Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna

Dottorato di Ricerca in

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Ciclo XXV

Settore Concorsuale di afferenza: **14/A2**

Settore Scientifico disciplinare: **SPS/04**

THE RIGHT TO VOICE:

Its Realization by Estonian and American Parents in Public Schools

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Esame finale anno 2013

To my daughters for giving me the inspiration
To my husband for always believing in me
To my parents for being stimuli to reach further
I love you all

ABSTRACT

Civic engagement is often seen as one of the key indicators of countries' democratic development, while relevant analyses mostly concentrate on peoples' political participation. Investigating parents' formal engagement opportunities in public schools serves well to characterize the relationship between states and societies. While the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic success has been thoroughly investigated, rarely has it been seen to indicate countries' governing regimes.

The researcher was curious to see whether and how does parents' voice differ in different democracies. The hypothesis was that in mature regimes, institutional opportunities for formal parental engagement are plenty and parents are actively involved; while in young democracies there are less opportunities and the engagement is lower. The assumption was also that parental deliberation in expressing their dissatisfaction with schools differs across democracies: where it is more intense, there it translates to higher engagement. Parents' informedness on relevant regulations and agendas was assumed to be equally average, and their demographic background to have similar effects on engagement.

The comparative, most different systems design was employed where public middle schools last graders' parents in Tartu, Estonia and in Huntsville, Alabama the United States served as a sample. The multidimensional study includes the theoretical review, country and community analyses, institutional analysis in terms of formal parental involvement, and parents' survey. Dahl's polyarchy and Verba et.al. civic voluntarism models were used as a guiding framework.

The findings revealed sizeable differences between parents' reported engagement levels in Huntsville and Tartu. The results indicate passivity in both communities, while in Tartu the engagement seems to be alarmingly low. Furthermore, Tartu parents have much less institutional and inclusive opportunities to engage. In the United States, multilevel efforts to integrate parents to school life are visible from local to federal level, in Estonia similar intentions seem to be missing and meaningful parental organizations do not exist. In terms of civic education there is much room for development in both countries. The road will be longer for a young democracy Estonia, in transforming its institutional systems from formally democratic to inherently inclusive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a long road in many ways. I am grateful to circumstances that have allowed to reach beyond the walls, and forever indebted to everyone who let me to reach that far.

I am thankful to Prof. Stefano Bianchini for giving me the opportnity to engage in this joint doctoral program and embark the research in the area so close to my heart. Also many sincere thanks to all faculties and people involved in this interdisciplinary program.

Without my energetic supervisor Prof. Emanuele Padovani I would not have known much about producing compact, clear and efficient academic work. Thanks to his guidance and setting an example, I am glad to be here and writing this today. I am also very grateful to Prof. Alessandro Martelli for his patience when I struggled with finding the satisfactory perspective, and for his suggestions in narrowing it.

Would I not had the opportunity to meet professors Joseph Marko, Florian Bieber and Larissa Ogertschnig-Berdiyev during the mobility period at the University of Graz, this research would not have many of the features that it does today. I would also like to thank Tallinn University for recommending me for the European Social Fund's scholarship, and for enabling to carry out part of this research under the guidance of Prof. Mati Heidmets. His pointed critique at the initial stages of this study was of crucial importance.

Extended thanks go to all schools in Tartu and Huntsville who allowed me to survey their parents and supported in distribution. I am also grateful to all students who were delivering the surveys, and to parents who took a moment to participate. In relation to this, I am thankful to everyone who assisted and supported my research in Estonia and Alabama.

Wholehearted gratitude goes to my parents, whose strength and commitment to excellence have served as a model of persistance. I am deeply indebted to my husband for his enduring love, support and belief in me. Thanks to my beloved and amazingly patient daughters I never ran out of commitment and inspiration. Without this unconditional love and support from you all, I would have never made it that far. Thank you.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of this research was to study civic engagement in different liberal democracies. Civic engagement is a multidimensional term that entails a fine line between political and non-political engagement, but serves well as an umbrella term for describing peoples' involvement and participation in public decision-making processes.

Benjamin Barber (1996) has implied that if people's participation needs to be investigated, there is probably something "wrong" with democracy. Indeed, irrelevant of the character or the stage of development of a political regime, people around the world seem to be dissatisfied with how their states and institutions function, who gets access to decisions and how the decisions are made. On the other hand, does it not imply that something is expected to be better? If yes, then what and how?

People tend to see the state with its politicians and bureaucrats as distant and rather ignorant "them" than "us", while many do not even consider that they could or should be in control (Przeworski, 2003). Carole Pateman (1975, p. 104) has warned that tolerance towards "non-participation of the apathetic ordinary man lacking in the feeling of political efficacy" can easily lead to political instabilities since people become excluded from their communities.

This study was driven by the interest towards the interaction of two key components in modern democratic processes. As will be elaborated soon, democracy is widely interpreted as "people's rule," that should theoretically mean the symbiosis of "for

the people" and "by the people" dimensions. For example, public schools and education are simultaneously democratic instruments and instruments for democracy. These are institutions that have been established to provide access to universal education and build stronger communities.

Considering the potentially underestimated potential of public school and education systems to societies' segregation or integration, the author decided to focus this research more narrowly on parents' role in it. In most countries parents are legally responsible for their children wellbeing and can be held accountable if they do not fulfill their duties. Parents' role can be seen as that of a proxy: they represent their children rights and liberties until they are minors, while not having the right to make uninformed decisions.

In systems of electoral democracy, public school and education systems follow policies and agendas that are initiated by political representatives and operated by education officials. Examining parental engagement in public schools' governance and education systems - their "voice" in processes where decisions are made - serves well to define the nature of the relationship between the public and the government that they have built, or the relationship of *demos* and *kratia* in modern democracies.

Research problem

Research on civic engagement concentrates mostly on people's political participation. Less is known about stakeholders' participation in areas that directly and daily affect their lives. From this perspective, public schools and education that the states provide is a research interest difficult to avoid, whereas it is also an area where public and

private spheres frequently overlap. The principles by which these systems have been set up and the purposes they carry, define the generations and the overall character of communities.

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic success, but rarely have the *parental voice and engagement* in decision-making seen as an indicator of countries' political ideology and functioning. The freedom and ability of parents to express their voice and engage in decisions that affect their families' lives today and in the future, is of critical importance in building cohesive democracies. There are reasons to assume that in a few countries that define themselves or have been defined as "democratic", the equation of *for the people* and *by the people* is not in a satisfactory balance. At least not in terms of what is expected from ideal democracies.

