

How to Co-operate with Parents *Rethinking School Education*

Institut Turgot

September 20th, 2011

Johannes THEINER, EPA-President



EPA-The Voice of Parents in Europe



Introduction

EPA -

THE European Parents' Association

"super macro-level"

- founded in Milan in 1985 – 25th anniversary
- 50 member associations
- from Iceland to Cyprus,
from Malta to Norway
- Monopole status at the European Commission as
THE stakeholder representation of parents
- representing **150 Millions** of European citizens
- involved in Civil Society/Active European Citizenship
- ... most concerned about **parents in education**



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EPA's Mission and Aims

To work in **partnership** both to **represent** and give to parents a **powerful voice** in the development of education policies and decisions at European level.

EPA's aim is the promotion of **collaboration** between schools, parents' associations and other educational communities throughout Europe, ...

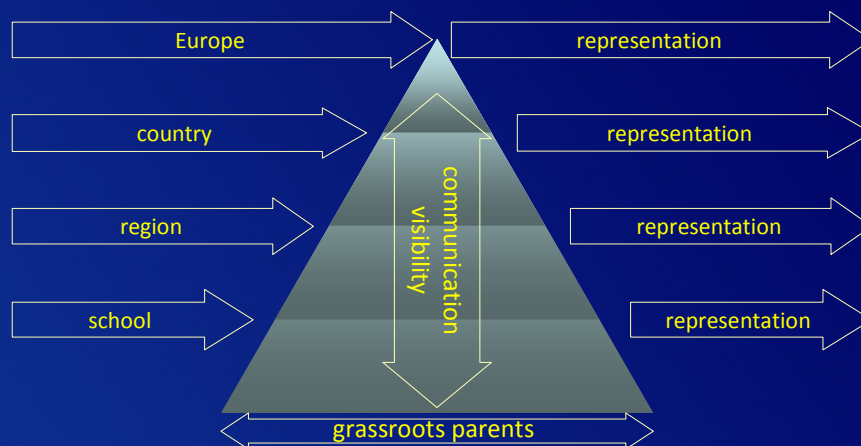
- ...
- Support the need for the **highest possible quality** of educational development for all children in Europe
- ...
- Promote the recognition for **parents** of their central place as the **primary educators of their children**,
- ...



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The Challenge of Subsidiarity



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Parents are the primary educators of their children!

... at least they have the potential

PRIMARY?

- o **FIRST**
- o **BEST** – most impacting

Statistician: **“Parents spoil the results of every survey on (public) education.”**

(International Conference “Improving Education”, Dec. 1st 2009)

EPA: **“Don’t blame *good* parents for impacting on the learning of their children! Rather help *all* parents to do so!”**



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Primary Educators?

Sacker et al.: **“Parents’ attitude towards education strongly influences the academic success of their children.”** (2002)

Charles Deforges: **“All *normal* parents can perform as superior educators of their children.”**

“It is a matter of parental competence. Required knowledge, skills, and attitudes can be trained.”

(Lecture at the EPA conference “How Parents can Improve the Learning of their Children”, June 19th, 2009)

Ramon Flecha: **“Parents from little educated classes are open to education if approached respectfully”** (EUCIS-LLL conference, April 14th, 2010)

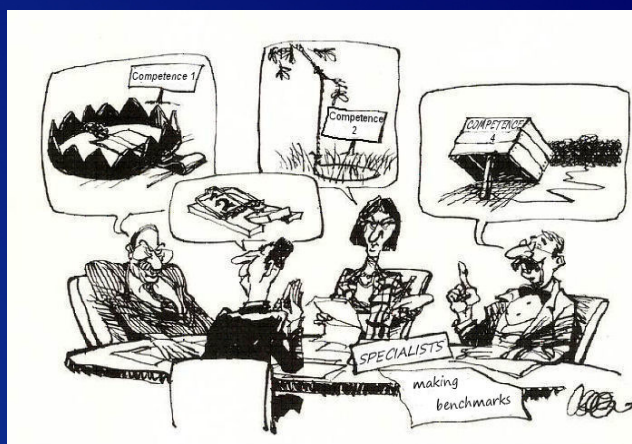
Joyce Epstein: **“There is no more need to ask the question whether home-school relations and parental involvement are important for the learning and development of a child: We have clearly proven that this is the case!”** (ERNAPE conference, June, 2011)



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How public sometimes sees teachers and the purpose of formal education



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The Delicate Semantics

“EDUCATION” – “TEACHING” – “LEARNING”?

