

Student Participation in School Life: The “Student Voice” and Mitigated Democracy

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Abstract

Student participation in school life may be considered from the points of view of diverse theoretical frameworks that question different educational aspects related to such social involvement. Issues such as the construction of a democratic school, education for citizenship, active learning and student-centred education may be addressed when the object of one’s study focuses on student participation. In the present study, we sought to learn how student participation is promoted in a given set of schools, and what class representatives, students’ legal representatives, have to say about it. Data collection was performed by means of a self-description guide characterizing school practices with regard to students’ participation and a semi-structured questionnaire administered to the class representatives and vice representatives. The participation described in the guide we have analysed involves mostly one representative type and reveals what is statutorily established. According to the representatives who participated in the study, the role of a student representative is not yet sufficiently valued by the school and by educational actors, namely by their constituents. Hence, it may be concluded that there is mitigated democracy present in the current education system.

Key words: *democratic participation; school life; student voice.*

Introduction

Student participation in school life may be considered from the points of view of diverse theoretical frameworks that question different educational aspects related to

such participation. Issues such as the construction of a democratic school, education for citizenship, active learning and student-centred education may be addressed when the object of one’s study focuses on student participation. In the present study, student participation is analysed from the social-critical point of view focusing on a traditional tendency not to consider student “voice” in the decision-making process on issues that concern them, and to maintain a merely rhetorical or administrative account on the forms of active involvement on the part of children and young people.

The present study is part of the Observatory of Life in Schools (OBVIE) which belongs to the Centre for Educational Research and Intervention (CIIE) of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto. OBVIE carries out its research in partnership with a grouping comprised of 16 schools.¹

In this article we present the problem combined with the theoretical framework, the methodology and the most significant results of the study.

“Student Voice” and Democratic Participation

In recent decades, the conceptual approach to what has been referred to as the “student voice” has been central in the issues of schooling. Although the controversial nature of the terms used in the expression may be highlighted, it should be emphasized that the main purpose of “student voice” is to listen to children and young people as individuals who live the school and at school. In the period which has been referred to as the “school crisis” time, the need to listen to the individuals who have major roles in that process has been unavoidable. If we consider Wagner’s (1996) concept of crisis as designating a set of phenomena, situated in certain historical periods, which pose new problems and question the established procedures, thus giving rise to new social practices that transform institutional settings, we may emphasize that school is no longer able to solve its problems through the established practices. There is a need to create new education practices that consider the reality of the social-educational conditions in which problems emerge. In such a setting listening to the students’ “voices” and the social actors involved in the education process is simply unavoidable.

The idea of the central role of the student in decision-making in various fields of education (curricular, organizational and cultural) is not novel. From the ideology of the New Education Movement to Dewey’s conceptions of democratic education (see Pereira, 2010) early in the last century, and the concepts developed by Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner and Ausubel, among others, who emphasized the essential nature of meaningful learning, the education centred on student participation has been a recurring approach, not only in the Educational Sciences, but in educational discourses in general. Nevertheless, education practices tend to ignore this conceptual and

¹ In Portugal, school management is carried out by the schools grouping of the diverse school levels that share the same geographical area.

ideological heritage; in most cases this is only a legitimizing rhetoric of educational policies that have no impact on the social-educational reality. The rationale underlying the importance of considering student “voice” includes three tiers of reasons.

Reasons of ethical-political nature:

- children’s active participation rights in all matters that concern them, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989,
- the democratization of school, in the sense of considering school as a community of participants committed in the effort of education and teaching-learning, involving students in improving the conditions of their school experience, particularly within the classroom,
- the formation of responsible citizenship, through the co-responsibility in the construction of forms of life in school, which means turning students into agents of construction of the diverse dimensions of life in school, particularly in school organization and culture,
- giving “voice” to cultural forms and groups typically silenced at school, reinforcing focus on inequality and difference.

Reasons of epistemological nature:

- understanding the phenomenon of school experience from the perceptions, representations and perspectives of those who experience it personally,
- listening to students’ “voices” is a way of ascribing them centrality and legitimacy in the knowledge that is produced in the field of Educational Sciences.

Reasons of social-educational nature:

- the need to listen to the perceptions and opinions of children and young people about their school experience and take them into account in the decision-making process within different educational scopes, particularly when dealing with the phenomena of school dropout and failure,
- promotion of the sense of belonging and relevance in school education, engaging students fully and meaningfully in learning and socialization experiences in school, and in their planning,
- promotion of personal and social development and academic success as they allow students to develop a positive sense of self, develop the ability to explore the world and attain new competences, develop social skills and new relationships, reflect on their own learning, and have the opportunity to be active and creative (cf. Noyes, 2005).

In this array of factors legitimising the importance of giving “voice” to students, we are interested in focusing on the aspects that link that demand to the possibilities of building a democratic school, which educates students for participatory citizenship. Noyes (2005) draws attention to the issue of power developed by some studies on student “voice”. Arguing that “voices mean nothing if they are not heard”, the author

points out that the imbalance of power in the educational relationship cannot be ignored in the dynamics of research and participation involving students. Any educational momentum generated in school is explicitly or implicitly related to school learning. Thus, the relationship with knowledge (cf. Charlot, 1997) is an intrinsic part of all activities that aim at involving students in active participation in school, while the teacher assumes a mediating role in that relationship.

According to Charlot (1997), learning encompasses four processes. The first one is the process of objectification-denomination according to which learning involves acquiring knowledge perceived as an object which exists only by and in language. The second process of learning involves overlap of the self in the situation. This process is described as learning is “doing”, being able to solve situations (either material or symbolic) an individual is confronted with, but which simultaneously condition action. The third one is the process of distancing-regulation. It refers to becoming capable of regulating relationship with oneself and with others. Finally, the fourth process involves learning as an activity of observation and reflection that allows one to interpret life, understand others and know oneself. In that sense, learning is a relationship with oneself, with the others and with the world, and knowledge only takes form in a cognitive relationship that, in school, implies the educational relationship.

The educational relationship refers to a hierarchical relationship that traditionally empowers the teacher to determine the content and meaning of that relationship. For that reason, the dynamics that aim at giving “voice” to students at school and place their participation in focus, as they are mediated by the educational relationship, deserve critical watchfulness in relation to the powers that, in effect, they confer on students.

The “Student Voice”

As previously stated, the issue of students’ participation in school life can be addressed from different perspectives. Nevertheless, literature clearly reveals an increase of discourses and arguments advocating the need to improve and create the conditions for a deeper and more effective participation of students in the daily practice and management of their school. These arguments are closely related to the concept of “student voice”, and present a variety of considerations on the subject, but also focus on relevant issues such as democratic schooling, citizenship, and school improvement. It is important to consider what is nowadays understood as “student voice”, and what are the central features related to it, in order to better understand how it is achieved in schools, and what kind of initiatives are being developed in this respect.

Literature on the subject of student voice presents a common understanding and definition of the concept. In general, it involves listening to students, giving them visibility and involving them into the educational processes, from the definition of procedures and strategies to the definition of contents, as well as allowing them to

be heard and have an active role in the decision-making process in the classroom and in the school, together with the other actors in education (Noyes, 2005; Cook-Sather, 2006; Gunter & Thomson, 2007). Giving “voice” to students entails listening carefully to their perceptions of school reality, their ideas, the needs they invoke, the points they consider positive. Thus, a better perception of what meets the students’ needs and what is more suitable for them may be achieved. The benefits of giving students “voice” rest mainly on: i) the potential of promoting contact with general notions of democracy and citizenship as it should be done in schools, and considering their part in the students’ full development as individuals; ii) the ability of gathering crucial information on the functioning of school and promoting its improvement, and viewing students as “experts” who experience school life personally.

The objective of creating an environment where students can interact and learn the basic notions of democracy and citizenship is closely related to the idea of the *democratic school*, and can only be truly achieved if students actively participate in school life. That is to say that such an environment can only be created if students are allowed to participate, to contribute and to be heard on various issues underlying school management, school infrastructure, and the processes of teaching and learning. This is closely related to the concept of “student voice”, as it rests upon students freely expressing their opinions and perceptions, as well as giving suggestions and being consulted about different matters of school life. Literature seems to point to the potential of involving students in the decision-making processes, and states that these initiatives, regardless of how they are displayed, help students become conscious of their future roles as active societal individuals, and aid them in gaining the basic knowledge of citizenship and democracy (Bolmeier, 2006; Dobozy, 2007; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, & Jamieson, 2008; Edelstein, 2011). Based on this belief, the “Student Voice” project was implemented in the USA, aiming to increase the participation of students in their school’s everyday life. This was achieved by creating classroom and school environments where children could share opinions and participate in decision-making (Taylor & Robinson, 2009). This listening to students can be achieved in several ways, as presented below.

Several authors suggest that giving “voice” to students is a positive strategy, which promotes the success of the teaching-learning process. Mitra (2008, p.20), for example, states that “In order to promote students’ success, it makes sense to go directly to the source – the students. Not only can students share opinions about their experiences in the classroom, but they can also play significant roles at school”. Also, Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton (2011, p.55) state that “giving ‘voice’ to students for them to actively participate in the decision-making process about their learning environment has a great potential for an increased involvement and motivation to learn”.

One reason to give students “voice” is their privileged status of *experts*, that is, partakers with deep knowledge of the educational process, the school and the strengths and weaknesses that hinder or promote the success of the teaching and

learning processes. In fact, the way school education is developed is often decided by individuals and institutions external to the school itself, which do not experience it personally and do not suffer from its inefficiency, and which lack contextual knowledge of school dynamics, needs and realities (Pereira, 2009). However, out of all the seldom heard members of the educational community, students are those who can best express their views. Accordingly, and assuming that students, their perceptions, opinions, ideas and feelings about the school should be considered and heard by those responsible for education, several authors advocate this same perspective. Therefore, if a school aims at a significant improvement, and this improvement is mostly focused on teaching and learning, aiming for better academic results, the students' opinions, perspectives and experiences cannot be ignored, as they are the main characters in the learning process (Lodge, 2005; Flutter, 2006; Leren, 2006; DeFur, & Korinek, 2009). Nevertheless, searching for students' opinions on teaching and learning brings about some constraints. Teachers tend to feel uncertainty and tension when their students provide feedback on their work and can resist or ignore such feedback. If students' feedback focuses on negative features, teachers can experience frustration (Flutter, 2006; Ferguson et al., 2011). However, students' feedback can provide a solid base for change and improvement.

Gilljam, Esaiasson, & Lindholm (2010) give another perspective on why it is beneficial to pay attention to student “voice”. The authors speak of the degree to which students accept the measures that generate change. The changes that occur in school are mostly defined and implemented by the management structures. These are not always well accepted by students, who feel them as overpowering. The above authors argue that this feeling is not as strong when changes and actions are based on listening to students' opinions. Although there is no difference in the acceptance of the decisions of the management (they are almost always accepted), students' feelings towards those decisions are different. Students are more positive about changes when they participate in the decision-making process.

Therefore, listening to student “voice” allows educators, policy makers, managers and legislators to identify issues central for the success of the educational action. They deal with the following issues: what is the appropriate degree of the adequacy of curricula regarding the reality as experienced by students, their aspirations and intentions, what educational needs are felt by students, what are the pedagogical practices that promote students' academic success and motivation and what approaches have less positive effects, how school environment is perceived by students, what they value and what makes them unsatisfied, which ideas and suggestions students have for improvement of their school's teaching and learning environment, etc. (Thomson & Gunter, 2006). Also, giving students “voice” in school's daily life enables them to experience and gain the first impression and knowledge of democracy and citizenship, as they participate in the decision-making processes and actively collaborate in them. This provides an important moment for their development as members of the society they live in.

Nevertheless, there is another issue to be considered concerning “student voice” and students’ participation in school life. Even though there are several arguments in favour of students’ active participation in school development and management and even if schools provide or implement means for this participation, it does not mean that the process gets successfully achieved. That is, many strategies seem to be mere bureaucratic responses to an administrative demand to engage students into the decision-making processes in school, but do not aim for effective participation. Thus, students’ opinions and contributions are not considered, even though they are asked to give feedback. Alternatively, their feedback is only considered and their voices are only heard concerning superficial aspects of school life, such as equipment, infrastructure and other issues. This causes students to feel demotivated, deceived, and misled as that their opinions are not, in fact, being heard (Black, 2011).

Forms of Student Participation

Literature shows that there is a variety of ways to promote student participation in school life, ranging from their representation on boards, together with the other decision makers, to listening to the students directly.

One of the most common strategies for student participation is the “Student Council” or similar initiatives (Black, 2011) such as the “Classroom Council” presented by Edelstein (2011). In this initiative, some class time is dedicated to democratic “training” activities by means of which the teacher guides students in the process of decision-making concerning classroom issues. Students assume the role of decision makers in discussing, voting and electing, and are thus introduced to the basic notions of democracy and participation in their social environment.