The role of public schools and the goals of public education are often defined and designed without much oversight or understanding by those who are the primary customers of this public service, students and their parents. Furthermore, it is likely that many parents do not realize that while they cannot escape paying for this service, in most democratic regimes instruments exist that would allow them to demand transparency and accountability for their contribution.

There may be various reasons for parental apathy and disengagement. The most likely reason is that despite of having been built an institutional system that allows fulfilling the basic democratic criteria, the political and bureaucratic elite is in fact practicing exclusive government. This means that the institutions formally do exist that allow for

public participation and voice, but at the same time they have been built few and with a narrow access.

People's daily lives require their own share and during countries' political transformations or in times of economic crises, it may be especially difficult for parents to stay updated and involved. This in turn diminishes their further incentives to engage while lacking updated information, relevant contacts and eventually may just feel that this not their "area of expertise". However, this should not be seen as an excuse but rather a sign of inadequate democratic government that cannot provide their people opportunities to be involved in state building, but rather allowing the gap between the governing elite and people to widen. In democracies that respect individual freedoms, nobody can be enforced to engage, but inclusive opportunities should exist for those who wish to execute their right to do so.

Driven by these beliefs and observations, this study aimed at analyzing the institutional "for the people" (or the output) and practical "by the people" (or the input) conditions in contemporary democracies from the perspective of the character of parents-schools-states triangular relationship.

Conceptual framework

It is a widely known argument that the democratic ideal may be a too big piece for contemporary nation-states to swallow. The ideal is conceptually also relatively vague. Thus the author employed Robert Dahl's (1971, 1989) p*olyarchy* model to resize and operationalize the basic democratic criteria, while the later analyses and evaluations tend to develop from this basis. To categorize the main reasons behind

people's possible disengagement or instruments that could be employed to engage them, Verba, et.al., (1995) *civic voluntarism* model served as a conceptual approach for the empirical part of this study.

Research question and hypotheses

This study undertook the task to investigate whether in different democracies that define their political regimes similarly, differences exist in institutional options that are available for parents to engage in decisions regarding public schools and education. The author realized that the definitions and structures likely differ in each country, but the underlying interest was rather in whether these options to engage differ by their fundamental principles. Since the institutions provide only the "for the people" part of the democratic equation, the author found it necessary to inquire also about practical application of these opportunities "by the people", i.e. parents' realization of their right to voice. The *hypotheses* were set as follows:

1) In public school systems of *mature democracies*, *many institutional opportunities* for formal parental engagement exist, and their *engagement* in formal decision-making processes *is higher*;

2) In public school systems of *young democracies*, *less institutional opportunities* for formal parental engagement exist and their *engagement* in formal decision-making processes *is lower*.

The researcher also *assumed* that in different democracies, parents are not equally deliberative in expressing their dissatisfaction with school systems but where they are,

it translates into higher engagement levels. Parents' informedness of relevant rules and regulations is assumed to be equally average, while parents' demographic background to have similar effects on engagement.

Methodology

This was a comparative case study that employed the most different systems design. The purpose was to examine the application of similar democratic norms in different polities, through the lense of parental engagement in public schools. Two municipal school districts in Tartu, Estonia and in Huntsville Alabama, the United States served well to fulfill the requirements. Both are governed by the principles of liberal democracy, while in terms of most other characteristics these communities are very different.

The last graders' parents of public middle schools in Tartu and Huntsville served as the population sample; parental engagement as dependent variable; country background, institutional setting, parents' resources and motivation as independent variables.

Comparative methods derive directly from the research question and related assumptions. The theoretical review that prepared for the analysis, concentrated on providing a conceptual basis of civil rights and civic engagement; of different understandings and models of democracies and their measurement; and of the purpose of public schools, education and the role of parents.

For the subsequent analysis, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to provide:

1) A brief historical, economical and political overview on Tartu in Estonian and of Huntsville in Alabama, the United States;

2) A synthesis of selected rankings that have measured or evaluated Estonian and the United States' state of democracy, polyarchy and civic engagement;

3) An analysis of these countries' and communities' public school and education systems that may be of importance in examining and understanding parental involvement;

4) An institutional analysis of formal structures that parents in Tartu and Huntsville schools could use to express their voice and engage in decision-making;

5) A survey analysis to reflect and interpret parental views and practice of their right to engage in Tartu and Huntsville schools.

Outline of the study

The study starts with a conceptual review of democracy, civil society and civic engagement. Democracy is a concept and phenomenon that will never lose its attraction and is of fundamental importance for this research. It is difficult to promote an ideal however, if there is no common understanding what is it, despite of its mainstream image and usage. How can we know whether we have it or not? Also

Horowitz (2006) has regretted that "there is still no consensus, either within the administration or American society, about what constitutes a democracy. The world's only superpower is rhetorically and militarily promoting a political system that remains undefined."

Gerring (2012) calls concepts "linguistic containers by which we make sense of the world". The quest takes us to a quick tour back in time to search democracy's historical roots - in practice, linguistically and semantically. We ponder about the meaning of *demos,* the people and *kratia,* and try to understand what they might have meant in different contexts and periods of time. The meaning of civil rights and liberties, civil society and civic engagement are also briefly elaborated. Within the latter concept, the civic voluntarism model is introduced to assist in later survey analysis.

Then, through perspectives of participation and representation, the subcategories of democracy are synthesized and presented in a concise manner. This leads us to better understanding of contemporary liberal democratic regimes, the democratic ideas behind participation and representation, and also clarifies the idea of polyarchy as an operational model to evaluate democracies. Different measurement and evaluation criteria for democracies are also provided.

The elaboration on democratic principles is crucial to proceed to the area of public schools, universal education and parents' role in these systems. Public schools and education are fundamentally important institutions in every society, and thus serve well to be a model for researching civic engagement. This chapter elaborates on

liberal principles of classic thinkers, while gradually proceeding to contemporary understanding and practices on parental involvement in liberal democracies.

The analysis consists of three parts. Firstly, the historical, political and socioeconomic background of Tartu, Estonia, Huntsville, Alabama, and the United States is briefly provided. Their political regimes are described and compared by applying the public information of ten well-known databases that have measured these countries from the perspective of polyarchy, democracy, civic engagement and social cohesion. The purpose of this approach was to nest the following institutional and practical analysis into an adequate context.