- Educating/Teaching:
 - present **information** – **didactics**
 - **facilitate** learning activities – **pedagogy**
 - **assess** learning achievements – **feedback**
 - be an **authority** – **empathy**
 - **share responsibility** with the learner – **participation**
 - **grade** pupil's/student's performance – **evaluation**
- Learning
 - Acquisition of **knowledge** – transformation of **information**
 - Acquisition of **skills** – accumulation of **experience**
 - Development of **attitude** – **personality/self esteem**
 - **Competences** can only be acquired by **active learning**
not by simple reproduction of content

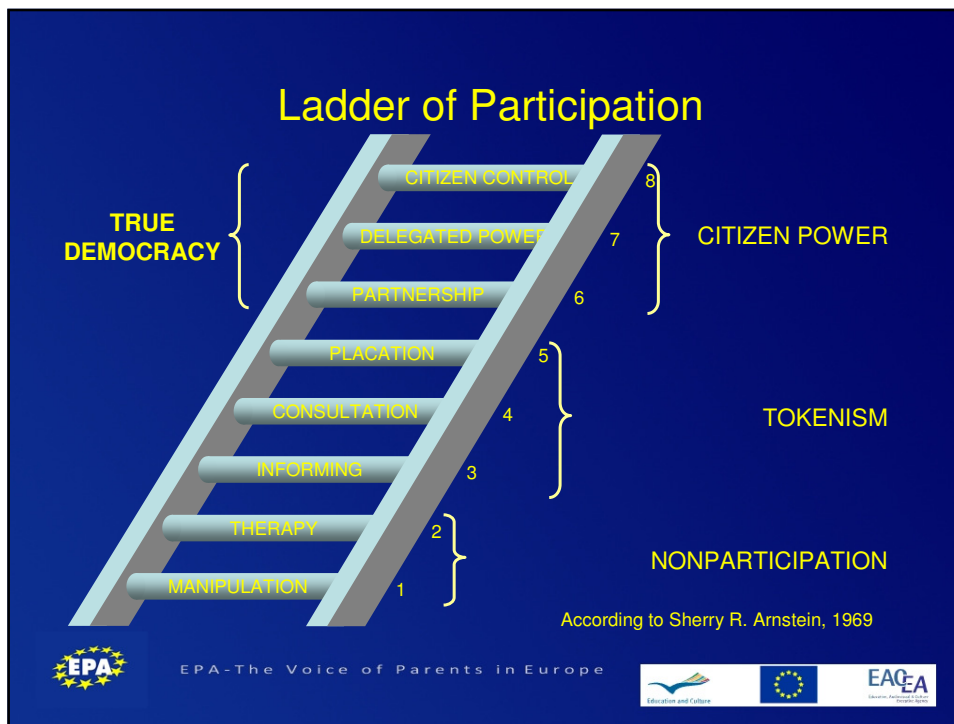
formal
non-formal learning
informal

Formal only



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Prepared for Partnership?

- **Teacher “vs.” Parent 1:1**
 How to meet on eye-level?
 How to react on demanding tone, negative criticism ...?
 How to sense the child’s family background?
- **The Parents’ Evening: Teacher “vs.” Parents 1:”100”**
 How to transform the “classroom situation” to an adults’ meeting?
 What are the roles of teacher and parents in such a setting?
 What could happen, threatens the teacher?
 How to sense centres of (social, cultural ...) tension/challenge?
- **Challenges**
 Parents come from every part of society.
 Parents tend to be selfish for their (only) child

but
 they need to form a community congruent /complementary to the classroom.


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What to gain?

- **Individual child – individual learner**
Better understanding for specific observations and needs
(social, behavioural, learning ...)
“Embracing” the child with co-ordinated educational support
- **For the classroom – “Learning Community”**
Superior understanding of social landscape and dynamics
Tools for soldering the classroom community on several levels
Parental support – in many ways
- **New opportunities for LLL**
Parents at school could enter a learning stimulating environment
Teacher and parents could learn together
Teacher and parents could teach/educate together
- **New Spirit of Competition, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
Active Citizenship**



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Who benefits?

- **Individual child – individual learner**
- **The classroom – “Learning Community”**
- **Parents**
- **Teachers**
- **The School Community**
- **...**
- **Local/regional/national Society**
- **EUROPE**



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Partnership of “Educators”

- **Werner Sacher** (Univ. Erlangen, 2004)
study on behalf of the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Culture about the role of formal and informal contacts between parents and teachers (German)
- Results are based on a statistically significant number of interviews with parents and teachers
- All parties confirm the positive effect of formal (school meetings) and informal (accidental meetings in the street, shopping etc.) contacts
- Parents representatives and grass root parents don't interact properly
- Little interaction clearly correlates with a negative school view



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Links to the 36th ATEE Conference

- **Vivienne Collinson** (Canada)
“Exemplary teachers always are permanent Learners”
- LifeLong Learning as “school partner” and “school community”
- **Lea Kozminsky** (Israel)
“Research/scientific attitude is essential for educators”
- Ability for collective self reflection and observation of learning processes
- **Tatjana Kože** (Latvia)
... looked at Competitiveness, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- Focus on The European Key Competences and Transversal Skills



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Links to the 36th ATEE Conference

- **Dieter Schulz** (Germany)
"Teachers are expected to do everything in school"
 - Improving the access to and cooperation with other experts like (school) doctors, psychologists, nurses, therapists etc.
"teacher education has to offer a practical field of experience linked to a high level academic background"
 - Requirement in the preparation for school partnership
- **Steven Tan** (Singapore)
"The (successful) school system in Singapore is based on high teacher recognition (salary) and respects and involves teachers expertise in strategic development"
 - System development could profit from the incredible number of exemplary teacher experiences



