CIT4-CT-2006-028603

INCLUD-ED

Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education

Integrated Project

Priority 7. Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society.

D.17.1

REPORT 9: Contributions of local communities to social cohesion

Due date of deliverable: 30th June 2011

Actual submission date: 28th March 2012

Start date of project: 01/11/2006   Duration: 62 months

University of Barcelona

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)		
Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	**X**
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services	

INDEX

1. Executive summary

This report presents the results from the analysis carried out for Project 6 of INCLUD-ED: *Local projects for social cohesion*, which aims to study communities involved in learning projects that have developed the integration of social and educational interventions that contribute to reduce inequalities and marginalisation, and to foster social inclusion and empowerment. Project 6 spans a period of 5 years and one round of the case studies was carried out each year in the 6 schools across Europe over 4 years. This report is the result of a longitudinal and cross-case analysis developed in the last year of the study and is based on the preliminary reports for each four rounds. The overall aim was to study how community involvement in educative actions contributes to social cohesion and improve academic results.

The overall research methodology for the case studies is based on the communicative approach which highlights the importance of including all the voices of all of the agents in the research. It considers research as a form of an egalitarian dialogue where researchers contribute with scientific knowledge while social agents contribute with their own knowledge about the reality analysed. This dialogue involves the construction of knowledge based on inter-subjectivity and joint reflection among both researchers and social agents. The four rounds of the case studies followed an internal continuity and conceptual development following this methodological approach.

The first round identified those educational strategies which lead to social cohesion and better academic results based on the involvement of the community e.g. Interactive Groups (a form of classroom organisation based on heterogeneous groups with reallocated resources). The second round provided evidence of the existence of four main forms of family and community participation: family and community education; the participation of the community in decision-making processes in schools; the participation in the development of the curriculum and in the evaluation; and the participation in classrooms and learning spaces. The third round evolved around the connection between different types of community involvement and academic and non academic improvements in the selected schools. The fourth year analysed whether family and community participation in the school has had an impact beyond the walls of the school and back on the neighbourhood, transforming the latter and the lives of the participants in different

social areas: housing, health, employment, social and political participation, and lifelong learning.

In order to obtain both an overall view of the context as well as an in-depth understanding, mixed data collection methods were used. Quantitative tools included: two questionnaires to end-users, one for family members and the other for pupils. The main objective of these questionnaires was to analyse the impressions, opinions, and perceived impact of the selected schools' success from the point of view of the end-users and from a longitudinal perspective. The questionnaires thus provided a longitudinal view of the ongoing issues. A total of 4.484 questionnaires were collected for all the case studies carried out in the five countries. Qualitative tools involved a number of open-ended interviews, communicative life-stories, communicative focus group, and communicative observations. These were transcribed and notes were taken from the observations. For the analysis of the qualitative data, data analysis charts were created for each round, which included categories of analysis that responded to the research questions and focused on the forms of community participation. The information contained in each category was analysed based on the transformative and exclusionary dimensions. The exclusionary dimension refers to barriers that persons or collectives face to access certain social benefits. The transformative dimension refers to the elements that help overcoming these barriers. This analysis responds to the communicative methodology orientation, which aims at analysing reality to find elements that contribute to its transformation.

The rationale underlying the school selection was based on three criteria: (a) educational centres that have demonstrated to contribute to school success (as reflected by children's or adolescents' educational attainment) in relation to their context; (b) educational centres that respond to the same social characteristics: low SES and pupils with minority background; (c) educational centres with strong community involvement that are contributing to overcome inequalities. In Spain two case studies have been conducted, on is the Mare de Déu del Montserrat school and the other is the La Paz school. Both of them have gone through the process of transformation into *Learning Communities.* In Finland the case study is conducted on a day-care centre in Helsinki, situated in the same building as the Laakavuori primary school and the youth action centre. In the United Kingdom a primary school divided into two separate school buildings, the Junior school, age 7 to 11 and the Infant/Nursery school, age 3 to 7 were analysed. They are both funded by

the state. The Lithuanian case study is Lapiu basic school in the Kaunas region and encompasses grades 1-10, even if this study focuses on the primary level (grades 1-4) with pupils in the age of 6-11 years. The case study in Malta is a primary school in the south east of the country and caters for the upper years for age ranges 8-11.

The results provide an **understanding of how family and community participation contribute to school success and social cohesion** and how that participation works in those successful schools in Europe. **Three types of family and community participation**: **decision-making processes, curriculum and evaluation, and educative (family education and learning pupils support)** were found to contribute to school success and social cohesion. The analysis reveals how these different forms of family and community participation have impact on the acquisition of basic competences within the curricula and in the reduction of absenteeism. Family and community education, for example, helps families transmit a positive view of learning, which is then reflected in learning more and better and having more motivation to learn. It also increased the families' expectations of their children. At the same time, it enabled families to increase their skills for reading, writing and talking about school issues with their children.

Family and community participation in the classrooms involves a more effective re-organization of the existing human resources in the community, as these are included within the classrooms to support the pupils' learning. It promotes mutual benefit from sharing diverse knowledge; particularly it helps to overcome prejudices and the improvement of coexistence within the community. Participation in the process of designing norms all together promotes greater shared responsibility in school management and in tackling the school needs. Active participation in the decision-making becomes a source of creation of meaning of education for the whole community. Participation of families in the evaluation and planning of the curriculum has been identified as important in preschool education to promote children's educational success in instrumental learning. Through this partnership, pupils feel supported, they increase their self-esteem and expectations about their possibilities to learn and, in general terms, learning difficulties are prevented.

Transformation processes also go beyond the school itself and reach other social spheres in the neighbourhood and in the personal lives. Indeed,

family and community participation in the cases analysed shows an impact in the improvement of the situation related to housing, health conditions, employment and social and political participation.

Recommendations put forward to schools include:

- Promoting family and community participation in schools based on SEAs;

- Increase and diversify the interactions that children have around learning to increase their learning opportunities;

- Provide family education which responds to the participants' educational needs as expressed by them;

- Provide spaces for shared learning activities between children and their families, either in school time or after school time;

- Ensure that all the voices are not only listened to but also taken into account in the school management;

- Include families in the assessment of the students, and the whole community in the assessment of the school and the shared process for the definition of the curriculum;

- All participants –families and other community members- should have high expectations not only of the students' capabilities for learning but in contributing to the school, and to the students' success.

- Taking into account family and community requirements to enable their participation in the school; and

- Create spaces for interaction and networking among the community.

This research has shown how community involvement in school can be an inspiration and hope for our future generations.

2. Introduction

The recent global financial crisis has had an impact on all aspects of society. Unemployment has risen across all Europe, in countries such as the UK, Latvia, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, Slovenia and Slovakia (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; Verick, 2009). The current economic situation has increased the inequalities between social groups. Consequently, the economic insecurity situations for many families have increased as well (Eurochild, 2009). In many countries, the social impact of the economic crisis is greater on the most vulnerable people, particularly young children and youths (Marcus & Gavrilovic, 2010). This means that there is an increase in the number of children growing up in jobless households, which implies that their material well-being, emotional health, and the relationships and atmosphere in their homes are at stake. This vulnerability will eventually put a strain on social cohesion (Red Cross, 2009).

The crisis is also placing greater demands on the education of children in schools, where not only demands related to education provision are becoming more difficult and are posing greater challenges, but many schools are also experiencing funding cuts (Chang, 2010). As the World Bank (2010) highlights, the economic crisis brings opportunities for education sector reforms that increase efficiencies, and which can offset some of the effects of diminished resources. Priorities should focus on measures to ensure that allocated resources do reach schools, increase the accountability of schools, and improve teacher performance. This cannot be achieved by schools on their own and educating in such circumstances requires the input and effort of all actors. Schools, families and communities have to work together for the benefit of the children (Epstein, 1995). There is an increasing need to tackle educational, social, and psychological aspects based on professional knowledge about child development, learning, and social integration. For this reason, education should be a shared responsibility (Rosenberg et al., 2009) where the whole community works together with different professionals, teachers and educators. This is a key to surviving the crisis in view of a better future, especially since education is considered as an effective tool in the promotion of social cohesion (Green et al., 2003).

However, although schooling may be a major agent in children's education, it is definitely not the only element that influences their abilities and their educational achievement. Factors such as the family, cultural and socio-economic background,

financial situation and the locality in which they live all play a role in the children's development and educational performance (Collins et al., 2000; Elliot et al., 1999; Rainey & Murova, 2004). This complex situation does not make it easy for the schools to deal with the myriad diversity that the children bring with them to school. **For this reason, it is necessary that schools make strategic partners with other community organisations and professionals such as local councils.** These types of collaborations are important because they **provide a greater range of professional expertise and they make it possible to tackle issues from different perspectives**, in a more holistic way.

By working with these entities towards a common goal, the schools can better reach out for those who need help the most, making it is easier to promote transformative actions which will enable the children to achieve their potential notwithstanding the circumstances of their background, culture, socioeconomic status etc. At the end, education is the key to social cohesion and better integration of citizens. In the effort to empower children and families to succeed in education, the schools and community organisations need to promote social capital (Green & Preston, 2001) and reduce the marginalisation of disadvantaged groups in society. Putnam (2004) goes on to say that any government which aims to increase social capital and social inclusion must focus on the quality of the education provided.

This report presents the results from the analysis carried out for the 6 longitudinal case studies within Project 6: *Local projects for social cohesion*, which aim to *study communities involved in learning projects that have developed the integration of social and educational interventions that contribute to reduce inequalities and marginalisation, and to foster social inclusion and empowerment* (Annex I, p. 5). Project 6 spans a period of 5 years and, in 4 of these 5 years, one round of the case studies was carried out in each of the 6 schools. This report is the result of the longitudinal and cross-analyse study developed during the four years and based on 20 preliminary reports.

The project provides key elements and lines of action to improve educational systems and social policies. Project 6 within INCLUD-ED focuses on community involvement in schools and educational success as described in work packages 21 and 22. The overall aim of these two work packages is to **study community learning projects that have developed ways of promoting the integration of social and educational interventions that contribute to reduce inequalities**

and marginalisation, and to foster social inclusion and empowerment. In achieving this aim, two main objectives have been set:

Objective 6.1: To study communities involved in learning projects that have developed the integration of social and educational interventions that contribute to reduce inequalities and marginalisation, and to foster social inclusion and empowerment;

Objective 6.2: To identify common and differing strategies of reducing or preventing inequalities and marginalisation, and fostering social inclusion and empowerment among the six cases.

Work packages 21 and 22 involved undertaking six case studies in schools (5 primary and 1 pre-primary school) in five participating countries (2 case studies in Spain and one each in Finland, Malta, Lithuania and United Kingdom). Work package 21 consisted in the preparation of the research tools and the data collection for each case study. Work package 22 involved the data analysis and the elaboration of the reports from each case study. It also included the comparative analysis of the different studies.

This report is the main milestone of Work package 23. It summarizes the main findings and conclusions obtained from the four-year longitudinal case study. The aim of this report is **to provide meaningful and relevant data on the contribution to social cohesion from successful schools in Europe**. It further synthesises the main contributions of *Cluster 3: Local projects for social cohesion.*

The structure of the report is organised as follows. First, the methodology that has helped to identify successful educational actions based on community participation is described. Second, the main findings of the case studies conducted in each of the countries are presented, based on a longitudinal analysis, and responding to the four main types of successful family and community participation that have been identified. Third, we present a discussion of these findings from a cross-case perspective identifying the connections between the different types of family and community participation and the improvement in academic results and coexistence in schools, on the one hand, and on overcoming social exclusion, on the other hand. Finally, in the conclusions we highlight the major contributions of family and

community participation in the form of political recommendations, which can guide educational interventions that contribute to achieve school success in all schools across Europe.

2.1 Theoretical Background

The issue of community involvement in schools has attracted a significant body of research, as various researchers were interested in its analysis in order to determine what benefits could be attributed to it (Sanchez, 1999; Epstein, 2001, Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Garcia 2002). According to Wells (1999), for instance, educators can transform their schools and classrooms into communities of inquirers. In this process the community involvement becomes important not only for the school but also for the transformation of that very community. Furthermore, community involvement has been shown to lead to a better performance of the pupils at school (Epstein, 2004; Grolnick et al., 1999; Harvard, 2007).

Schools as communities: Schools for the future

The issue of how schools would best serve the preparation of future generations was a question which the OECD (2001) had formulated. A number of world level academics were asked to contribute to finding an answer with ideas and postulate possible scenarios. The exercise resulted in the identification of three main developments: one reflected a preference to conserve the present system and maintain status quo; a second scenario promotes re-schooling where the existing schools have to rethink the way they work; and, at last, the de-schooling approach which tries to deconstruct the existing system for educating children.

The type of school of interest to this study falls within the re-schooling scenario and conceives schools as 'core social centres'. Such schools are considered to become the main agent against social fragmentation and exclusion as they promote and attribute a greater role to families and communities. The schools being researched in this study may very well develop further to become the model schools of the future.

The value and contribution that the community brings to the education process has already been recognised in official policy documents. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) ACT in 2002 in the U.S., identified, among other elements, increased

parental involvement as one of the mechanisms to be used by educators, in order to raise the pupils' achievement. Schools were encouraged to create policies valuing family and community involvement, to include families in decision and policy-making processes, to provide information to parents about academic content and standards, and to invest in school-home initiatives. Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) revealed that in those areas with low SES the tendency of school failure can be reversed by implementing measures and policies based on family participation.

The Concept Community

The term 'community' in itself can have different meanings. At the end of the 20th century, the German sociologist and philosopher Ferdinand Tonnies distinguished between two forms of social relations. Gesellschaft which is taken to mean an association between people based on members' pursuit as self-interest and Gemeinschaft where the association is based on shared purposes, personal loyalties and sentiments (Watkins, 2007).

Communities, of whatever type, bring with them a number of aspects which characterise them. All communities have a sense of agency; they can act and do things, they promote a sense of belonging to their members, they support cohesion through commitment, and they embrace diversity (Watkins, 2007). Different processes can be used within a community. Watkins (2007) describes how communities help their members to act through collective action; bridge members of the community through connections; promote collaboration; and allow for dialogue, discussion and debate for the exchange of ideas and opinions. Schuler (1996) considers the community the sum of a number of dependent aspects. He identifies these to include: strong democracy; education; health and well-being; economic equity, opportunity and sustainability; information and communication; and conviviality and culture.

Parental Involvement and school success

It has been argued that parental involvement in education is one of the key factors in school effectiveness (DeGabriele, 2004). Family involvement and participation in the children's education leads to their success from 'cradle to career' (Westmoreland et al., 2009). Various studies seek to answer the question of whether schools are actually practising parental involvement (Foot et al., 2002;

Tett, 2001) and whether this has an impact on students' achievement and general well-being at school (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Edwards & Warin, 1999).

Nevertheless, there is a deeper level of analysis, i.e. whether contemporary forms of parental involvement are empowering parents democratically and politically. In other words, are parents being given an active role and democratic decision-making powers over their children's education in terms of educational content, method and everyday life at the school? Community and parental involvement in schools is strongly related to critical education and democratic schools. In this context, the assessment of participation in the learning process and decision-making power is central. The literature shows that despite the latest policies and developments, the school, both in the physical and metaphysical sense, is still a place where parents and community members step-in occasionally and in a limited manner.

There might be various reasons for the lack of democratic community involvement in the learning process. According to Freire (1993) this is because some educators manifest conservative attitudes towards *vis-à-vis parental involvement, in that they express their doubts and misgivings in an air of profound sobriety, as befitting custodians of freedom. Mistrust from educators is the product of the dichotomy and diversity between the social context and social realities of educators and parents and students.*

An educational system which mystifies the role of the professional educator alienates parents from school life. Moreover, social class, income and status have a significant effect both on family views and on parental and community involvement. Lack of success of programmes targeting increased parental and community involvement, also on a political level, might be due to the barriers that some parents encountered in educative system due to their socio-economic background. The educational reality is becoming more and more complex, and schools working in partnerships have to consider a wider perspective rather than just parental involvement. Epstein & Sheldon (2006), following years of research in the area, have developed a number of principles. These state that school, family, and community partnerships are a better way of placing school actions within the community rather than parental involvement because they recognize that parents, educators, and other members in the community share responsibility for the pupils' learning and development. This is because community involvement is a multidimensional and complex concept involving different agents acting at different

levels and in different ways. Epstein & Sheldon (2006) also highlight that community partnerships are an essential component of school and classroom organization and require strong leadership. They continue to highlight how such programmes should aim for better educational achievement as well as to reach equity of education provision.

Community involvement and learning communities in schools have been documented to have provided academic improvement in children. Improvement has been noted in literacy (Faires et al., 2000; Jordon et al., 2000) in the early years of schooling. Improving parents reading skills allows greater opportunity for low income parents to match the school culture (Paratore et al., 1999). This is why it is emphasised that governments need to ensure equity in the distribution of literacy programmes (Ponzetti & Dulin, 1997). The use of volunteers was also found to promote and help the development of the reading skills of primary level pupils (Fitzgerald, 2001). Progress in reading, due to community involvement programmes, was also observed with older pupils at primary level (Epstein, 2001).

Furthermore, improvements in mathematics were found where elements of community involvement at school were present. This was related to children's self-concept as learners in mathematics reflecting their parents' views of them and their capabilities in mathematics (Frome & Eccles, 1998). In science, parents' attitude toward the subject was found to play an important role on the children's interest and achievement in the subject (George & Kaplan, 1998).

Effects on non-academic aspects were also identified. Saunders and Sheldon (2009) provide references to research projects which show the impact of community involvement through reduced absenteeism, better behaviour of the children at school, as well as the pupils' attitude and adjustment. Research from Spain shows how community involvement has also helped to fight gender violence through the participation of different groups of women (Oliver et al., 2009). It has also been argued that for school and curricular reform to take place and be sustained, community involvement is necessary (Arriaza, 2004) as family literacy programmes help parents in helping their own children as well as in enabling their voices to be heard in the learning and development of their own children (Tett, 2001).

Community involvement and transformations of communities

Community involvement should always be aimed towards the inclusionary actions that are democratic in nature. Hence, community involvement should foster the democratic inclusion of parents and other community members, making them active key role players in their education and partners in the education process. For Freire (1993) this should not be pseudo-participation, but a committed involvement.

However, the best way to understand the contributions of community involvement to children's school success is analysing real life examples. Sánchez (1999) describes the case of an adult school located in Barcelona (Spain) where neighbours started to meet on the street to ask for public supplies (like a public library, a school for adult learners, a place for elders, etc.). They occupied a building from the old authorities to provide free services to the community. Based on egalitarian dialogue and democratic participation, this school has survived for three decades providing community members with formal and non formal education and with the opportunity to read classic books of the universal literature in literary circles.

Rosenfeld and Tardieu (2000) report on a successful experience of some families living in extreme poverty in a *banlieue* in Lille (France). Families became allies of teachers and other administrative agents and created a "street library" in order to promote children's literacy. They also worked hard to build the *Regional Education Project*, a research conducted by all inhabitants of the neighbourhood to make the families of all children, in particular the poorest, partners of the school. A library was created to allow children to discover that they could enjoy learning, reading, writing and using computers, and discovered also their own capacities and knowledge.

Apple and Beane (2007) describe the Fratney School, from Milwaukee (United States), placed in a neighbourhood with a great diversity of people. The school was run by both teachers and parents, who were the main actors. They developed a multicultural curriculum to face former problems of discipline and disrespect for human differences amongst students. Parents tend to participate more when they can have real influence in the decisions regarding the school future and their children's lives (Apple & Beane, 2007). In this school, neighbours and other members of the community were even able to transform their neighbourhood through their participation, not just the school programmes and curriculum.

Fischman and Gandin (2007) report on a Brazilian experience, the *Escola Cidadâ*, involved in "participatory budgeting", which is a social form of community government. All inhabitants in Porto Alegre had the opportunity to participate directly in their municipality decisions. *Escola Cidadâ* was based on three main premises: (a) schooling matters if it provides real opportunities for people to be literate (in Freire's terms), (b) learning is only possible when teachers are aware of the interlink between the educative and the political domains of education; and (c) the success depends on the capacity of the school to involve the whole community in a shared project. The experience of the *Escola Cidadâ* has achieved advancements with regards to educational inclusion. A rise in enrolments, a reduction in early school leaving and school failure, and a decrease of illiteracy in the city have been related to the cooperation, solidarity, participation, and democracy inherent to the pedagogical practice of this experience.

These examples of community involvement went beyond empowering individuals by giving them greater freedom and control in their lives. They also empowered and enabled groups of people, to take action collectively and to change the life of whole communities.

3. Methodology

The overall research methodology for the case studies is based on the communicative approach. This section includes a description of the critical communicative methodology which is the method on which this research is based, the research questions, the research tools and fieldwork set for the four years, including tools of data collection and data analysis.

3.1   Communicative Methodology as the basis of the research

This research has used the Communicative Methodology (Gómez et al., 2006), which highlights the importance of including all the voices of all of the agents involved in the research. Furthermore, it also considers research as a form of an egalitarian dialogue and involves the construction of knowledge based on inter-subjectivity and joint reflection.

3.1.1 Postulates of the Communicative Methodology

The Communicative Methodology is based on the following premises:

•**Universality of language and action**: it based on the fact that everyone has linguistic communicative competencies. Thus, every individual has the capacity to communicate and interact with others. However, there are different dimensions of language due to cultural and historical factors and it is through dialogue that real understanding can be developed.

•**People as transformative social agents**: The Communicative Methodology recognises the existence and value of the subject, and does not attribute the researcher the role of leader who "enlightens" the rest. It promotes other types of relationships in the research process, in which arguments prevail rather than are imposed. This is based on the belief that through dialogue, everyone is able to transform his or her context. The critical communicative methodology thus considers people to be actors capable of making reflexive interpretations and creating knowledge. It rejects instrumentalisation and theories that are based on incapacities and deficits, and recognises individuals as social agents critically aware of their lives and contexts (Freire, 1993).

•**Common sense:** in order to find out why an action occurs, it is always necessary to take people's common sense into consideration. Subjective meaning and interpretation of reality depends on individual life experience and

on particular people's conscience. This is normally build and formed within one's own cultural reality and context. This is why the critical communicative methodology puts so much emphasis on the key importance of obtaining understanding within the context in which interactions occur and in which knowledge has been created.

- **Communicative rationality:** This perspective recognises that not only researchers, but also individuals and societies, have the capacity to interpret the social world, given that social reality is constructed through personal interpretations and social interactions. The communicative methodology offers the possibility to obtain a detailed understanding provided through direct contact, by listening to and collecting participants' opinions and stories and interpreting their contexts with them, given that through cultural intelligence and practical conscience they are able to know their social reality and base their life project on this knowledge. CM allows collecting these contributions because it is based on communicative rationality, which entails using the language as a means for dialogue and understanding.

- **Disappearance of the interpretative hierarchy:** Since the "researched" can understand as much as the members of the research team, these latter need not to take on the role of the "scientific interpreters". The critical communicative methodology acknowledges that individuals and societies have the capacity to interpret the social world.

- **Dialogic knowledge:** The interpretative aspect of the communicative methodology seeks to take into account that knowledge is constructed through active interaction with one's surroundings and thus it is not neutral. This leads to a greater degree of involvement, to the establishment of more egalitarian relationships and to the common construction of knowledge (Flecha, 2000).

- **Equal epistemological level:** The critical communicative methodology reduces the gap between researchers and the "researched" as it does away with the epistemological gap in social research. In order to understand or explain a phenomenon, researchers have to participate in a communicative process of dialogue, based on an egalitarian basis, with the people directly related to the research. Everybody provides their own interpretations and experiences, and understanding achieved through consensus on arguments

based on dialogue (Habermas, 1984).

Communicative Methodology stems from diverse and interdisciplinary theoretical foundations. Among these is Habermas' theory of communicative action (1984) that argues that there is no hierarchy between the interpretations of the researcher and the subject, and their relation should be based on the arguments they provide and not on their social or academic position.

Communicative Methodology also draws from Mead's symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) which stresses that interactions make people's interpretations change, and therefore do not only depend on the individual subject. Finally, Garfinkel's ethno-methodological framework (Garfinkel, 1967) is also taken into account for a better understanding of the subjects insights in their contexts (Annex 1, 31).

Hence, Communicative Methodology includes the contributions of objectivist and constructivist orientations, albeit it prioritizes the processes of critical reflection and self-reflection, on inter-subjectivity, through which meaning is constructed in interactive communication between people, by reaching agreements. Within the INCLUD-ED project, the Communicative Methodology is used in order to enable greater social impact of its results. The Critical Communicative Methodology guarantees that the results obtained from the research are the product of an egalitarian dialogue by researchers *with* social agents, vulnerable groups, educators, policy makers, employers, professionals and citizens as a whole, rather than a dialogue *on* them. The researcher contributes with scientific theories to the dialogue in the same way as the people who are participating in the research contribute towards the enrichment of the research theories and the results of the research with their interpretations, reflections, and life experience.

Specific conditions are necessary in order to reach an inter-subjective dialogue which is free of hierarchy between the researchers and the people being researched. One way to ensure this is by including the participation of the researched subjects throughout the whole research process, not only in the data collection but also in its analysis and the elaboration of the conclusions (Gómez et al., 2006). Another means of contributing to this aim is the fact that this research method "places most weight on the processes of critical reflection and self-reflection, and on inter-subjectivity, through which meaning is constructed in

interactive communication between people, by reaching agreements" (ibid: 8).

The Critical Communicative Methodology seeks to obtain results which aim to understand the educational reality in schools in order to contribute to transform and improve it. This is one of the most significant contributions of the critical communicative methodology as it offers the necessary elements to overcome the existing barriers and to contribute to the transformation of social reality. Hence, the research methods and analysis adopted are oriented to this aim, more specifically to *identifying those strategies which bring greater educational success and social inclusion and the practices which do not contribute to success and which generate more inequalities.*

3.2   Research questions for the four rounds of Project 6

In order to contribute to this overall objective, for each of the four rounds of the case studies several concrete research questions were formulated to guide the fieldwork and the data analysis in each phase of the study. All the four rounds of the case studies have an internal continuity and conceptual development. These can be seen in Annex I.

3.3   Research tools and fieldwork done in the four years

Based on the Communicative Methodology, research tools which seek egalitarian dialogue were chosen for the research. The Communicative Methodology provides the possibility to integrate and incorporate distinct methods and techniques to collect and analyse data. Besides typically communicative techniques, other qualitative and quantitative techniques can be used, whenever they are based on a communicative orientation. In this case, the research team considered that in order to obtain both an overall view of the context as well as an in-depth understanding of it, it was also important to use mixed data collection methods.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data

Two **questionnaires to end-users** were used, one addressed to family members and the other to pupils. The main objective of the two questionnaires was analysing the impressions, opinions, and the perceived impact of the selected schools' success from the point of view of the end-users, and from a longitudinal perspective. The questionnaires were thus conceived to provide a longitudinal view of the ongoing issues and data on family satisfaction regarding school success and academic improvement.

The two questionnaires were created and completed in a way which included both closed and open questions. Both questionnaires have a common set of questions across the six cases, as well as specific questions according to the characteristics of the respondents: it is necessary to keep in mind that the children's perspective is different to that of parents/guardians. Overall, the two questionnaires were designed to allow for the identification of commonalities and differences among the six case studies which facilitated the annual cross-case analysis whilst taking into account the specificities of each case.

Each partner carried out the data collection for the school/s researched in their country, and distributed the questionnaires among all the children and families. The range of questionnaires collected varied from one case study to another and also in different rounds. This varied depending on the size of the school as well as the different response rates. However, the number of questionnaires collected increased every round, due to the research team's efforts put in each participating country on finding different ways to distributing the questionnaires and collecting the responses.