Wyness (2009) notes four forms of participation and of giving children “voice”. The first modality is called ‘adult advocacy’ in which adults represent students, their interests and ideas in the decision-making structures and in the process of mediation between the two parties. The main positive point of such representation is the fact that adults have a greater degree of authority and credibility among their peers, which makes their representation more effective and allows greater influence on their part. However, as a negative point, adults can easily be biased towards what is transmitted to them by children, in order to meet their own intentions to the detriment of the students’ needs and suggestions, thus going against the objective of “adult advocacy”.

Fielding (2004) mentions the second model, “participatory democracy”, in which students’ involvement is more direct, close to their peers, working towards issues related to students. The third approach to students’ active participation presented by Wyness (2009) is based on the direct participation of students in the management and decision-making structures. In this model, individual students are chosen as representatives of the student community. Their task is to convey to the above mentioned structures the perceptions and opinions of their peers, always in a process mediated by adults. This approach is called “represented democracy” and it is provided

by the operational organization of the school. Finally, the author refers to the fourth model he identifies as “deliberative democracy”, which is based on the discussion of issues related to students in a broader debate, with groups of students representing other groups, in a dynamics closer to the civil society.

There are other processes by means of which students’ participation may take place, and the ones most referred to in the literature are “students as researchers” (Fielding, & Bragg, 2003) and “consulting pupils” (Flutter, & Rudduck, 2004; MacBeath, Rudduck, & Myers, 2003). In the first modality students act as their teachers’ partners in the process of building up the knowledge of the school, its functioning and its features (of institution and population) in order to become the agents of change together with their teachers. In the second modality, students are consulted in order to see what suits them and what brings them closer to the school.

This study is aimed at finding out how schools associated to OBVIE promote student participation and what students have to say about it. Specifically, this study has the following objectives:

1. to learn how student participation is statutorily provided for in the various governing and decision-making bodies existing in school;
2. to investigate the perspective of students on their participation in those bodies.

Methodological Procedures

Research Methods

The research design that seemed more adequate for accomplishing the above stated objectives was a descriptive one, considering its ability to unravel and show the participating schools’ practices regarding student participation in school life and clarify students’ perceptions regarding this issue. This design was also more appropriate for achieving the exploratory aims of the study as it focuses on the schools’ frameworks concerning student participation in the governing and decision-making bodies and intends to establish how student representatives view their involvement in the decision-making process. The empirical research generated quantitative data from these two settings – school and student representatives.

Sample

This research was carried out with 207 students, who were class representatives and vice representatives in ten OBVIE schools.

If schools involved (N = 10) present a random sample, regarding the entire set of schools in Portugal, the number of participating students refers to the vast majority of class representatives in such schools.

Data Collection Tools

In order to collect enough information on this subject, two data types were considered important: information on the participating schools’ frameworks and information regarding the students’ perceptions.

Therefore, data collection procedures consisted of a self-description guide, filled in by schools, on the bodies and school situations which provide student participation, and a semi-structured questionnaire administered to the participating class representatives and vice representatives.

The guide for the self-description of schools' practices included the following main points: [1] bodies where the students' opinions and involvement in the decision-making process is valued, [2] forms of students' individual participation in collective decisions and/or in the construction of collective decisions, [3] participation of students in class councils: frequency and modes. The guide was sent to the participating schools and filled in by their management in the period between February 15 and April 15, 2011.

The questionnaire administered to the representatives and vice representatives of the associated schools allowed us to gather background information, such as the participating students' grade, age, gender, parents' education, previous experience as a class representative, and manner of access to the function. It also enquired about their experience as a representative in the current school year. This was achieved by gathering information about the convocation to the meetings and their attendance, the inventory of the issues raised and the ways that representation was performed, as well as the tasks normally undertaken by the class representative. Finally, the questionnaire was used to collect an overall assessment of the performance of the function and the effect that it seems to have had in the respondents' personal development. The questionnaire was semi-structured, with multiple-choice questions and some open questions, and was made available online in the period between April 15 and May 30, 2011.

We gathered 10 guides, duly filled in, and 207 validated questionnaires.

Data Treatment

The data collected by means of the guide and the questionnaires were statistically analysed using the computer software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) – Version 18. The analyses were descriptive and included absolute and relative frequencies of the data collected by means of the guides, which referred to the schools' description of their student representatives' participation in the decision-making processes of their respective schools. We examined absolute and relative frequencies (for categorical variables) and measures of central tendency and dispersion (for continuous variables) of the data collected by means of the questionnaires administered to the class representatives and vice representatives. Where appropriate, chi-square tests (χ^2) were applied in comparing responses between groups of subjects according to the participants' gender, age, mothers' education, and siblings. We used the statistical significance of 5% as a reference point in the analysis.

Data organization resulted from the paper's focus on student participation in various governing and decision-making bodies in school. Thus, data were organized in the following way: participation of students in the Class Councils, participation of students in the Pedagogical Council, Assembly of Class Representatives and/or Vice Representatives, participation of students in other bodies. Data collected by means

of questionnaires which had been administered to the representatives were grouped into five categories/variables: each representative's personal information, experience as class representative, convocation and participation at the Class Council and Assembly of Representatives, tasks performed in the function of a class representative, and assessment of the experience as a representative.

Forms of Participation and Students' Perspectives: Some Results

Student Participation in the School's Various Governing and Decision-making Bodies ²

Student Participation in the Pedagogical Council

Out of 10 schools groupings, the three that provide secondary education require, in statutory terms, the presence of one student in the Pedagogical Council. However, in the academic year that our data refer to, in one of the schools the students never showed up, in another they seldom did, and in the third they were present at all meetings. The intervention of these students' representatives was not fostered by the remaining Council members. In two schools where students had already participated at the Pedagogical Council meetings, their opinion was usually taken into account.

Student Participation in the Class Councils

Two of the 10 schools groupings systematically promote participation of student representatives at the meetings of the Class Councils of the 5th and 6th grades. On average, and in the academic year in which our data were collected, there were two Class Council meetings at which student representatives were present. Overall, representatives were present at about half of the meetings held in the 5th grade and 45% of the meetings in the 6th grade, and vice representatives attended those meetings in 29% and 27% of the cases, respectively.

In the school years corresponding to the 3rd CEB³ (7th, 8th and 9th grades), all schools held Class Councils at which student representatives were present. On average, the number of meetings held in the 7th and 8th grades was 2.3; in the 9th grade that average was 2.4 per grade. The percentages of the representatives' attendance were 61%, 64% and 63% for the three grades. The vice representatives were present in 29%, 37% and 40% of the times, in each of those three grades.

The three schools, that also offer secondary education, carried out one to three meetings at which representatives and vice representatives were present. The presence

² In Portugal, the legal regulation on the schools groupings' management considers the existence of three bodies in which students should have representatives: the General Council, the Pedagogical Council and the Class Council. However, representation in the first two bodies is reserved only for schools that offer secondary education.

³ CEB stands for Cycle of Basic Education.

of the representatives in the three grades was 60%, 50% and 68%. Vice representatives were present at 57%, 43% and 45% of the meetings per respective grades.

With regard to the prior preparation of the remarks students make on the Class Councils, it was possible to organize the respondent schools into three groups: a set of three schools where this practice does not occur, another set of five schools that report that this procedure does not always occur, and a third set of two other schools where it was noted that prior preparation occurs in some classes but with differentiated occurrence levels. The comparison of these data with levels of education did not offer any explanation.

Regarding the effect of students' intervention on decisions made by the Class Councils, schools mostly stated that it was always or frequently effective.

Assembly of Class Representatives and/or Vice Representatives

In the observed academic year the Assembly of Class Representatives and/or Vice representatives existed and functioned in four of the respondent schools groupings in the 1st CEB, in seven of the 2nd and 3rd CEB and in two secondary schools.

In the 1st CEB the initiative for the convocation came from the teacher (1 case), from the coordinator of the cycle (2 cases), and from the social animator (in the last school in this group). In the 2nd and 3rd cycles the initiative came exclusively from the school management in three cases, from the respective coordinators of form teachers in another school, and from the joint initiative of the management and other actors, such as the form teachers or social animators in the remaining cases. In all cases, students' active participation was always encouraged by the promoters of the meetings, students prepared their speeches beforehand and the decisions which were made at those meetings had a binding character for those who promoted them.

Student Participation in Other Bodies

In four of the respondent schools groupings, students were also represented in the General Council, but students' attendance at the General Council meetings was only recorded in one of the schools.

Four respondent schools groupings have a legally constituted Students' Association with elected bodies. In three of those schools, the Association works regularly and participates in the activities of the Educational Project.

One of the respondent schools groupings fosters Class Assembly meetings on a regular basis (weekly or monthly) in 7 out of 33 classes. This initiative aims at promoting more socially adjusted behaviour in one of the classes, and at developing students' competences in accordance with the Civic Education project in the other classes.

Students' Perspective on Their Participation as Class Representatives

The 207 collected and validated questionnaires corresponded to an equal number of class representatives that represented classes with an average of 22.6 students. However, the analysis of the distribution of the number of students per grade revealed

a continuous decrease in the number of students per represented class. It also revealed that representatives from the 5th to the 9th grades constituted the majority of the sample.

Representatives' Personal Information

The participating representatives were 12.8 years old on average and were mostly female (63%). The analysis broken down by grade revealed this same trend in all the years considered and about which significant data was available, although the figure representing data on the 5th grade indicates greater gender differentiation.

The academic qualifications of the responding representatives' parents were mostly similar, although there was a slight difference between mothers and fathers found, as mothers had higher academic qualifications.

As for the siblings, participating students generally have a brother and are, in 58% of cases, the elder brother in the family. There are also 46 (22.3%) students who are only children.

Experience as Class Representative

The number of respondents who took up the position of the class representative for the first time in the year of the research was 82 (38.9%), but 36 (17.4%) had previously been vice representatives and the remainder had already held the position of a representative and a vice representative.

Regarding the manner of access to the position, most representatives (n=148, 70.8%) were elected in the first round, against 38 (18.2%), who required the second electoral round. However, we found 11 cases (5.3%) in which access to the position resulted from the recommendation of some teacher, presumably the form teacher.

Concerning the feelings experienced during the election, the majority (n=150, 71.8%) regarded the election as a kind of a mission fulfilment. About 18% of respondents (n=38) interpreted the fact that they were elected as the recognition of their personal skills, and 5.3% (n=11) experienced an unpleasant feeling considering the position as an imposed burden.

Convocation and Participation in the Class Council and Assembly of Representatives

Out of the responding representatives, 54 (27%) had not been invited to any meeting from the beginning of the academic year (September 2011) until the time of the interview (end of April 2011). A similar percentage had been invited to a meeting and 41% had been invited to two meetings. Representatives who received convocations to a greater number of meetings were a minority (5.5%). The average number of convocations was 1.09 meetings per 1.05 presences. With regard to the representatives' assemblies, the average number of convocations was 1.87 per 1.59 presences.

As for the representatives' attendance at meetings, it was less frequent compared to the number of convocations. That difference was greater in the 8th, 11th and 12th grades. Only in the 10th grade was this presence regular.

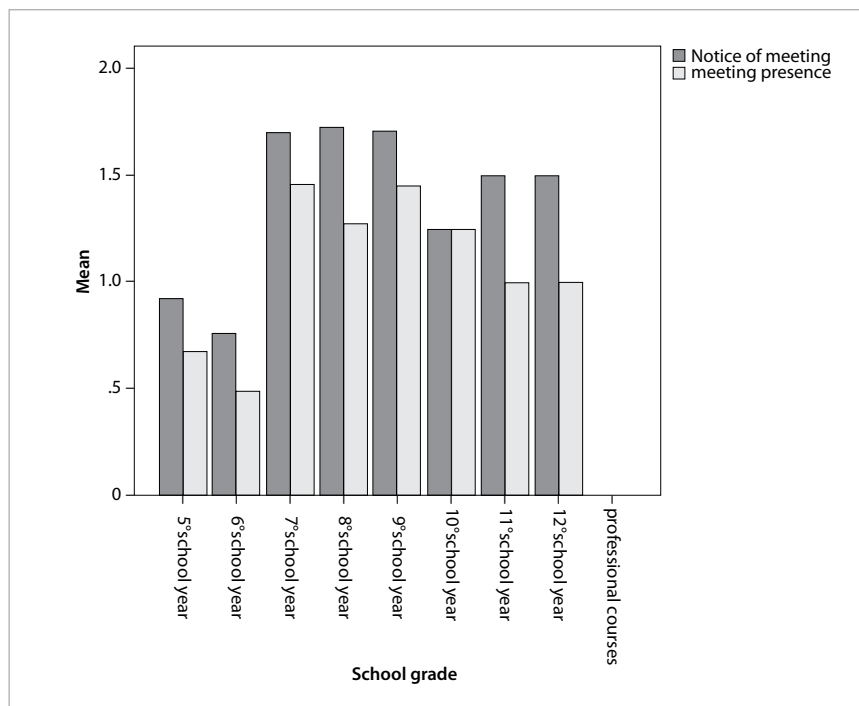


Figure 1. Comparison between the number of convocations and frequency of attendance at Class Councils, by grade.

