on school events and activities . . . . .	75
Figure 28 Frequency of information provision on school policies and regulations . . . . .	76
Figure 29 Frequency of newsletters sent to parents . . . . .	76

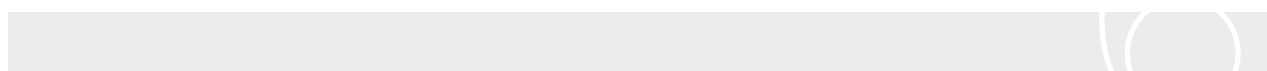


Figure 30 Frequency of home visits. . . . .	77
Figure 31 Frequency of surveys to find out parents' opinions and attitudes. . . . .	78
Figure 32 Frequency of open door days . . . . .	78
Figure 33 Principals' satisfaction with parent meetings organized by form teachers . . . . .	80
Figure 34 Principals' satisfaction with parent meetings organized by subject teachers. . . . .	81
Figure 35 Share of parents regularly engaged in form teacher–parents meetings . . . . .	82
Figure 36 Share of parents regularly engaged in subject teacher–parents meeting. . . . .	82
Figure 37 Share of parents regularly engaged in School Principal–parents meetings . . . . .	83
Figure 38 Importance of sessions helping parents assist their children with homework. . . . .	86
Figure 39 Importance of materials helping parents assist their children with homework. . . . .	86
Figure 40 Usefulness of materials helping parents monitor their children's homework . . . . .	87
Figure 41 Importance of information helping parents create a home learning environment. . . . .	87
Figure 42 Importance of counseling service provision to parents . . . . .	88
Figure 43 Importance of parent issue-based support groups . . . . .	88
Figure 44 Sessions organized to help parents assist their children with homework. . . . .	89
Figure 45 Frequency of material provision to help parents assist children with homework . . . . .	90
Figure 46 Frequency of material provision to help parents monitor their children's homework . . . . .	91
Figure 47 Frequency of information provision to parents on creating a home learning environment . . . . .	91
Figure 48 Frequency of counseling services provided to parents. . . . .	92
Figure 49 Frequency of parent issue-based support groups . . . . .	92
Figure 50 Lack of school resources as a barrier to develop and run services. . . . .	93
Figure 51 Parents' lack of interest in engaging in school-based support services as a barrier. . . . .	94
Figure 52 Parents' lack of availability to get involved in school-based support services as a barrier. . . . .	94
Figure 53 Teachers' lack of availability to run parenting support services as a barrier . . . . .	95
Figure 54 Teachers' lack of necessary skills to run parenting support services as a barrier . . . . .	95
Figure 55 Lack of methodology to develop support services for parents as a barrier. . . . .	96
Figure 56 Conflicts between teachers and parents as a barrier. . . . .	96
Figure 57 Importance of parents' involvement in the evaluation of teachers' performance . . . . .	98
Figure 58 Importance of parents' involvement in hiring and firing of teachers . . . . .	99
Figure 59 Importance of parents' involvement in setting priorities for school budget. . . . .	99
Figure 60 Importance of parents' involvement in the selection of textbooks and other materials used in class. . . . .	100

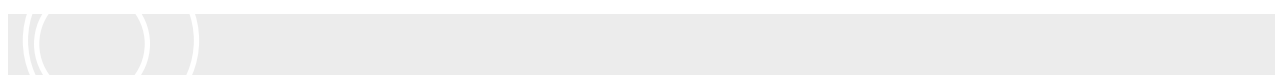
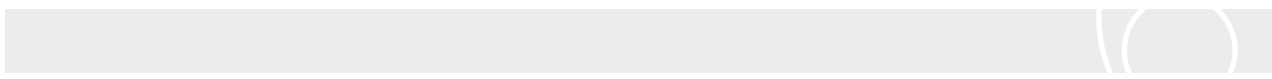


Figure 61 Importance of parents' involvement in social activity planning . . . . .	101
Figure 62 Importance of parents' involvement in the development of school policies and regulations. . . . .	101
Figure 63 Importance of parents' involvement in decisions taken at classroom level. . . . .	102
Figure 64 Importance of parents' involvement in decisions taken at school level. . . . .	102
Figure 65 Participation of Parents' Council members at meetings . . . . .	103
Figure 66 Participation of Parents' Council members in the elaboration of new school policies . . . . .	104
Figure 67 Parents' Council members entitled to initiate the modification of school policies . . . . .	105
Figure 68 Parents' Council members entitled to initiate the adoption of new policies . . . . .	105
Figure 69 Parents' Council members entitled to veto the adoption of rules they disagree with. . . . .	106
Figure 70 Influence of Parents' Council on daily school life . . . . .	107
Figure 71 Influence of Parents' Council on the pedagogical methods used in teaching . . . . .	108
Figure 72 Influence of Parents' Council on the content of lessons . . . . .	109
Figure 73 Influence of Parents' Council on the planning of extracurricular activities . . . . .	109
Figure 74 Influence of Parents' Council on planning school infrastructure development. . . . .	110
Figure 75 Influence of Parents' Council on helping pupils value education . . . . .	110
Figure 76 Influence of Parents' Council on the involvement of parents in school life. . . . .	111
Figure 77 Parents' influence on the evaluation of teachers' performance . . . . .	112
Figure 78 Parents' influence on hiring and firing teachers . . . . .	112
Figure 79 Parents' influence on the selection of textbooks and other teaching materials+ . . . . .	113
Figure 80 Parents' influence on setting priorities for the school budget . . . . .	113
Figure 81 Parents' influence on social activity planning . . . . .	114
Figure 82 Parents' influence on the development of policies and regulations . . . . .	114
Figure 83 Parents' influence on decisions taken at classroom level . . . . .	115
Figure 84 Parents' influence on decisions taken at school level . . . . .	115
Figure 85 Satisfaction with contribution by the parent representatives of the School Board. . . . .	116
Figure 86 Satisfaction with attendance of parent School Board members at Board meetings . . . . .	117
Figure 87 Satisfaction with input provided by parent School Board members at Board meetings . . . . .	117
Figure 88 Satisfaction with support provided by School Board members to solve school problems . . . . .	118
Figure 89 Satisfaction with parent School Board members' communication with Parents' Council . . . . .	118



## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEPS	Center for Educational Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSR	Comprehensive School Reform
DFID	UK department for International Development
ESP	Education Support Program
EU	European Union
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
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Executive summary

The perceptions and actions of School Principals in regard to parental involvement in school life are crucial to the success or failure of sustained policy efforts to generate open and inclusive school-based governance in the educational systems of the South East-European countries. Therefore, the aim of this study was to inquire about School Principals' perceptions of the extent to which parental engagement in school life enhances the educational outcomes of pupils. For this purpose the survey inquired about the factors that, in the view of Principals, enhance or inhibit the establishment, communication and implementation of school policy on parental engagement in school life. We also addressed issues related to school policies on parental involvement in school life, in particular asking how school leadership ensures that the school policy on parental engagement is applied? Finally, we focused on learning about the opportunities for parents to contribute to school decision-making.

School Principals that participated in the survey are from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Serbia. During June 2008 a total of 2,273 hour-long, face-to-face interviews were carried out with School Principals. The surveying was preceded by 16 focus group meetings with the participation of School Principals, a pilot of the final survey instrument and one large-scale co-ordination meeting with researchers engaged in the survey from all participating countries.

The overall findings of the cross-country School Principals Survey indicate that Principals consider that parental engagement in school life yields major benefits both in terms of the educational attainment of pupils and in terms of overall school atmosphere. However, when assessing the effectiveness of home-school communication and the involvement of parents in school governance Principals report both limited efforts on the school side and limited effectiveness in meaningfully engaging parents in school life.

In the following report we present the main survey findings along the four major dimensions of parental engagement in school life: opportunities for parents to engage in school life, home-school communication, school support for parents to help their children in education and parent involvement in school governance.

## 1. Opportunities for parents to support school activities

In the view of School Principals in all eight countries, creation of opportunities by the school for parents to support school activities is the most favored way of engaging parents in school life. In this respect the major findings of the cross-country survey indicate the following:

- Parental engagement is perceived by School Principals to be likely to influence considerably and positively the overall climate of the school, the general attitudes and behaviors of parents towards schools, the support that is offered to school, and pupils' educational outcomes.
- Requesting parents to participate in the organization of school ceremonies is common practice among schools in all eight countries under study. Schools generally invite parents to engage in such activities on a quarterly or semestral basis.
- School Principals from a considerable share of schools in most countries report that they do not ask parents to sponsor school activities. The share of such schools is 35.56% in Kosovo, 32.99% in Romania, 27.50% in Serbia, 26.69% in Moldova, 24% in Macedonia, 21.94% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 13.10% in Montenegro.
- Consistently across countries requests for parental support for school-based teaching activities are considerably less frequent than invitations for parents to participate in the organization of school ceremonies or social activities. Such invitations generally occur on a semestral basis in all countries.
- Important cross-country variation was observed in the share of schools that had invited parents to provide any teaching assistance in the previous academic year (32% in Romania, 46.50% in Serbia, 58.45% in Moldova, 58.65% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 58.67% in Kosovo, 65% in Macedonia, 83.45% in Montenegro).
- While in the all countries School Principals report comparably similar levels of limited effectiveness when engaging parents in the most successful school activities, important differences exist among schools within each country.

## 2. Home-school communication

On the extent and nature of communication between home and school our major findings are that:

- In all countries School Principals perceive parents' limited time and the lack of interest to be the most important barriers to the establishment of meaningful home-school communication. Nevertheless, the extent of the perceived problem varies considerably among countries, most critical being School Principals from Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro.
- With the exceptions of Moldova and Montenegro, teacher-related factors (i.e. lack of interest, workload and lack of necessary skills) are considered to be a small or non-existent barrier to communication with parents.
- While School Principal-parent meetings were an established method of communication between School Principals and parents there is much variation in the frequency with which such meetings take place, both within and between countries.
- In the views of School Principals, once parent-teacher communication begins there are virtually no problems or conflicts in undertaking meaningful communication. However, sustained communication is seriously limited by lack of parental interest, availability and communication skills, and to a lesser extent by the interest, availability and communication skills of teachers.

- When requested to identify at least one parental communication strategy 86% of Bosnian and Herzegovinian, 84% of Romanian, 82.5% of Macedonian and 81.42% of Moldovan School Principals named at least one approach. In contrast, this was 5.52% and 26% in the cases of Montenegrin and Serbian School Principals.
- No information on the school curriculum was provided to parents 36.5% of Macedonian schools, 34.67% of Kosovan schools, 24% of Serbian schools, 19.85% of Romanian schools, and 9.66% of Montenegrin schools. Similarly, information on school policies and regulations were not shared in the case of 25% of Macedonian, 14% of Serbian, 12.89% of Kosovan and 7% of Romanian schools.
- School Principals' estimates of parental engagement in school-parent meetings range most often between 25% and 50% of parents in Albania (38.67%), Macedonia (39%), Moldova (43.92%), Montenegro (49.66%), Romania (47%) and Serbia (43%). Higher rates of parental participation are reported by School Principals in Bosnia and Herzegovina: in 44.3% of form-teacher parent meetings participation is reported at 50-75%. In contrast, in Kosovo we observe that in the case of almost 40% of meetings less than 25% of parents participate.
- Importantly, in all countries, the large majority of School Principals perceive form and subject teacher meetings with parents positively. Yet it is seldom that Principals report that over 75% of parents participate in such meetings.

### **3. School support for parents to help their children in education**

In all eight surveyed countries School Principals perceive school support to parents to help their children in education as a critical to improving pupils' performance (achievement and behavior). Principals also perceive teacher-parent relations to be non-conflictual, and therefore not a barrier in the case of their own schools. While School Principals' responses indicate that they value the potential benefits of school support to parents to help their children in education, we found that:

- The number of schools that deliver support services is considerably lower than the number of School Principals with a positive perception of the utility of such services. In schools where such services exist they are most often delivered about once a semester. In Serbia 38.58% of schools report never having organized such sessions, followed by Kosovo with 29.86% of schools, Macedonia with 24.75% of schools, and Albania with 18.39% of schools.
- In terms of the frequency with which parental services activities undertaken by schools, we learnt that in all countries except Montenegro, most schools who organized such sessions did so at least once a semester. This is the case in Moldova (63.51%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (51.69%), Macedonia (49.49%), Romania (45.89%), Albania (39.13%), and Serbia (27.92%).
- While lack of resources is not perceived to be a problem at in the case of 26.77% Macedonian and 21.61% Bosnia and Herzegovinian schools, we note that it is perceived to be a serious barrier by 49.5% of Albanian respondents, 36.44% of Kosovan respondents, and 29.19% of Romanian respondents.
- 83.55% of Kosovan, 82.76% of Montenegrin, 78.86% of Albanian, 66% of Serbian, 63.05% of Moldovan, 62.46% of Romanian, 59.09% of Macedonian 44.07% of Bosnian and Herzegovinian School Principals considered parental disinterest to be a barrier to their provision of parenting support services.
- Similarly, School Principals consider parents' lack of availability to be a barrier in 86.2% of Montenegrin, 74.95% of Albanian, 69.06% of Kosovan, 67.94% of Moldovan, 64.52% of Romanian, 64.32% of Serbian, 53.02% of Macedonian and 48.08% of Bosnian and Herzegovinian schools.



- The availability of teachers is considered to be a limited or inexistent barrier to schools' provision of parenting services by 83.76% Macedonian, 83.36% of Romanian, 82.63% of Bosnian and Herzegovinian, 75% Kosovan, 73.23% of Serbian, 69.7% of Albanian and 51.72% of Montenegrin School Principals.
- While slightly over 71% of School Principals from Kosovo considered providing materials to parents to help assist their children with homework to be useful, 73.27% of schools did not undertake such an activity in the previous academic year. Important shares of schools in the other countries without such activities are Serbia (54.36%), Macedonia (47.21%), Albania (42.41%), Montenegro (32.41%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (31.20%), Romania (26.58%), and Moldova (13.70%).
- The share of schools providing counseling services is high: even in the lowest rating countries (Albania, Kosovo and Serbia) the share of schools that report offering such services is above 65%. There are significant variations in the frequency with which such activities are undertaken, both in-country and between countries. Thus, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina 65% of schools report organizing such activities on a monthly basis, 61% of schools in Montenegro organize such activities on a yearly basis.

#### **4. Parent involvement in school governance**

Besides being informed, engaged in social activities and benefitting from school services, parents can be also involved in the decision-making at school level:

- 96% of Kosovan, 88.28% of Montenegrin, 82.33% Albanian, 80% of Macedonian, 69.20% of Bosnian and Herzegovinian, 57.77% of Moldovan, 56.50% of Serbian and 40% of Romanian School Principals consider parental evaluation of teacher's performance to be important.
- School Principals report that parental influence on classroom-level decisions is common. While this is a positive development, it does not compensate for the limited influence reported by Principals in the areas of teacher performance assessment, textbook choice and school budgeting.
- The established rules of Parent Council members' participation indicate the existence of important differences in types of engagement. Importantly we learnt that in the overwhelming majority of schools in all eight countries there are no rules that prohibit the participation of parent representatives in school life. Nevertheless, the degree of openness to parental involvement in shaping school policies and regulations varies considerably across all countries.
- While 74.11% of Macedonian, 69.02% of Kosovan and 68.97% of Montenegrin Principals consider that Parents Committees have a positive influence on pedagogical methods used in teaching, 90.69% of Romanian, 82.88% of Moldavian, 72.36% of Serbian and 70.37% of Albanian Principals consider that there is little if any influence at all.
- Despite an overall positive evaluation by School Principals of the influence of Parents Committees in involving parents in school life, in all countries the majority consider this influence as only limitedly successful.
- Principals report satisfaction with the extent of parental participation in School Board meetings. There are important variations in the extent of satisfaction with the attendance parent members. School Principal satisfaction rates are: Montenegro (99.5%), Serbia (92.93%), Kosovo (91.56%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (89.87%), Albania (87.29%), Macedonia (86.43%), Romania (81.98%) and Moldova (60.67%).

## Section I. Background

The first section, structured in three chapters, introduces the context of the initiative. The first chapter discusses the way in which representatives of Open Society Network-related institutions from participating countries developed the initiative. This is followed by a discussion on the focus of the survey, the presentation of the conceptual model that is at the basis of the survey, the formulation of key questions and the introduction of the conceptual framework of analysis. The third chapter goes on to describe the survey methodology, focusing on survey planning, the target population, the sample design, and the response rate.

### Chapter 1: Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The need to advance the participation of parents in school life was recognized by Open Society Institute (OSI) representatives in the context in which –despite fundamental educational reforms (OECD, 2003, 2006) – disparities and inequality of educational opportunities and outcomes continue to increase in South-East European (SEE) countries. It was also pointed out that, besides mostly anecdotal evidence on good and bad school level practices, there was very limited systematic knowledge of activities undertaken at school level in these countries to create a welcoming and participatory environment for parents. To address these issues, a series of international meetings were held during 2007 with the participation of OSI related representatives in SEE countries. At these meetings participating educational experts and practitioners identified the following educational priorities, common to all countries:

Addressing rising inequity in education, more precisely:

- The widening gap between improved education policy regulations and the implementation of such policies at school level. Examples of this phenomenon include the lack of funding for teaching assistants, the insufficient number of qualified support staff, inappropriate facilities for children with physical disabilities, reluctance to enroll children with disabilities, and weaknesses in the involvement of parents in school life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Mr. Steve Powell for contributing with this chapter

- Less obvious forms of discrimination. While there are national and international efforts to address inequality of access to quality education of minorities, as well as children with special needs, disabilities and difficulties, there is a real concern that many pupils are denied access to quality education for reasons like socio-economic status, physical appearance, and family background.
- Insufficient and/or inadequate participation of education stakeholders, particularly pupils and parents, in school life. Although mechanisms for pupil and parent participation in education exist (e.g. inclusive school boards, parents' councils, pupils' councils, etc.), the actual participation of these stakeholders in the life of the school is often nominal and their influence on school issues remains negligible.

Poor quality of school-level governance is seen as one of the factors leading to inequality of access to education. Academic literature indicates that the dimensions of quality include but are not limited to: provision of educational services; school management; curriculum structure and content. It is critical to understand these dimensions from the perspective of education stakeholders: pupils, particularly the discriminated ones, teachers and parents.

Considering the above-mentioned educational priorities identified for SEE countries by national experts, our initiative – entitled Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South-East Europe, funded by the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute and jointly implemented with the Center for Educational Policy Studies (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education) – was tailored to address the challenges related to insufficient and/or inadequate participation of parents in school life.

### **Participation in a human rights perspective**

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).

Useful model: five levels of student participation. Thomson and Holdsworth<sup>75</sup> 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)

“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

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.

## **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 (primarily 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](http://www.proMENTE.org/ESPReview). The links in that bibliography go directly to online versions of those documents which are freely available.

## **Background: the policy context**

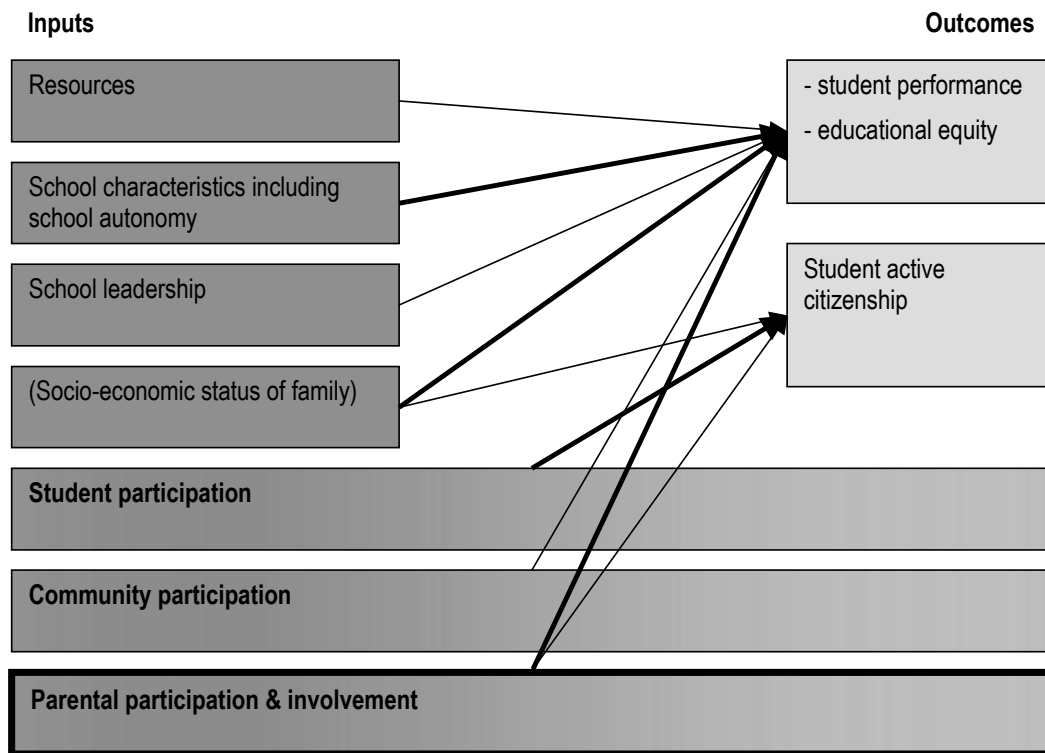
### **Participation embedded in other education quality issues**

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.

## 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<sup>2</sup> on the left-hand side correspond to the 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

## **.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 wholesale 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 for 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 wholesale 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.

## Policy context in South-East Europe

### 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.

### 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 politicised 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. 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).*



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)

## Findings

**The review findings are as follows.**

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

### **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-economic 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.

### **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.

## 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).

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)*

## 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. 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 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 practitioners 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.

## 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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

## How autonomy and participation are related

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

Other stakeholders in local community	Parents	Pupils	Teachers
	Principal		
	Local authority		
State			

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).

## **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.

## **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 weaknesses. 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.

### **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).

### **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.

### **The effects of parent involvement in schools<sup>3</sup>**

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.

### **Evidence for the effectiveness of parent involvement**

#### **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.**

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

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.

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.adi.org).

(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 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.

### **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<sup>4</sup>.

---

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

## 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.

## School boards

School boards can be seen 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.

## 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%).



## **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<sup>5</sup>, carried out a complex project entitled “Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe”. This 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.**

## **The effects of school leadership**

### **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). 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. 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.**

<sup>5</sup> Education ministries from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

## **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).

## **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).

## **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).

## **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 identities (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 “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)

## Student participation

### 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).*

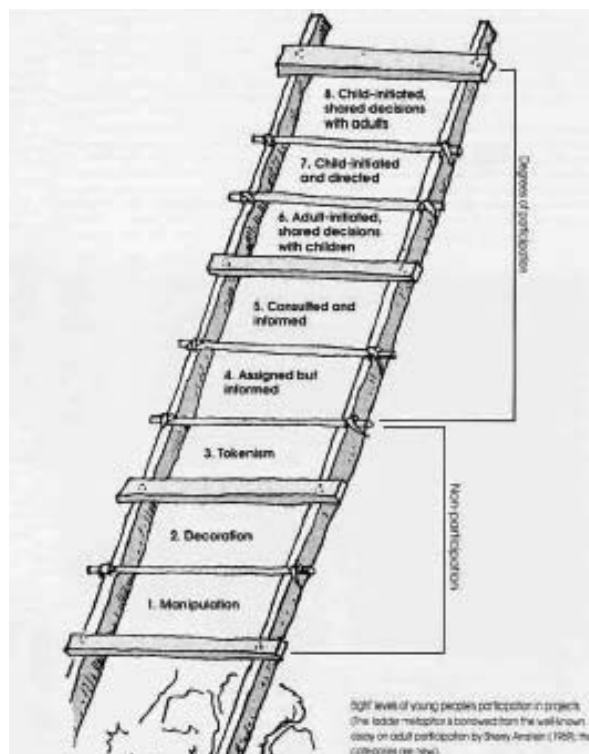
### A warning: the “ladder of participation”

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.



### 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)

### **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.

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.

### **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.

### **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).

### **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).*

### **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)

### **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). 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 tradi-

"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)

tional 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).

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

## **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). 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](http://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.
- 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).

### 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.
- 
- Children's 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)

## **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 self-reflective 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. , 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).



## 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.	<b>Focus on parents as main stakeholder group.</b>	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.	<b>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.</b>	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.	<b>Focus on school principals as main respondent group.</b>	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.	<b>Consider including a measure of transformational leadership among school principals, although this concept is not especially suitable for self-report.</b>	Link participation to the debate on educational reform.

Conclusions	Recommendations: research	Recommendations: programming
School autonomy		
<p>School 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. 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.</p> <p>Success at school reform may involve school principals coming to see themselves as team members rather than team leaders.</p> <p>“...how important it is to check who is being empowered when higher-level strings are loosened” (Eskeland, 2007, p. i)”</p>	<p><b>Consider asking school principals about participation in the context of school autonomy: is school autonomy increasing? Which stakeholders are involved, who is accountable?</b></p> <p><b>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.</b></p>	<p>Focus attention on who benefits from school reform and school autonomy.</p>
<p>Measures to increase school autonomy may not be effective if they are not adapted to local circumstances.</p>	<p><b>Ask how much leeway is available at school or municipal level to interpret or adapt reform initiatives and/or regulations on stakeholder participation.</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
Equity		
<p>There are potential synergies between school autonomy and stakeholder participation.</p>	<p><b>Do excluded groups benefit from increasing school autonomy?</b></p>	<p>Leverage participation as a tool to ensure that we can have our cake and eat it too: increase access to education without decreasing quality.</p>

Conclusions	Recommendations: research	Recommendations: programming
Parental involvement, equity and learning outcomes are closely interrelated.	<b>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.</b>	
Parental involvement can function as a spontaneous attempt to correct some aspects of inequity: when they see something wrong, they get involved.	<b>Do excluded groups use participation in order to positively influence their children's education?</b>	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.	<b>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.</b>	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	<b>Asked principals about their perception of the relationship between parental involvement and student performance.</b>	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	<b>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?</b>	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

Conclusions	Recommendations: research	Recommendations: programming
Regional issues		
There is to our knowledge no substantial research replication in South-East Europe of the contribution of parental involvement to school outcomes.	<b>Try to replicate, in South-East Europe, research results 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.</b>	Highlight the potential cost effectiveness benefits of parental participation, and position the research as potentially providing crucial information on this topic
Roma are the main excluded group in the region.	<b>Include specific questions on participation of Roma parents and children, as well as other minorities.</b>	
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)	<b>Which resources does the school need in order to implement participation successfully?</b> <b>What skills do individual stakeholders, including school level management, need?</b>	Train new skills in all stakeholder groups
Stakeholder participation is particularly vulnerable to tokenism (Arnstein, 1969).	<b>Consider using questions inspired by the “ladder of participation” model (Arnstein, 1969) in order to identify whether participation is tokenistic or genuine.</b>	

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.



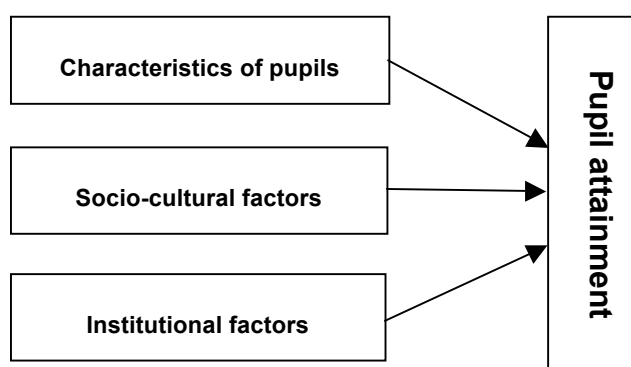
## Chapter 2: The Role of School Leadership

Parental participation in the education of children has been studied extensively and there is compelling evidence of a systematic and positive relation between the levels of parental participation and the developmental and educational outcome of pupils (Okpala et al., 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Barnard, 2004; Moran & al., 2004; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006; Hartas, 2008).

Parental participation can therefore be viewed as one of the factors that influence pupils' attainment. According to the literature these factors can be grouped into three main categories, namely: the characteristics of pupils, the socio-cultural background of pupils, and the various institutional factors related to educational policy regulations as well as overall school and classroom environment.

The impact of the first two categories of factors has been systematically studied and, although there are ongoing fundamental debates on the nature and extent of their influence, important advances have been made in understanding their role in influencing the levels of pupil attainment. This is partly attributable to 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 is systematically related to the socio-cultural background of the pupil, but is not systematically related to school and instruction characteristics. Although the academic consensus built on the above studies has been repeatedly put under scrutiny over the last thirty years, the findings of Coleman et al. (1966) and Jenkins et al. (1972) still remain highly influential among educational professionals (e.g. Luyten et al., 2005).

Figure 1 Factors that influence pupil attainment



Both policy-makers and educational practitioners view school and classroom effectiveness as central to improving pupils' educational achievements. However, there is considerably less systematic evidence and knowledge on the ways in which institutional factors, especially overall school and classroom environment, affect pupils' attainment levels. The criticisms' lack of a coherent theoretical foundation (Thrupp, 2001) has limited their success in dismantling the argument for no systematic school environment effect. The findings of this stream of literature are also considerably hindered by a conceptual pluralism mostly attributable to the varying definitions of the core concepts in the different fields that contribute to this stream of research.

When studying parental participation, institutional factors cannot be overlooked. School leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a welcoming participatory environment which, besides facilitating the participation of parents in school life, increases inclusiveness and ensures that parents belonging to socio-economic groups less likely to engage are also involved (Bradshaw et al., 2004; Hallam et al., 2006; Lupton, 2006). This involvement is essential given that evidence shows (e.g. Sacker et al., 2002, Waanders et al., 2007)) that parents who are economically less well off and those with lower levels of educational attainment are less likely to meaningfully engage in the education of their children compared to those who have higher socio-economic status.

The relevance of the role of school leadership is enhanced by increasingly decentralized responsibilities related to school governance and the adoption of innovative methods of management, e.g. distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), evidence-based leadership (Lewis and Cardwell, 2005), turnaround leadership (Fullan, 2005), educational leadership (Hoyle and Wallace, 2006), etc.

For better insight into the possible outcomes of strengthening the role of school leadership, we carried out an exploratory survey in eight SEE countries that have recently adopted reforms institutionalizing parental participation in school governance and decentralized considerable decision-making authority to school level. The survey of School Principals, conducted in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia, investigates the role of School Principals' perceptions and actions in fostering parental participation in decision-making, extracurricular activities, and the education of their children in public elementary schools.

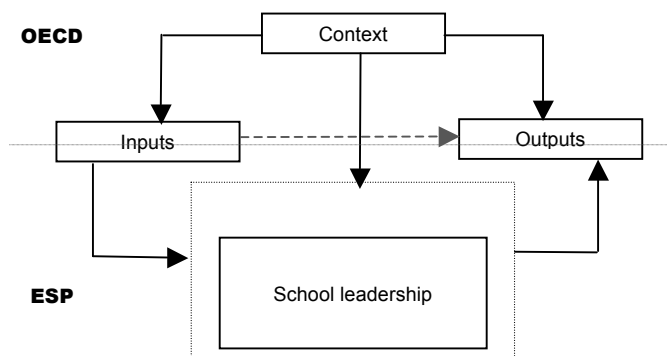
The general aim of the cross-national survey was **to better understand the opportunities created by school leadership for parents to participate in school life**. In the light of this general aim, our purpose was to gather evidence in order to provide an enhanced and contextual understanding of the perceptions and actions of school leadership in the context of improved parental participation in school life.

Insufficient parental participation in school life, despite the considerable improvement of national legislation, raises concerns about the extent of equity that may be achieved in schools in the newly developed education systems of the SEE region. While system-level measures and policies are likely to provide the necessary framework for the reduction of large-scale and systematic discrimination, they are far from sufficient to ensure the establishment of attitudes and behaviors to ensure educational equity at school level. Considering these, the main focus of the survey was to document the key factors related to school leadership that could inhibit or encourage the meaningful participation of parents in school life.

The initiative was designed to complement other large-scale interventions recently implemented in the region. The OECD, in partnership with SEE Education Ministries, carried out a complex project entitled "Education Development for Students at Risk and Those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe" (2003-2007), which assessed the extent to which national anti-discrimination legislation had been improved. Our project complements this initiative as it focuses on the extent to which schools can effectively implement these policies and establish attitudes and actions that ensure participatory school governance.

To illustrate the above, we have adapted Scheerens and Bosker's (1997) model as follows:

**Figure 2 Conceptual model**



According to this model, context represents the educational policy environment in which schools carry out their work. This is the dimension which the OECD project focused on. In comparison, the ESP initiative puts emphasis on promoting participatory school-level governance to ensure an inclusive and fair environment for all children. According to the OECD, inclusiveness means the practice of minimum standards for all children, while fairness implies that the physiological characteristics and the socio-cultural background of the pupil do not hinder the realization of his/her educational potential.

Inputs include pupil inputs (abilities, motivations, pre-school/home experience, etc.), teacher inputs (experience, qualifications, motivation, performance evaluation, beliefs/expectations, pedagogical style, etc.) and school inputs (infrastructure, financial resources).

In our understanding, besides the general policy environment, school leadership also has a great say in how inputs are turned into outputs. This is because school leadership is responsible for the adoption of school-level policies, oversight of procedures and framing of practices (teachers' cooperation within school, parents' involvement in school matters, etc.), and is the main promoter of school values.

In terms of outputs, the literature has sometimes overused pupils' educational attainment as a proxy to evaluate school effectiveness. This has led to further criticism of the school effectiveness literature and misinterpretation by policy-makers. Educational attainment scores have several intrinsic advantages over other possible measures (e.g. comparability, as they are systematically reported, cover virtually the whole educational system, and are open to statistical analysis). However, assessing educational outcomes and comparing schools' performance exclusively on the basis of pupils' educational attainment entails several major limitations. Such an approach does not assess, for example, the extent to which schools successfully reduce the effect of social inequality, or generate tolerant citizens and confident adults.

Our emphasis on the school as the place to promote equal parental participation in school life was motivated by at least four reasons. First, although the general educational policy environment has significantly improved in all countries of the region under study, there are still shortcomings in the school level implementation of educational equity related provisions. Second, growing educational decentralization and increased expectations related to the promotion of effective school-based governance have highlighted the limits of the existing school leadership and educational stakeholder involvement in school life. Third, the over-emphasized role of pupil testing in the evaluation of overall school performance diverts the attention from other, equally important functions of the school. Fourth, as parents of pupils enrolled in compulsory public education have to cover an increasingly larger share of the costs of



education in SEE countries, the principles of inclusive education are seriously challenged and existing inequalities in schools are likely to widen further unless counter-balancing measures are taken.

Due to their increasing role in school management, School Principals are central to ensuring the articulation and effective operation of school-based governance structures. The values, attitudes and actions of School Principals directly influence school culture and the extent to which equal educational opportunities, through the involvement of parents, are promoted at school level. If School Principals do not subscribe to the principles of educational equality, school-based governance structures and school culture are unlikely to be inclusive and sensitive to challenges related to educational equity.

Understanding the attitudes, perceptions and actions of School Principals is therefore fundamental to an understanding of the nature of school-based governance structures and school cultures. Through the survey we wished to gather new empirical evidence on the perceptions and actions of School Principals and contribute in this way to current debate over the most effective strategies to address the challenges of implementing participatory school management.

The emphasis on the school context allows us to identify the capacities that need to be developed, the attitudes that need to be formed or changed and the practices that need to be adopted in order to create a school culture that directly contributes to the more effective implementation of national policies seeking to establish participatory school level governance.

## Key Questions

The cross-national survey of School Principals was designed to provide systematic data on the following question:

*What are the perceptions and actions of School Principals in SEE countries related to furthering parental participation in practical school life, school-level decision making and in the education of their own children?*

In the next stage, the survey findings will be complemented by demonstrative projects providing evidence from case studies around particular questions:

- a) What are school policies on parental involvement in school life? How does school leadership ensure that school policy on parental involvement is applied (in teaching, pupils' interactions, etc.)?
- b) What factors enhance/inhibit the establishment, communication and implementation of the school's policy on parental involvement in school life? What are parents' opportunities to contribute to school decision-making?
- c) What types of involvement are promoted by the school? What steps need to be taken by school leadership to ensure the participation of marginalized groups?

The eight surveys of School Principals provide empirical evidence on the extent to which School Principals promote or inhibit parental participation in school life, while the active research component is designed to provide case study based evidence on instances in which parental participation in school life has been fostered and supported by School Principals. These instances could be used as examples of good practice. The evidence gathered through the survey and active research will inform the specific focus and design of the advocacy campaigns in each country, as well as at regional level, in the second phase of the initiative.

By building on the principles of open society values defined at the school level, we hope to (re)lay the theoretical foundations of literature focusing on the role of school leadership in promoting equal educational opportunities. The international character of this two-phase initiative, the diverse academic backgrounds and professional expertise of the participating educational experts and practitioners, and the expertise of the ESP and OSI, should allow us to begin doing this. The initiative has the potential to contribute directly to the promotion of comprehensive school performance indicators along open society values in education, including the extent to which participatory school governance is meaningfully established.

## Framework of Analysis

To capture the role of school leadership in fostering parental participation in school life, we generated a number of indicators. These are in line with the most recent literature and are considered to cover the different dimensions involved very precisely. These dimensions include: offering opportunities for parents to engage in school life, sustaining home-school communication, providing school support for parents to help their children in education, and involving parents in school governance. The indicators are grouped under three categories, namely: School Principals' general perceptions of parental participation; the actions undertaken at school level to foster parental participation; Principals' assessment of parental participation in their schools' life.

**Table 1 Conceptual framework of analysis**

	General perceptions of parental participation in school life	Actions to foster parental participation in school life	Assessment of parental participation in the given school
Opportunities for parents to engage in school life	School Principals' perceptions of the benefits of parental participation in school life	Invitation of parents to engage in school-related activities	Share of parents engaged in the three most successful school activities
Home-school communication	Barriers to parental participation in school life	Home-school communication initiated by school. School strategy for communication with parents.	Satisfaction with meetings held with parents. Share of parents regularly participating at meetings held by form teachers, subject teachers and School Principal
School support for parents to help their children in education	Potential benefits of school support for parents to help their children in education	Support services provided to parents to help their children in education	Barriers to providing support services to parents to help their children in education
Parents' involvement in school governance	Principals' perceptions of the importance of parental voice in school life	Decision-making authority attributed to Parents' Council	Influence of Parents' Council on the daily life of school Influence of parents in general on practical school life Contribution of parents' representatives on the School Board

## Chapter 3: Survey Methodology

The School Principal Survey was carried out through face-to-face interviews in the SEE region during May and June 2008. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia the interviews were carried out by GfK, while in Moldova and Romania they were carried out by IMAS.

### Survey planning

The survey instrument is the result of the joint effort of the central research team, country research teams, ESP staff, and independent experts. The main preparatory steps for the design of the survey instrument included:

1. **The elaboration of the sampling preparation manual.** This included, among others, the identification of the research aims and objectives, the minimum quality standards of the survey, definition of the target population, data collection protocols, and the sample design plans.
2. **The carrying out of country context reports by country teams,** including a review of current policies and regulations related to stakeholders' participation in schools, a mapping of existing initiatives seeking to improve stakeholders' participation in schools, an assessment of factors which may affect the level of stakeholders' participation in the given country, and information on country-specific survey logistics.
3. **The carrying out of a comprehensive literature review on stakeholders' participation in school life.** This included the definitions of key concepts, a review of the academic debates and findings related to parental participation in school life with emphasis on the effects of school-home relationships on pupils' attainment and the quality of education, a review of the policy context of parental participation in school life in SEE countries, and the role of school leadership in fostering parental participation in school life.