The second part of the analysis investigated the formal opportunities that are available for Tartu and Huntsville parents to express their voice and engage in structures to influence decisions on schools and education. This required finding and synthesizing the relevant legislation both on national and local level that may define parental involvement or their role in each country and community. The legal and institutional analyses are inseparable if one is to adequately and comparatively synthesize people's fundamental rights and options that are available to realize them.

And finally, the third part of the analysis was surveying Tartu and Huntsville parents to see the differences and similarities in how they are realizing their right to voice and engage in formal options that are provided to influence decisions and agendas. It was also analyzed whether parents' demographic characteristics, and their satisfaction with schools and education have any effect on their engagement levels.

Definitions

Definitions and terms used in this work and that can raise questions or controversies, are elaborated in the following chapter. A few key issues still need to be mentioned here.

Firstly, this study is comparing democracies on *evaluative* terms. It will *not measure* their performance, albeit a few criteria and datasets are given as to illustrate various methods how democratic regimes can be measured and consequently evaluated.

Then, the author wishes to emphasize that this is a study about *demos,* about the *people* and the community that they create for themselves and share in different parts of the world, following similar political ideas. In ancient Athens, the "people" might have meant also *citizens,* while back in those times citizens were very likely only a limited group of males. Thus in this work the term citizen will be used carefully and only when it clearly applies to legal citizens of the country. In modern era, "a citizen of the world" and people practicing *citizenship* concepts have often moved far from the ancient exclusive and elite term. Legally however, it still signifies a set of rights and liberties granted only on certain terms. Due to these controversies, this paper prefers to stick with the "people", "demos" and if appropriate, also "residents", unless the issue is specifically about legal citizens.

Relying on the synthesis, the researcher does believe that *civic engagement* is a *civic right* and a crucial element for building democracies and *civil societies. Civic engagement* will be used synonymously with participation, voice and engagement throughout this work, while covering people's participation both in political and

public spheres that can be frequently overlapping areas. *Civil society* in terms of this work means polities and communities where the public can engage in.

The difference between *schools* and *education* must be noted here. The author makes a clear difference between engagement in schools and in education. However, in some cases "schools" will be used as a broad umbrella term, as to include also education. In fact, schools are just one instrumental element of a broad education system. In terms of secondary education, schools are usually public buildings where the nationally standardized education is delivered. For parents, it can be very different whether to try to influence schools or education, as these would usually require involvement on different levels and through different organizations.

Delimitations of scope

The study on parental engagement in two communities may not be an adequate amount of data to make far-reaching conclusions about the character and type of democracy, nor is it enough of a basis to make categorical comparisons. It can show some general trends and tendencies however, in regards to people's inclusion and involvement in democratic decision-making processes. Parents are the primary caretakers of their children, ultimately responsible for their wellbeing, and should thus be fully informed and have the opportunity to have a say on matters that affect their children's schools and education. This study has provided a synthesis of relevant research and existing institutions, and collected the original field data that can pave the way for further studies in the area.

Key beliefs and general assumptions

While it is difficult to assign widely accepted or easily perceived criteria to any particular type of democracy, there is one model that offered major help in terms of simplifying the evaluation and comparisons. The *polyarchy* model enables to evaluate countries on two dimensions: *contestation* and *participation*, while the first refers to institutional opportunities (liberalization) and the second one to inclusiveness in terms of participation. Full polyarchies should be at the top of both dimensions and the author believes that this position would allow them to define as well functioning modern democracies. This perspective assisted the author and hopefully also assists the reader to make relevant conclusions based on the material presented.

In terms of parental engagement in schools and education, the author assumes that in polyarchic democracies: 1) schools have been set up by governments to provide standard education services for all its children; and that 2) parents delegate a large portion of their children education and upbringing to public schools.

On the other hand, the author believes that 1) parents cannot delegate the ultimate responsibility for their children's education and upbringing to the school or state; 2) if parents are not satisfied with public education and schools, they should be able to choose an alternative schooling or get involved to try to change the source of dissatisfaction.

Findings

The hypotheses could not be tested due to low response rate in Huntsville. The author is not convinced however, that it was only due to parents' passivity. The possible culprit could also be seen in either students' sense of responsibility while delivering

the questionnaires, and in some Huntsville school administrations' organizational issues. Thus the results of the analysis should be interpreted rather cautiously as showing some trends, and that may or may not reflect all 9th graders parents' behavior in Huntsville. For this reason, also comparisons between two countries should be approached carefully. If the hypotheses could have been tested however, the findings would have supported it.

In terms of participation, the analysis revealed shortcomings both in Huntsville and Tartu, while these may be of different nature. In comparison to Estonian parents, American parents have considerably more institutional opportunities to engage, and to influence their children schools and education, even by electing the highest level governing body for local education. They are also more organized on grass-root level through fully inclusive parent-teacher associations in every school that extend to a national-level influential lobby group. In terms of all these opportunities available for parents in Huntsville and of their historical significance, it was surprising to discover parents' relative passivity in terms of fully employing these opportunities.

In Tartu and in Estonia in general, the institutional opportunities through which parents could influence schools and education are limited. The system sees parents rather as a symbolic consultation partner who should better not get involved in school matters. As for formal opportunities, the parent association exists only on national level, is rather invisible and informal. At schools, the education law requires to have trustee boards where a few parents are elected to meet a couple of times a year, are not known by many parents and do not have any real influence on matters that are of

fundamental importance. Tartu parents reported low informedness on legislation and agendas, while feeling largely incompetent for more meaningful involvement.

It was interesting to see that in both communities dissatisfaction with schools or education did not motivate parents to change the situation by much higher involvement. Nevertheless and as it was assumed, where they expressed more dissatisfaction, there the engagement was slightly higher, which was the case in Huntsville. In Tartu this passiveness was much more visible and especially surprising, while parents satisfaction ratings were higher than in Huntsville, but their narrative comments revealed more dissatisfaction than did American parents' responses.

The assumption on parents' equal informedness on legislation and agendas did not hold as Huntsville parents reported to be considerably better informed than Tartu parents. Again, these are self-reported responses that asked parents how they feel about it, but it was not measured by any means. Again, the narratives revealed that Tartu parents have less channels through which the information is distributed to them, have not become familiar with the relevant legislation, and feel rather left out from the ongoing processes. Parents' demographic background did not have as much effect on their voting and candidacy behavior as theoretically could have been expected, although higher education and better financial situation resulted more visible and higher engagement among Huntsville parents. In both communities, single parents reported lower engagement in both countries.