The Families' Questionnaire

The family questionnaire consisted of 29 items and can be considered to include five different foci. The first part of the questionnaire focused on the respondents demographics and thus gathered personal data about the guardians filling in the questionnaire. The first eleven items involved questions relating to gender, age, relationship with the children, culture, religious belief, work situation, and details about the highest level of education.

Then, the questionnaire (items 11- 14) focused on the family's level of satisfaction with the school and how the school was spoken of within the community. These questions led to more specific questions (items 15 – 18) about the children's degree of improvement in the specific subject areas as well as overall academically. The fourth part focused on the family's expectations with respect to secondary and tertiary education as well as for the future (items 19-20). The last part of the questionnaire (items 21-29) focused on community involvement, probing various aspects such as: in what ways the community is involved in the school; how do they as family members participate; reasons for not-participating if this is the case; what are the benefits of community involvement as well as opportunities to meet

other parents. These questions responded to the specific research questions for each round.

The Children's Questionnaire

The children's questionnaire was structured in a similar way to that of the family. It consisted of a total of 24 items. The first section (items 1-10) include items about the personal details such as gender, age, nationality, culture, religion, with whom they live, and their parents' job. The questionnaire then focused on how well they think they are doing at school in general and in specific subject areas (items 11-14). The third part focuses on aspirations (items 15 – 17) and asks the children to indicate whether they want to proceed to secondary and tertiary education as well as how much they value their education for their future. The last part of the questionnaire (items 18-24) concentrates on community involvement and asks the children to indicate who participates in the school other than the teachers and what other community activities they participate in. As in the families' questionnaire, these questions responded to the research questions for each round.

In the case of Finland where the school researched is a preschool, the children's questionnaire was adapted to be responded by young children who may have been as young as 4-5 years old. Due to the small number of Finland school population and the limitation that the children are very small and only the older groups of 5 years old were included the survey, the number of questionnaires completed in the school is very small. Nevertheless, a total of 4.484 questionnaires have been collected for all the case studies carried out in the five countries. The table below presents a summary of the questionnaires collected in each country.

Table 1: Summary of the questionnaires collected in each country per round

Country	Questionnaires collected							
	1st round		2nd round		3rd round		4th round	
	Children	Families	Children	Families	Children	Families	Children	Families
Finland	20	19	20	19	7	7	5	5
Lithuania	27	19	99	51	119	85	73	86
Malta	249	232	88	83	229	245	217	225
Spain	224	37	220	50	236	102	204	290

UK	49	21	49	71	269	28	314	89	
TOTAL	**569**	**328**	**476**	**274**	**860**	**467**	**813**	**695**	**4484**

3.3.2 Qualitative Data

Flecha and Gómez (2004) highlighted the importance of involving dialogic and egalitarian dialogue when using data collection tools within the critical communicative methodology. These involved a number of open-ended interviews, communicative life-stories, communicative focus group, and communicative observations. These techniques have the added advantage of ensuring that the research results really reflect the realities that people, particularly disadvantaged groups experience.

The dialogue within the communicative methodology allows understanding as well as promoting transformation. This is achieved through two components which are typical of it: *exclusionary dimensions* (which refer to the barriers which impede transformation) and *transformative* **components** (which demonstrate ways in which to overcome the aforementioned barriers) (Gómez et al., 2006). Communicative Methodology aims at social transformation and uses two dimensions for the analysis of data. The number of techniques used and the profile of the respondents, for each case and round are summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of the qualitative techniques used in each school and round of Project 6.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION		
Existing data and documents.		
13 Standardised open-ended interviews		
5 representatives of the local administration (working in different areas of society)	5 representatives of other community organisations involved in the local project	3 professionals working in the local project.

13 Communicative daily life stories of end-users	
6 family members	7 pupils
1 Communicative focus Group	
1 group with professionals working in the local project	
5 Communicative observations	
5 observations looking at the characteristics and particularities of each local project, in spaces in which community participation could be found.	
Total techniques for each case studying every round	32

The aim of the collection and analysis of the qualitative data, as set out in Annex I, was to study the process of overcoming social inequalities and fostering social cohesion to be able to analyse and assess the influence of community involvement in this process. The standardised open-ended interviews were reviewed and focused more specifically on aspects of community involvement in the schools.

Qualitative and communicative data: Data collected in the first year of the study

	Communicative daily life stories of family members	Communicative daily life stories of pupils	Interviews with professionals working in the project	Interviews with people from other organisations in the community	Interviews with local authority employees	Communicative observations	Communicative Focus Group	Total
Finland	6	7	3	5	5	0	1	**27**
Lithuania	6	7	3	5	5	1	1	**28**
Malta	6	7	7	7	1	5	0	**31**
Spain	14	23	15	10	8	5	0	**75**
TOTAL	32	44	26	27	19	11	2	**161**
TOTAL	**76**		**72**			**13**		

Qualitative and communicative data: Data collected in the second year of the study

	Communicative daily life stories of family members	Communicative daily life stories of pupils	Interviews with professionals working in the project	Interviews with people from other organisations in the community	Interviews with local authority employees	Communicative observations	Communicative Focus Group	Total

Finland	n/a	n/a	3	5	5	0	1	**14**
Lithuania	10	13	3	5	5	5	1	**42**
Malta	6	6	7	6	0	5	0	**30**
Spain	48					2	1	**51**
United Kingdom	6	7	3	5	5	5	1	**32**
TOTAL						17	4	
TOTAL					**21**			

Qualitative and communicative data: Data collected in the third year of the study

	Communicative daily life stories of family members	Communicative daily life stories of pupils	Interviews with professionals working in the project	Interviews with people from other organisations in the community	Interviews with local authority employees	Communicative observations	Communicative Focus Group	Total
Finland	7	6	3	5	5	5	1	32
Lithuania	8	13	3	5	5	5	1	42
Malta	6	7	3	5	5	5	1	32
Spain	7	15	11	7	5	7	1	53
United Kingdom	6	7	3	5	5	6	1	33
TOTAL	34	48	23	27	25	28	5	190
TOTAL	82		75			33		

Qualitative and communicative data: Data collected in the fourth year of the study

	Communicative daily life stories of family members	Communicative daily life stories of pupils	Interviews with professionals working in the project	Interviews with people from other organisations in the community	Interviews with local authority employees	Communicative observations	Communicative Focus Group	Total
Finland	6	7	3	5	5	5	1	32
Lithuania	6	13	3	5	5	5	1	38
Malta	6	7	3	5	5	5	1	32
Spain	16	14	9	10	10	3	1	63
United Kingdom	6	7	3	5	5	5	1	32
TOTAL	40	48	21	30	30	23	5	197

TOTAL	88	81	28	

Communicative daily life stories, communicative focus groups and communicative observations are communicative techniques which are described as follows.

Communicative daily life stories

The communicative daily-life stories were aimed at children and families. The objective of the family communicative daily life a story was to reach a consensual interpretation of reality through a dialogic process between two people –researcher and researched–. Reflections were made on the interpretations which family members make of their lives, as well as what it means to them to participate in the local educational project which is being analysed. In the case of the children's communicative daily life stories, reflections were made on the interpretations which the pupil makes of his or her life, as well as what it means to him or her to participate in the local educational project which is being analysed.

Communicative focus group

A communicative focus group is characterised by obtaining information on a certain issue from the group perspective, and generating information together through egalitarian dialogue based on a consensus. The objective of the communicative focus group in project 6 is to exchange personal subjective information (opinions, knowledge, etc.) with the group, and thereby obtain information about people's daily reality, in order to achieve more significant data about the school being analysed. The dynamic in the focus groups is based on recognising the interaction and the dialogue of everyone participating in it.

Open-ended Interviews

Open-ended interviews were carried out with three different groups: school administrators; representatives of the community organisations; and with professionals involved in the project. The aim of the interview is to collect and analyse the information provided by representatives of these different groups with the purpose to obtain data which could help the researchers find answers to the research questions set: to reveal how community involvement in the school was having an impact on housing, health, employment, social and political participation, and lifelong learning in promoting social cohesion in the school's neighbourhood.

The interviews involved different sections which varied from one year to another

and included questions which target directly discussion on community involvement related to the focus of the research questions of each particular year.

Communicative observations

The contribution which the communicative observation provides lies in the direct observation of the educational situation, as well as in the people who take part in it, and the attitudes, behaviour, expressions and skills which are usually used in the daily situation. For this reason it was important that the observation took place within the usual context of the activity. In communicative observations, the interpretation of what is being observed occurs in an inter-subjective way, based on egalitarian dialogue between the person observing and the people who are being observed. In each communicative observation, activities including community involvement were identified and observed.

3.4 Analysis of Data

The quantitative data were introduced in SPSS version 16.0 on a common template prepared by the work package leader. The SPSS programme was then used to run the analysis of the responses given in the two questionnaires. A descriptive analysis based on frequencies and percentages was conducted. The degree of satisfaction with the improvement of academic achievement was identified among students and families. These results were analysed in relation to key skills (mathematics, ICT, languages), the coexistence between social and ethnic groups, the impact of the school on the neighbourhood , as well as the socio-demographic data.

The open-ended interviews, the daily life-stories as well as the focus groups were transcribed. Notes were taken from the observations based on a chart previously elaborated. In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants in the study, all the techniques were assigned a code.

For the analysis of the qualitative data, data analysis charts were created for each round, which included categories of analysis that responded to the research questions and focused on the forms of community participation. The information contained in each category was analysed based on the transformative and exclusionary dimensions. This analysis responds to the Communicative Methodology orientation, which aims at analysing reality to find elements that contribute to its transformation.

4. Case Studies

In this section we will review, case by case, the successful educational actions related to family and community participation that are implemented in the different schools, based on a longitudinal analysis which has been performed for each of the case studies.

For each case study first we will present the rationale underlying of the school selection. These consist of three criteria, as established in Annex I: (a) educational centres that have demonstrated to contribute to school success (as reflected by children's or adolescents' educational attainment) in relation to their context; (b) educational centres that respond to the same social characteristics: low SES and pupils with minority background; (c) educational centres with strong community involvement that are contributing to overcome inequalities. We will focus the explanation on the criteria (a) and (b), as the criterion (c) will be explained in detail in the subsequent analysis of the case studies. Second, quantitative results based on the end-users questionnaires data are presented. Finally, we explain the main actions that contribute to the improvements in pupils' success and social cohesion in the community, according to the qualitative evidence collected.

4.1. Spain Case Study: Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La Paz schools

Two case studies have been conducted in Spain: **Mare de Déu de Montserrat** School and **La Paz** School. In what follows, the actions of these two cases are presented jointly given the fact that both of them have gone through the process of transformation into *Learning Communities* and many of the actions undertaken are framed within this project. However, when necessary, we will make specific reference to particularities that differ from one case to the other.

Both schools are public schools which offer pre-school and primary education and therefore contain pupils aged between 3 and 12. The **Mare de Déu de Montserrat School** is situated in the city of Terrassa, near Barcelona. This school has been operating as a *Learning Community* since the school year 2001-2002. Over the last six years a significant improvement has been perceived in the school, both in relation to the academic results of the pupils and in the relationship with the community, as it has become a space which is helping to include the richness of

diverse people in the neighbourhood.

La Paz school is located in the outskirts of the city of Albacete (in Castilla La Mancha). The school became a *Learning Community* in the 2006-2007 academic year, and in this short period of time amazing improvements have been achieved also in relation to the pupils' results and impact on the community.

4.1.1. Description of the school: Mare de Déu de Montserrat School

- **Evidences of school success**

Every year the Department of Education in the Catalan Government conducts evaluation tests on basic education competences in all schools. For this case study, the results of these tests were revised and used as an indicator to demonstrate the school success and improvement. These results are more reliable (and comparable) than those stemming from internal evaluations that might be conducted by teachers in their classrooms. Nevertheless, in the academic year 2009-10 new tests were introduced in Catalonia thus substituting the previous ones. The new tests consist of new parameters and are aimed only at the last grade of primary school. For that reason, the comparison was not possible between the 4th year of the longitudinal case study (2009-2010) and the previous three years. However, this data (2009-2010) can be compared with those of the academic year 2010-2011. In the period from 2000 till 2006 there is a **clear trend indicating an improvement in the results obtained by the school**, for example, in maths. A graph is provided below showing the competences acquired by the pupils in mathematics[1]. As it can be observed, all the competences in this area can be compared throughout the period improved.

---

[1] The Basic Mathematics Competences that are evaluated are the following (based on documents from the Department of Education, the Catalan Government):

M1- Use their knowledge about the decimal system, relate numbers and operate quickly, searching depending on the situation an exact or an approximate result.

M2- Use techniques and strategies of geometric representation to describe, argument, and reflect changes in shapes and spaces.

M3- Use the measure units precisely and appropriately.

M4- Use correctly tools and techniques to draw, measure, and calculate.

M5- Plan and follow problem solving strategies and modify them if they are efficient enough,

M6- Use and interpret mathematic language such as numbers, figures and other graphic representations and drawings to describe usual phenomena.

M7- Interpret the function of numbers when they appear in a real context (express quantity, identification, time, measure, intervals) and use them according to their characteristics.

M8- Recognise and interpret graphically simple relations of functional dependence between sets of data of everyday use, particularly in cases of direct proportionality.
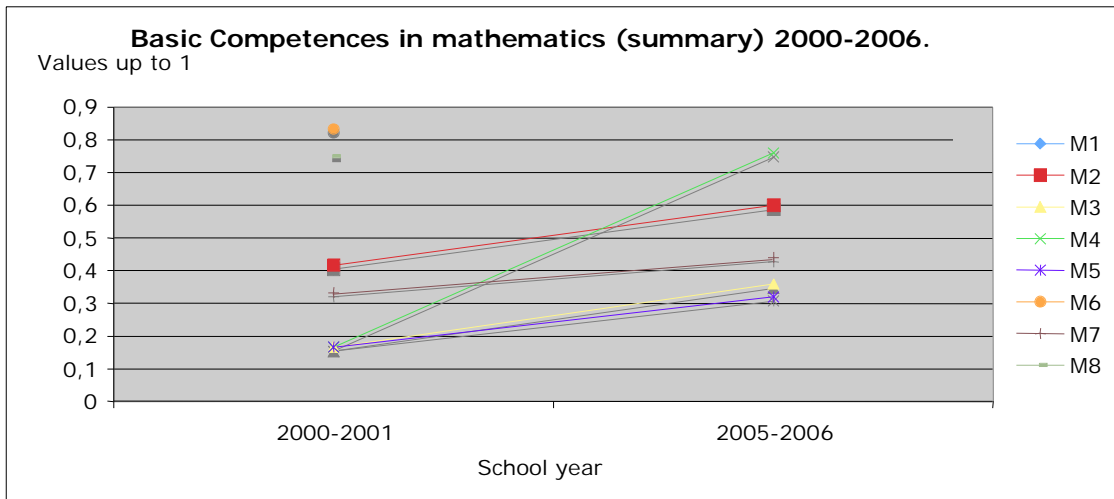
Figure 1: Summary of basic competences in mathematics (2000-2007). 4th grade.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

The results between 2009 and 2011, showed below, also demonstrate an improvement for all the mathematics competences. In all of them, the percentage of students with low level competence reduces and the percentage of those with medium and high level increases. The test shows that overall competence in mathematics is acquired at medium level by more than a half of the students and there are approximately 18% of pupils who stand out with high levels of overall competence in maths. The proportion of pupils who have poor levels of mathematical competence has declined from 70% to 23% (approximately).
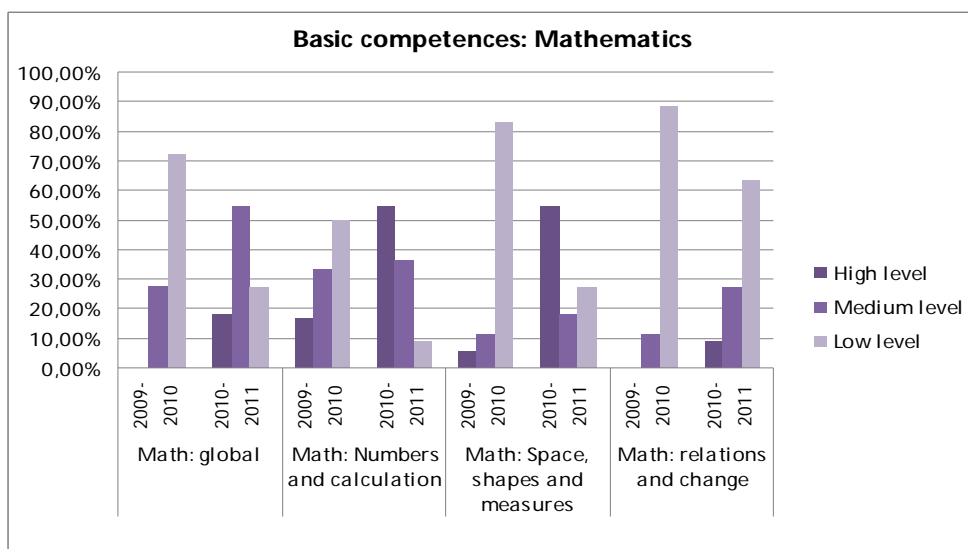

Figure 2: Summary of basic competences in mathematics (2009-2011). Sixth grade.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

As regards the language competences, they are evaluated in Catalan, Spanish and English, since English is a compulsory foreign language in primary schools in Spain. The indicator of language competences mainly includes reading and writing competences. The basic **competences in the Catalan language show a clear tendency towards improvement.** In the 4th grade of primary education, for instance, we can see that the pupils' results significantly increase between the academic years 2000/2001 and 2006/2007.
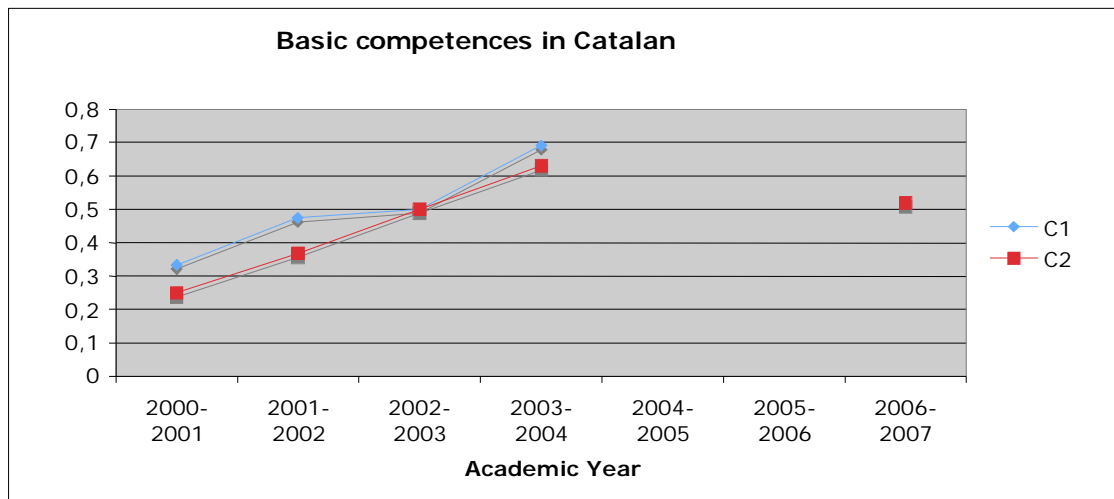

Figure 3: Basic Competences in Catalan (2000-2007). Fourth grade.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

In the 2nd grade, high grades were obtained in general in 2007-2008 in the area of language competence[2]. Although students only performed lower in three competences: L12 and L15 (b) for Catalan and L10 for Spanish. Therefore, the overall result for students in 2nd year was very positive, for the last school year analysed. The following chart shows the percentages of improvement for children in

---

[2] The Basic Language Competences that are evaluated are the following (based on documents from the Department of Education, the Catalan Government):

L9. Understanding the information specified in an oral text in order to be able to extract what is required depending on the objective of the communicative situation (literal oral comprehension).

L10. Understanding an oral text by interpreting the message based on the information it contains and one's own knowledge (inferential/interpretative comprehension).

L12. Understanding a written text by interpreting the message based on the information it contains and one's own knowledge (inferential/interpretative textual comprehension).

L13. Expressing oneself verbally and adapting to the communicative situation and to the recipient in and ordered and clear way.

L14. Expressing oneself verbally by applying linguistic knowledge as far as lexis and morpho-syntactic structures are concerned correctly (linguistic component).

L15. Interpreting the connection between writing sound and punctuation marks in a text with phonetic correction and suitable intonation (reading component).

L16. Writing a text suitable to the communicative requirement and the recipient, in an ordered and clear way (organisation of the text).

L17. Producing a text by correctly applying linguistic knowledge as far as lexis, spelling and structures are concerned.

L18. Producing a text with clear and legible writing, following the guidelines for the presentation of written work (presentation and writing).

2nd year for the 2007-2008 school year in the area of language competences in Catalan, Spanish and English, compared to those obtained in the 2006-2007 school year for those competences for which data is available.
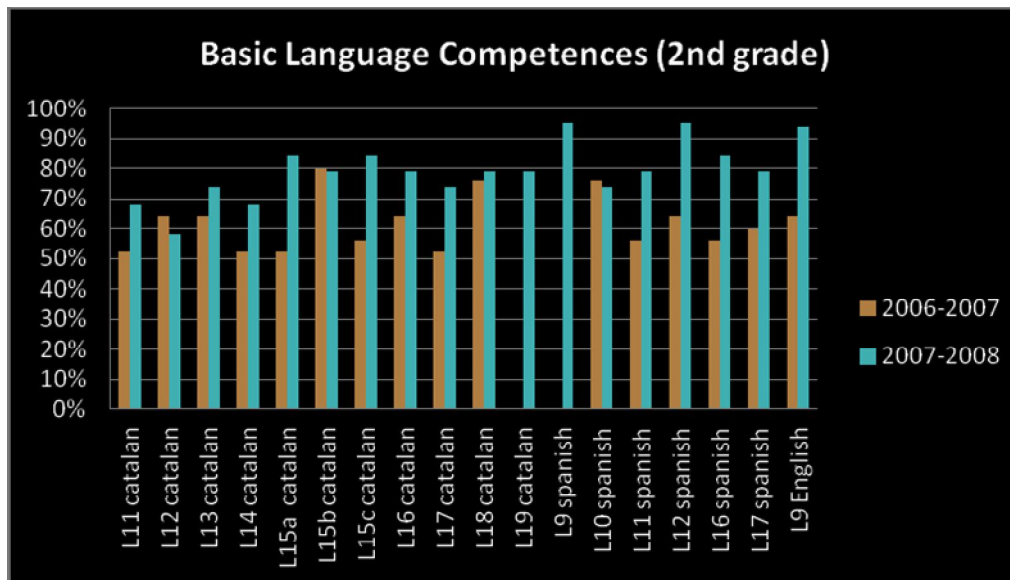
Figure 4: Percentages improvement in Basic Competences in Language (2006-2008). Second grade.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

A clear improvement in language competencies can also be observed between the years 2009 and 2011, two school years, for the pupils in 6th grade, the only children to whom the questionnaires were addressed in these years. In all the competences of Spanish and Catalan, the percentage of students with low level was reduced, between the 5% (in Catalan, writing) and the 56% (in Spanish, reading comprehension). At the same time, in all the competences the percentage of pupils with high level increased between the 9,1% (in Catalan, reading comprehension) and the 36,4% (in Spanish, reading comprehension). The following graph shows the differences between the percentages recorded in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (negative values stand for a reduction in the percentage and positive values imply an increase in the percentage).

Basic competences: Spanish and Catalan Language. Differences

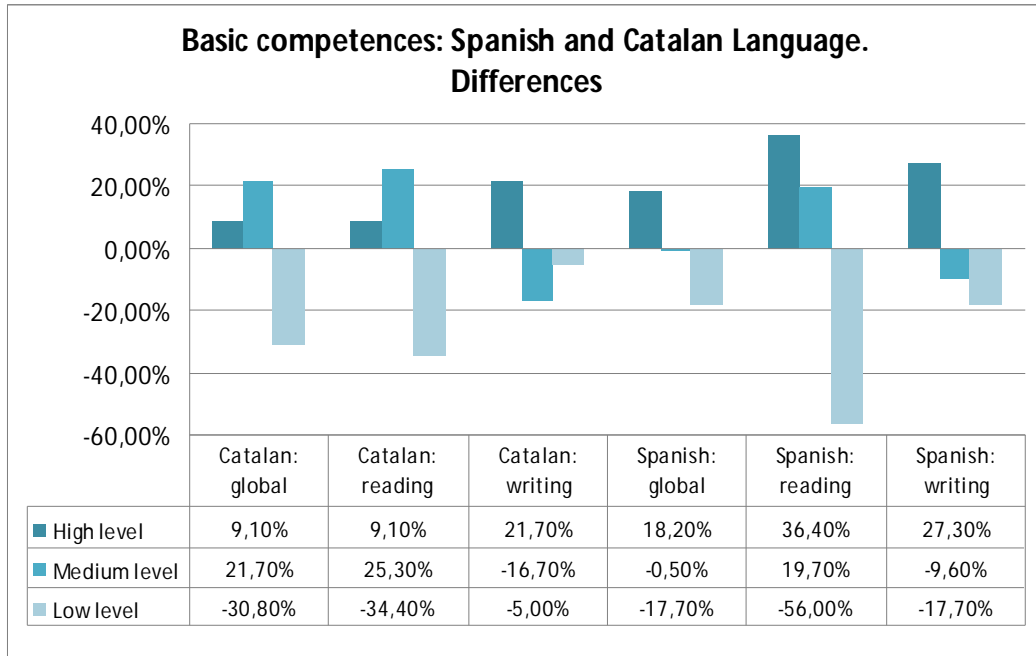|	Catalan: global	Catalan: reading	Catalan: writing	Spanish: global	Spanish: reading	Spanish: writing
■ High level	9,10%	9,10%	21,70%	18,20%	36,40%	27,30%
■ Medium level	21,70%	25,30%	-16,70%	-0,50%	19,70%	-9,60%
■ Low level	-30,80%	-34,40%	-5,00%	-17,70%	-56,00%	-17,70%

Figure 5: Percentages of improvement in Basic Competences in Language (between 2009 and 2011). Sixth grade.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

As regards the English competences, the successful results achieved by the school can be appreciated when these are compared to the results achieved by the Catalan schools as an average. The 72,7% of the pupils of the Mare de Déu de Montserrat school have a high level in the English global competence, whereas the Catalan average is 37,8%. In the Mare de Déu de Montserrat school the percentage of pupils with high level reaches the 100% in the listening competence, as compared to the 79% of the average in Catalonia. This data shows that the school achieves results in the English competences above the average in Catalonia.
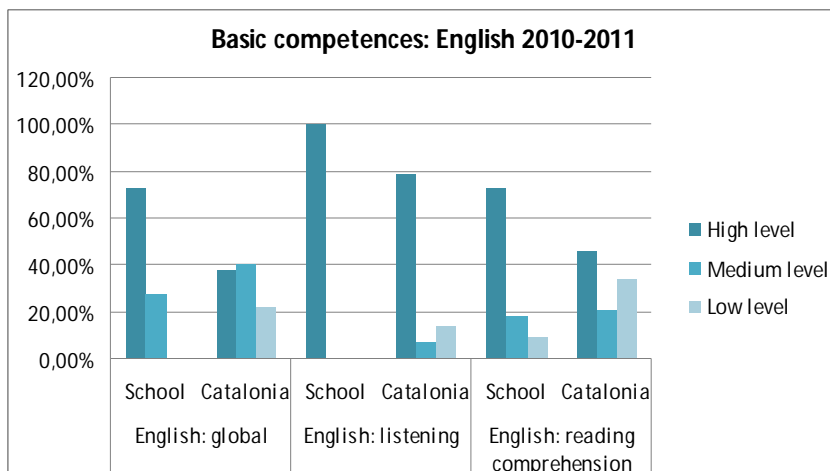

Figure 6: Basic Competences in English (2010-2011). Sixth grade.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

•Social characteristics: low SES and students with minority background

The CEIP Mare de Déu de Montserrat school is located in a low SES neighbourhood and is composed of pupils belonging to minority groups, including immigrants, and ethnic and cultural minorities. In the Montserrat neighbourhood, the majority of the flats are rented to immigrants from Maghreb, Ecuador and members of the Roma population. Many of them have no basic education, some have not finished primary school, and only a quarter have completed either basic education or primary school. Only a small percentage has completed vocational training or an upper secondary education.