Once these preparatory steps had begun, a meeting of all those involved was organized in Belgrade, Serbia, between the 14th and 16th January 2008. The main outcome of the meeting was the finalization of the sampling preparation manual, agreement of the project milestones, and the division of responsibilities related to the survey instrument development process, the carrying out of field work, data analysis and report writing.

For developing the survey instrument, the main milestones included:

1. The planning, carrying out and analysis of two focus group discussions with School Principals in each of the participating countries (to be done by country research teams). For this, the central research team designed a focus group guide building on the findings of the country context reports and the literature review.

2. The drafting of the survey instrument using the findings of the country context reports, the literature review and the focus group discussions.
3. The piloting of the final survey instrument in each country by carrying out test surveys with School Principals.

For the fieldwork, the main milestones included:

1. The development of the terms of reference, the tendering of survey services and the contracting of the selected specialized survey companies. Four offers were received, from which the Project Advisory Committee selected IMAS for the Republic of Moldova and Romania and GfK for the other six countries participating.
2. The gathering by country teams of the sample frames and securing the appropriate letters of support from relevant public institutions (e.g. Ministry of Education).
3. The carrying out of the fieldwork with the involvement of the country research teams with supervision from the central research team.

Following the completion of the fieldwork a second regional workshop was held at Skopje between 27th and 29th June 2008 to review the advances made in the implementation of the project and discuss next steps related to data analysis, writing of the country reports and writing of the cross-national report.

## **Target population**

As its name suggests, the survey focused on Principals of schools corresponding to the level of compulsory primary education in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.

## **Sample design**

Data was collected using stratified random selection of sample units (schools). The main advantage of using such stratification procedures (the division of the sample into sub-groups and randomly selecting from those sub-groups) is that it reduces sampling error.

Nevertheless, our sample design was likely to underestimate true population variance and consequently to produce larger standard error estimates. To minimize the effect of the sample design on parameter estimates, post-stratification weights were used. The main reason for the use of post-estimation weights was that our sampling design violated the assumptions of simple random survey sampling, according to which observations from the sample frame are selected independently and they all have the same selection probability. In this survey, cases were not selected independently in the final sampling scheme and had different probabilities of selection.

The sampling of schools was carried out using stratification by region and settlement type. The stratification performed at regional level was done proportionally to the total population distribution

for each country (except Bosnia and Herzegovina). In Bosnia and Herzegovina unequal sampling rates were taken in order to include a sufficient number of schools with Croatian NPP (national group of subjects/curriculum), and thus Croatian schools were oversampled. At the level of settlement type, sampling was done proportionally to the total population distribution. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina unequal sampling rates were applied (no differential non-responses were observed). Country-specific sample design and confidence levels are reported in the table below.

**Table 2 Sample design and confidence**

Country	Sample design	
Albania	Stratification by region reflects regional distribution in the population of schools. Urban/rural distribution in the sample is proportional to the distribution of schools in the population. The schools were chosen randomly, proportionally to their distribution in the territory. The schools were grouped also according to urban/rural distribution.	CL: 95% CI: $\pm 5.06$
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sample stratification was done by region and type of settlement. The sample is disproportional due to the different characteristics of the educational system in the three areas with different ethnic majorities. Urban/rural school distribution in the sample is 65:35, while in the total population it is the other way around.	CL: 95%. CI: $\pm 5.69$
Kosovo	The sample is two-staged, stratified into three regions. Stratification by region was done to reflect regional distribution in the population of schools. Urban/rural distribution in the sample is proportional to the distribution of schools in the population. Within each region the survey was conducted in a number of municipalities that are representative for primary school population. At the municipality level (and depending on rural/urban distribution) random sampling of schools was applied.	CL: 95% CI: $\pm 5.0$
Macedonia	Sample stratification was done by region and type of settlement. Schools' stratification by region was done proportionally to total population distribution.	CL: 95%. CI: $\pm 4.61$
Republic of Moldova	Sample stratification was done by region and type of settlement. Schools' stratification by region and type of settlement was done proportionally to total population distribution.	CL: 95% CI: $\pm 3$
Romania	Sample stratification was done by region and type of settlement. Schools' stratification by region and type of settlement was done proportionally to total population distribution.	CL: 95% CI: $\pm 3$
Serbia	Sample stratification was done by region (four regions) and type of settlement. Schools' stratification by region was done to reflect regional distribution in the population of schools. The urban/rural distribution in the sample is proportional to the distribution in the population of schools.	CL: 95%. CI: $\pm 6.33$ .
Note: CL – confidence level, CI – confidence interval.		

The analysis carried out in the Survey Report takes into consideration the complex sample design/structure of the data and uses post-estimation weighting (population or calibration weights). This implies down-weighting sample units to their corresponding population proportion. These weighted adjustments are critical to ensure that the risks of biased point and variance estimates are kept at a minimum.

**Table 3 School distribution in SEE countries**

Country/ regions		Schools	%	Sample	Urban	Rural
Albania	North	445	30%	89	77	12
	Center	324	22%	66	54	12
	South	569	38%	116	94	22
	Tirane	146	10%	29	9	20
	Total Albania	1,484	100%	300	234	66
Bosnia and Herzegovina <sup>1</sup>	NPP – Serbian entity	205	34%	60	21	39
	NPP – Bosnian entity	338	55%	100	35	65
	NPP – Croatian entity	69	11%	40	14	26
	Total Bosnia and Herzegovina	612	100%	200	70	130
Kosovo <sup>2</sup>	Center	128	24%	53	10	43
	South-East	105	19%	44	7	37
	West	306	57%	128	22	106
	Total Kosovo	539	100%	225	39	186
Macedonia	Skopje	150	29%	58	45	13
	North-East	114	22%	44	26	18
	South-East	65	13%	25	15	10
	South-West	67	13%	26	15	11
	North-West	122	24%	47	19	28
	Total Macedonia	518	100%	200	120	80
Moldova <sup>3</sup>		661	100%	296	31	265
Romania		6,123	100%	670	169	501
Serbia	Grad Beograd	190	16%	35	28	7
	Vojvodina	376	31%	60	28	32
	Istočna Srbija	337	28%	55	26	29
	Zapadna Srbija	306	25%	50	23	27
	Total Serbia	1,209	100%	200	105	95

Notes: 1. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the sample is unbalanced. 2. In Kosovo the sample was limited to Albanian schools. 3. In the case of Moldova school districts were used instead of regions. 4. In Montenegro a census was carried out.

As part of the survey instrument development process, a series of focus group meetings with School Principals were organized in each country upon completion of the literature review. The survey instrument was also pre-tested in each country. As part of the survey, the Principal in each selected school was contacted and interviewed face-to-face, but there were schools in which the principal position was vacant. In such cases, the person temporarily fulfilling the responsibilities of the School Principal was interviewed. For instance, of the 670 interviews completed in Romania, 591 (88.21%) were conducted with Principals, while 79 (11.79%) were conducted with acting School Principals. At the other end of the scale, in the Republic of Moldova over 99% of interviews were conducted with Principals.

Carrying out school stratification by region (in order to reflect regional distribution in the population of schools) ensured equal probability of selection of schools. In the case of urban/rural distribution, country-specific population size weighting was used to correct for and imbalance between the school population and the pupil population. To ensure that the minimum required sample size would be achieved two additional samples were drawn, using the same procedures as in the case of the original sample.



## Response rate

As shown in Table 4, the overall response rate was 91.07%, significantly above the 75% cut-off value initially set. Given the high response rates (98.6% in the Republic of Moldova, 97.8% in Kosovo, 95.7% in Romania, 94.5% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 93.5% in Macedonia, 81% in Serbia and 66.3% in Albania) we can assume that the effect of a possible systematic difference between respondents and those declining to respond is marginal.

**Table 4 Survey response rate by country**

Country	Sample from which schools were selected			Total
	Original Sample	Additional Sample 1	Additional Sample 2	
Albania	199	69	32	300
	66.3%	23.0%	10.7%	100%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	224	13	0	237
	94.5%	5.5%	.0%	100%
Kosovo	220	5	0	225
	97.8%	2.2%	.0%	100%
Macedonia	187	13	0	200
	93.5%	6.5%	.0%	100%
Montenegro	145	0	0	145
	90.06%	0%	0%	90.06%
Republic of Moldova	292	4	0	296
	98.6%	1.4%	.0%	100%
Romania	641	26	3	670
	95.7%	3.9%	.4%	100%
Serbia	162	30	8	200
	81.0%	15.0%	4.0%	100%
Total	2070	160	43	2273
	91.07%	7.04%	1.89%	100%

Note: In Montenegro a census was carried out, 145 schools (90.06%) of the total 161 being interviewed.

High response levels in the original sample, with the exception of Albania, indicate that survey data is highly reliable.

## **Section II. Findings**

This section is structured in four chapters, each presenting the survey findings on a different dimension of the role of school leadership in fostering parental participation. The findings on each dimension are discussed along the three categories described earlier under the framework of analysis and presented in Table 1.

The first chapter in this section discusses School Principals' responses regarding opportunities for parents to engage in school life. It starts with findings on Principals' perceptions of the possible benefits of parental participation in school life. Then it reports on how and when parents in the countries under focus are invited by schools to engage in various school activities. Finally, we present our findings on the shares of parents participating in the three school activities Principals consider the most successful in terms of parental engagement.

In the second chapter of this section discusses our findings on home-school communication. The discussion follows the five indicators used to evaluate School Principals' perceptions, actions and assessment in this respect. Thus, the chapter analyzes Principals' responses regarding barriers to facilitating parental participation through home-school communication. We then detail the different ways schools communicate with parents. Finally, we look at School Principals' assessment of home-school communication, focusing on their level of satisfaction with meetings held for parents and the share of parents regularly engaged in such meetings.

### **Chapter 1: Opportunities for parents to engage in school life**

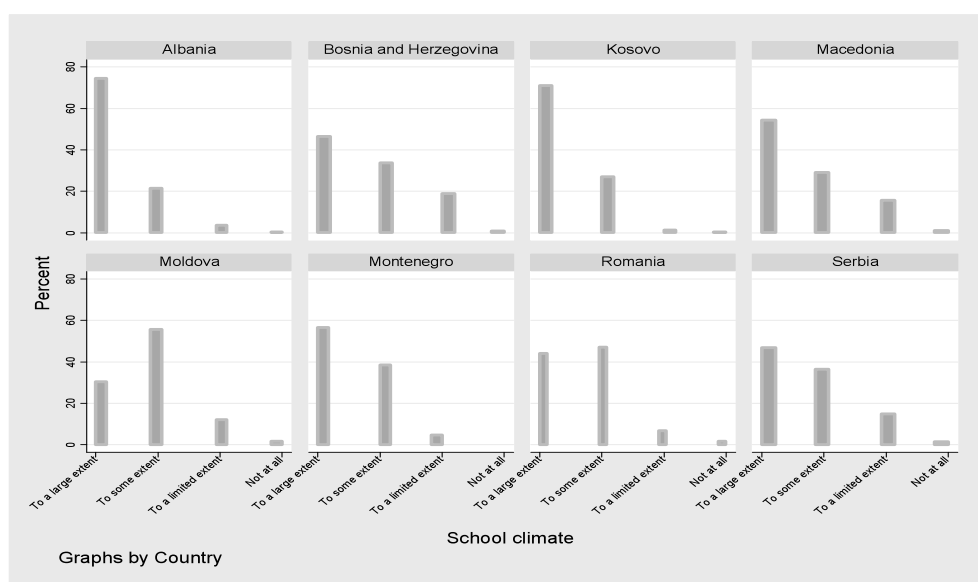
This chapter covers the first of the four dimensions of the role played by school leadership in fostering parental participation in school life. It presents the findings on how, and to what extent, schools in the SEE countries under focus create opportunities for parental engagement. The chapter is structured in three parts: the first discussing School Principals' general perceptions of the potential benefits of parental participation; the second presenting actions undertaken by schools to facilitate parents' participation in school-related activities; and the third focusing on how Principals assess parental participation in their schools' activities.

## Benefits of parental participation in school life

We sought to find out whether School Principals considered that parental participation had a positive overall influence on school climate, parents' attitudes towards the school, parents' support for the school, and pupils' educational attainment. The composite score indicates that, overall, School Principals assign high value to parental participation in school life in terms of its perceived beneficial influence on the four indicators mentioned above.

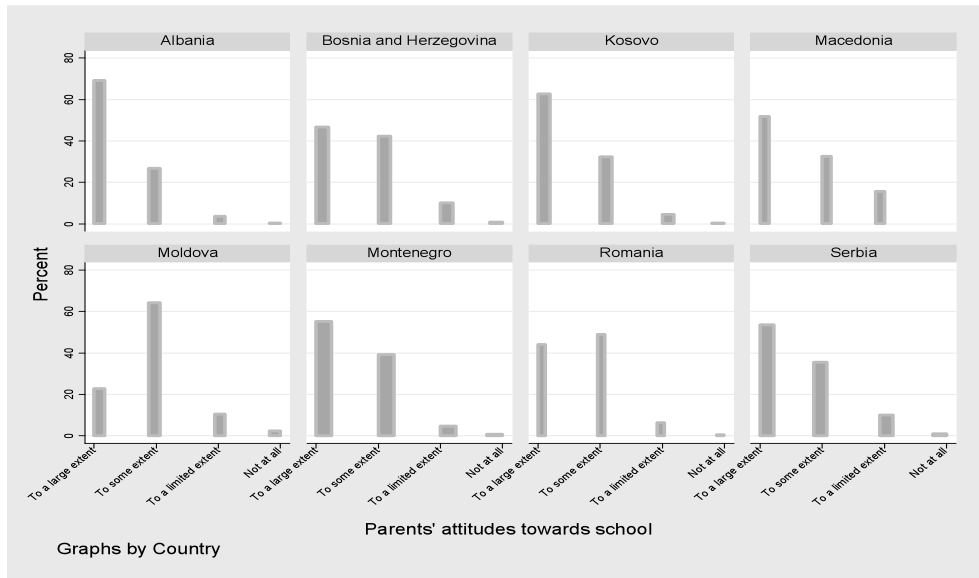
Nevertheless, when studying each indicator individually we observe that there are large cross-country variations in what concerns the extent to which parental participation is viewed by School Principals to be beneficial. For instance, the large majority of Principals in Albania (74.58%) and in Kosovo (71.11%) consider that parental participation in school life benefits overall school climate to a large extent, but in Moldova only 30.51% of Principals share this view. However, that in each country less than 2% of Principals consider parental participation to play no significant role in the improvement of overall school climate.

**Figure 3 Perceived benefits of parental participation for overall school climate**



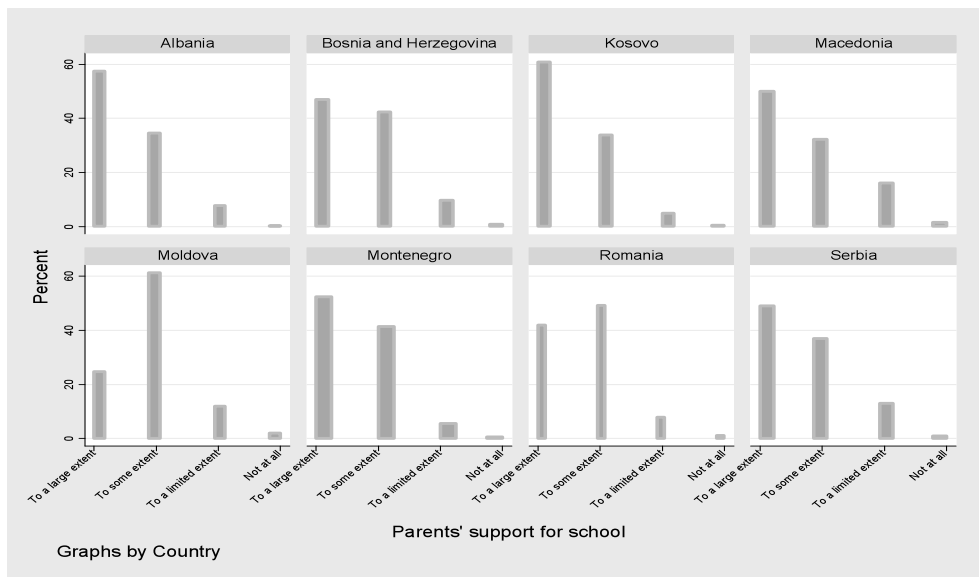
In general, School Principals consider parental participation in school life to be positively associated with the way in which parents relate to the school. Yet we observe that there are differences in the extent to which this link is perceived to be beneficial. In Albania and Kosovo, for instance, 69.23% and 62.67% of Principals respectively responded that parental participation strongly influences the formation of positive parental attitudes towards the school. In Moldova only 22.79% of Principals share this view. In contrast, 15.58% of School Principals in Macedonia and 10.17% in Moldova consider that parental participation influences parents' attitudes towards the school only to a limited extent.

**Figure 4 Parental participation and parents' attitudes towards school**



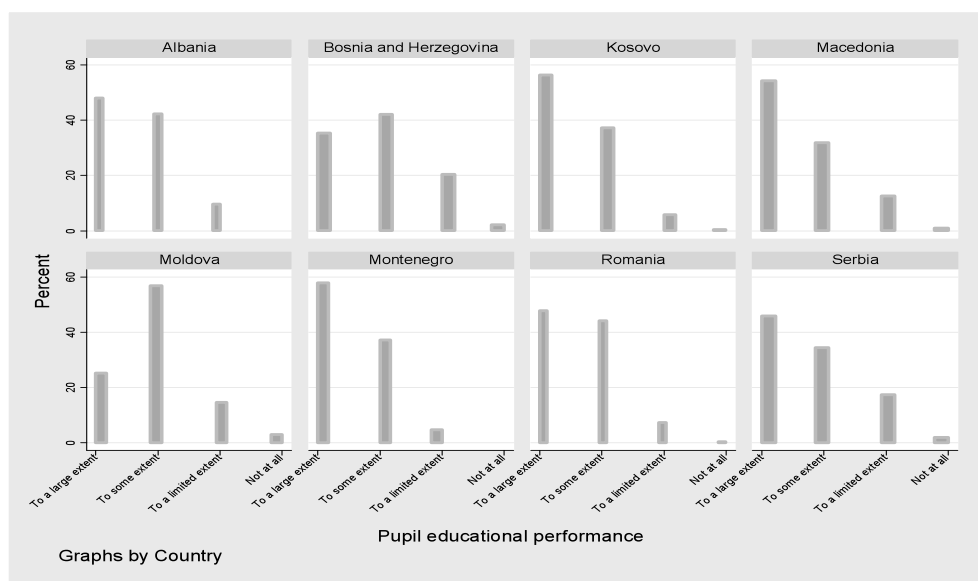
Most Principals (except in Moldova and Romania) responded that parental participation influences their overall support to the school to a large extent. As shown in Figure 6, this answer was given by 60.89% of School Principals in Kosovo, 57.38% in Albania, 52.41% in Montenegro, 50% in Macedonia, 49% in Serbia and 47.03% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Moldova and Romania most Principals (61.3% and 52%, respectively) said that participation influences overall support only to some extent.

**Figure 5 Perceived benefits of parental participation for overall support to school**



Principals report very similar perceptions when it comes to pupils' educational attainment. According to the responses provided, we can unequivocally state that in School Principals' view the closer the relation between parents and the school the higher the educational attainment level of pupils. Over 70% of Principals in each country consider that parental participation in school life leads to enhanced pupil educational performance.

**Figure 6 Perceived benefits of parental participation for pupils' educational performance**



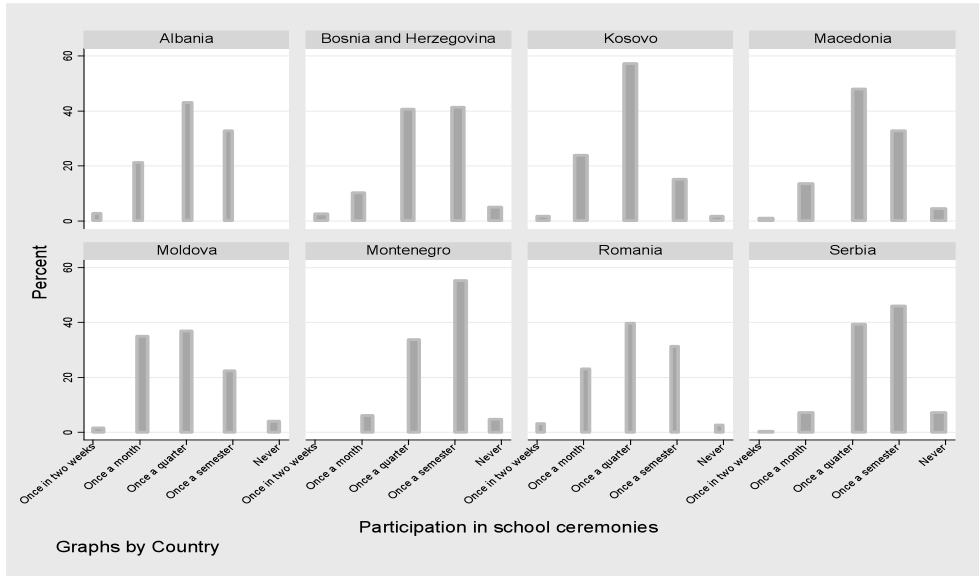
Based on our findings, we can conclude that the large majority of School Principals in the SEE countries under study perceive parental participation in school life to be beneficial for overall school climate, parents' attitudes towards the school, parents' support for the school, and pupils' educational attainment.

## Invitation of parents to engage in school life

Having established that School Principals regard parental participation in school life to be positively related to educational outcomes and school climate, we can assess the extent to which opportunities for participation are actually fostered. To assess this we identified eight measures considered to capture different aspects of efforts to involve parents in school-based activities. These measures include inviting parents to: participate in the organization of school ceremonies, to organize social activities, to provide teaching assistance, to organize support groups for other parents, to sponsor school activities, to fund-raise for the school, to help other parents support their children, and to represent the school.

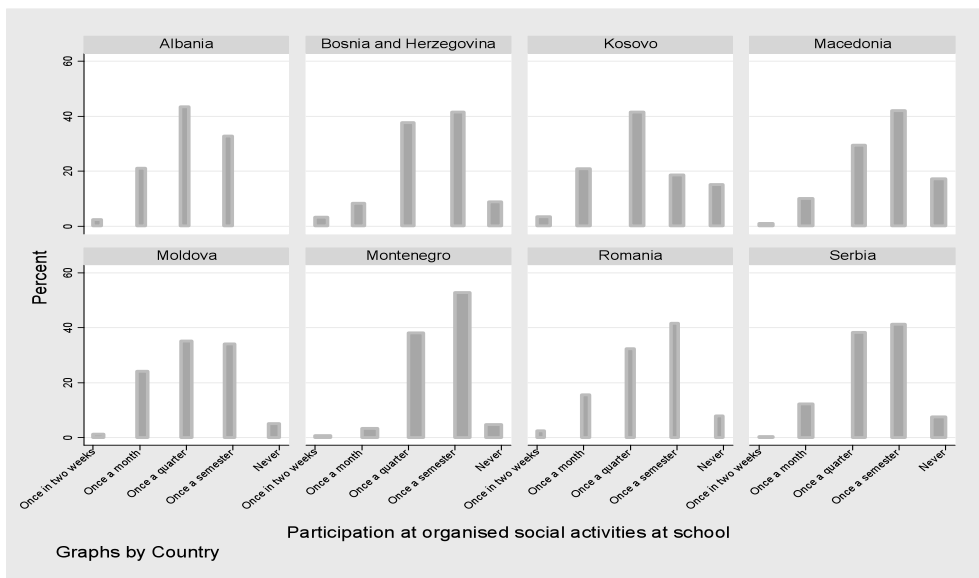
According to the responses of School Principals, the invitation of parents to participate in the organization of school ceremonies is a common practice in schools across all countries under study. Schools generally invite parents to engage in such activities on a quarterly or semestral basis.

**Figure 7 Parents invited to organize ceremonies at school**



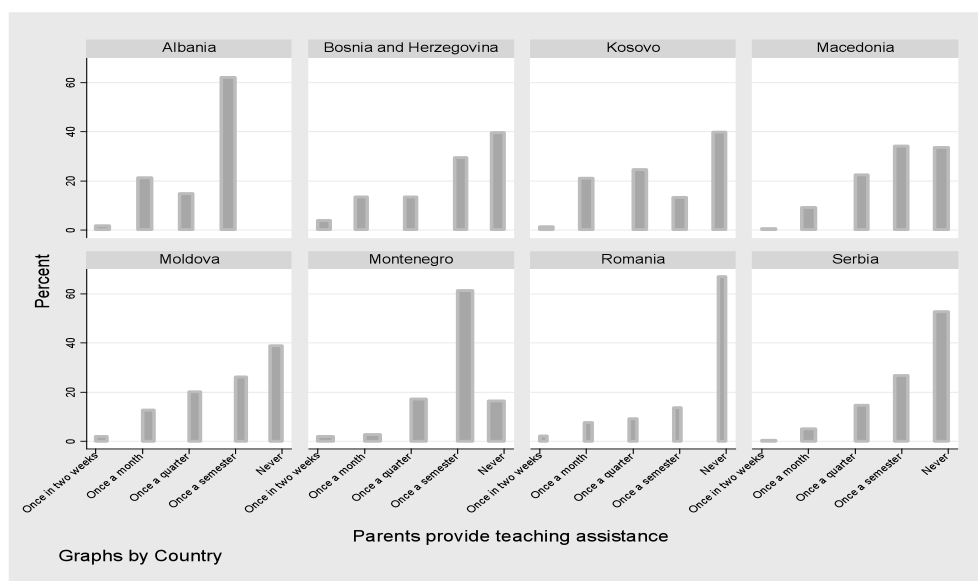
When it comes to the organization of activities such as field trips, etc., we observe that a slightly higher share of schools do not send such invitations. However, where parents are invited, the frequency of invitation is similar to that for participation in the organization of school ceremonies. We also observe within-country variations in the frequency of requests for parents to organize social activities.

**Figure 8 Parents invited to organize social activities at school**



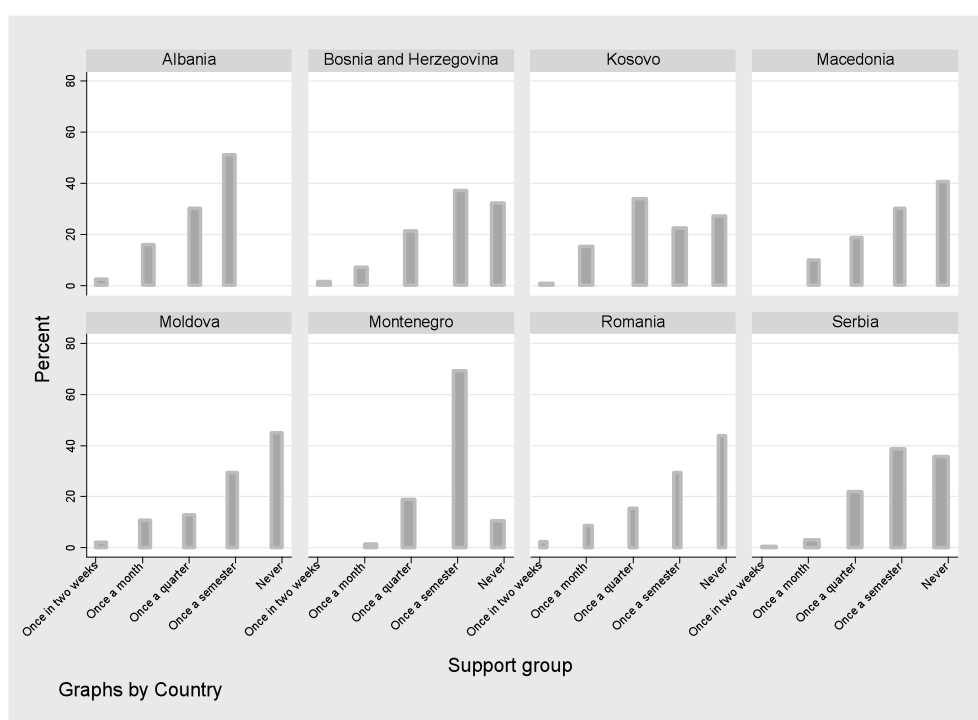
The share of schools offering opportunities for parental support related to teaching activities is much smaller than the share of schools inviting parents to participate in the organization of school ceremonies or social activities. Invitations to parents to provide teaching assistance in the previous academic year stood at 32% in Romania, in Serbia 46.50%, in Moldova 58.45%, in Bosnia and Herzegovina 58.65%, in Kosovo 58.67%, in Macedonia 65%, and in Montenegro 83.45% of schools. We learn that parents' contribution in this respect is requested in most cases once a semester. In Albania the non-response rate in the case on this item was extremely high at 64%.

**Figure 9 Invitation of parents to provide teaching assistance**



The frequency with which parents are asked to organize support groups varies considerably across countries. While in Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Serbia approximately 40% of schools did not solicit such support, in Montenegro nearly 90% of schools requested such support. However, even in this case, the frequency of such requests was generally low (once a semester).

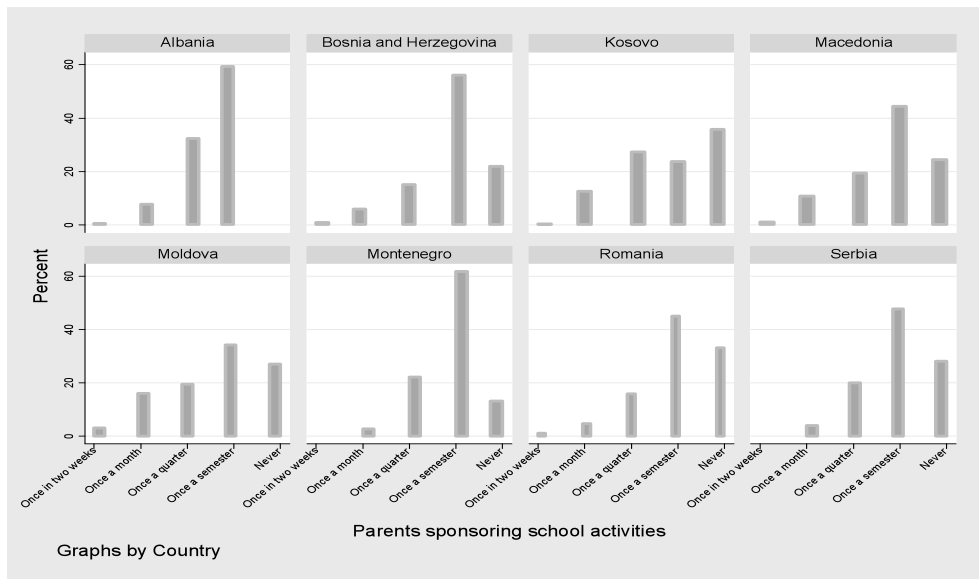
**Figure 10 Invitation of parents to organize support groups**



A surprising result is that a significant share of schools in most countries did not request parents to sponsor school activities: 35,56% in Kosovo, 32,99% in Romania, 27,50% in Serbia, 26,69% in Moldova, 24% in Macedonia, 21,94% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 13,10% in Montenegro. Also, the frequency

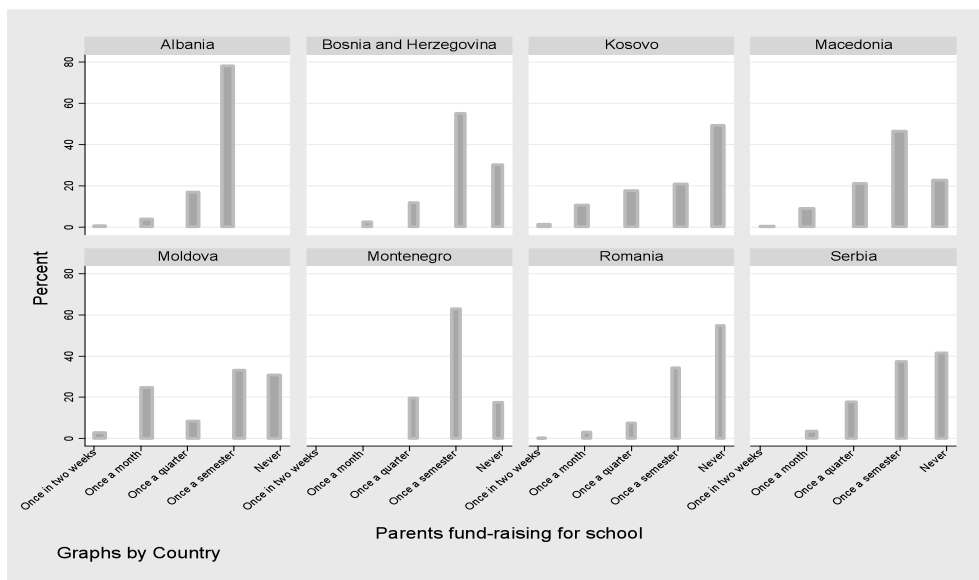
of supporting school activities is low: generally once a semester in all countries, except in Kosovo where it is once a quarter.

**Figure 11 Invitation of parents to sponsor school activities**



In contrast to the results on the incidence and frequency of inviting parents to sponsor school activities, requests to fund-raise are relatively high. For instance, in Albania all schools request parents to raise funds once a semester, while in Romania nearly 58% of Principals report not extending such a request at all in the last academic year.

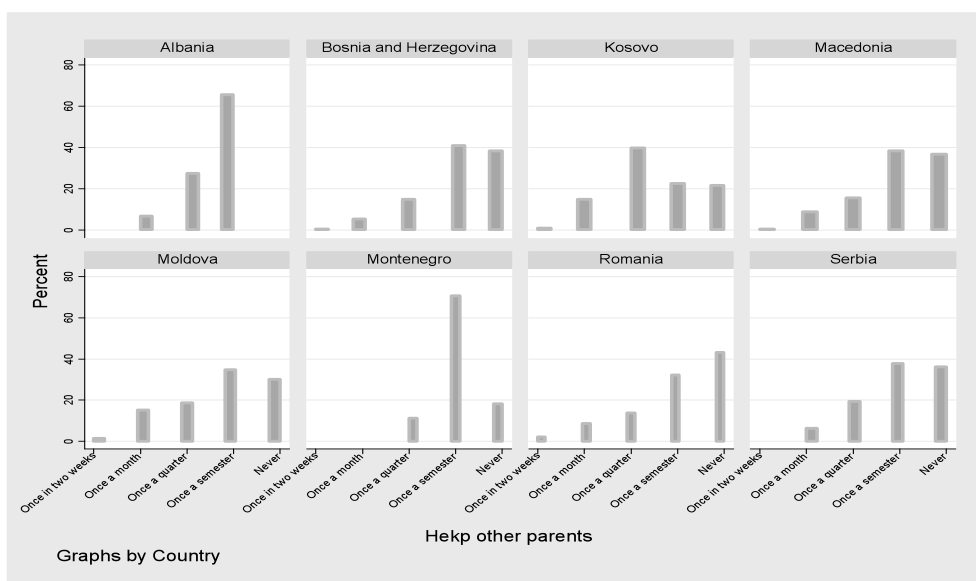
**Figure 12 Asking parents to fund-raise for school**



In all countries except Albania, teachers in over one third of schools initiated parental support groups. In the schools where parents are asked to participate in such groups it most often takes place once a semester.

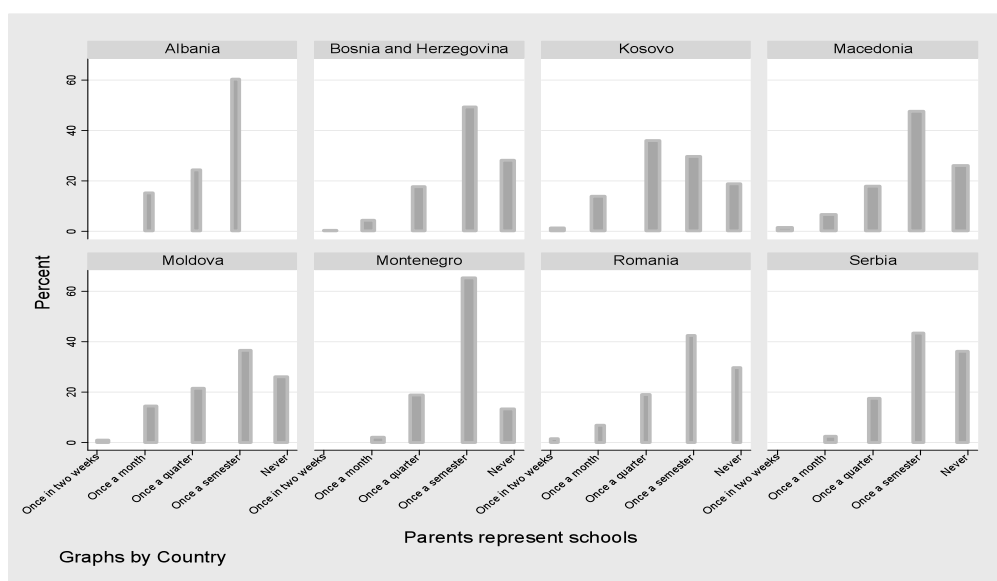


**Figure 13 Asking parents to help other parents support their children**



In general parents are requested to represent the school once a semester. The countries in which schools request such representation least often are Romania (with slightly over 42% never extending such a request), Serbia and Macedonia (each with nearly 40% of schools), and Moldova (with over 30% of schools).

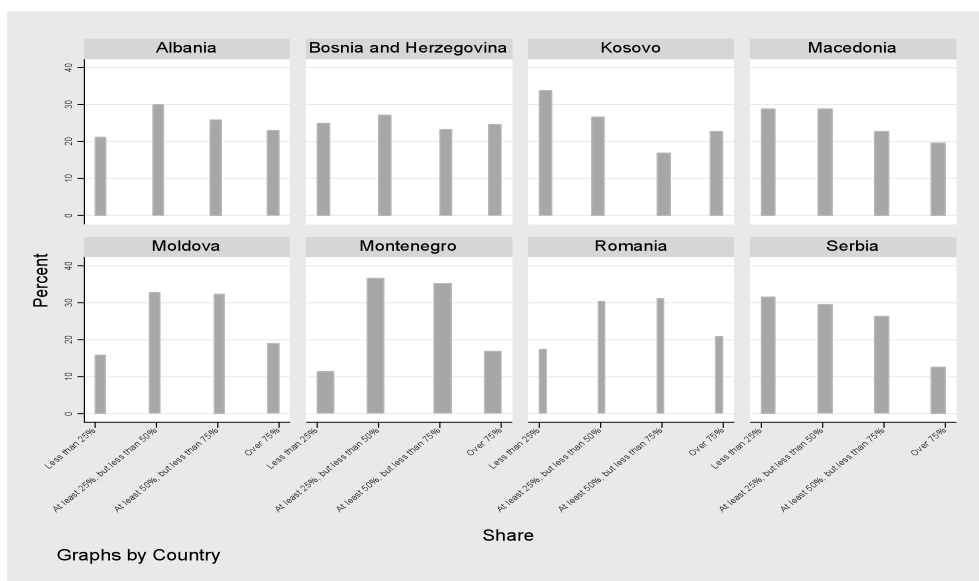
**Figure 14 Invitation of parents to represent school**



## Share of parents engaged in the most successful school activities

In the next stage we asked School Principals to estimate the extent of parental involvement in the activities of their schools. The request was extended in two steps. First, we asked Principals to identify the most successful school activities undertaken in the last year with the involvement of parents. School Principals were then invited to identify the share of parents that actively participated in these activities. The results indicate large in-country differences in the effectiveness with which parents were engaged in the most successful school activities. This finding indicates important heterogeneity in the success with which schools engage parents in their school activities. This conclusion is valid for all participating countries.