Legend:

(Black Bold)- Class meetings' convocation (number)

(Black crossed) – Class meetings' attendance (number)

With regard to whether the representative had gathered information from those represented in order to better convey their opinions at meetings, about two thirds of respondents reported having done so ($n=112$). When we crossed this data with the level of education, we found that, in the 5th and 6th grades, the distribution of responses was very different than in the remaining grades, which allowed us to observe that the respondents who failed to gather information from their colleagues belonged to lower academic levels.

When asked whether they spoke out on behalf of their classes (complain, request, etc.) at the meetings, more than half of the respondents reported having done so (57%). In this matter, there was no difference between the participants according to the gender or groups formed on the basis of the academic grade attended, although there was some difference between the situations experienced by the representatives of the 2nd and 3rd CEB ($\chi^2=7.9$).

Content analysis of the issues that the representatives presented at the meetings on behalf of their classes was performed on a set of 79 references obtained. They were grouped into six sets and they referred to students' behaviour (32 references), and to

the quality of the facilities, namely sanitary and changing room facilities and to the canteen (18 references). A less specific group which was categorized as complaints, requests, proposals and suggestions totalled 15 references. We also found 6 specific suggestions for extracurricular activities. There were five references that dealt with the academic performance of the representatives' respective classes. Finally, we also found 3 criticisms of teachers' behaviour.

A set of 94 respondents (54.9%) gave personal opinions on some subject at meetings, and those contributions differed according to the cycle that the students attended. Again, younger students were the ones who expressed less opinions ($\chi^2 = 7.96$). The role of the teachers in student participation at meetings seemed to be important as well, as 122 students (71%) felt that these issues had been specifically pointed out by their form teachers or other teachers.

Less than half the representatives ($n=76$, 45.5%) were asked to deliver some kind of a message to their peers, or report to their respective classes on some subject which had been tackled at the meeting and discuss it with their peers. Curiously, girls more often than boys, were asked to perform some of these duties and that difference was validated by the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 4.57$).

Out of 86 coded references in the set of responses concerning the messages that representatives were required to deliver to their classes, some were found which need to be reported. The first group of messages referred to students' behaviour – 41 references; to the quality of facilities, namely those referring to the maintenance of the quality of the toilets and the canteen; those that refer to the basic rules of operation of the school and problems brought about by their inappropriate use. However, the second largest number of messages concerned the inadequate performance of students as learners, either in class or individually. We also found two specific references to problems with teachers, and other two, more general in nature, that seem to point to the students' co-accountability in the joint problems of the school. There was also a set of 4 references stating that representatives were invited to inform the class on the conclusions of the meeting. Finally, one representative claimed no recollection of what he had been asked to convey to the class.

Tasks Performed by Class Representatives

Conveying information was the most frequently reported task performed by the representatives. Running small errands for teachers and representing their class in formal occasions were the other two most frequently reported tasks. Assisting in the organization of activities in which the class participated and managing conflicts among students in the class were also reported as two regular tasks. Representatives were less frequently required to manage conflicts between students and teachers. These trends are identical even when the independent variables are considered, i.e., gender, grade or school cycle.

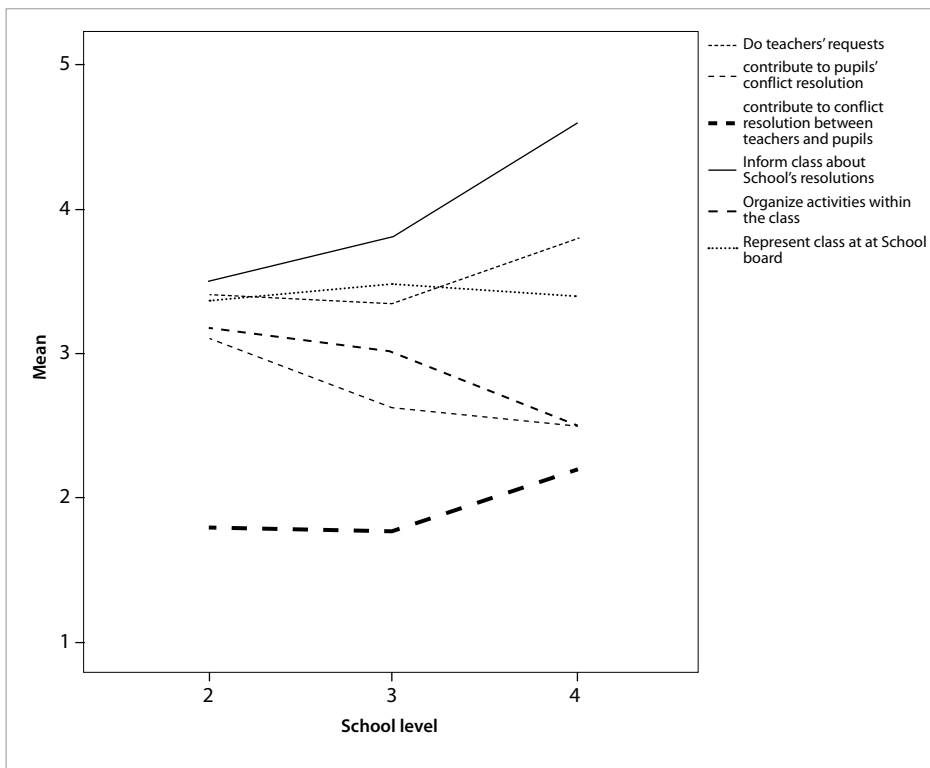


Figure 2. Degree of frequency of tasks that were performed by the representatives according to the school cycle

Legend:

1 (.....). Runs small errands for teachers, such as fetching anything lacking in class

2 (- - - - -). Resolves minor conflicts between students in class

3 (— — —). Resolves minor conflicts between students and a teacher

4 (———). Conveys messages of the class director or the School Directorate to students in the class

5 (— — —). Organizes or helps organize activities in which the class participates, such as games, school projects, etc.

6 (.....). Represents the class in formal occasions

Consideration of Experience as a Representative

Enjoyed the experience, but prefers not to be re-elected. Most representatives reported that their experience in carrying out the representative function was positive, although there was a group of 81 students (42.6%) who preferred not to be representatives again.

Boys, more than girls, express the wish not to repeat the experience and the difference is significant. However, when we repeated the question, we found that only 45 students did not wish to be re-elected as representatives. Considering that there is not a unique possibility of response, we cannot assess the number of subjects who disliked the experience.

It seems that other students in class do not realize what a representative is for. The majority of respondents partly agreed or disagreed with this statement assessing their

peers' knowledge about the function of their representative. The 3rd cycle students valued this position most.

It seems that class masters view representatives as employees. Despite the fact that representatives reported believing that their peers did not understand their function, the hypothesis that the representative was perceived as the 'service employee' was not confirmed, since 146 students (75.6%) disagreed with the statement (see Figure 2).

The representative had the opportunity to participate in the decisions made by the school. Most respondents felt that they had not taken part in the decisions made by the school ($n=112$, 59.2%). However, we found differences in the distribution of responses that may be attributed to the cycle the respondents attended, insofar as the 3rd cycle and secondary level students were those who contributed most to this majority ($\chi^2 = 6.53$).

The representative felt more respected by other students, teachers, staff and guardians. It did not seem that other educational actors held the representatives in higher esteem than their peers. In fact, the majority of the respondents thought that they were not more respected because they performed that role, neither by the students, teachers, staff or guardians who were part of the Class Council ($n=123$, 64.3%).

However, the trend was not the same in all of the cycles. When the relationship between the representatives and their peers was analysed by means of a chi-square test, it was found that the relative values between assertion and denial of respect that the 2nd cycle students started ascribing their representatives were closer when compared with the remaining cycles ($\chi^2 = 6.91$ for 2 *df*).

The representative was forced to think, not as an individual, but bearing in mind class interests. A very large majority of all respondents found that they had been forced to think from a collective point of view, in accordance with the interests of their class and not their particular interests (74 *yes*, 86 *sometimes*, 32 *no*). They felt that this was the case often or at least sometimes. Most of the independent variables do not seem to have had differentiating influences in this modification. Neither gender, grade, cycle, or the state of having brothers or being an only child accounted for the differences in the responses. Only the state of being the elder brother seemed to help explain these results. The representatives who were elder brothers in their families considered change to be more relevant ($\chi^2 = 5.56$). With regard to the influence of parents' academic qualifications, we have noticed that the mothers' education helped explain the differences, but the fathers' education did not seem to serve as an explanatory variable. Students whose mothers held academic qualifications, and who attended 3rd CEB or were older, were more assertive in the realization of the importance of the position in the development of this competence ($\chi^2 = 5.52$). Circumstantial variables, such as access to the position, also served to explain the results. Thus, we may conclude that the performance of the position was what changed that attitude, and this was more often acknowledged by the delegates who were also elder brothers in their families and the children of more educated mothers.

The representative became aware of the issues and topics important for school life which he/she had not noticed before. Most students found that the performance of the function helped them become aware of the issues important for school life that they had not previously appreciated (113 yes, 51 sometimes, and 27 no). Additionally, it was not possible to find an explanation for the change of this perception other than the performance of the position.

The representative improved his/her ability to address different audience types. The ability to speak in public, and to do so in front of the audiences other than the usual ones, was considered to result from the performance of the class representative function, according to the majority of respondents (n=141, 74%). Similar to the previous personal changes attributed to the function, the effect was not supported by the other independent variables considered. However, there was a positive relationship found between the students who stated that they had improved their skills and those who believed that they had felt more respected on the part of their teachers due to the performance of the function.

The representative changed his/her way of treating his/her classmates. Regarding the relational structure that representatives had begun to establish with their peers, there were no changes in the representatives' relationship with their peers which they attributed to their position. However, 91 representatives (47.3%) felt the opposite.

We found relationships between those who changed the way they treated their classmates and those who stated that they also felt more respect on the part of the teachers, staff and guardians ($\chi^2=13.2, 18.18, 12.24$, respectively for 1 df).

Student Participation: Predictions, Perceptions and Effects

We will now answer the three questions that were used to operationalize the first dimension, aimed at finding out how students' participation in their schools' various governing and decision-making bodies was statutorily provided for.

The Class Council is the body where students' opinion and deliberative capacity is most valued. From what we could ascertain from the collected data, the rate of attendance of student representatives (representative and vice representative) on the class councils is significant, although it is more relevant in the 3rd CEB and secondary education than in the 2nd CEB. Emphasis is also put on the fact that there is a positive correlation between the attendance of meetings and the importance ascribed to students' opinions in the decision-making processes in those councils. Indeed, it seems that students have a perception about the relevance of participating or not in those councils according to their contribution to the decision-making processes that affect them and their peers. Considering the perspectives of Taylor and Robinson (2009) and of Gunter and Thomson (2007) on the importance of giving 'voice' to students to promote contact with notions of democracy and citizenship, we can state that these students have developed a perception of citizenship and

democratic participation according to their real capacity of influencing decisions in their schools. However, the absence of that capacity is more clearly engraved in the students' representations among the youngest students. This fact converges with Black's (2011) opinion that many strategies fall under a mere bureaucratic response to the demand on engaging students in the decision-making process, but do not aim to achieve effective participation.

Considering Wyness' (2009) and Fielding's (2004) approaches, we may observe that we are mainly facing a particular form of participation called "represented democracy", although it is also possible to identify forms of "participatory democracy" as the existence of student assemblies and of 'deliberative democracy', and with regard to class assemblies, despite the residual character of the latter. In Edelstein (2011) this form of participation is referred to as "Classroom council".

With regard to the second dimension, that is, the idea that class representatives have about their roles as active participants in school life, we can list the following relevant results.

Respondents are mostly female (63%); the qualifications of the respondents' parents do not differ much and most of the participating students have a brother. This characterization allows us to infer that family is an important variable in the profile of the students chosen as representatives of their peers. As stated by Mitra (2008), the students' experience, particularly that which refers to family relationships, conditions their participation in school and their possibilities to learn, so the construction of a democratic school cannot disregard it. Similarly, Lodge (2005) and Leren (2006) state that students' opinions, perspectives and experiences are the main variables involved in improving teaching, learning and school in general.

More than half of the students stated that they had presented issues in the meetings on behalf of their classes. Additionally, a qualified majority stated that they had asked their colleagues their opinions on some topic in order to get a clearer idea of the general opinion of the class and so prepare for the corresponding meeting. However, students attending lower educational levels (5th and 6th grades) did not mention gathering much information from their peers in order to prepare for the meetings. The data allow us to suspect that the 'represented democracy' lacks some type of training on the part of the students, who have developed it mainly from their own experience of representation in these bodies. If we consider the educational relevance of training democratic participation skills in schools, perhaps that training should be made the object of the educational processes organised by schools in a more conscious way.

Concerning issues that are important to the class, and which representatives took to the meetings, we may conclude that they refer to student behaviour, to the quality of facilities, complaints, requests, proposals and suggestions, to specific suggestions for extracurricular activities, to the academic performance of the class and judgment of teachers' actions. Flutter (2006) and Ferguson et al. (2011) state that such judgment can build up factors of tension and uncertainty in teachers, leading them to resist or

ignore such feedback. Thus, it is not strange that our results indicate a contradiction between what teachers and students refer to as relevant topics to be discussed at those meetings.