In recent years, the school has seen an increase in immigrant children which is much greater than that of Catalan pre-primary and primary schools in general. In the 2000-2001 school year the immigrant pupils in the school represented 11,87% of the total, and this percentage reached 46,08% in 2006-2007, whereas in Catalonia in 2006-2007 this overall percentage was slightly above 10%.

The school has continued to reflect this tendency. The enrolment data for the 30th of June 2008 indicated that 49% were immigrant pupils (44% from Morocco, 2% from Senegal and 3% from Latin America) and 16% were pupils from the Roma cultural minority. Nevertheless, although the number of immigrant children is increasing, the academic performance is not getting worse but is in fact improving.

At the beginning of the case study in the year 2006-2007, the school was selected precisely due to the fact that the increase of migrant population from the course 2000-2001 onwards went together with an improvement of the academic results. The year 2000-2001 the school became a *Learning Community* and the implementation of successful educational actions began. The following charts reflect the evolution of both immigration and academic achievement between 2000-01 and 2006-07. Among the foreign population present in the school, the Moroccan population is the most important. Many pupils have a background of South-American, Asian or African countries. In 2009 the 64% of the pupils had a migratory background and 14% belong to the Roma ethnic minority.
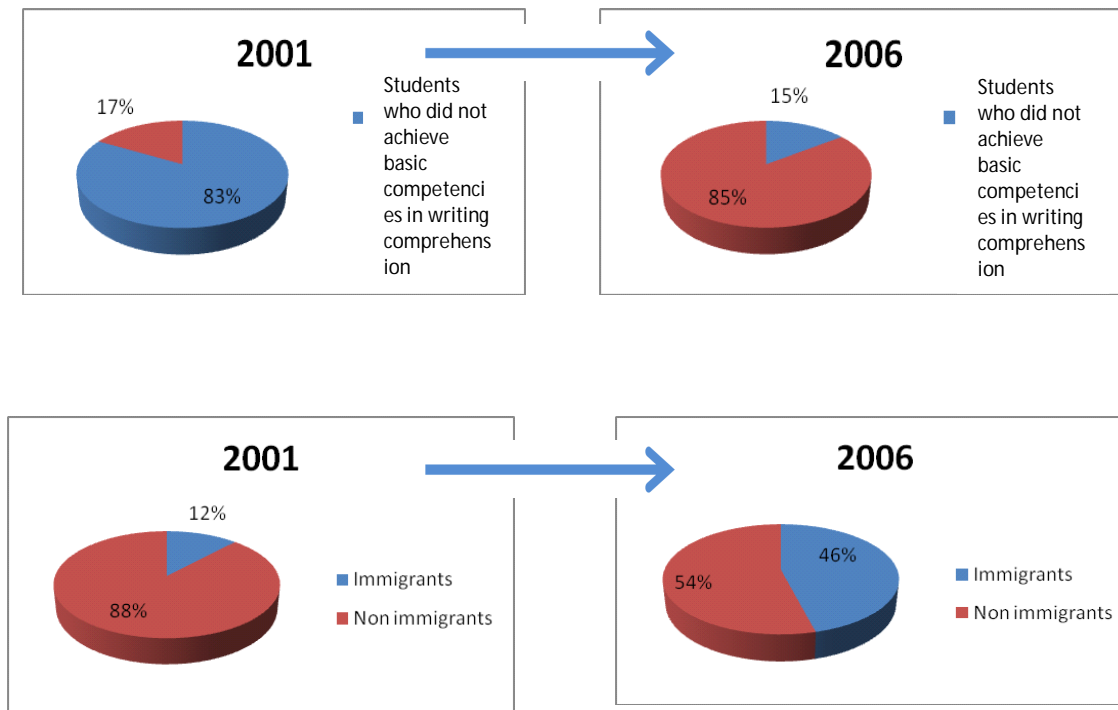
Figure 7: Evolution of both immigration and academic achievement between 2000-01 and 2006-07. Mare de Déu de Montserrat School.

Source: Own creation based on data from the external evaluations.

Therefore, immigration is not a significant variable as far as explaining why some schools achieve poor results is concerned, in spite of the mainstream discourse, which makes immigrants responsible for bad results.

Further data along these lines shows that in the year 2009-10 there are 64 out of 206 pupils with special needs, 31% of these are due to their socio-economic environment. In the year 2010-11 60,4% of the pupils have some kind of difficulties in learning, which are due to various reasons, one would be the late enrolment. Additionally, more than a half (53%) lack the provision of some basic needs such as food, hygiene, health, and clothing; there are also cases of overcrowded housing.

In 2010-2011, out of the 11 pupils of 6th grade that participated in the basic competences evaluation, only 2 native pupils and 3 pupils with migratory background had attended the school from pre-primary onwards. Moreover, 2 of them arrived late to the beginning school year, in September, and left the school during the Festival of Sacrifice. However, the late incorporation of the pupils in the school and the mobility during their schooling is not an obstacle to the school's

continuing improvements in the academic results.

4.1.2. Description of the School: La Paz School

•Evidences of school success

The academic results of La Paz School that prove the success obtained by the school are presented in the following. School success is reflected in the pupils' academic achievement from the 2006-2007 school year when the school started implementing the *Learning Communities* project.

In a similar way to the Mare de Déu de Montserrat school, La Paz participated in external evaluations conducted by the regional government. The graph below shows the average results in these tests in the areas improved between the school years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 for the students that were in 2nd grade in 2006-2007 and in 3rd grade in 2007-2008. In 2006-2007 all competences averages were below 2 (over 5). **Just one year later, after the process of becoming a Learning Community, all these indicators increased spectacularly. Pupils doubled their scores in almost all of them**.
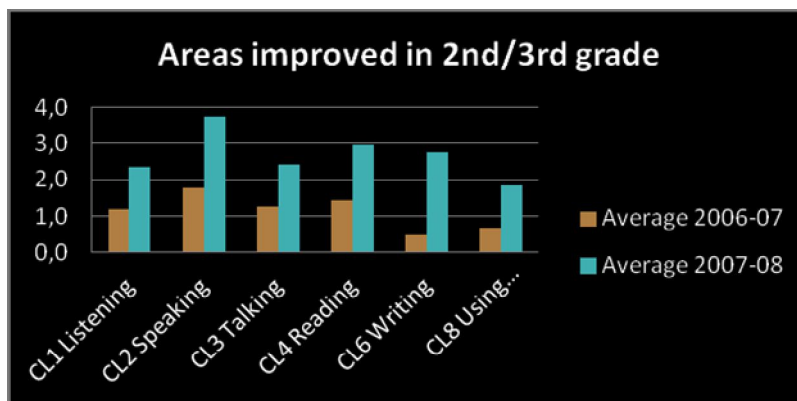
Figure 8: Areas improved in 2nd/3rd grade between 2006 and 2008 in La Paz school.
Source: Own creation based on from the external evaluations.

The data on the basic competences acquired by the students in the fourth grade during the year 2009-2010 clearly show an improvement regarding the previous year, pointing towards a very significant shift in the results. Ten are the competences evaluated by the Department of Education of Castilla La Mancha government in the 4th grade of primary education: linguistic communication, mathematics, knowledge and interaction with the physical world, cultural and artistic competences, treatment of information and digital competence, social and

citizenship, learning to learn, autonomy and personal initiative, emotional competences, and English.

As we can see in the following figure, a very important improvement in the relevant instrumental competencies -such as linguistic communication, mathematics and knowledge and interaction with physical setting- has occurred in the La Paz school. All the competencies have improved significantly but particularly impressive is the case of Mathematics which has in one year improved its results from 1 to 3 (over 5). There is also a relevant improvement in the area of knowledge and interaction with the physical world which improved up to 4 (over 5). A great progress is also to be highlighted in the management of information and new technologies skills, rising from 1 to 3 over 5.
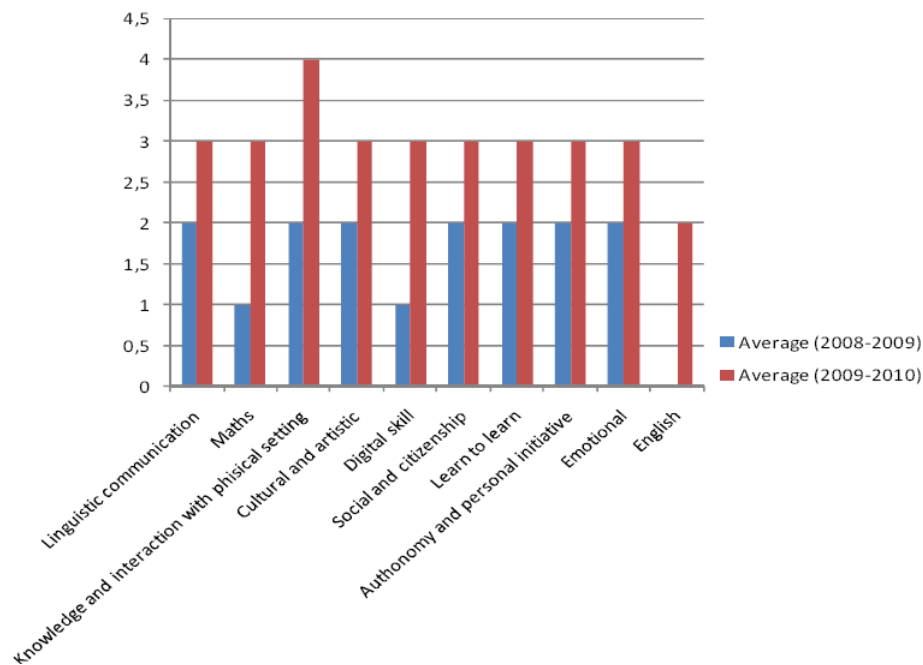
Figure 9: Educational attainment: Competences in La Paz school. Fourth year.

Source: Own creation based on from the external evaluations.

Regarding the pupils' enrolment, we can see that the progress trend is being maintained as identified in the 3rd round of the case study. The last two years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, registration has increased considerably. In 2009-2010 the percentage of pupils grew a 27,66% in relation to the previous year and in the year 2010-2011 a 10,56%. It is noteworthy that the school is offering secondary education now and therewith maintains continuity for the children. This was started in year 2008-2009 with just one course and is continued in the following courses.

Currently, there are already three years of secondary education that are being taught, with around 45 students.

The increase in the pupils' matriculation and the dropping rates of absenteeism provide further evidence of school success. Absenteeism for the 2006-2007 school year was 30%. In 2007-2008 it was reduced to 10% and in 2008-2009 it only occurred occasionally. With regards to matriculation, the chart shows that, after years of experiencing a decrease in the number of pupils, since the implementation of the Learning Communities project the number of matriculated children began to increase.
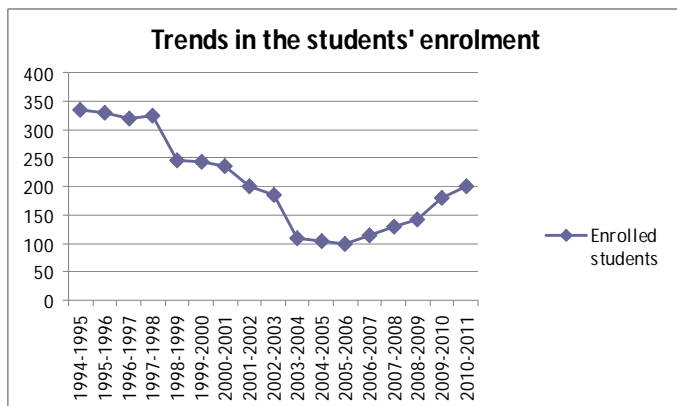
Figure 10: Pupils' enrolment in La Paz School (1994-2011)
Source: Own creation based on school data.

•Social characteristics: Low SES and pupils with minority background

The Milagrosa neighbourhood, where the school is located, was constructed at the beginning of the 1980´s as a consequence of the implementation of a local plan which aimed to eradicate the shanty towns. The neighbourhood was already marginalised when it was first conceived, as the plan was to house families with few resources there, mostly families of Roma origin, who had no access to housing in any other area of the city. Over time, situations involving marginalisation and social exclusion increased, thus, causing more complex problems which have made life in the neighbourhood and the school difficult. Since 2000 the neighbourhood has been included into a state plan aimed at improving social conditions for the people who live there, which is funded by the regional government.

The employment situation of the people who live in the Milagrosa neighbourhood is

very precarious. Data from 2004 indicated that 70-75% of people in working age in this area were unemployed (the rate in the region is 21.8%). The socio-demographic data of 2010 gathered through the surveys provide a deeper insight into this situation. In the case of the children's survey, we observe that the percentages of unemployment of family members in charge reached the 30%. However, this data needs to be complemented with the fact that those who are active are mostly working in the informal economy, such as cleaning tasks, selling scrap iron, fruit picking, etc. These are employments that do not guarantee either continuity or social security.

The educational levels in the population of this neighbourhood are also very low. Data from 2009-10 year school was that 7% of the population is illiterate, and 79% of the population has not completed basic or primary education. The neighbourhood currently is composed of an increasingly diverse immigrant population (7.1%), as well as high numbers of Roma population.

4.1.3. Main findings from the quantitative analysis

This section presents the main findings emerging from the analysis of the surveys conducted in INCLUD-ED during four years. The data from the questionnaires, which were addressed to families and children in Spain, are presented separately for each school, the Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La Paz school.

Data obtained from the families' questionnaires, show the **educational level of the families** in both schools. It can be appreciated that the higher percentages are those of families with no education or with only primary education, in both schools. However, a trend in the reduction of the percentages of families with no education can be observed with a slight increase in the percentage of families with primary education, especially in the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School. The percentages of families with either upper secondary, vocational or university education is below the 23% in the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School and reaches 11% in La Paz School.

Another aspect of the survey data that shows and complements the results of the tests of basic skills is the satisfaction of family members and students with their own learning process. During the 4 years data were collected on math competence and language skills (and in some rounds on other competences, e.g. ICT skills).

According to families, children have been **improving very much in mathematics**. This is the answer that achieves higher percentages in the 1st, 3rd and 4th round in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and in all the rounds in the La Paz School. There is generally a high degree of satisfaction, because the rest of the family members indicated that they were very impressed by the learning achievements in school. It can be highlighted how even in the case of La Paz school the percentage of dissatisfaction or complaint is reducing until it disappears in the last year (and so we have a percentage 0).

Table 4. Improvement in Mathematics. 1st to 4th round. Families' questionnaire

	Mare de Déu de Montserrat				La Paz			
	1st R	2nd R	3rd R	4th R	1st R	2nd R	3rd R	4th R
Very much	54,5%	40,5%	51,2%	36,7%	37,5%	75,0%	50,0%	100,0%
Quite	40,9%	43,2%	25,6%	31,6%	37,5%	12,5%	50,0%	0,0%
Little	4,5%	16,2%	22,0%	21,4%	25,0%	12,5%	0,0%	0,0%
Not at all			1,2%	10,2%			0,0%	0,0%

Source: Own creation based on school data.

Figure 11: Improvement in Mathematics in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La Paz School.
Source: Own creation based on data from the families' questionnaire.

Children's perception on their improvement in mathematics reflects a similar trend. Most of the pupils responded that they learnt very much: between the 61% and the 74% in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and between the 63% and the 94% in La Paz. Moreover, in both schools a trend can be observed in increasing the percentage of pupils that say have learnt very much, and in reducing the percentage of pupils that perceive have learnt only a little.

Table 5. Improvement in Mathematics. 1st to 4th round. Children's

questionnaire

	Mare de Déu de Montserrat School				La Paz School			
	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Very much	61,54%	69,78%	70,99%	74,40%	63,89%	84,75%	88,00%	94,59%
A little	35,04%	28,78%	28,24%	22,40%	33,33%	13,56%	10,67%	4,05%
No at all	3,42%	1,44%	0,76%	3,20%	2,78%	1,69%	1,33%	1,35%

Source: Own creation based on school data.

Responses on **language improvement** also show a perception of good academic performance of the pupils. Families' responses to the questionnaire show that, in a high percentage, families perceive that their children had learnt very much in language, between the 35% and the 54% of the families in Mare de Déu de Montserrat School and between the 12% and the 100% in La Paz School, across the different rounds. In Mare de Déu de Montserrat School, the percentage of families responding that the children learnt quite a lot is also noteworthy: between 32% and 45% of the families. Summing up the percentage of relatives who answered that children learnt either very much or quite a lot in language, percentages between the 72% and the 95% are achieved in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and between the 57% and the 100% in La Paz. Furthermore, in La Paz a great increase can be seen in the percentage of families that answer that students had improved a lot: the improvement goes from the 12% (in reading) and 14% (in writing) in the 1st round to 100% in the 4th round.

Table 6. Improvement in Language. 1st to 4th round. Families' questionnaire.

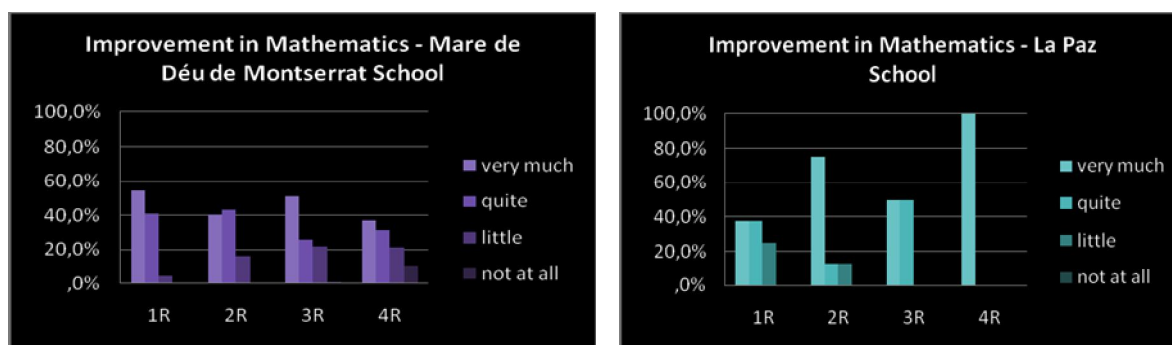|	Mare de Déu de Montserrat					La Paz				
	1st R	1st R	2nd R	3rd R	4th R	1st R	1st R	2nd R	3rd R	4th R
	Reading	Writing	Language	Language	Language	Reading	Writing	Language	Language	Language
Very much	50,0%	54,5%	35,0%	51,8%	45,5%	12,5%	14,3%	77,8%	21,9%	100,0%
Quite	45,5%	36,4%	37,5%	27,7%	32,3%	62,5%	42,9%	22,2%	75,0%	0,0%
Little	4,5%	9,1%	27,5%	19,3%	17,2%	25,0%	42,9%	0,0%	3,1%	0,0%
Not at all				1,2%	5,1%				0,0%	0,0%

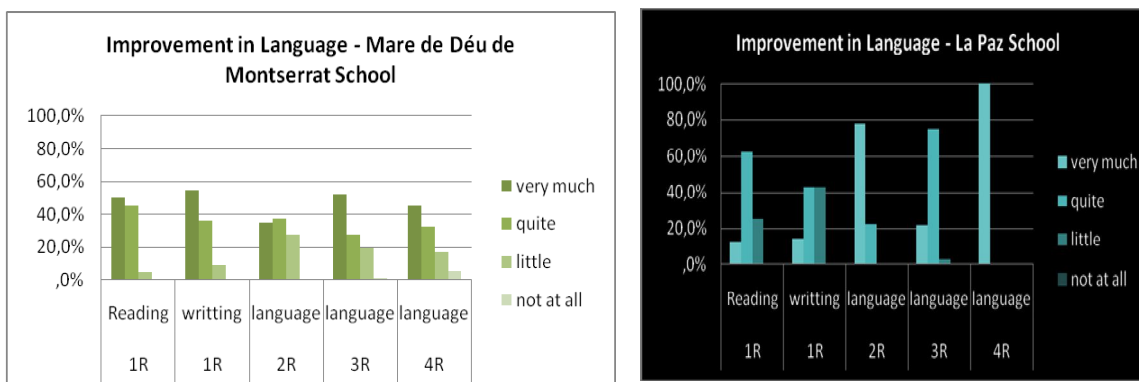Source: Own creation based on school data.

Figure 12: Improvement in Language in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La Paz School.

Source: Own creation based on data from the families' questionnaire.

Children's responses to the questionnaire as regards their language improvement show both a high perception of improvement and an increase in this perception across the years, for both schools. In Mare de Déu de Montserrat School the percentage of pupils who say have improved very much ranges between a 60% and 74%, and in La Paz it ranges between 55% and 89%. An increase in the percentage of children who say to have improved very much can be observed in Mare de Déu de Montserrat, where the 62% (in reading) and the 60% (in writing) answered so the 1st year and the 74% did in the 4th year. Similarly, in La Paz, the 58% (reading) and the 55% (writing) answered to have improved very much in the 1st year and 89% did in the 4th year[3].

Table 7. Improvement in Language. 1st to 4th round. Children's questionnaire.

	Improvement in Language - Mare de Déu de Montserrat					Improvement in Language - La Paz				
	1st Year Reading	1st Year Writing	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	1st Year Reading	1st Year Writing	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Very much	62,39%	60,68%	73,05%	73,28%	74,40%	58,33%	55,88%	89,83%	82,89%	89,04%
A little	35,04%	37,61%	22,70%	25,95%	24,80%	38,89%	38,24%	10,17%	15,79%	8,22%
Not at all	2,56%	1,71%	4,26%	0,76%	0,80%	2,78%	5,88%	0,00%	1,32%	2,74%

---

[3] Again, as pointed out before throughout the four years the survey has undergone changes, and slight differences have been introduced in some variables. In this regard, for the competence of language it was differentiated between reading and writing in the first year but in subsequent years the two sub-variables were not distinguished any more.

Source: Own creation based on school data.

Figure 13: Improvement in Language in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La Paz School.
Source: Own creation based on data from the children's questionnaire.
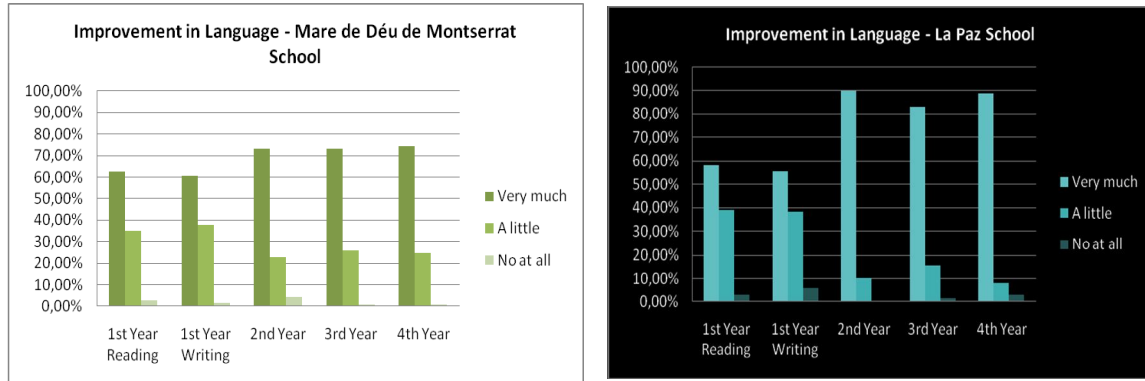
Source: Own creation based on school data.

These responses to the questionnaires show an overall perception of a satisfactory progress in pupils' performance among the families and among the children. This corresponds with the results achieved in the basic competences tests.

The types of **family participation** in the school are also addressed in the children's and families' questionnaires. According to the families, a high percentage of relatives participate in educative –including receiving education themselves, and helping students in the classroom and in afterschool hours– and decisive forms of participation in both schools. It is remarkable that in La Paz School in the 4th round 100% of the respondents reported these types of participation in the school.

Table 8. Types of participation in the school. 1st to 4th round. Families' questionnaire.

	Mare de Déu de Montserrat				La Paz			
	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Propose and organise activities	43,8%				62,5%			
Help the pupils in classrooms	68,80%				75,0%			
Help the pupils out of the school timetable	56,3%				0,0%			
Give classes to the families	25,0%				0,0%			
Receive education		50,0%	37,0%	38,1%		77,8%	70,0%	100,0%
Help pupils in the classroom or after school		55,0%	48,1%	49,5%		33,3%	80,0%	100,0%
Decision-making meetings		52,5%	68,3%	67,0%		55,6%	53,3%	100,0%
Curriculum design and/or evaluation		12,5%	28,0%	16,5%		11,1%	3,3%	75,0%
Attendance to informative meetings		80,0%	52,4%	46,4%		44,4%	40,0%	75,0%
Attendance to school festivities		60,0%	30,5%	4,1%		33,3%	30,0%	25,0%

Source: Own creation based on data from the families' questionnaire.

Figure 14: Types of family and community participation in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La

Paz School.

Source: Own creation based on data from the families' questionnaire.

As regards the children's perspective, also high percentages can be appreciated in these forms of participation, but especially high percentages are found as regards their participation in activities related to helping students learning, either in the class or in afterschool activities, probably because this is the type of participation children experience more directly. In Mare de Déu de Montserrat school, this percentage reaches the 82% of pupils who report this type of participation in the 3rd round, and in La Paz the 81% also in the 3rd round. However, high percentages are also obtained as regards family education, as almost the 60% of students in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and the 64% in La Paz reported this type of participation in the 4th round.

Table 9. Types of participation in the school. 1st to 4th round. Children's questionnaire.