Figure 15 Share of parents engaged in the most successful school activity





## **Chapter 2: Home-school communication**

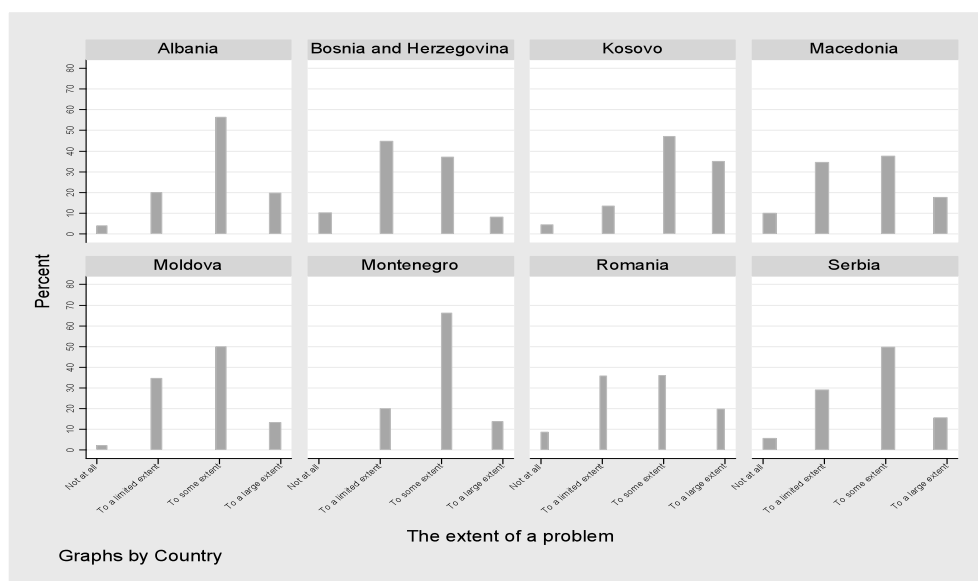
In this chapter we report the findings on the second dimension of the role played by school leadership in furthering parental participation in school life, namely home-school communication. There are many different factors that influence the quantity and quality of home-school communication but, given the focus of the survey, we focus on stakeholder-related factors exclusively, more precisely parents, teachers and Principals.

### **Barriers to parental participation in school life**

As mentioned above, this section of the survey was meant to shed light on barriers related to communication parents and teachers. Concerning barriers related to parents, a multiple-choice question was formulated including three measures: parents' lack of interest, their limited time to inform themselves about school-related matters, and poor communication skills. Three factors were included for barriers related to teachers: teachers' lack of interest, their workload, and their lack of training to engage with parents. To assess the interaction of these two groups we also included two relational measures, namely limitations in parents' and teachers' communication with each other, and the possibility of a conflictual atmosphere between parents and teachers.

Figure 16 indicates that the majority of School Principals in our study countries, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, consider parents' lack of interest in communication with the school as an important barrier to meaningful home-school communication.

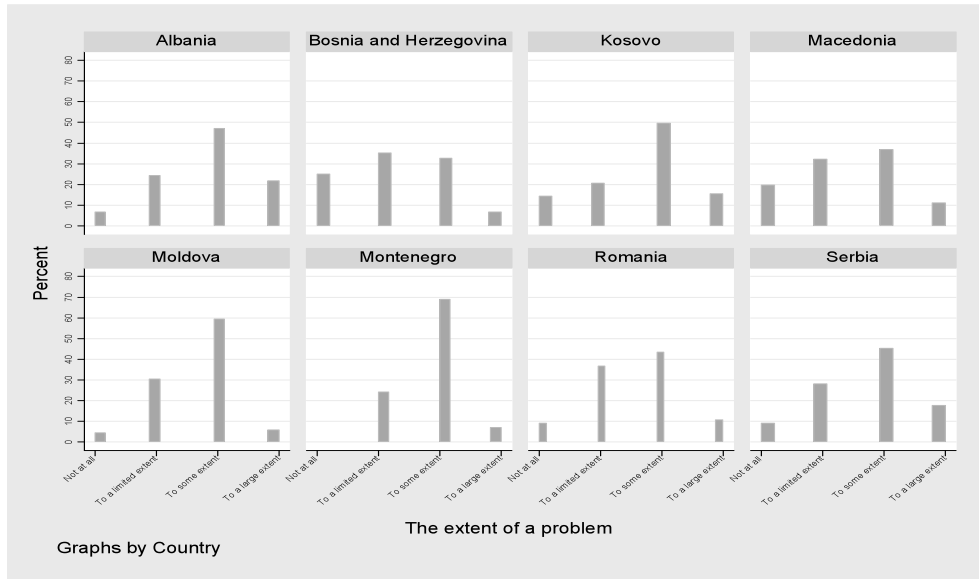
**Figure 16 Parents' lack of interest as a barrier to communication with school**



Nevertheless, the extent to which Principals consider this a barrier varies considerably across countries. Thus while over three-fourths of School Principals in Kosovo (82%), Montenegro (80%) and Albania (76%) consider parents' lack of interest in communication with the school to be a problem to some or a large extent, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, nearly 55% of School Principals do not consider it a problem or only to a limited extent.

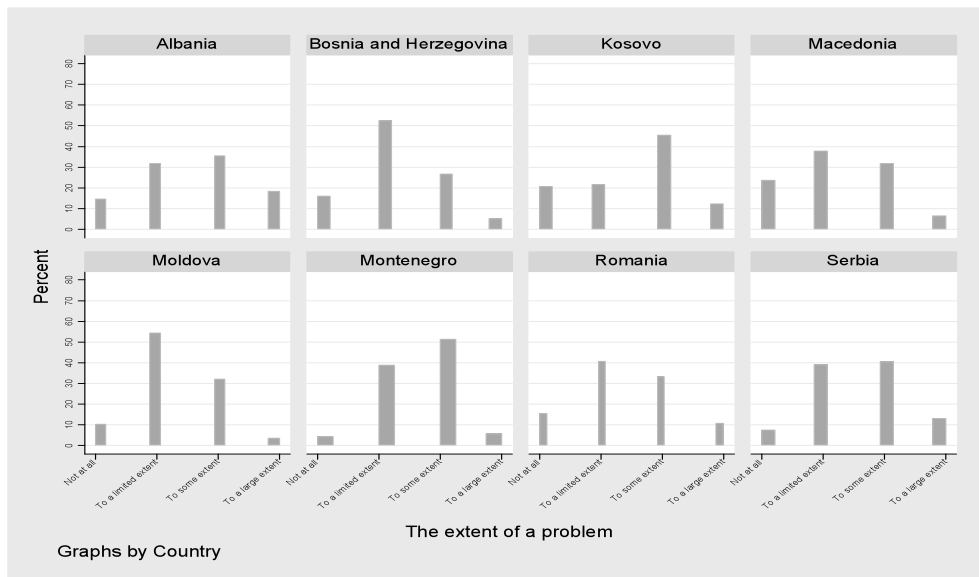
When considering parents' limited time, School Principals' responses indicate that this is regarded as an important barrier to home-school communication. However, there are important cross-country variations. In Montenegro 75.86% of School Principals consider parents' limited time to be a barrier to some or a large extent. This share is 69% for Albania, 65.18% for Kosovo, and 62.81% for Serbia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina 60.43% of School Principals consider parents' limited time to be an important problem.

**Figure 17 Parents' limited time as a barrier to getting informed about school issues**



Compared to the findings on the perceived levels of parent interest and time to communicate with the school, School Principals consider parents' lack of communication skills to be a limiting factor to a lesser extent. In fact, the data seems to suggest that there is a wide variation in Principals' perceptions in this respect. This might be associated with different individual characteristics of parents, which points to the importance of analyzing these findings in further detail. Figure 18 shows that values/responses are not concentrated in the extreme values, but instead are either spread over the four categories or are more neutral.

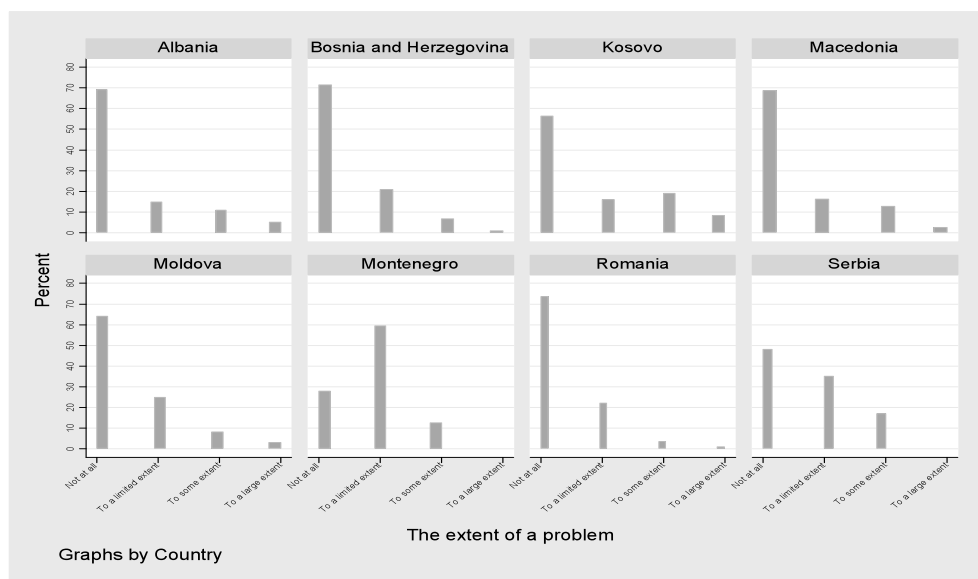
**Figure 18 Parents' lack of communication skills as a barrier**



The success of efforts to establish meaningful home-school communication is also considered to be also subject to how teachers relate to and engages in communication with parents. Therefore we also asked School Principals about their perceptions of teachers' level of interest in communicating with parents and whether they thought this was a barrier to home-school communication. Overall, the responses suggest that Principals view this to be a much less significant barrier compared to parent-related factors. If we look, for instance, at perceptions of the extent of parents' lack of interest in commu-

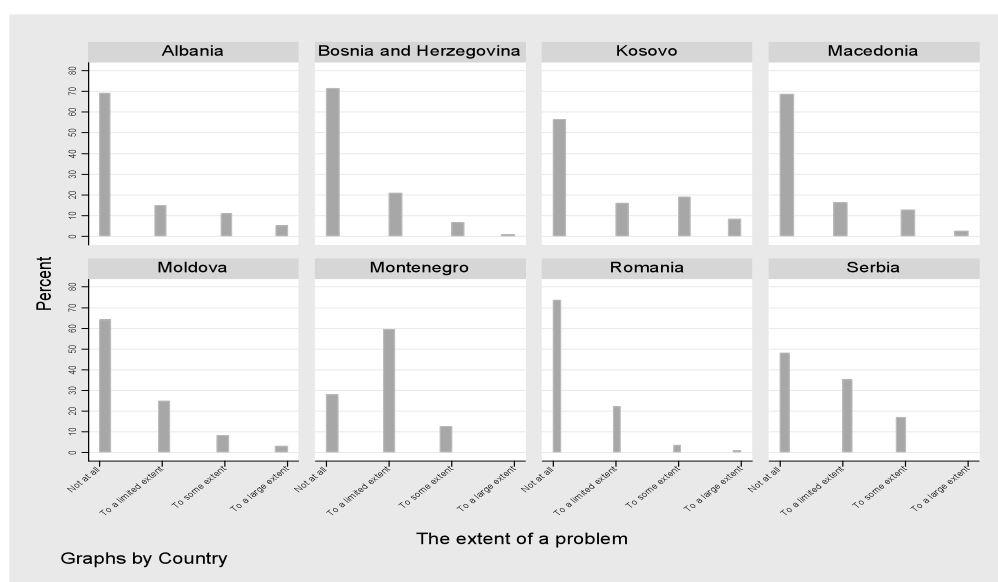
nicating with schools in the case of teachers' high ranking countries, i.e. Kosovo (57.66%), Montenegro (56.94%), Albania (53.72%) and Serbia (53.50%), score considerably lower.

**Figure 19 Lack of teachers' interest as a barrier to communication with parents**



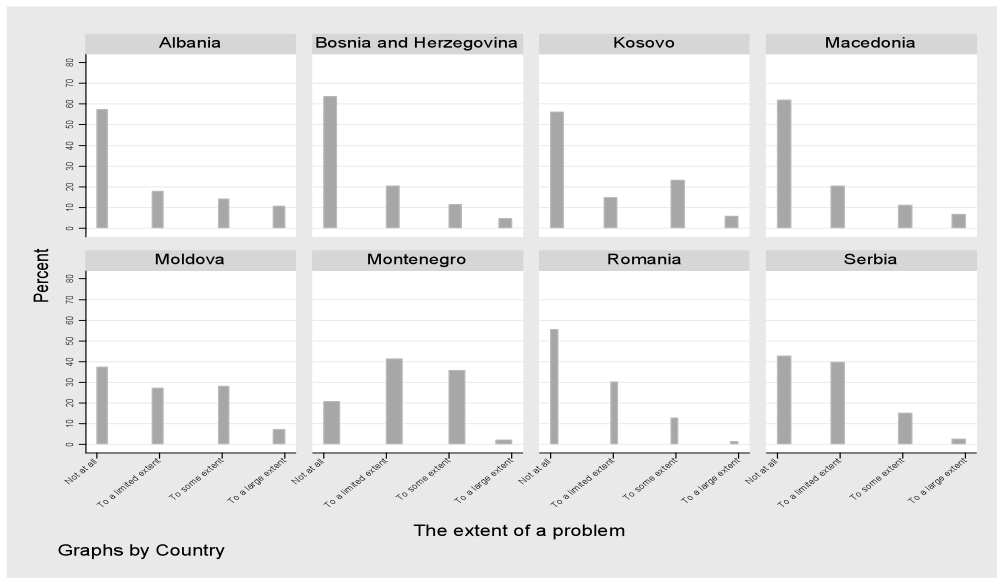
Except in Moldova and Montenegro, School Principals consider teachers' workload as a possible barrier to communication with parents to be a problem at all or to be a problem only to a limited extent. It appears that, by and large, School Principals acknowledge the efforts made in their education reform process to ensure that teachers have sufficient time resources to communicate with parents as required.

**Figure 20 Teachers' workload as a barrier to home-school communication**



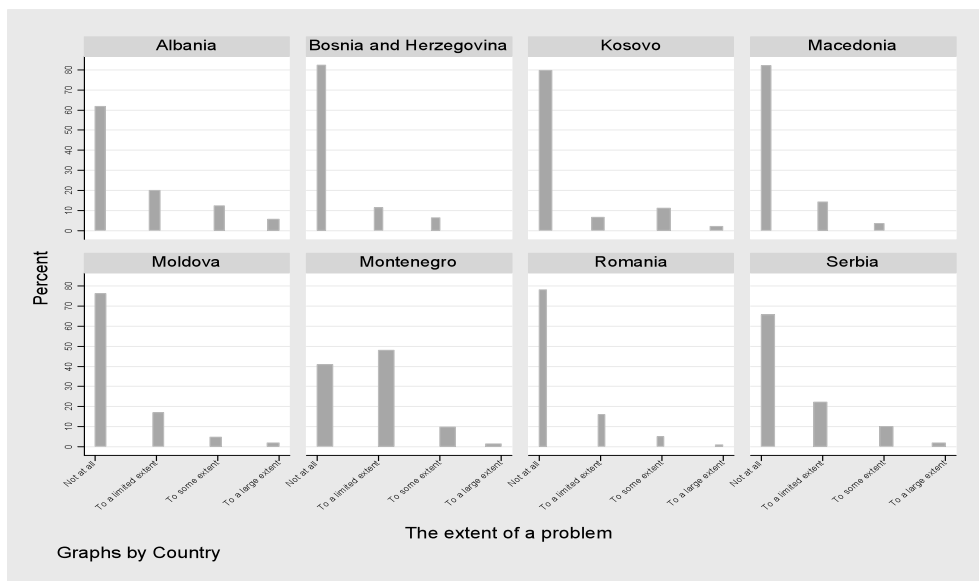
Teachers' training to interact with parents is also viewed as satisfactory suggesting that, according to School Principals, teachers are prepared to undertake meaningful communication with parents. We can observe that Principals in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro are the most critical of the level of teachers' preparedness to communicate with parents.

**Figure 21 Teachers' lack of training to engage with parents as a barrier**



Concerning the ability of parents and teachers to communicate with each other, the results presented in Figure 21 show that School Principals in all countries under focus consider it not to be a problem at all or to be only marginally a problem.

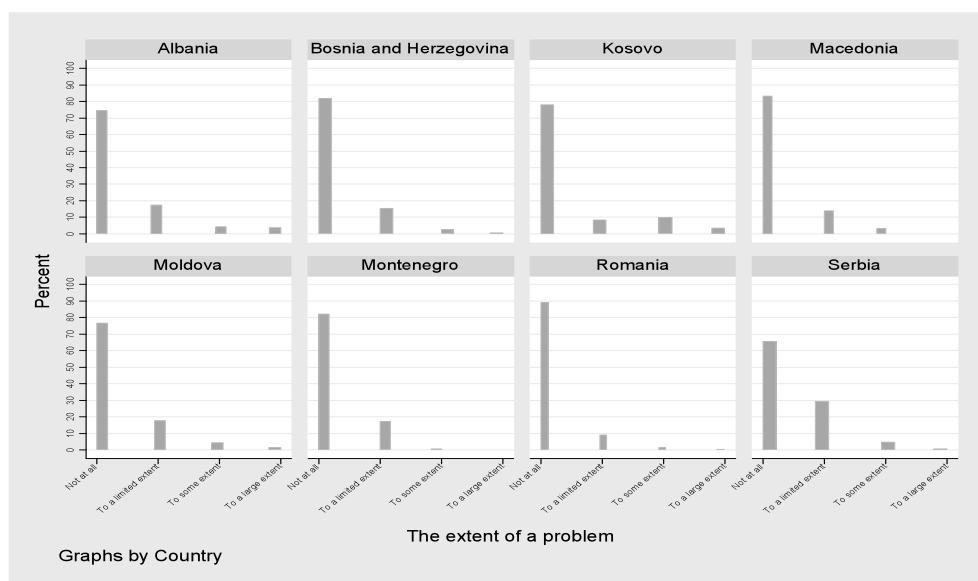
**Figure 22 Parents and teachers' inability to communicate with each other as a barrier**



Similar results were found when inquiring about conflicts between parents and the school as a potential barrier to home-school communication. As Figure 22 shows, in the view of School Principals the general atmosphere between parents and the school is not at all or only slightly conflictual. The most critical in this respect were Principals from Serbia.



**Figure 23 Overall conflictual atmosphere between parents and school**



In conclusion, according to School Principals, once parents and teachers begin communicating there are virtually no problems. However, we have also learned that such sustained communication is seriously limited by parents' lack of interest, time and communication skills and to a considerably lesser extent by teachers' interest, workload and communication skills.

After discussing School Principals' perceptions of the potential barriers to the establishment of meaningful home-school communication, we now turn our attention to the efforts made by schools to involve parents in school life by means of communication.

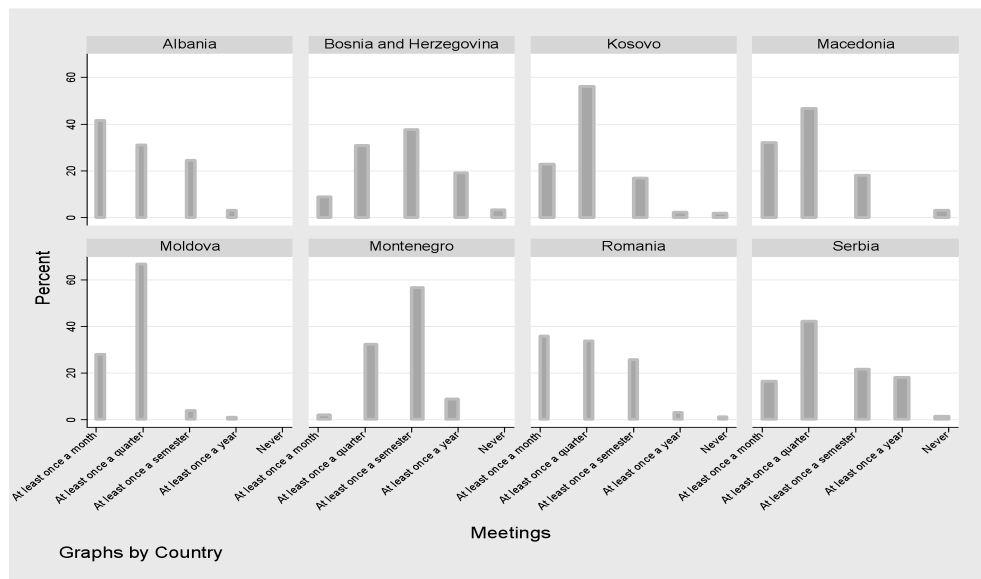
## Home-school communication initiated by school

One of the primary ways in which parents can be involved in school life is through periodical communication initiated by the school. The current survey identified nine possible methods of communication: (1) School Principal-parents meetings, (2) written evaluation sent to parents about pupils' performance, (3) information provided to parents on curriculum, (4) information provided to parents on school events and activities, (5) information provided to parents on school policies and regulations, (6) school newsletter sent to parents, (7) home visits, (8) surveys to find out parents' opinions and attitudes, and (9) open door days.

Findings on School Principal-parents meetings indicate that in the countries under study there are very few or no schools that did not organize such meetings at all. The countries where Principals report not having organized any such meetings in the previous school year are Montenegro (8.97%) and Macedonia (3.02%). The countries where such meetings were organized most often (at least once a month) are Albania (41.47%), Romania (35.89%) and Macedonia (32.16%). The majority of schools in Kosovo (56.25%), Macedonia (46.73%), Moldova (66.78%) and Serbia (42.21%) organize such meetings on a quarterly basis. In the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro the largest shares of schools, 37.71% and 56.55% respectively, organize School Principal-parents meetings on a semestral basis. These

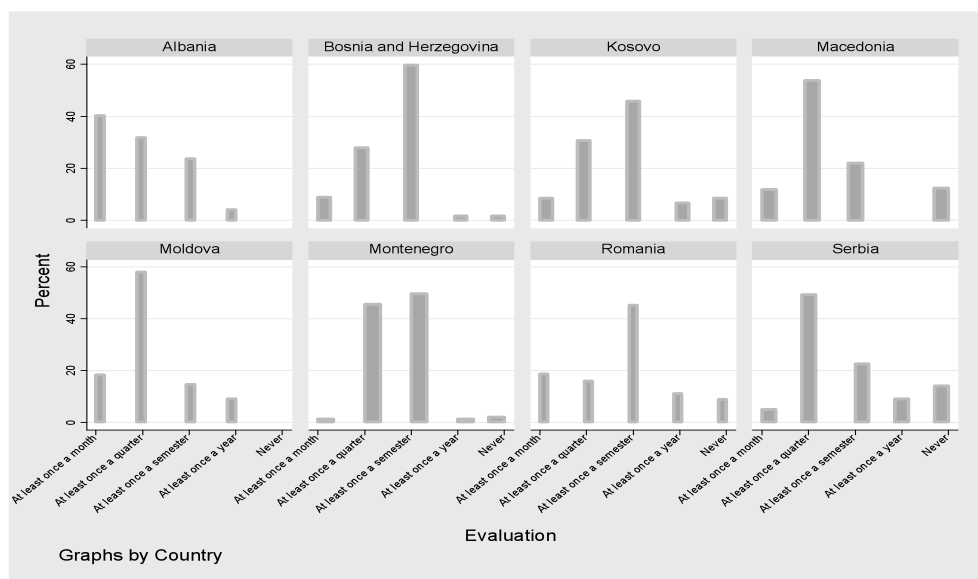
findings indicate that while School Principal-parents meetings have become an established method of communication between Principals and parents, there is still large variation in the frequency of such meetings both within and across countries.

**Figure 24 Frequency of School Principal-parents meetings**



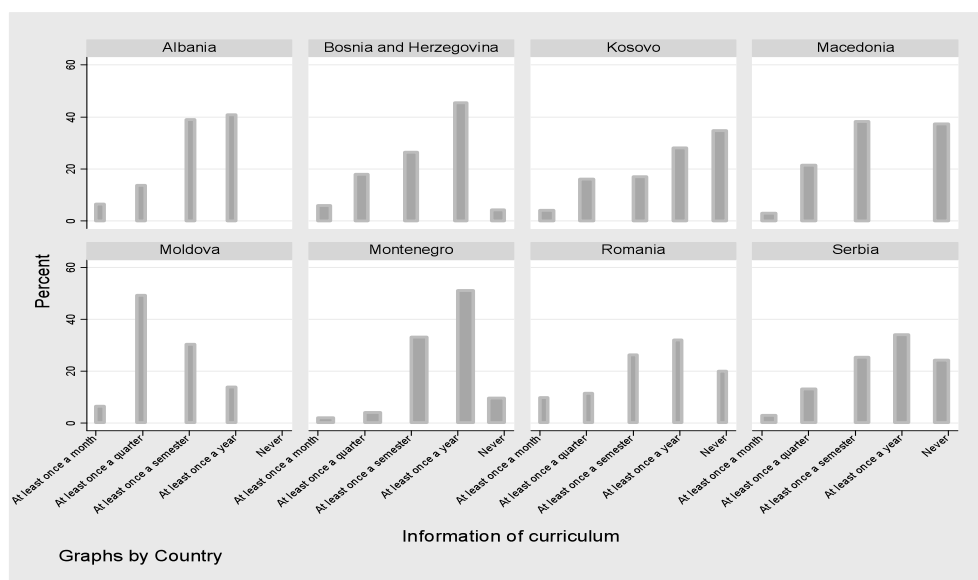
One way to inform parents about their children’s developmental and educational outcome is to provide them with regular written evaluation reports. According to School Principals in Albania and Moldova, such reports are sent by all schools. In contrast, written evaluation reports were not used in the last school year by 14.07% of schools in Serbia, 12.31% in Macedonia, 8.8% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 9% in Romania, 8.44% in Kosovo and 1.8% in Montenegro. Turning to the frequency of such reports, we learn that 40.34% of schools in Albania write such reports at least once a month, followed by Moldova with 18.37% and Macedonia with 11.79%. The smallest number of schools with monthly reporting can be observed in the case of Montenegro, where only 1.38% of schools issue such reports on a monthly basis.

**Figure 25 Frequency of written evaluation sent to parents on pupils' performance**



Regarding information provided to parents on school curricula, we observe important cross-country variations. No such information was provided to parents in 36.5% of schools in Macedonia, 34.67% in Kosovo, 24% in Serbia, 19.85% in Romania, 9.66% in Montenegro, and 4.42% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Albania and Moldova, all School Principals reported having provided parents with information on school curriculum in the last academic year.

**Figure 26 Frequency of information provided to parents on curriculum**

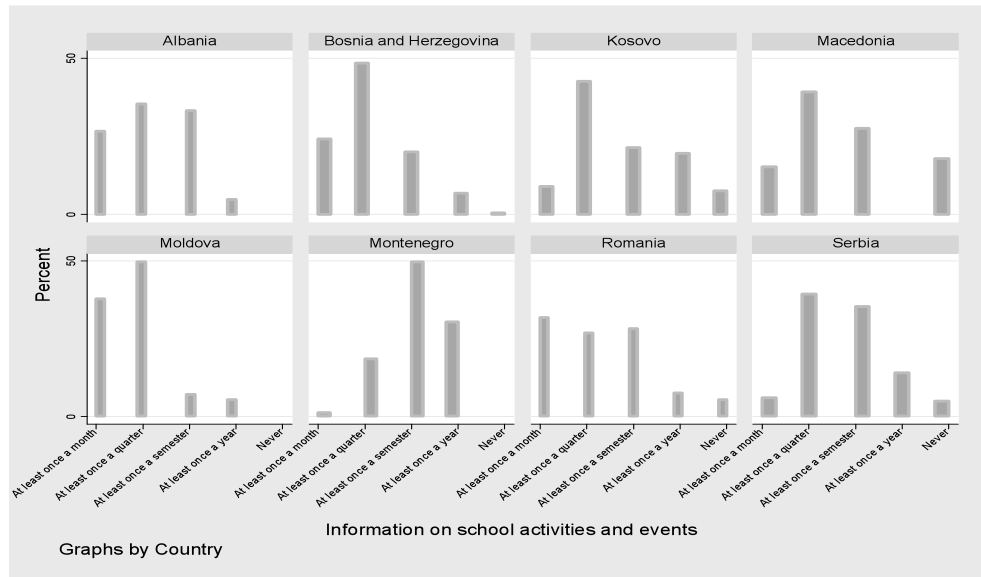


Information on school events and activities is shared with parents at least once a year in Albania, Moldova, and Montenegro. In contrast, 17.5% of schools in Macedonia, 7.56% in Kosovo, 5.37% in Romania and 5% in Serbia did not share such information at all in the last academic year.

The frequency with which such information is shared also varies considerably among countries. Thus while 37.84% of schools in Moldova, 31.49 in Romania, 26.33% in Albania and 24% in Bosnia and

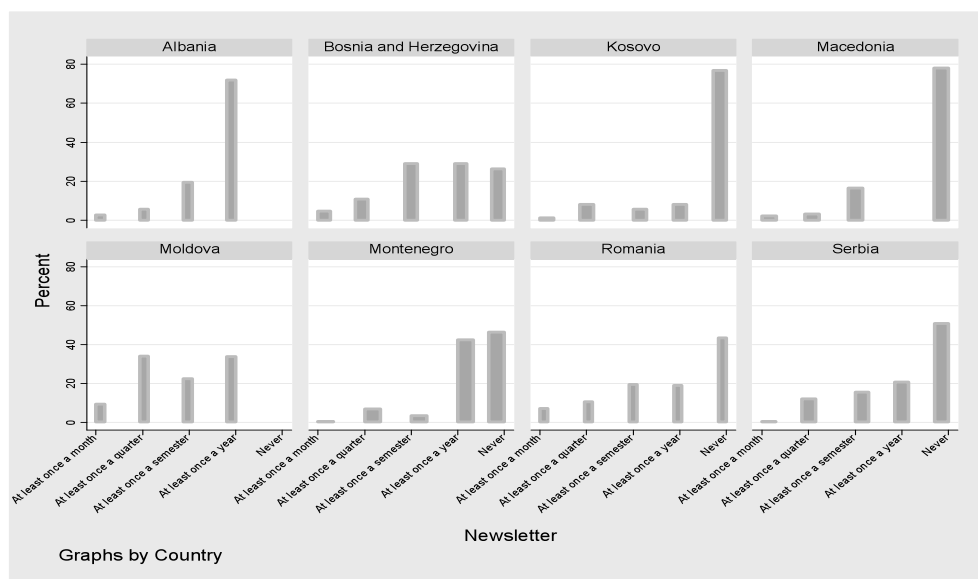
Herzegovina share such information at least once a month, this practice was identified by only 15% of schools in Macedonia, 8.89% in Kosovo, 6% in Serbia and 1.38% in Montenegro. In other words, while in Romania most schools communicate with parents, on average, at least once a month, and in Montenegro most schools provide information on school events and activities once a semester, schools in the other countries inform parents of school events and activities at least once a quarter.

**Figure 27 Frequency of information sent to parents on school events and activities**



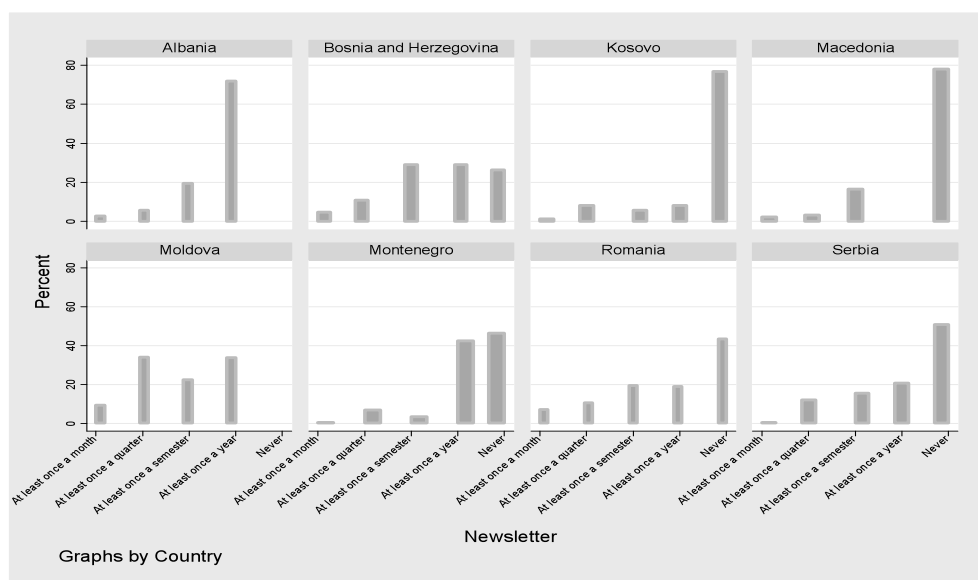
Another major step towards involving parents in school life is to share information on school policies and regulations. Although it would seem a reasonable expectation to provide such information to all parents at least once a year, the survey findings reveal that in the case of six countries there are schools that did not do so in the last academic year. As shown in Figure 28, the share of such schools is 25% in Macedonia, 14% in Serbia, 12.89% in Kosovo, 7% in Romania, 3.45% in Moldova and 2.95% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The frequency of communication of such policies and regulations is subject to the frequency with which the policies and regulations are updated. The important variations both within and across countries are partly attributable to this. At the same time, while in 55% of schools in Moldova such updates take place quarterly, in 65.52% of schools in Montenegro this happens once a year.

**Figure 28 Frequency of information provision on school policies and regulations**



School newsletters to inform parents about school life are only used by all schools only in Albania and Moldova. Even in these cases we observe that 67.67% of schools in Albania send newsletters once a year only, while in 64.19% of schools in Moldova this happens at least once a semester. In the case of the other countries under study we learn that 76.44% of schools in Kosovo, 73.50% in Macedonia, 50% in Serbia, 46.21% in Montenegro, 42.69% in Romania and 25.74% in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not send newsletters to parents at all.

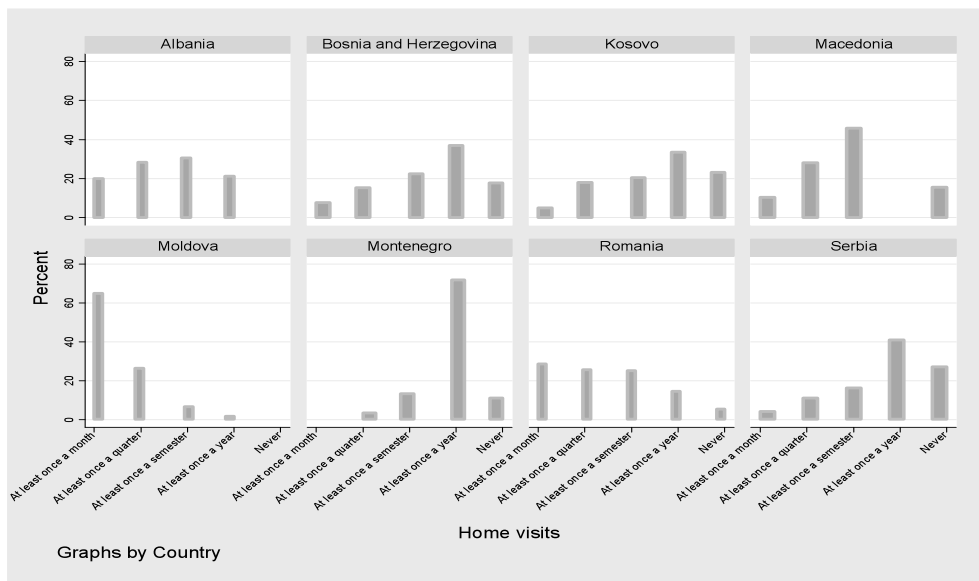
**Figure 29 Frequency of newsletters sent to parents**



Another effective way to ensure home-school communication is to have teachers pay regular home visits. However, home visits are time-intensive for teachers and this limits their utility as a sustained method of communication. However, the data presented in Figure 30 indicates that important efforts are made to support home visits by teachers. Although the gathered information does not include the purpose of the visits or the share of pupils visited, the fact that the majority of schools in all countries

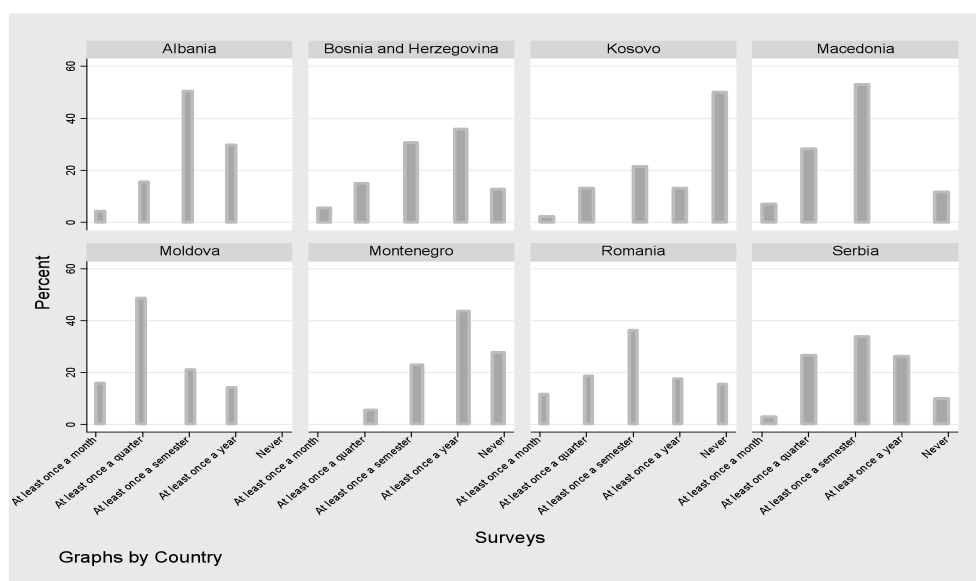
under se this mechanism might be interpreted as a positive outcome. Nevertheless, we need to note that in 25.5% of schools in Serbia, 22.67% in Kosovo, 16.88% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 15% in Macedonia no home visits were paid at all in the last academic year.