Conclusion

This study provides a comparative insight to democratic practices today, in two different parts of the world. This has been done through the perspective of formal civic engagement in public institutions that are occupying a highly important and long-term position in people's lives, in public schools. The case of parental involvement is a complex and serious one: as they are legally responsible for their children wellbeing, they might not have the right not to know and not to engage, but have the duty to represent their children's rights that children themselves cannot yet do.

The author sees parents' inability to engage as much as they should, a failure of democratic institutions and government. If parents are not adequately informed, do not know how to influence, or cannot because they feel like they do not belong, then is not the fault of parents but of the government. On the other hand, for the changes to happen, the motivation has to be bi-directional: in the case of Estonian parents they should better organize among themselves to make their voices heard. Bureaucracy is passive and politicians unresponsive as long as there is no urge to change the situation. In the case of Huntsville, it is more difficult to explain parents' low engagement indicators where so many opportunities and initiatives exist for parents to exercise their voice.

These two communities and countries have very different experience with democracy and civic engagement, and these differences reflected throughout this work. In terms of parental engagement the author sees the broad field to cultivate civic education, and in Estonia the institutional base that would allow people to engage and influence, needs to grow more transparent, broad and inclusive.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION

"Democracy and logic were among the first ones to escape their motherland"

(Philippos, a waiter at the cafe by the Agora, in Athens, Greece – Eslas, 2013)

This is a research on the state of democratization, a long-lasting catchword of political discourse (Schmitter & Karl, 1991, p. 76). Within comparative politics, the study of democracy is a never-ending opportunity to (re-)evaluate communities' development (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002, p.5). Much debate surrounds the "what is democracy" and "what is democratic" questions that the current research paper alone can certainly not solve. But it can add to the discussion, provide its own view and angle to this pool of research and data.

The state of democracy continues to be a core concern of the people across the world who are living it or have been just introduced to it. Democracy is a thick concept (Coppedge, 2005, pp.1, 5), meaning many things to many people and the expectations of democracy are different, but generally high. It is thought and talked about when struggling for freedom and better life; it is condemned when things do not go quite the way it was expected from democracy. As long as we live it, there can be no argument against researching it, again and again till we understand by which principles we live now and would prefer to live in the future.

Robert Dahl has noted that there is no single theory of democracy, only theories (Dahl, 1971; 1989). This review focuses on the previous research and theories on democracy and civic engagement, goes to semantics and far back to the history, will

select and synthesize fundamental concepts that are necessary for conducting this research, and eventually provides a set of possible criteria for categorizing democracies. It should lay a solid groundwork for the following chapters on state and parents role in education, and also for the later empirical analysis.

Before undertaking a research on comparing modern democracies and diving into its practical dimension like civic engagement, the first requirement is to map the research area's core conceptual and operational definitions. Any concept is just an empty word withouth characteristics and criteria filling it in (Riker, 1982; Greven, 2009). An understanding about what does it certainly must consist of and what definitely not, enables to better evaluate its strengths and shortcomings while indicating opportunities for further research and discovery. Conceptualizing democratic concepts here will also prepare us better to understand the choice of the research, the methodology and final conclusions later (Held, 2006, p. x; Lipset, 1959, p. 70).

2.1 Polis, demos and kratia

Looking at different sources of data that claim to reflect countries' democratic development, many different criteria and categories that they provide and measure states with, can be confusing to say the least. One who wishes to comment on it or make further conclusions, should be well acquainted with the concept of "democracy", its history, semantic roots and different versions of it that have emerged and have been applied through time and space (Hadenius, 1992; Wolfe, 1986). Then, the methodology should be reviewed to see what and how was measured, and whether it reflects our understanding of democracy (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002). We need to be aware of the possible ambiguousness of broadly accepted definitions or concepts

that are used more frequently, that are firmly established in our language and practices. People have frequently become bewildered by different explanations of democracy and what is "democratic" can be so stretched out that the only way to try to make some sense in it, is to search for linguistic roots, semantic interpretations and historical practices (Dowty, 1999; Cunningham, 2002).

While only a few political thinkers have bothered to undergo the research on "democracy" from the linguist-semantic perspective (Buchstein & Jörke, 2007; Hadenius, 1992), Mogen Hansen (2010, pp. 502-503) is one of those who have encountered this arduous task. Based on the information and research made on the government and society of ancient Athens, he claims that democracy can be divided into six different dimensions based on how *demos* was defined and used. According to his findings, *demos* meant:

1. The *Athenian state* and was used synonymously with *polis*;

2. The *democratic constitution* and was synonymously used with *demokratia*;

3. The *people's assembly* and was used synonymously with *ekkleksia;*

4. The *people at large* and there was no explicit reference to the Assembly or to any other political institution (see also Robinson, 1997, p.42);

5. The *common people* and was used synonymously with e.g. *ochlos* or *aporoi* or *plethos*.

6. The *democratic faction*, in particular in connection with a civil war.

Adding to *demos* the word *–kratia,* signifying "rule" or "power"*,* we get *dēmokratia* that has frequently been translated and interpreted as "people's rule" (Manin, 1997, pp. 1-2; Cook & Morgan, 1971). The "rule by the people" is parallelly also used as to

imply the "government by the people" or to put it simply - as a form of living, sharing, and building communities together (see also Rosanvallon, 2009).

Throughout the history, there have been different definitions and doctrines on the the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the "people". In ancient city-states for example, not all people were involved in decision-making: women and servants, for example, could not participate in these procedures (Blackwell, 2003). In Athens, democracy was practiced by calling *citizens*, i.e. free, adult males to Athenian *agora* (city's central square) about forty times a year (Jones, 1958, p. 5), to directly participate in state's decision making, mostly by voting on laws.

Interestingly, Jones argues that Greeks did not consider popular election even as a democratic process. In their view, it was rather supporting aristocracy since ordinary people tend to vote for someone whose name they have heard before, but not for unknown people who may actually be those who have valuable ideas (Jones, 1958, p. 5). This is an important fact, since Athenians considered harmonious collaboration for public interests as essential for a democractic state (Katz, 1997, pp. 6-14; Blackwell, 2003 Ostwald, 1986).

O'Donnell (1998) refers to Hansen's work (1991), pointing out that Athenians who participated in decision-making were paid daily wages, thus making it possible also for poorer people to participate. This, the practice of the broader definition of "the people" was the ideal way of governing for the Athenian statesman Pericles, announcing that "Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend

to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters" (Thucydides, 1972).