When we compared the issues that students wished to see discussed in meetings with those issues which were actually discussed and which representatives later conveyed to their colleagues, we found a very substantial difference with regard to the issue of academic performance of the class and students which was absent in the previous set. The remaining issues thematically overlap, but change direction regarding students' co-responsibility. They either referred to their behaviour or maintaining the quality of the toilets and the canteen, to the basic rules of school operation and the problems that the inappropriate usage of school facilities entails. Data on the experience of the representatives' task performance show us that conveying information is the most frequently mentioned aspect. It is interesting to note that girls are those to whom councils most often delegate "messages" for their peers.

These data highlight a disagreement over the notion that teachers and students have about what is important to discuss in meetings. Indeed, power relations in school have traditionally been asymmetrical, and teachers' perspectives prevailed in the decision-making process. As stated by Noyes (2005) and Cook-Sather (2006), to give students "voice" involves listening to them in order to consider their ideas, perceptions and representations in the organization of school and in educational decisions. What may be concluded on the basis of data analysis is that, although students are represented on pedagogical and class councils, this representation is manipulated in favour of achieving discipline and positive attitudes towards learning on the part of the students. These ideas are mediated by their own colleagues who represent them on the councils through "messages" and information that tend to normalise and induce learning behaviour which teachers regard as better.

This idea is reinforced by the fact that most students (mostly from the 3rd CEB and secondary education) believe that they have not taken part in school decisions. We may infer that older students think that their participation in their schools' bodies of democratic governance has little impact in that governance. Bearing in mind that these students actively participate at those meetings, it is not strange that a very significant percentage of them do not wish to repeat their experience as a representative. It seems that students perceive their participation in these bodies as not resulting in an increase of power in the decision-making process on school issues that affect them. If we take into account that one reason to give students "voice" refers to their privileged status of experts (Pereira, 2009; Mitra, 2008), the results of this study seem to indicate that the forms of participation nurtured in schools do not help build that status.

With regard to the influence that acting as student representative seems to have had in the development of the representatives' personal skills, it may be concluded that, from a comparative standpoint, the ability of public speaking and organising reasoning for doing so was considered to have been developed by a number of

respondents, compared with the decentring, both from their points of view and extending insight over the lines that weave the life of their respective schools. As to the general trend of the effects that performing the position had on students’ personal development, the most striking aspect regarded the importance of the ability to think, not from their personal point of view, but from the perspective of the interests of their class, to value topics that, before being representatives, they had not noticed, and to improve their abilities to address different audiences. However, most students felt that performing their duties had not changed their relationship with their colleagues. We should highlight that these forms of participation have a significant impact on the development of competences that do not limit themselves to the practice of citizenship, but influence the psychosocial development in general.

Taking up the ideas of Charlot (1997) on the relationship of the students with knowledge, we may identify more experienced relationships in the studied participation processes. In fact, the objectification-denomination and the distancing-regulation, that is, the ability to acquire knowledge perceived as an object that exists only by and in language, and to regulate relations with themselves and with others, were processes that support this conclusion.

Although the results of this study inform us about a certain mitigated democracy that students’ participation in the management bodies seems to promote, the truth is that the positive effects of that participation in the development of skills and attitudes on the part of the students are also evident. Those effects converge with the perspectives of DeFur and Korinek (2009) on the benefits of engaging students and respecting their “voices”, and of Thomson and Gunter (2006) on how important it is that teachers and other educational decision makers listen to students in order to promote the success of the educational action.

Conclusion

We have presented a study that sought to investigate how schools associated to OBVIE promote students’ participation and what students have to say about it; that is, we wished to find out how students’ participation in various governing and decision-making bodies in school is statutorily provided for. Moreover, we sought to identify the perspective of students on their participation in those bodies.

The study is contextualised into a problem that considers the “crisis” of the school and the importance of listening to students as specialists in school life and, thus, as informants about issues that affect them and the factors that relate to them. Democratic participation in school and its conceptual relationships with the theoretical approach on the “student voice” and the perspectives of the relationship with knowledge form the conceptual theoretical framework of the study.

The results allow us to conclude that the participation described in the guides we have analysed is mostly of a representative type, since class assemblies only occur in schools groupings and students’ general assemblies were not mentioned. Such

representation falls within the scope of the bodies that are statutorily established, that is, which derive from the political context and respond directly to the first trend identified in the introduction.

The major dichotomy of responses about the impetus that teachers should give students to participate in various bodies supports the conclusion that this issue seems to be differently understood and implemented by schools. Should schools encourage students' participation and train them in the matter or not? What would be the purpose of such training?

From the representatives' points of view their function does not seem to be experienced as sufficiently valued in school, notwithstanding the fact that its agents consider that activities of representation, mediation and organization are developed, which have positive effects on their personal development. From the respondents' point of view, the role is not yet sufficiently valued by the school and by educational actors, namely by those they represent.

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Sudjelovanje učenika u životu škole: „učenički glas” i ublažena demokracija

Sažetak

Sudjelovanje učenika u životu škole može se razmotriti sa stajališta različitih teorijskih okvira kojima se propituju razni obrazovni aspekti, a koji se odnose na takvo društveno djelovanje. Kad je predmet izučavanja sudjelovanje učenika u životu škole, mogu se proučavati problemi kao što su izgradnja demokratske škole, građanski odgoj, aktivno učenje, odgoj i obrazovanje usmjereni na učenika. Cilj ovoga rada bio je istražiti kako se učeničko sudjelovanje potiče u uzorku škola i što predstavnici razreda koji pravno zastupaju svoje vršnjake u školskim strukturama imaju o tome reći. Podatci su prikupljeni uz pomoć vodiča za samoopisivanje kojim su okarakterizirani školski postupci koji se tiču sudjelovanja učenika i uz pomoć polustrukturiranoga upitnika koji je podijeljen predstavnicima i zamjenicima predstavnika razreda. Sudjelovanje opisano u vodiču koji smo analizirali odnosi se samo na jedan tip predstavnika i svjedoči o praksi utvrđenoj statutom. Predstavnici koji su sudjelovali u ovome istraživanju smatraju da se uloga razrednoga predstavnika u školi još dovoljno ne cijeni ni od sudionika obrazovnoga procesa. Stoga možemo zaključiti da je u sadašnjem obrazovnom sustavu na snazi demokracija u svom ublaženom obliku.

Ključne riječi: demokratsko sudjelovanje; učenički glas; život škole.

Uvod

Sudjelovanje učenika u životu škole može se razmotriti sa stajališta različitih teorijskih okvira kojima se propituju različiti obrazovni aspekti, a koji se odnose na takvo društveno djelovanje. Kad je predmet izučavanja sudjelovanje učenika, mogu se proučavati problemi kao što su izgradnja demokratske škole, građanski odgoj, aktivno učenje, odgoj i obrazovanje usmjereno na učenika. U ovome je istraživanju s društveno-kritičkoga stajališta analizirano učeničko sudjelovanje u životu škole. Naglašava se tradicionalna tendencija da se učenički „glas“ ne uzima u obzir u donošenju odluka o problemima koji se tiču učenika, kao i tendencija da se održi uglavnom retorički ili administrativni pristup oblicima aktivnoga sudjelovanja djece i mladih u procesima donošenja odluka.

Ovo je istraživanje dio mreže znanja nazvane Promatranje života u školama (engl. Observatory of Life in Schools - OBVIE) koja je dio Centra za istraživanja i intervencije u obrazovanju (engl. Centre for Educational Research and Intervention – CIIE) Fakulteta za psihologiju i obrazovne znanosti Sveučilišta u Portu. OBVIE provodi istraživanja u okviru skupine od šesnaest škola.¹

Predstaviti ćemo problem istraživanja u okviru njegova teorijskoga okvira, izložiti ćemo metodologiju i najvažnije rezultate istraživanja.

„Učenički glas“ i demokratsko sudjelovanje

Tijekom posljednjih desetljeća konceptualni pristup pojmu „učeničkoga glasa“ smatra se središnjim u problemima školovanja. Iako možemo istaknuti kontroverznu prirodu pojmova koji se koriste u ovome izrazu, potrebno je naglasiti da je temeljna uloga „učeničkoga glasa“ obraćanje pažnje na mišljenja djece i mladih ljudi kao pojedinaca koji žive školu i u školi. U vremenu koje je poznato kao vrijeme „školske krize“, neizbježna je bila potreba da se poslušaju osobe koje imaju glavne uloge u tome procesu. Osvrnemo li se na pojam krize prema Wagneru (1996) kojim autor opisuje niz pojavnosti koje su smještene u određenim povijesnim razdobljima, a koje predstavljaju nove probleme i propitkuju utvrđene procedure i tako formiraju nove školske prakse kojima se mijenjaju institucijske postavke, možemo naglasiti činjenicu da škola više ne može riješiti svoje probleme putem utvrđenih praksi. Pojavljuje se potreba da se izrade nove obrazovne prakse koje uzimaju u obzir stvarnost društveno-obrazovnih uvjeta u kojima problemi nastaju. U takvom je okruženju neizbježno oslušivanje učeničkih „glasova“ i društvenih elemenata u obrazovanju.

Koncept središnje uloge učenika u donošenju odluka u različitim područjima obrazovanja nije nov. Od ideologije Novog obrazovnog pokreta do Deweyevih postavki demokratske edukacije (v. Pereira, 2010) u ranim godinama prošloga stoljeća, koncepta koje su razvili Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner i Ausubel i drugi, a koji su naglasili ključnu prirodu sadržajnoga učenja, obrazovanje usmjereno na učeničko sudjelovanje stalno je prisutan pristup, ne samo u obrazovnim znanostima već i u obrazovnom diskursu općenito. No obrazovni je proces ipak sklon ignoriranju tog konceptualnog i ideološkog nasljeđa. U većini se slučajeva to odnosi na davanje legitimnosti obrazovnim politikama koje ne utječu na društveno-obrazovnu stvarnost. Pozadinska argumentacija važnosti slušanja učeničkoga „glasa“ obuhvaća tri skupine razloga.

Razlozi etičko-političke prirode:

- dječja prava koja obuhvaćaju aktivno sudjelovanje u svim predmetima koji ih se tiču, a koja su navedena u Konvenciji o pravima djeteta Ujedinjenih naroda iz 1989.,

¹ U Portugalu se upravljanje školom provodi u okviru skupina škola različitih školskih razina koje se nalaze na istom geografskom području.

- demokratizacija škole u smislu shvaćanja škole kao društva sudionika koji su posvećeni nastojanjima u ostvarivanju obrazovanja i poučavanja-učenja, kao i uključivanje učenika u unapređenje uvjeta u njihovoj školi i razredu,
- obrazovanje aktivnih građana primjenom podijeljene odgovornosti u kreiranju oblika života u školi, čime učenici postaju agenti izgradnje različitih dimenzija života u školi, ponajviše u organizaciji i kulturi škole,
- davanje „glasa“ kulturološkim skupinama koje se većinom ušutkavaju u školi naglašavanjem usredotočenosti na nejednakost i razliku.

Razlozi epistemološke prirode:

- razumijevanje pojavnosti školskoga iskustva iz perspektive i poimanja onih koji to iskustvo stječu u prvom licu
- osluškivanjem učeničkih „glasova“ pruža im se sigurnost i legitimnost u znanju koje se stječe u području obrazovnih znanosti

Razlozi društveno-obrazovne prirode:

- potreba da se slušaju percepcije i mišljenja djece i mladih ljudi o njihovom iskustvu u školi i uzimanje njihova mišljenja u obzir prilikom donošenja odluka u različitim obrazovnim okvirima, a osobito kad se rješavaju pitanja prekidanja školovanja i školskoga neuspjeha,
- poticanje osjećaja pripadnosti i relevantnosti učenika u školskom obrazovanju, zatim potpuno i smisleno uključivanje učenika u iskustva učenja i socijalizacije u školi, kao i njihovu planiranju,
- promicanje osobnog i društvenog razvoja i akademskoga uspjeha jer oni učenicima omogućuju razvoj pozitivnoga stava o sebi, sposobnosti da istraže svijet i steknu nove kompetencije, razviju društvene vještine i nove odnose, osvrnu se na vlastito učenje čime im se pruža mogućnost za aktivno i kreativno izražavanje (usp. Noyes, 2005).

U tome nizu čimbenika koji „glas“ učenika čine legitimnim posebno nas zanimaju aspekti koji taj zahtjev povezuju s omogućavanjem izgradnje demokratske škole koja učenike obrazuje i priprema za građansko sudjelovanje. Noyes (2005) skreće pozornost na problem moći koji su razvile neke studije o učeničkom „glasu“. Tvrdeći da „glasovi nemaju značenje ako ih se ne čuje“, autor ističe da se nedostatak ravnoteže moći u obrazovnom odnosu ne smije ignorirati u dinamici istraživanja i sudjelovanju koje uključuje učenike. Bilo koji obrazovni moment koji se ostvari u školi eksplicitno se ili implicitno odnosi na učenje u školi. Stoga je njihov odnos sa znanjem (usp. Charlot, 1997) sastavni dio svih aktivnosti kojima se učenike nastoji potaknuti da aktivno sudjeluju u životu škole, a učitelj preuzima ulogu medijatora u tome odnosu.