**Figure 30 Frequency of home visits**



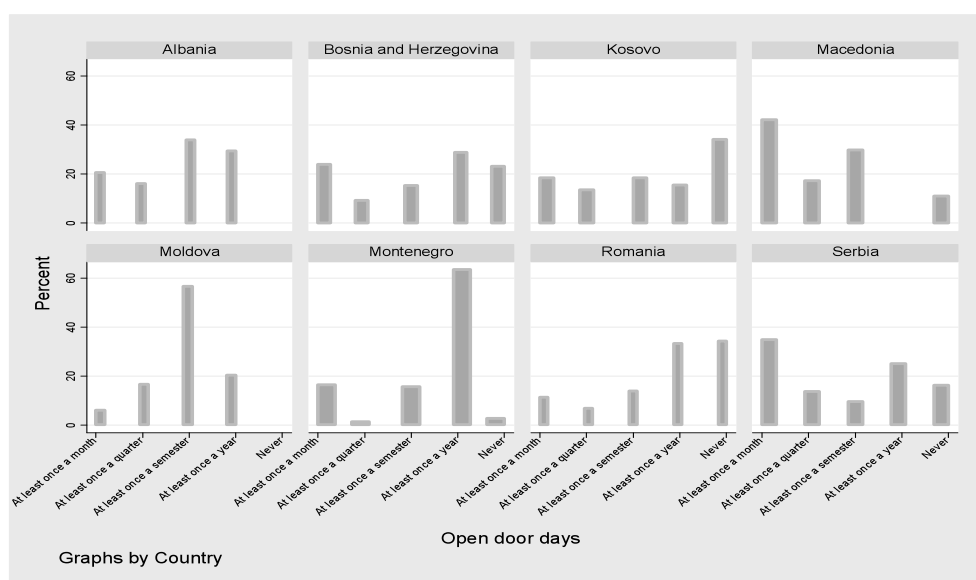
In what concerns surveys to find out parents’ opinions and attitudes, they are used most frequently in Albania, Macedonia and Moldova. On the other hand, parent surveys were not at all used in 48.89% of schools in Kosovo and 27.59% in Montenegro. In terms of frequency, with the exception of Moldova, surveys are mostly used on a semester or yearly basis.

**Figure 31 Frequency of surveys to find out parents' opinions and attitudes**



Finally, we asked School Principals about the practice of organizing school open days to offer parents the opportunity to visit the learning environment in which their children study and to interact with teachers and other parents in an informal way. Although School Principals report that in the large majority of schools such open days have been organized, we observe important cross-country variations. For instance, in Albania and Moldova all schools organized such events in the last academic year, with a large proportion of School Principals (36% and 38.8% respectively) indicating that they did so at least once a semester. In Macedonia the largest share of School Principals (42.5%) reported to have organized open days at least once a month but 12.8% of schools did not have this practice at all. Non-use of open days was reported in five other countries; in almost one-third of schools in Romania and Kosovo and in about one-fifth of schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina no such open days were organized at all.

**Figure 32 Frequency of open door days**



These findings indicate that while there is some school-home communication, this tends to happen infrequently or rarely.

## School strategy to communicate with parents

Not only was the survey meant to provide information on the actions undertaken by schools in SEE countries to communicate with parents, it also tried to discover whether these actions are part of a strategy of communication or are simply undertaken on a need basis. Consequently, we asked School Principals about their schools' home-school communication strategies, if any.

When asked whether they had a school strategy to communicate with parents, almost all School Principals gave an affirmative answer. However, when it came to identifying at least one such communication strategy, a considerably smaller percentage of Principals actually did so.

**Table 5 Approach to communication with parents identified by Principals**

Country	Method of communication with parents identified		Total
	Yes	No	
Albania	206 68.67%	94 31.33%	300 100.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina	204 86.08%	33 13.92%	237 100.00
Kosovo	145 64.44%	80 35.56%	225 100.00
Macedonia	165 82.50%	35 17.50%	200 100.00
Moldova	241 81.42%	55 18.58%	296 100.00
Montenegro	8 5.52%	137 94.48%	145 100.00
Romania	563 84.03%	107 15.97%	670 100.00
Serbia	52 26.00%	148 74.00%	200 100.00
Total	1,584 69.69%	689 30.31%	2,273 100.00

Table 5 shows significant variations across the countries under study. While 86% of School Principals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 84% in Romania, 82.5% in Macedonia and 81.42% in Moldova named at least one approach, only 5.52% of School Principals in Montenegro did so. The second lowest rating country in this respect was Serbia with 26%.

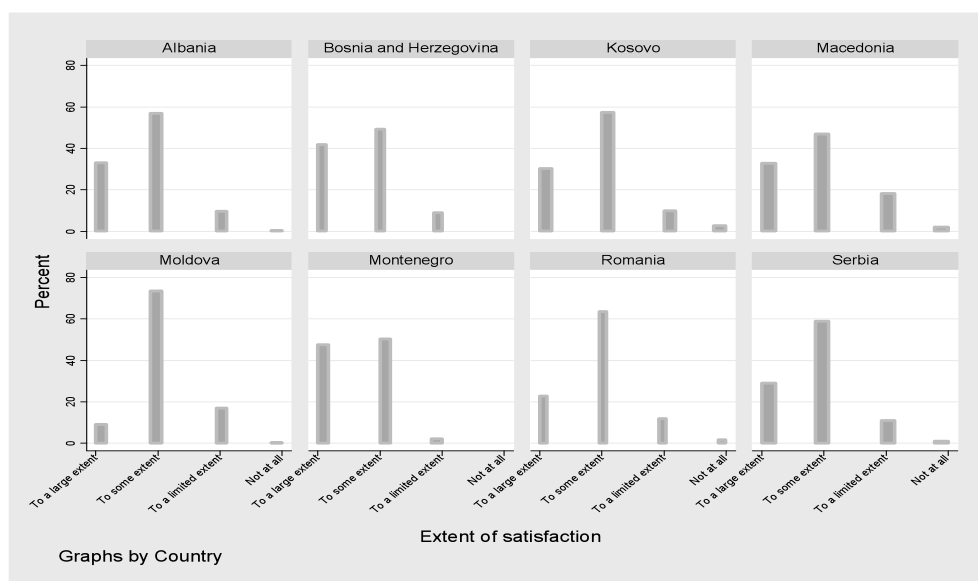


## Satisfaction with meetings with parents

School Principals' satisfaction with parent meetings organized by form and subject teachers was used as a proxy to evaluate their satisfaction with communication with parents.

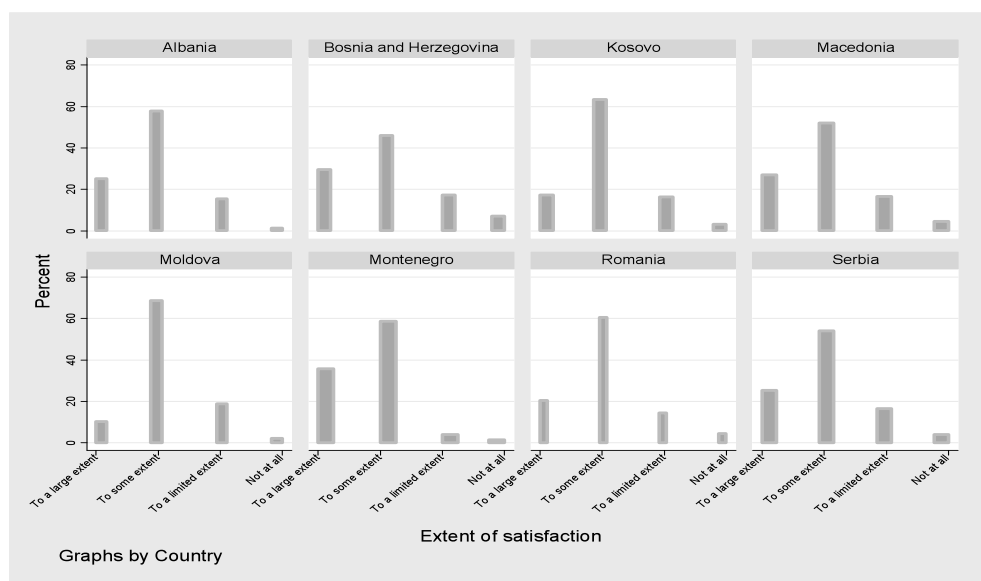
Form teacher-parent meetings, which the law states must be organized regularly in all countries, are regarded positively by School Principals in all countries. Nevertheless, they expressed limited satisfaction, suggesting that it would be important to inquire into the possibilities of improving the effectiveness of such meetings.

**Figure 33 Principals' satisfaction with parent meetings organized by form teachers**



Similar results are obtained in the case of meetings organized with parents by subject teachers (see Figure 34). More precisely, Principals express limited satisfaction with such meetings, while a minute share expresses absolute dissatisfaction. The majority of School Principals expressed limited satisfaction, seeming to indicate that while such meetings are effective, they deliver expected outcomes only to a limited extent.

**Figure 34 Principals' satisfaction with parent meetings organized by subject teachers**

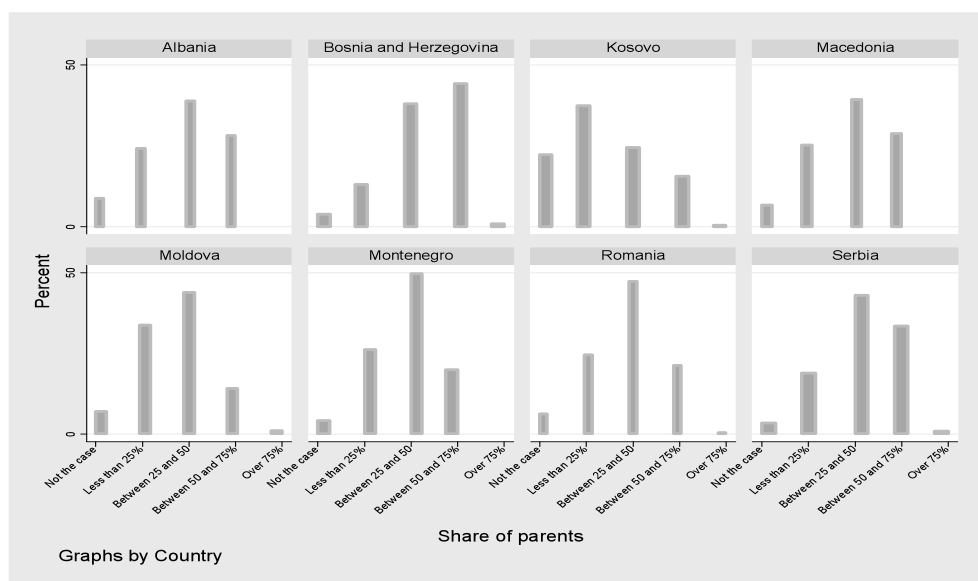


Importantly, in all countries, the large majority of School Principals perceive parent meetings held by form and subject teachers positively. This indicates the importance Principals attribute to teacher-parent communication from the point of view of sustaining home-school communication.

### Share of parents participating at school meetings

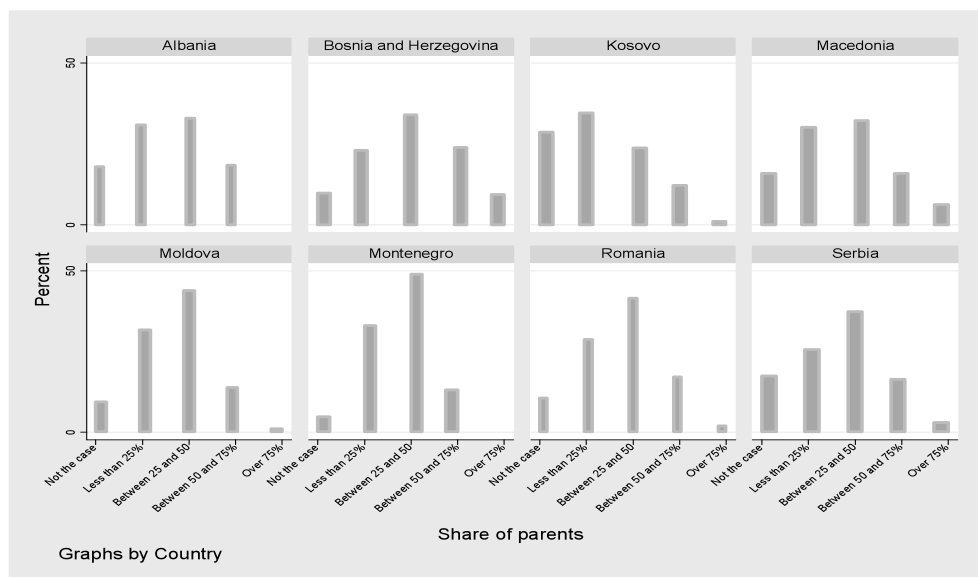
A factor that may limit the extent of School Principals' satisfaction with parent meetings is the level of parental participation at such meetings. Figure 36 shows the average share of parents that participated in form teacher-parent meetings in the last academic year. The first observation is that, according to School Principals, seldom do more than 75% of parents participate at such meetings. In fact, Principals estimate that parental participation at such meetings ranges between 25% and 50%. That is the case in Montenegro (where 49.66% of Principals responded in this way), Romania (47%), Moldova (43.92%), Serbia (43%), Macedonia (39%) and Albania (38.67%). A higher rate of parental participation was reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where 44.30% of School Principals said that parental participation was between 50% and 75%. In contrast, in Kosovo nearly 40% of School Principals reported parental participation to be less than 25%.

**Figure 35 Share of parents regularly engaged in form teacher–parents meetings**



In the case of subject teacher–parent meetings, the parental participation is assessed to be at rather similar rates. Again, the most-often mentioned participation rate is between 25% and 50% (Albania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia). The only exception is Kosovo where School Principals estimate that most often less than 25% of parents participate at subject teacher–parent meetings. It is also important to note that the incidence of such meetings in all countries is lower compared to that of form teacher–parent meetings.

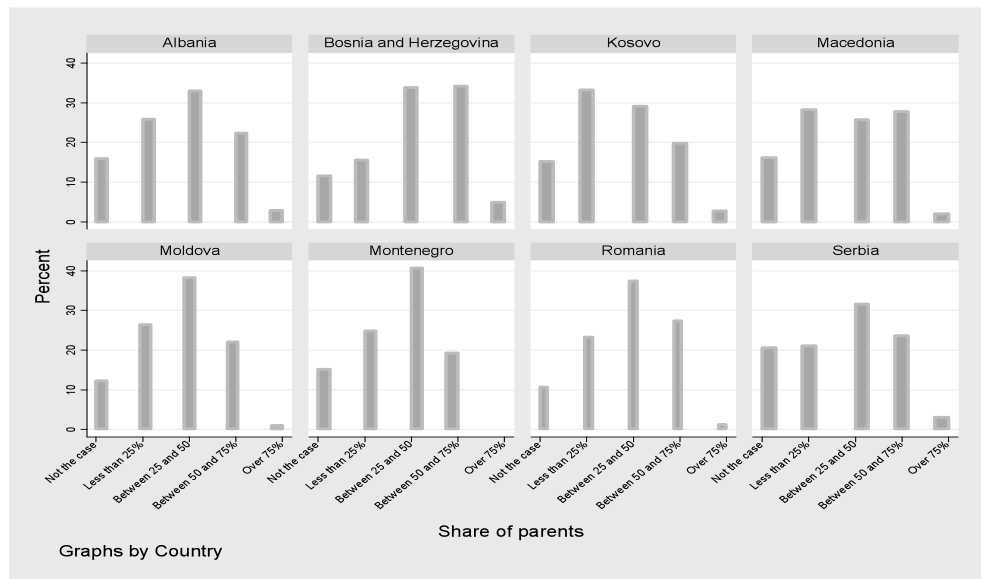
**Figure 36 Share of parents regularly engaged in subject teacher–parents meeting**



Looking at School Principal–parent meetings, we learn that no such meetings were organized in the last academic year in 20.50% of schools in Serbia, 16% in Macedonia, 15.17% in Montenegro, 15.11% in Kosovo, 15% in Albania, 12.16% in Moldova, 10.97% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 10.60% in Romania. In schools where such meetings were organized in the last academic year a share of 25% to 50% of parents tended to participate. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country where a slightly larger share

of Principals reported parental participation to be between 50% and 75%. In contrast, in Kosovo and Macedonia the largest share of Principals said that parental participation at School Principal–parent meetings was less than 25%.

**Figure 37 Share of parents regularly engaged in School Principal–parents meetings**



To sum up, we can state that there are important variations in the level of parental participation at meetings held by teachers and School Principals in all surveyed countries. What is common, however, is that only a very small share of Principals report over 75% participation. Further research, to find out which parents are systematically missing from such meetings, would be important.



## **Chapter 3: School support for parents to help their children in education**

In this chapter we present our findings on the third dimension of parental participation in school life: the extent and nature of support services that schools provide to parents so that they can help their children in education. Such services for parents offer a good opportunity for home-school communication. Once parents are invited to participate at school sessions on how to help their children in education, a venue of exchanging ideas is created, which is further strengthened by the actual participation of parents.

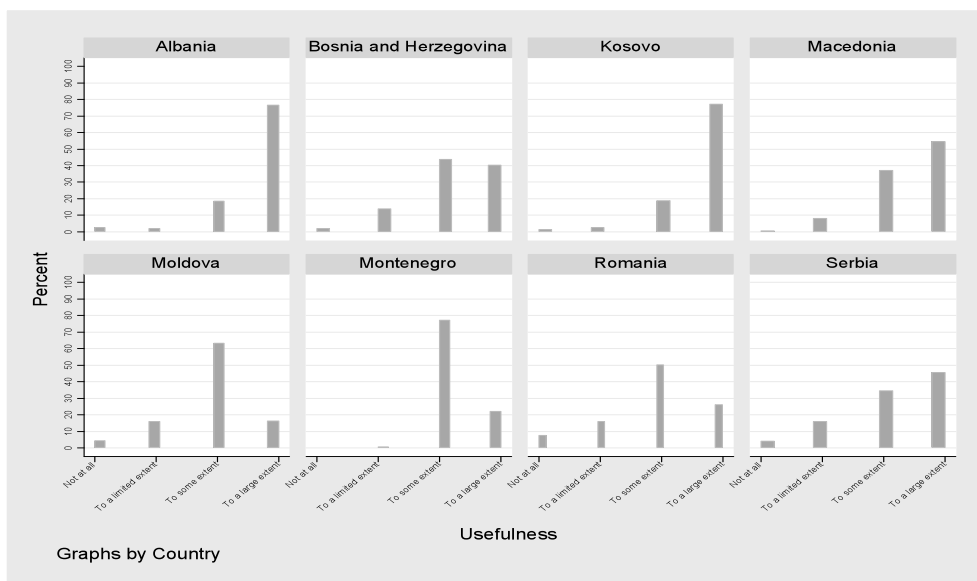
We asked for School Principals' perceptions of the potential benefits of such school support services from the point of view of pupils' educational performance. We then asked about the support services that were actually offered to parents by the respective schools in the last academic year. Finally, we inquired about the barriers met by School Principals in providing support services to parents.

### **Potential benefits of school support for parents to help their children in education**

Six items were included under the category of school support services for parents to improve pupils' performance in school: sessions to help parents assist their children with homework, materials provided to parents to assist their children with homework, materials provided to parents to help monitor their children's homework, information provided to parents on how to create a home learning environment, counseling service to parents, and issue-based parent support group.

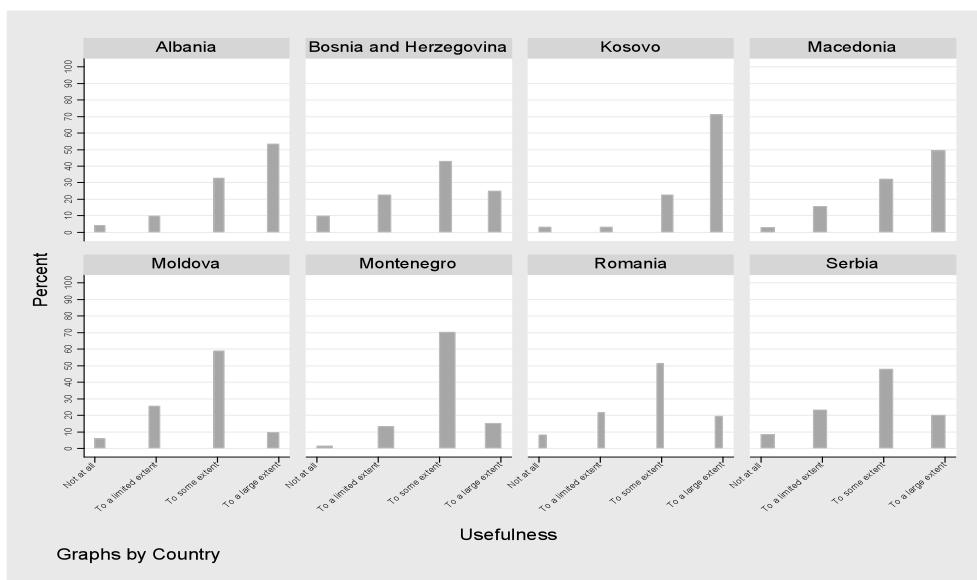
The results shown in Figure 38 indicate that School Principals consider sessions to help parents assist their children with homework to be a useful instrument to enhance pupils' educational attainment. However, we observe that there are important variations in the extent to which such sessions are considered useful. Thus, while 77.23% of School Principals in Kosovo, 76.67% in Albania, and 54% in Macedonia consider these sessions to be useful to a large extent, 77.24% of School Principals in Montenegro, 63.14% in Moldova and 50.3% in Romania consider them to be useful only to some extent.

**Figure 38 Importance of sessions helping parents assist their children with homework**



An alternative, possibly less time-consuming and therefore more accessible way for parents to benefit from school services on parenting is through receiving materials describing methods and ways of assisting children with homework. In Figure 39 we present our findings on School Principals' perceptions of the usefulness of providing such materials to parents. Principals generally agree that providing such materials is useful, less so than providing sessions. Principals in Kosovo seem to be the most convinced about the usefulness of materials provided to parents on how to assist their children with homework, with 71.11% reporting that such materials are useful to a large extent.

**Figure 39 Importance of materials helping parents assist their children with homework**



Regarding the importance of providing parents with materials to help them monitor their children's homework, overall we observe that the provision of such materials is regarded to be less useful than sessions or materials helping parents assist their children with homework.

**Figure 40 Usefulness of materials helping parents monitor their children’s homework**

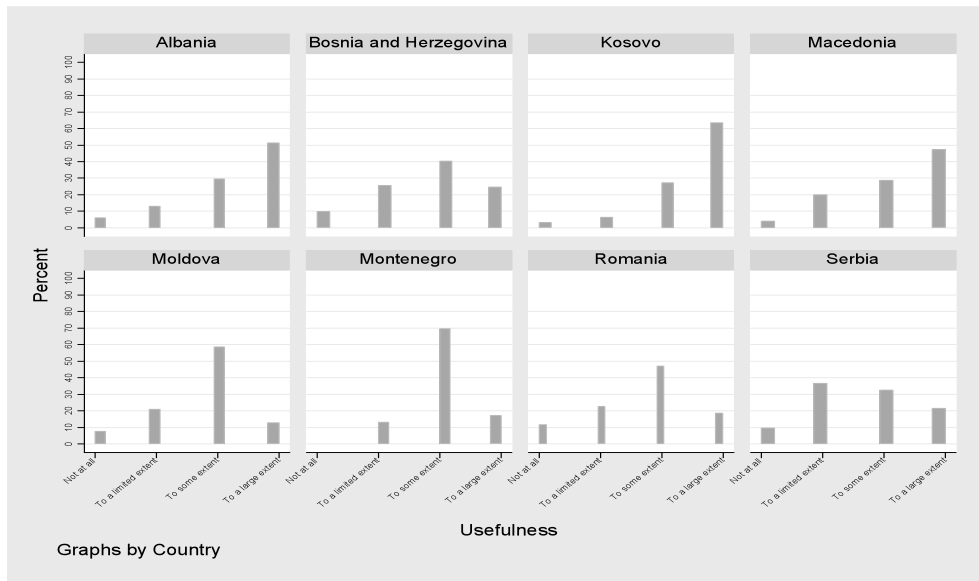
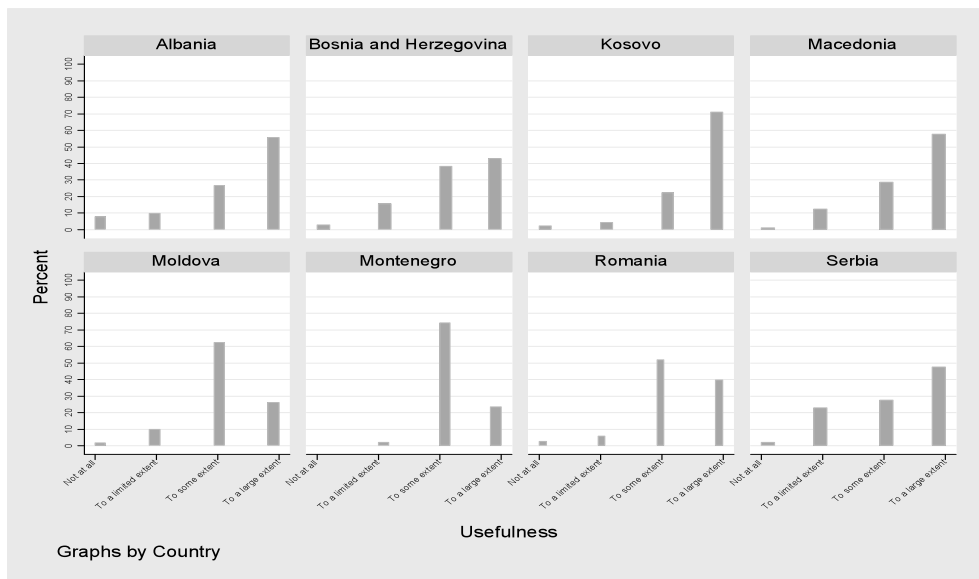


Figure 41 shows the usefulness, in the view of Principals, of school support for parents to create a home learning environment for their children. In all countries under study, School Principals consider the provision of information to parents on how to create a home learning environment to be useful.

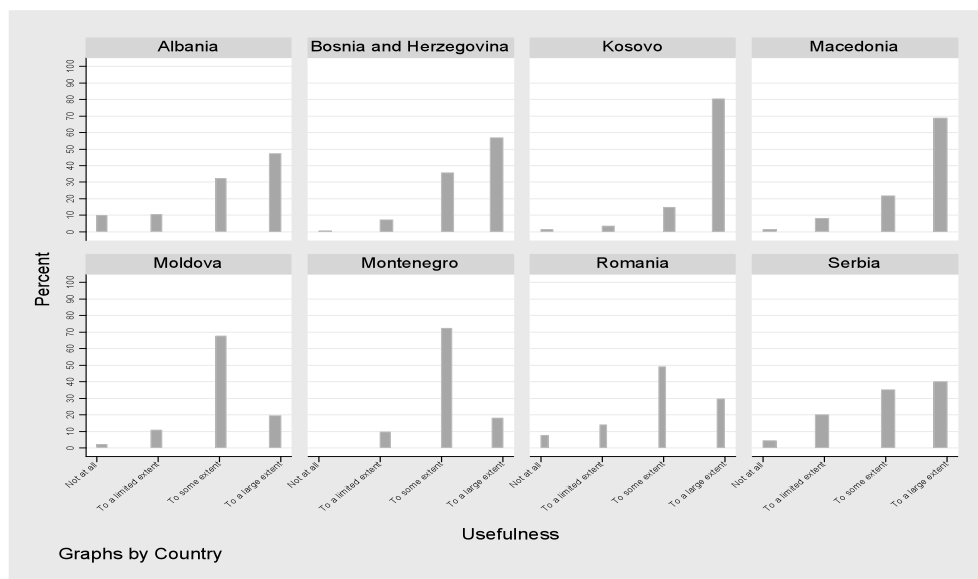
**Figure 41 Importance of information helping parents create a home learning environment**



Besides the services that schools can provide to parents (discussed above), there is also the possibility of creating individualized support services, for instance under the form of counseling. In Figure 42 we present our findings on the usefulness of such services as perceived by Principals. The results indicate that such services are regarded positively, yet we note that (as with the other parenting services) the extent of usefulness varies considerably among countries. Thus, while the largest share of Principals in Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Serbia consider counseling services to be useful to a large extent, the largest share of Principals in Montenegro, Moldova, and Romania find it useful only to some extent. At the same time, in all countries except Montenegro there is a small share of Principals who consider that such services are not useful at all.

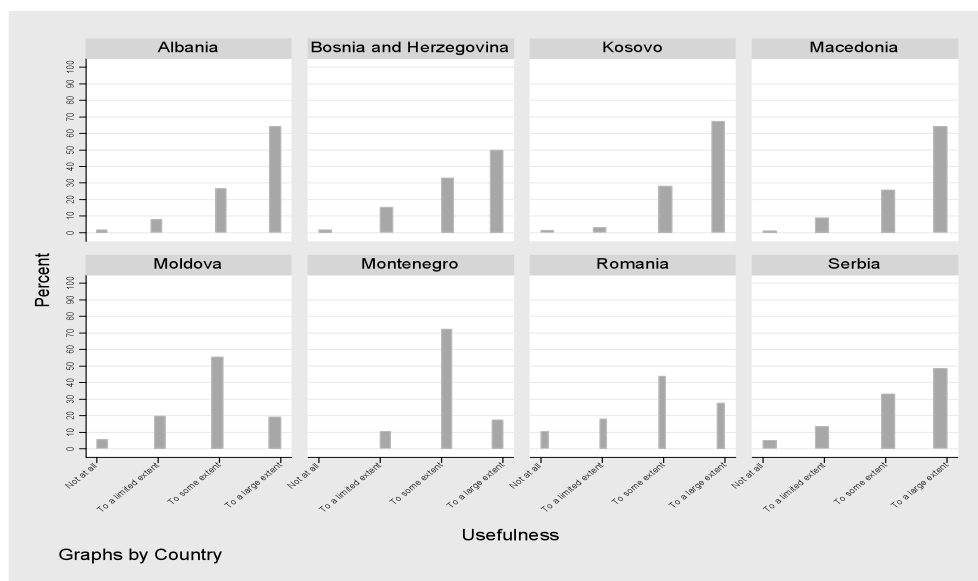


**Figure 42 Importance of counseling service provision to parents**



We also asked Principals about their views on the usefulness of issue-based support groups for parents to help their children in education. The results are again positive, as Principals consider such groups useful, with similar cross-country variations as in the previous cases.

**Figure 43 Importance of parent issue-based support groups**



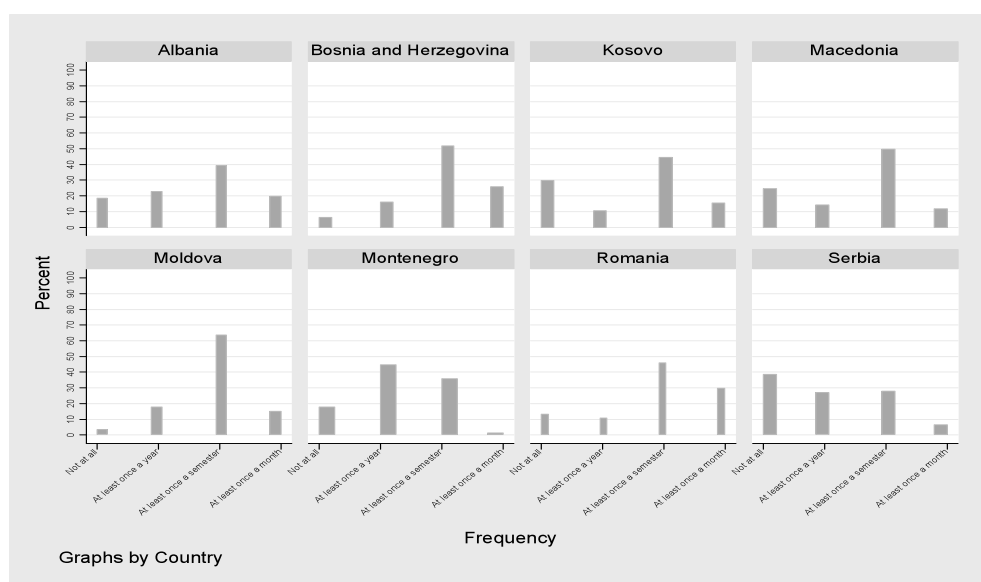
We can conclude that School Principals consider that school support services to parents to help their children in education are a critical component in improving pupils' performance (achievement and behavior). This suggests that such services are delivered in the schools under study, and the next part of this chapter looks at the extent to which this is the case.

## Support services provided by schools to parents to help their children in education

The share of schools that have organized services to help parents help their children in education varies considerably. In Serbia 38.58% of School Principals report not having organized such sessions in their schools at all, followed by Kosovo with 29.86%, Macedonia with 24.75% and Albania with 18.39%. The difference between the perceptions of the usefulness of such activities and the extent to which they are actually undertaken is an important one, indicating a considerable gap between theory and practice.

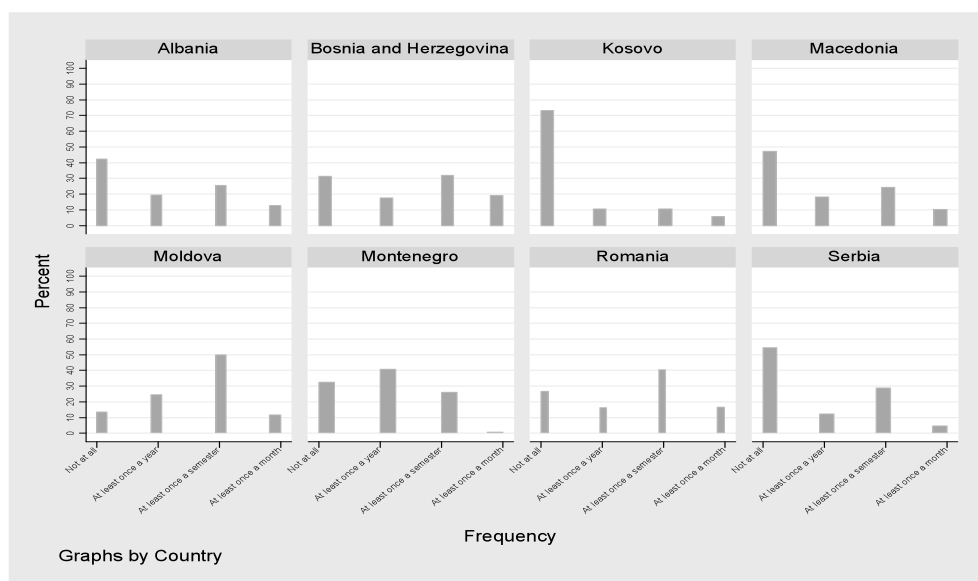
Regarding the frequency with which schools hold sessions to help parents assist their children with homework, we learn that in all countries except Montenegro, most schools that do have such sessions organized them during the last academic year at least once a semester (in Moldova 63.51%, in Bosnia and Herzegovina 51.69%, in Macedonia 49.49%, in Romania 45.89%, in Albania 39.13%, and in Serbia 27.92%). In Montenegro the largest share of schools offering such sessions organize them at least once a year.

Figure 44 Sessions organized to help parents assist their children with homework



The gap between theory and practice at school level is also notable in the provision of materials to help parents assist their children with homework. The largest difference can be observed in the case of Kosovo: although from Figure 40 we can see that slightly over 71% of School Principals consider this support service to be useful, 73.27% of schools did not actually undertake such an activity in the previous academic year. Important shares of schools without such an activity can also be found in the other seven countries under study: 54.36% in Serbia, 47.21% in Macedonia, 42.41% in Albania, 32.41% in Montenegro, 31.20% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 26.58% in Romania and 13.70% in Moldova. In schools where such materials are provided, generally this takes place at least once a semester.

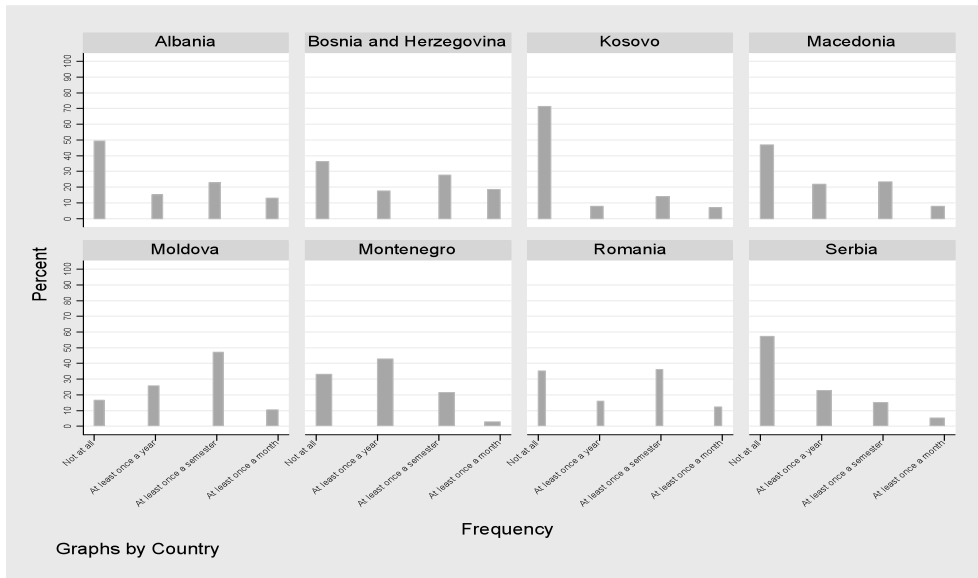
**Figure 45** Frequency of material provision to help parents assist children with homework



In the case of providing materials for parents to help them monitor their children’s homework, the gap between their perceived usefulness and their actual provision is again considerable. No such materials were provided in the previous academic year in 71.30 % of schools in Kosovo, 57.22% of schools in Serbia, 49.48% of schools in Albania, 46.94% of schools in Macedonia, 36.32% of schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 35.39% of schools in Romania, 33.10% of schools in Montenegro, and 16.55% of schools in Moldova.

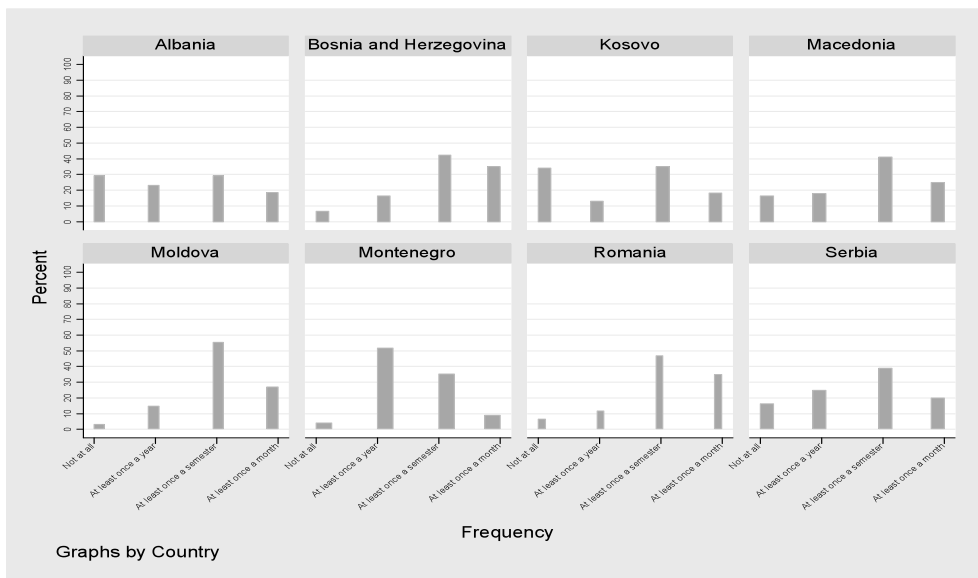
In five six of the eight countries, most schools that provide such materials do so (on average) at least once a semester. However, shares vary considerably across countries. Thus stands at Moldova 42%, Macedonia at 21%, Bosnia and Herzegovina at 18%, Romania at 17%, Albania at 15% and Kosovo at 9%. The two countries where such an activity takes place the least most frequently, about once a year, are Montenegro and Serbia.