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Links to European Debates

- ... *in private communication*
"We (school partners) need to be more influential in evaluation and policy making!"
"**Learning centred** definitions of school quality and procedures for quality assurance in education are required."
- Development of indicators for "learning outcome" beyond the fashionable narrowing educational standards
Pasi Sahlberg (Finland): blames the General Education Reform Movement = GERM
... demands change to a competence and trust based educational system replacing the focus on accountability and regulation



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Links to European Debates

- Focus on hard to assess transversal skills and key competences (“**emotional literacy**” introduced at the ATEE winter conference)
- Educators and learners together need to gain responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning

shift the focus of Quality Assurance from system to classroom level. (EPA conference “Assessment and Evaluation in School, Apr. 2011 – see next slide)



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What is Quality

- **Quality of the (national) school system** Governmental responsibility
- **Quality of school regions** Responsibility of regional authorities
- **Quality of the school** Responsibility of School heads, school boards ...
- **Quality of the class** Responsibility of teachers
responsibility of class community
- **Quality of the individual students' learning environment** Individual contribution, family and classroom determinants
unknown/out of control factors



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Why focus on classroom level?

- The **individual student** needs to experience best education = best learning conditions. QA is hardly possible on this level.
- **Class room** = teacher(s) + group of students + their parents could monitor and assess the quality of their work.

Expected and desired effects:

- The **peer group** is the second most impacting factor on the individual academic achievements following parents' attitude (Stefan Hopmann, ibid.)
- Getting **ownership/responsibility** on the learning
- Negotiating priorities and quality indicators
- Creating a focus on **attitudes**: awareness, responsibility, cooperation,



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The „schoolpartner’s triangle“?

As a permanent educational task students should be guided towards an appropriate fraction of responsibility during their school career.

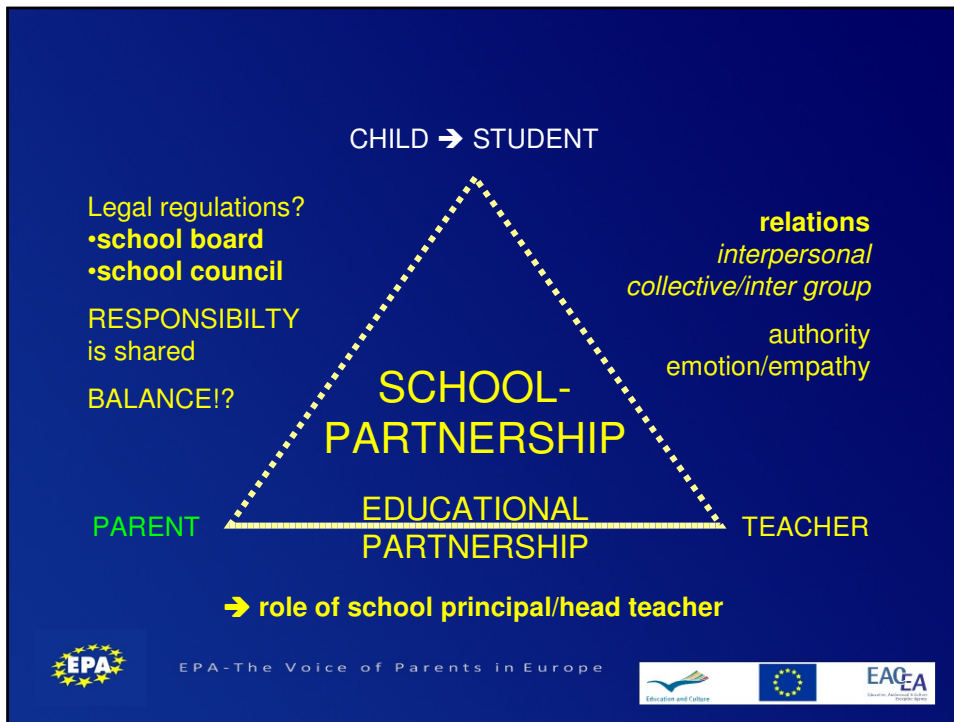
Austrian School Act (basically established 1975):

- Upper secondary level students delegate members to the school council consisting of three representatives of parents, teachers and students.
- Every group has **equal votes** in all decisive matters
- School autonomous decisions (curricula, schedules ...) are based on almost unanimous votes (approval by 2/3 in every group)
- Head teacher is chairing without a vote



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Conclusion

- **It is all about the child**
- **it is all about good Learning**
- **Quality education needs to be based on mutual trust between educators and learners**
- **Teachers need to be prepared for taking leadership**
- **... which enables them to trigger and moderate educational partnership with parents**

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Education and Culture

EAQEA

Let us go for the bigger goals

- **Becoming more “European”**
- **Becoming more democratic**
- **Becoming entrepreneurial**
- **Coping with Future**
utilising the curiosity of lifelong learners

Thank you – Merci!



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