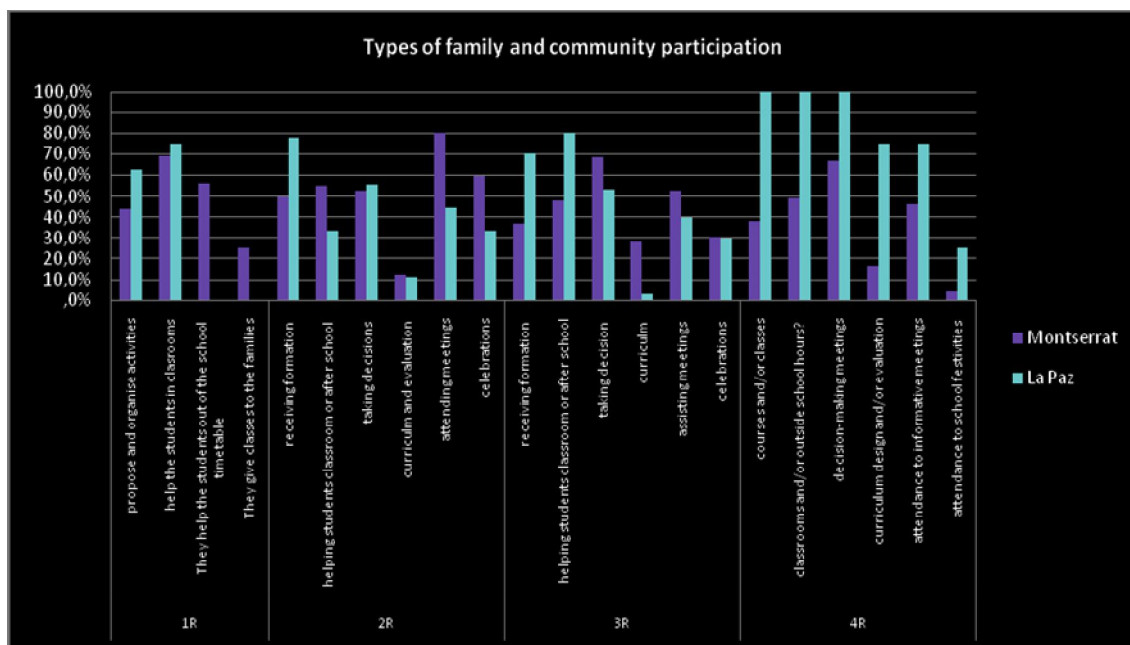|	Mare de Déu de Montserrat				La Paz			
	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Help pupils in class activities	81,20%				77,14%			
Help pupils in activities after school	31,90%				17,14%			
Help children in learning activities		50,00%	82,31%	74,80%		75,00%	81,82%	76,92%
Help organising or attending school celebrations	50,00%	41,43%	41,54%	37,40%	51,43%	35,71%	42,86%	52,31%
Come to school to learn	31,30%	50,00%	58,46%	59,35%	17,14%	51,79%	57,14%	64,62%
Decision-making		23,57%	24,62%	23,58%		23,21%	40,26%	49,23%
Meetings		42,86%	48,46%	38,21%		19,64%	53,25%	50,77%

Source: Own creation based on school data.
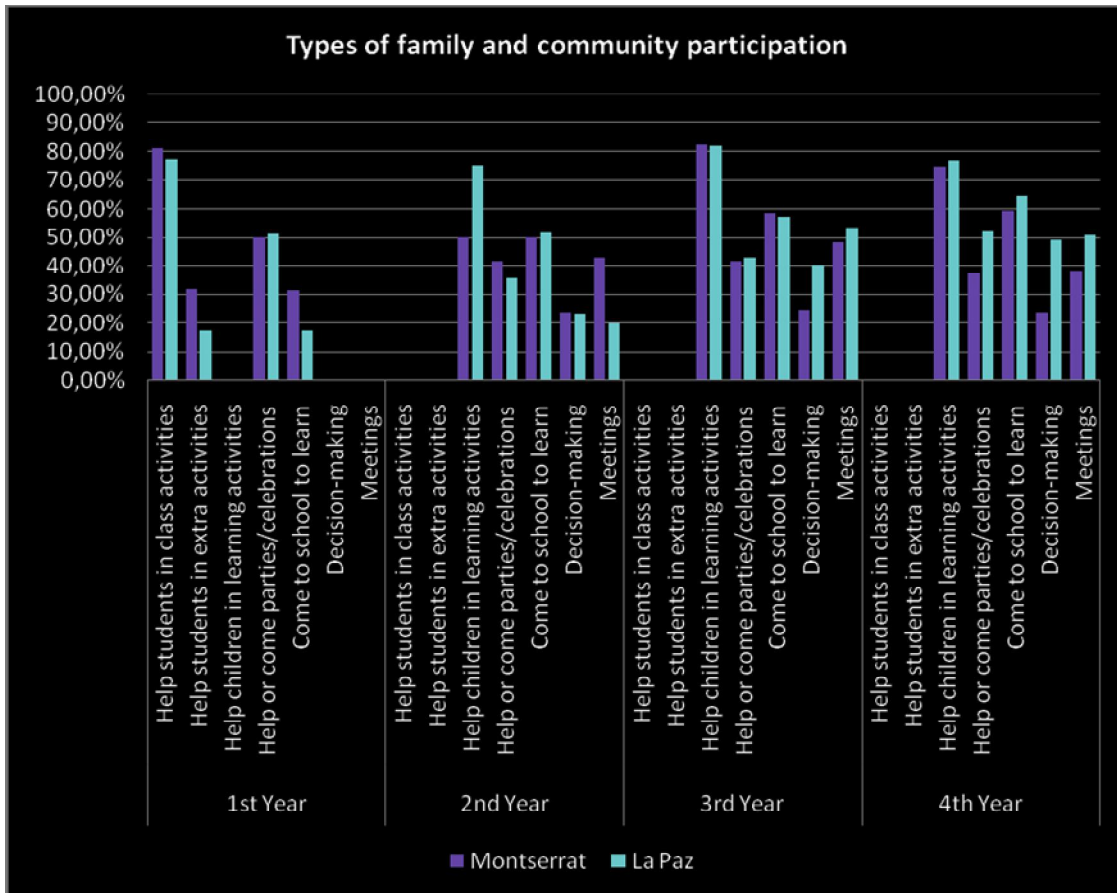
Figure 15: Types of family and community participation in Mare de Déu de Montserrat and La Paz School.

Source: Own creation based on data from the children's questionnaire.

4.1.4. Main findings from the qualitative analysis

4.1.4.1   Educative participation

a. Community participation in children's learning activities

a.1 Interactive groups

Interactive groups can be defined as a form of classroom organization that promotes both increasing academic results and better social cohesion. This practice consists of **grouping students in small heterogeneous groups** (in terms of gender, culture, academic attainment, special needs, etc.) **and incorporating into the classroom human resources** that already exist in the school and in the community but that are in many cases misused. These resources refer to families, volunteers, support teachers, etc. Several activities are proposed by the teacher and every small group works on them with the help of a family member or a

volunteer who becomes part of the group. This additional adult in each group has the function of motivating learning interactions among the pupils. This type of organisation **encourages peers to help each other** and as the pupils are heterogeneous concerning their level of attainment, learning improves. This is how Lucía, a Roma girl who participates in interactive groups and who has improved her learning level and her behaviour in class describes very simply from her experience how **solidarity and cooperation between the pupils is promoted in these groups**:

> *Ah! In a group, and what do you do? So how do you work [together]? Between two [students], me and Mada, Mada helps me, I help her, Rafi helps Ramonchi, Ramonchi helps Rafi* (Lucía, Roma girl).

A primary teacher from La Paz School supports this idea and adds her reflection based on her observation of these groups that the inclusion of families into Interactive Groups **increases the effort and motivation** that the children put into their work and, as a consequence their academic performance improves:

> *Specifically the parents who participated in Interactive Groups (…) you could see that their daughter or son became involved, made an effort, became motivated, helped the others, were incorporated into the dynamic… becoming very productive children.* (Primary teacher, La Paz School)

The incorporation of families into the classroom contributes to an improvement in coexistence and better behaviour. The children behave better and concentrate on learning activities when their relatives or other children's relatives are present. Both family members and teachers have identified this improvement. This is the case of an illiterate mother from La Paz school, who observes that when she participates in the classroom the pupils' behaviour improves.

Before I come in they are making such a racket which is too much, eh? And one of the little girls says, "Juan's mummy is here" and they sit down. [And I say] "Well come one everyone calm down and you'll see what happens [if not] eh! You'll see!" and all of the kids sit there to do what the teacher says and everything goes well, and the teacher is there with them [and the teacher said] " if I hadn't seen this with my own eyes I wouldn't have believed it" and she also said "when are you coming next?" (Family Member, La Paz School).

The children themselves see the advantages of this heterogeneous way of organizing the learning and they feel that it helps them progress in their learning. As a child in Mare de Déu de Montserrat School said, in these groups he feels more and his learning accelerates, "b*ecause that way they help you and you learn more".*

Just as a teacher in the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School states, interactive groups allows the acceleration of the learning both for those pupils who are in a more underprivileged position -avoiding an exclusionary curricular adaptation-, as for those students with a higher level. This is possible due to the fact that **some of them acquire new knowledge while the others consolidate it** through an inter-subjective learning process.

Those who help definitely learn as well. Let's see, if a boy has to explain a problem to his classmate (…) **when he explains it he has to go through a small reflection process in his head**, *lower his level of understanding let's say and then communicate it verbally to his classmates so that they can understand it. Therefore this is a reasoning process which he goes through and* **which really helps him to learn more and really become aware of what he knows**, *you see?* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

In doing so, this organization **ensures that all of them are progressing in their learning and that none of them is left behind**. This is possible because the available resources are introduced into the classroom instead of being the pupils those who are displaced outside the classroom, allowing for increased interaction among pupils and a faster acquisition of the competencies. One mother from the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School explains how the introduction of the new resources allows paying more attention to all the children.

*When smaller groups are created you **can spend more time with them** when you are doing reading or when you are doing [multiplication] tables or whatever, there are always more people and for teachers of course it is not the same to have a group of 6 or 7 as it is to have a group of 25 (*Family Member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

As the additional support is introduced in the classroom and the pupils are not taken outside, **labelling is avoided**, especially for those groups which are more vulnerable to educational failure such as SEN pupils and migrant children. One of the Mare de Déu de Montserrat teachers notices the learning improvement of these pupils when they are included in the classroom and provided with support and through the interactions.

*They concentrate better on their work and learn more. […] There are children for example who have just arrived and after a year and a half you can see that they can already speak, **you can see they have integrated into the class, they can follow the class along with the others**. **Before, these children were taken out of the class, they were like separated and when they were in the classroom they were passive*** (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

As interactive groups count on heterogeneous pupils and volunteers, this classroom organisation allows for **multiplying the interactions both in number and in diversity**. This means that children have the opportunity to get to know other role models, life options and professions, and modify their own expectations, as this mother in Mare de Déu de Montserrat School explained:

*If the children were saying "What do you want to do?", "To be a building labourer my father is a building labourer". "I want to be a truck-driver because my father is a truck driver". On the other hand **now for example I do have a child who says that he wants to be a teacher. Why? Because he can see volunteers who come in who are university people,** they are doing degrees and we also explain to them look… here's L. (a volunteer) who is in the university* (Family Member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

Interactive groups also offer the possibility to interact with adult members of the cultural minorities the children belong to in the context of a learning activity. These adults become role models for the pupils and motivate them for engaging in the learning activity. Along these lines a Moroccan volunteer explains how the pupils get more motivated with volunteers of their cultural background.

> *There has been an improvement, with regards to written language, spoken language and learning attainment, because these improvements have happened, from my experience because I think that I'm, I participate in interactive groups for learning support classes in Catalan and Mathematics and because I'm Moroccan and there are many Moroccans, mostly in the grades 4 and 6. And my presence really improved… really motivated some of the Moroccan students* (Moroccan volunteer, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

Family participation in classrooms and learning spaces also **increases the families' motivation to continue studying and educating themselves**. This is an important transformation as the majority of the families in La Paz School have low educational degrees. **Furthermore, opening up the learning spaces to the whole community as is the case with interactive groups has increased the trust that families have in the school**. By opening up the schools they know better what happens inside school and the classroom and trust has increased between families and teachers. Thus a better coordination among them has been achieved. A Roma mother explained it this way:

> *We, the mothers, have the possibility to go to see our kids, and before you could not, before it was just from the doorway and from the outside, there were no meetings which I knew about, if there was no school, they gave the children letters, there was none of this trust like there is now between the teachers and us, there is a lot of trust, and the school is now (…) we have a lot of information, if anything happens they call us.* (Roma Family Member, La Paz school)

b. Extending the learning time
b.1. Tutored Library

It is a learning activity which is carried out outside school hours oriented both to

providing learning support for students and anticipating the work which will be carried out in the classroom so that everyone can follow it. It consists in increasing the spaces and times for support in order to accelerate the learning process for all the children. School support that is offered in the Tutored Library can be offered with the **participation of other members in the community** such as volunteers, families, members of associations, former pupils, etc. This is another way in which, students have the opportunity of multiplying the number and the diversity of the interactions, which promotes increased learning.

This activity **is especially important for the inclusion of vulnerable groups and those that cannot receive help at home for doing their homework**, because it makes possible that pupils who have not been able to reach the same level as the rest of their classmates, can have the opportunity to work more with people supporting them and in that way they reach the same level of attainment as the rest of their peers. A teacher from CEIP Mare de Déu de Montserrat explains:

> *Well when they go out of the school building imagine what it is like for those who do not stay afterwards in the tutored library, they go home and they have to do their homework and well perhaps they don't know how to do that homework and they have no-one at home to help them with that homework. On the other hand **the ones who stayed got help because there were five of us in the library and when they leave there they can then do something else because they've done their homework.*** (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

This practice has **transformed the relationship children have to learning and this is later transferred to their homes**. Thanks to these activities they feel more capable to learn and want to show it to their family and continue learning with them. In this way the academic interactions that increase learning are transferred to the context of the family. A mother from the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School points out how her son's participation in the Tutored Library increases the meaning he gives to education and extends the activity of academic learning beyond the school:

> *He loves it, he loves it and when we get home he says "Mum read me another of those stories that you read in school, go on." And we work at home in the same way.* (Family Member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

b.2. Summer Activities

These activities are organised in the summer vacation and consist in members of the community offering support for the children's learning. It helps to **intensify and accelerate learning** by extending the learning time once the school year has ended. It is especially important for the pupils with a greater delay in their learning process and with special educational needs. The activity was organised as a result of a request made by the community, especially those families who want to guarantee the educational opportunities for their children. Just as a member of the administration points out, the extension of the learning time promotes the inclusion of these students in the classroom once the school year starts again:

> *There is no division process or classification, along these lines it's obvious that these courses they call acceleration which we do for three weeks throughout July and are aimed at a specific group of pupils who are behind, I would not classify that as segregation, on the contrary **we are giving them a push towards their integration in the following school year**.*
> (Administration representation, Mare de Déu School)

b.3. Centro FINDE

The *Centro Finde* ("Weekends Center") is a space that organizes activities and provides educational support outside school hours for the students of La Paz School. This **project is initiated by organizations from the neighbourhood that develop learning activities every day from Monday to Friday from 5 pm to 7 pm, during the weekend, and on holidays**. These activities are carried out within the La Paz School centre, which is also available to other entities in the neighbourhood to develop different activities within the FINDE programme –Roma Secretariat Foundation, Daughters of Charity, Evangelic Church, the Scout Group, Social Services, etc. The creation of this centre emerged from an agreement among different actors within the community, as a response to tackle needs of the children and youth, both in terms of academic achievement and managing their leisure time. The different after school activities and youth services existing before the transformation of the school in a learning community, are now **coordinated with the school and with the families to offer learning activities to accelerate children and adolescents' learning process** and free-time activities that help creating a safe environment and prevent or overcome harmful habits (such as

drug-addiction). In fact, this project has lead the school being considered a key factor in improving the neighbourhood conditions. Overall, 140 children and adolescents benefit everyday from the initiatives developed within the Centro Finde.

The Centro Finde is a form of extending the learning time in La Paz school by means of implicating the community in different learning and educational spaces. As the **time and spaces for learning** have increased, the **opportunities for families and the community to participate** in the school at different times have also increased. A physical education teacher in the school refers to these increased opportunities to participate, which he considers as important for children in the following quote:

> *This school is open from seven in the morning or 07.30, [and] it is open until six or seven in the evening, in other words, it is open for twelve hours. (…) now [by] opening the doors, well the parents have also felt more identified, (…) I think that the parents are very important in the children's classrooms.* (Teacher, La Paz School)

Participating in such activities by being involved in associative movements has also had an impact on the families and community members who participate. In some cases participating in egalitarian relationships in the school and in community spaces has helped overcoming difficult personal situations and improving their life quality, as for instance the following case explained by the school mediator.

> *She [a mother] volunteers on weekends in civic organizations. I tell you one thing, she is a girl that, her life has been very hard because of abuse, problems when she wanted to leave her husband, to keep going, and where we have noticed a development in the children, an evolution in her as a woman, the mindset, the ways, in the way of expression … and I can say she is among those who most defend the project* (Other community member, La Paz School).

Particularly the family members who participated as volunteers in school-related activities change their perceptions about the pupils and change the types of relationships they have to them. In this regard, some family members have learnt through this participation **new ways of interacting with their children**, more based on dialogue, which can be transferred to spaces beyond school.

And then the people of the neighbourhood who participate, on the one hand they learn and see their children in a different environment to when they are at home or on the street, and strategies that their sons and daughters use to solve problems of learning and behaviour. And I am also realizing that, especially mothers who are more involved, that they learn strategies how to relate with their children, different than yelling, hitting, they start to use the dialogue. And they acquire values that before they maybe did not know that they existed. (Family member, La Paz School)

4.1.4.2 Family Education

Courses for family members are organized in both schools. One main characteristic of these courses is that they are organised to respond to families' needs as they themselves express them. This is possible **because the family members are participants in the entire organisation of the activities** for their own education, from the choice of the subject to the timetable. This feature **promotes a greater degree of participation of family members in the courses**. Volunteers and other people employed by the town council have given IT classes, literacy classes and different sessions on subjects requested by the families.

a. Language learning

In the Mare the de Déu de Montserrat School, there is an activity exclusively addressed to women. It consists in language classes –host country language classes– mostly for mothers with children at this school but also for other women from the neighbourhood. The gender criterion is very important as it was one of the requirements expressed clearly by the women, in order to create a space for them in which they would feel comfortable to speak openly. In this activity the active involvement of the participants has been very crucial in both its definition and development.

The main motivation for the families is to be **participants in their own learning** and thus educators understand and incorporate the needs of the participants into their classes. A teacher from Mare de Déu de Montserrat School explains that the courses are organised to respond to the educational needs expressed by the participants.

*The family education in the school is… "a la carte", in other words, in their dream the parents decided, they said, **they expressed what they wanted, and which subjects they wanted to learn and we try to respond** to that (…).* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

The **classes are adapted to the training needs of the families** but also to other needs such as schedules. In this sense, there is flexibility in the timetable. In the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School, for instance, since the school year 2008-09 activities are implemented on days and hours allowing the participation of working families. As regards promoting specifically the participation of mothers, certain actions have been identified to be necessary, such as having a **person taking care of the youngest children** (free of charge) while the mothers are learning. A mother explains how the implementation of this measure has facilitated mothers' participation:

*It was a very a very big step as well, which went very well, the fact that they had **someone (…) who looked after the baby sitting service while the mothers were studying, working... were**… […] And they want to continue next year.* (Family Member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

b. Dialogic literary gatherings

In the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School, **literary gatherings based on classical literature** are carried out. The literary gatherings have been organised since the school year 2009-2010 every two weeks and the attendees are women, particularly Moroccan women. The activity consists in sharing the reading of classical universal literature. Participants deepen in the language learning by participating in these literary gatherings and they also find spaces to conduct in depth debates from their own life experience.

Evidences show that the activities of family education lead to the following improvements:

- The **creation of opportunities in which children and their relatives can share their knowledge and work together at home** thus improving their motivation and academic competences. These learning spaces are very significant for the increase of academic interactions between relatives and their children, as

this teacher explained:

> *The mother brings the folder with the vocabulary sheets and the child brings his folder with his homework sheets, they can often talk about the same things (…) the mum and the child are experiencing an academic situation [together] and they can interact, [they can say] well I have helped you or at least ask each other what they have been doing. If the child is more motivated, he or she will learn more.* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

These classes have a clear effect on **enriching the relations within the families**. A female immigrant participant explains that her participation in language classes for women is complemented by what her children teach her later at home: *Now I learn a lot from them (the children) at home.*

Consequently this not only affects the learning but also the **connection between the school and the family. New family interactions** and the progressive transformation of the overall learning context of the children, as this teacher in La Paz School explains:

> *It is also beneficial to the children to see that their family is… something so close to them, as close to them as the school is and the way in which they [mothers] are also involved in school and they also go there to learn. Therefore, I think that it is very good, well, because it establishes more links between the family and pupils and also us* (Teacher, La Paz School).

- Due to family and community education the opportunities that families have to be able to help their children with their homework have increased, and this contributes to their academic attainment: A teacher explained that most of the teachers in the school have noticed that **since these classes began children do their homework better**:

> *In staff meetings we have sometimes discussed the fact that specific families that are doing classes, well, until now the children never did their homework and now they do it.* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

- Increased learning interactions and learning contexts have lead to

increased expectations of children's academic possibilities. A teacher compares the evolution of these expectations as a result of family education activities.

> *Since there are classes this means that parents open up their expectations for their children a little bit, perhaps they used to say that well, fourth or sixth year of secondary school was as far as their children could go and now they talk about university (…) It used to shock me a lot when I arrived, that the children when they were 14 would immediately talk about the fact that when they were 15 or 16 they would already start working, but now they say, I want to be a vet, I want to go to university.* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

- Families' participation in the classes has lead in occasions to **increasing family participation in other activities** in the school as a result of being more familiarised with the school and the opportunity for participating they have there, as this teacher explains:

> *Well it has an impact on them understanding how things work at school. This means that more parents collaborate then (…). Once they see how it works, well the* **parents become more involved and they are more aware** *because sometimes people do not collaborate because they are unaware of how it works and so then they just give up.* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

Particularly, family education classes are important for families so they **can help their children and motivate them to study more since they act as role models for studying**, as a Roma mediator in La Paz School says:

> *The parents learn and then afterwards they can help their children, this also means that they [the children] are enriched and they are more motivated to continue studying.* (Roma community member, La Paz School)

- Family courses have an impact on pupils' behaviour. In some cases, children whose relatives take part in family education groups **behave much better** now. A teacher explains the case of a boy whose mother participates in literacy classes in La Paz School:

(…) The first year and the second year in the case of JM whose mother came to literacy classes, and I think his sister did as well and so this motivated him, seeing his mother coming one day a week…and well the fact that she was also learning and that she was starting to read letters and that she was happy, well this meant that he behaved better. (Teacher, La Paz School)

- **Female** participants **in family education courses become the protagonists of their own progress and increase their self-esteem**. In the La Paz state school, most of the people who participate in literacy courses and other types of classes are Roma women without any education. Most of them have learnt how to write and read in these classes. These activities promote also the empowerment of these women. A community member explains it as regards the course for being school canteen monitor:

I think that it is a La Paz success, that the way in which they feel part of the team, I really do have to thank the team very much (…) The fact they see themselves in their white coats and the fact that the kids call them teacher, well it's like putting a crown on the virgin [Mary], and they feel a bit, their ego is inflated, and I think they are the ones who are most positive about the course, to see that two weeks before the end of term that none of them have left the course, the attendance is very regular, that the most they could be is missing a one or two hour class because they had to go to the doctor, for us it is surprising, surprising when you look at experiences in the other courses. (Volunteer, La Paz School)

To summarise what has been explained so far the following table shows the main successful actions in the educational participation and how they are implemented.

		a. Interactive groups	
Educative Participation	**I.A. Community participation in children's learning activities**	b. Extending the learning time	b.1. Tutored Library b.2. Summer Activities b.3. Centro FINDE
		a. Language learning	

	I.B. **Family Education.**		
		b. Dialogic literary gatherings	

4.1.4.3   Decisive participation

The organisation in both schools is characterised by the egalitarian participation of the community in the decision-making processes in the centre. This means that families, volunteers, education professionals, and other members of the community get to an agreement on aspects related to the classroom organisation, activities to be conducted, the use of the centre and the resources, etc. In order to make this decisive participation possible a series of actions related to a democratic organisation had to be implemented as they were necessary to break the traditional barriers that limit the participation of the community. Several successful actions identified as favouring the decisive participation of the community are detailed below.

a. Mixed committees

The mixed committees are a body for decision-making that are **formed by people from of all the groups in the community**: families, teachers, pupils, and other representatives of the community. The mixed committees become, as a community member mentions, one of the main organs as the fact of participating in decision making requires high expectations regarding the abilities of the families for deciding on the management of the centre and not only in peripheral aspects.

In order to promote the participation in the mixed committees all the voices are taken into consideration and **all the people are equally important in the committee**. The management of the school through mixed committees has fostered the involvement of **family members since their opinion has the same validity as that of the rest** of the teaching staff in these spaces. This is the case of a Colombian mother, who explains that her motivation to participate in these spaces is the possibility to decide on relevant aspects of the school.

> *Meetings are carried out, first to make decisions and then a meeting is held in order to inform people about what was decided, it is not simply a case of holding the meeting and **people saying they want this and that, and***

that's it, no. Later the parents are informed of what was decided and the results of the previous meeting. (…) Everyone participates in all of the meetings here, everyone (Family Member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

b. Joint creation of the school rules

In La Paz School, one of the decisions taken jointly with the whole community is the elaboration of the **school constitution**, the rules of coexistence, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts. **The implication of the families and the whole community in the creation of the school rules** and in the actions carried out in case of non-compliance of these rules, has contributed to preventing and reducing conflicts and the improvement of the coexistence in the school, as well as increasing the **pupils' sense of responsibility**, since the school rules were agreed on together with the families. A primary teacher describes how one of the mixed committees, in charge of coexistence, promoted community participation on this issue in order to **improve coexistence**:

In the beginning there were very serious behavioural problems. (…) [and] the coexistence committee, which is in charge of working on all these issues, (…) we called family members so that they were able to come and also collaborate, so they were aware of what has happened and able to collaborate (…) [and] so that they could contribute (Teacher, La Paz School).

As a result of this democratic participation in decision making, an **improvement in the behaviour** of the children has been perceived in the classroom. Participation has enabled to increase and improve also relations between community members. This involvement also affects positively the resources the school has to improve the learning levels and living conditions of the whole community.

*Of course, we have changed, some houses, some blocks of neighbours, some families who already work in volunteer bodies … I think it had never been seen in this neighbourhood before, right? We have created a group of friends. I always say it. These are no longer volunteering mothers (…) There are mothers who spend more hours here than teachers. So no … I think it has improved a lot. (*Family Member, La Paz School)

c. The dream phase

In the process of transforming a school into a Learning Community, the phase of dream is the moment when all school members envision the ideal school. **They make requests and wishes that guide the decisions and changes that will take place in the school**. The phase of dream is done in the beginning of the transformation process and is repeated periodically to gather emerging needs. Everyone in the community (pupils, teachers, family members, non-teaching staff, organisations, and social services) jointly and in a dialogue, expresses the priorities in relation to the school which should be fulfilled in the following months and years. One of the mothers from the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School points out that this phase allows people to be part of the decision making processes on how to organise the school.

> *They do an activity which is called dreams, in which you write down on a piece of paper* **the way you would like the school to be**, **what you would like the school to have**, *it's a bit like that, a bit like among the things you do… its decided a little bit among everyone, if something needs to be done in the school, or needs to be changed, they are interested in what this could be. I see that in the school the parents participate so then they get the parents involved in everything, in volunteering, in the school board meetings, they participate in everything!* (Family Member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

This democratic organisational model **takes into consideration all the voices** regardless of the social status of the interlocutor and this allows identifying all the different needs and priorities. Family participation in decision making processes has also a direct impact on children. Those families who participate most in decision-making processes have managed to **decrease absenteeism** of their children, as teachers observed in Moroccan families in the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School:

> **The children of the people who participate are the ones who rarely miss school**, *that is, it is clear, because the implication of the mother or the father. […] you can see that those children are more motivated, there is a greater motivation, they come more to school* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

The following table synthesise the main successful actions explained above,

regarding the community participation process.

Decisive participation	a. Mixed committees
	b. Joint creation of the school rules
	c. The dream phase

4.1.4.4   Evaluative participation

This aspect considers the curriculum and the degree to which parents and other community members can provide input in the curriculum as well as in the evaluation of the school's success. Evaluation refers mainly to the evaluation of the school's work and initiative. One particular feature which emerged across all the schools research is that the curriculum content is still strongly considered to be the teachers' domain and responsibility only. In addition, in some schools a common central curriculum exists that not even the teachers can change. Even though the curriculum is considered to be exclusively the responsibility of the teachers and other educational staff within the school, the teachers from the schools analysed still feel the need to share their educational practices with the parents. There was an overall practice in all the schools where teachers were willing to talk to parents and explain to them why they were doing certain activities and/or adopting certain teaching approaches. This was due to a need that the teachers had: to have the parents' collaboration and support in promoting learning and understanding among the pupils.