Prema Charlot (1997) učenje obuhvaća četiri procesa. Prvi je proces opredmećivanja – imenovanja u okviru kojega se učenje odnosi na usvajanje znanja shvaćenoga kao predmet koji postoji samo u jeziku i uz pomoć jezika. Drugi proces učenja odnosi se na uključivanje sebe u određenu situaciju. Učenje se vidi kao „činjenje“, sposobnost

rješavanja situacija (materijalnih ili simboličnih) s kojima se pojedinac susreće i koje u isto vrijeme uvjetuju radnju. Treći je proces udaljavanja-uređivanja. Radi se o stjecanju sposobnosti za uređenje odnosa sa samim sobom i ostalima. Četvrti i posljednji proces odnosi se na učenje kao aktivnost promatranja i promišljanja koje omogućuje pojedincu da protumači život, upoznaje sebe i razumije druge. U tom je smislu učenje odnos sa samim sobom, s drugima, i sa svijetom, i oblikuje se samo u okviru kognitivnoga odnosa koji u školi podrazumijeva obrazovni odnos.

Obrazovni odnos jest hijerarhijski odnos koji učitelju tradicionalno daje moć da odredi sadržaje i značenja toga odnosa. Zbog toga dinamika koja kao cilj ima davanje „glasa“ učenicima u školi i koja njihovo sudjelovanje smješta u središte pažnje zavređuje kritičan oprez s obzirom na moć koja se uistinu daje učenicima.

O „učeničkom glasu“

Kao što smo prethodno naveli, problemu učeničkog sudjelovanja u životu škole može se pristupiti s različitih gledišta. Međutim, literatura jasno pokazuje povećanje broja tekstova i argumenata u kojima se autori zalažu za potrebu stvaranja uvjeta za temeljitije i učinkovitije sudjelovanje učenika u svakodnevnom upravljanju školom. Ti su argumenti tijesno povezani s konceptom „učeničkoga glasa“ i predstavljaju razna razmatranja o navedenoj temi, no također se usredotočuju na relevantna pitanja kao što su demokratsko školovanje, građanstvo, unapređenje škole i sl. Važno je razmotriti pitanje „učeničkoga glasa“ kako ga se danas razumije i pogledati koje su temeljne karakteristike „učeničkoga glasa“ kako bi se bolje razumjelo na koji se način on postiže u školama i koje se inicijative u tom smislu razvijaju.

Radovi koji se bave učeničkim glasom predstavljaju uobičajeno razumijevanje i definiciju toga pojma. Općenito, on podrazumijeva slušanje mišljenja učenika, omogućavanje vidljivosti učenicima i uključivanje učenika u obrazovne procese, počevši od definicije procedura i strategija do definicije sadržaja obrazovnih procesa. Također je učenicima potrebno omogućiti da se njihov glas čuje i da imaju aktivnu ulogu u procesima donošenja odluka u razredu i u školi, i da u tome budu uz bok ostalim osobama uključenima u obrazovanje (Noyes, 2005; Cook-Sather, 2006; Gunter & Thomson, 2007). Davanje „glasa“ učenicima uključuje pažljivo slušanje njihovih dojmova o školskoj stvarnosti, njihovih zamisli, potreba koje iskazuju, stvari za koje misle da su pozitivne i postizanje bolje percepcije o tome kako zadovoljiti njihove potrebe i što je za njih primjereno. Prednosti davanja „glasa“ učenicima jesu u: i) mogućnosti poticanja njihova kontakta s općim pojmovima demokracije i građanstva, što bi i trebalo činiti u školi, razmatranju uloge tih pojmova u učeničkom potpunom razvoju kao pojedinca, ii) mogućnosti prikupljanja ključnih informacija o funkcioniranju škole i promoviranje njegova poboljšanja, viđenje učenika kao „stručnjaka“ koji je osobno iskusio život u školi.

Cilj stvaranja okoline u kojoj učenici mogu ostvariti međusobni kontakt i učiti o temeljnim pojmovima demokracije i građanstva tijesno je povezan sa zamisli o

demokratskoj školi i može se jedino istinski postići ako učenici aktivno sudjeluju u životu škole. To znači da se takvo okruženje može postići jedino ako se učenicima dopusti da sudjeluju, doprinesu i da se njihov glas čuje u vezi s različitim problemima vođenja škole, infrastrukture škole, kao i procesa podučavanja i učenja. Sve je to tijesno povezano s konceptom „učeničkoga glasa“, koji počiva na slobodi iznošenja učeničkoga mišljenja i opažanja, davanju sugestija i traženju mišljenja o različitim problemima života u školi. Čini se da se u literaturi ističe potencijal uključivanja učenika u procese donošenja odluka. Također se navodi da te inicijative, bez obzira na njihov oblik, u učenicima izgrađuju svijest o njihovim budućim ulogama aktivnih pojedinaca u društvu i pomažu im u stjecanju temeljnoga znanja o građanstvu i demokraciji (Bolmeier, 2006; Dobozy, 2007; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, i Jamieson, 2008; Edelstein, 2011). Na temelju navedenoga, „učenički glas“ implementiran je u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama s ciljem poticanja sudjelovanja učenika u svakodnevnom životu njihove škole. To se postiglo stvaranjem razrednoga i školskoga okruženja u kojemu djeca mogu izraziti svoje mišljenje i sudjelovati u odlučivanju (Taylor i Robinson, 2009). Osluškiivanje učeničkoga mišljenja može se ostvariti na nekoliko načina, kao što je prikazano u daljnjem tekstu.

Nekoliko autora ističe da je davanje „glasa“ učenicima pozitivna strategija kojom se potiče uspjeh procesa učenja i poučavanja. Primjerice Mitra (2008, str. 20) tvrdi da „kako bi se potaknuo uspjeh učenika, smisleno je ići pravo prema izvoru – učenicima. Ne samo da učenici mogu ponuditi mišljenje o svojim iskustvima u razredu već također mogu preuzeti važne uloge u školi“. Ferguson, Hanreddy i Draxton (2011, str. 55) također tvrde da „u davanju ‘glasa’ učenicima, čime im se omogućuje da aktivno sudjeluju u procesu odlučivanja o okruženju u kojemu uče, leži velik potencijal za njihov pojačan angažman i motivaciju za učenje“.

Jedan od razloga za davanje „glasa“ učenicima jest u njihovu privilegiranom statusu stručnjaka, odnosno sudionika s velikim znanjem o obrazovnom procesu, školi i jakostima i slabostima koje utječu na poticanje ili ometanje uspjeha procesa poučavanja i učenja. Zapravo o strategiji razvoja školskoga obrazovanja često odlučuju institucije i pojedinci izvan škole, koji nemaju osobno iskustvo i ne pate uslijed neučinkovitosti sustava, koji nemaju kontekstualnoga znanja o školskoj stvarnosti, dinamici i potrebama (Pereira, 2009). No među svim članovima obrazovnoga društva čiji se glasovi rijetko čuju, upravo učenici najbolje mogu izraziti svoje stavove. Nekoliko se autora zalaže za isti stav i to pod pretpostavkom da bi učeničke dojmove, mišljenja, ideje i osjećaje o školi trebali čuti i razmotriti oni koji su odgovorni za obrazovanje. Dakle, ako škola želi postići znatan napredak, a taj je napredak uglavnom usredotočen na poučavanje i učenje, odnosno bolje akademske rezultate, učeničko mišljenje, stavove i iskustva ne smije se zanemariti jer su učenici glavni sudionici procesa učenja (Lodge, 2005; Flutter, 2006; Leren, 2006; DeFur i Korinek, 2009). No potraga za stavovima učenika o poučavanju i učenju ima određena ograničenja. Učitelji se mogu osjećati nesigurno i pod pritiskom kad njihovi učenici daju povratnu informaciju o njihovu radu pa se mišljenju učenika mogu odupirati ili ga čak ignorirati. Ako je povratna

informacija usredotočena na negativne karakteristike, učitelji mogu osjećati frustraciju (Flutter, 2006; Ferguson i sur., 2011). Međutim, povratna informacija koju pružaju učenici predstavlja solidan temelj za promjenu i razvoj.

Gilljam, Esaiasson i Lindholm (2010) imaju drugačiji stav o tome zašto je dobro obratiti pažnju na „glas“ učenika. Autori govore o mjeri do koje učenici prihvaćaju mjere kojima se postižu promjene. Promjene u školi većinom definiraju i implementiraju upravljačke strukture. Njih učenici često ne prihvaćaju lako jer smatraju da su predominantne. Navedeni se autori slažu u tome da taj negativan osjećaj u učenicima nije toliko snažan kad se promjene i postupci temelje na njihovu osobnom mišljenju. Iako nema razlike u prihvaćanju odluka upravljačkih struktura (one se uvijek prihvaćaju), različiti su stavovi učenika prema tim odlukama ovisno o tome kako su donesene. Učenici imaju pozitivniji stav prema promjenama kad sudjeluju u procesu donošenja odluka.

Dakle, oslušivanje učenikoga „glasa“ omogućuje osobama uključenima u obrazovni proces kreiranje odluka, upravnim tijelima i zakonodavnim tijelima izdvajanje temeljnih problema u obrazovanju. Radi se o sljedećim problemima: koji je primjeren stupanj adekvatnosti kurikula s obzirom na stvarnost kakvu žive učenici i s obzirom na njihove aspiracije i namjere, koje obrazovne potrebe imaju učenici, koje pedagoške prakse promoviraju učenički akademski uspjeh i motivaciju, koji pristupi imaju manje pozitivne učinke, kako učenici doživljavaju njihovo školsko okruženje, što cijene i što ih čini nezadovoljnima, koje zamisli i sugestije imaju za poboljšanje svoje školske okoline za učenje i poučavanje itd. (Thomson i Gunter, 2006). Davanjem glasa učenicima u školi omogućuje im se sudjelovanje u procesima odlučivanja i aktivna suradnja u tome smislu pa oni tako stječu svoje prve dojmove o demokraciji i građanstvu. To je važan trenutak za razvoj učenika kao članova društva u kojemu žive.

Međutim, još jedan problem treba razmotriti koji je povezan s „glasom učenika“ i njihovim sudjelovanjem u životu škole. Iako postoji nekoliko argumenata koji idu u prilog aktivnom sudjelovanju učenika u razvoju škole i upravljanju školom, pa čak i ako škole pruže i implementiraju načine na koje učenici mogu ostvariti to sudjelovanje, to ne znači da je taj proces uspješno postignut. Čini se da su mnoge strategije samo birokratski odgovori na administrativni zahtjev za uključivanjem učenika u proces odlučivanja u školi, ali nisu usmjerene na njihovo učinkovito sudjelovanje. Tako se učeničko mišljenje i njihovi prilozi u procesima odlučivanja ne uzimaju u obzir iako se od njih traži povratna informacija. U suprotnom se njihovo mišljenje razmatra samo u vezi s površnim aspektima života u školi, kao što su oprema, školska infrastruktura i slične teme. Takvi postupci demotiviraju učenike i oni se smatraju prevarenima jer se njihovo mišljenje zapravo ne čuje (Black, 2011).

Oblici učeničkog sudjelovanja

U literaturi se navode razni načini poticanja učenikoga sudjelovanja u životu škole, od njihova stajanja uz bok tijelima koja donose odluke o životu u školi do izravnog slušanja učenikoga mišljenja.

Jedna od uobičajenih strategija za uključivanje učenika u donošenje odluka o školi jest njihovo sudjelovanje u „Učeničkom vijeću“ i slične inicijative (Black, 2011), kao što je „Razredno vijeće“, koje je predstavio Edelstein (2011). U okviru te inicijative nešto je vremena posvećeno aktivnostima demokratskoga „odgoja“ s pomoću kojih učitelj vodi učenike u procesu odlučivanja o problemima u razredu. Učenici preuzimaju ulogu osoba koje odlučuju u raspravi, glasanju i izborima pa im se tako predstavljaju temeljni pojmovi demokracije i sudjelovanja u njihovu društvenom okruženju.

Wyness (2009) navodi četiri modela sudjelovanja i davanja „glasa“ djece. Prvi je model nazvan „zastupanje djece od odraslih“ i temelji se na zastupanju učenika, njihovih interesa i zamisli od odraslih, u strukturama koje donose odluke, u procesu medijacije između dvije strane. Glavna pozitivna karakteristika takvog predstavljanja jest činjenica da odrasli uživaju veći autoritet i vjerodostojnost među svojim kolegama pa je stoga njihovo zastupanje učinkovitije i omogućuje im veći utjecaj. No, negativno je to što odrasli mogu biti pristrani i tako raditi na postizanju vlastitih ciljeva zanemarujući potrebe i prijedloge učenika. Takvo je postupanje u suprotnosti s ciljevima „zastupanja djece od odraslih“.