**Figure 46 Frequency of material provision to help parents monitor their children’s homework**



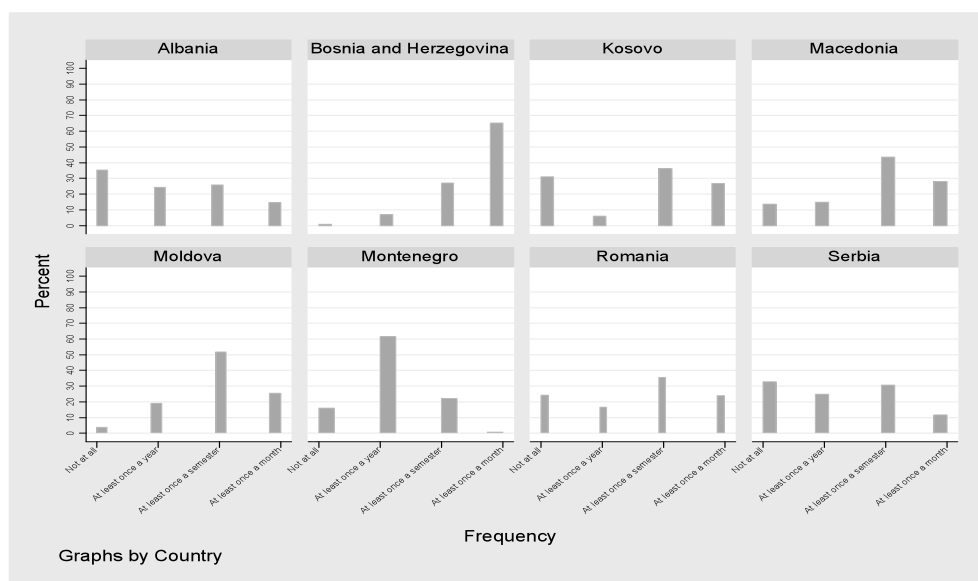
Again, while School Principals considered that providing information to parents on creating a home learning environment was useful, a considerably lower share of Principals report implementing such an activity in their schools. However, more schools provide this service than provide materials helping homework monitoring by parents. Although such information is generally provided at least once a semester, the share of schools in each country that undertake this activity at least once a month is higher than those which provide materials guiding parents in homework monitoring.

**Figure 47 Frequency of information provision to parents on creating a home learning environment**



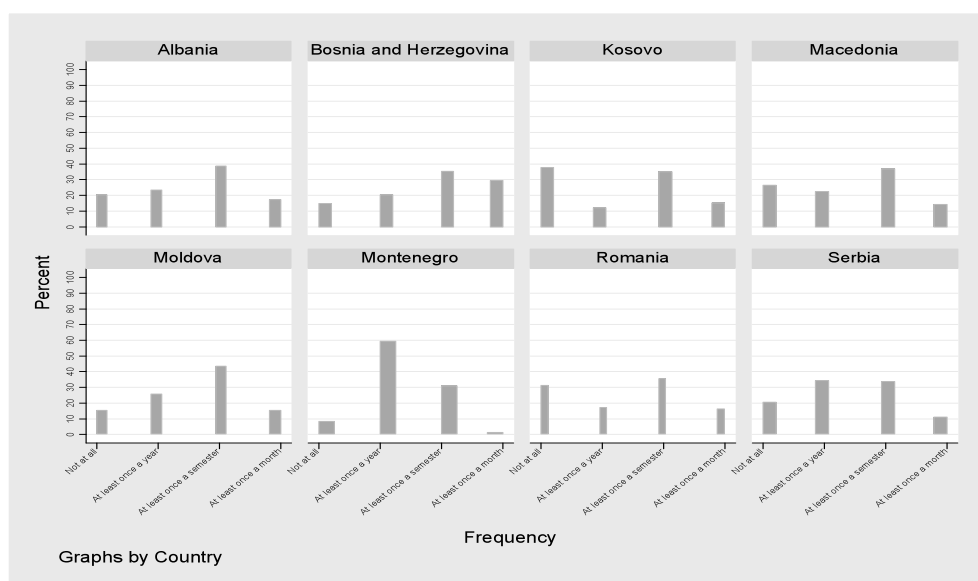
The share of schools providing counseling services can be considered high, as even in the lowest rating countries, i.e. Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia, over 65% of schools offer such services. Within-country variations in frequency are important but, as with the previous cases, inter-country differences are even more significant. For instance, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina 65% of schools report having organized such activities on a monthly basis, 61% of schools in Montenegro did so at least once a year.

**Figure 48 Frequency of counseling services provided to parents**



When asked about school-based parent issues support groups, School Principals overall report such activities to be organized more frequently than any other support activity for parents to help their children in education. Nevertheless, in terms of the frequency of organizing such activities, there are important within-country variations.

**Figure 49 Frequency of parent issue-based support groups**



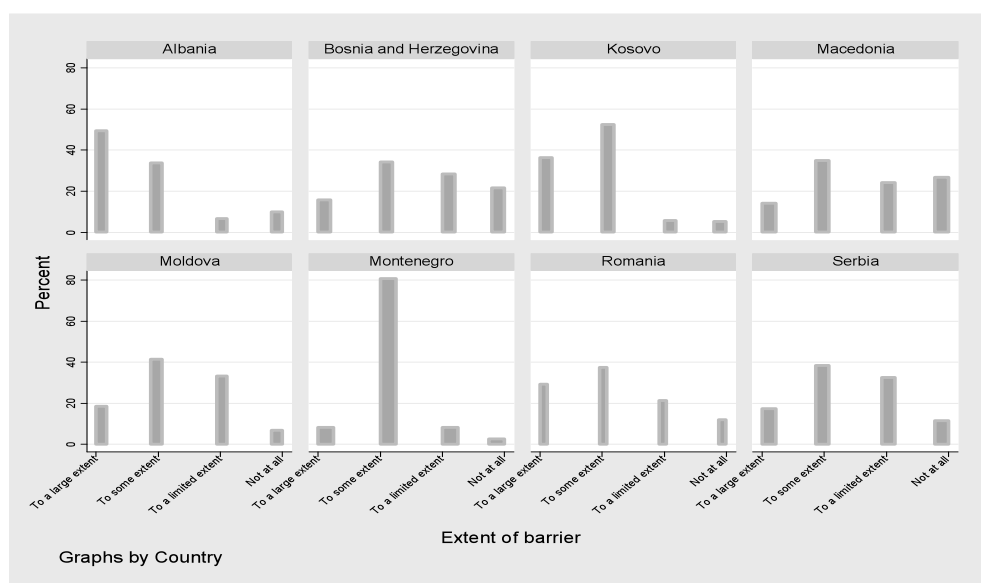
In conclusion we can state that the actual share of schools delivering services to help parents assist their children in education is considerably lower than that of School Principals with a positive attitude about the utility of such services. In schools where such services were provided in the previous academic year, these were generally carried out about once a semester.

## Barriers to providing support services to parents to help their children in education

School Principals were also asked about potential barriers to providing support services to parents to help their children in education.

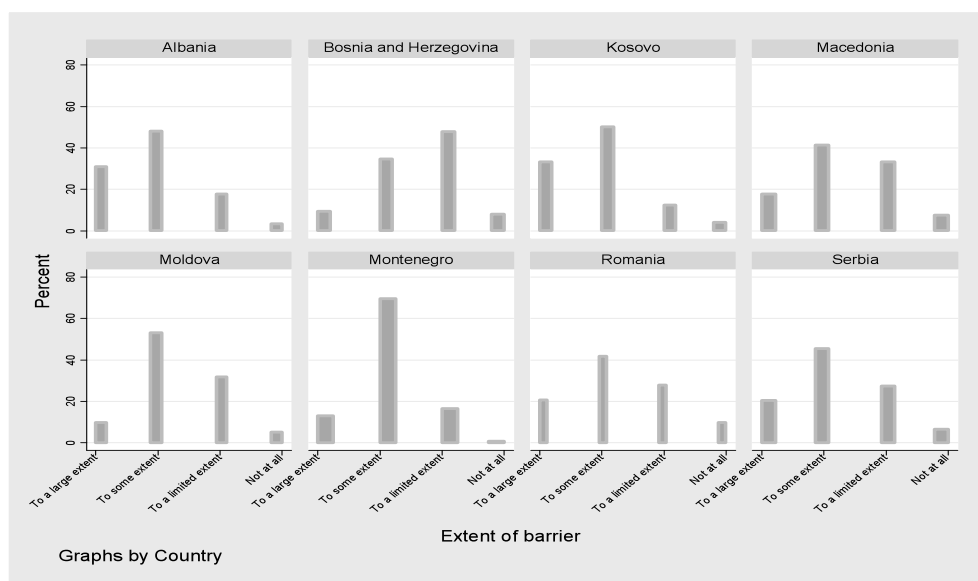
Figure 50 indicates a varied picture, both across and within countries, of the availability of resources to develop and sustain support services for parents by schools. Thus, while availability of resources is perceived not to be a problem in the case of 26.77% schools in Macedonia and 21.61% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is perceived to be a barrier to a large extent by 49.5% of respondents in Albania, 36.44% in Kosovo, and 29.19% in Romania. Furthermore, while in the cases of Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro a lack of resources is perceived to be a problem by an overwhelming majority of Principals, in the other surveyed countries we observe a more balanced distribution.

**Figure 50 Lack of school resources as a barrier to develop and run services**



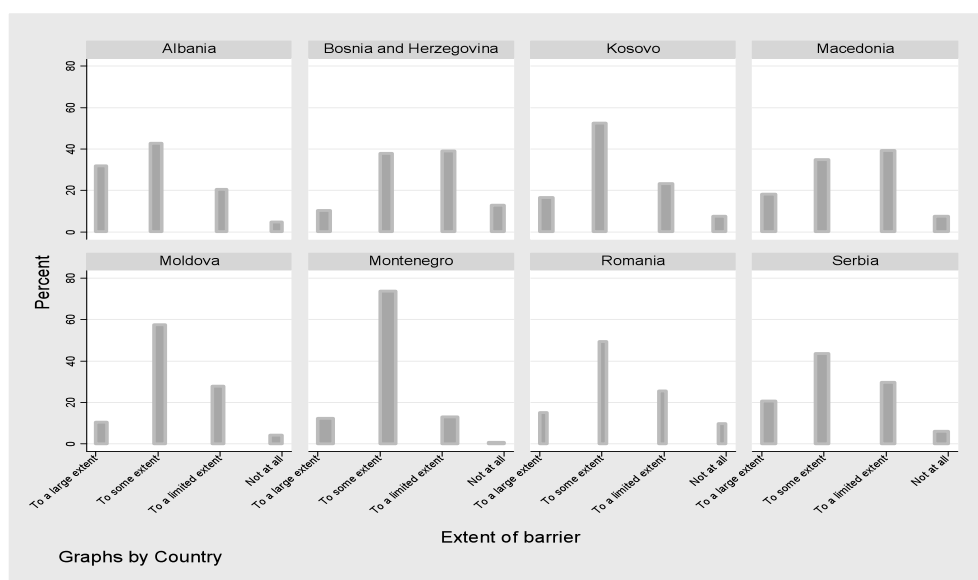
Parents' level of interest in engaging in school-based support activities is viewed as a problem in all countries. Thus, 83.55% of School Principals in Kosovo, 82.76% in Montenegro, 78.86% in Albania, 66% in Serbia, 63.05% in Moldova, 62.46% in Romania, 59.09% in Macedonia and 44,07% in Bosnia and Herzegovina consider parental disinterest to be a barrier to providing parenting support services to a large or to some extent. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country where the share of Principals giving this answer is below 50%.

**Figure 51 Parents' lack of interest in engaging in school-based support services as a barrier**



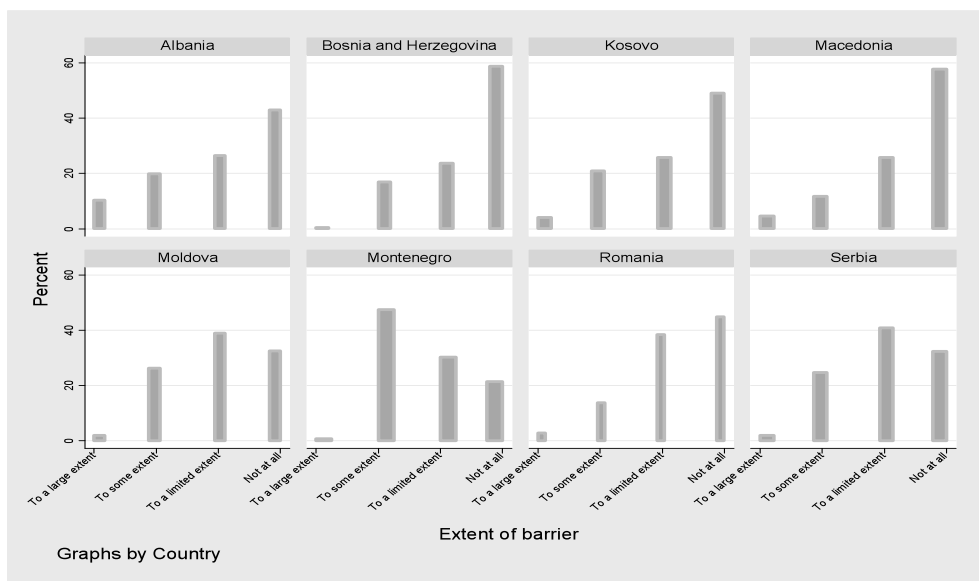
Rather similar results were obtained when inquiring about the availability of parents to get involved in school-based parenting support services. Accordingly, the share of School Principals that consider parents' lack of availability to be a barrier is 86.2% in Montenegro, 74.95% in Albania, 69.06% in Kosovo, 67.94% in Moldova, 64.52% in Romania, 64.32% in Serbia, 53.02% in Macedonia, and 48.08% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We need to note, however, that the largest shares of Principals consider that parents' lack of availability is a barrier only to some extent.

**Figure 52 Parents' lack of availability to get involved in school-based support services as a barrier**



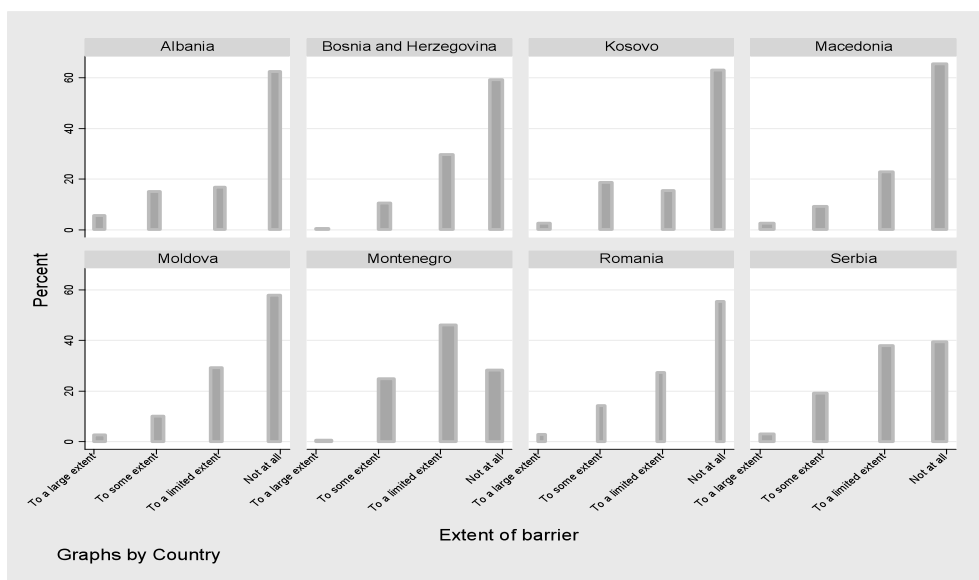
The majority of Principals considered teachers' availability as a possible barrier to providing parenting services to be a problem only to a limited extent or not at all (83.76% in Macedonia, 83.36% in Romania, 82.63% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 75% in Kosovo, 73.23% in Serbia, 69.7% in Albania, and 51.72% in Montenegro). This is an important insight as it indicates that teachers would have the necessary time if such services were promoted by school leadership.

**Figure 53 Teachers' lack of availability to run parenting support services as a barrier**



Although Principals report that teachers have the necessary time to undertake such parent support activities, a possible barrier could be linked to teachers' lack of skills. Therefore, we also surveyed Principals' perceptions of the extent to which teachers in their schools have the necessary skills to run support services for parents. As Figure 55 shows, the share of Principals that do not consider teachers' lack of skills to be a problem is 65.48% in Macedonia, 63.11% in Kosovo, 62.54% in Albania, 59.32% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 57.84% in Moldova, 55.41% in Romania, 39.59% in Serbia and 28.28% in Montenegro. Thus, it can be stated that, in the perception of School Principals, teachers have both sufficient time and the necessary skills to run support services to guide parents in helping their children in education.

**Figure 54 Teachers' lack of necessary skills to run parenting support services as a barrier**

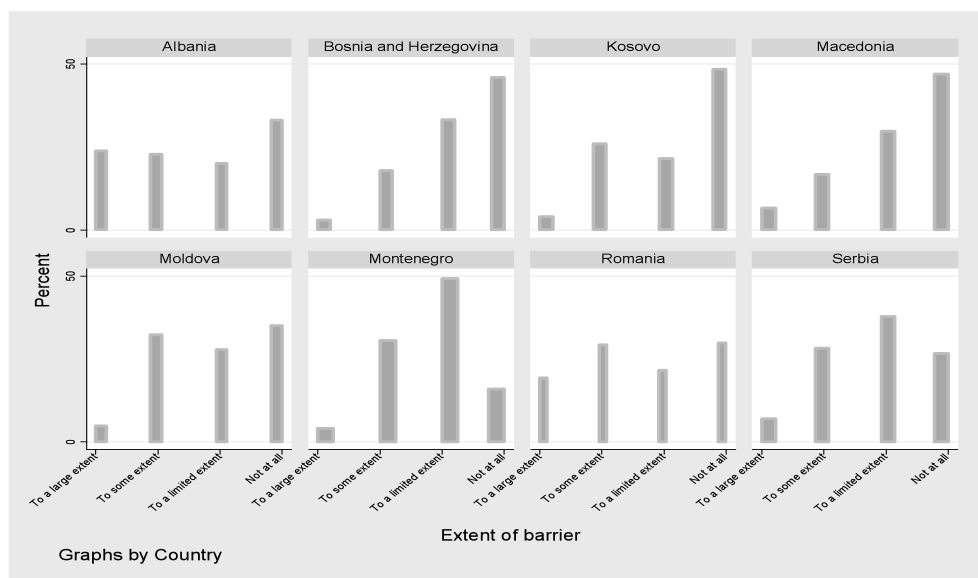


As providing support services for parents requires the existence of clearly defined methodologies and methods, we also inquired about the extent to which Principals regard the availability of such methodologies to be a barrier to providing these services. The findings, reported in Figure 56, indicate



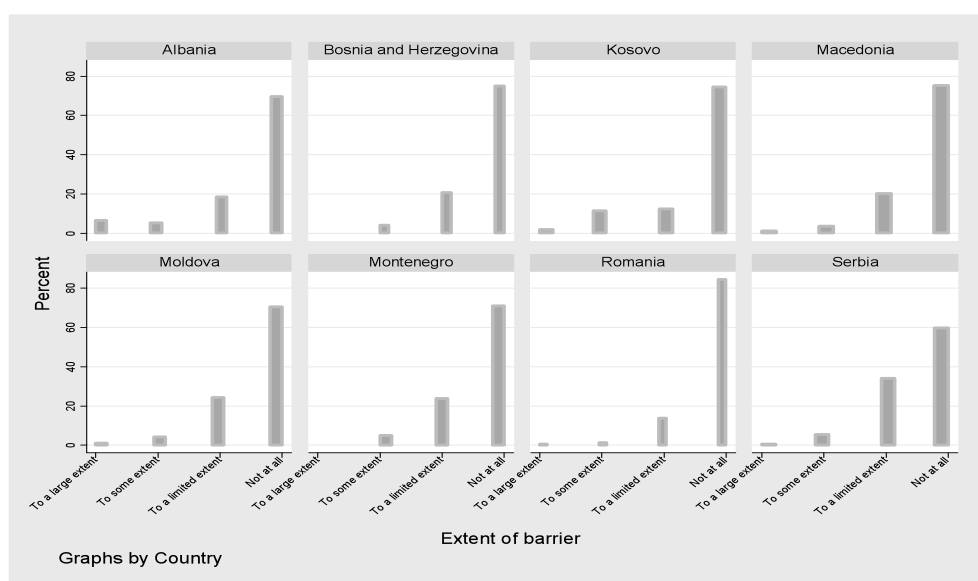
a mixed picture. Overall, Principals in all countries under study share the view that the availability of such methodologies is a problem only to a limited extent or not at all. Nevertheless, in each country there remains a considerable share of Principals who see the lack of such methodologies to be a barrier to some or even to a large extent. The most concerned about the limiting effect of the inexistence of such methodologies are School Principals in Albania and Romania.

**Figure 55 Lack of methodology to develop support services for parents as a barrier**



Finally, we inquired about the extent to which possible conflicts between teachers and parents constitute a barrier to providing support services to parents. The responses confirm the findings presented earlier in Figure 24, namely that the majority of Principals perceive teacher-parent relations to be non-conflictual, and therefore not a barrier to offering school-based support services for parents.

**Figure 56 Conflicts between teachers and parents as a barrier**



## Chapter 4: Parents' involvement in school governance

Becoming involved in decision-making at school level is widely considered to be one of the most effective ways in which parents can influence the school environment. Therefore, the fourth dimension of the role of school leadership in fostering parental participation in school life measures parents' involvement in school governance. The chapter is structured in three parts. The first part focuses on School Principals' perceptions of the importance of parental voice in school governance. This is followed by insights into the actual practice of involving parents in school level decision-making, more precisely the decision-making authority attributed to Parents' Council. The last part reports on School Principals' assessment of the contribution made by parental participation in decision-making in their respective schools.

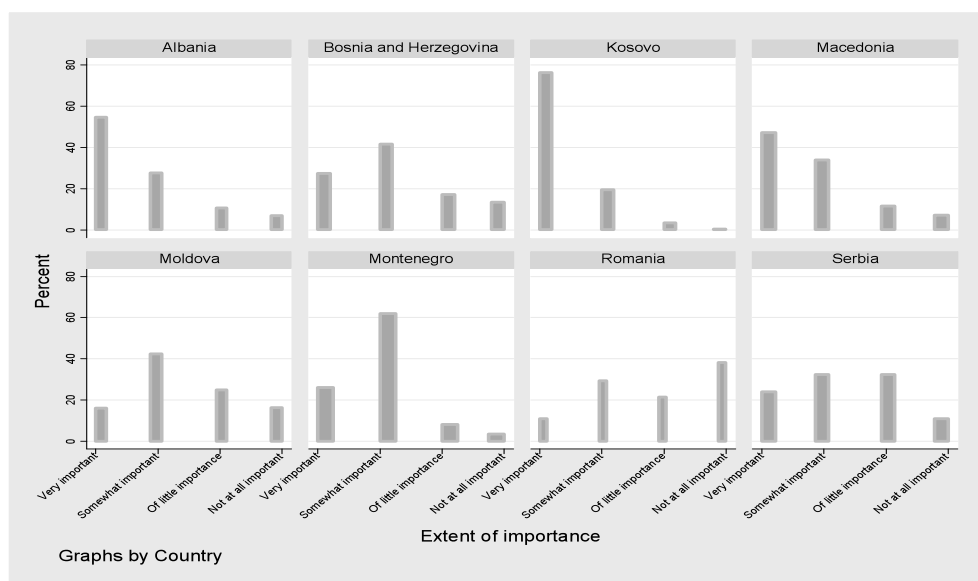
### Principals' perceptions of the importance of parental voice in school life

In what follows we discuss the perceptions of School Principals on the importance of parental participation in school management, focusing on the eight indicators included in the survey questionnaire. The indicators were selected from those used in other literature for their reliability, validity and relevance to the school contexts of the countries participating in the survey.

There are two indicators meant to capture the importance of parent involvement in the hiring, performance evaluation and sacking of teachers. Parents' involvement in school-level planning is measured through their involvement in school budgeting, social activity planning, and the development of school policies and regulations. In addition, we measured the perceived importance of parents' involvement in the selection of textbooks and other materials used in class. Finally, we inquired about parents' involvement in decision-making at both school and classroom levels.

Figure 58 indicates that the majority of Principals (96% in Kosovo, 88.28% in Montenegro, 82.33% in Albania, 80% in Macedonia, 69.20% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 57.77% in Moldova, 56.50% in Serbia) consider parental involvement in the evaluation of teachers' performance to be important. The exception is Romania, where only 40% consider this important. However, we also observe considerable differences between countries in the share of Principals with a positive perception of parental evaluation of teachers and in the level of importance attributed to this. Thus, while 76.44% of Principals in Kosovo and 54.67% in Albania consider parent involvement in teacher evaluation to be very important, this share is only 15.88% in Moldova, 24% in Serbia and 27.43% in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

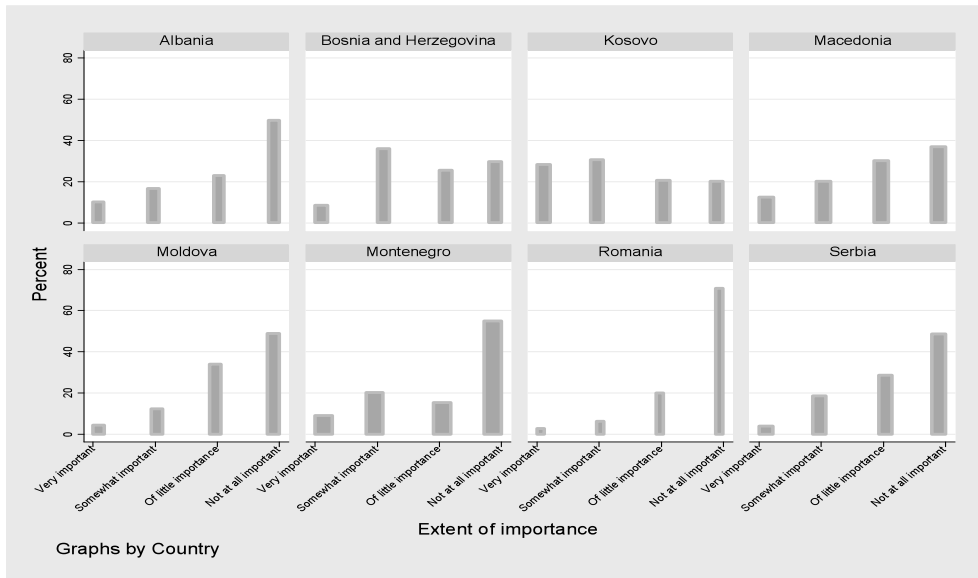
**Figure 57 Importance of parents' involvement in the evaluation of teachers' performance**



In contrast, School Principals tend to perceive parent involvement in the hiring and sacking of teachers as of limited or no importance. The most positive responses came from Principals from Kosovo (57.33%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (44.30%), while the most critical were Principals from Romania (90%, with 70.15% considering parent involvement not at all important), Moldova (80.75%) and Serbia (77%).

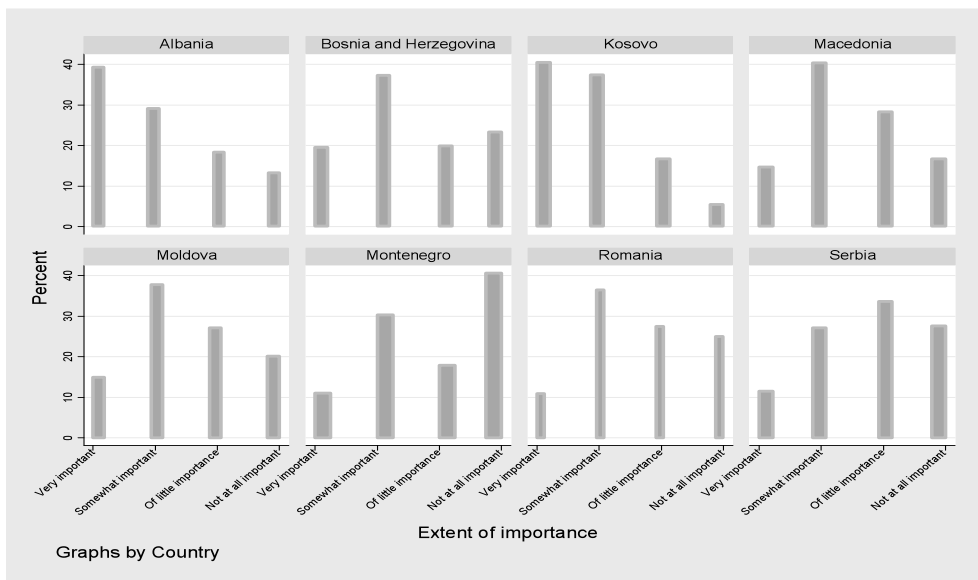
Considerable differences in perceptions can also be observed at country level. Thus, while the overwhelming majority of School Principals in Romania, Moldova, Montenegro, and Serbia perceive parent involvement in the hiring and sacking of teachers to be of limited or no importance, we observe that Principals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo the shares are more balanced. This seems to suggest that in the former countries readiness to involve parents in such decisions is likely to be generally low among School Principals, while in the latter countries the level of resistance towards such involvement is likely to be lower.

**Figure 58 Importance of parents' involvement in hiring and firing of teachers**



Findings on School Principals' perceptions of transparency in the school budgeting process, presented in Figure 60, indicate a less clear picture in most countries. First of all, at the level of cross-country comparison, we learn that the majority of School Principals in Kosovo (76.89%) and Albania (67.33%) view parents' involvement in school budgeting as very or somewhat important, while 61% of Principals in Serbia, 58.59% in Montenegro and 52.09% in Romania hold the opposite view, considering it of limited or no importance. In the other three countries no such clear tendency can be identified. For instance, in Macedonia the responses are nearly evenly split.

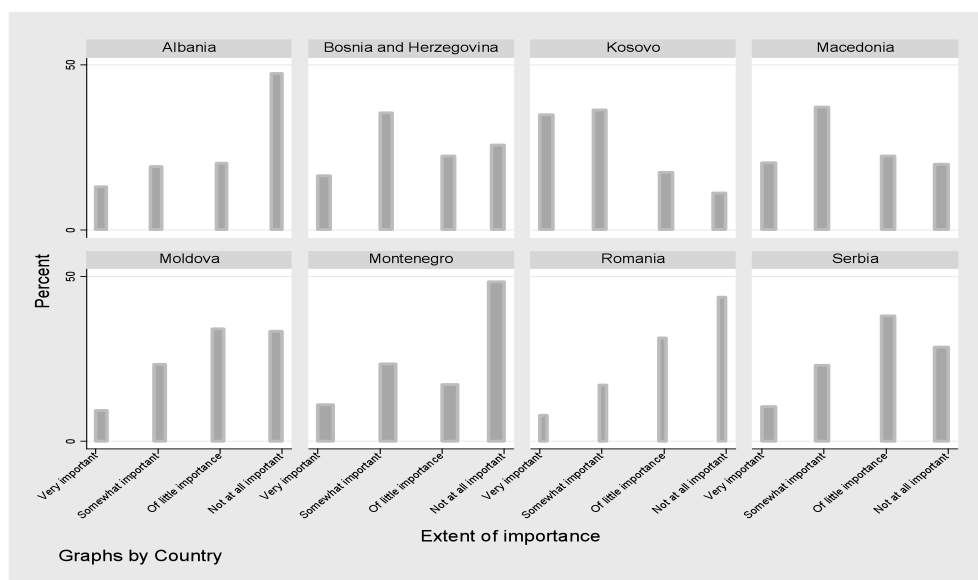
**Figure 59 Importance of parents' involvement in setting priorities for school budget**



In recent years curriculum reform and the related public debates on textbook choice have been high on the agenda in the countries under study and have allowed schools/teachers to choose from among a number of alternative textbooks in the case of certain subjects. We therefore also asked Principals about their views on the importance of parents' views in the selection of the textbooks and materials

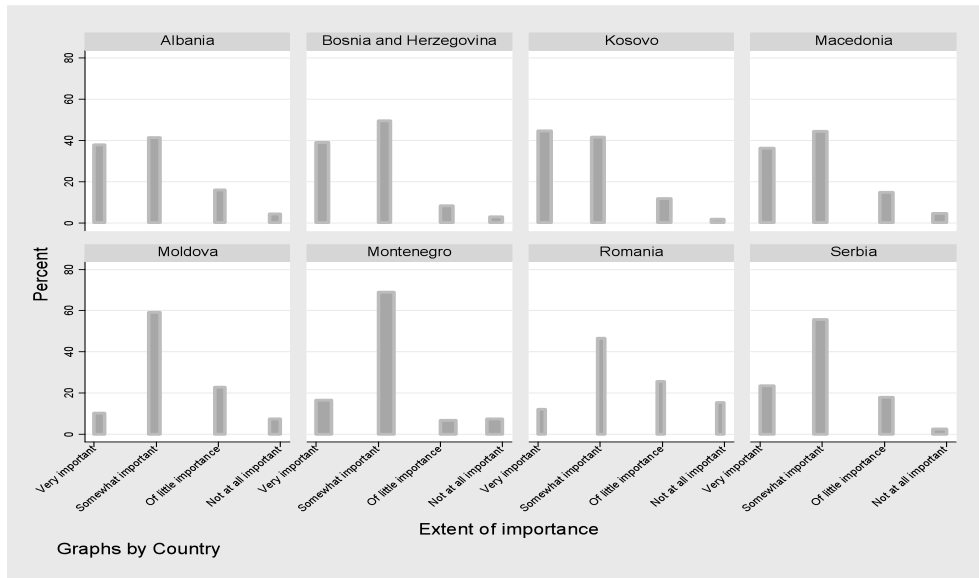
used by their children. The results, reported in Figure 61, indicate that in all countries (with the exception of Kosovo and Macedonia) most Principals consider that parents' involvement in textbook choice is of limited or no importance. The most critical about this issue are Principals from Albania, as 47% of them consider that parental involvement is not at all important, followed by Montenegro with 48.28% and Romania with 43.58%. In contrast, 34.67% of School Principals in Kosovo and 20% in Macedonia consider that it is very important to involve parents in textbook choice.

**Figure 60 Importance of parents' involvement in the selection of textbooks and other materials used in class**



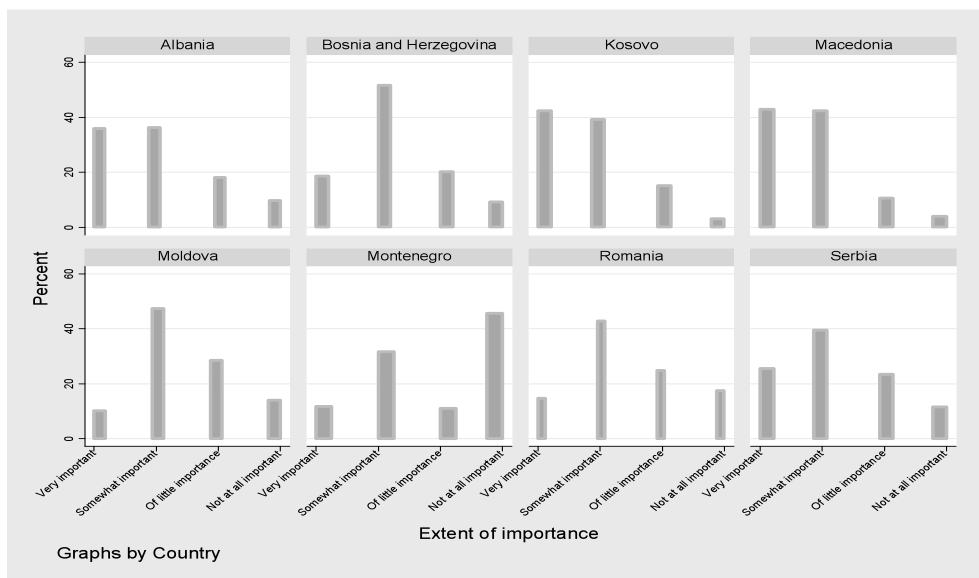
We have already learnt that parental participation in social activities organized by schools is the main form of parental participation in school life. We were also interested in discovering whether Principals consider it important to involve parents in the planning of such activities. The responses given are comparably similar in all eight countries: 88.19% of Principals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 85.52% in Montenegro, 84.89% in Kosovo, 79% in Macedonia, 79% in Serbia, 78.67% in Albania, 67.91% in Moldova and 58.66% in Romania consider it very or somewhat important (although the share of those who view it as somewhat important is higher in each country except Kosovo). The most critical about this issue are Principals from Romania and Moldova: 41.14% and 29.73%, respectively, consider that such involvement is of limited or no importance.

**Figure 61 Importance of parents' involvement in social activity planning**



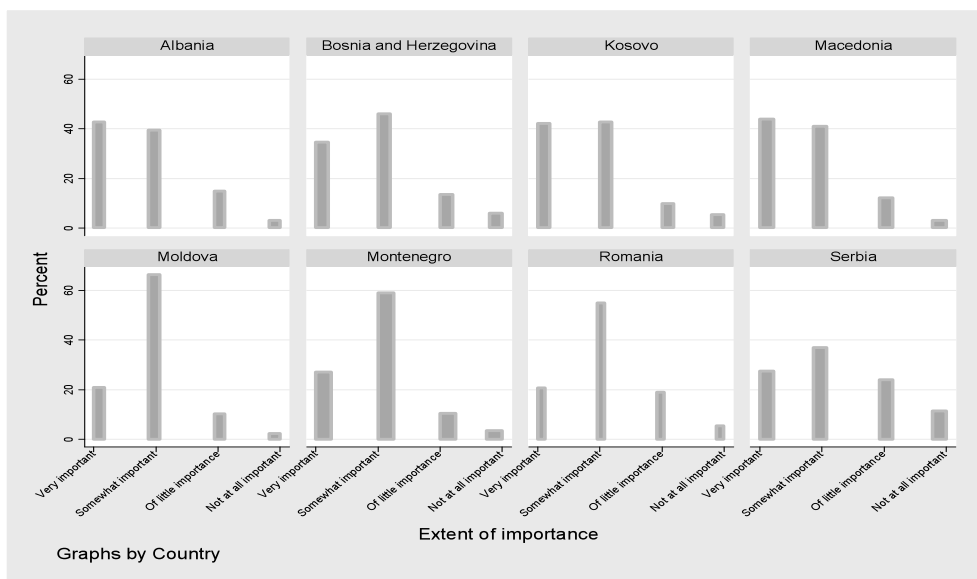
Principals' views on the importance of parents' involvement in the development of school policies and regulations are fairly positive, except in Montenegro, where 56.55% of Principals consider it of limited or no importance. Much more positive perceptions of this form of parental participation are expressed by Principals in Macedonia (84.92%), Kosovo (81.70%), Albania (72.15%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (70.34%). These findings seem to support the view that in principle School Principals see a role for parents in the development of school level policies and regulations, as parents and their children are required to respect the adopted rules. This result points to the importance of developing good home-school relations so that this opportunity is capitalized upon in the daily life of schools, and rules also include provisions that are shared by parents as well.