La Paz School has involved families, organisations, and neighbourhood entities in the **school's annual evaluations through the *Dialogic Evaluation*** where a learning plan is established with the parents. This refers to an individual learning plan for each child developed by the educators in collaboration and in partnership with the parents. This process consists of an evaluation of the academic year in which the families and representatives of the community take an active part. As a teacher puts it:

> *This report is an internal evaluation carried out of what was planned, taking into account that fact that our programming was quite general based on the*

general principles of the learning communities. This report was written dialogically by all the associations (Asociación Calí, Secretariado Gitano, Social Services) and people who participated in the project (family members, volunteers, external advisors from CEP [Teachers centre], *Ctroadi* [Territorial resource centre for guidance, diversity and interculturality] *and the Education Delegation), both externally and internally. All of these conclusions were gathered together and captured in this report and this will be the starting point for the creation of the PGA*[Annual General Programme] *for the next school year* (Teacher, La Paz School).

Along the same lines an education inspector pointed out that the school staff has an open attitude for family and community participation in evaluation processes:

The attitude of the teaching team is an attitude which on the one hand has included dialogue with all the people and also the rest of the neighbourhood organisations have been involved, (…) every time any of the mothers or fathers come to the school they are given a description of their child's situation and they are also invited to directly and openly participate in the school dynamic (Community member, La Paz School).

The dialogic evaluation allows the **educational provision in the school and in the neighbourhood to be coordinated, extended and improved**. For example, through this action it was detected that a lot of the extracurricular activities overlapped or that there were people who couldn't attend the meetings due to their work hours. The measure adopted was that the meetings are now held at two different times of the day so those who cannot attend one meeting can attend the other. And also, although parents do not have much input on the core curriculum activities within the school, they have been given space in other less formal aspects such as extra-curricular activities which still serve as opportunities for learning.

The table below shows the main successful actions regarding the participation on the evaluation and on the curriculum.

Evaluative participation	a. Dialogic evaluation
	Dialogic School report Internal evaluation that involves the various associations which take part in the school and with the people who participate

4.1.4.5   Elements that foster participation

There are certain strategies that enhance participation. In the following the main strategies identified are explained:

1. **Flexibility in the participation processes** promotes a greater amount of community involvement, since the opportunities for participation are not limited to one unique moment or task within a specific timeframe. In fact it is the community itself who decides how and when it wants to and is able to participate. A person from an organisation in the community in the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School explains it in this way:

If I wanted to participate more or if I wanted to come in the afternoons to the school as a volunteer the school is completely open, (…) I am excluding myself due to personal and work-related reasons and so on but if it only depended on the school it is always open, always. (Community member, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

As a consequence, families perceive that the school is taking their needs and problems into consideration, according to a person from an organisation in the community:

The school keeps an eye on that a lot and sometimes will hold the same meeting twice, once for those who can make it, which mothers come to and once for the fathers to come to, why not? […] the year when they did the dream phase again, they held two meetings with the parents on dreams, one with mothers from 3 to 5pm and one more with the fathers at 10 o'clock at night so that the fathers could also talk about their dreams. (Community member, La Paz School)

2. **Family and community participation in school is related to incorporating their opinions into the decisions and activities which are carried out**. This increases if the space of interaction is based on egalitarian condition of dialogue and validity claims prevail. People participate if they feel their participation is considered important and has a real impact, as this teacher explains:

> *Well I think that people become involved above all when they believe that their participation is real, no? Active participation, participation which involves being listened to and taken into account (…) the proposals are taken into account, they are debated, arguments are provided by them and the opinion of the community is what makes things move forward.* (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

Elements that foster participation	1. Flexibility in the participation processes.
	2. Incorporating subject opinions into the decisions and activities.

4.1.4.6. Contributions of community involvement to education

In this section we collect and highlight the main contributions that community participation has on the improvement of the pupils learning. But furthermore the transformation that this involvement has on the family environment by transferring academic interactions which increase learning in the context of the family will be presented.

a. Decision making process:

The community participates actively in the processes of decision making at different levels and therewith affects academic achievements by increasing the motivation of the children to learn and reduce absenteeism.

Two strategies can be identified: The mixed committees (Mare de Déu del Montserrat School and La Paz School) and the Dialogic Contract (in La Paz School).

The latter implies that through a participatory and democratic process the whole community reaches a consensus on the school constitution holding the rules which are respected by all members of the community (children, families, social professionals, teachers, etc.)

b. Evaluative participation:

It refers to an internal evaluation carried out and which involves making plans in a joint and dialogic way together with the whole community (associations, family members, volunteers, school advisory team, etc). It allows for an inclusive curriculum adaptation to meet specific learning needs. One example for this is the Dialogic School Report (La Paz School).

c. Educative participation:

Family and community participation supports the teacher's task in order to improve the children's academic results through their involvement in learning spaces. Interactive Groups and Tutored Library among other actions increase school success. Interactive Groups increase the levels of attention paid to the children in the teaching-learning process and those who are involved in Interactive Groups obtain better results which is due to being organised according to the Dialogic Learning Principles. The extended learning time and extra support offered in the Tutored Library contributes to increasing academic results.

4.1.4.7. Overcoming social exclusion

The schools analysed in Spain show that family and community participation in schools can have an impact on the neighbourhood, beyond the school itself, in the areas of employment, health, housing, social and political participation, and in transforming people's lives.

Adult participants in the school have seen **their labour opportunities increased** as a consequence of participating in training processes through their involvement in the school. Since the course 2009-2010 families in La Paz school have started classes to get the High School Graduate; it has been an important achievement as this certificate is relevant in the processes of labour insertion that many of these people are following.

Specifically, **family education** has shown to influence participants' job

opportunities. Ana, a Roma girl, explained the benefits of these courses for her mother and the other women who are involved in these classes in relation to their future work activities:

> *Because they know how to read and write and if they have to get a job and they are told to "sign here", they need to know how to write. Or in order to read they need to know what it says. If they have to find people they need to be able to write, or when they work as a waitress* (Roma girl, La Paz School).

One example is found in one specific course for family and community education aimed at labour insertion which was promoted in La Paz school. This **course for becoming school canteen assistants** was promoted through the participation of diverse social agents and has improved the quality of life of the women who participated in it, as the 85% of the women who participated in it found a job in the surrounding area afterwards. This high percentage of labour insertion has promoted enthusiasm in the neighbourhood. As a member of the intercultural association in the neighbourhood states, it is important that the course leads to official degrees and therewith jobs become accessible:

> *We did the course of school canteen monitors. Therefore we had to work in school canteens and on the playgrounds. Through this training, two monitors in the canteens and six girls who did the summer school last year stayed. And this had the effect that many more people were trained in that and this year we have had to take registration-list for the monitors of summer schools...and they have expressed that if they are trained with an official degree (...) something that accredits their skills and abilities, more opportunities open up for them (...), this has improved a lot, some mothers that were trained with us have graduated now* (Community Member, La Paz School).

Other opportunities arose from having a job as a result of school participation. The experience as a volunteer might be recognised to obtain a job or the schools itself can also employ these parents when it is needed and the possibilities are given, as this Moroccan girl explains:

> *So maybe when eh, when they were building up the school... They were*

doing the new doors and so on, maybe Laura asked some of the fathers to come and work, to help doing it and also to... it would be a job that is still...instead of doing... watching the tv, they came to work, and then got a month's salary. (Morocan girl, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

It is also relevant to highlight how the transformation of La Paz school leads to a more general process of transformation of the neighbourhood, as the creation of the "**Centro FINDE**" showed. This centre is a place where students can go after school to do different activities including academic and leisure activities. This is a **safe place for children and adolescents to spend their after school time** that they did not have before.

Furthermore, in both schools initiatives have been undertaken to keep the environment clean, nice and more liveable, as this pupil of the Mare de Déu de Montserrat explains:

In the neighbourhood, more and more...ehh, when I was in second or third year the neighbourhood was dirtier and people were always fighting because they were not looking after the environment, and then since the school could see that there was no, there was no communication between the community members and helped them to improve the neighbourhood, and now in each place in the neighbourhood there are plants, there is a small park, there are benches so that the mothers can sit down, and talk to each other (Boy, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

Family participation in the **school improves health conditions** for them and their children. As a teacher in Mare de Déu de Montserrat school explained, the school is becoming a space where through interactions people have a better access to information regarding how to improve health conditions and access health services. The school expands the possibilities to access more information that improve health condition for all the family members. As a consequence of a community demand, the school organises training sessions with health professionals. They start to familiarise themselves with health services.

And there has always been a strong relationship with the local healthcare centre and a lot of sessions have been given, therefore that definitely has an impact […]. And the school which allowed this was the Montserrat school, in the other schools which may exist in the area it is more difficult, it is more

*unusual to organise an assembly for mothers there, or to have a group of mothers in which it is more difficult to intervene, **here in Montserrat since they are [already] here, they already meet, since it is their meeting place its easier and has always been done**, no? (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).*

As a result of this greater access to health services and information, there is an impact on the habits and use of health services translated into an improvement in people's health conditions. Moreover, the school becomes a space to approach health services through these sessions provided. In that sense, as was pointed out by a teacher in Mare de Déu de Montserrat school, nowadays all the students, including those with a migratory background, are vaccinated in the school as there is better information among families and because the vaccination is done at school. This situation contrasts with other schools where the same knowledge and habits do not exist:

The other day the 6th grade teacher said that the children had to go to the health centre to do their vaccinations, isn't it? And she said: I have been in other schools in which there were just as many immigrants or less than in this one, and she said that [when] they had to go and do a vaccination, to be more specific, perhaps 6 families responded and [they would say] "you should have gone 3 weeks ago", said the teacher "but here, I have informed everyone and almost the whole class, a total of 27 children, almost the whole class had been (Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School).

Participation in the school has had an impact on social and political **participation beyond the school**. Specifically, in the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School family members have been involved in neighbourhood **demands for obtaining facilities in the neighbourhood**; it was already achieved to remove the electrical transformer from the school, and currently a community centre is being demanded. Part of the neighbours engaged in these demands had previously been involved in the school.

The neighbourhood association here is very active, which means… if it is very active that means that people from the neighbourhood participate and since the majority of people in the neighbourhood are immigrants I conclude that it is really them who are participating. Yes at the forefront there is a person who is autochthonous, who has lived in the neighbourhood all his life,

*but if he did not have the people behind him to support him and be with him possibly they would not do all of the actions which they do. And I know that they are doing that... (*Teacher, Mare de Déu de Montserrat School)

Participants' lives have greatly been transformed due to participating in the school. Improvements such as learning the language of the host country or having found a job entail a **transformation of their personal lives and a personal empowerment.**

4.2. Finland Case Study

4.2.1. Description of the school

The case study analysed in Finland is a day-care centre in Helsinki, situated in the same building as the Laakavuori primary school and the youth action centre. There is a close co-operation between these services. The day-care centre offers day care to children under the school-age and afternoon activities to children in early childhood special education. The accomplishment of the three selection criteria set for the case studies of Project 6 is explained in the following section.

Evidences of school success

Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) is seen as a whole comprising the intertwining dimensions of care, education and teaching. These dimensions receive a different emphasis according to the situation, and the age and needs of the child. Finnish ECEC emphasizes more the learning process and children's play than the academic learning results[4] and for this reason objective data on learning outcomes are not easily available. However, in the day-care centre different kinds of programs have been implemented throughout the case study duration. These programmes generate opportunities which help children and families to learn and participate.

At the beginning of the case study, in 2007, three projects or educational programs were being implemented: *Moniku Project* (support for multicultural children), *Youth Against Drugs Project -YAD-project-* (support program for leisure time), and the *Evaluation of School Readiness*. The *Moniku* and the *YAD-projects* officially ended in 2007. However, the actions developed in the framework of both of them continued to be implemented and became established practices in the day-care centre. In

2009 a project called VKK-Metro, similar to Moniku, was started, which has achieved successful results as regards increased participation of children, parents and employees, as well as improved communications. Similarly, the Key Team project assumed the goals of the previous YAD-Project.

As regards the support for multicultural children, it entails pupils staying in their class with a teacher and teaching assistant for 25 hours a week – for every subject except sports and arts. It can be anything between six months and a year before **they are judged to have mastered Finnish and are ready to be placed into their correct year group.** In the day-care centre, support for children is organised by including more than one adult in each group: one teacher and two nannies and in occasions also an assistant.

Finland, on the other hand, has had what is described as an affirmative action policy since the 1990s. It gives schools extra funds if they are situated in relatively poor areas or have a disproportionately high number of children with special needs. Laakavuori primary school has used this premium to employ social workers and psychologists a few days a week. The principal says this helps to *detect early problems and deal with them quickly.*

Social characteristics: low SES and students with minority background.
Demographic data collected at the beginning of the case study showed the cultural diversity of the pupils. The day-care centre was attended by 67 children, who represented 15 languages and **14 nationalities**: Somalia, Russia, Japan, Iraq, Iran, Thailand, Liberia, Vietnam, Egypt, England, Estonia, Brazil, Hungary and Palestine. 39 children, making up **58.21%, had a cultural background other than Finnish**.

The day-care centre is located in an area characterised by a low SES population. In the following table (**Table 10**), data from 2006 – before starting the case study– of the district where the case study is located, demonstrate that it has the highest values in Helsinki for the following indicators. The data shows a high number of inhabitants and high percentages of families with children, single parent families, and the spoken language in the family is not Finnish or Swedish. Moreover, the percentages of **recipients of child welfare and subsistence subsidies** are the

---

[4]Sylva, K., Sammons, P., Elliot, k., Taggart, B., Siraj-Blatchford,I.&Melhuish, E. 2003. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education[EPPE] Project: A Longitudinal study funded by the DFES(1997-2003).

highest in Helsinki. The latter are received by **10,5%** and **14,3%** of the district population respectively.

Table 10. Socioeconomic summary of the district of the case study

(in bold are numbers that are the highest in Helsinki)

Variable	By number	By per cent
Population of area	**36.255**	-
0−6-year-old	2.895	8,0%
7−15-year-old	3.995	11%
16−18-year-old	**1.353**	**3,7%**
Family with children	**5.394**	-
Single parent families	**2.024**	**38% of families with children**
Average size of families	2,76	-
Swedish speakers	1.253	3,5%
Other languages	**5.297**	**14,6%**
Unemployment rate		13,2%
Rented apartments	9.495	50,9%
Child welfare clients	**863**	**10,5%**
Subsistence subsidy clients	**5.200**	**14,3%**

Source: City of Helsinki 2006, Central Statistical Office of Finland.

4.2.2. Main findings from the quantitative analysis

In the following the contributions from the analysis of the **family surveys in Finland** are presented.

The data collected in Finland shows that there is a general feeling of confidence in the school (and the teachers) from the families. Particularly, an increase in families' trust in the school's ability to improve their children's mathematics performance can be observed. The progression goes from 50% of families responding positively in the 3rd round to 60% in the 4th round. This is consistent also with the other countries involved in the survey.

As we may observe in table 11, there is a trend of increasing the participation along the survey. In the first year there was not a single category up to 100%, while in fourth year we find three categories in this percentage. These are attending family education, participating in decision making processes, and in the creation of the curriculum and/or lessons. This fact suggest that participants experienced an

attitude to get more and more involved and in different ways.

Table 11. Summarises the distribution of families' opinion regarding different types of participation

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Attending courses or classes	**66,7%**	**30,8%**	**71,4%**	**100%**
Helping the students in the classrooms or outside school	33,3%	15,4%	14,3%	60%
Participating in meetings in which decisions are shared	n.d.	23,1%	71,4%	100%
Participating in the creation of the curriculum and/or lessons	33,3%	38,5%	28,6%	100%
Attending informative meetings	n.d.	53,8%	57,1%	80%
Attending school festivities	n.d.	76,9%	n.d.	60%

Source: Own creation based on school data.

As follows, we summarise the contributions coming from the analysis of the **child surveys in Finland**.

It is noteworthy that in the survey, although being comprehensive, very few responses were obtained. Therefore the obtained results are not representative. We would like to highlight that, starting from the first year studied till the last one, there has been an increase in the satisfaction with the learning in both - maths and language, as can be seen in the following table.

Table 12. Child learning satisfaction

	MATH	READING	WRITING
YEAR 1	50,0	62,5	50,0
YEAR 2	50,0	62,5	50,0
YEAR 3	42,9	42,9 (Language)	
YEAR 4	60,0	80 (Language)	

Source: Own creation

4.2.3. Main findings from the qualitative analysis

Community participation in the day-care centre area is promoted through the *local working team* mentioned above. Besides, the day-care centre participates in different programmes which involve cooperation with agents beyond the centre itself, for example, with other organisations.

4.2.3.1 Educative participation

a. Family and community education

Regarding participation in *family and community education*, encouraging participation and cooperation with parents are important factors. Through these initiatives parents feel that they can participate, that the day-care centre listens to their needs, and that they have a good cooperation.

Overall, participation is hampered by lack of information and communication problems, which are related to limited Finnish language skills among immigrant families. **Sometimes teachers perceive it as a lack of interest to participate. One of the strategies** to overcome this barrier and to promote the empowerment of the community members **is to increase the opportunities to learn the language;** it is seen as necessary to overcome this difficulty. In this regard, a transformative element is found in relation to the possibilities of family and community education: it is the willingness of migrants to learn the Finnish language, especially among migrants from Russia. This is important, as early intervention and support for families prevent later exclusion. **Family education has a significant impact on children's academic progress; this occurs when families gain opportunities to help their children at home**, as this relative informs:

> *Do you think that it's good for the children's learning development for you to know about them? Yes, it's a good thing. Because whenever they have some difficulties or something skills-related, we can support them at home. Because at home we have older children, school-age, so we give them the chance to help* (Family member).

In the following table we collect the main results that were explained above.

Educative Participation	Family education	Increase opportunities to learn language for immigrant families
		Impact on children academic progress

4.2.3.2 Decisive participation

Families' participation and cooperation is promoted in *decision-making and accountability processes*. In this regard, **parents feel that their opinions are being heard and taken into account**, and the **parents of minority groups feel that there is no prejudice in this regard**.

In this case study some ways to encourage the participation of family had been observed. For example, parents and staff of the day care centre cooperate in activities as the garden party, mother's day, or discussion group for Somali mothers. Also, the centre's staff encourages the involvement of family by taking the initiative to discuss with parents every day when they take their child to the day care and also when they pick them up.

a. Parent evenings with interpreters

This is an activity for immigrant families in which day care and school have **arranged parent's evenings and have asked translators for major languages to attend**. Topics are about school work, rules, and answering to the parent's questions.

Egalitarian dialogue is seen as a strategy that promotes parent-teacher cooperation; it is related to most of the parents' feeling that there is a good cooperation with the day-care centre and that their **needs are listened and taken care of**. The day-care centre staff also has the idea that they are working for the parents, and they do everything they can to have a good co-operation with families. As a teacher explains:

> *(…) parents evenings, so there they have the opportunity to take part. We have had parents' evenings where interpreters attended and who have translated* (Teacher).

In the following table we collect the main results explained until now.

Decisive participation	
	Parent evenings with interpreters

4.2.3.3 Evaluative participation

a. *Individual Early Childhood and Education Plan*

Families mainly participate in relevant school decisions as regards evaluation and curriculum development through participating in the elaboration of *Individual Early Childhood and Education Plan,* which is **elaborated for every child in collaboration with their parents**. This participation can take place, first, when the local curriculum is formulated under the National Core Curriculum. Based on that, every school makes their own curriculum according to the local one. Finally, **every teacher makes an individual early education and care plan for each child, and this is elaborated together with the guardians**; this is the *Individual Early Childhood and Education Plan*.

It is based on the premise that the early identification of problems in learning or other areas is essential in pre-primary education. It is also based on the principle of "*educational partnership*" between guardians and educational staff, meaning that guardians have a key role, together with educators, in supporting the child's growth, development and learning. This shared commitment is elaborated more in detail in the individual plan. **In this plan, the individual learning objectives for the pre-school year are defined.** It serves also to monitor children's development. **Parents participate not only in the definition but also in the evaluation of the plan.** This plan together with the information about the child's learning progress can be given subsequently to the primary school when children finish the pre-primary stage. In relation to the design of the early childhood education plan, parents take part in the meeting every year and participate in the decision-making together with staff of the centre and the children.

> *Well, isn't it generally that we are in a close contact with each other every day that isn't written anywhere, but sure at least once a month we should talk longer about how things are going in the centre and how the kids are doing, so we know where we are going* (Family member).

b. *Evaluation of the School Readiness Programme*

Parents also participate in the *Evaluation of School Readiness Programme,* in

collaboration with a multi-professional team, with the **aim of preventing learning difficulties for pre-primary children when they enter primary school**. Normally almost all children are 7 years old when they go to the first grade. Pre-school at the age of 5-6 is voluntary but now about 90% of the children go there. **School readiness is evaluated and the parents' view is taken into account**.

Overall, the participation of families is considered important and is promoted in the school, as this teacher stated:

> *Then parents shared our opinion and we settled it together. In that way they also are in decision making process. We try to do this together. We might have the professional knowledge and vision why this kind of action would be reasonable to do, but we do it together with parents. And this is also one of our significant issues, this partnership in education with parents, so it clearly goes like, somehow like this* (Teacher).

As regards the improvements related to this type of participation it is noteworthy that improvements in academic results were confirmed by parents, who feel that children have enough support for their learning, including mother language teaching, small group teaching, and a possibility to have help from a school assistant.

Additionally, by participating in the elaboration of this plan, parents feel that they really can affect decision-making processes and particularly the curriculum and evaluation. In this way they know well the child's early childhood education and care plan and can help their children to learn, as these relative states:

> *Yeah, whenever I've been able to say don't go on about these things, he can do that so maybe do something else, and then they think about where he needs help and where he doesn't* (Family member)

c. The *MONIKU PROGRAM*

This programme entails cooperation with other day-care centres in order to improve their practices. 21 day-care centres in the municipalities of the metropolitan area (Vantaa, Espoo, Helsinki and Kauniainen) participate in the project. They co-operate on developing and evaluating their practical methods and everyday models for working with children and parents who have multicultural background. The

essential part of guaranteeing the child's well-being is to develop a mutual and committed partnership between staff and the parents, so that parents in this programme have a chance to participate in all matters concerning their children (learning, evaluation, and decision).

Specific strategies that the program entails are:

- Improving professional skills of the staff and increasing their awareness and ability to support children in learning Finnish as their second language as well as their cultural identity and mother tongue. As a teacher said:

  > *Then we have this Russian club, which is in every other week and then we have Somalian language club, which also meets every other week, so these mother tongue clubs are especially meant for those Moniku–children* (Teacher).

- Promoting a committed partnership between staff and the parents.

d. *Early childhood education plan*

The involvement of families and community members in the decision making process with regards to the children has been considered as very beneficial for their education as we can observe in the following interview between the researcher and family member.

> *Researcher: Is an early childhood education plan being prepared in the autumn?*
> *Answer: Yes, an early childhood education plan.*
> *Researcher: Do you do it every year?*
> *Answer: Yeah, that's the aim anyway.*
> *Researcher: Do you feel that you can make decisions on matters concerning your child?*
> *Answer: Sure.*
> *Researcher: Do you think it helps your child's education that you yourself have been involved in preparing and deciding on his early childhood education plan and other such matters?*
> *Answer: Yeah, whenever I've been able to say don't go on about these things, he can do that so maybe do something else, and then they think about where he needs help and where he doesn't* (Researcher and family member).

The following table collects the main results explained in this section.

Evaluative participation	a. Individual Early Childhood and Education Plan
	b. Evaluation of the School Readiness Programme
	c. The MONIKU PROGRAM
	d. Early childhood education plan

4.2.3.4 Overcoming social exclusion

The precarious situation of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood was demonstrated in different areas of society. The lack of education and knowledge of the Finnish **language of some parents is one of the causes for difficulties in obtaining a job or using health services**. The representatives of administration pointed out that especially immigrant families do not use health services, although the child health care in Finland is considered as well-organized. One parent reported that the health centre of the area was too far. Alcohol and drug abuse is also present in the streets, to the point that children are afraid to play outside in the evenings without their parents. Based on this situation, different initiatives are being undertaken by the community to tackle the difficult context of the neighbourhood. In this sense, also the community has offered a response to the more vulnerable groups as immigrants.

> *Well, the **'Mellunmäkiseura' club** is active, it (the multipurpose hall) has all kinds of things and the discussion there is very multicultural, and they are certainly very active there, if I am talking specifically about immigrants. And **the activities include language teaching and computer classes** (Teacher).*

The initiative of employing immigrant personnel in the school has also had an impact on integrating people of this collective in the labour market, thus alleviating their situation of exclusion from employment and promoting their inclusion into the Finnish society. In occasions the personnel recruited are parents:

> *Yes, we also have parents who have now worked to some extent, in on-the-job training funded by job creation schemes* (Teacher).

In Finland a quite common system is providing training for work at the workplace. People participating in these projects called *on-the-job training* and funded by *job creation schemes* have normally been unemployed. They are offered a training period by an employee. The day care centres uses this system and in some cases the participation in the training sessions lead to offering them a job afterwards. It has also had an impact on reducing prejudices and improving the multicultural coexistence and social cohesion in the area, as a parent explained:

> *Well let's say that I certainly had some prejudices, quite many in fact, what I'd heard from others, and I didn't bother to find out about the matter myself, but later I went to school myself and could see life from a broader point of view* (Family member).

In this way, the multicultural staff working at the day-care centre is seen both by teachers and migrant parents as very significant for including children with immigrant background into the day-care community and into the Finnish society as a whole. A parent expresses it in this way:

> *It seems to me that this day-care is the best in the area. (…) Here there are good members of staff and an efficient day-care system. (…) other day-care centres don't have cultural events or staff members from different cultures, teachers or assistants, different kinds of people in the day-care, but here there are, and I think this is the only one where you can express your own culture* (Family member).

As regards housing and social and political participation, in 2009 the three-year-project "**Attractive Mellunmäki**" was established. It is aimed at **building an attractive suburban area, making democracy an established practice**, **giving local actors the possibilities to participate in the development of the area**, and encouraging immigrants and their organizations to participate. Also, an initiative has been developed in which some families have taken on the responsibility of helping other families with problems and difficulties as regards housing. Overall these forms of community involvement aim at overcoming inequalities in the neighbourhood.

The *local activity group* and the *local community centre* play a relevant role in promoting the inclusion in preventing social exclusion for at-risk children and youth, as a person from the administration explains:

> *There are certainly area groups, probably more on the school side, because when we are concerned about children attending school, the possible use of drugs, then such local area groups and parent groups try to influence the situation* (Administration Representative).

This provides families with a place where youth could go to enjoy their free time without any risk.

In the area of **health** the local activity group spoke to the local shopkeepers from which underage youth used to obtain alcohol, in order to stop this practice. Furthermore, the school is helping families in order to have more access to health information. Finally, the ***Local activity group and the local community centre*** promote activities that try to **solve local problems like drug using**.