Fielding (2004) spominje drugi model, „sudioničku demokraciju“, u kojoj je uključenost učenika izravnija, bliska njihovim vršnjacima i usmjerena prema problemima učenika. Treći pristup aktivnom sudjelovanju učenika prema Wynessu (2009) utemeljen je na izravnom sudjelovanju učenika u strukturama koje se bave organizacijom i donošenjem odluka. U tom se modelu biraju učenici predstavnici učeničke zajednice i prethodno navedenim strukturama prenose stavove i mišljenje njihovih vršnjaka, u okviru procesa koji posreduju odrasli. Ovaj se pristup naziva „zastupnička demokracija“, a osigurava ga operacionalizacijska organizacija škole. Autor se na kraju bavi četvrtim modelom nazvanim „deliberativna demokracija“. Taj se model temelji na raspravi o učeničkim problemima u okviru šire rasprave, u kojoj skupine učenika predstavljaju druge skupine u dinamici bližoj građanskome društvu.

Postoje i ostali procesi putem kojih se može ostvariti sudjelovanje učenika u odlučivanju. U literaturi se najčešće navode procesi nazvani „učenici istraživači“ (Fielding i Bragg, 2003) i „savjetovanje učenika“ (Flutter i Rudduck, 2004; MacBeath, Rudduck i Myer, 2003). U prvom slučaju učenici rade u partnerstvu sa svojim učiteljima u procesu izgradnje znanja o školi, funkcioniranju i karakteristikama škole i njezine populacije kako bi, zajedno sa svojim učiteljima, postali posrednici promjene. U drugome se slučaju učenike konzultira kako bi se vidjelo što im odgovara i što ih približava školi.

Opći cilj ovoga rada jest istražiti kako škole koje se nalaze u OBVIE mreži potiču učeničko sudjelovanje i što učenici o tome imaju reći. Detaljnije gledano, ovaj rad ima sljedeće ciljeve:

- istražiti načine na koje je statutom osigurano učeničko sudjelovanje u različitim upravljačkim tijelima, kao i tijelima koja se bave donošenjem odluka u školi,
- istražiti stav učenika o njihovu sudjelovanju u tim tijelima.

Metodološke procedure

Metodologija istraživanja

Nacrt istraživanja koji se činio primjerenim za postizanje navedenih ciljeva bio je deskriptivan. Namjera je bila otkriti i prikazati načine na koje škole uključene u istraživanje omogućuju sudjelovanje učenika u životu škole te pojasniti stavove učenika o toj temi. Taj se nacrt također smatrao primjerenim za postizanje istraživačkih ciljeva rada s obzirom na njegovo usmjerenje na sudjelovanje učenika u različitim upravljačkim tijelima i tijelima koja se bave donošenjem odluka u školi i na otkrivanje mišljenja učeničkih predstavnika o svojoj ulozi u tim tijelima. Empirijsko istraživanje proizvelo je kvantitativne podatke o školi i predstavnicima učenika.

Uzorak

Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 207 učenika koji su u vremenu kad je istraživanje provedeno bili predstavnici i zamjenici predstavnika svojih razreda u deset OBVIE škola.

Ako škole uključene u istraživanje ($N = 10$) predstavljaju slučajan uzorak svih škola u Portugalu, broj učenika koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju odnosi se na veliku većinu predstavnika razreda u takvim školama.

Prikupljanje podataka

Dvije vrste podataka prepoznate su kao važne pri prikupljanju informacija za ovo istraživanje: informacije o ustrojstvima škola i informacije o učeničkim stavovima.

Prema tome, procedure prikupljanja podataka sastojale su se od vodiča za samoopisivanje koji su ispunjavale škole, a u kojemu su se nalazili upiti o školskim tijelima i situacijama kojima se osigurava sudjelovanje učenika i polustrukturiranom upitniku koji su ispunjavali predstavnici i zamjenici predstavnika razreda.

Vodič za samoopisivanje praksa škola obuhvaćao je tri temeljne točke: [1] tijela u kojima se cijeni učeničko mišljenje i njihova uloga u procesu odlučivanja, [2] oblici učeničkoga pojedinačnog sudjelovanja u donošenju zajedničkih odluka, [3] učeničko sudjelovanje u razrednim vijećima: čestotnost i modaliteti. Vodič je poslan školama koje su sudjelovale u istraživanju pa su ga od 15. veljače do 15. travnja 2011. ispunile upravljačke strukture škola.

Uz pomoć upitnika koji smo podijelili predstavnicima i zamjenicima predstavnika učenika u školama koje su sudjelovale u istraživanju prikupili smo pozadinske informacije, kao što su razred koji su za vrijeme istraživanja ispitanici pohađali, njihovu dob, spol, obrazovanje roditelja, prethodno iskustvo u ulozi predstavnika razreda i način na koji su izabrani na tu funkciju. Prikupljeni su i podatci o iskustvu sudionika istraživanja u ulozi razrednoga predstavnika u godini kad je istraživanje provedeno. S tim ciljem prikupljene su informacije o sazivanju predstavnika na sastanke upravljačkih tijela te njihovu odazivu, problemima o kojima je na sastancima raspravljano, načinima na koje su predstavnici predstavljali svoje razrede, kao i

zadacima koje su u toj ulozi obavljali. Na kraju, uz pomoć upitnika prikupljene su informacije o općoj ocjeni obavljanja funkcije predstavnika i učinka koji je ona imala na osobni razvoj ispitanika. Upitnik je bio polustrukturiran, s pitanjima višestrukog izbora i nekim pitanjima otvorenoga tipa. Bio je dostupan na internetu između 15. travnja i 30. svibnja 2011.

Prikupili smo 10 vodiča i 207 valjanih upitnika.

Obrada podataka

Statistička analiza podataka prikupljenih uz pomoć vodiča i upitnika provedena je računalnim softverom Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) – inačica 18. Analize su bile deskriptivne i obuhvatile su apsolutne i relativne frekvencije podataka prikupljenih uz pomoć vodiča, a koji su proizašli iz informacija o sudjelovanju učenika u procesima odlučivanja koje su dale škole. Proučili smo apsolutne i relativne frekvencije (za kategorijske varijable) i mjere središnje tendencije (za kontinuirane varijable) za podatke prikupljene uz pomoć upitnika koji su podijeljeni predstavnicima i zamjenicima predstavnika razreda. Gdje je bilo primjereno, upotrijebljen je hi-kvadrat test (χ^2) kako bi se usporedili odgovori između skupina ispitanika koji su kategorizirani prema spolu, dobi, obrazovanju majke i tome jesu li najstarije dijete u obitelji.

Upotrijebili smo statističku značajnost od 5% kao referentnu u našoj analizi.

Organizacija podataka bila je uvjetovana usredotočenjem ovoga rada na sudjelovanje učenika u upravljačkim tijelima i tijelima koja donose odluke o radu škole. Tako su podatci organizirani na sljedeći način: učeničko sudjelovanje u Razrednom vijeću, Pedagoškom vijeću, Skupovi predstavnika i zamjenika predstavnika razreda, sudjelovanje škola u ostalim tijelima. Podatci prikupljeni upitnicima koji su podijeljeni predstavnicima svrstani su u pet kategorija/varijabli: osobni podatci svakoga predstavnika, njihovo iskustvo u obavljanju funkcije razrednoga predstavnika, sazivanje i sudjelovanje u Razrednom vijeću i Skupu predstavnika, zadatci koje obavlja razredni predstavnik i ocjena iskustva u obavljanju dužnosti predstavnika.

Oblici sudjelovanja i stavovi učenika: neki rezultati

Učeničko sudjelovanje u različitim upravljačkim tijelima i tijelima koja donose odluke o radu škole²

Učeničko sudjelovanje u Pedagoškom vijeću

Od 10 skupina škola u njih tri koje pružaju srednjoškolsko obrazovanje statutom je određeno prisustvo jednoga učenika u Pedagoškom vijeću. Međutim, u akademskoj godini u kojoj smo provodili istraživanje u jednoj se školi učenik nikad nije pojavio, u drugoj rijetko, a u trećoj je bio prisutan na svim sastancima. Intervencije tih učeničkih

² U Portugalu se pravna regulacija upravljanja skupinama škola oslanja na tri tijela u kojima učenici imaju svoje predstavnike: Opće vijeće, Pedagoško vijeće i Razredno vijeće. Međutim, u prva dva tijela predstavljene su samo škole koje nude srednjoškolsko obrazovanje.

predstavnik nisu poticali ostali članovi Vijeća. U dvije škole u kojima su učenici prisustvovali sastancima Pedagoškoga vijeća, njihovo se mišljenje uglavnom uvažavalo.

Učeničko sudjelovanje u razrednim vijećima

Dvije od 10 skupina škola sustavno potiču sudjelovanje učeničkih predstavnika na sastancima Razrednih vijeća petih i šestih razreda. U školskoj godini u kojoj su prikupljeni podatci u prosjeku su održana dva sastanka Razrednih vijeća kojima su prisustvovali učenički predstavnici. U prosjeku su predstavnici bili prisutni na 50% sastanaka održanih o petom razredu i 45% sastanaka o šestom razredu, 29% zamjenika predstavnika sudjelovalo je na sastancima petog, a 27% zamjenika na sastancima šestog razreda.

U školskim godinama koje odgovaraju trećem obrazovnom ciklusu (sedmi, osmi i deveti razred), u svim su školama održana Razredna vijeća kojima su prisustvovali učenički predstavnici. U prosjeku je broj sastanaka održanih u sedmom i osmom razredu bio 2,3. U devetom je razredu bio 2,4 po godini. Postotci prisustvovanja predstavnika bili su 61%, 64% i 63% za tri školske godine. Zamjenici predstavnika bili su prisutni u 29%, 37% i 40% slučajeva u svakoj školskoj godini.

Tri škole koje pružaju i srednjoškolsko obrazovanje održale su jedan do tri sastanka kojima su prisustvovali razredni predstavnici i zamjenici predstavnika. Prisutstvo predstavnika u tri godine trećega obrazovnog ciklusa bilo je 60%, 50% i 68%. Zamjenici predstavnika bili su prisutni na 57%, 43% i 45% sastanaka.

Što se tiče prethodne pripreme učeničkih primjedbi koje su iznosili na Razrednim vijećima, škole smo organizirali u tri skupine: skup koji se sastojao od tri škole u kojima te prakse nema, drugi skup od pet škola u kojima se ta procedure ne provodi redovito i treći skup od dvije škole u kojima je zabilježeno da se prethodna priprema provodi u nekim razredima, ali s različitim stupnjevima intenziteta. Usporedba tih podataka s razredima koje su ispitanici pohađali nije razjasnila navedene razlike.

Što se tiče učinka učeničke intervencije na odluke Razrednoga vijeća, škole su se uglavnom izjasnile da je bio redovito ili često učinkovit.

Skup predstavnika i zamjenika predstavnika razreda

U školskoj godini u kojoj je provedeno ovo istraživanje Skup predstavnika i zamjenika predstavnika razreda postojao je i djelovao u prvom obrazovnom ciklusu u četiri skupine škola koje su sudjelovale u istraživanju, u drugom i trećem obrazovnom ciklusu u sedam skupina škola i u dvije srednje škole.

U prvom je obrazovnom ciklusu inicijativa za okupljanje došla od nastavnika (jedan slučaj), koordinatora ciklusa (dva slučaja) i od društvenoga animatora (u posljednjoj školi iz te skupine). U drugom i trećem ciklusu inicijativa je došla isključivo od školske uprave u tri slučaja, od koordinatora razrednika u drugoj školi i od zajedničke inicijative uprave i ostalih osoba uključenih u obrazovni proces, kao što su razrednici ili društveni animatori.

U svim je slučajevima aktivno sudjelovanje učenika poticano od osoba koje su inicirale sastanke. Učenici su unaprijed pripremali svoja izlaganja, a odluke koje su donošene na tim sastancima imale su obvezujući karakter za one koji su ih poticali.

Sudjelovanje učenika u drugim tijelima

U četiri skupine škola koje su sudjelovale u istraživanju učenici su predstavljani i u Općem vijeću, no učeničko prisustvovanje sastancima Općega vijeća zabilježeno je samo u jednoj školi.

Četiri skupine škola imale su pravno utemeljenu Učeničku udrugu, s izabranim upravljačkim tijelima. U tri škole Udruga ima redovitu ulogu u aktivnostima obrazovnog projekta.

Jedna od skupina škola koje su sudjelovale u istraživanju redovito održava sastanke Razrednoga skupa (tjedno ili mjesečno) u sedam od trideset i tri slučaja. Ta inicijativa ima kao cilj poticanje društveno prilagođenoga ponašanja u jednom slučaju, a u drugome razvoj učeničkih kompetencija u skladu s projektom Građanskoga odgoja i obrazovanja u ostalim razredima.