**Figure 62 Importance of parents' involvement in the development of school policies and regulations**



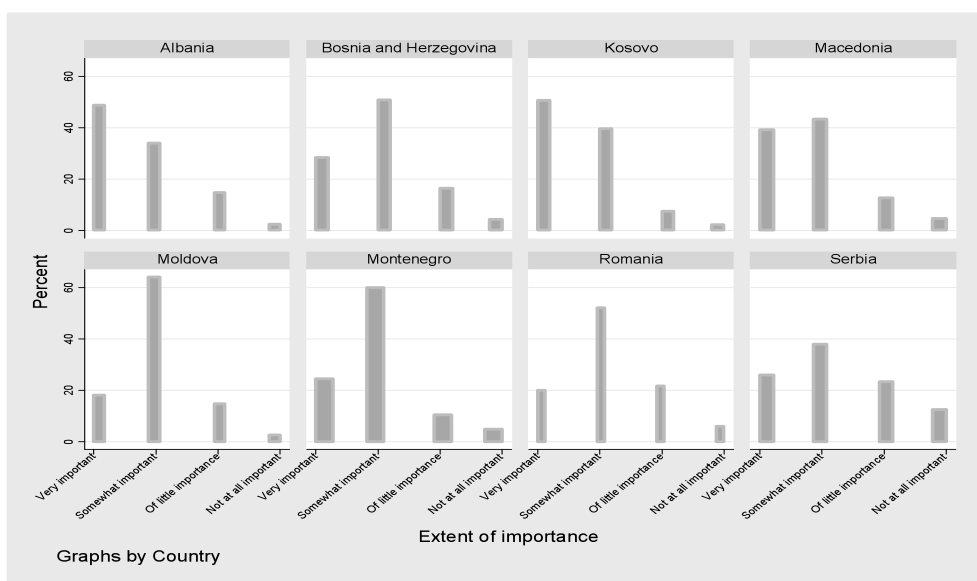
A large majority of Principals in all countries agree that parents need to have a say in the decisions taken at classroom level.

**Figure 63 Importance of parents' involvement in decisions taken at classroom level**



Similarly, as shown in Figure 65, the majority of Principals in all eight countries share the view that parents should have a say in the decisions taken at school level.

**Figure 64 Importance of parents' involvement in decisions taken at school level**



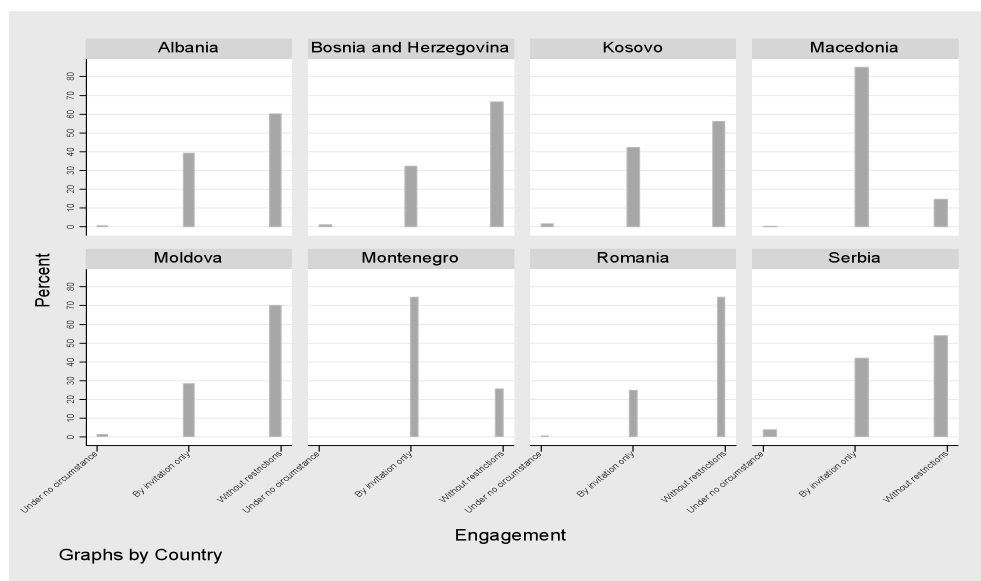
At a conceptual level, School Principals in the surveyed countries generally tend to agree that parents should have a say in school life. Despite this we learn that Principals consider that parental influence should be primarily oriented towards social activity planning.

## Decision-making authority attributed to Parents' Council

In order to assess the extent to which parents can effectively engage in school decision-making, we asked School Principals about the practice of regulating the involvement of Parents' Council members in various aspects of school decision-making. We tried to capture this by focusing on the following: the opportunities for Parents' Council members to participate at meetings where school decisions are taken and in the elaboration of new school policies; to initiate the modification of existing policies and the adoption of new policies; and to block the adoption of rules they disagree with. The questions were multiple-choice with three possible answers: "under no circumstance", "by invitation only", and "without restriction".

In each country under study only a minute share of Principals report that participation of Parents' Council members at meetings where school decisions are taken is not possible under any circumstance. While this is a positive finding, we also learn that in an important share of schools participation takes place by invitation only. This is the case in 84.92% of schools in Macedonia and 74.48% in Montenegro. The smallest shares in this respect were recorded in Romania and Moldova (24.85% and 28.97%, respectively). The share of schools offering Parents' Council members unconstrained access to meetings where school decisions are taken also varies widely within countries, suggesting that school leadership does have discretion over these decisions, which in turn points to the importance of school leadership in deciding over the rules of participation.

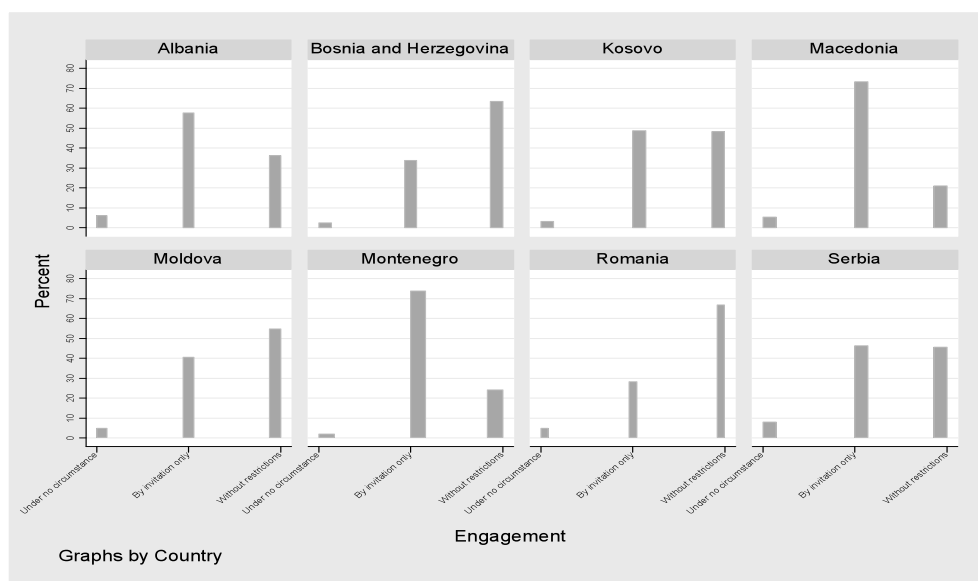
Figure 65 Participation of Parents' Council members at meetings



When turning to the rules of involving Parents' Council members in the development of new school policies, we get a very similar picture. Only a tiny fraction of Principals report that Parents' Council members are excluded from the development of new policies, but in some countries an important share of School Principals say that participation is by invitation only. Again, the most notable finding is the variations in terms of the rules for the participation of Parents' Council members within countries.



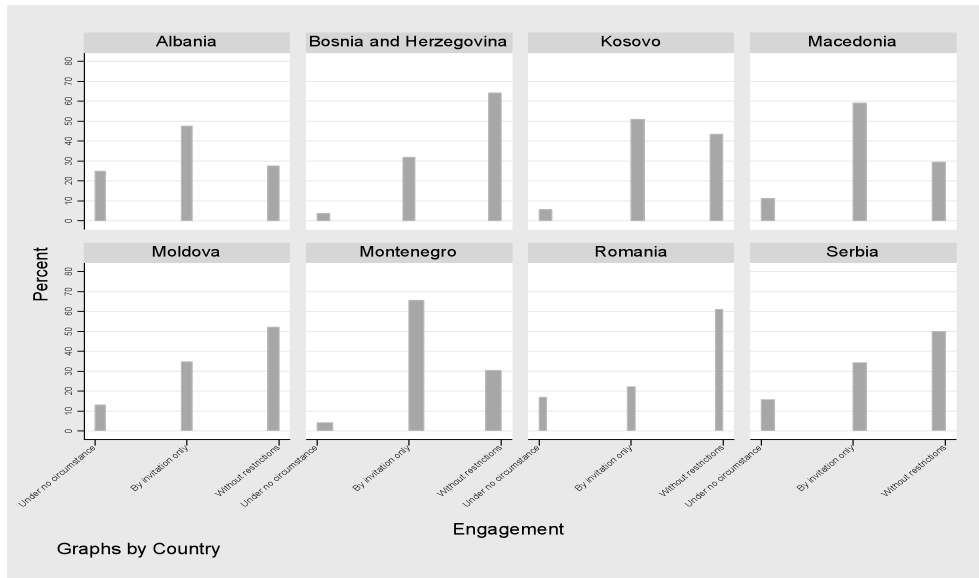
**Figure 66 Participation of Parents' Council members in the elaboration of new school policies**



When we asked Principals the extent to which Parents' Council members were welcome to initiate the modification of the existing school policies, our first finding was that the share of Principals giving the answer "under no circumstance" increased compared to the previous two cases. Thus, we learn that 24.91% of School Principals in Albania, 16.82% in Romania, 15.66% in Serbia, 13.10% in Moldova, 11.22% in Macedonia consider that parent representatives are not entitled, under any circumstance, to initiate the modification of the existing school policies.

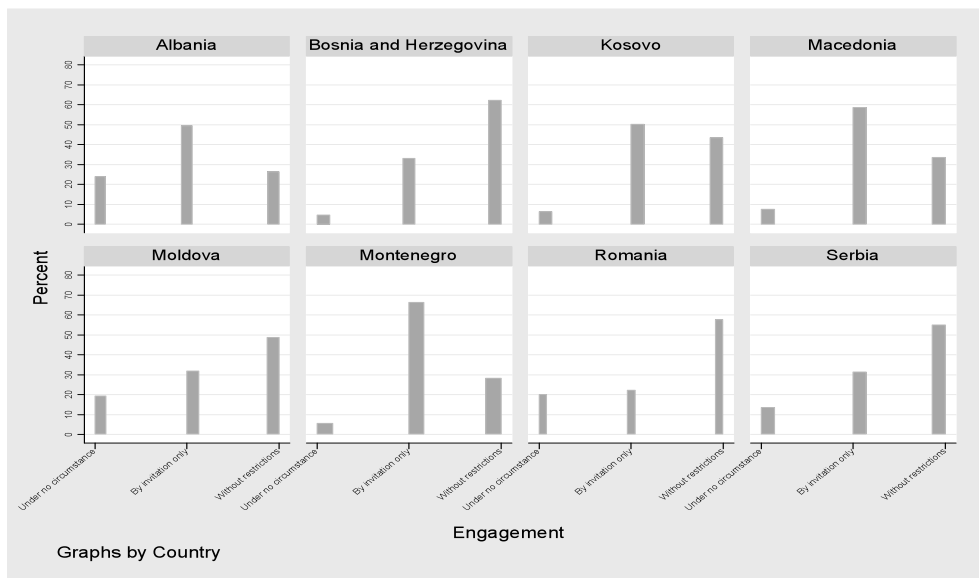
Secondly, we learnt that, as with the previous two cases, there are important variations in the extent to which parent representatives are allowed to initiate the modification of the existing school policies. We can distinguish between two groups of countries: those where the largest share of Principals considers that change should be initiated by parents only when the school invites parent representatives to do so (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro) and those where the largest share of Principals say that parents can initiate change without any restriction (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Romania, and Serbia).

**Figure 67 Parents' Council members entitled to initiate the modification of school policies**



The nature of school-level regulations on how Parents' Council members can initiate the adoption of new school policies also varies considerably within each country. We observe that the share of Principals reporting that school rules do not permit such activities is similar to the share that reported that parent representatives were not permitted to initiate the modification of current school policies, and this similarity is reflected in the country groupings. The existence of important within-country differences points to the fact that the role of parent representatives in school decision-making is interpreted differently by different schools.

**Figure 68 Parents' Council members entitled to initiate the adoption of new policies**

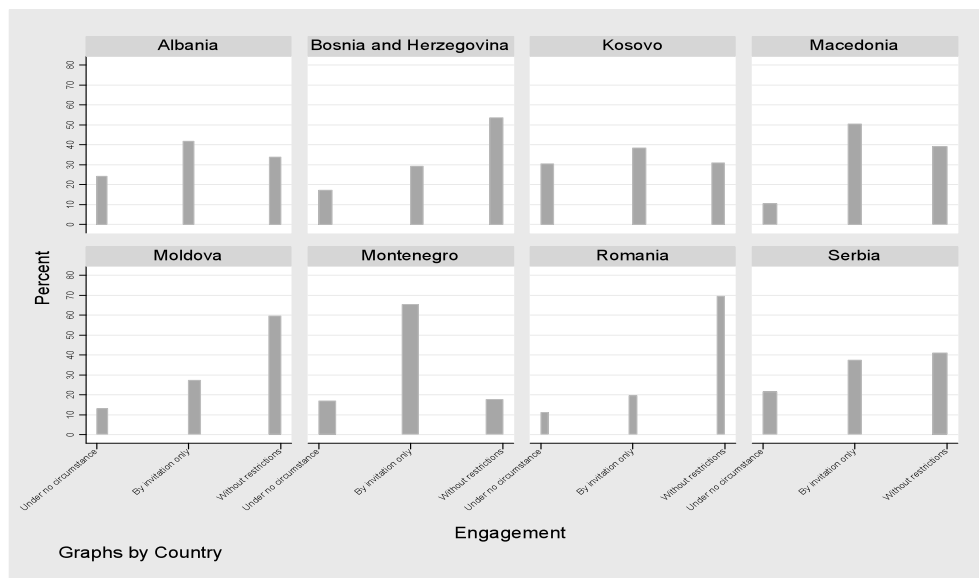


Finally, we inquired about the possible veto power of Parents' Council members when debating the adoption of rules that they disagree with. Compared to the previous cases, the share of Principals reporting that Parents' Council members cannot prevent the adoption of rules is larger: 30.56% in Kosovo, 24.22% in Albania, 21.54% in Serbia, 17.12% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 17.02% in Montenegro, 12% in

Moldova, 11.08% in Romania and 10.42% in Macedonia. Full power to prevent the adoption of rules is the most frequently reported in Romania (69.38%), Moldova (59.57%), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (53.60%).

In contrast to the previous cases, there is limited variation in Montenegro and Romania but the other six countries still show significant variation among schools.

**Figure 69 Parents' Council members entitled to veto the adoption of rules they disagree with**



The rules established for the participation of Parents' Council members indicate important differences in possible mechanisms of participation. Importantly, we learn that in the overwhelming majority of schools in all eight countries there are no rules prohibiting the participation of parent representatives. Nevertheless, the degree of openness to parents' involvement in shaping school policies and regulations varies considerably in all countries and for all measures. This indicates that schools enjoy discretion over the ways in which parent representatives can participate in school decision-making, and that schools in the same country enact different regulations, pointing to the different levels of influence Parents' Councils enjoy in various school contexts in all eight countries.

## Chapter 5. Parents' influence on school life

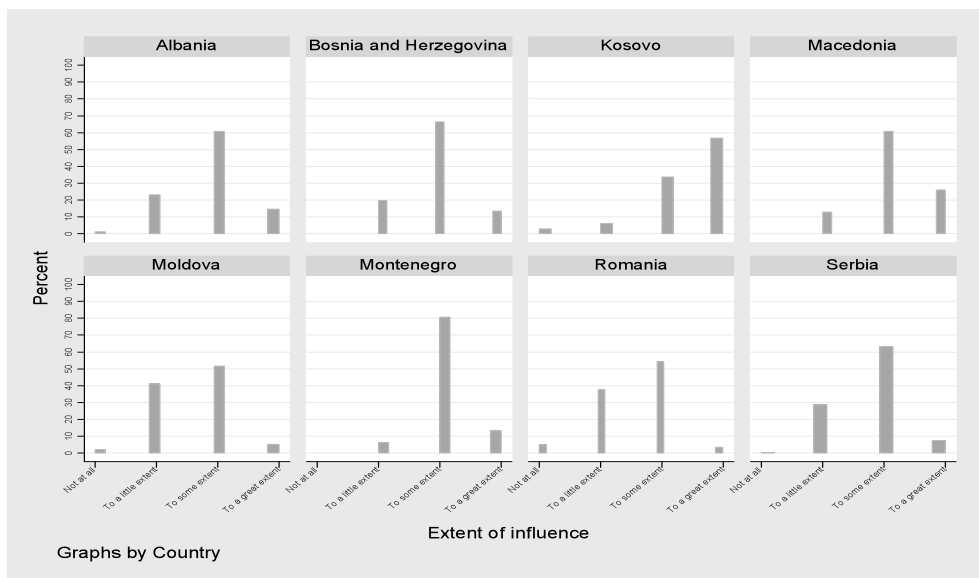
The previous parts of this chapter have revealed that School Principals perceive positively at least some aspects of parents' involvement in school decision-making. We have also found that in the overwhelming majority of schools in all eight countries parent representatives, i.e. Parents' Council members, have the opportunity to participate in school decision-making, although in many cases by invitation only. This part of the chapter focuses on how School Principals perceive parental involvement in their schools' governance. To capture this, the survey questionnaire included three composite indicators, i.e. the perceived influence of the Parents' Council on the daily life of the school, the perceived influence of parents in general on practical school life, and the perceived contribution of parent representatives on the School Board.

### Influence of Parents' Council on school life

The overall assessment of the influence of Parents' Council on the daily life of the school is reported in Figure 71. The composite indicator reveals that School Principals in all eight countries consider that Parents' Council has some or a great extent of influence over daily school life.

**Figure 70 Influence of Parents' Council on daily school life**

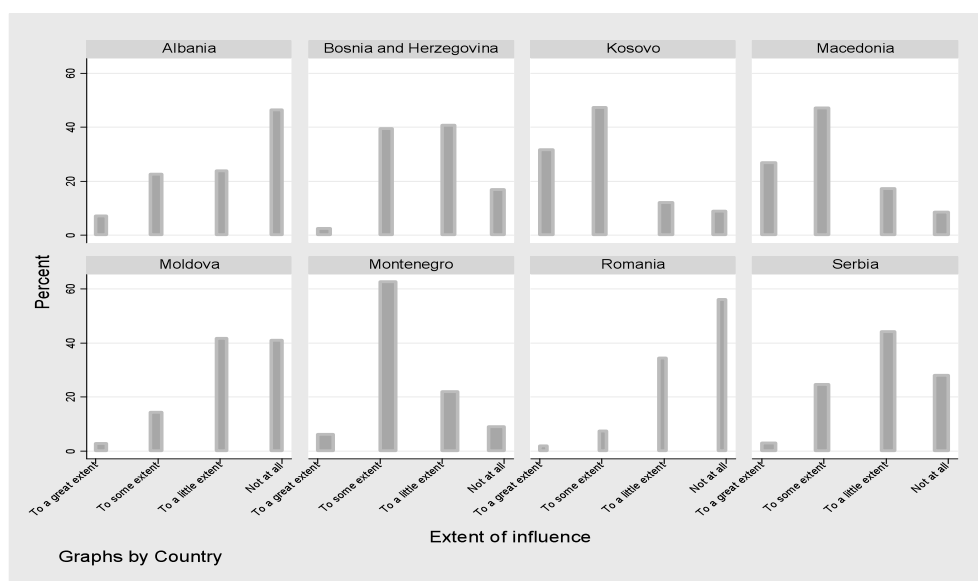
Composite score



The influence of the Parents' Councils composite indicator includes six measures, namely the extent of the Council's influence over: teaching methods used; lesson content; the planning of extracurricular activities; the planning of school infrastructure development; helping pupils value education; and the involvement of parents in school life.

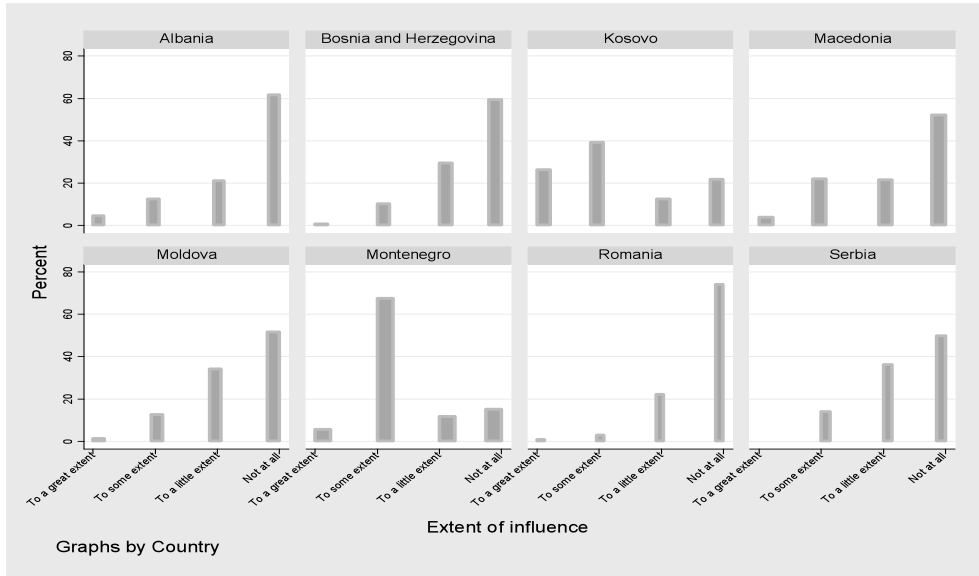
We observed considerable variation between countries in terms of School Principals' perception of the extent to which the Parents' Council influences the teaching methods used in their respective schools. Thus, while 74.11% of Principals in Macedonia, 69.02% in Kosovo and 68.97% in Montenegro consider that the Parents' Council has some or great influence, 90.69% of Principals in Romania, 82.88% in Moldova, 72.36% in Serbia and 70.37% in Albania consider that they have little if any influence.

**Figure 71 Influence of Parents' Council on the pedagogical methods used in teaching**



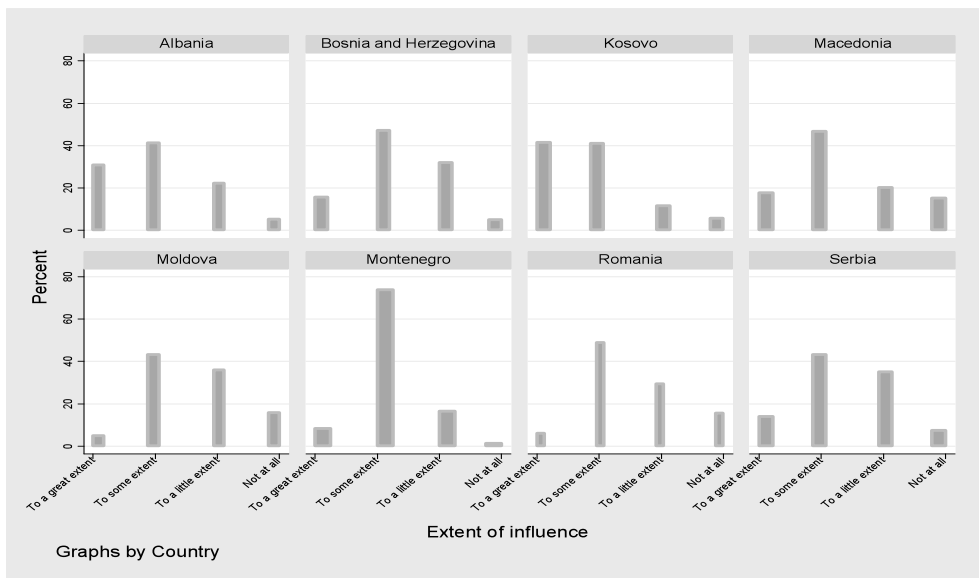
Similarly important are the findings on the influence of Parents' Council on the content of lessons. In this case, School Principals report even lower levels of influence compared to the already low levels of influence on teaching methods. Parent influence is perceived to be non-existent by the majority of School Principals in Romania (74.02%), Albania (61.62%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (59.40%), Macedonia (52.26%) and Moldova (51.75%). In Serbia slightly less than 50% (49.75%) of Principals responded in this way, but another 17% said that Parents' Council influences the content of lessons to a small extent. Montenegro (73%) and Kosovo (65.63%) report slightly more influence, but even in these two cases most School Principals mention only some influence.

**Figure 72 Influence of Parents' Council on the content of lessons**



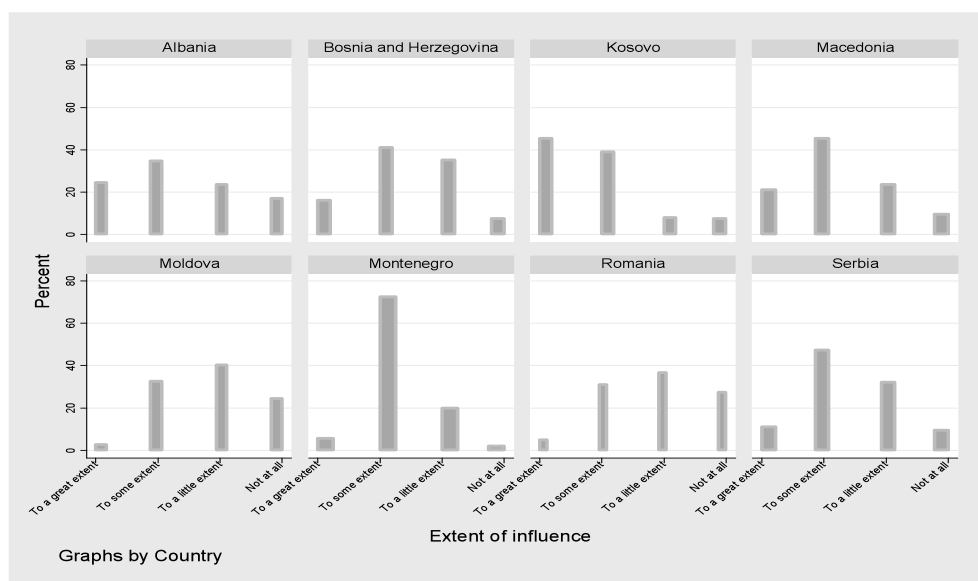
The picture is reversed when it comes to the extent of influence that Parents' Councils have on the planning of extracurricular activities. In all eight countries their influence is seen to be positive with variation in the extent of the positive perception.

**Figure 73 Influence of Parents' Council on the planning of extracurricular activities**



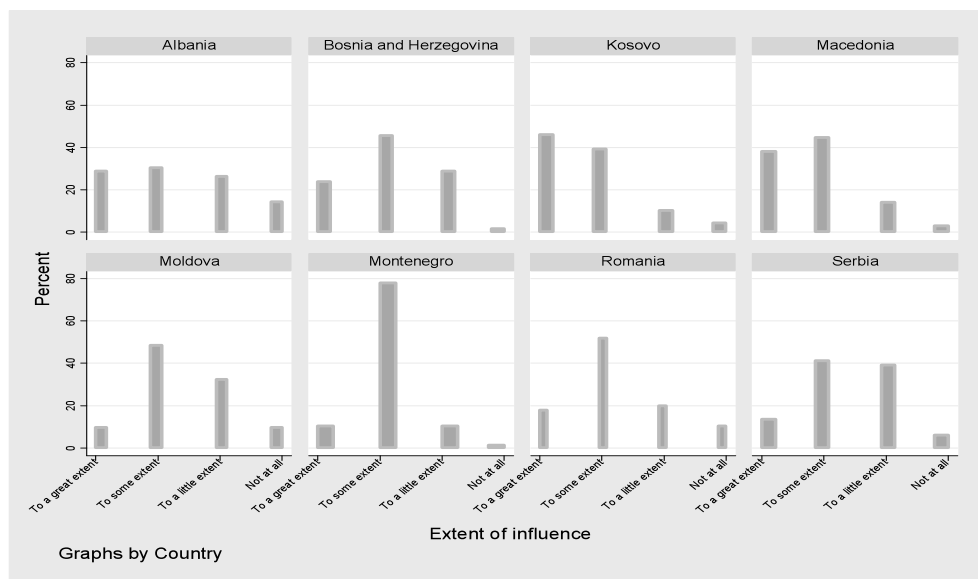
Rather similar results (limited though positive influence) were recorded when asking School Principals about the extent of influence that Parents' Councils have on the planning of school infrastructure development. However, it must be noted that in Moldova and Romania the largest share of Principals said that their Parents' Council has only a little influence.

**Figure 74 Influence of Parents' Council on planning school infrastructure development**



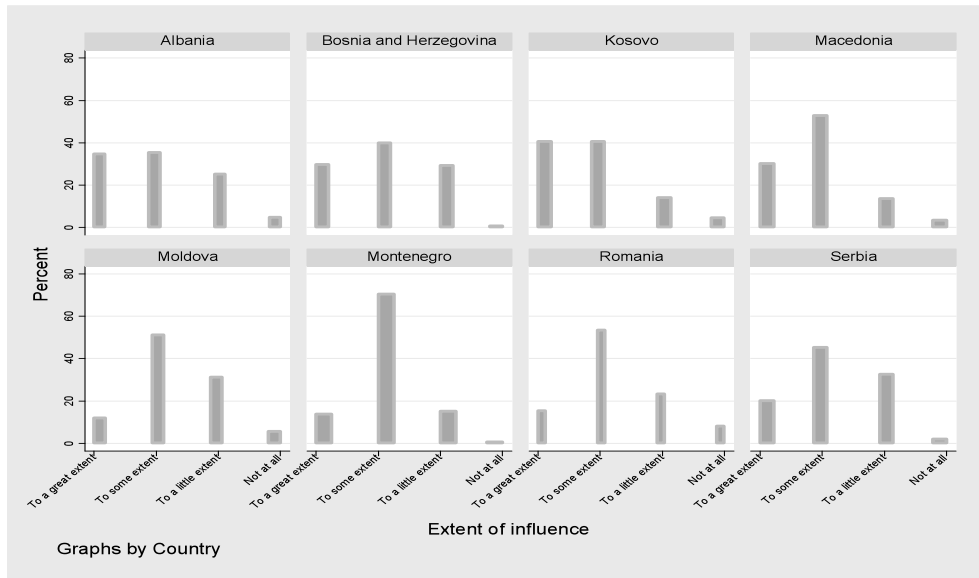
Interestingly, School Principals in all eight countries tend to associate Parents' Council activities positively with efforts to help pupils value education. A positive assessment of the Council's influence in this respect was given by 88.27% of School Principals in Montenegro, 85.27% in Kosovo, 82.91% in Macedonia, 69.67% in Romania, 69.36% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 59.32% in Albania, 58.07% in Moldova and 54.78% in Serbia.

**Figure 75 Influence of Parents' Council on helping pupils value education**



Surprisingly, the largest share of School Principals in all eight countries view the influence of Parents' Council on the involvement of parents in school life to be successful only to some extent.

**Figure 76 Influence of Parents' Council on the involvement of parents in school life**



In conclusion, we can state that School Principals in all eight countries under study consider the influence of Parents' Council on teaching methods and the content of lessons to be limited or nonexistent. In contrast, on all other measures the assessment is positive, but even in these cases Parents' Council is mostly considered to have influence only to some extent.

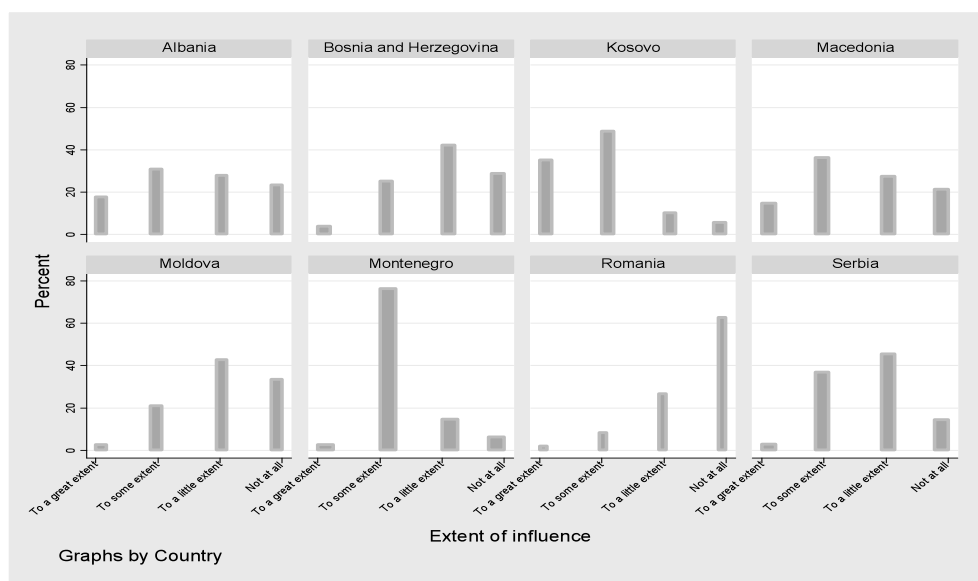
## Parents' influence on school life

In order to capture the extent of influence that parents in general have on practical school life, we surveyed School Principal perception of eight areas of parental influence: evaluation of teachers' performance; hiring and sacking of teachers; selection of textbooks and other teaching materials; setting of school budget priorities; planning of social activities; development of school policies and regulations; decisions taken at classroom level; and decisions taken at school level.

Figure 58 shows how School Principals perceive the importance of parental involvement in the evaluation of teachers' performance. We found that, except in Romania, Principals consider parental involvement in the evaluation of teachers' performance to be very or somewhat important. In Figure 78 we present School Principals' perceptions of parents' actual influence on evaluations of teacher performance. The results indicate a mixed picture. At cross-country level we can see that in Montenegro 79.08% of Principals consider that parents have influence on the evaluation of teachers' performance, while 89.51% of Principals in Romania say that parents have marginal or no influence. We also observe that in Albania, Macedonia and Serbia positive and negative responses are distributed proportionally similarly. This may indicate that it is at the discretion of school leadership whether or not such parental influence is established.

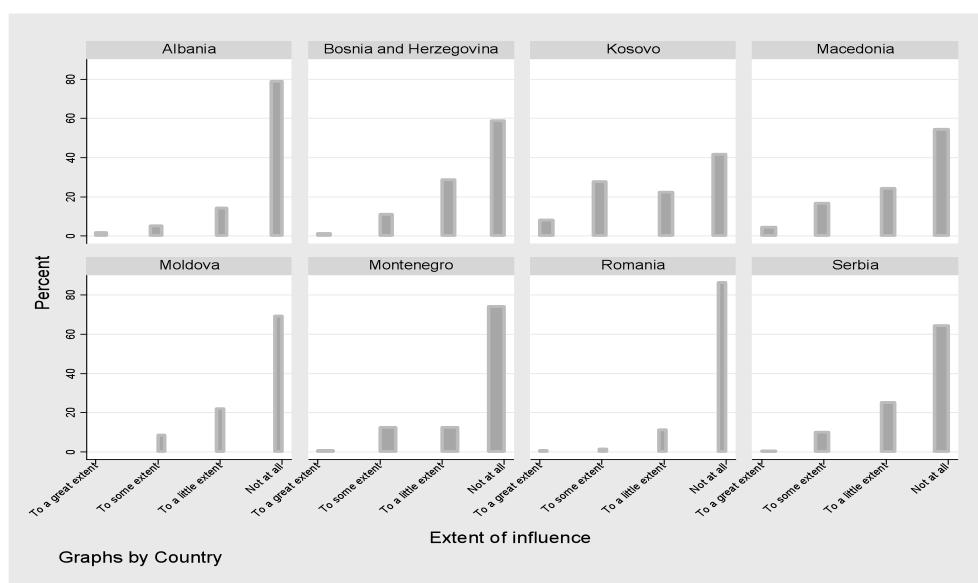


**Figure 77 Parents' influence on the evaluation of teachers' performance**



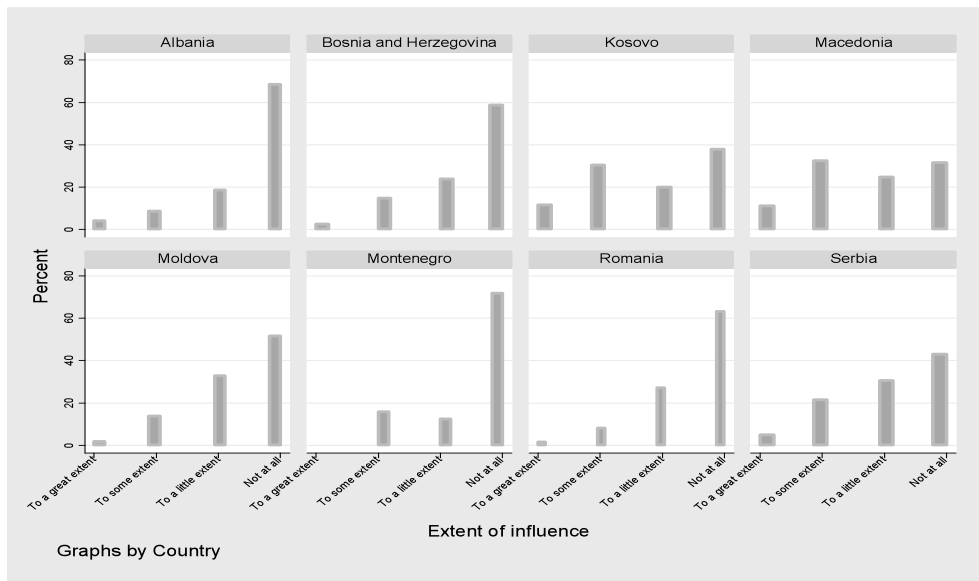
The level of parental influence on the hiring and sacking of teachers is perceived as non-existent or marginal by an overwhelming majority of Principals in each country. This is in line with the findings presented in Figure 59, namely that parents' involvement in the hiring and sacking of teachers is considered to be of limited or no importance. Given that a considerable share of Principals in each country except Romania previously said that parents had a say/influence in/on the evaluation of teachers' performance, it seems we can conclude that this influence is not determinant in the final assessment of their performance.

**Figure 78 Parents' influence on hiring and firing teachers**



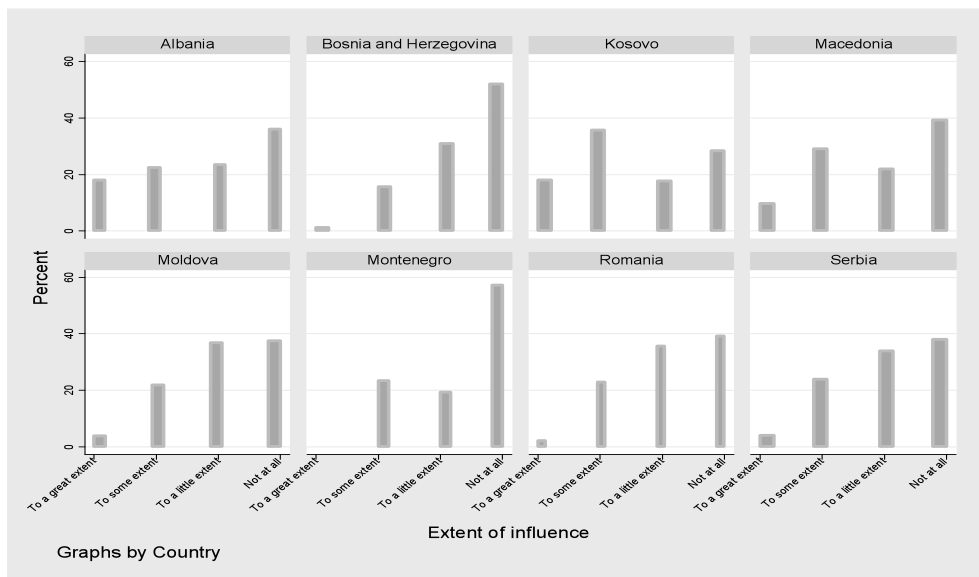
Parent influence on the selection of textbooks and other teaching materials does not seem to be common in the surveyed countries. Kosovo and Macedonia are the only countries where there is a considerable share of Principals who say that parents have some influence. In the other six countries such influence is virtually non-existent.