4.3. United Kingdom Case Study

4.3.1. Description of the school

Lakeside Avenue School is divided into two separate school buildings: the Junior school, age 7 to 11 and the Infant/Nursery school, age 3 to 7. They are both state maintained foundation schools. Each school has its own head teacher. However, the schools have only recently split into two separate buildings given the increase in student numbers. The schools remain less than 1 mile apart, located in the same neighbourhood and catchment area. A large majority of pupils who attend the Infant/Nursery school go on to attend the Junior school. Although being separated into two separate buildings, there is a tight, community-driven relationship between the Lakeside Avenue Schools. Teachers and administration work closely together. Parents often have children attending both schools and teachers know the families of students attending each school. Lastly, with the massive school restructuring occurring in the wider city area, there is anticipation that the two schools will once again be located within a single building over the next several years. Lakeside Avenue are very diverse, inner city schools in the Midlands region of England. The schools are located in the neighbourhood of Callaton, with a population of just over

40,000 according to a 2001 census. Callaton is a socially and economically deprived neighbourhood, which has suffered for many years from long-term disadvantage.

Evidence of school success

According to data from the 2008 Annual Performance Review report, all pupils have continued to make progress regarding last years, including EAL pupils and pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties. The report shows that Pakistani pupils in particular have shown academic progress, achieving standards above the overall school average. RAISE online 2008 data for the Infant School show that over a four-year period from 2004 to 2008, overall attainment levels at Key Stage 1 have steadily improved since 2006 and, as for 2008, are currently meeting the national average. These data for specific subject areas show that academic attainment has risen in Reading from 2006 to 2008 and made large improvements in Mathematics, with the school's Key Stage 1 average point score meeting the national average since 2007. These data also show that ethnic minority pupils and English as additional language (EAL) pupils are making academic progress and achieving standards at or above the national average.

Using CVA scores, the most recent results in the Standard Assessment Tests showed major gains in Level 4+ attainment across the main content areas with the following results: English (67%), mathematics (82%) and science (93%). For Lakeside Avenue Schools, the CVA in English for children aged 7-11 show a score above the national mean of 100. For Math, there have been steady improvements from 2005 to 2007, where results are expected to be 100+ in comparison to the national norm. The results in science have always been above the national norm, reflecting excellent teaching and learning. The Annual Performance Review report shows that there is a continuing improvement in all three subject areas. The overall target for English was exceeded by two points, with significant progress made in reading where results showed that 78% of pupils attained Level 4+ and 30% attained Level 5. Similar excellent progress was attained in mathematics, in which attainment of Level 4+ and Level 5 targets was exceeded. The Level 4+ attainment target was exceeded by as much as 15 points. Finally, the Junior School continues to report that a majority of their pupils transfer to one of three outstanding secondary schools in the area. In addition, the head teacher also reports that significant numbers of pupils continue their education in college and university, as well as follow successful vocational routes into employment.

Social characteristics: low SES and students with minority background.

According to the Office for National Statistics (2007), Callaton where the school is located, is one of the neighbourhoods of lower socioeconomic strata of England highlighting the low income, low employment rates, gaps in health and education, and high crime rates.

One of the indicators used to measure the socioeconomic context where the school is located is the percentage of pupils who qualify for free school meals. In spring 2008, 29% of Lakeside Avenue Junior School students were eligible for free school meals, and although in 2009 this percentage had decreased to 26%, these figures still remain higher than the national average. At Lakeside Infant School, 29% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is an increase by 4% from the school year 2007-2008. Invalidated RAISE online 2008 data show that, compared to other schools in UK, the Lakeside Avenue Infant School is in the 60th percentile, demonstrating that the school has a significantly high proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. In addition, invalidated 2008 RAISE online data show the Infant School to have a higher school deprivation indicator than 80% of the schools in the UK.

Furthermore, according to the most recent Ofsted report, the school reflects the diversity of the neighbourhood, with a higher proportion of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds than the national average. In 2008-2009, the percentage of students with ethnic minority backgrounds at the Infant School was 88%, and the percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) pupils at the Junior School was 82%. At both schools, the largest represented minority ethnic groups are pupils of Asian heritage.

Diversity and especially ethnic diversity is also shown in data on religious affiliation. According to the Office for National Statistics (2001), data comparing the population of Callaton with national averages in England, show that approximately 40% of residents of Callaton are Christian (significantly lower than the national percentage in England, which is 71.7%), and approximately 20% of Callaton residents are Muslim, compared to 3.1% in UK.

4.3.2. Main findings from the quantitative analysis

In this section the main findings from the **family survey** are presented. In the United Kingdom we collected 145 questionnaires along the four years of the survey. The level of education (in average) was higher than elementary school. Only 16% of the sample had elementary education or a lower educational level. However, the variety of levels starting up from elementary and higher levels was really important: upper secondary, VET, and university degrees sum 63% of the total sample.

Figure 7: Level of education. United Kingdom.
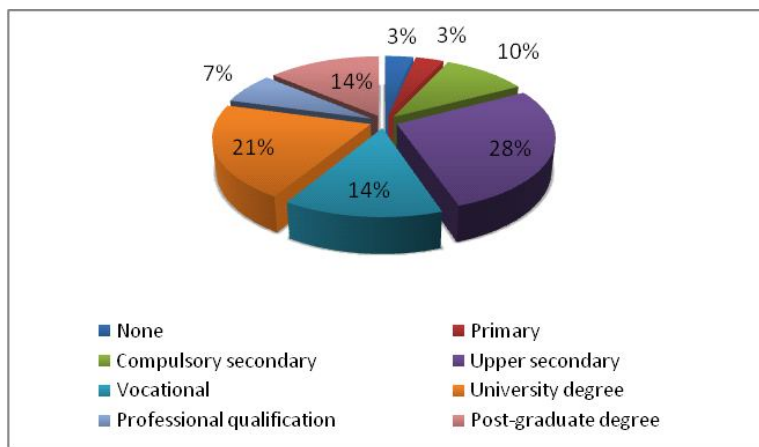
Source: Own creation based on school data.

In the following table the main findings regarding the types of participation are summarised. The data provided in this table affirms that there is a high percentage of people attending informative meetings as a main "way" to participate in school. However, other spaces of participation that are more demanding in terms of openness to the community, like "participating in the creation of the curriculum and/or lessons", for example, present a noticeable lower percentage compared to a "neutral" activity which is "attending informative meetings". This fact suggests that in the United Kingdom families are less likely to participate in decision-making spaces rather than other countries in the EU.

Table 13. Types of participation in UK.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Attending courses or classes	66,7%	38%	18,3%	38%
Helping the students in the classrooms or outside school	33,3%	50,7%	14,1%	42,4%

Participating in meetings in which decisions are shared	n.d.	53,5%	19,7%	42,4%
Participating in the creation of the curriculum and/or lessons	33,3%	23,9%	15,5%	23,9%
Attending informative meetings	n.d.	67,6%	28,2%	69,6%
Attending school festivities	n.d.	53,5%	22,5%	48,9%

Source: Own creation

On the other hand, regarding the children's satisfaction with school, the main results collected from the child survey are that the improvement on instrumental skills in English language is also very well valued by the interviewed pupils. Regarding mathematics' the results are similar to language as in the second round the improvement is stated by 73% and 75%, respectively, and in the fourth round the improvement drops to 68%. Nevertheless, the third round seems to be more successful in Maths as 93% reports having improved their skills.

Table 14. Improvement on Mathematics and Language . 1st to 4th round.

	IMPROVEMENT	
	Mathematics	*Language*
Year 1	—	——
Year 2	73,2	75,0
Year 3	92,9	57,1
Year 4	67,9	67,6

Source: Own creation based on school data.

The children highlight the parents' and other relatives' participation in the school as a successful action. This is confirmed by the data collected as in round 2 and 4 the 75% of the children inform that parents come to learn at school. Participation with the aim to help children is also very quoted by the pupils.

Table 15. Types of relatives' participation in the school. 1st to 4th round

	TYPES OF RELATIVES' PARTICIPATION	
	Come to learn at school	*Help children*
Year 1	—	—
Year 2	76,3	77.4
Year 3	—	—

Year 4	75,0	65,1

Source: Own creation based on school data.

4.3.3. Main findings from the qualitative analysis

The longitudinal analysis conducted at Lakeside Avenue show a range of different types of community and family member involvement in the school, including family and community education, informal literacy sessions and coffee mornings with parents, and learning activities where parents and children learn together.

4.3.3.1 Educative participation

a. Community participation in children's learning activities
a.1 Literacy volunteers

Creative Partnership is a governmental project based on the idea that in order to raise the academic achievement and motivation of England's youth, schools need support and assistance in collaborating with "creative professionals.

One Creative Partnership's activity is **to bring parents and other community members like "*creative professionals*" into the school as a way to foster additional individual support**. Parents serve as **literacy volunteers** who go in the afternoon to listen to children reading. The sessions are oriented towards reading different books, discussing vocabulary and playing games.

> *To motivate them… it's very important to make sure the child is not bored* (Family member).

One of the central aims is to **improve children's enjoyment of reading and literacy activities**, and through that enjoyment, improve their literacy skills. It's believed to have a direct **impact on the improvement in literacy**. A teacher reflected that Creative Partnership has had an important role

> *In literacy… that's an area where I work in so we've been raising standards in literacy… most definitely speaking and listening and language development* (Teacher).

For example, one of the volunteers reflected:

> *One girl that I have at the moment… when we started off… she could hardly read, and… (now with the same books) I found she could read it. So I do find there's a definite difference" (*Community member*).*

a.2. Stay and play

Friday morning **'Stay and Play' Peers Early Education Partnerships (PEEPS) sessions** at the Infant/Nursery school are **attended by a number of mothers and their young toddlers** (ages 2-3). There are five to six parents who **participate in the two-hour session at the school**. Two volunteers are present and help with different learning activities and model plays for parents. Children who participate in 'Stay and Play' also have **an opportunity to interact with other children, including children from different backgrounds**.

The PEEPS sessions also have been positive for children's interpersonal skills, as they learn different abilities through the diverse interactions they have.

> *Sharing and taking turns and all of those things that can come across from the interaction of children with children* (Family member).

This activity also has an impact for all the social agents involved: family members, children, as well as teachers. As a consequence, the family involvement in this kind of activities changes the relationship **between family and teacher, and also the relationship among the families themselves**:

> *Seeing the school as a place to be rather than just a place where their children go and learn* (teacher) and have allowed for community-building and friendships to form: "we have parents that go out for dinner and meet up because they've met in PEEPS" (Teacher).

a.3. Extracurricular learning activities

Family learning through the Supporting Our Families In Education (SOFIE) project aims to **have parents and children working together on various learning activities**, such as English language classes (ESOL), pottery, cookery, football and the gardening club. SOFIE attempts to encourage children and parents to learn together [through] courses for children and parents obtaining new skills

together and to have that valuable interaction that can have an impact on their home life.

Similarly, the **Extended School** aims to overcome the limitations of the school to offer educational activities outside the school by involving community members, that is, schools embody an open-door policy. In that sense, interesting to be highlighted the most recent Ofsted evaluation of the school states that learning is often spread outside the school and classroom into the local community.

The **Gardening Club sessions**, which are held once a week, is another initiative. The overarching aim is to use the Gardening Club as a way to **enhancing parental involvement in school activities.** The Club is also aimed at creating an opportunity for parents and children to work together. As the organizer stated:

> *The project isn't just about gardening really, it's very much about giving parents and children the opportunity to do something together, you know to have that quality time.* (Community member)

This also allows for **community building** among the different families. The gardening club also provides both a social outlet for parents to become integrated into the school community and an opportunity to further the learning of English language and literacy skills for EAL parents.

b. Family Education
b.1. Adult Minorities Breaking Educational Restrictions Project (AMBER)

From 1995 to 2008 it is relevant to mention the **Adult Minorities Breaking Educational Restrictions project (AMBER).** This project aims to help **parents and family members from ethnic minority groups to further their own education**, have a better understanding of the education system and build networks in the community. **Parents are also encouraged to work with their children at home**, build a home-learning environment and get involved in the school, while the school is encouraged to think about how parents could be welcomed and valued as co-educators.

The stopping of the AMBER programme in 2008 due to financial cutbacks signifies losing a formal programme for the schools, which has a direct impact on the provision of family and community education courses. However, there have been a number of new initiatives focusing on family and community education and the former AMBER coordinator at the Junior School has become the Parent Liaison Worker for the school. She set up adult education classes, family learning activities, and also works with individual parents.

b.2 Education courses

The adult education courses and parenting skills courses have had a positive impact on encouraging family members to be more involved in the education of their children in school, as well as to improve their professional opportunities, individual interest in education, and their self-esteem.

Some of the children who were interviewed had parents who had participated in a family education course offered through the school **(adult literacy and adult numeracy courses)**. For example the participation of a pupil's mother and two aunts in family education courses made the child believe that her mother's participation in the course had a positive impact on her education:

> She comes home, she makes me food and she says: *Get your homework out and I'll help you. So it's like one hour for me, one hour with my other sister and one hour with my other sister* (Child).

We would like to highlight the following improvements:

- Families involved in educational courses have **raised the aspirations not only of their own education and skills, but the aspirations they have for their children:**

  It's breaking that low aspiration cycle that leads people to not to further education... one of the ways of breaking that cycle is through parenting, through adult education, through family support programs that work with the family as a whole (Family Member).

For family members for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL), it does not only improve their educational level but also increases academic relations between the parents and the children.

> *It might help them assist their children with homework... There is a lot of,*

especially the students coming here English is their second language as well they just need that bit more help which obviously they need to continue at home (Family Member)*.*

- Increase in **professional and educational aspirations** among family members. These courses have increased the personal and professional opportunities the participants have. A mother explained:

  Before [I had] low esteem for myself… I didn't know what I was capable of doing… now, I just feel I can educate my children in quite a lot of areas and a lot more confident in myself" (Family member).

She feels that her participation in family education courses has had a positive impact upon her three children:

  They're happy because as before they used to see me quite dull because I didn't have any confidence and now they've seen the change in me… they're happy because they can see from where we used to be and now where we are because I'm working and you know, it's just a big jump in our lives (Family member).

- Given the high rate of ethnic minorities in the neighbourhood, family courses have been an important **contribution regarding the community cohesion as well as promoting the integration of ethnic minorities or recent immigrant communities**.

  Before I would speak to parents but not know them by name etc., but now if we meet outside school, we'll say 'oh hello are you ok? etc.' and you get to know different people and then their friends will speak to you as well… When you've got children of different races in the school, it does help the parents come together (Family member).

	A. Community participation in children's learning activities	a. Literacy volunteers	
		b. 'Stay and Play' Peers Early Education Partnerships (PEEPS)	
Educative Participation		c. Extracurricular learning activities	- Supporting Our Families In Education (SOFIE) - Extended School
	B. Family Education	a. Adult Minorities Breaking Educational Restrictions Project (AMBER)	
		b. Education courses	Adult literacy and adult numeracy courses

d. Contribution of community involvement to education

School staff believes that parental involvement on the governing body has had a positive impact upon a range of different academic issues. One school staff member stated that:

It does have a good impact on children's learning and for children to see that parents you know have a say in how they're taught and are interested in their learning (Staff member).

At Lakeside Avenue, families had the possibility of **participating in family education courses, which helped them improve their children's literacy and numeracy skills**. As a coordinator of family learning stated:

If parents are really interested in what [their children are] doing and helping them at home, it just raises standards (Community member).

Moreover, **parents felt more capable of assisting children with homework and in other learning activities**. One of the long-standing participants in family education courses at the Junior school felt that she learned the importance of spending time with her children through helping them with their homework, and felt that she learned certain skills that enabled her to assist her children in learning

activities. She stated:

> *[the courses] Helped me as well because I'd spend time with them and understand what I'm actually teaching them and make sure that I'm teaching them the right things…both of my children, the older ones, were struggling with maths and then there was a literacy and numeracy course that helped me to help them* (Family member).

School professionals notice that with greater parental involvement, **children's motivation and enthusiasm for learning is enhanced**:

> *It's not a case that we've got to push them, they're actually doing the pulling, they're wanting to learn and I think the parental involvement encourages that. You see the parent is far more aware by coming into school about what we're doing here and so when they take homework away with them, they can have more input into what that homework is about and how often it's supposed to come* (Teacher).

As noted, there are numerous ways in which family and community members participate in classrooms and learning spaces, including after school clubs (e.g. gardening club, SOFIE classes), school activities (e.g. Literacy sessions on Friday mornings), activities during school time (e.g. 'Stay and Play' PEEPS sessions), one-to-one learning support (e.g. community literacy volunteers), social events and school trips (e.g. holiday or cultural fairs) to improve "community cohesion".

From the perspective of school professionals, parental involvement, whether reading at home, talking about a television programme or book, or having a meal together, is crucial to the academic success of children, and the schools note that "*those children who don't make it to the required level, 2c by the time they get to the end of Key Stage 1*" are those children who have not had parents that got involved in the school (Teacher). One concrete example is a child, whose mother began to work at the school as a teaching assistant: *the child was predicted at the beginning of this year a 2c…she did her SATs this week and has got a 2a, [which is] above average* (Teacher). The teacher attributes this improvement in academic progress to the mother's participation and involvement in the school. Pupils appeared to believe that the support of family and community members helped to improve their academic progress. It was also found that the behaviour of children is improved with having more family and community members involved in school

activities.

As a result of the participation in the gardening club at school, mentioned before, a greater interest in topics related to science among the children and their families arose. Moreover, it has become a home learning activity for children to do together with their parents.

Finally, another interesting element to highlight is the way how volunteers from the community took part in sessions oriented towards reading different books, discussing vocabulary and playing games with children. One of the central aims is to improve children's enjoyment of reading and literacy activities, and therewith improve their literacy skills. Participants provided a number of examples of children, whose attainment in literacy had improved. For example, one of the volunteers reflected:

> *One girl that I have at the moment…when we started off…she could hardly read, and… [now with the same books] I found she could read it. So I do find there's a definite difference". This student's interest in reading and self-confidence improved, from beginning the year with statements about not being able to read books and refusal to read to ending the year, being able and enthusiastic about reading* (Community member).

e. Overcoming social exclusion

The case study conducted in the UK emphasizes elements that have an impact on overcoming social exclusion, mainly, in the **employment** domain. The **Parent Liaison Officer** employed by the school offers help to families in difficult situations. These courses are organized for family and community members. The instructor is from a local college and the courses are held at the school during school hours.

> *…she [Parent Liaison Officer at the Junior School] advises about housing, and she actually goes to the housing department with people, if they have problems, helps them fill in forms, she's always helping them with that you know (member of the senior management team at Lakeside Avenue Junior School).*

Furthermore, the employment opportunities of the family members have increased

as a result of participating in **family education**. This is the case especially for migrant people, who have increased their labour opportunities through their better knowledge of the native language as well as the participation in some courses offered by the school promoting labour insertion.

> *…in some respects the school sometimes performs another useful function in terms of actually employing members of the community, and I've got several people who work in this building who are either present or past parents of children here. I'm constantly getting telephone calls from people in the community for work experience, people who think ooh I may want to become say a teaching assistant, what's it like? So they want to come into a school and do some voluntary work first to just test out the water, and then who knows? (former member of the senior management team at the Junior School).*

Members of the staff who act as Parent Liaison Officers support parents in all aspects of their lives to ensure their wellbeing, including housing. In this aspect, the role of the Parent Liaison Officers involves helping parents to access the housing benefit they are entitled to or to move to better accommodation facilities to improve their housing conditions. They give advice and also take people to the housing office if they are unable to get there by themselves due to lack of transport or need assistance with communication. In some cases the Parent Liaison Officers even speak the language of the end-users, for instance, one of them speaks Punjabi.

> *So we're often the first port of call, especially if people speak Urdu and haven't got very much English, she, because you know she can translate for them (community member)*

4.4. Malta Case Study

4.4.1. Description of the school

The selected school is a primary school in the south eastern side of Malta. The school population consists of 290 pupils and caters for students across the ages of 7-11. Primary education in Malta caters from preschool (starting from the age of three) up to the age of eleven. However, compulsory education starts from the age

of 5 and primary education involves six years of education.

Evidence of school success.

The most relevant data on the evidences of school success is related to **academic performance**. We could observe this improvement in the proportion of pupils who pass the **11+ examination**, with pass rates improving from less than half of the pupils in 1999 to 69% in 2009.

Figure 16. Academic performance
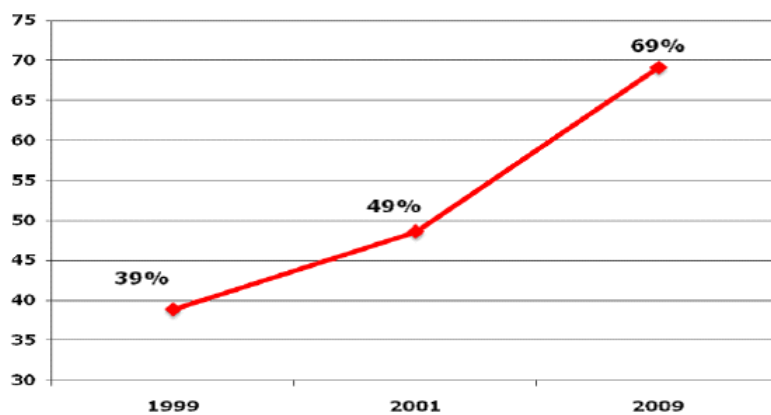
Source: Own creation based on school data.

Social characteristics: low SES and students with minority background.

The evidences which show that the selected school is fulfilling the aforementioned criteria are as follows:

-   The village where the school is located, is composed of people from any kind of socioeconomic background, varying from very low to very high socioeconomic levels. The average income per household of the district's inhabitants is 17.923€, third rank from below, albeit there is a remarkable increase since 2005 when the average income was 16.352€.
-   The district where the school is located is characterised by having the highest percentage among all districts of crime, violence and vandalism. 29.6% of households are affected with pollution, crime and environmental problems.
-   More than half of the population are unemployed.
-   In the last years the school is achieving some improvements in terms of living standards, health education, and education.

4.4.2. Main findings from quantitative analysis

Findings from the family survey

In Malta a sample of 561 individuals participated in the survey along the four years of the inquiry. The main profiles for participants in the survey were family members with low secondary educational level (one of three participants in the survey fit into this profile). Almost everybody (96,9%) affirms to feel "very much satisfied" or "quite satisfied" with the kind of education provided by the school. This fact suggests that there is a shared feeling of confidence on the educative institution among the individuals participating in the survey.

Regarding the data collected, 50% of the participants believe that the school helped their children to improve their skills in mathematics. Over the four years of the survey, the percentage was oscillating between 45-82% of the sample reporting that they are very much satisfied with this statement. In terms of reading (language skills), results are very similar.

Table 17. Table of High Satisfaction about the improvement in maths

	High Satisfaction about the improvement in maths
1st Year	45%
2on year	n.d
3th year	68%
4th year	82%

Source: Own creation based on school data.

Main findings from the child survey

The improvement in mathematics and language are highly quoted by the Maltese pupils. The highest percentage is identified in the third round where a 68,7% of interviewees said that they have improved very much in mathematics in the school. Regarding language skills the highest numbers can be found in the fourth round (66,2%) due to the participation of community members.

The percentages on family participation in the school are higher in the category "helping children" than in "come to learn at school". Regarding the first one, around 40-47% of students affirmed that their parents or relatives come to the school to help them and their peers in the classrooms in the three first rounds, whereas in the fourth round this participation drops to 24%. At the same time, the

participation in coming to school to learn increased over the years and reached 37% in the fourth round.

Table 18. Types of family and community participation in the school. 1st to 4th round.

	TYPES OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	
	Come to learn at school	*Help children*
Year 1	31,4	47,3
Year 2	24,1	41,0
Year 3	31,9	47,6
Year 4	37,2	24,2

Source: Own creation based on school data.

4.4.3. Main findings from the qualitative analysis

There are relevant empirical evidences about strategies and actions carried out in the Maltese school that are contributing to improve the pupils' academic performance as well as to increase social cohesion.

4.4.3.1 Educative participation

a. Community participation in children's learning activities

a.1 One of the most relevant learning activities are the **writing skills sessions** offered by the **FES (Foundation for Educational Services).** This educational programme is promoted by a foundation in collaboration with the Department of Curriculum Management at the Education Division. The effects of this programme in the school have been observed during the longitudinal analysis. Some improvements identified are:

The **writing skills sessions** are **helping students to move around and ask for feedback to their classmates (peer learning) and educators**. These sessions are also aimed at promoting the writing skills:

> [The Session] *may be simplified or else if it is one whole session it is graded so that as much as possible all can participate...it's purpose is that the children enjoy writing...why should children that perhaps find it hard to write*

nurture a dislike to writing just because they cannot make it in time?

Thus, we make writing enjoyable for all the children you know so if you have two different abilities, why not cater for them as well. (Family Member)

Some session from the FES programme are organised following the principles of **collaboration between parents and children.** There are also **weekly after-school hour sessions**. In the parent-student writing session **parents and children get together in a writing activity** with the aim of helping parents understand what the writing process involves and improve the children's learning process.

We had sessions where the children, together with the parents during school hours, as well as in the after school club...write and share learning with their children (Family Member).

a.2. After School Hours Writing Club.

Following a demand by parents, the school requested to the FES to start an After-School Hours Writing Club for children and the parents who wish to join their children. The 'After-school Hours Club' was set up following a request by some parents. In this club, **after school hours parents and children stay at school together with a professional educator**.

...This year the school requested to set up a club...after school hours, for children and their parents, it is now not run (summer), there were 8 sessions...from the feedback that we got they were very enthusiastic...parents and children together: they could send the kids on their own, they could come together (Family Member).

There has been an improvement **in student's academic performance regarding writing skills:** in terms of spelling, but also in terms of ideas, structure as well as in length. The intervention programme was overall considered to be informative, educational and specifically a boost for the children's self-esteem.

Before I used to make many spelling mistakes. Now, if there is a word, she had prepared like a handout we used to write the word, the word that we do not know how to write, we write it, we try again, then we check exactly...we look it up on the dictionary...we see...more what it means...I was always

good in Maltese, and now I love it more...but now I love English too (Children).

b. The **involvement of parents in learning activities carried out in the school**.

Parents are participating in learning activities which are providing them with skills to help their children. At the same time, through this involvement in the school **they are helping educators to identify aspects which boys and girls need to work on**. From the data we see how they can identify weaknesses, interests, and capabilities as they progress from one year to the other within the educational system.

c. Family education

Family education is **adjusted to the needs of the participants**. This contributes to the increase of participation of family members within the school and helps **to increase the educational level of the family members** and with it their self-esteem.

> *Sometimes while these children are learning computers, most mothers would have no knowledge, and **we help them to familiarize themselves with computers. And they feel safer when their children use the computer**, since they would have some knowledge, and it helps them, in this sense they become computer literate* (Community Member).

Educative Participation	**a. Community participation in children's learning activities**	**a. FES (Foundation for Educational Services) writing skills sessions**
		b. After School Hours Writing Club.
		c. Involved in learning activities carried out in the school
	b. Family Education	**Adjusted to the needs of the participants (computers, language, etc.)**

4.4.3.2. Contributions of community involvement to education

In general terms, families respond positively on participation when it comes to their children's academic improvement. They are receptive to the benefits of programmes which involve them. Teachers are aware that when parents are called in to work with their children, the majority see this as a positive initiative and participate actively.

Furthermore, a **positive correlation between family participation and students' academic achievement** has been perceived. This is because parents transmit a positive attitude towards learning to the children as well as help building their self-esteem.

> *If he sees his mother at school he says, "All right my mother is taking interest in me", but, then, I think during the lesson, it is up to the child to do well in terms of grades. Yet seeing parents at school participating does have an effect* (Family Member).

Children also recognise this positive effect:

> *Res: The fact that your mum comes to the school helps you to do well at school, in terms of grades?*
> *Children: Yes it helps me a lot* (Children).