Mišljenje učenika o njihovu sudjelovanju u životu škole u ulozi predstavnika razreda

Ukupno 207 prikupljenih i valjanih upitnika odgovaralo je jednakom broju razrednih predstavnika koji su predstavljali razrede u kojima je u prosjeku bilo 22,6 učenika. Međutim, analiza distribucije broja učenika po razredu pokazala je stalni pad u broju učenika po zastupljenome razredu. Također je pokazala da su predstavnici iz petog i devetog razreda činili većinu u uzorku.

Osobni podatci predstavnika

Predstavnici su u prosjeku imali 12,8 godina i uglavnom su to bile djevojčice (63%). Analiza prema razredu koji su predstavnici pohađali pokazala je isti trend, u svim promatranim godinama o kojima smo imali podatke, iako slika koja predstavlja podatke petoga razreda pokazuje veću diferencijaciju prema spolu.

Akaderske kvalifikacije roditelja predstavnika razreda koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju bile su slične, iako je postojala mala razlika između majki i očeva, jer su majke imale višu naobrazbu.

Što se tiče braće i sestara, učenici su uglavnom imali brata i bili su u 58% slučajeva stariji brat u obitelji. Uzorak je sadržavao i 46 (22,3%) učenika koji su bili jedinci.

Iskustvo ispitanika o njihovoj ulozi predstavnika razreda

Broj ispitanika koji su prvi put u godini u kojoj je ispitivanje provedeno izabrani na mjesto predstavnika razreda bio je 82 (38,9%), ali su njih 36 (17,4%) prethodno bili zamjenici predstavnika, a ostali su već obavljali funkciju predstavnika i zamjenika predstavnika.

Što se tiče načina na koje su izabrani na funkciju predstavnika, većina ih je (njih 148, odnosno 70,8%) izabrana u prvom krugu, nasuprot njih 38 (18,2%) koji su izabrani u drugom krugu. No, bilo je i 11 slučajeva (5,3%) u kojima je izbor na mjesto predstavnika bio potaknut preporukom nekog od nastavnika, vjerojatno razrednika.

Na pitanje o tome kako su se osjećali tijekom izbora, većina ispitanika (njih 150, odnosno 71,8%) izjavila je da je taj trenutak doživjela kao svojevrsno ispunjenje misije. Oko 18% ispitanika ($n = 38$) interpretiralo je svoj izbor kao činjenicu da su njihovi kolege prepoznali njihove osobne vještine, a 5,3% ($n = 11$) iskusilo je neugodan osjećaj smatrajući tu ulogu nametnutim teretom.

Sazivanje sastanaka i prisustvovanje Razrednome vijeću i Skupu predstavnika

Od ukupnoga broja predstavnika koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju, njih 54 (27%) nije bilo pozvano ni na jedan sastanak od početka školske godine (rujan 2011.) do trenutka intervjua koji je održan potkraj travnja 2011. Sličan je postotak ispitanika bio pozvan prisustvovati sastanku, a 41% njih bilo je pozvano na dva sastanka. Manji je broj predstavnika (5,5%) bio pozvan na veći broj sastanaka. Prosječan je broj sazivanja bio na 1,09 sastanaka, a rezultat je bio 1,59 prisutnosti.

Što se tiče prisustvovanja predstavnika na sastancima, njihov je broj manji u odnosu na broj saziva. Ta je razlika bila veća u osmom, jedanaestom i dvanaestom razredu. Samo je u desetom razredu prisutnost bila redovita.

Slika 1.

Na pitanje jesu li predstavnici upitali svoje kolege koje su predstavljali o njihovu mišljenju o problemima škole kako bi mogli vjerno prenijeti to mišljenje na sastancima upravnih tijela, otprilike trećina ispitanika ($n = 112$) izjavila je da je to učinila. Kad smo te podatke analizirali s obzirom na razrede koje su predstavnici pohađali, utvrdili smo da se distribucija odgovora predstavnika petih i šestih razreda znatno razlikovala od odgovora predstavnika ostalih razreda. Drugim riječima, ispitanici koji nisu prikupili informacije od svojih kolega o njihovu mišljenju o problemima škole pohađali su niže razrede.

Kad su upitani govore li na sastancima u ime svojih razreda (izražavaju žalbe, zahtjeve itd.), više od polovine ispitanika izjasnilo se da to čini (57%). U tom se pitanju ispitanici nisu razlikovali s obzirom na spol ili obrazovni ciklus, iako je uočena mala razlika između situacija u kojima su se zatekli predstavnici drugog i trećeg ciklusa ($\chi^2 = 7,9$).

Analiza sadržaja koje su predstavnici predstavili na sastancima izrađena je na temelju 79 prikupljenih iskaza. Oni su svrstani u šest setova prema tome jesu li se odnosili na ponašanje učenika (32 navoda) i na kvalitetu popratnih prostorija i to onih koje se odnose na zdravlje, svlačionicu i menzu (18 navoda). Druga, manje specifična skupina žalbi, zahtjeva, prijedloga i savjeta imala je ukupno 15 navoda. Također smo

pronašli šest specifičnih prijedloga o izvannastavnim aktivnostima. Pet prijedloga odnosilo se na akademski uspjeh razreda koje su predstavnici predstavljali. Na kraju smo još pronašli tri kritike ponašanja nastavnika.

Skup od 94 ispitanika (54,9%) na sastancima je dao osobna mišljenja o nekom predmetu, a ti su se njihovi prilozi razlikovali s obzirom na ciklus koji su učenici pohađali. Ponovno su mlađi učenici manje izražavali svoja mišljenja ($\chi^2 = 7,96$). Uloga nastavnika u sudjelovanju učenika također se činila važnom pa su 122 učenika (71%) osjećala da su probleme koje su iznijeli na sastancima prethodno posebno istaknuli njihovi razrednici ili drugi nastavnici.

Nekim predstavnicima ($n = 76, 45,5\%$) povjerenje je da prenesu poneku informaciju svojim razrednim kolegama ili izvijeste svoje razrede o temi o kojoj se raspravljalo na sastanku kako bi o njoj raspravili sa svojim vršnjacima. Zanimljivo je što su te dužnosti povjeravane češće djevojčicama nego dječacima. Ta je razlika utvrđena hi-kvadrat testom ($\chi^2 = 4,57$).

Navodimo neke od 86 kodiranih referenci u setu odgovora na pitanje o porukama koje su predstavnici trebali prenijeti svojim razredima. Prva se skupina poruka odnosi na ponašanje učenika (41 odgovor) i uključuje kvalitetu popratnih prostorija, odnosno održavanje toaleta i menze, i na probleme upravljanja školskim dobrima. Druga najveća skupina poruka odnosila se na neadekvatan akademski uspjeh učenika, u razredu ili individualno. Također smo pronašli dvije specifične reference na probleme s nastavnicima i još dvije općenitije koje upućuju na suodgovornost učenika u zajedničkim problemima škole. Također je pronađena skupina od četiri reference u kojima su ispitanici svjedočili o tome da su trebali izvijestiti svoj razred o zaključcima sastanka kojem su nazočili. Na kraju, jedan se predstavnik nije sjećao poruke koju je trebao prenijeti svojem razredu.

Zadaci koje su obavljali predstavnici razreda

Podatci pokazuju da je najčešća uloga ispitanika predstavnika razreda bila prenošenje informacija. Obavljanje malih zadataka koje bi im povjerali nastavnici i predstavljanje razreda u formalnim situacijama bila su sljedeća dva najčešće spomenuta zadatka. Pomoć pri organizaciji aktivnosti u kojima su sudjelovali njihovi razredi i rješavanje sukoba među učenicima bila su sljedeća dva najčešća zadatka. Rjeđe su trebali rješavati sukobe između učenika i nastavnika. Ti su trendovi identični čak i kad se u obzir uzmu nezavisne varijable, odnosno spol, razred ili obrazovni ciklus.

Slika 2.

Mišljenje o iskustvu obavljanja uloge predstavnika razreda

Uživao/la sam u iskustvu, ali ne bih volio/la biti ponovno izabran/a. Većina predstavnika ima pozitivno mišljenje o svojem iskustvu u obavljanju funkcije predstavnika razreda, iako skupina od 81 učenika (42,6%) nije željela biti ponovno izabrana.

Više dječaka nego djevojčica nije željelo biti ponovno izabrano. Ta je razlika značajna. Međutim, kad smo ponovili to pitanje, otkrili smo da samo 45 učenika nije

željelo biti ponovno izabrano na mjesto predstavnika razreda. S obzirom na to da ne postoji jedinstvena prilika za odgovor, ne možemo saznati broj učenika kojima se iskustvo predstavnika nije sviđjelo.

Čini se da ostali učenici u razredu ne razumiju ulogu predstavnika razreda. Većina ispitanika djelomično se složila ili nije s tom izjavom ocjenjujući znanje svojih kolega o ulozi njihovih predstavnika. Učenici trećega ciklusa najviše su cijenili tu funkciju.

Čini se da razrednici vide predstavnike kao zaposlenike. Usprkos tome što predstavnici smatraju da njihovi vršnjaci ne razumiju njihovu ulogu, hipoteza o tome da se predstavnik vidi kao „zaposlenik“ nije potvrđena, jer se 146 učenika (75,6%) nije složilo s tom tvrdnjom (v. sliku 2).

Predstavnik je imao priliku sudjelovati u donošenju odluka škole. Većina je ispitanika smatrala da nisu imali ulogu u donošenju odluka ($n = 112, 59,2\%$). Međutim, pronašli smo razlike u distribuciji odgovora koji se mogu pripisati ciklusu koji su učenici pohađali, utoliko što su učenici trećega ciklusa i srednjoškolci dali najviše takvih odgovora ($\chi^2 = 6,53$).

Predstavnik je osjećao da ga ostali učenici, zaposlenici i skrbnici više cijene zbog funkcije koju je obavljao. Nije se činilo da ostale osobe uključene u obrazovni proces cijene predstavnike više nego njihove vršnjake zbog funkcije koju su obavljali. Zapravo je većina ispitanika smatrala da ih učenici, učitelji, osoblje i skrbnici koji su bili članovi Razrednoga vijeća ne cijene ništa više zbog njihove funkcije ($n = 123, 64,3\%$).

Međutim, trend nije bio jednak u svim ciklusima. Kad je odnos između predstavnika i njihovih vršnjaka analiziran hi-kvadrat testom, otkriveno je da su relativne vrijednosti između potvrde i nedostatka poštovanja koje su učenici drugoga ciklusa počeli pripisivati svojim predstavnicima bile bliže kad ih se usporedilo s ostalim ciklusima ($\chi^2 = 6,91$ za 2 *df*).

Predstavnik je bio prisiljen razmišljati ne kao pojedinac, već imajući na umu interese svojega razreda. Velika je većina ispitanika smatrala da su barem nekad, ako ne i uvijek, bili prisiljeni razmišljati iz perspektive kolektiva i u skladu s interesima svog razreda, a ne svojim osobnim interesima (74 odgovora *da*, 86 *ponekad*, a 32 *ne*). Čini se da većina nezavisnih varijabli nije imala razlikovnih utjecaja u ovoj modifikaciji. Spol, razred, obrazovni ciklus, broj djece u obitelji (braća ili jedino dijete) nisu mogli objasniti razlike u odgovorima. Čini se da se jedino objašnjenje može pronaći među učenicima koji su bili starija braća u obitelji. Ti su učenici smatrali da je promjena važna ($\chi^2 = 5,56$). Što se tiče akademskih kvalifikacija roditelja, obrazovanje majke pomoglo je objasniti razlike, a obrazovanje oca nije. Učenici čije su majke bile akademski obrazovane i koji su pohađali treći obrazovni ciklus ili bili stariji, bili su uporniji u realizaciji važnosti pozicije u razvoju ove kompetencije ($\chi^2 = 5,52$). Varijable koje su se ticale okolnosti obavljanja funkcije, kao što je način izbora na funkciju, promijenile su taj stav. Takav su stav češće izražavali predstavnici koji su bili starija braća u obiteljima i djeca obrazovanih majki.

Predstavnik je postao svjestan problema i tema koje su važne za život škole, a koje prije nije primjećivao. Većina je učenika smatrala da im je obavljanje dužnosti predstavnika

pomoglo u stjecanju svijesti o problemima koji su važni za život škole, a koje prethodno nisu uočavali (113 odgovora *da*, 51 *ponekad* i 27 *ne*).

Nismo mogli pronaći drugo objašnjenje za promjenu toga stava do obavljanja funkcije predstavnika.

Predstavnik je poboljšao svoju vještinu izlaganja pred različitim publikama. Većina ispitanika smatra da im je obavljanje funkcije predstavnika razreda pomoglo u stjecanju sposobnosti javnoga obraćanja i to ne samo pred uobičajenim publikama ($n = 141, 74\%$).

Ni taj se učinak nije mogao objasniti ostalim nezavisnim varijablama, već samo činjenicom da su ispitanici obavljali funkciju predstavnika razreda. No pronađen je pozitivan odnos između učenika koji su smatrali da su razvili svoje vještine i onih koji su vjerovali da su ih njihovi učitelji više poštovali zbog funkcije koju su obavljali.