**Figure 79 Parents' influence on the selection of textbooks and other teaching materials+**



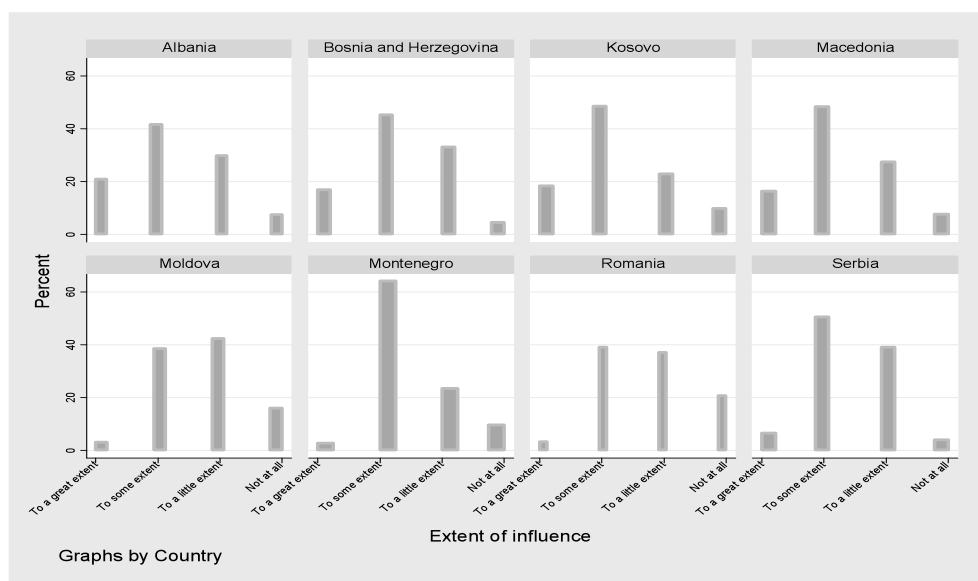
Parents tend to have limited influence on the setting of school budget priorities (see Figure 81) even in Kosovo and Albania where (as seen in Figure 60) the majority of School Principals consider parents' involvement in this activity very important. This can be partly explained by existing school financing practices in SEE countries, where transfers are earmarked and/or normative. However, the variations in reported levels of influence we observe in some countries indicate that different levels of parental participation are possible under the same financing regime. This raises the question of which factors lead to such variations.

**Figure 80 Parents' influence on setting priorities for the school budget**



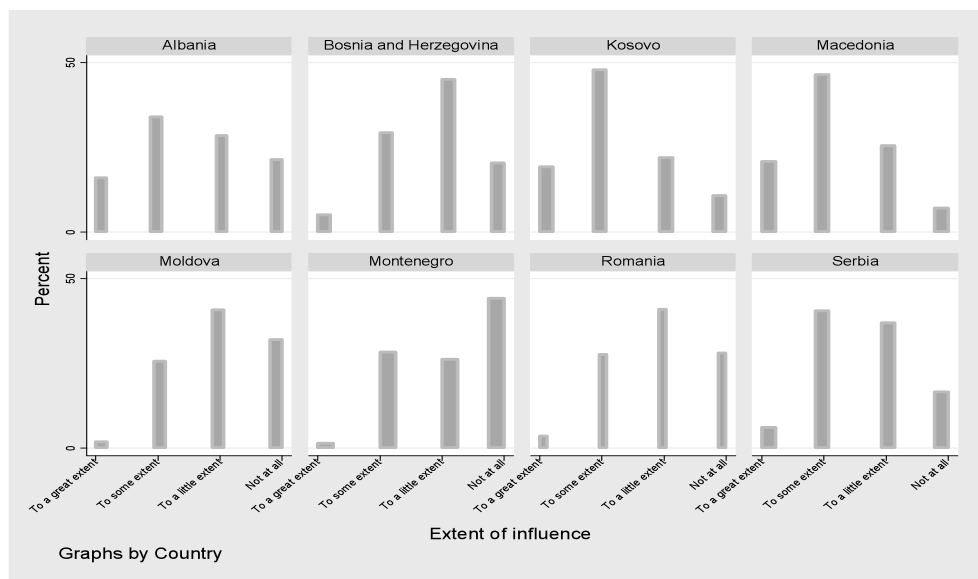
We have already learnt that School Principals view parents' role in school life as primarily linked to the organization of social activities. This is confirmed by Principals' assessment of the extent of parents' influence on planning such activities. In all eight countries the largest share of Principals consider that parents have some positive influence, with Moldovan and Romanian Principals being the least positive about the extent of influence.

**Figure 81 Parents' influence on social activity planning**



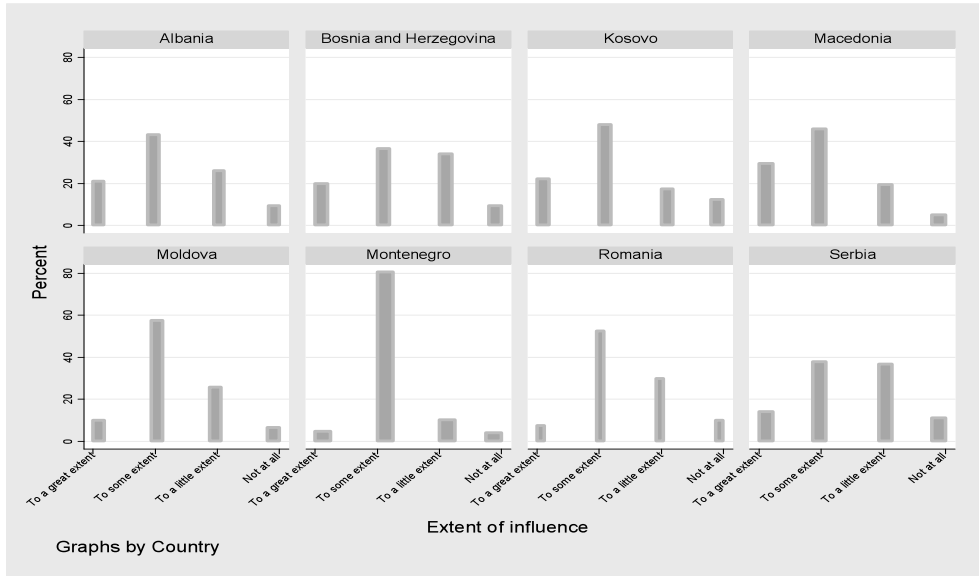
When turning to the assessment of parents' influence on the development of school policies and regulations, Principals' responses outline a mixed picture in each country. Within-country variations seem to reflect the different regulations and participation mechanisms adopted by schools. These variations can be interpreted as reflective of increased levels of school autonomy, as well as of the different types of school leadership that have been established in various school contexts.

**Figure 82 Parents' influence on the development of policies and regulations**



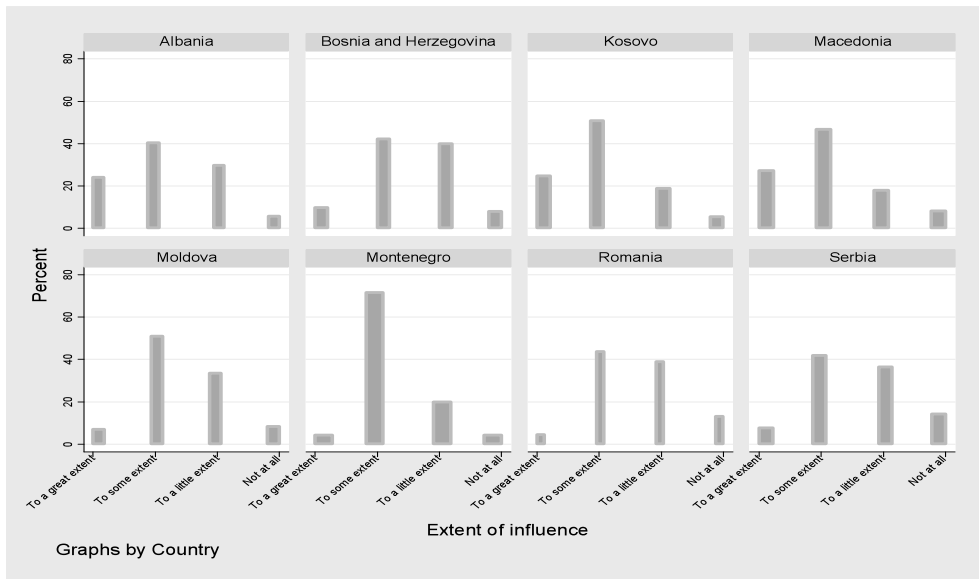
School Principals perceive parental influence on decisions taken at classroom level to be much greater. While this is a positive development, it cannot compensate for the limited levels of parental influence in the cases of teacher performance assessment, textbook choice and school budgeting. Despite limited influence on overall school culture, classroom level participation offers the opportunity to influence such results, and could be the precondition of parental participation in choice of teaching methods, school management and other aspects of school life.

**Figure 83 Parents' influence on decisions taken at classroom level**



It is even more encouraging that Principals consider the parental participation in school-level decision-making to be generally satisfactory (subject to the existing forms of participatory opportunities created by school).

**Figure 84 Parents' influence on decisions taken at school level**



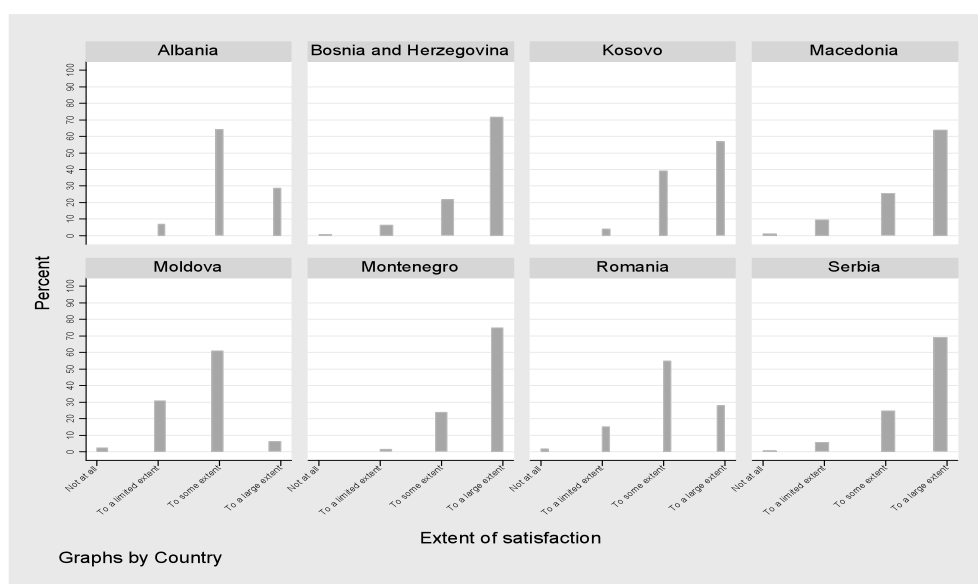
Overall, School Principals' assessment of parents' influence on school decision-making reiterates the double standards that are assigned on the one hand to teaching, teaching methods and overall management, and school social activity planning and participation in classroom decision-making on the other hand.

## Contribution of parent representatives on the School Board

To capture School Principals' perception of the contribution of parent representatives on the School Board, we focused on five items: Principals' satisfaction with the contribution of parent representatives on the School Board; the attendance of parent members at School Board meetings; their input at these meetings; the support they provided to solve school problems; and their communication with Parents' Council.

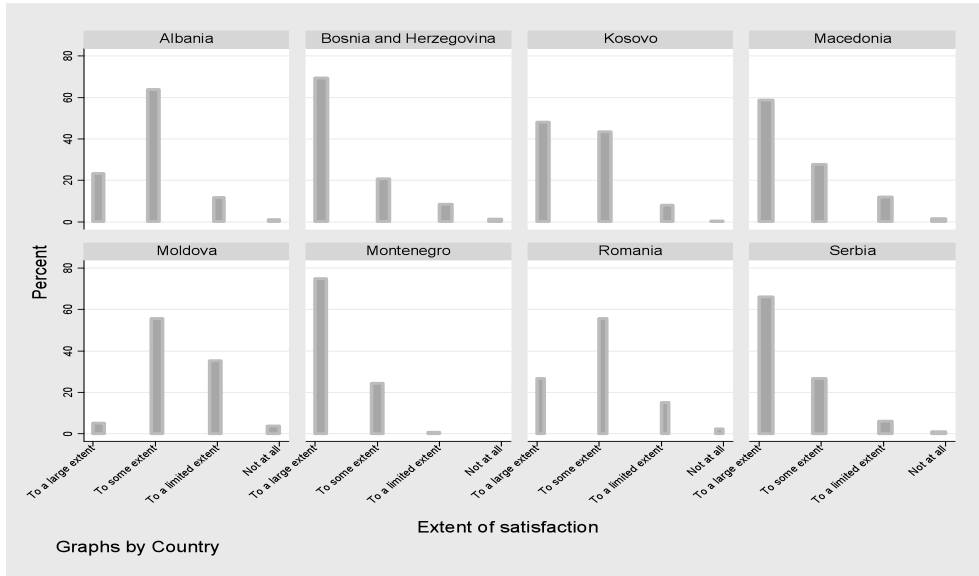
From the composite measure we learn that Principals in general regard the contribution of parent representatives to the School Board as satisfactory.

**Figure 85 Satisfaction with contribution by the parent representatives of the School Board**  
composite score



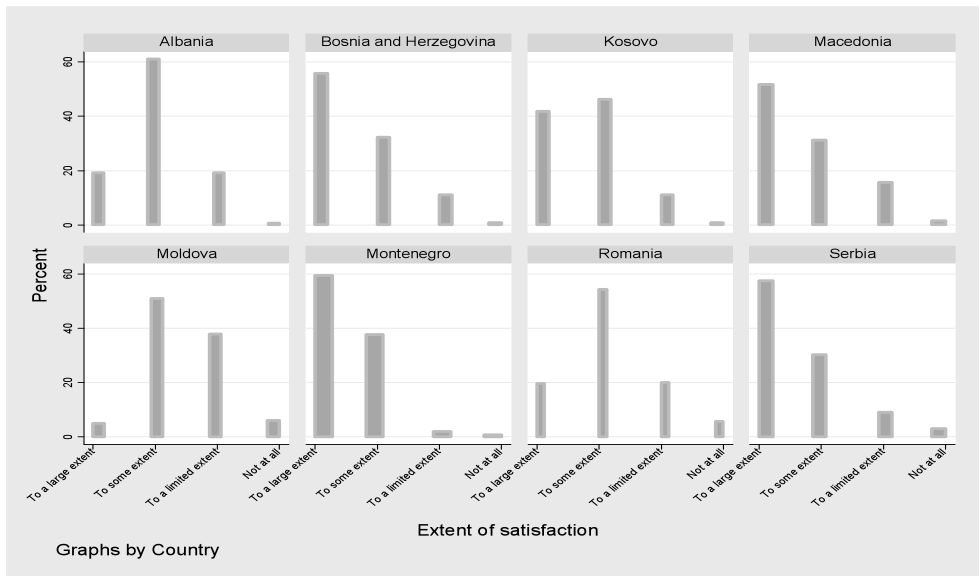
The attendance of parent members at School Board meetings is assessed as satisfactory by the overwhelming majority of Principals in all eight countries: 99.5% in Montenegro, 92.93% in Serbia, 91.56% in Kosovo, 89.87% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 87.29% in Albania, 86.43% in Macedonia, 81.98% in Romania and 60.67% in Moldova. However, the extent of satisfaction varies importantly by country. While School Principals reported high levels of satisfaction in Montenegro (74.83%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (69.20%), Serbia (66.16%) and Macedonia (58.79%), this share is less than 50% in the other four countries (48% in Kosovo, 26.63% in Romania, 23.41% in Albania and only 5.24% in Moldova).

**Figure 86 Satisfaction with attendance of parent School Board members at Board meetings**



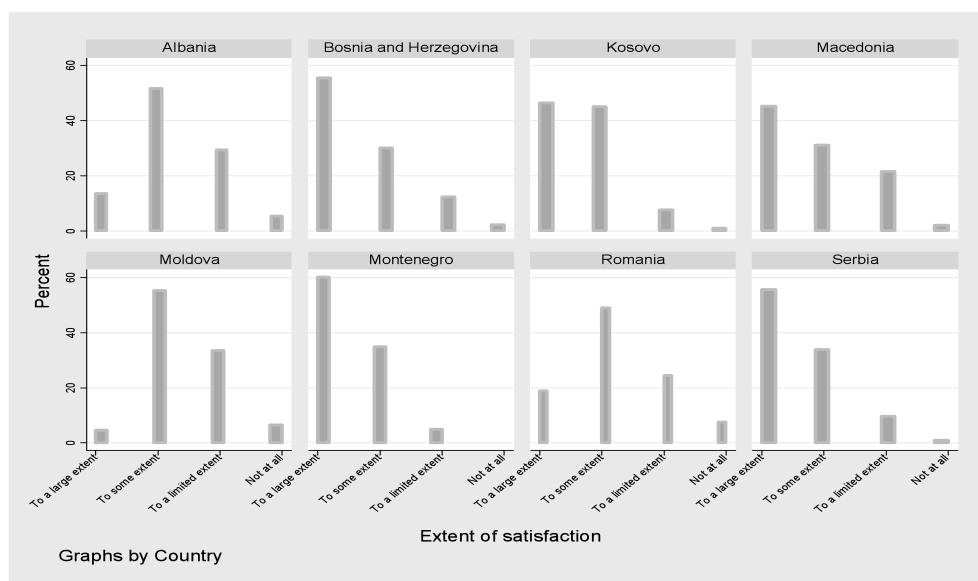
The overwhelming majority of School Principals consider the input provided by parent members of the School Board satisfactory, with some variation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia the largest share of Principals are satisfied with the input of parent members to a large extent, while in Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, and Romania the largest share of Principals are satisfied only to some extent. Principals in Moldova seem to be the most critical in this respect: nearly 40% report limited satisfaction and approximately 10% are not satisfied at all.

**Figure 87 Satisfaction with input provided by parent School Board members at Board meetings**



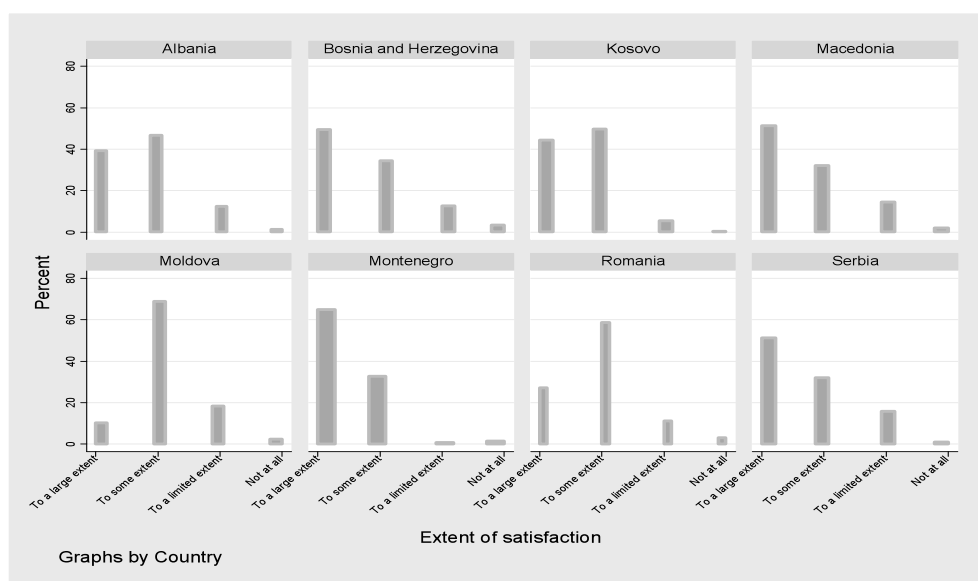
When turning to the support provided by parent members of the School Board in addressing school problems, the assessment of School Principals remains positive. However, the share of Principals expressing negative views slightly increases in some countries. The most critical School Principals are from Moldova, Albania, Macedonia, and Romania.

**Figure 88 Satisfaction with support provided by School Board members to solve school problems**



A fundamental role of parent representative(s) on the School Board is to liaise between the Board and Parents' Council. Therefore we also asked Principals for their assessment of the ways in which parent representatives communicate with Parents' Council. Figure 90 reveals that the large majority of Principals in all eight countries are satisfied with this communication to a large or at least to some extent.

**Figure 89 Satisfaction with parent School Board members' communication with Parents' Council**



In conclusion, we can state that in general School Principals in the eight SEE countries under study acknowledge that not only do parent members of the School Board take part at the meetings, but they make an important contribution to those meetings. Furthermore, the support provided by parent representatives to the school in addressing emerging problems and communicating with parents is also considered to be substantial by the overwhelming majority of School Principals.

## Section III: Conclusions

This section summarizes the findings of the cross-country survey of School Principals. The analysis of the data was limited to descriptive analysis because the initiative under which the survey was carried out is oriented towards informing practitioners of ways to further parental engagement in school life (more detailed country level analysis can be found in each of the eight country reports). Findings in this respect constitute an important instrument for assessing the extent of school openness to parental participation and the opportunities that are created for parents to engage in school life. Besides summarizing the main findings of the survey, this section also focuses on identifying possible lines of further inquiry into the data gathered. Finally, findings are discussed in light of advocacy activities to further parental participation in school life, to be planned and carried out in the next phase of the initiative.

We have found, consistently across all participating countries, that School Principals perceive parental participation in school life as positively associated to all four performance variables studied. More precisely, School Principals consider that parental participation in school life influences positively overall school climate, parents' attitudes towards the school, parents' support for the school, and pupils' educational attainment. Despite the overall agreement of School Principals on the positive role played by parental participation in school life, we note the presence of important cross-country variations in the extent to which this impact is perceived to have a positive influence on the four performance variables. For instance, the largest shares of School Principals in Moldova and Romania consider, in contrast to Principals from the other countries, that parental participation in school life is beneficial only to some extent.

The fact that over 80% of School Principals consider that parental participation in school life is beneficial for each of the four variables to a large or some extent implies that School Principals are likely to undertake actions to further parental participation in school life, possibly widening of the scope of decision-making at school level. In the case of the surveyed countries, this finding challenges the common belief that School Principals are against parental participation in school life and that widening their Principal decision-making authority would lead to the emergence of inward-looking and power-monopolizing school leadership.

We found that, without exception, all schools undertook at least one action to foster parental participation in the last school year. This is an exceptionally important finding, as it indicates that, although the number of school activities in this respect is limited, all schools have some experience in involving parents. We need to also note that the frequency with which such activities were undertaken is most often on a semestral basis.

These results indicate that there is an important gap between the perceived importance of parental participation in school life and the actual efforts made by schools to actively involve parents. The majority of School Principals in all countries under focus share the view that sustained home-school communication is seriously limited by parents' lack of interest, time and communication skills. In contrast, teachers' lack of interest, availability and communication skills is considered to be much less of a problem.



The gap between School Principals' perceptions of the importance of parental participation and the actions undertaken to increase this is also visible when examining shares of parents participating in the three school activities most successful in terms of parental engagement. The shares of parents engaged consistently heterogeneous across countries, indicating the presence important differences in the school contexts in which such activities are organized.

We have also found that home-school communication initiated by schools is limited in scope. According to School Principals' responses, while the overwhelming majority of schools in all countries provided information on pupils' educational performance in the last academic year, a considerable share of schools failed to provide any information on school curriculum, and in some countries newsletters are rare or nonexistent. In terms of frequency, we have found important variations in each school-initiated attempt at home-school communication, both within and between countries. These variations indicate that the framework for organizing such activities exists, but implies that schools make use of it to a different extent. It is important to note that even schools that organized such activities in the last academic year mostly did so only on a quarterly or semestral basis. It is also important to remember that while virtually all School Principals reported having a school communication strategy with parents, varying shares of Principals did not identify any communication approach when asked to name at least one. It is also worth pointing out that School Principals reported almost unanimous satisfaction with parent meetings held by form or subject teachers, despite reporting that seldom did over 75% of parents participate at these.

We have found high levels of consensus among School Principals on the importance of schools providing support for parents to improve their children's educational performance. However, while School Principals tend to regard parenting services highly, their views on the usefulness of such services vary considerably both within and across countries. Compared to other countries, School Principals in Moldova, Montenegro, and Romania tend to attribute lower levels of usefulness to school support for parents to help their children in education. School Principals in Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia are by far the most enthusiastic about such services.

Another important finding is the existence of a consistent gap between the shares of School Principals who perceive parenting services by schools as useful and the actual rate with which such services are organized in their respective schools. For instance, in Kosovo over 95% of School Principals consider sessions to help parents assist their children with homework to be useful, but only approximately 70% of schools actually organized such sessions in the last academic year. Similarly, in Serbia nearly 80% of School Principals said that such sessions are useful, yet only about 60% offered such services. At the same time, a share of schools in all countries under study did not undertake parenting services in the last academic year. In schools where such services were organized, we found important variance in the frequency of service delivery.

In contrast to the dimensions of the role of school leadership in fostering parental participation in school life already discussed, in the case of parents' involvement in school decision-making we found a more mixed picture in each country. We observe that overall only a small share of School Principals consider that parental voice is not at all important. This share is largest in Romania (10.46%) and Serbia (10%). The most positive perceptions are shared by School Principals from Kosovo (91.56%), Albania (79.23%) and Macedonia (79.80%). This indicates that overall School Principals consider that parents should be involved in school decision-making. However, we have also learnt that Principals consider that parental involvement needs to be primarily oriented towards social activity planning rather than, for example, the evaluation of teachers' performance. We observed that School Principals in all countries are divided over the importance of parental involvement in setting school budget priorities.

School Principals' overall assessment of parents' influence on school decision-making reflects the double standards that are assigned to teaching, pedagogy and overall management on the one hand, and school social activity planning and engagement in classroom decision-making on the other. Thus parents are expected to make a significant contribution to school life by engaging in the latter and, to a lesser extent, in the former.

The share of schools in which Parents' Council members are not permitted to attend meetings where school decisions are taken is marginal. We have also identified an important split between countries in terms of the conditions under which Parents' Council members can participate at such meetings. While in 84.92% of schools in Macedonia and 74.48% of schools in Montenegro, Parents' Council representatives could participate at such meetings by invitation only, such limitation are present in only 24.85% of schools in Romania and 28.97% of schools in Moldova. In Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia schools are comparatively evenly split between those where the participation of Parents' Council members is by invitation only and schools where there is no restriction in this respect.

Consequently, while the majority of School Principals in all countries consider that their Parents' Council has an influence on daily school life, this influence is limited. The only exception is in the case of Kosovo, where nearly 60% of School Principals consider that Parents' Council plays an important role. We learnt that while 74.11% of School Principals in Macedonia, 69.02% in Kosovo and 68.97% in Montenegro consider Parent Councils to have some or great influence on teaching methods, 90.69% of Principals in Romania, 82.88% in Moldova, 72.36% in Serbia and 70.37% in Albania say that they have little, if any influence at all. Similar results were obtained in the case of Parent Councils' influence on the content of lessons.

These figures are reversed when it comes to the influence of Parent Councils on the planning of extracurricular activities. In this case, School Principals tend to regard the role of Parents' Council highly. However, we observe that School Principals in Moldova, Romania, and Serbia are approximately evenly split in their evaluation.

School Principals in all countries under focus report satisfaction with the extent of participation at Board meetings by parent members of the School Board. School Principals from Montenegro (99.5%), Serbia (92.93%), Kosovo (91.56%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (89.87%), Albania (87.29%), Macedonia (86.43%) and Romania (81.98%) all report satisfaction. Nevertheless, we observe that the extent of satisfaction varies by country. Thus, while School Principals in Montenegro (74.83%), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (69.20%), in Serbia (66.16%), in Macedonia (58.79%) and in Kosovo (48%) report high levels of satisfaction this share is only 5.24% in Moldova, 23.41% in Albania and 26.63% in Romania.

## References

- Amatea, E. S., Smith-Adcock, S., & Villares, E. (2006). From family deficit to family strength: viewing families' contributions to children's learning from a family resilience perspective., *Professional School Counseling*, 9(3), 177-189. doi: Article.
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224.
- Barnard, Wendy Miedel (2004). "Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment", *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 26, Issue 1, pp. 39-62.
- Blake, S., & Francis, G. (2004). *Promoting children and young people's participation through the national healthy school standard*. London: National Health School Standard .
- Boulding, E. (1979). *Children's rights and the wheel of life*. Transaction Publishers.
- Bradshaw, Jonathan; Peter Kamp; Sally Baldwin and Abigail Rowe (2004). *The Drivers of Social Exclusion, A Review of the Literature for the Social Exclusion Unit in the Breaking the Cycle Series*, Social Exclusion Unit, available at: <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/drivers.pdf>, accessed September 10, 2008.
- Bray, M. and R.M. Thomas (1992). "Faculty trust of colleagues: Linking the School Principal with School Effectiveness" *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 38-45.
- Bridges, E. M. (1967). A model for shared decision making in the school principalship, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 3(1), 49-61.
- Brundrett, M., Slavíková, L., Karabec, S., Murden, B., Dering, A., & Nicolaido, M. (2006). Educational leadership development in england and the czech republic: comparing perspectives., *School Leadership & Management*, 26(2), 93-106. doi: Article.
- Catholic Relief Services. (2006). *The crs parent-school partnership program evaluation case study: participants' perceptions of change in bosnia-herzegovina and kosovo*. Catholic Relief Services - Europe/Middle East Regional Office. Retrieved January 4, 2008, from [http://crs.org/education/pubs/Edu200702\\_e.pdf](http://crs.org/education/pubs/Edu200702_e.pdf).
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfeld, F., & York, R. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Convention on the rights of the child*. (1989). UN General Assembly Document . Retrieved January 11, 2008, from <http://www.cirp.org/library/ethics/UN-convention/>.
- Cotton, K. (2001). School-based management. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/7/topsyn6.html>.
- Crighton, J., & Kowar, G. (2007). *Education policies for students at risk and those with disabilities in south eastern europe: findings from the follow-up visits, october 2006-january 2007*. OECD Directorate for Education. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/61/38613229.pdf>.

- Davies, L., & Kirkpatrick, G. (2000). *The euridem project: a review of pupil democracy in europe*. Children's Rights Alliance for England.
- Davies, L., Williams, C., & Yamashita, H. (2005). *Inspiring schools: taking up the challenge of pupil participation - impact and outcomes*. Carnegie Trust. Retrieved from [http://www.participationforschools.org.uk/pdfs/InspiringSchools\\_P1.pdf](http://www.participationforschools.org.uk/pdfs/InspiringSchools_P1.pdf).
- Denis, Daniel J., Legerski, Joanna (2006). "Origins of Path Analysis: Causal Modeling and the Origins of Path Analysis", *Theory & Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 2.
- Desforges, Charles.; Abouchaar, Alberto (2003). *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review*, London, UK: Department for Education and Skills.
- Desimone, L. (2002). How can comprehensive school reform models be successfully implemented?, *Review of Educational Research* (3), 433-479.
- DeVellis, Robert F. (2003). *Scale development, Theory and Practice*, SAGE.
- Dika, S. L., & Singh, K. (2002). Applications of social capital in educational literature: a critical synthesis, *Review of Educational Research*, 72(1), 31-66.
- Dowley, K. M and B. D. Silver (2005) 'Crossnational Survey Research and Subnational Pluralism' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 17, Iss. 2; p. 226-238
- Eskeland, G. (2007). Autonomy, participation and learning: findings from argentine schools, and implications for decentralization, *Education Economics*, 15(1), 103-127.
- Fullan, Michael (2003). *The Moral Imperative of School leadership*,
- Fullan, Michael (2005). "Turnaround Leadership". *The Education Forum*, Vol. 69, Iss. 2, pp. 174-181.
- Gamage, D. T., & Sooksomchitra, P. (2004). Decentralisation and school-based management in thailand., *International Review of Education*, 50(3/4), 291-308. doi: Article.
- Gibton, D., Sabar, N., & Goldring, E. B. (2000). How principals of autonomous schools in israel view implementation of decentralization and restructuring policy: risks, rights, and wrongs, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 22(2), 193.
- Glass, G. V. (1979). Policy for the unpredictable (uncertainty research and policy), *Educational Researcher*, 8(9), 12-14.
- Gunnarsson, L., Orazem, P., Sanchez, M., & Verdisco, A. (2004). *Does school decentralization raise student outcomes? theory and evidence on the roles of school autonomy and community participation*. (Working Paper #04005). Ames, Ia.: Iowa State University.
- Hallam, Susan; Lynne Rogers and Jacqueline Shaw (2006). "Improving children's behaviour and attendance through the use of parenting programmes: an examination of practice in five case study local authorities", *British Journal of Special Education*, Vol. 33, Iss. 3, pp.107-113.
- Hanushek, E. A. (1995). *Interpreting recent research on schooling in developing countries*. University of Rochester. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from <https://urresearch.rochester.edu/retrieve/2210/WWP3-+Hanushek.pdf>.
- Hara, S. R., & Burke, D. J. (1998). Parental involvement: the key to improved student achievement, *School Community Journal*, 8(2), 9-11.

- Harris, A. and Chrispeels, J. H., Ed. (2006). "Improving Schools and Educational Systems", *International Perspectives*. London, Routledge.
- Harris, Alma (2006). "Leading Change in Schools in Difficulty" *Journal of Educational Change*, Vol. 7 Issue 1/2, pp. 9-18.
- Hart, R. (1992). *Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship*. UNICEF International Child Development Centre. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef-irc.org/cgi-bin/unicef/download\\_insert.sql?ProductID=100](http://www.unicef-irc.org/cgi-bin/unicef/download_insert.sql?ProductID=100).
- Hartas, Dimitra (2008). "Practices of parental participation: a case study" *Educational Psychology in Practice*, Vol. 24, iss. 2, pp. 139-153.
- Hoerr, T. R. (2008). What is instructional leadership?, *Educational Leadership*, 65(4), 84-85. doi: Article.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., & Brissie, J. S. (1987). Parent involvement: contributions of teacher efficacy, school socioeconomic status, and other school characteristics, *American Educational Research Journal*, 24(3), 417-435.
- Hoyle, Eric and Mike Wallace (2005). *Educational Leadership*, Sage.
- Jencks, C. S., Smith, M., Ackland, H., Bane, M. J., Cohen, D., Gintis, H., Heyns, B., & Michelson, S. (1972). *Inequality, a reassessment of the effects of family and schooling in America*. New York: Basic.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement, *Urban Education*, 40(3), 237.
- Jimenez, E., & Sawada, Y. *Do community-managed schools work? an evaluation of el salvador's educo program*. Development Research Group; The World Bank. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from [http://povertydev.forumone.com/files/14055\\_EDUCO-ElSalv.pdf](http://povertydev.forumone.com/files/14055_EDUCO-ElSalv.pdf).
- Jon Lauglo, & Tormod Øia. (2007). *Education and civic engagement: review of research and a study on norwegian youths*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Directorate for education. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/37/48/39676435.pdf>.
- Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl (2000): *Children and Youth at Risk: Some Conceptual Considerations*. Paper prepared for the Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda Symposium, "Children and Youth At Risk," April 6 -7, 2000, Ottawa, p. 5.
- King, E. M., & Özler, B. (1998). *What's decentralization got to do with learning? the case of nicaragua's school autonomy reform*. Development Research Group; The World Bank. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281552767/What\\_Decentralization\\_Learning.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281552767/What_Decentralization_Learning.pdf).
- King, Gary, Christopher J.L. Murray, Joshua A. Salomon, and Ajay Tandon (2004) 'Enhancing the Validity and Cross-cultural Comparability of Survey Research,' *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 1, pp. 191-207.
- Krüger, Meta L.; Witziers, Bob; Slegers, Peter (2007). "The Impact of school leadership on school level factors" *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, Vol. 18 Issue 1, pp. 1-20.
- Land, D. (2002). Local school boards under review: their role and effectiveness in relation to students' academic achievement, *Review of Educational Research*, 72(2), 229-278.

- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*, 138. Cambridge University.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large scale reform: effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(2), 201 – 227.
- Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (2000). Changing leadership for changing times, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 26(2).
- Lewin, H. M. (2006). *Can research improve educational leadership?*, *Educational Researcher*, 35(8), 38.
- Lewis, Jenny and Brian J. Caldwell (2005). "Evidence-Based leadership", *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 69, Iss. 2, pp. 182-190.
- Lupton, R. (2006). How does place affect education? London, *Institute for Public Policy Research*.
- Luyten, H., Visscher, A., & Witziers, B. (2005). School effectiveness research: from a review of the criticism to recommendations for further development, *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, 16(3), 249-279. doi: Article.
- Lynn, P. (2003) 'Developing Quality Standards for Cross-National Survey Research: Five Approaches', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol. 6, Iss. 4, pp. 323 – 336.
- Lynn, P., S. Häder, S. Gabler, and S. Laaksonen (2004) 'Methods for Achieving Equivalence of Samples in Cross-National Surveys: *The European Social Survey Experience*', Working Papers of the Institute for Social and Economic Research, paper 2004-09. Colchester: University of Essex.
- Maasoumi, E., Millimet, D. L., & Rangaprasad, V. Class size and educational policy: who benefits from smaller classes?
- Marzano, R. J. (2001). *A new era of school reform: going where the research takes us*. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning; US Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources Information Center. Retrieved from [http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/SchoolImprovementReform/5002RR\\_NewEraSchoolReform.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/SchoolImprovementReform/5002RR_NewEraSchoolReform.pdf).
- McDonald, Roderick P. (1996). "Path Analysis with Composite Variable" *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 239-270.
- Mitra, D. L. (2004). The significance of students: can increasing "student voice" in schools lead to gains in youth development?, *Teachers College Record*, 106(4), 651-688. doi: Article.
- Moran, Patricia; Ghate, Deborah; van der Merwe, Amelia (2004). *What works in parenting support? A review of the international evidence*. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Muijs, Daniel; Harris, Alma; Chapman, Christopher; Stoll, Louise; Russ, Jennifer (2004). "Improving Schools in Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Areas – A review of the Research Evidence" *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, Vol. 15 Issue 2, pp. 149-175.
- Nicaragua Reform Evaluation Team. (1996). *Nicaragua's school autonomy reform: a first look*. World Bank. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281552767/Nicaragua\\_School\\_Autonomy\\_Reform.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281552767/Nicaragua_School_Autonomy_Reform.pdf).
- OECD (2003) *Thematic Review of Education Policy in SEE countries*, available at <http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/RegionalIndicators/SEE.pdf>, accessed August 26, 2007.