On the other hand, **when it was not possible for the parents to support their children directly, the community and even the school stepped in to provide that additional support**. Help was provided by the local council, the school council, a residential home for mentally impaired children, and the locality's literacy institute. They all provided their educational support.

> *Poor marks happen for a reason, unfortunately. So, as such, we work with the family, rather than to improve the child's grades...this is our aim...then you have a chain reaction...that if you try to anticipate/deal with problems in time that will reflect in the improved grades for the child (*Government member).

> *We managed to obtain the PUD (Programme for our Children's Home) service from APPOGG...the biggest problem for this mother was Friday's homework, because on Fridays the teacher assigns a considerable amount*

of homework, and when the mother sees all that homework she gets discouraged, hence the daughter gets discouraged even further. So we relieved the mother on Friday after school and the daughter comes here (Community member).

4.4.3.3. Overcoming social exclusion

Community involvement in the school has generated benefits which are **contributing to changing people's lives.** Thus, **members from the community are improving their housing conditions, health status, employment and social participation thanks to the actions carried out in the school and community.** At the same time, the connection between the community, government and school is opening new possibilities to families in all these fields.

> *In (this locality) originally a lot of people worked in the ship yard and they became unemployed…where are they working now? In (this locality) there is some agriculture…what type of agriculture is there? And even the kids who attend primary school here, for example, we were asked if we could…maybe do some local research with a sample of kids on problems with literacy* (Community Member).

4.5. Lithuania Case Study

4.5.1. Description of the school

For the Lithuanian case study the Lapiu basic school in the Kaunas region was selected. The school encompasses grades 1-10; however this study focuses on the primary level (grades 1-4) with pupils in the age of 6-11 years. The selection of the school was guided by three main selection criteria compliance to which is explained more in detail.

Evidence of school success

The success of this school's graduates is evident in several fields: More pupils enter higher levels of education, for example, in 2005 (spring) 9% of the pupils (12 pupils) continued studies in secondary schools (all of them came to basic school from the primary school); in 2006 (spring) 11% (14 pupils) continued the studies in secondary education. The increase from one year to the other is of 3%.

More pupils enter higher levels of education, in 2007, for instance, 21 pupils continued at the secondary schools, and in 2008, there were 20 pupils. However this trend experiments a decrease as in 2009, there were only 18 pupils and 14 in 2010 who continued their studies in higher education.

Concerning the number of pupils in the primary school, in 2009, 129 children attended it, and in 2010, 121 children were registered there. In 2008-2009 and in 2009-2010 the internal evaluation was completed. It identified as main strength of the school, the learning achievements of the pupils. According to a school document, in 2006-2007 there were 27 children with very good and good academic achievements at primary level. In 2007-2008 there were 39 children with such good results. In 2008-2009, there were already 46 children, and in 2009-2010, 57 children with very good and good academic results. In brief, during the 4 years the number of children with very good and good results has doubled. Moreover, this document shows that a lot of children became the laureates and prizemen of regional and national competitions.

Social characteristics

The selected Lapiu basic (primary) school is situated in the Kaunas region, in the Lapiu district, on the bank of Neris river, 11 km from the Kaunas city. Pupils come mostly from the Lapiu town and Vanageliu village. Many families live in former Soviet collective farms or renovated houses, that previously used to be small summer houses, in collective farms. Many of these families could not afford living in the city 10 – 7 years ago and moved to the collective farms and restructured summer houses for permanent living.

The dynamics of this district is characterised by contrasts. Even though the initial situation of low socio-economic status is evident, social inequalities can be observed in this school. In the last 4 to 5 years a tendency of fragmentation started and every year there are more children registered in the school whose parents have a high income. This is due to the strengthening of Lithuanian economy (unemployment rate – lower than 4 per cent, average increase of income during the last three years – up to 15 per cent in comparison with each previous year). Thus in the district where the school is situated, the share of families with high income increased each year (at least until the global recession from 2009 in Lithuania) and their children go to the same school.

On the other side, the severe economic situation of the families is also demonstrated by the fact that more than 30% of pupils receive free school meals. The state takes over these costs for children from families whose monthly income per family member is less than 307.5 Lt (89 EUR). In comparison in the nearby Kaunas city 8% of pupils are entitled to the free school meals and in Lithuania 11% (data from 2009).

In Lithuania, unemployment was as high as 19% 14 – 12 years ago; these were people with low educational levels and low professional qualification. Given this situation, the only possible source of income for these people was to go to villages. In the period of 2005-2008 the unemployment was less than 4%. Nevertheless, due to the economic crisis in 2009 the unemployment rate increased. In 2009 it was 13,6% in Lithuania and in 2010 it reached 18,1%. Unemployment in the region of Kaunas where the school is situated was of 9% in 2009 and in 2010 it increased to 11,5%. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate in the Kaunas region is slightly below the average in Lithuania.

Related to the ethnic composition, there are 7% of families, where either both parents, or one of the parents associate themselves with being of Polish origin (considered a national minority) and 0.15% (2 students) of Russian origin from the case study report 1st year. All together, there are 4 children with ethnic minority background (Russian 2, Polish 1, and Byelorussian 1), though both family members and children talk state language, and study in state language (during all the case study).

4.5.2. Main findings from the quantitative analysis
Main findings from the family survey

In Lithuania 209 families participated in the survey during the four years of the study. Almost everybody stated that they feel very much satisfied with the education provided by the school. Hence feelings (and predisposition towards) school was on the positive range.

Figure 17: How satisfied are you with education provided by the school?
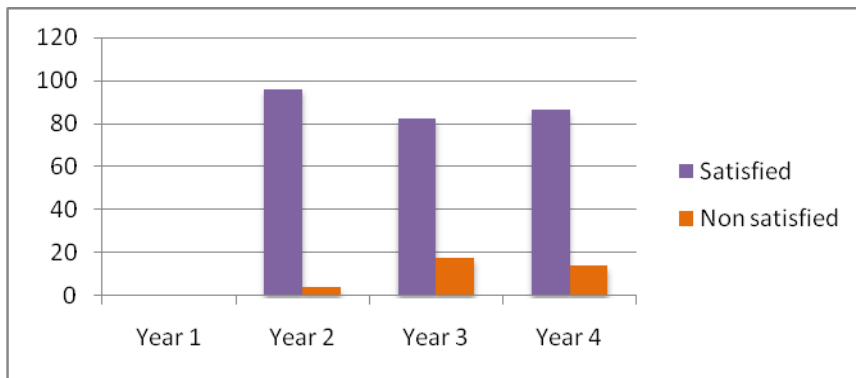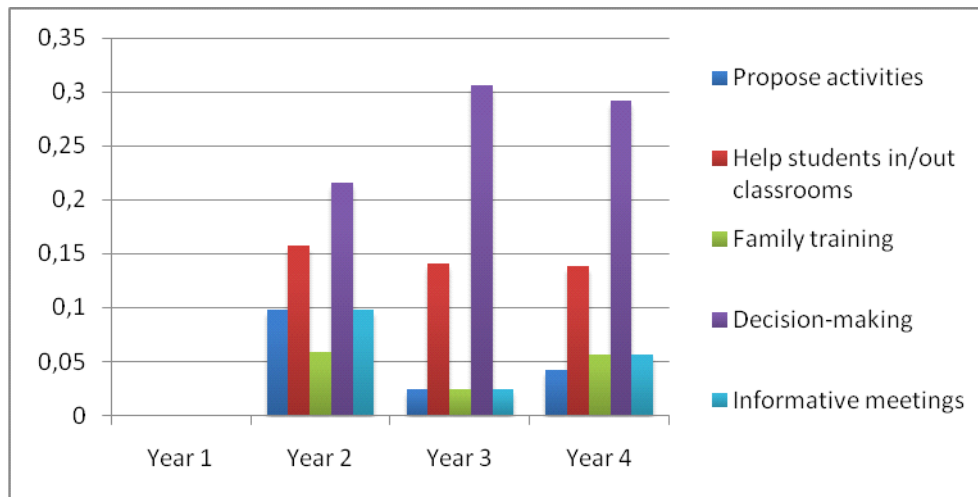
Source: Own creation based on school data.

Looking more in depth on the data collected, almost one out of every two persons thinks that their children perform better in mathematics after attending the school. This statement suggests that families have a high confidence in the educative system (or at least, in the school that their children attend). This is also the case regarding language skills. Families that participated in the survey affirm that they are positive regarding their confidence in the school as a place where their children improve their language skills. Over the four years of research, these trends were almost the same. There are no significant differences among the years.

In terms of types of participation, data suggest that year to year, families are experiencing an increase on the possibility to participate in more "instrumental" activities and / or more decision-spaces. Figure 3 summarizes the types of participation. We can observe that "decision-making" becomes (comparatively) the most important way to participate within the school, while "attending informative meetings" is almost the lowest category. "Family training" is also a non-regular type of participation. This is consistent with the profile of the families involved in the survey: over 90% of them apply for high levels of formal education (92,2% reach until high school / vocational training). Only 5,9% has elementary school as a background. Based on this fact, we assume that families feel ready enough to help their children at home (with the homework, etc.).

Figure 18: Types of participation

Source: Own creation based on school data.

The main findings from **Child survey** are presented here. Lithuanian data shows the positive consideration that pupils are giving to their improvement in mathematics and language. Both percentages are located between 69 – 79%, so there is a corroboration that students identify that school is helping very much to improve their skills on mathematics and language.

Table 19. Improvement on Mathematics and Language.

	IMPROVEMENT	
	Mathematics	*Language*
Year 1	—	—
Year 2	72,7	76,8
Year 3	79,0	69,7
Year 4	70,9	69,8

Source: Own creation

Regarding the participation of the family and community in school, the data collected from the child survey shows that participation has increased.

Table 20. Types of relatives- participation in the school

	TYPES OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	
	Come to learn at school	*Help children*
Year 1	—	—
Year 2	27,3	36,4
Year 3	13,4	32,8

	35,7	54,8
Year 4		

Source: Own creation

Community participation in the school is connected to an educational improvement, both for the pupils as well as for the adults. In this sense, an increase of participation in the school has been observed throughout the study. This is sensed by the very pupils.

The data shows how two successful actions in family and community participation are considerably increasing. In that sense, it is worthy to highlight that from the second round to the fourth the percentages on coming to learn at school rise from 27,3% to 35,7% and regarding helping children it increases from 36,4% to 54,8%.

4.5.3. Main findings from the qualitative analysis

4.5.3.1 Educative participation

a. Community participation in children's learning activities

a.1 Prolonged day group

One of the focuses of this case study has been the prolonged day group – an **additional programme for academic and social success at school**. The prolonged day group was established in 2006 and closed in 2009. As a consequence of the economic crises the municipality could no longer finance this activity. However, school made all efforts and in 2010 this group began function again. **It is a day time care unit, where pupils can stay after lessons until 4 pm**. In this care unit the children are provided with a variety of opportunities to meet their academic needs, to engage in creative activities, learn to use ICT for learning purposes, to play together, and to develop their social skills, like communication, cooperation and trust towards adults and other pupils. For example, the activity *Let's give the book a new life* was organised and during this week the pupils were encouraged to use a computer as a means for creating their own books and use it as a source of information in writing texts of different genres and contents. The activities in the prolonged day group are mainly organised by one teacher, but other school and community members often participate as well. One of the main activities is to do the <u>homework</u>. The prolonged day group **provides additional support to pupils who have any kind of difficulties** – to understand the material learnt in class, to work on their speech problems, and other problems.

They read, they talk to each other and they do homework… and they learn

*to play new games, not only those computerised monsters… of course they become better students, the very fact that **they come to regular classes with the homework done makes a difference,** they already can talk and share ideas, and not just feel uneasy because of unfulfilled assignment. […] this individualisation is very important for success at school, then **they have more courage to tell things in regular classes** (Teacher).*

This activity contributes to the academic results because pupils receive additional support for doing their homework and to have it done properly. Parents returning late from work often cannot provide the needed help.

What is good is that they do their homework, and then you know it is well done, and this is really good, we are all tired after work, it would have been really difficult to help in the evening, yes, this is a good thing (Family member).

The extended day group also **provides spaces for diverse interactions** in the school community - between pupils, teachers of different subjects, different specialists working in the school, e.g. speech therapist, librarian, and parents when they come to pick up the children. In these spaces all the people involved can express and freely exchange their impressions, concerns and ideas about helping individual pupils or introducing some changes in the way the school functions. It further reassures that the children spend their time with educational or fun activities and that they are in a safe environment where they are taken good care of.

*Now **a lot of parents work and they are afraid to leave the children alone**; children won't come home alone; the streets, coming home, staying alone, you don't know who can come when he's home alone; there is homework, and some people want that it is done with the help of a specialist* (Teacher).

As an example, here are the perceptions of a mother. She is very happy with the program, as here her son does his homework, stays with other children, **he is safe, and she also noticed that he has developed an increased intellectual curiosity.**

They play a lot of games here, and he can communicate with his friends, and

he became interested in more things now, for example, he started playing chess (Family member).

There is a variety, there is also a possibility to meet specific needs of children… how much time should we give for writing and writing again in the program (the day time extended group of additional support) [..] After all, the real pleasure is when children do not hurry home… [laughs], when mum and dad come to pick them up and they ask "One more minute…", something is not finished..; I think we are privileged that we are able to keep them longer at school (Family member).

In a number of instances it was emphasised that children who have learning difficulties, and those children who do not have a positive climate at home, find an **opportunity in this program to follow the official curriculum**, and therefore, to progress academically together with other children, overcoming their situation of potential drop out and social exclusion, at least in primary school. As a teacher pointed out:

For me the best thing is to hear a child asking the Mum whether he can stay a bit longer after school in the group, to play a bit more with friends, to go to the library, to the culture centre…; that is the greatest thing – they love being here (Teacher).

One strategy that allows these improvements is the interaction between the extended day group, the children's regular teachers, and also with other members of the school community. As one of the child points out:

Yes, sometimes our teacher comes, she asks me how my maths are.. she always asks me about maths.. and the librarian comes. I like books, she shows me interesting books, I like books and I like tales, and I like playing the Monopoly (Child).

Another strategy is supporting children with learning difficulties, and teachers also report that these children improve:

Children with learning difficulties? They receive adaptive tasks, and …I don't think they even are aware of the fact, as they are fully integrated into the

class, they do what all the other children are doing, playing together, socialising. And of course we try to keep democratic values, though sometimes it is not easy (Teacher).

a.2 Common activities with parents and the wider community / Cooperation with the different entities of the town

Parents express that during common excursions or school trips **the relationships among them become closer**; they communicate with other parents and improve their relationships with people from the neighbourhood:

When they are organising some festivals, trips to interesting places, to the theatre, our relationships become closer, […] it generates a good atmosphere, we laugh, communicating with each other. So, I think that non-formal meetings are very good for creating warm relationships (Family member).

The school draws on parents as educational resources by using their expertise in cultural and ethnic background. Parents are asked to contribute by sharing their knowledge of traditional food and customs but also their knowledge of their cultures; therewith they also help to better understand the diversity of cultural and ethnic groups in the community. This family participation in the classroom increases children's learning.

I am for fully including parents into teaching. I think parents could even have a class. For example, when I was expecting a child, one of the mothers of my pupils was a MD – obstetrician. So I invited her to tell the children, how children are born, how things work, and children were absolutely excited. Of course, there is always a question of ethics-what should be said and when. But in that case everything went so well together - me - pregnant, and that explanation, and the mother was very sensitive… so later, when I had another class, I invited her again…This seems to me a good example of how the involvement could be done (Teacher).

As a result of family involvement in learning spaces, motivation to learn increases among children because they feel that their parents take care, as a teacher says:

*From my own experience, **I noticed that these children, whose parents***

***are very active in participation, are more motivated to learn**. They know that their parents are taking care of them. They know that parents communicate with the teacher during the common meeting or individual consultation* (Teacher).

Moreover, **community involvement changes the image of the school** and helps to better understand the teachers' task. This is particularly relevant for a school that has become a ghetto school where the community participation plays a central role to transform inequalities.

Community participation in the school changes the image of school and the teachers. It brings relationships closer (Family member).

b. Family education
b.1. Activities for family and community education

One of the most common forms of family education is to offer sessions on issues of interest to the parents. For example, in this school specialists like psychologists are invited. The school also organises **meetings and activities to share the richness linked to cultural differences** and help children and parents to understand the different cultures within their community. Concerning training, school is very active in promoting lifelong learning for families and other community members reassuring, according to the families' answers, that the training programmes **respond to the families' needs** as much as possible. There is a continuous contact between parents and teachers which allows parents to express their needs and concerns. As a consequence, training addressed to family members is more directly related to their real needs.

One representative from another community organization provides an example, which shows that community participation in the school, improves the competencies of the participants also in an informal way:

There was one mother, who did not know how to work with computer. We helped her. Now she is trying to find a job, knows how to do this using IT technologies, internet search. We created her an e-mail account (Community member).

b.2 Integrated library

The school provides services beyond the education for children by offering services for the community such as the library at school, where not only school children but also other people from community are welcome. The resources provided are free to everyone, thus all community members have the opportunity to use the computers or to read books.

The integrated library fosters a **more efficient use of resources and opening spaces for interaction** both between school and community and between generations. This service extends the learning time after the school hours.

> *The prolonged day group comes to the library because we have a reading room, computer room… they can do what they are interested in: read books or play computer games; we try to organize something interesting for them. The library is shared: for the town and school together. This is an advantage for us because we have more books and computers; we work long hours, pupils can use the library from 8 in the morning till 7 in the evening* (Teacher).

This democratic participation has created a common sense of the community, and it also allows for sharing efforts among the different educational spaces and agents in the community:

> *Good results can be reached only by common efforts […] Here we live, communicate, cooperate. I don't imagine this place without common activity* (Family member).

Educative Participation	**A. Community participation in children's learning activities**	**a. Prolonged day group**	
		b. Cooperation with the different entities of the town	
		c. Community involvement in learning spaces	
	B. Family Education	**a. Activities for family and community education**	**- Meetings & activities to share cultural differences** **- School responds to families needs**

		b. Integrated library	

4.5.3.2. Elements that foster participation

Informal ongoing communication with parents

The strategy implemented in the school – **open door policy in the school –** is based on **informal ways** of giving parents opportunities to express their opinions and concerns. Parents feel empowered because they know that their comments are taken into account and whenever possible the school will take action to respond to the parents' demands.

> *Education of family takes place all the time, and not only during especially designed meetings. Class teachers meet parents all the time, and provide them with essential information, and also we, teachers ourselves learn all the time* (Teacher).

Involvement of the families in the school contributes to a better coexistence of pupils:

> *There are not a many people form vulnerable groups as I know, but for example there was one girl with disability, and other children were more honest and gentle with her. Maybe the fact, that this girl's parents participated in family education, communicated with other parents, and that could influence children's behaviour* (Teacher).

One teacher provides an exact example, which shows that **when children know, that a family member takes care of them, they put more efforts to learn and behave better** not only at school but also at home:

> *From my own experience, I noticed that these children, whose parents are very active in participation, are more motivated to learn. They know that their parents are taking care of them. They know that parents communicate with teacher during the common meeting or individual consultation"* (TGFN3)."*Yes, it is true, that children should feel that parents are interested in children's life at school. It is very important for most children* (Teacher).

Furthermore, the family and community involvement changes the life worlds.

Parents' participation builds a strong network that becomes a source of opportunities and provides sense of life. One mother says:

*I think that there are a lot of lonely families who do not have anyone to communicate with. And because of a child's wishes, these families could come to school and participate. I know such examples, when one mother was very passive in the beginning of the school year, but in the end of the year she offered her help. So school helped her to **become a more active person** (Family member).*

Regarding social cohesion, all informants express the idea that **community involvement in the school fosters social cohesion at school and beyond its walls.**

School helps to create closer relationship and friendship between all communities beyond the walls of the school. The wish to help somebody occurs (Family member).

Joint activities make close relationships. […] it fosters communication among different people and builds community sense (sociality) (Family member).

Elements that foster participation	**Informal ongoing communication with parents** **Open door policy**

4.5.3.3 Contributions of community involvement to education

Contrary to the results from the other countries, in Lithuania, family and community members expressed very different points of view on family and community participation. In this line, some people think that family participation in the decision making process or in the classroom, did not have any influence on children's learning and that the parents have the responsibility to work with their children at home. Among the children, some stated that the presence of the parents at school disturbed them and made them feel small and under pressure.

I don't need that parents would be at school, that they will look how I am doing, because, then I will forget everything and lose courage. (Child)

However this is not everyone's view. A teacher emphasized that when children know, that their relatives take care of them, they put more efforts to learn and behave better not only at school but at home too:

I think that when children know that their parents and teacher are talking and communicate with each other closely, the motivation of children increases. I had an example when the grandmother of one girl came to me and told me that her granddaughter at home is very different, not so good as at school. After a few days I met that grandmother and she told me that her granddaughter changed. But I didn't speak with this girl individually, maybe it was enough that the girl saw her relative at school (Teacher).

4.5.3.4 Overcoming social exclusion

Establishing contacts among community members has shown to be effective to promote their social inclusion, e.g., in the area of **employment**. Parents provide an example which shows that sometimes joint meetings and events at school help to find or get a better job:

I know one example, when one father helped to get a job for another woman, when she did not have a job. So I think, that these meetings, when you can communicate with other parents and teachers in a non-formal environment, having tea or coffee helps a lot (Family member).

Furthermore, effects on **participation beyond the school** have been identified. As seen in the case studies, school participation has led to greater social commitment that goes beyond the school and reaches the neighbourhood.

*There was one woman, who participated in school events and this **participation encouraged her to do a great job. She collected children from socially marginalised families and motherless children,** and started organizing festivals for them. Also they were participating in cleaning the environment. She gave the children small prizes and the children were very happy for that. So it was a very nice activity in our neighbourhood* (Teacher).

Parents also perceive that school is very active in addressing environmental problems. The school organises an *Environment cleaning day*, where children,

parents, and teachers are cleaning the school's territory. This event sets a very good example for the whole community, because when this action starts, everyone who lives in the neighbourhood begins cleaning their territory, too. It has helped to create a more pleasant environment.

> *School has an influence to neighbourhood. For example, when people, who are living in neighbourhood, saw that the children in our school are cleaning the environment, they also start to clean it* (Family member).

The integrated library has been particularly successful as regards overcoming social exclusion in the community. There is a library at school, providing computers and books to the whole community, not only to the school community. Thus the library becomes a space that it improves the access to the information and that reinforces community networks. One of the impacts of this initiative has been the improvement **in people's health status by increasing the available information** about this issue:

> *We gave the books about the health, healthy life style, and healthy food to one woman. Another day she came to us and was very happy and thankful for that. She helped herself to feel better* (Family member).

The library also provides **information on employment situations**. The library subscribes specific magazines and newspapers about job vacancies, where community members can find what they need. Everyone from the community can access this information, and they can also use the computer to look for employment.

5. Discussion

Successful educational actions in family and community participation

The successful schools analysed in the longitudinal study for four years provide evidence on the improvements obtained in promoting school success and social cohesion by implementing some types of family and community participation. Previous research pointed out that community **involvement in schools has an impact on students' achievement and general well-being at school** (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Edwards & Warin, 1999; Backer, Scher & Mackler,

1997). While many studies have identified the link between school and community (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009) and the roles which principals can take to promote such collaboration, this research analyses those links in depth.

Results from the case studies presented here provide a better understanding concerning **the ways in which family and community participation contribute to school success and social cohesion** and how that participation works in those successful schools in Europe. The impact of the types of family and community participation identified in this research has been found to have either direct **impact on academic and non-academic success**. A direct impact means that participation in itself in these successful actions resulted in better academic performance and better behaviour of the children. In other cases, the actions brought about changes in the person involved or situations, which then influenced the children's academic achievement or caused an improvement in non-academic aspects of the education process.

Based on a cross-case analysis across the six cases conducted, we have identified four types of family and community participation that have demonstrated to contribute to school success and social cohesion. These types are: participation in **family education**, participation in **decision-making processes**, participation in **curriculum and evaluation** and participation in **classrooms and learning spaces**. Annual case by case analysis carried out every year (2006-2010) has allowed for the identification of successful educational actions that each school implement to involve families and communities in school. Besides, in each school, each of these measures is implemented in a specific manner and adapted to the particular characteristics of the contexts and thus, there are also certain features that make these forms of participation unique in every school.

Additionally, these types of participation which are open to everyone (Oliver et al., 2009) also overcome the idea that schools are places for reproduction and perpetuation of social inequalities and promote the image of school becoming a space for social transformation and for overcoming these inequalities. The cases presented here are examples of this transformative capacity, and the actions analysed are components that can help increasing the transformative capacity of other schools across Europe.

5.1. Types of family and community participation and their contribution to academic results and coexistence

5.1.1. Educative participation: family and community participation in learning activities

a) Family and community education

It refers to the participation of parents and community members in learning activities offered at the school an addressed to them. In the following, the elements of participation that have contributed to the success of these types of participation as well as the improvements obtained are presented. In the first place, it is noteworthy that the activities of family and community education **correspond to the demands** of the families and the community members (literacy, numeracy, ICT, etc.). Hence, talks on topics of interest are organised taking into account the participants' preferences and learning spaces are provided in which children and families share the learning process (After School Hours Club – Malta, AMBER and SOFIE projects – UK, parent evening with interpreters in Finland, etc.).

The analysis demonstrates that the participation of family and community members in training activities **improves children's academic results**. This improvement can be observed not only in the **increase related to the acquisition of basic competence** according to the curriculum but also as in the positive effect on other aspects, such as a **reduction of absenteeism and an increase of the registration**, which is particularly relevant in the case of Spain and UK, as results from this research and which provide insight into the different mechanisms that promote this improvement.

Family education helps to bring educational practices in school closer to learning practices at home. Family and community education helps families to **transmit a positive attitude towards learning, which then reflects in learning more and better and having more motivation to learn.**

Family training also causes the **rise of families' expectations towards their children**. By participating in family education, parents start to understand the education system as well as realise that they themselves can learn and interact with other social referents, and thus become aware that also their children can succeed in this educational system which translates into holding greater expectations for their own children's learning possibilities. At the same time, the fact of children observing their parents engaging in similar educational activities as they do improves their relation with their parents.

According to previous literature, family training enables parents to help their children in their learning process. According to the evidence collected, **family training which is designed democratically allows improving the level of education of the parents**. As a result, family education allows that families **increase their skills for reading, writing and talking about school issues** with their children, and hence, it promotes the **increment of the academic interactions between children and their families**.

These findings are supported by previous works that stated that improving parents' reading skills allows greater opportunity for low income parents to match the school culture. This justifies the emphasis put on the need to ensure equity in the distribution of literacy programs.

In sum, the case studies analysed have shown that **this parent participation serves to empower them, and that they can help promote further education development in their children as well as greater social cohesion**.

b) Participation in classrooms and other children's learning spaces

Family and community participation in the classrooms involves a more effective re-organization of the existing human resources in the community, as these are included within the classrooms to support the pupils' learning. Taking advantage of the existing resources in this way produces a positive impact on the learning process, as shown by the scientific literature.

According to the case studies, there are different particular actions that make this possible. The participation of volunteers has been found to promote and help the development of the reading skills of primary level pupils. In this sense, we found cases in which members of the families and the community participate by helping children in instrumental learning, as is the case of the *Writing Program* carried out in Malta with the help of families. Another form in which volunteers promote students' learning is by **promoting interaction between students**, as occurs in the Interactive Groups in Spain. In this case, the inclusion of volunteers **increases the number and diversity of interactions** and this **accelerates the learning process**.