There is no broad consensus on who were allowed to decision-making structures, but the fact is that communities or city-states were much smaller than the states we have today, which made broader and direct participation more realistic. For example, it has been estimated that Athens was a city-sate of *circa* 20,000 – 60,000 citizens (males) in different periods of time (Blackwell, 2003). This number has also been supported by Plato who suggested that an ideal size of a state should be slightly over five thousand citizens or heads of households, which would make the size of an ideally functioning democratic state less than 50,000 inhabitants, if to add to men their families, servants and other possible non-citizen body of the state (Plato, 2008, Book III, Ch. 15).

Searching the origins of democracy and its ancient application, we see that this form of government was in no means an equal form of government "by the people", or at least in terms of how we define "people" today. Sealey argues that in ancient Greece, before "democracy", *isonomia* or "equal order" or "political equality" was frequently applied. In his view, this was much less aggressive and also more inclusive form of governance than *dēmokratia* that followed (Sealey, 1983. See also Ostwald, 1969, Ober & Hedrick, 1996).

Having witnessed the changes of his home city-state Athens, Plato suggested his view on degeneration of states, in four stages of socio-political dynamics: after the ideal state of governors, soldiers and producers (Bluck, 1959) comes *timocracy* or the rule of the noble seeking fame; then *oligarchy* with ruling wealthy families; next comes

democracy or lawlessness in the name of liberty; and finally comes *tyranny* as the sickness of the polity (Plato, 1991, Book VIII 545b, p. 223) .

As *demos* had different meanings, so did the democratic form of governance and has been a target of several changes, in line with changing political interests (Murray, 1993; Ostwald, 1986; Robinson, 1997). Since it did not give adequate opportunities for voice and "rule" to all people living in the state, regimes have constantly been challenged by peoples' desire for increased participation (O'Shea, 2003).

Governments can be overthrown on the quest for a better order. However, one cannot overthrow the *demos* in the sense of "the people". From the sociological perspective, demos will be there also after the revolution and can be in many forms, if to consider Hansen's definitions of *demos*. The story of democracy is of remarkable continuity and change of a great paradigm (Held, 2006), and some sense, "democracy" will always be. Nevertheless, difficulties lie in the definition, role and responsibility of *demos,* how large part of it can participate in governance, and how are these roles and responsibilities changing over time.

2.2 Civil society and political culture

The original character of democracy, or an ideal ideological base of how societies defining themselves as democratic should be or have been built on, has been provided. In its strict sense, we could interpret these definitions so as to people being part of the state governance, and the government being fully responsive to its people's wishes and needs. More than three hundred years ago, the defender of aristocratic rights Sir

Robert Filmer[1] referred with scepticism in his *Patriarcha* to Cardinal Bellarmine who had argued that "Secular or civil power is institututed by men, it is in the people, unless they bestown it on a prince. This power is immediately in the whole multitude…" (Filmer, 1680, Ch. I.). Bellarmine's statement has been considered as one of the earliest well-known concepts of civil society (Madden, 2007, p. 13).

Jürgen Habermas (1996) has regretted that there are not many clear, contemporary definitions, which would link the concept of a public sphere with that of civil society. In his view the purpose of civil society is to exercise control over markets and bureaucracies. Skocpol and Fiorina (1999, p.2) support this notion by envisaging civil society as "the network of ties and groups through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs."

A known explanation of civil society is also that of Edmund Burke who illustratively suggested that societies consist of "little platoons" (Burke, 1909-14, para. 75) or of families, community and business groups and so forth, that are formed by individuals to satisfy their self–interests. The various connections and relationships between these different platoons form a civil society, a form of public life that can be viewed from *political* and *non-political* perspective although they are strongly interrelated and rather seen from holistic perspective.

From political and linguistic viewpoint, civil society refers to the idea of *citizen* and its derivative *citizenship*[2]: both are political perspectives on how the concept of "the people" is defined and thus remain a source of endless discussions (Janoski, 1998).

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[1] Peter Laslett claims that Filmer has been greatly misinterpreted and demonized throughout the history: whereas Filmer was a dedicated family man, his doctrines were largely grounded on rules of domestic society, i.e. he simply preceived the society as run by heads of households (Laslett 1948).

[2] In Latin *civitat, civicus* and in old French *civis* means related to citizenry (Merriam-Webster, 2004)

While "citizenship" has been perceived as a Western invention that is successfully practiced by liberal democracies by defining who *is* and who *is not* "the people" (Heywood, 2002, p. 415), the concept of civil society by itself seems to presume that there is a gap between democratic ideals and practice, i.e. that the government is not fully representative of the people or its citizens (Fleming, 2008).

O'Shea describes the idea of a citizen as a person co-coexisting in a society with others, beyond the confines of a nation state. She elaborates by denoting that the term "citizen" signifies the status and "citizenship" signifies the role (O'Shea, 2003, p. 8). For Habermas (1996, p.367), citizens are members of the public who seek for ways to realize their interests, voice their needs and influence "institutionalized opinion- and will-formation."

The descriptive noun "citizen", its various definitions and derivatives open up a rather slippery area to step into (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Heater, 2004; Mouffe, 1991). Thus although controversies will be recognized and stated, this work assumes that civil society is an establishment for people despite their status, serving to and served by *all* people. Habermas's (*op.cit.,* pp.370-71) concept of civil society as the combination of people, associations and rights also fits well to the context here, thus when the concept of "citizenship" will be occasionally used, it is to signify all people's civic duties.

Cohen and Arato (1992, p.ix) saw civil society as "a sphere of interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate space (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary organizations), social movements, and

forms of public communication". Helmut Anheier (2004, p.22) has defined it similarly as "the sphere of institutions, organizations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests". His holistic view of the interrelated "big platoons" is provided in Figure 2.1 that well illustrates the key players, their roles and interactions in a civil society.