- OECD. (2006a). *Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe - Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from <http://213.253.134.43/oecd/pdfs/browseit/9606011E.PDF>.
- OECD. (2006b). Education at a glance 2006 - home. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from [http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_37328564\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_37328564_1_1_1_1,00.html).
- Okpala, C. O., Okpala, A. O. and Smith, F. E. (2001). "Parental involvement, instructional expenditures, family socioeconomic attributes, and student achievement." *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 95, Iss. 2, pp. 110-115.
- Powell, S., & Bratović, E. (2007). *We can. we volunteer. pro-social values/behaviour and employability amongst young people in see and the impact of volunteer work camps*. SEEYN: South-East European Youth Network. Retrieved from [http://www.proMENTE.org/files/research/proMENTE\\_SEEYN\\_voluntarism\\_research\\_results.doc](http://www.proMENTE.org/files/research/proMENTE_SEEYN_voluntarism_research_results.doc).
- Ranson, R., Farrel, C., Peim, N., & Smitih, P. (2005). Does governance matter for school improvement?, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 16(3), 305-325.
- Robertson, R. (1995). Glocalisation: time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity In , Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson: *Global Modernities*. London: Sage, pp. 25-44.
- Rodríguez, A., & Hovde, K. (2002). *The challenge of school autonomy: supporting principals*. The World Bank. Retrieved from [http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/lac/lacinfoclient.nsf/590e830e72216ab88525694c00781195/0740e48d5da7e20185256ca60004158b/\\$FILE/77-School-Autonomy-Principals.pdf](http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/lac/lacinfoclient.nsf/590e830e72216ab88525694c00781195/0740e48d5da7e20185256ca60004158b/$FILE/77-School-Autonomy-Principals.pdf).
- Roger Hart. (2008). Stepping back from 'the ladder': reflections on a model of participatory work with children, *Participation and Learning*.
- Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). Transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organizational values: the mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(2), 179 – 199.
- Rudduck, J., Arnot, M., Demetriou, H., MacBeath, J., Flutter, J., Mcintrye, D., et al. (2003). *Consulting pupils about teaching and learning*. Economic and Social Research Council. Retrieved from [http://www.tlrp.org/pub/documents/no5\\_ruddock.pdf](http://www.tlrp.org/pub/documents/no5_ruddock.pdf).
- Sacker, A., Schoon, I. and Bartley, M. (2002). "Social inequality in educational achievement and psychological adjustment throughout childhood: magnitude and mechanisms." *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 55, pp. 863-880.
- Scheerens, J. (1999). *School effectiveness in developed and developing countries; a review of the research evidence*. University of Twente/ The World Bank.
- Scheerens, J. (2005). *Review of school and instructional effectiveness research*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001466/146695e.pdf>.
- Scheerens, J., & Bosker, R. J. (1997). *The foundations of educational effectiveness*. Oxford/New York/Tokyo: Pergamon.
- Schmuck, P., & Schmuck, R. (1990). Democratic participation in small-town schools, *Educational Researcher*, 19(8), 14-19.

- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. Doubleday.
- Sheridan, S., & Samuelsson, I. (2001). Children's conceptions of participation and influence in pre-school: a perspective on pedagogical quality, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2(2). Retrieved from [http://www.worldwords.co.uk/pdf/viewpdf.asp?j=ciec&vol=2&issue=2&year=2001&article=Sheridan\\_CIEC\\_2\\_2&id=89.146.164.174](http://www.worldwords.co.uk/pdf/viewpdf.asp?j=ciec&vol=2&issue=2&year=2001&article=Sheridan_CIEC_2_2&id=89.146.164.174).
- Sinnott, R. (2006) 'An Evaluation of the Measurement of National, Subnational and Supranational Identity in Crossnational Surveys' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 18, Iss. 2; p. 211-230.
- Spillane, James S. (2005). "Distributed Leadership". *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 69, Iss. 2, pp.. 143-150.
- Sun, H. (2007). Contextual factors and effective school improvement, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 18(1), 93-122.
- The World Bank. (2007). Education - impact evaluation. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20885241~menuPK:2448393~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:282386,00.html>.
- Thomson, P., & Holdsworth, R. (2003). Theorizing change in the educational 'field': re-readings of 'student participation' projects, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 6(4), 371-391.
- Thornton, B., Peltier, G., & Perreault, G. (2004). Systems thinking a skill to improve student achievement., *Clearing House*, 77(5), 222-227. doi: Article.
- Thrupp, M. (2001). Sociological and political concerns about school effectiveness research: Time for a new research agenda. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol. 12, pp. 7 - 40.
- Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H., & Schulz, W. (2001). *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries: civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen*. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Retrieved from [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/e5/37.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/e5/37.pdf).
- Ullman, Jodie B. and Peter M. Bentler (2004) *Structural equation Modeling*, in Hardy Melissa and Alan Bryman (eds.) *Handbook of Data Analysis*, Sage, pp. 431-458.
- UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. MONEE project. (1998). *Education for all?* UNICEF. Retrieved January 22, 2008, from <http://ideas.repec.org/p/ucf/remore/remore98-3.html>.
- UNICEF. (2007). *Education for some more than others: a regional study on education in central and eastern europe and the commonwealth of independent states (cee/cis)*. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Regional\\_Education\\_Study\\_.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Regional_Education_Study_.pdf).
- Vegas, E. (1999). Ssrn-school choice, student performance, and teacher and school characteristics: the Chilean case. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=636199](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=636199).
- Waanders, Christine; Julia L. Mendez, and Jason T. Downer (2007). "Parent characteristics, economic stress and neighborhood context as predictors of parent involvement in preschool children's education: *Journal of School Psychology*, Volume 45, Issue 6, pp. 619-636
- Walker, E. M. (2002). The politics of school-based management: understanding the process of devolving authority in urban school districts, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 10(33), 16.



- Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: what 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. a working paper. Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, For full text: [http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/LeadershipOrganizationDevelopment/5031RR\\_BalancedLeadership.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/LeadershipOrganizationDevelopment/5031RR_BalancedLeadership.pdf). Retrieved from [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/1b/83/a1.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/83/a1.pdf).
- White, K. R. (1982). The relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement., *Psychological Bulletin*, 91, 461-481.
- Wong, S. W., & Hughes, J. N. (2006). Ethnicity and language contributions to dimensions of parent involvement., *School Psychology Review*, 35(4), 645-662. doi: Article.
- York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? findings from two decades of scholarship, *Review of Educational Research*, 74(3), 255.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Summary of Focus Group Discussion Reports<sup>6</sup>

Focus Group Sessions were held in all 8 countries participating in the Project:

- Albania
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Kosovo
- FYR of Macedonia
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Romania
- Serbia

### Project objectives

This focus group research is part of the Project “Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe”. The Project has several phases; the main objectives of the first phase are to --

1. better understand how stakeholders (e.g., parents) are engaged in school- level governance, by carrying out national surveys of school principals;
2. support sustainable initiatives that enhance stakeholders’ participation in school governance.

### Focus group objectives

Focus groups are a useful way to ascertain the capability, values, positions and activities of school principals with respect to participation at the school level. The results as reported in the 8 country reports will be used to improve our understanding of the conditions under which schools operate, and principals’ positions with regard to parental participation in school-level decision-making. They will also help us to prepare more relevant questionnaires for other components of the Phase 1 research.

---

<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Johanna Crighton for contributing with this summary

**Groups:** In each country, two groups of school principals were invited to take part. Most groups included elementary school principals only, although some secondary school principals took part as well (Romania). In total, 16 focus group sessions were conducted, in which more than 100<sup>7</sup> principals or other school leaders (e.g., deputy principals) took part. In some cases, care had been taken to include a mix of urban/rural schools, and in one case (Montenegro) the principal of a special school was invited; in another (Albania) a school with a largely Roma student population was represented. Each focus group had about 8 participants.

**Sessions** lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, and - judging by the reports - the discussions were animated and considered useful by those present.

**Topics** were suggested by a set of guidelines provided by the Regional Research Team for the Project, and translated for each respective country. Each discussion group was recorded, and then transcribed and summarized in 8 country reports. These are available on the Project web site (in English).

**Country reports** range from 5 pages (Kosovo) to 36 pages (Montenegro), with an average about of 15-17 pages. Some are straightforward summary *reports* of what was said during the discussions (Kosovo, Moldova, FYR Macedonia, Serbia) while others offer *analyses/interpretations* (Albania, Romania, Montenegro) as well as *recommendations* (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina).

## Key findings

### Issues discussed.

Despite the common guidelines, there are considerable differences in the topics of discussion among the groups. Understandably, principals were more interested in solving their immediate problems than in talking about stakeholders' participation in school decision-making.

For example, in **Albania**, one of the top concerns was over-crowded classes; another was the undue importance given to examination results, and the adverse (or not?) effects of new private universities with easier admission criteria. Principals in **Bosnia & Herzegovina** said that education reforms were imposed without adequate funding or clear guidelines, and that therefore they were implemented by schools themselves to the best of their ability, given that essential materials and equipment are often unavailable. In **Kosovo**, principals spoke about poor infrastructure, too many shifts, not enough class time, and a lack of financial autonomy which means that even minor expenditures require complicated centralized procurement procedures.

In **FYR Macedonia**, concerns were related to teacher quality, to the availability of equipment, to the impact of [financial and administrative] decentralization, and to the introduction of the new 9-year basic education programme. In the latter case, principals commented that the new requirements (e.g., the provision of a computer for every child) took no account of the real conditions of many schools. Reforms were too rushed, too top-down, with too little consultation, and no strategies for sustainability. Worries were expressed also about aggressive behaviour of some children – fights, vandalism, bullying. In **Moldova**, there was concern about the large amounts of home-work given to students; teachers' low salaries, and resulting lack of motivation. Moreover, the fact that a growing number of parents work abroad means that children often do not get the kind of family stability and support they need in order to learn and develop. Their motivation suffers; they are also often sick and not properly nourished.

---

<sup>7</sup> Two reports do not mention the number of participants (BiH and Albania); but together, the other 6 had 99 participants over the two focus sessions. However, it can be assumed that BiH's and Albania's groups were of approximately the same size ( $\pm 8$  people), bringing the total to an (assumed)  $16 \times 8 = 128$  people.

**Montenegrin** principals spoke of their schools' financial and material problems, as well as their lack of professional and personal satisfaction because they feel they cannot provide the kind of high-quality education that students are entitled to. Some also mentioned political bickering between parties and personal animosities that sometimes stand in the way of getting things done. Relations with local authorities, however, are reported to be good. The principals acknowledge that the socio-economic "surroundings" of the school (community) highly influence the quality of schooling, and that they are sometimes more concerned with ensuring safety and security than with teaching and learning,

In **Romania**, all focus group participants had recently been involved in public consultation debates about a block of new education laws proposed at the end of 2007 (Law on Pre-University Education, Higher Education, and Teacher Education). Therefore they were very well informed. Not surprisingly, some of the discussion was about changes in the way principals will be appointed (under the new laws, this will be the responsibility of local Councils on the recommendation of the school's Board of Trustees) and similar issues raised during the public consultation. In addition, all principals said that the quality of learning in Romanian schools is "getting worse" and that learning outcomes are unsatisfactory; but that negative media reporting – and a lack of communication between political and administrative decision-makers and the school – are adding to the schools' negative image. **Serbian** principals agree: they say that one of the most common problems for principals is the lack of communication, cooperation and support from the Ministry and other institutions (e.g., Social Welfare and Health). Also, while material conditions in schools have improved, student behaviour and attitudes have not. "Some students are aggressive, and not interested in learning" – and in some cases parents do not support the school when there are problems with violence or other behaviour issues. On the positive side, in-service training of teachers is much better, and they have more opportunities for professional development.

### **Parents' and Community Participation<sup>8</sup> in School-level Decision-Making**

The main objective of the focus group discussions was to find out how principals perceive the level and value of parental and community participation in school affairs. Therefore, all focus group spoke about this topic in some detail, mostly in a positive way but with some reservations.

#### **Recurring themes were:**

- Active interest and involvement from parents are good for school life, and for ensuring that students are regularly in school and progressing well.
- Frequent contact between the school (principal as well as teachers) and the parents is helpful, and often prevents problems or makes it easier to resolve them when they arise.
- Not all parents, however, are interested in taking an active part. In fact, principals say that most are not interested, beyond the results (grades) of their own child<sup>9</sup>. A minority of parents (between 10 and 20%) are taking an active interest in school matters.
- As a result, the most prevalent form of participation is through formal channels, such as a Parents' Council or a Board of Trustees (with parent representative(s)), and communication goes through the same channels. Decisions taken are "notified" to teachers and parents. Communication is limited to dissemination of information, rather than participation.

<sup>8</sup> Since none of the focus groups spoke about *employers* – key "stakeholders" in education quality! – "participation" in the reports usually refers only to parents/guardians, and [occasionally, e.g. in **Romania**] to persons who are community members but not parents of students in the school.

<sup>9</sup> Some principals saw the lack of involvement by parents as symptomatic of a general lack of involvement in the lives of their children, either because of lack of time or lack of interest. "Children have no one to talk to at home" (**Romania**).

- In practice, for most parents contact with the school is limited to their child's teachers, or other professionals such as pedagogues or psychologists.
- Most principals are satisfied with this, and many expressed concerns about too much direct involvement by parents. They felt that this could lead to undue interference in matters that are not within the competence of non-professionals, and that in the end the principal is [legally] accountable for the way the school is run: "The School Council has power but is not accountable, whereas the principal is accountable for decisions made by the School Council" (BiH). In **Serbia**, the comment was made that "Some parents on the Board are aggressive...they do not trust the principal and use their power to constantly criticize, complain and control everything".
- Indeed, some focus group participants were strongly against the very idea of Parents' Councils or School Boards (e.g., in **Albania**), again because these bodies confuse (or dilute) issues of authority and accountability: "Either you give the competence to the school head, or you give it to a Board. I don't want to deliver my requests to a Board and be controlled by a Board".
- However, there is a general consensus that parent involvement is useful in specific types of activity. Examples given are (1) raising money for materials or equipment [most frequently mentioned]; (2) supervising extra-curricular activities such as clubs or school outings; (3) organizing special events, and contributing to refreshments for parties; (4) helping with building maintenance or painting classrooms. Note that none of these involves decision-making in matters of school policy, or priority-setting in allocating resources. Thus, the conclusion must be that informal parental involvement is welcome, as long as it is limited to "support", and does not impinge upon the decision-making powers of the principal.
- Nevertheless, a significant number of principals mentioned positive experiences with parental involvement, although they say that it takes a great deal of effort to engage parents in a meaningful and sustained way. Training of Board or Parents' Council members would be useful, because few are familiar with the legal and financial implications of running a school. In addition, many principals expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which Council or Board members are chosen, and with the overall constitution of the Board or Council membership.
- It is striking that there was no discussion (except briefly in one case, in **Albania**) about *students'* participation, either formally (e.g. through student representation on a Board or Council) or informally, for example through organization of clubs or competitions. Principals spoke fairly critically about their students (low motivation, poor results, behaviour problems) or seemed to regard them almost as "victims" of education reforms such as curriculum change, assessment/examination procedures, or as being overloaded with too many subjects, homework etc. Principals do not appear to consider them "stakeholders" in the way the school functions. (This may be because most principals came from primary schools; but even where secondary school heads were present, the subject did not arise.)

**In conclusion**, principals say they do want parents and the community to be more actively involved with the school, as long as there are clear boundaries between the principal's authority and (constructive) input from stakeholders. The way most principals see it, practical support -- such as fund raising or helping with maintenance -- is most useful.

In addition, there may be some legal restrictions on what non-professionals can and cannot do. In **Serbia**, for example, rules laid down by supervisors and inspectors limit parents' involvement to some extra-curricular activities, but they cannot take part in any aspect of teaching or learning. In one

school, the principal was sanctioned because during a gym class some skills were demonstrated by a parent who was not a qualified teacher. Some projects like *Developmental Planning* and *School without Violence* can include parents as partners, as long as no classroom work is involved.

In **Montenegro**, by contrast, principals were enthusiastic about involving parents directly in teaching. One of the arguments put forward was that this might “lead to an increase in parents’ motivation for participation in other aspects of school life, including the Council’s work.” They also say that there is a legislative framework for this, since every teaching plan and programme leaves space for the autonomous creation [at school level] of parts of the curriculum relating to the local environment, and parents could be involved in both the planning and the delivery of lessons related to the local economy, the town’s history, etc.

## Additional issues

Because the Project is formally titled: “Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in SEE”, several focus groups seemed to be unclear as to what the *main topic of these particular discussions* (**parental involvement**) was meant to be. A great deal of discussion time was therefore spent on wider issues, such as education reform, teacher qualifications, materials and equipment, and student behaviour. While this certainly helped to break the ice and get the discussion going, there was also a risk that the groups would focus on their schools’ most pressing problems (such as over-crowding, poor condition of premises, lack of class time to deliver the curriculum, lack of money, and concerns about [too much or too little] external assessment and testing).

Of course, these problems do affect both the **quality** of education and the capacity of schools to be more “**inclusive**” in terms of ethnic minorities and children with special needs, and in that sense these wider discussions were useful.

Several focus groups did spend time talking about **inclusion**, mostly in positive terms although they did not underestimate the complexities of the task. Efforts to include **Roma and other ethnic minority children** were mentioned in several cases (**Romania, Montenegro**), as well as a greater awareness of the problems that some poor or otherwise disadvantaged children (for example, those without parental care) face in terms of learning achievement. There also seems to be a difference in learning achievement between urban, suburban and rural children, and in the ability of [some] rural schools to provide the same quality of education as urban schools

Only in one country (**Montenegro**) was time devoted explicitly to principals’ attitudes to **inclusive education**. It is well worth paying some special attention to this discussion:

- Principals in both focus groups stated that one of the basic forms of educational deprivation is that of **rural children vis-à-vis their urban counterparts**. Rural children are less likely to have had pre-school experience, and often come to school less well prepared.
- The education system – and the school – is adapted to the needs of the national majority more than to **ethnic or linguistic minorities**. The language barrier was mentioned in particular, as well as the lack of appropriate role models for minorities as reflected in textbooks, materials, and curriculum.
- In the case of **Roma**, the language barrier is considered the greatest problem. Often they do not speak Montenegrin, and there are no conditions for teaching in Roma language. Many also speak Albanian, and although there are some Albanian schools not all Albanian-speaking Roma have access to them.

- Regarding children with **special educational needs**<sup>10</sup>, principals say that some teachers (especially older ones) are opposed to SEN inclusion, and do not make any effort to include them in teaching and other activities. “They don’t look at it as something normal.” Also, some students are prejudiced against SEN children, and have negative attitudes because of what their parents and other family members say about special needs.
- Some principals also raised practical problems – “there are no legislative standards set by the State”, for example about the incline of wheelchair ramps, how long and wide they should be, etc. Also they say there are no standardized specifications for toilets for disabled children.<sup>11</sup>
- A key issue is the lack of staff trained to work with SEN children, especially in over-crowded classrooms. Some teachers have had NGO in-service training but it is not enough.
- Specialists are also lacking – mentioned were speech therapists, psychologists, pedagogues. These may be available in bigger schools but not in smaller or rural ones.
- The principals mentioned as “the biggest problem” the so-called “categorisation” (assessment and diagnosis of a child’s special educational needs). [NOTE: In Montenegro, the notion of “*categorisation*” is no longer used. The former Commissions for diagnosis and placement are now called “Commissions for Direction”; there are at present 19 of them at local level. They include parents as well as school psychologists and defectologists, and the approach is no longer “medical”]
- However, in practice the evaluations are not always carried out, and this leads to frustration not only for the school and the teachers but also for the parents and the child. There is also a danger of under- or mis-diagnosing special needs that are not immediately obvious, for example children with some degree of autism, dyslexia, or behaviour disorders.

## Conclusion

The focus groups appear to have been well attended, lively, and useful in terms of the development of the PHASE 1 research questionnaire. In particular, the report from Bosnia & Herzegovina includes some helpful suggestions for amending the survey questionnaire. Because only a few of the focus group reports came to any “recommendations”, and because these tended to be country-specific, it is best for the national teams to follow up on them.

<sup>10</sup> In April 2008, the *National Strategy on Inclusive Education* (developed by the MoES in partnership with UNICEF, the Finnish Government Development Programme, FOSI-ROM and Save the Children-UK) was formally approved.

<sup>11</sup> Others felt that (in the case of ramps) ordinary common sense should be enough, and that no legislative standards were needed. In the case of toilets and other facilities, architects or building contractors should have enough experience to advise the schools.

## Appendix 2 – The survey instrument

Module 1 – School background information						
<b>1. Please estimate the total number of pupils in your school currently?</b>						
___	(write number indicated by respondent)					
89	Don't know					
99	Refused					
<b>2. Please estimate, for the current academic year (2007/2008), the number of staff working in your school as:</b>						
	Full-time	Part-time	Don't know	Refused		
a. School level management (principal, etc.)	___	___	89	99		
b. Teachers (professionals involved in teaching activities)	___	___	89	99		
c. Teacher aides (non-professionals that carry out teaching or support for teachers)	___	___	89	99		
d. Professional support personnel (psychologist, social worker, etc.)	___	___	89	99		
e. Support personnel (assistants, bookkeepers, cleaners, security personnel, etc.)	___	___	89	99		
<b>3. Please estimate what percentage of teachers currently teaching in your school are:</b>						
	Of those full-time	Of those part-time	Don't know	Refused		
a. fully qualified teaching professionals carrying out teaching activities in the subject matters in accordance to their qualifications?	___	___	89	99		
b. fully qualified teaching professionals carrying out teaching activities in other subject matters than their qualifications?	___	___	89	99		
c. not-qualified teaching personnel?	___	___	89	99		
<b>4. How long have you been:</b>						
	number given by respondent	Don't know	Refused			
a. working in any school? (in years)	___	89	99			
b. of those, as a principal of this school	___	89	99			
<b>5. Please estimate how much of your time is dedicated to teaching activities:</b>						
1	I do not have any teaching obligations while being school director					
2	Less than 25 percent					
3	Over 25 but less than 50 percent					
4	Over 50 but less than 75 percent					
5	Over 75 percent					
89	Don't know					
99	Refused					
<b>6. What percentage of pupils in your school would you say that:</b>						
	0 to 5%	Over 5 but less than 10%	Over 10 but less than 25%	Over 25%	Don't know	Refused
a. come from a household without regular income.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. come from single parent family.	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. come from family with one parent working abroad.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. come from family with both parents working abroad.	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. live in institutional care.	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. belong to an ethnic group different from the majority ethnic group in your school.	1	2	3	4	89	99



7. Are parents of pupils now attending your school represented in the school Board:

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	89
Refused	99

7.a If YES, how satisfied are you with parents members of the School Board from the view of:

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. The attendance at School Board meetings.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. The input provided at School Board meetings.	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. The support provided to solve problems related to school life.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. The extent at which Board decisions communicated to Parents' Council.	1	2	3	4	89	99

**Module 2 – School-parent communication**

8. In average, how often in your school, if at all:

	At least once a month	At least once a quarter	At least once a semester	At least once a year	Not at all	Don't know	Re-fused
a. are School Principal–parents meetings organized?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
b. is written evaluation of pupil's performance sent to parents?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
c. is information on curriculum sent to parents?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
d. is information on school events and activities sent to parents?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
e. is information on school policies and regulations sent to parents?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
f. is a school newsletter sent to parents?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
g. do teachers or professional support personnel make home visits?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
h. surveys are carried out to find out the opinions/attitudes of parents?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
i. "Open doors" days?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99

9. In general, how satisfied are you with the meetings with parents:

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. organized by form teachers	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. organized by subject teachers	1	2	3	4	89	99

10. Please estimate the percentage of parents in your school regularly (at least half time of meetings) engaged in:

Form teacher-parents meetings	Subject teacher-parents meetings	School Principal-parents meetings	percent
1	1	1	Less than 25 percent
2	2	2	Over 25 but less than 50 percent
3	3	3	Over 50 but less than 75 percent
4	4	4	Over 75 percent
5	5	5	Not the case
89	89	89	Don't know
99	99	99	Refused

11. If regular meetings held in your school, identify the three most common topics discussed (1 being the most common):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Does your school have a policy on how to communicate with ALL parents? 

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	89
Refused	99

12. a. If yes, please name the main approaches in the strategy/policy:

---



---



---



---

13. How much of the following present barriers to meaningful communication with parents in your school:

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. Lack of parents' interest in communicating with school.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. Parents' limited time to get informed about school issues.	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. Lack of parents' communication skills.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. Lack of teachers' interest in communicating with parents.	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. Teachers' workload.	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. Parents and teachers do not speak the same language.	1	2	3	4	89	99
g. Overall conflictual atmosphere between school and parents.	1	2	3	4	89	99
h. Lack of training of teachers for engagement with parents	1	2	3	4	89	99
i. Other (please, specify): _____.	1	2	3	4	89	99

14. In your school what categories of parents, if any, are more difficult to communicate with? Please name the three most important ones (1 being the most difficult type):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Module 3 – Opportunities for parents to support school activities

15. How often on average in the current academic year do form teachers in your school ask parents to:

	At least once in two weeks	At least once a month	At least once a quarter	At least once a semester	Never	Don't know	Re-fused
a. participate in organizing school/classroom ceremonies?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
b. participate in organizing social activities at school/class level?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
c. provide teaching assistance to teachers?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
d. organize a school/classroom support group?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
e. sponsor activities carried out at school/classroom level?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
f. fund-raise for school?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
g. help other parents with supporting their children's education?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
h. represent the school at different events?	1	2	3	4	5	89	99
i. Other (please, specify): _____.	1	2	3	4	5	89	99

16. Which do you consider to be the three school activities in your school that have most successfully engage parents (not only from the list above)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

17. Please estimate the percentage of parents that have engaged in the three activities identified above:

First activity	Second activity	Third activity	percent
1	1	1	Less than 25 percent
2	2	2	Over 25 but less than 50 percent
3	3	3	Over 50 but less than 75 percent
4	4	4	Over 75 percent
88	88	88	Don't know
89	89	89	Refused

18. Could you please recall one instance when successful school parent partnership was achieved? **18.a. If yes, please describe the instance:**

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	89
Refused	99

---



---



---



---



---



---

#### Module 4 – School support for parents to help their children in education

19. Some of the ways in which a school can provide support to parents are listed below. How useful would the following activities be to improve pupils' performance (achievement and behavior) in your school:

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Re-fused
a. organized sessions to help parents assist their children with homework	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. provided parents with materials helping to assist their children with homework	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. provided parents with materials helping to monitor their children's homework	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. provided parents with information on creating a home learning environment	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. provided counseling service to parents	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. parent issue-based support groups e.g. on violence, behavioral problems, etc.	1	2	3	4	89	99
g. Other (please, specify):	1	2	3	4	89	99

20. Please indicate whether in the current school year your school has had:

	At least once a month	At least once a semester	At least once a year	Not at all	Don't know	Re-fused
a. organized sessions to help parents assist their children with homework	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. provided parents with materials helping to assist their children with homework	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. provided parents with materials helping to monitor their children's homework	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. provided parents with information on creating a home learning environment	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. provided counseling service to parents	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. parent issue-based support groups e.g. on violence, behavioral problems, etc.	1	2	3	4	89	99
g. Other (please, specify):	1	2	3	4	89	99

**20 a. If you provide any of these activities do you target specific groups? (Please identify service and group)**

	Support to parents	Main target group(s)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

**21. How much do the following present barriers that limit your ability as an institution to offer support to parents?**

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Re-fused
a. Insufficient school resources to develop and run the services.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. Lack of parents' interest in engaging in school based support services to them	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. Parents too busy to be involved in school based support services to them.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. Teachers are too busy to run support services to parents.	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. Teachers lack necessary skills to offer support services to parents.	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. Lack of methodology to develop support services to parents.	1	2	3	4	89	99
g. Conflict between teachers and parents.	1	2	3	4	89	99

**Module 5 – Parent involvement in school governance**

**22. Please, identify how important is it that parents of pupils have a say, in order to improve the overall quality of education provided in your school?**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Of little importance	Not at all important	Don't know	Re-fused
a. Evaluation of teachers' performance.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. Hiring and firing of teachers.	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. Selection of textbooks (materials) used in class.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. Setting priorities for the school budget.	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. Social activity planning.	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. Development of school policies and regulations.	1	2	3	4	89	99
g. Decisions taken at classroom level.	1	2	3	4	89	99
h. Decisions taken at school level.	1	2	3	4	89	99
i. Other (please, specify):	1	2	3	4	89	99

**23. Are, in the case of your school, the members of the Parents' Council entitled to:**

	Without restrictions	By invitation only	Under no circumstance	Don't know	Re-fused
a. participate at meetings where school level decisions are taken?	1	2	3	89	99
b. actively participate in the elaboration of new school policies	1	2	3	89	99
c. initiate the modification of an existing school policies?	1	2	3	89	99
d. initiate the adoption of new policies?	1	2	3	89	99
e. prevent the adoption of rules they disagree with?	1	2	3	89	99

**24. Does your school have a Parents' Committee?**

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	89
Refused	99

25. How much does the Parents' Committee influence the following areas in the daily life of your school:

	To a great extent	Some	Little	Not at all	Don't know	Re-fused
a. Pedagogical methods used by teachers.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. Content of lessons.	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. The planning of extracurricular activities.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. The planning of school infrastructure development.	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. Helping pupils to value education.	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. Facilitating increased involvement of parents in school life.	1	2	3	4	89	99

26. Indicate the extent of influence in general parents in your schools have in practical school life in the following:

	To a great extent	Some	Little	Not at all	Don't know	Re-fused
a. Evaluation of teachers' performance.	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. Hiring and firing of teachers.	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. Selection of textbooks (teaching materials) used in class.	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. Setting priorities for the school budget.	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. Social activity planning.	1	2	3	4	89	99
f. Development of school policies and regulations.	1	2	3	4	89	99
g. Decisions taken at classroom level.	1	2	3	4	89	99
h. Decisions taken at school level.	1	2	3	4	89	99

27. In your view, which has been the most significant initiative by the Parents' Council in the current school year, if any?

.....

**Module 6 – General attitudes**

28. To what extent do you think that the following represent benefits of engaging parents in school life:

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Refusal
a. Overall improved school climate	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. More positive attitudes of parents towards school	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. More overall support of parents for school	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. Improved pupil educational performance	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. Other (please, specify): _____	1	2	3	4	89	99

29. It is said that some parents are less likely to engage in school activities than others. Are there any groups of parents in your school that generally tend to get less involved than others? Which are these ones:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

30. What special steps, if any, are taken by your school to encourage the active involvement of the above identified groups of parents?

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

31. Overall, how satisfied you with:

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. the education reform process as it affects your school?	1	2	3	4	89	99
b. support from your Ministry of education?	1	2	3	4	89	99
c. co-operation with your Ministry of education?	1	2	3	4	89	99
d. school rooms and buildings in your school?	1	2	3	4	89	99
e. school equipment in your school?	1	2	3	4	89	99

32. How would you appreciate your schools budget for the 2007/2008 school year?

1	Very good, we paid all our utility bills and we were able to carry out important investments
2	Sufficient, we paid all our utility bills and we were able to carry out small investment
3	Insufficient, we barely could pay our utility bills
4	Extremely bad, we could not pay our utility bills
89	Don't know
99	Refused

33. How much can you as School Principal influence changes in the school system?

1	Extremely
2	Moderately
3	Somewhat
4	Not at all
89	Don't know
99	Refused

School location:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural

School director's gender:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female

Name of settlement:

## Appendix 3 – Letter to Ministries

(date)

(contact details)

(type name and title of addressee)

I, the undersigned, on behalf of the Center for Educational Policy Study, Faculty of Education at the Ljubljana University, would like to explore ways of possible collaboration in carrying out the international School Principals survey in your country as well. Due to a generous grant from the educational Support Program of the Open Society Institute our organisation is planning to carry out a multi-country survey on the nature of 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 directors; both at national and international level.

Through the survey we intend to identify the different experiences of School Principals in implementing national regulations related to parental involvement in education at the (please fill the relevant one in your country, i.e. classes I-VIII or I-IX) level of education. The first hand experience of School Principals in implementing existing regulations on parental participation is critical to identify the efforts undertaken, and the lessons learned regarding what has worked and not, and the different school related conditions under which some approaches to involve parents proved to be more or less effective.

First, in order to ensure that the survey is carried successfully in your country as well, we would like to request your formal endorsement. Second, we would like to invite you to comment and formulate observations on the questionnaire to be applied, so that your valuable expertise and subject matter to further enhance the quality of the survey. Therefore, we send you attached the draft version of the questionnaire to be applied. Naturally final survey results, national and international ones will be made openly available to your institution upon being finalized.

I would like to also mention that we will do all to ensure that the survey will closely follow all national rules and regulations related to survey codes of conduct. The survey will be conducted by ... survey company.

Looking forward to your kind reply,

Yours truly,

## Appendix 4 Composite indicators

1. **Contribution of parent representatives on the School Board (Q7a)** – an indicator of the extent of School Principals satisfaction with the contribution made by the parent representatives on the School Board. It includes four items, which are:
  - The attendance at School Board meetings
  - The input provided at School Board meetings
  - The support provided to solve problems related to school life
  - The extent to which Board Decisions communicated to Parents’ Council.
2. **School-initiated home-school communication (Q8)** – an indicator of the forms of communication undertaken by school in order to ensure information exchange between school and parents. This composite includes the following nine items:
  - Parent-Principal meetings
  - Written evaluation of pupil’s performance sent to parents
  - Information on curriculum sent to parents
  - Information on school events and activities sent to parents
  - Information on school policies and regulations sent to parents
  - School newsletter sent to parents
  - Home visits of teachers or professional support personnel
  - Surveys are carried out to find out the opinions/attitudes of parents
  - School “Open doors” days
3. **Satisfaction with parent-teacher meetings (Q9)** – and indicator of the overall level of satisfaction of the School Principle with meetings between teachers and parents in the given school. The composite includes two items, which are:
  - Form teacher-parents meetings
  - Subject teacher-parents meetings
4. **Share of parents participating at school meetings (Q10)** -
  - Form teacher-parents meetings
  - Subject teacher-parents meetings
  - School Principal-parents meetings
5. **Barriers of home-school communications (Q13)** – captures the degree to which School Principals feel that communication efforts are hindered by parents – teachers interest and skills to engage in meaningful communication. Includes the following eight items:
  - Lack of parents’ interest in communicating with school
  - Parents’ limited time to get informed about school issues
  - Lack of parents’ communication skills



- Lack of teachers' interest in communicating with parents
  - Teachers' workload
  - Parents and teachers do not speak the same language
  - Overall conflictual atmosphere between school and parents
  - Lack of training of teachers for engagement with parents
6. **Parents invited by form teachers to engage in school life (Q15)** – captures the instances in which opportunities for parents to engage in different school activities were created by school. Includes:
- Participate in organizing school/classroom ceremonies
  - Participate in organizing social activities at school/class level
  - Provide teaching assistance to teachers
  - Organize a school/classroom support group
  - Sponsor activities carried out at school/classroom level
  - Fund-raise for school
  - Help other parents with supporting their children's education
  - Represent the school at different events
7. **Potential benefit of school support to parents to help their children (Q19)** – an assessment of the potential benefits of support services provided by school to support parents to help their children in education from the view of pupils' educational performance. Includes:
- Organized sessions to help parents assist their children with homework
  - Provided parents with materials helping to assist their children with homework
  - Provided parents with materials helping to monitor their children's homework
  - Provided parents with information on creating a home learning environment
  - Provided counseling service to parents
  - Parent issue-based support groups e.g. on violence, behavioral problems.
8. **Support services provided by school to parents to help their children in education (Q20)** – an indicator of the actions and support services provided by school to support parents to help their children in education. Includes:
- Organized sessions to help parents assist their children with homework
  - Provided parents with materials helping to assist their children with homework
  - Provided parents with materials helping to monitor their children's homework
  - Provided parents with information on creating a home learning environment
  - Provided counseling service to parents
  - Parent issue-based support groups e.g. on violence, behavioral problems.

9. **Barriers to provide support services to parents to help their children in education (Q21)** – an indicator of the degree to which School Principals feel that actions and support services provided by school in order to support parents to help their children in education are hindered by institutional factors, teachers and parents interests and skills. Includes:
- Insufficient school resources to develop and run the services
  - Lack of parents' interest in engaging in school based support services
  - Parents too busy to be involved in school based support services
  - Teachers are too busy to run support services to parents
  - Teachers lack necessary skills to offer support services to parents
  - Lack of methodology to develop support services to parents
  - Conflict between teachers and parents
10. **Principal's belief in the importance of parental voice in school life** – an indicator of the degree at which School Principals feel that parental influence on school life is related to the overall quality of education. Includes (Q22):
- Evaluation of teachers' performance
  - Hiring and sacking of teachers
  - Selection of textbooks and other teaching materials used in class
  - Setting priorities for the school budget
  - Social activity planning
  - Development or updating of school policies and regulations
  - Decisions taken at classroom level
  - Decisions taken at school level
11. **Decision-making authority attributed to Parents' Council (Q23)** –
- Participate at meetings where school level decisions are taken
  - Actively participate in the elaboration of new school policies
  - Initiate the modification of an existing school policy
  - Initiate the adoption of new policies
  - Prevent the adoption of rules they disagree with
12. **The extent of the Parents Committee's influence in the daily life a school (Q25)** – and indicator of the degree at which members of the Parents' Council can influence decision-making at the school level. Includes:
- Pedagogical methods used by teachers
  - Content of lessons
  - The planning of extracurricular activities

- The planning of school infrastructure development
  - Helping pupils to value education
  - Facilitating increased involvement of parents in school life
13. **School Principal's perception of the benefits of parental engagement in school life (Q28)** – indicator captures the general attitudes of Principals towards the possible benefits of parental engagement in school life. Consists of the following four items:
- Overall improvement on school climate
  - More positive attitudes/behavior of parents towards school
  - More overall support of parents for school
  - Improved pupil educational performance
14. **Extent of influence parents have in school life** – an indicator of the degree at which School Principals feel that parents have an influence on school life in the case of their school. Includes (Q26):
- Evaluation of teachers' performance
  - Hiring and firing of teachers
  - Selection of textbooks and other teaching materials used in class
  - Setting priorities for the school budget
  - Social activity planning
  - Development or up-dating of school policies and regulations
  - Decisions taken at classroom level
  - Decisions taken at school level

## **The Education Support Program**

The Education Support Program (ESP) at the Open Society Institute 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.

The mission of the 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 Education Support Program works with a close international network of partner organizations and individual experts to further OSI's mission in education.

More information: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/about>

## **Centre for Educational Policy Studies**

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education

The Centre is active in the field of educational policy studies. It participates in national and international activities in this field, particularly in research, development and consultancy projects. The Centre's activities support study programmes and are aligned with other research at the Faculty of Education. Its members are professors and researchers of the Faculty of Education and some other faculties of the University of Ljubljana and from other institutions.

More information: <http://ceps.pef.uni-lj.si/eng.htm>

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji  
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

37.091.113  
37.064.1

SCHOOL governance and social inclusion : involvement of parents  
: south-east Europe cross-countries survey of principals' views /  
Daniel Pop & Steve Powell, Gordana Miljević, Johana Crighton ;  
[edited by Gordana Miljević]. - Ljubljana : Faculty of Education,  
Centre for Educational Policy Studies, 2009

ISBN 978-961-253-048-8  
1. Pop, Daniel 2. Miljević, Gordana  
250738688

ISBN 978-961-253-048-8



9 789612 530488