

CHANCES AND WAYS OF ADVOCATING PARENTS' INTERESTS AT CZECH SCHOOLS

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It is not only the upbringing but also the education of children what parents are responsible for. According to Czech legislation, nearly all parents are obliged to delegate their children's education to schools. It is therefore logical that they should be entitled to exercise some influence on the manner their children are educated in. Yet, it is doubtful whether they really can push through their interests in the school, and which ways of doing so they can choose from. Alike questions became part of the subjects of a large project called *The Role of Parents as Educational and Social Partners of the School*, the starting points and first results of which were presented at the last ERNAPE conference in Rotterdam.

In the prospective contribution, the writers examine the following research questions: How do parents advocate their interests at schools, both as individuals and as groups? Are there any differences in such advocacy between cities and the country, or nursery schools and basic schools? How is such advocacy perceived by the representatives of schools and by parents themselves? Looking for the answers, the authors use two resources: a questionnaire survey of a random sample of Czech nursery and basic schools (grade I and II), carried out in May 2002, and an interview with some representatives of the Parent's Union (a NGO uniting delegates of parents in the Czech Republic).

Presenting the results, the writers first focus on the customary behaviour of parents as individuals and the ways they express their dissatisfaction. Then, various solutions to current difficulties are discussed (such as confusion in the child's evaluation, surfeit of homework, etc). Also, groups of parents who uphold joint interests are discussed, these groups not being active in any other relation to the school and, mostly, disappearing once their goals are achieved or the problems solved. The last part is devoted to parents' associations and their activities, as judged from the head-teachers' and parents' viewpoints.

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