Figure 2.1. *Relationships between the Elements of Civil Society*
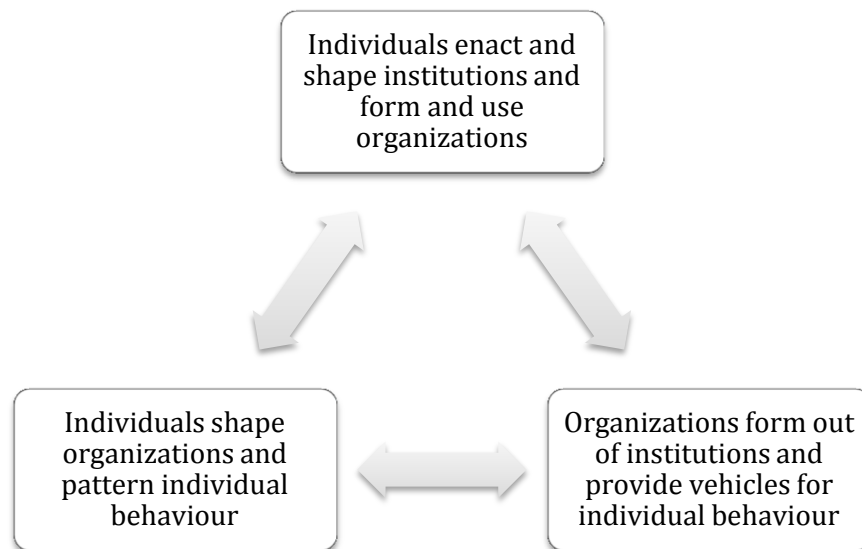
Source: Adapted from Anheier (2004), p.24. Figure 2.1.

Anheier (*ibid*, p.24) describes *institutions* as structures that define, and regulate norms and regulations in different polities. In his view *organizations* are voluntary, informal units that form the infrastructure of civil society, enabling participation and voice. *Individuals* are people participating in those organizations, grouped together for specific cause and interests.

In the 1960s, Almond and Verba noted in their five nation study of mass attitudes and values, that the world's *political culture* is becoming more participatory than ever before, the question is only in the *mode of participation*: "The democratic state offers the ordinary man the opportunity to take part in the political decision-making process as an influential citizen" (Almond & Verba, 1989, p. 3). Inglehart (1967) has supported this notion, and while considering economic factors important he admits that sustainable democracy depends heavily on special cultural factors, which in turn support macroeconomic and –political development.

Almond and Verba identified three broad types of political culture that existed in the countries of their study: 1) *parochial*, in which there are no clear differentiation of special, political roles among actors and no expectations exist towards political system; 2) *subject*, in which institutional and role differentiation exists, but towards which subjects are in nearly passive relationship; and 3) *participant*, in which the relationships between institutions and members of the society are holistic and fully interactive (*op.cit.* pp.22-40).

And finally, while regretting that the concept of civil society had become a buzz term in narratives and discussions about democracy, Robert Putnam (1993; 1994; 1995) reinvigorated the term *social capital* in 1990s as to explain the nature and importance of healthy civic society. At that time, it had already been conceptualized, most notably by Pierre Bourdieu who defined it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248).

Siisiäinen (2000) has well summarized Putnam's and Bourdieu's conceptualizations from comparative perspective. In his view, while Putnam's three-dimensional idea of social capital consists of moral obligations and norms, social values, and social networks; then Bourdieu's concept is related to class relationships by differentiating between economic, cultural and social capital through the mediation of symbolic capital (see also Edwards & Foley, 1998). Also James Coleman has been one of these three most cited authors on social capital (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2008), his views will be elaborated later in the chapter on schools and education.

2.3 Civil rights and liberties

Civil rights and liberties are tightly associated with democratic political regimes, civil society and engagement. Harvard Law School fellows contend that "though civil rights and civil liberties represent two different areas of focus, there is no distinct line between the two" (Hill, et al., 2007, p. 4).

The term *civil rights* gained popularity in the 1950s in the United States and have frequently become associated with Martin Luther King, Jr. and the associated movements at that time (Morris, 1999). Amartya Sen (1999a, p.4) argues that "political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action." Through acts like voting or forming lobbying and interest groups, people can assist in legitimizing governments and pressing them for social justice and action. Modern scope of civil rights movement has become remarkably broad, including groups promoting issues of

disability, sexual minorities, immigrants' and many other organizations (Macnair & Harris, 2000).

Recalling again the Athenian great statesman Pericles, he announced that "everyone is *equal* before the law," and that the power is in the hands of *all* Athenians (Thucydides, 1972). In the 18th century America, it was popular to discuss about people's natural rights and one of the core understandings was that in the state of nature, individuals had to be free of subjugation from others. Additionally liberty, life and the pursuit of happiness were considered as natural rights (Hamburger, 1993).

European Enlightenment was driven by the belief that all men are created equal. This belief has been built into American Declaration of Independence as a statement, although the initial elaboration that men are also independent, was deleted by its creators as can be seen from the original document (Library of Congress, 2013). The roots of this idea can be tracked down to John Locke and his *Two Treatises of Government* (Locke, 1764b, Book I, Ch.6), while the question has always been how to interpret the statement "all men" – is it literally only men of certain privilege, or are women, children and minorities also included, for example (see also Rawls, 1993).

In his *Theory of Justice,* Rawls (1999, pp. 65-78), proposed the term *democratic equality,* where the dimensions of *fair equality of opportunity* and *difference* would intersect for the societies to be open to all, despite their social position and would work for everyone's advantage. For example, he saw public schools and universal education as correcting morally arbitrary social contingencies (p.243), although not mentioning the possibly segregative nature of public school districts that form around

neighborhoods of different kind. In his view the difference principle would give priority to the interests of worst-off groups and could correct for natural contingencies such as the lack of talents.

Civil liberties typically mean the *right* to free speech, assembly, property and religion (Zakaria, 1997). Riker (1982, pp.6-7) recalls that the idea of basic civil liberties was originally established to protect English politicians from persecution once they were freed from their office. He also points to a fundamental difference in two perspectives on liberties, arguing that Anglo-American societies have been guided by Locke's description of liberty as inalienable, independent and natural rights; whereas the other perspective is that of Rousseau, who saw liberty in the right to participate in government. As we can see, the interpretation of liberties can be potential source for perpetual disagreements: the first approach presenting a liberal and selective "for the people" condition, whereas the second one is traditional that adds "by the people" to the equation.

2.4 Civic engagement and political participation

People's ability to engage in societal matters enables them to have better control over their lives through voicing their needs and proposing actions. As with the concept of civil society, also in the case of *civic engagement* and *political participation* the potential confusion between political and non-political levels needs to be addressed. Verba, et.al acknowledge that the difference between these two types is rather vague and often overlapping, offering an example of parent-teacher organizations where parents' organizing and networking experience could be easily transferable to politics

later and there could be many other transformations in other areas (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Heywood (2002, pp.8-9) suggests that civic engagement is about the balance between the given or acquired status and consequently of people's roles, i.e. there is equilibrium between individual's political rights and responsibilities before the community. Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001, p.55) include a wide range of activities beyond voting and electoral activities that clouds the distinction between civic and political sphere. They see civic engagement as "involvement in organizations to take stands in politics, informal efforts to address community problems; and voluntary service on local governing boards or regular attendance at meetings of such boards". Indeed, it is difficult to come to a unified agreeement on definition(s) that could be used to describe a range of people's activities both on political and community level (O'Neill, 2006).

