



This paper is taken from

*The Experience of Citizenship
Proceedings of the sixth Conference of the Children's
Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2004

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 378 6

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- multiple copies may be made only by
 - members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
 - a official of the European Commission
 - a member of the European parliament

If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as

Sarmiento, T. (2004) Parental involvement as multiple forms of citizenship - the school and parents project, in Ross, A. (ed) The Experience of Citizenship. London: CiCe, pp 343 - 346

© CiCe 2004

CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication

The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Parental involvement as multiple forms of citizenship - the school and parents project

Teresa Sarmento

Instituto de Estudos da Criança da Universidade do Minho (Portugal)

Relations between school and community today are both legally defined and based on a socio-pedagogical premise. Yet mutual collaboration has many obstacles, both from internal elements in schools and from its community partners. With the objective of understanding the reasons for such oppositions, as well as the virtues of cooperation, an action investigation was developed, in which a group of trainers and teachers tried to promote the development of context practices that support educational continuity between school and community. This is a form of citizenship.

After an initial stage in which each trainer/teacher reflected on his/her own experience and the benefits of a shared construction, their acquired knowledge (depending on the contexts where they work) have been analysed and activated. In this process the presumption that different social actors had autonomy has been very difficult.

This paper summarises the work of the project so far and discusses processes still being developed. Three questions are proposed for discussion: How do practices that include children's rights as social actors and take their wishes/interests into consideration? How deeply is parental involvement valued by parents themselves? How deeply are different educational agents interested in overcoming constraints in order to develop/assert citizenship?

The School –Parents Project

The School-Parents Project results from a partnership between the IEC – Instituto de Estudos da Criança da Universidade do Minho (Child Studies Institute) and the ICE – Instituto das Comunidades Educativas (Educational Communities Institute), and is being developed by a group of pre-school teachers and first cycle teachers (formerly primary teachers). However having attended the same training institutions, the two groups kept separate from one another in the field, with no project articulation whatsoever, each blaming the other for this, but considering nevertheless that their approach was essential not only for the development of the children they are responsible for, but also for their professional performance in general.

The goals

The goals designed by the group are:

- to promote partnership between the school and families;
- to develop cooperative practices between teachers and parents;
- to contribute to the definition of professional norms and standards, attitudes and values;
- to guarantee educational continuity between the community and the school; and

- to promote citizenship.

The pursuit of these objectives was achieved by reinforcing cooperation between the elements of the group (each is assumed to be a resource to every other), in joint reflection on each others' projects, and in gaining awareness of the necessity of bringing together the internal network of the group inside that which requires an urgent rooting in each school and between schools.

Developing the project

In order to foster the objectives the following structuring activities were defined:

- reflective meetings every fortnight on organisation and management which influence and promote new ways of thinking and acting
- cooperative intervention within each professional's context on behalf of the team elements
- individual or collective development in the work contexts of each element of the team of strategies, either through informal contact with the families or formally in terms of syllabus development with widening participation
- inter-schools activities
- conferences
- radio programmes
- participation in school councils
- organisation of seminars
- participation in congresses, seminars, parents' associations meetings
- publication of a book entitled *The School and Parents*.

Trying to make it clearer, we may specify:

- intervention in context, under the influence of the base work-group, where each element influences others in the school: the processes of construction, organisation and participation are more important than the events themselves
- social abilities – the parents' social abilities widen, thus helping the children to grow up
- allowing the work done in kindergartens and in schools to be seen
- fostering inter-generation relationships through the investment of the community in the interactions between different generations

Benefits to each of the groups

This interaction work between parents, children and teachers brings benefits to each of the groups. It gives the parents

- the power to introduce changes into the school and in the community
- innovative attitudes
- new educational practices
- greater responsibilities and commitment in partnership work.

For the teachers:

- the construction of new ideas
- a new vision of the teaching profession
- greater communication between different school levels.

With this interaction, children gain:

- greater perception of the support of the school's organisation system
- continuity of goals between parents and schools
- enlargement of their opportunities of socialisation.

The development of the project has been very positive, but there have been difficulties. These are

1. Contradictory and complex perceptions by the families about the role of pre-school educators and teachers (mainly and more evidently of the former), which cause tensions and reactions for/ from the professionals in the development of a more inclusive educational action.
2. Conflict between the school organisation and the family organisation in terms of the distribution of time for the educational action.
3. An element of self-centred professional feelings and practices among the educators and teachers which has made it difficult for them to act as citizens who actively contribute to local development. An over-'scholarly' vision of the educational process masks possibilities for action which integrate/emancipate parental participation.
4. Lack of investment by the political powers of the autarchy in the establishment of action partnerships in educational fields: they have limited themselves to the creation of material and physical conditions (though not sufficient of even these in a large number of situations).

Synthesis

We would like to highlight

- the awareness of the importance of the organisation of teachers' school networks in order to be able to present themselves as open structures
- the pertinence of having teachers and communities as voluntary protagonists participating in local educational politics
- the construction processes which make it easy to change from uniformity into diversity, from submission into autonomy and from isolation into partnership
- placing a high value on a school's polyglot nature via the institutions of democracy and citizenship, having as a principle that the relation with parents is established through the pedagogic relation with pupils.

Functionally the project is a form of citizenship, involving the community, fostering the return to a pedagogical good sense with the search for a social equity increased by mental health. We conclude that citizenship is a process of permanent construction undertaken in multiple contexts, an individual and collective apprenticeship requiring partnerships. Educational development can and must be, besides an intervention in the use and management of techniques and resources, a process of people's qualification and valuation towards the (re)construction of their lives.

References

- Sarmiento, T. et al, "Relação Escola – Pais: as nossas práticas – um projecto de intervenção numa rede de educadores e professores em Portugal", *Encuentro Mundial de Educadores Infantiles*, 1999. Colômbia. [Http://waece.com/waece](http://waece.com/waece)
- Sarmiento, T. et al, "A participação em projectos como modalidade de formação profissional – O Projecto Escola – Pais: as nossas práticas", in *Infância e Educação – Investigação e Práticas*, nº3, 2002. Porto
- Sarmiento, T. et al, "A Escola e os Pais", CESC, IEC-Universidade do Minho