Predstavnik je promijenio svoje ponašanje prema svojim kolegama iz razreda. Što se tiče odnosne strukture koju su predstavnici počeli graditi sa svojim kolegama, nije pronađena razlika u odnosu predstavnika s kolegama koju bi oni pripisali funkciji predstavnika razreda. No, 91 predstavnik (47,3%) imao je drugačije mišljenje.

Pronašli smo odnose između onih koji su promijenili način na koji su se odnosili prema svojim kolegama iz razreda i onih koji su smatrali kako osjećaju da ih njihovi učitelji, osoblje i skrbnici više cijene ($\chi^2 = 13,2; 18,18; 12,24$, za 1 *df*).

Učeničko sudjelovanje: predviđanja, mišljenja i učinci

Sad ćemo odgovoriti na tri pitanja kojima je operacionalizirana prva dimenzija kojoj je cilj bio istražiti na koji je način učenicima ustavno omogućeno sudjelovanje u različitim upravnim tijelima i tijelima koja donose odluke u njihovim školama.

Razredno vijeće je tijelo u kojem se najviše cijene učeničko mišljenje i savjetodavna sposobnost. Koliko smo mogli vidjeti na temelju prikupljenih podataka, stopa prisutnosti predstavnika i zamjenika predstavnika razreda u razrednim je vijećima značajna, iako je relevantnija u trećem obrazovnom ciklusu i srednjoškolskom obrazovanju nego u drugom obrazovnom ciklusu. Naglasak je također na činjenici da postoji pozitivna korelacija između stope pohađanja sastanaka i važnosti koja se pripisuje učeničkom mišljenju u procesima donošenja odluka u tim vijećima. Uistinu se čini da je učeničko mišljenje o važnosti sudjelovanja u tim vijećima povezano s njihovim doprinosom u procesima donošenja odluka koje utječu na njih i njihove kolege iz razreda. S obzirom na stavove koje izražavaju Taylor i Robinson (2009) i Gunter i Thomson (2007) o važnosti davanja „glasa“ učenicima s ciljem promoviranja njihova kontakta s idejama demokracije i građanstva, možemo ustvrditi da ti učenici imaju dobru percepciju građanstva i demokratskoga sudjelovanja s obzirom na njihov stvarni utjecaj na donošenje odluka u školi. No upravo nedostatak toga kapaciteta ima jači utjecaj na učeničko mišljenje o različitim oblicima sudjelovanja. To odgovara mišljenju prema kojemu mnoge strategije predstavljaju tek puki birokratski odgovor

na zahtjev da se učenike uključi u procese donošenja odluka, ali ne stremi postizanju učinkovitoga sudjelovanja (Black, 2011).

Oslanjajući se na Wynessove (2009) i Fieldingove (2004) pristupe, primjećujemo da smo uglavnom svjedoci specifičnom obliku sudjelovanja nazvanome „zastupnička demokracija“, iako je također moguće identificirati oblike „sudioničke demokracije“ u obliku učeničkih skupova i tragove „deliberativne demokracije“. Edelstein (2011) taj oblik sudjelovanja naziva „Razredno vijeće“.

Što se tiče druge dimenzije ovoga istraživanja, odnosno mišljenja koje predstavnici razreda imaju o svojoj ulozi predstavnika razreda u životu škole, navodimo da su naš uzorak uglavnom činile djevojčice, da se stupanj obrazovanja roditelja ne razlikuje puno i da većina učenika koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju ima brata.

Na temelju tih podataka zaključujemo da je obitelj važna varijabla u profilu učenika koje njihovi vršnjaci biraju za predstavnike. Prema Mitri (2008), učeničko iskustvo, a osobito ono koje se odnosi na obiteljske veze, uvjetuje njihovo sudjelovanje u školi i njihove sposobnosti učenja pa se pri izgradnji demokratske škole ono ne smije zanemariti. Lodge (2005) i Leren (2006) smatraju da su učenička mišljenja, stavovi i iskustva glavne varijable koje uvjetuju poboljšanje učenja, poučavanja i škole općenito.

Više od polovine učenika smatralo je da je predstavilo svoj razred iznoseći njihove probleme na sastancima upravnih tijela. Kvalificirana je većina također ustvrdila da su pitali svoje kolege o njihovu mišljenju o nekoj temi kako bi dobili jasniju sliku o općem mišljenju razreda i tako se pripremili za odgovarajući sastanak. Međutim, učenici koji su pohađali niži obrazovni ciklus (peti i šesti razred) ne spominju da su svoje kolege iz razreda pitali za njihova mišljenja kako bi se pripremili za sastanke. Na temelju podataka možemo spomenuti osnovanu sumnju o tome da za postizanje „zastupničke demokracije“ nedostaje neki oblik obuke učenika. Oni svoje iskustvo razvijaju uglavnom na temelju vlastitoga iskustva obavljanja zastupničke funkcije u tim tijelima. Uzmemo li u obzir obrazovnu važnost obuke za demokratsko sudjelovanje u procesu odlučivanja u školi, možemo zaključiti da bi možda jedna takva obuka trebala biti predmetom obrazovnih procesa koji se provode u školi.

Razredni problemi koje su predstavnici predstavili na sastancima odnose se na učeničko ponašanje, kvalitetu popratnih prostorija, žalbe, molbe, prijedloge i savjete, na specifične prijedloge i izvannastavne aktivnosti, na akademski uspjeh razreda i kritiku postupaka nastavnika. Flutter (2006) i Ferguson i sur. (2011) smatraju da takva kritika može uzrokovati tenziju i nesigurnost nastavnika te ih navesti da pruže otpor takvoj povratnoj informaciji ili je u potpunosti ignoriraju. Stoga nije neobično da naši rezultati pokazuju nesuglasnost između mišljenja učenika i nastavnika o tome koje su to relevantne teme o kojima bi trebalo raspravljati na tim sastancima.

Kad smo usporedili probleme za koje su učenici smatrali da o njima treba raspravljati na sastancima s problemima o kojima se raspravljalo i koje su predstavnici poslije prenijeli svojim kolegama, otkrili smo vrlo značajnu razliku s obzirom na probleme akademskoga uspjeha razreda i učenika, a koje učenici nisu naveli kao ključne probleme razreda. Ostali se problemi tematski preklapaju, ali mijenjaju smjer s obzirom na učeničku suodgovornost. Oni se odnose na njihovo ponašanje ili na

održavanje toaleta i menze, na temeljna pravila funkcioniranja škole i probleme koje podrazumijeva nepravilna upotreba popratnih sadržaja škole. Podatci o iskustvu obavljanja funkcije predstavnika otkrivaju da je najčešći aspekt te funkcije prenošenje informacija. Zanimljivo je bilo primijetiti da se zadatak prenošenja poruka vršnjacima najčešće povjerava djevojčicama.

Ti podatci naglašavaju nesraz između mišljenja nastavnika i učenika u tome o čemu je potrebno raspraviti na sastancima. Uistinu, odnosi moći u školi tradicionalno su asimetrični pa stavovi nastavnika prevladavaju u procesima donošenja odluka. Prema Noyesu (2005) i Cook-Satheru (2006) davanje „glasa“ učenicima uključuje slušanje njihovih zamisli, stavova i njihovu ulogu u predstavljanju u organizaciji škole i odlukama u obrazovanju.

Na temelju analize podataka dobivenih u ovome istraživanju možemo zaključiti da, iako su učenici predstavljeni na pedagoškim i razrednim vijećima, to se zastupanje manipulira kako bi se postigli disciplina i pozitivan stav učenika prema učenju. Te im zamisli prenose njihovi kolege koji ih predstavljaju u vijećima preko „poruka“ i informacija kojima je cilj normalizirati i potaknuti ono što nastavnici smatraju boljim ponašanjem.

Taj je koncept istaknut činjenicom da mnogi učenici (uglavnom učenici trećega obrazovnog ciklusa i srednjoškolci) smatraju da nisu sudjelovali u odlukama škole. Možemo zaključiti da stariji učenici misle da je njihovo sudjelovanje u demokratskim upravljačkim tijelima njihovih škola imalo malo utjecaja na upravljanje školom. Imajući u vidu činjenicu da ti učenici aktivno sudjeluju na takvim sastancima, nije neobično to što značajan postotak predstavnika ne želi ponoviti to iskustvo. Čini se da učenici smatraju kako njihovo sudjelovanje u tim tijelima ne utječe na povećanje moći u procesima donošenja odluka o problemima škole koji se i njih tiču. Uzmemo li u obzir da je jedan od razloga za davanje „glasa“ učenicima njihov privilegiran status stručnjaka (Pereira, 2009 i Mitra, 2008), čini se da rezultati ovoga istraživanja pokazuju da oblici sudjelovanja koji se njeguju u školama ne pomažu osiguravanju toga statusa.

Što se tiče utjecaja koji je uloga predstavnika imala u oblikovanju osobnih vještina tih učenika, zaključujemo da su mnogi ispitanici smatrali kako su, zahvaljujući toj funkciji, razvili vještinu javnoga govorenja i organizacije iskaza pa su pritom govorili u svoje ime, ali i u ime svojih kolega na način da su razvili širu sliku o problemima škole. Što se tiče općeg trenda učinaka koje je obavljanje te funkcije imalo na osobni razvoj učenika, najupadljiviji se aspekt odnosio na važnost mogućnosti razmišljanja iz pozicije interesa njihova razreda. Također su naučili vrednovati teme koje prethodno nisu primjećivali i usavršili su svoju sposobnost izlaganja pred raznovrsnim auditorijima. Mnogi su učenici smatrali da obavljanje navedene funkcije nije promijenilo njihov odnos s kolegama. Naglasimo da navedeni oblici sudjelovanja imaju značajan utjecaj na razvoj kompetencija koje se ne ograničavaju na građansku praksu, već utječu na opći psihosocijalni razvoj.

Osvrnemo li se na zamisli koje navodi Charlot (1997) o odnosima znanja, možemo identificirati opredmećivanje – imenovanje i udaljavanje – uređivanje, odnosno

spodobnost stjecanja znanja koje se percipira kao predmet koji postoji samo po jeziku i u jeziku pa tako regulirati odnose sa samima sobom i ostalima.

Iako nas rezultati ovoga istraživanja upućuju na određenu ublaženu demokraciju koja potiče sudjelovanjem učenika u upravljačkim tijelima, jasni su i pozitivni učinci toga sudjelovanja na razvoj vještina i stavova u učenika. Ti učinci odgovaraju stavovima koje navode DeFur i Korinek (2009) o pozitivnim učincima uključivanja učenika i poštivanja njihovih „glasova“, kao i stavovima koje navode Thomson i Gunter (2006) o tome koliko je važno da nastavnici i ostali pojedinci koji su uključeni u donošenje odluka u obrazovanju slušaju učenike sa svrhom postizanja uspjeha obrazovanja.

Zaključak

Predstavili smo istraživanje kojemu je cilj bio istražiti kako škole koje su uključene u OBVIÉ mrežu potiču učeničko sudjelovanje u donošenju odluka o životu škole i što učenici o tome imaju reći. Drugim riječima, željeli smo istražiti kako je statutom osigurano takvo učeničko sudjelovanje i pokušali smo utvrditi stavove učenika o njihovom sudjelovanju u upravljačkim tijelima.

Istraživanje je obuhvaćeno problemom koji promatra „školsku krizu“ i važnost slušanja stručnoga učeničkog mišljenja o problemima važnim za život škole pa ih se smatra vjerodostojnim izvorom informacija o problemima koji na njih utječu i čimbenicima koji se na njih odnose. Teorijski okvir istraživanja čini demokratsko sudjelovanje u školi i njegov konceptualni odnos s teorijskim pristupom „učeničkome glasu“ i odnosom sa znanjem.

Na temelju rezultata zaključujemo da je sudjelovanje opisano u vodičima kojima smo se koristili uglavnom zastupničkoga tipa jer se u rezultatima spominju samo razredni skupovi, a ne i opći skupovi učenika. To je zastupništvo uključeno u niz statutarne utemeljenih tijela. Drugim riječima, potječe iz političkoga konteksta i izravno odgovara prvome trendu navedenome u uvodu.

Glavna dihotomija odgovora o poticaju koji nastavnici trebaju pružiti učenicima kako bi ih uputili u sudjelovanje u različitim tijelima podržava zaključak o tome da se taj problem različito shvaća i implementira u školama. Trebaju li škole potaknuti učeničko sudjelovanje i osposobiti ih ili ne trebaju? Koja bi bila svrha takvog osposobljavanja?

S gledišta predstavnika razreda ta se funkcija u njihovoj okolini dovoljno ne cijeni, iako smatraju da njezinim obavljanjem razvijaju svoje sposobnosti prezentacije, medijacije i organizacije, čime doprinose svom osobnom razvoju. Stav je predstavnika da se ta funkcija još uvijek dovoljno ne cijeni u školi, a ni od kolega koje zastupaju.

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