From the operational perspective, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has attempted to measure civic engagement, regretting that there is no universally accepted conceptual criteria to do that. While admitting that these indicators are not ideal, OECD has included both political and non-political dimensions to its civic engagement index: the ability of people to have a voice in political processes on the quality of governance, and their satisfaction with public institutions (OECD, How's Life?, 2011). Having a voice is not only about respecting the basic freedoms and rights, but people are also more likely to be satisfied with national institutions and governance when they have had opportutines to have a say in various stages of decision-making (Sen, 1999b, pp.146-59; Frey & Stutzer, 2005).

Table 2.1 *Forms of Engagement*

CIVIL PARTICIPATION (latent political participation)		POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (manfifest)		
Involvement (attention)	Civic engagement (action)	Formal political participation	Activism (extra-parliamentary participation)	
			Legal	Illegal
Individual forms				
Personal interest in politics and issues. Attentiveness to political issues	Activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues	Electoral participation and contact activities	Extra-parliamentary forms of participation: to make once voice heard or to make a difference by individual means (e.g. signing petitions, political consumption)	Politically motivated unlawful acts on an individual basis
Collective forms				
A sense of belonging to a group or a collective with a distinct political profile or agenda Life-style related politics (e.g. identity, clothes, music, food, values)	Voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community, for charity, or to help others (outside the own family and circle of friends)	Organized political participation: membership in conventional political parties, trade unions and organizations	Loosely organized forms or network-based political participation: new social movements, demonstrations, strikes, and protests	Illegal and violent activities and protests: demonstrations, riots, squatting buildings, damaging property, confrontations with the police or political opponents

Source: Ekman & Amnå, 2009. Table 1: Latent and manifest political participation

Ekman and Amnå (2009) divide types of engagement to c*ivic participation* that could

signify individual participation in civil domain and to *political participation* that could

refer to activites on public or political domain. While also in their view the term *civic*

engagment has been weakly conceptualized, stretched too wide while aspiring to cover both concepts, they have provided their own view that is presented in Table 2.1 above.

As we can see, there is a very fine line between the main dimensions. Stone (2005) has provided an umbrella-term for engagement and describes it as *civic capacity* or a collaborative effort on governmental and non-governmental level to address and solve community problems. In his view, the character of governmental activity largely depends on non-governmental activity. Since it might be unrealistic to expect people's full participation in all aspects of civic governance in complex modern worlds, Barber (1996) advises people not to withdraw, but at least to participate selectively, while emphasizing that it is a necessary precondition for retaining and improving democracies.

Most democratic countries have guaranteed equal political rights and institutionalized participation opportunities for their people. Though rights are equal and there seem to be no legal barriers to participate, people's engagement in civic activities and political decision-making is generally stratified (Verba, 2003). Putnam and many others have expressed their concern about decreasing levels of civic engagement in mature democracies (Putnam, 1993, 1995; Lane, 2000; Sander & Putnam, 2010; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999), while others believe that this kind of generalizations are misleading and the channels for engagement have just become more varied (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Michael, 2006; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007).

Necla Acic-Topra who examined patterns and levels of civic engagement in nineteen European countries, found that "country specific factors play a more important role in reducing the variations between countries than individual level factors" (Acik-Topra, 2009). This is substantiated by Pippa Norris' study on social capital in forty-seven countries which grounded the assumptions that countries' historical and cultural traditions - highly dependent on religious backgrounds - can have substantial effect on people's engagement (Norris, 2001; see also Almond & Verba, 1989).

Norris tied people's engagement to communities' levels of social trust and found that people in Nordic region and Anglo-American democracies are more likely to become engaged than those in the post-Soviet and Central European societies (Norris, 2001; see also Norris, 2011; 2012). Inequalities in voice and participation have consequences on political decisions made by those who participate, which in turn have an effect on overall justice and equality within the state (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

It has been questioned whether the differences in civic engagement and discontent of those who are less engaged, are necessarily an indicator of undemocratic decision-making (Sliwka & Istance, 2006). While there will always be differences within and among political regimes, it will also remain a contested issue whether and to what extent people should participate or on which levels to engage, and how it should be conceptualized.

2.5 Civic voluntarism model

People's voices are different and are heard differently. Not all people can, want to, or know how to exercise it effectively. There can be many reasons for that: ignorance, health problems, lack of necessary resources like time, information and so on. Based on their decade-long study of 15,000 participants in 1990s, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) distinguish between three, closely interrelated types of political inactivity:

- *Scarcity of resources*. People cannot participate in political and civic life because of inadequate amount of money, time and education, for example. This can lead to:

- *Psychological disengagement*. People do not want to engage, because either they do not believe it matters or changes much, they are not interested in politics, or they have little information about politics and options of how they could participate. These problems can lead to the final stage of:

- *No recruitment,* meaning that people have become sidelined from civic and political life simply due to gradually increased isolation and limited social networks.

2.5.1 Resources

Putnam (1995) believes that civic solidarity and reciprocity are the primary factors that define the availability of community resources. Verba et al., on the other hand, say that it is first and foremost the lacking resources that cause people's civic inactivity. Disparities in participatory rights or resources that people have access to,

like money, time, education, civic skills – result in differences in people's civic engagement levels (Verba, 2003; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). This has been statistically validated also by the OECD (*"How's Life?,* 2011), reporting that although people in all its member states enjoy fundamental civic rights and could exercise them effectively, the poor, the less educated and the youth are the groups most visibly withdrawn from opportunities to engage.

There is a paradox of people perceiving the institutional social and political order as an external reality, taking it as a historical fact that has authority over them and that they cannot change. Berger and Luckmann (1991) find it necessary to emphasize that an individual does not become a member of the society by birth, but is predisposed to an existing social situation of the family (race, ethnicity, gender, for example) and the surrounding institutions like neighborhood and social class. Individuals are capable of creating the world as they wish, but the result can be something that will be later perceived as a non-human product that reacts back to people. Verba (2003) elaborates, pointing out that the socioeconomic causes of political inequality are "durable", regenerative in nature and thus passed on from one generation to another.