The scientific literature emphasises the impact that family and community

participation in children's learning activities has on pupils' achievement and general well being at school. Our case studies provide evidence that having more support within the classroom **increases the motivation, the focus on learning, and the pupils' self-esteem**. Extra support clearly helps improving the academic results and it additionally promotes solidarity between children. Also, the great majority of pupils assure that they like to have their relatives involved in learning activities with them, which is directly related to the motivation they put in the learning activities.

This type of family and community participation allows the introduction of diverse people from the communities and, as a result, **new cultural role models among the adults at school are included**, and this is especially relevant for the children from cultural minorities. In this way, children observe how people from different cultural groups work together, and this **improves multicultural coexistence**. We can identify this aspect in the *Friday Morning Coffee* in the UK, which is a moment when families come to school to be with their sons and daughters, or in *Stay and Play Peers Early Education Partnerships (PEEPS) sessions* also in the UK that aim at promoting the interaction between cultural groups, or the *Writing skills sessi*ons in Malta where support is given to the pupils in order to help them improve their writing and reading skills.

These actions are having an influence beyond the school context and are favouring the transformation of the family contexts because of the increase of academic interactions with the families. These transformations refer not only to the children but also to the family members. In the UK, this has had a particularly positive impact upon some of the Asian women, who felt that this form of participation, which they considered more informal helped to strengthen their self-confidence to participate in other ways in school.

Some strategies are making these improvements possible. Among them, having high expectations of the academic results of the pupils and of their behaviour as well; to create shared learning spaces between pupils and families; to rely on relatives' cultural intelligence; and to promote that teachers reinforce the participation of relatives.

Besides participation in classroom activities, families and community members **participate in extracurricular learning activities. These activities help**

ensuring that students who do not have the same learning level as their peers can reach it and then they can follow the ordinary school classes, and this is possible thanks to the participation of volunteers. This is how the participation of volunteers and relatives in the educational **centres is contributing to extend the learning time beyond the school timetable.** Consequently, pupils and especially those pupils with more learning difficulties and with special educational needs, have more learning. Examples of these activities are: the *Tutored Library* (in Spain), the Family Learning through the Supporting Our Families in Education (SOFIE) Project (in the UK), and the After School Hours Sessions (in Malta).

The community participation in these extracurricular activities allows that relatives and students start a **shared learning process**, and as a consequence that families and children increase their academic interactions together. These new learning contents in their interactions generate greater motivation in the pupils and transforms the participants' personal relationships and lives.

The following table collect the main results highlighted previously.

EDUCATIVE PARTICIPATION Family and community participation in learning activities	
a) Family and community education	
Education activities organized according to the demands of the families	- Increase acquisition of basic competence - Reduction of absenteeism - Bring educational practices in school closer to learning practices at home - Increment of families' expectations - Improving the educational level of parents
b) Participation in classrooms and other learning spaces of the children	
- More effective re-organization of the existing human resources in the community - Participation in extracurricular learning activities help ensuring that pupils who do not have the same learning level as their peers can reach it	- Community participation supports children in instrumental learning - Promotes interaction between pupils - Promotion of interactions accelerates the process of learning - Increases the motivation - Improves multicultural coexistence - The participation of volunteers & relatives in the educational centres contributes to extend the learning time beyond the school timetable

5.1.2. Decisive participation: family and community participation in

decision making processes

Throughout the different case studies we have observed actions promoting the representation and participation of the different groups in decision-making, putting into practice a form of democratic organization. This type of organization **includes the voice of everyone in the management of the school centre**, and is based on the idea of "*cultural intelligence*" (Oliver et al., 2011). In this sense, **contributions are appreciated regardless to the individuals status position but taking into account the arguments provided**. An example of this form of organisation is the families' assembly carried out in the CEIP Mare de Déu School (Spain). This assembly was set up to decide on the organisation of the classrooms and how to take advantage of the increasing immigration in the school. Families from different cultures and educative levels (even illiterates), as well as teachers and volunteers, agreed to implement the educative option that best works to respond to the educational demands of the pupils. As a result of this assembly it was decided that pupils with a minority background should remain within the classroom (they would not separate them into different classrooms according to their learning level), and they would incorporate all the resources and support within the regular classroom (support teachers for children with special needs, volunteers, and families).

Interactions among members of the community in these kinds of meetings promote mutual benefit from sharing diverse knowledge. As a consequence **prejudices can be overcome and coexistence improves** within the community. For this to occur, **the meetings are not just consultative or informative**, but they are mainly spaces for decision-making. By allowing the participation of everyone, transparency is promoted as well as a better adjustment to the reality of the environment. For example, in the Finnish case study, they organize the *Parents evenings with interpreters* in order to include the voices of the families that have more difficulties to participate. The objective of these meetings is to collect demands, concerns, and needs from the families' perspective. An exchange takes place between teachers and families, and **the suggestions given by the families are included within the discussion**. An egalitarian relationship between teachers and families is created. In order to promote their participation, **translation into several languages** is offered. Also, meetings are conducted in schedules compatible with the participants' working time.

The democratic organization of the school centre has impacts on the **relationship**

between teachers and the pupils. Borg and Mayo in Fischman and McLaren (2005) say that when schools establish an egalitarian dialogue with the families and the community, it reflects in the children's behaviour and on school success. In the case studies analysed we found that taking into account the contribution of all the agents in the school running allows for sharing ideas and considering contributions on an equal level, irrespective of their role and importance within the school and this allows finding better responses to the school concerns. In case of coexistence, from the moment in which the community participates in the process of **designing norms in common, there is a greater shared responsibility** regarding the school management and tackling the school needs. As a consequence **the active participation in the decision-making becomes a source of creation of meaning** of education for all the community.

This can be seen in the Spanish case, as the participation of the community, especially in terms of decision-making, **cut off the absenteeism and at the same time increased the children's motivation for learning**. In this case the education of children in schools, that is becoming more difficult and a greater challenge every day, is no longer the sole responsibility of schools but a shared responsibility depending on the families and communities to work together with the school for the benefit of children.

In the following table the main results regarding decisive participation are collected.

DECISIVE PARTICIPATION
Family and community participation in decision making processes

- Includes everybody's voices in the management of the centre	- Overcomes prejudices and improves coexistence
- The meetings are not just consultative or informative	- Impacts on the relationship between teachers and students
- In order to promote the participation of all community members translation into several languages is provided	- Becomes a source of creation of meaning of education for all the community
	- Reduces absenteeism
	- Increases children's motivation for learning

5.1.3. Evaluative participation: family and community participation in the school evaluation and in the curriculum

The evaluation of the progress made by pupils and the design of the curriculum has traditionally been responsibility of the professionals of education. However, the **possibilities for improving children's learning conditions appear when family and community members are included in the process of evaluation or the curriculum design**.

The literature in the field has already collected cases in which teaching is improved due to the participation of families and the community. This is the case of the Fratney School, located in a neighbourhood with a great diversity of people, where teachers and parents were the main actors in running the school. They developed a multicultural curriculum to face and prevent problems of discipline and disrespect for cultural differences among students. **As a result of this participatory process, neighbours and other members of the community were able to transform the school programme and curriculum, and even their neighbourhood**.

In the schools analysed in the Includ-ed project it was possible to identify that family and community involvement in the design of the curriculum has allowed to better respond, identify, and prevent some conflictive situations. This has been experienced in the Spanish case, where the participation has effectively avoided acting with disciplinary measures only and to end up labelling the pupils. Sharing the design of these measures has had an impact beyond the conflict prevention and resolution itself, as it has also influenced the perception that people who traditionally manage schools –the teachers– have of other educational agents such as relatives and the whole community.

The participation of the families in the evaluation and in planning the curriculum has been identified as important in preschool education to promote children's educational success in instrumental learning. In the *MONIKU program*, for pre-primary education (in Finland), the evaluation is a shared responsibility among parents and professionals. A shared evaluation makes it possible to **design and better adapt the organization of the learning** to the pupils' needs, and thus learning is improved and accelerated. Through this shared process, the community **helps teachers to identify aspects that children need to work more on**. The *Individual Early Childhood and Education Plan*, developed in Finland, also draws on the idea that collaboration between different educative agents allows to prevent learning difficulties at an early stage. Through this partnership, students feel

supported, they **increase their self-esteem and expectations about their possibilities to learn** and, in general terms, **learning difficulties are prevented**.

In the case of pupils with disabilities, they gain from the collaboration between teachers and families in the design of the curriculum because both have a direct and complementary knowledge of the pupils and the attentions they need. This allows **individualisations of the curriculum** to be developed in a **more inclusive** way, aiming for an acceleration of learning. **High expectations** towards these pupils are also promoted as a result of this collaboration, which positively impacts their **self-esteem.**

In order to allow and encourage family and community participation in the domain of curriculum and evaluation, **egalitarian and collaborative relationships** need to be established with the school staff, so that families and community can make real contributions that have an impact on the children's learning process.

Evaluative participation. Family and community participation in the school evaluation and in the curriculum	
- Families and members of the community are included in the process of evaluation or curriculum design - Evaluation is shared among parents and professionals - Community helps teachers to identify aspects that pupils need to work more on	- Increased possibilities for improving children's learning conditions appear - Makes possible to design and better adapt the organization of the learning to the pupils' needs, and thus learning is improved and accelerated - Increase self-esteem & expectations about possibilities to learn - Learning difficulties are prevented - Individualisations of the curriculum developed in a more inclusive way

5.2. Overcoming social exclusion

The participation and involvement of members of the families and the community in school entails transformation processes that go beyond the school itself and reach

other social spheres that affect the lives of the participants. These are transformations in the neighbourhood taking place with respect to housing, health, employment, social and political participation and the personal lives.

5.2.1. Housing

One of the challenges related to housing is that of accessing information (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). As schools are becoming spaces for multiple interactions, the opportunities to access different kind of information increases and, thus, reduces **the problem of information provision** related to housing. The analysis conducted for the different case studies show that providing access to housing **information and improving the community network increase the opportunities that people enjoy better housing conditions**. In these spaces, and through different interactions, information about economic issues, banking transactions, neighbourhood rules or specific rules in a building and housing opportunities are discussed and help to improve housing conditions. Moreover, the housing dimension is also related with architectural demands and urban reforms in order to organise a safe communitarian space.

In the contexts where the schools analysed are located, which are sometimes very deprived areas, schools become a source of safety, **providing safe spaces for residents**, which can be used to spend the leisure time. From these contexts initiatives have arisen, which have been organised by the school, to **create nice and safe contexts** within the neighbourhood surrounding the school.

In these ways the community participation and coordination has surpassed the school walls to improve the living conditions and physical environment of the neighbours.

5.2.2. Health

There is growing evidence which suggests that the distribution of income, in addition to the overall standard of living of the different members of society, is a key determinant of the population's health. Community involvement is a promising strategy to enhance a healthy development. The case studies conducted show that family and community participation furthers empowerment in the participants and contributes to overcome existing barriers to achieve a good health status of individuals, families and the overall community.

For migrant people, language learning promotes integration within a community and also helps understanding how health services work. Thus, promoting **the learning of local language improves health conditions**. Furthermore, it provides general skills, values, and dispositions that offer more opportunities (access to the information, solidarity network, and empowerment) for the people to adopt attitudes of taking care of the personal health and also of the family. Particularly, there is evidence that investments in education and literacy, especially addressed to women, can have an impact on preventing health problems. The learning of local language among the migrant population endows them with greater autonomy for the understanding of information which is given from health services. This has been stated in the case studies conducted in Spain and the UK cases, where migrant people pointed out, for example, that learning the local language makes them free to access the health services without being accompanied by a relative; they feel confident with themselves to go alone.

Additionally, and as a consequence of the increased access of health information (services and health conditions), in some cases the school and/or other community organisations have taken up the initiative to promote and support health services in schools.

Exclusion from social services such as those related to health can lead to social problems such as alcohol consumption, smoking (Laaksonen et al., 1999), and drug abuse. In this regard, health is one aspect of social life which is part of social cohesion within a community. Promoting healthy practices within the community can help developing social cohesion. In the schools analysed we found cases in which the actions undertaken have a direct impact on improving the health status of the children, their families, and the community and have contributed in this way to the transformation of the neighbourhood.

5.2.3. Employment

Family education activities increase the work opportunities of these families, as has been stated in the case studies. This succeeds, in the first place, **because the skills and competences of the family members improve and they enrich their educational background.** Secondly, and referring to the case of migrant community members, family education is an opportunity to **learn the language of the host country** and this, in turn, improves their participation in the

labour market. As a consequence, the investment of family education strengthens the connection between education and labour opportunities.

On the other hand, the **volunteering experience itself is sometimes valued in the labour market**, increasing people's professional experience, and helping find better work opportunities. Finally, participation in the school allows **building a large number of spaces for interaction that give access to a network of information**, thus overcoming the social isolation and discrimination in the search for a job. In this regard, the schools become places where networks are created and strengthened and where information about job vacancies becomes more accessible.

Additionally, in some cases, members of the community have indicated that their participation in the school has brought about new employment opportunities for them or their families, for example by employing temporary some of the pupils' relatives to work in the renovation of the school building. In this sense, both the school and the family members benefited from this employment opportunity that appeared as a result of the existing communication between the school and the families.

5.2.4. Social & political participation

Due to the realisation of different activities together with families and students and continuous transformation and improvement of the school that can be perceived by the participants, the **participation increases** and is extended to other areas and activities. Certain conditions have been identified that need to be promoted in order to improve this participation. These refer to the egalitarian dialogue, cultural intelligence, democratic organization of the school, and adjusting schedules, spaces and topics to the reality of the participants.

Participation in the school has a multiplier effect that goes beyond the school itself influencing the participation in other spaces for the **transformation of the neighbourhood.** The school community becomes more involved in improving their environment and getting engaged in claims for better facilities to improve their neighbourhood.

6. Conclusions: overall findings

In the previous sections, the forms of family and community participation that contribute to school success and overcoming social exclusion were presented. However, throughout the Project 6 lifespan, particular limitations have been faced that in many cases the longitudinal nature of the data collection allowed the researchers to be able to introduce changes and address them. Among many, four are the ones that need to be highlighted. The first limitation refers to the fact that the SEAs identified are not neither an exhaustive nor a comprehensive list. If more fieldwork had been conducted, beyond the six case studies, more SEAs and particular ways to display them in the practice would have been identified. This is something that could be done in future follow up works. Second, the experience of collecting data with children of a wide range of ages represented a challenge that was extensively discussed within the participating institutions. For the second round, adapted tools were designed in order to attend these diverse profiles found among the children. Even with adapted everyday life stories, sometimes to interview children and to obtain relevant data has been also a barrier that researchers have had to deal with. Third, another limitation was the different levels of family and community participation was found across the six schools analyzed. This fact generated that in particular rounds, the collected data was more rich and thorough in those schools where more participation was found, and it explains the sometimes found predominance of examples from some countries over others. Finally, the response rate of the questionnaire in particular rounds and cases should have been ideally higher, so the team also reacted and special efforts were made to guarantee a minimum response for each case. Along these strategies, consequent revisions of the questionnaire were also conducted in order to improve the relevance of the information gathered. As it is possible to appreciate, the most interesting and significant results were obtained through the qualitative fieldwork. Despite these limitations, the work conducted under this project has lead to relevant and significant findings that represent a step beyond to what we already know.

In what follows, a synthesis of the overall findings is presented, with the aim to achieve school success for all children and youth in Europe:

   a. **Family and community participation in schools will be promoted**.
      In order to achieve the greatest impact, this participation should go

beyond the traditional forms –informative and consultative participation- and **focus on the educative, evaluative and decisive types of participation**.

b. Educative participation in **children's learning activities** should be addressed at **instrumental learning** activities, either in activities in regular school hours or in after school activities. Allowing and promoting families and community participation in these spaces entails **taking advantage of the resources available in the community** and making them available to respond to the pupils' learning needs, increasing their learning opportunities.

c. The **number and diversity of interactions** children have around learning should be maximised in order to increase their learning opportunities. This should be taken into account when promoting adult participation in the learning activities. In the case of children from cultural minorities and migrant background, the inclusion of adults of their own culture should be promoted as they will act as cultural role models for the children, which is positive in terms of creating motivation for learning.

d. **Family education** should **respond to participants' educational needs** as expressed by them, either to improve their educational levels to increase their opportunities to be socially and labour inserted, or to be better endowed to help their children to learn, or to receive information on relevant topics for them. **Literacy and language courses** have been proved to be especially important for families with migrant origin and should be facilitated to them. Also, **courses specifically addressed to improve employability** can be offered in schools for those families who are severely affected by unemployment. Finally, **informative sessions** on topics such as health, when a lack of information is identified, can improve the families' situation in this area.

e. It is advisable to create **spaces for shared learning activities between children and their families** (like *After School Hours Writing Club* on Malta), either in school time or after school time, as it allow transforming the interactions around learning which can be later transferred to the homes.

f. Family and community members' participation in the decision making processes in school should be based on egalitarian dialogue and it should be ensured that **all the voices** are not only listened to but also **taken into account in the school management**, based on the validity of the arguments provided. This allows taking advantage of the cultural intelligence families and community members have in order to find the best options for the management of the school.

g. The **democratic management** in decision making can also be transferred to the creation of the **coexistence rules** and the procedures of conflict prevention and resolution. Sharing the process of creating the coexistence rules allows for creating an increased meaning and a greater commitment to following these rules in the overall community.

h. **Families need to be included in the evaluation of the students, and the whole community should be included in the evaluation of the school and the creation of the curriculum**. This dialogue in the pupils' evaluation makes it possible to share different information and knowledge that families and teachers have about the pupils. This is especially important for the case of individualised adaptations of the curriculum, in order to ensure that they are as inclusive as possible.

i. It is necessary to have **high expectations** not only of the pupils' capabilities for learning but of **all participants** –families and other community members– as regards their capacity to contribute to the school, and to the pupils' success.

j. **Family and community requirements** need to be taken into account in order to enable their participation in the school. Particularly, the **schedules** have to be agreed so that they do not overlap with other responsibilities –either familiar or job related–. Particular needs such as **translation and/or interpretation** facilities for families that do not know the communication language are necessary to be addressed. Sensitivity towards other situations such as providing childcare for mothers with babies also facilitates the participation of everyone.

k. On the whole, the **schools should become spaces for interaction and networking among the community**. Allowing the school to be such type of spaces makes it possible to provide **access to diverse**

types of information and resources –health information, knowing about job vacancies– which can help transforming familiar and personal situations.

7. References

Apple, M. W., & Beane, J. A. (2007). *Democratic schools. lessons in powerful education.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Arriaza, G. (2004). *Making Changes that Stay Made: School Reform and Community Involvement,* Project Muse, University of North Carolina Press.

Backer, L., Scher, D., & Mackler, K. (1997). Home and family influences on motivations for literacy. *Educational Psychologist, 32,* 69-82.

Bell, D., & Blanchflower, D. (2010). *Youth Unemployment in Europe and the United States,* Paper prepared for the Nordic Economic Policy Review conference on Labour Market Consequences of the Economic Crisis, Rosenbad Conference Center, Drottninggatan, Stockholm, 9th November 2010.

Chang, G. (2010). Monitoring the Effects of the Global Crisis on Education Provision, *Comparative Education,* 12(2), 14-20.

Collins, C., Kenway, J., & McLeod, J. (2000). *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School,* A project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

DeGabriele, A. (2004). *The role of parents in education: a case study.* M.Ed. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Malta.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (2001). *The Power of Community. Mobilizing for Family and Schooling,* Lanham, MD: Rowmand and Littlefield.

Edwards, A., & Warin, J. (1999). Parental involvement in raising the achievement of primary school pupils: Why bother? *Oxford Review of Education,* 25 (3), 325-341.

Elliott, J., Hufton, N., Hildreth, A., & Illushin, L. (1999). Factors Influencing Educational Motivation: A Study of Attitude, Expectations and Behaviour of Children in Sunderland, Kentucky and St. Petersburg, *British Educational Research Journal,* 25(1), 75-94.

Engel, L., Wilson, H., & Holford, J. (2008). *Local projects for social cohesion: UK* No. Project 6, 1:) Includ-ED Project.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76,* 701-712.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Epstein, J. L. (2004). Foreword. In P. A. Edwards, *Children's literacy development: Making it happen through school, family and community involvement* (pp. ix-xiv). Boston: Pearson Education.

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2006). Moving forward: Ideas for research on school, family and community partnerships. In C. F. Conrad and R. Serlin (Eds.) SAGE handbook for research in education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry (pp. 117-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Eurochild (2009). *Impact of economic and financial crisis on children & young people*, EUROCHILD, Retrieved November 25, 2010, from http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy/Financial_Crisis/Eurochild_report_on_crisis_impact_-_9October09.pdf.

Faires, J., Nichols, W. B., & Rickelmann, R. J. (2000). Effects of Parental Involvement in developing competent readers in First grade, *Reading Psychology*, 21, 195-215.

Fischman, G. E., & McLaren, P. (2005). Rethinking Critical Pedagogy and the Gramscian and Freirean Legacies: From Organic to Committed Intellectuals or Critical Pedagogy, Commitment, and Praxis, *Critical Methodologies*, 5 (4), 425-447.

Fischman, G. E., & Gandin, L. A. (2007). Escola Cidada and Critical Discourse of Educational Hope, in P. McLaren and J. Kincheleo, Critical Pedagogy: where are we now? New York: Petere Lang 209-223.

Fitzgerald, J. (2001). Can minimally trained college student volunteers help young-at-risk students to read better? *Reading Research Quarterly,* 36, 28-46.

Flecha, R. (2000). *Sharing words: Theory and practice of dialogic learning.* Lanham, M.D: Rowman & Littlefield.

Flecha, R., & Gómez, J. (2004). Participatory paradigms: Researching 'with' rather than 'on'. In B. Crossan, J. Gallacher & M. Osborne (Eds.), *Researching widening access: Issues and approaches in an international context* (pp. 129-140). London: Routledge.

Foot, H., Howe, C., Cheyne, B., Terras, M., & Rattray, C. (2002). Parental participation and partnership in pre-school provision, *International Journal of Early Years Education,* 10(1), 5-19.

Freire, P. (1993). The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Penguin: London.

Frome, P. M., & Eccles, J. S. (1998). Parents' influence on children's achievement-related perceptions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 74(2), 435-452.

García E. (2002). *Student Cultural Diversity. Understanding and meeting the Challenge.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Gatt, S., & Brown, M. (2007). *Preliminary report WP22 report outline. Case studies*

of local projects working towards social cohesion- Malta. University of Malta. Malta: Unpublished Report.

George, R., & Kaplan, D. (1998). A structural model of parent and teacher influences on science attitudes of eighth graders: Evidence from NELS: 88. *Science Education,* 82(1), 93-109.

Gómez, J., Latorre, A., Sánchez, M., & Flecha, R. (2006). *Metodología comunicativa crítica [critical communicative methodology]*. Barcelona: Hipatia.

Green, A. & Preston, J. (2001). Education and Social Cohesion: Recentering the Debate, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(3&4), 247-284.

Green, A., Preston, J., & Sabates, R. (2003). Education, Equality and Social Cohesion: a distributional approach, *Compare*, 33(4), 453-470.

Grolnick, W. S., Kurowski, C. O., & Gurland, S. T. (1999). Family processes and the development of children's self-regulation. *Educational Psychologist,* 34, 3-14.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action, Vol. I, Reasons and the Rationalisation of Society*, Boston: M.A. Beacon.

Harvard (2007) Harvard Family Research Project, *Family Involvement makes a difference*, 2(Winter).

Jordon, G. E., Snow, C. E., & Porche, M. V. (2000). Project EASR: The effect of a family literacy project on kindergarten students early literacy skills, *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35, 524-546.

Laaksonen, M., McAlister, A., Laatikainen, T., & Puska, P. (1999). *Do health behaviour and psychosocial risk factors explain the European East–West gap in health status.* Department of Epidemiology and Health Promotion, National Public Health Institute: Helsinki, Finland.

Marcus, R., & Gavrilovic, M., (2010). *The Impacts of the Economic Crisis on Youth Review of Evidence.* London: Overseas Development Institute

Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

No Child left Behind Act (2001) Public Law 107-110, 107th Congress, Retrieved March 14, 2011, from http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf.

OECD (2001). *Tomorrow: what schools for the future?* Paris: OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.

Oliver, E., Soler, M., & Flecha, R. (2009). Opening schools to all (women): efforts to overcome gender violence in Spain, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30 (2), 207–218.

Oliver, E., de Botton, L., Soler, M., & Merril B. (2011). Cultural intelligence to

overcome educational exclusion. *Qualitative Inquiry, 17 (3),* 267-276.

Paratore, J. R., H., A., Krol-Sinclair, B., & Duran P. (1999). Discourse between teachers and latino parents during conferences based on home literacy portfolios. *Education and Urban Society, 32*(Education and Urban Society), 58-82.

PGA (2006-2007). *Annual general programme for the next school year.memoria dialógica [dialogic report].* Spain. Albacete.: La Paz School.

Ponzetti, J. J., & Dullin, W. (1997). Parent education in Washington State even family literacy programs. *Early Childhood Education Journal,* 25(1), 23-29.

Putnam, R. (2004). *Raising the Quality of Learning for All, Note for discussion at the Meeeting of OECD Education Ministers* - Education, Diversity, Social Cohesion and Social Capital, 18-19 March, Dublin.

Rainey, D.V., & Murova, O. (2004). Factors influencing Educational Achievement, *Applied Economics,* 36(21), 2397-2404.

RedCross (2009). *The economic crisis and its humanitarian impact on Europe: Testimonies from the Red Cross Red Crescent*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Retrieved June 20, 2011, from http://www.roteskreuz.at/uploads/media/Krise_Armut_engl.pdf.

Rosenberg, H., Lopez, M., & Westmoreland H. (2009). *Family Engagement: A Shared Responsibility, Volume I, Issue 4, November 2009,* Harvard Family Research Project Commentary. Retrieved June 6, 2011, from <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators/fine-newsletter-archive/november-fine-newsletter-family-engagement-as-a-shared-responsibility ACCESSED on 5/6/11>.

Rosenfeld, J.M., & Tardieu, B. (2000) *Artisans of Democracy: How Ordinary People, Families in Extreme Poverty, and Social Institutions become allies to overcome social exclusion,* Maryland: University Press of America.

Sánchez, M. (1999). La Verneda Sant Martí. A school where people dare to dream. *Harvard Educational Review 69(3), 320-335.*

Sanders, M. and Sheldon, S. (2009). *Principal Matter: A guide to School, Family and Community Partnerships.* California: Corwin.

Schuler, D. (1996). *New community networked: Wired for Change.* New York: ACM Press.

Senechal, M., & LeFevre, J. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development,* 73 (2), 445-460.

Teddie, C., & Rreynolds, D. (2000). *The International handbook of School*

Effectiveness Research, London: Falmer Press.

Tett, L. (2001). Parents as problems or parents as people? Parental involvement programmes, schools and adult educators. *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 20(3), 188-198.

Verick, S. (2009). *Who Is Hit Hardest during a Financial Crisis? The Vulnerability of Young Men and Women to Unemployment in an Economic Downturn,* Bonn Germany: International Labour Organization (ILO) and IZA.

Watkins, K. (2007). *Classrooms as Learning Communities: What's in it for Schools*, Great Britain: Routledge.

Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: towards a sociocultural practice and theory of education,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Westmoreland, H., Heidi, M., Rosenberg, M., Lopez, E., & Weiss, H. (2009). *Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for how school Districts Promote Family Engagement,* Harvard Family Research Project, Issue Brief, July, 2009.

World Bank, 2010, *Averting a Human Crisis During the Global Downturn Policy Options from the World Bank's Human Development Network*, conference proceedings: World Bank publication.