Individuals with fewer resources tend to have weaker voices, which may result in policies that favor those with louder voices, i.e. with more resources (Krugman, 2007). At the same time, while democratic polities aim to distribute resources in specific ways, their representative institutions are always targeted by those who are less advantaged than those in power and searching for ways to redistribute (Przeworski, 2009). Here again the voice of Pericles is in place, saying that what counts in people's political engagement is not their class or status, but their ability to

service the state. In his view nothing, including people's monetary wealth should keep them participating in political life (Thucydides, 1972)[3].

Most solutions for improving people's capability, interest and opportunities to engage in governing – formal or non-formal – require governmental intervention. The scarcity of resources like money, time, lack of specific knowledge and so on, are likely to be among first reasons of all successive forms of political inactivity. Education might be the primary one of these (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Laski (1935, p.73) has warned that if people are not adequately educated and informed, they might also not have the sense of urgency to demand access to governing decisions.

Laski (*op.cit.*) believed that in capitalist societies where the gap between rich and poor is considerable, it is in the interests of government to maintain the ignorance of the multitude and thus keep the education systems such as to support their reign (see also Becker, 1964). Habermas (1996, pp. 316-17) sees this as a "domination over the colonized public of citizens," or a form of paternalism where the information is withheld from the public, which eventually results in people's lack of expertise to form adequate opinions. And on the contrary, people trained too well may threaten the wealth and throne of those currently in power.

Habermas (*op.cit.*) maintains that in ideal participatory democracies, every political affair should be publicly discussed, although not all of them become into law or are related to people's private lives. Not everyone thinks that this is realistic however,

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[3] Much may have been lost in translation(s), thus considering those various versions of the meaning of *demos,* it is not clear if "all" and "people" mean "all people" as we would understand it today, in democracies, i.e it is not clear who were included and who were not (if at all) in ancient democracies by Pericles' account, for example. *– Author's note.*

since the specific knowledge that is required for modern governance might be too complicated and thus it would too much to expect from the general public (Laski, 1935; Lowell, 1968; Schumpeter, 2003). This position is supported also by many liberals who believe that people might not be able to decide on formal levels what is best for them and for the society collectively (Heywood, 2002).

It is possible that the fear of "ordinary people's" lack of information and ability to meaningfully participate has become a forgotten worry today, in the year of 2013. Rather, modern governments are increasingly concerned with keeping too much information going out to virtual universe (Simon, Corrales, & Wolfensberger, 2002; Bruce, 2004; Roberts A., 2006). As of today, this has become almost mission impossible, while non-governmental and non-political groups may be many steps ahead in terms of accessing the desired information (think of Wikileaks, for example).

Thus the most effective way to increase participative equality is to concentrate on eliminating resource-based inequalities, i.e. improve social and economic conditions that might hinder individuals' capacity from serving (Sen, 1992; Anderson & Beramendi, 2008). Current global, economic difficulties have shown that this is not a short-term and easy fix, but there are other resources like enabling broader access to better quality education, that can be handled nevertheless. A well-known economist Ben Friedman has said in an interview that the overall economic growth and people's improving living standards can contribute to shaping "the moral character of people and society" through their increased interest in civic engagement and the character of it. As a result, it can lead to increased fairness, tolerance towards diversities, equal opportunities and improved democracy (Friedman, 2008).

To have political rights to participate, but not to have appropriate tools or resources is just an empty act of democracy; especially if the lack of these is the result of government's mismanagement and deliberate exclusive policies (Galston, 2004; see also Marshall, T.H., 2006). There are different types of resources needed for efficient participation in public spheres: from information about political agendas to specific civic skills to make one's voice heard and engaging in governance issues. If policies and the institutional opportunities do not enable that, then the result is a wide(-ning) gap between the state, the elite and the rest of the public.

2.5.2 Motivation

Scarcity of resources is one of the primary, direct causes of people's disinterest in political processes and civic engagement. However, feeling that political decisions are rather about resources that they do not possess anyway, people can feel even more disengaged from political institutions where their voice could matter (Warren, 2009). People's political motivation and socioeconomic resources are in a reciprocal relationship, since better resources are likely to support more active engagement and thus resulting in government programs like tax policy for example, that prefer those of more resources (Verba, 2003).

Many groups and individuals, dissatisfied with the situation of their resources, carry the blame on to their political regime. Seeing little or no changes, sensing a deep gap between people in need and the government, and struggling with their own resource-caused daily difficulties, people will likely become detached from political and civic life (Berger B., 2011). One remedy could be, despite the economic situation of the

country, to fundamentally change the political system and decentralize the governing power, i.e. bring it closer to the people (Hart, 1972).

This, warns Heywood (2002), could cause dismantling of the nation state, but modern states may be too large for effective and universal political engagement in all important issues. Nevertheless, to increase people's interest in participation, governments need to become more responsive to people's concerns and follow up with normative actions. Of course, there is always a possibility that more active people with acute concerns will overcome the problem of resources and find ways to get engaged.

Traditions play their role, too. In post-communist societies, for example, peoples' voices were long suppressed while selected forms of civic engagement were planned and strictly controlled by communist governments (Letki, 2003). Also Putnam (1993) has noted that since many post-communist societies lack the tradition of free civic engagement, their people have come to be rather passive in what comes to assuming a responsibility and control of their governments. In fact, he elaborates this notion to some other countries, pointing out the historical differences in terms of civic participation in Northern and Southern Italy, for example.

Knack (2002) is more straightforward, considering political passivity and deliberate non-informedness as a free ride on other people's expense. Whatever the cause of people's inactivity, who does not "play along"' will likely be excluded from the game, i.e. there will be no eager political responsiveness to their problems as these have not been articulated. Thus it is very likely that the society has the face of the active

majority who express their voices and participates in circles and institutions to advance their interests (Verba, 2003). Mill (1869) has called this tendency a tyranny of the majority.

Higher engagement requires activity also from people's side, meaning that people need to act to remove those engagement barriers that are in their power to handle. For example, Schneider et al., invite people as consumers of democratic products and services to be more active in becoming better informed about their options and choices available, and make decisions only after careful considerations (Schneider, Teske, Marchall, & Roch, 1997). This is a two-way process, requiring motivation and initiative from both sides: from providers and consumers, or in other words from the government and the public.

2.5.3 Recruitment

Tocqueville (2002) once regretted that people in disadvantaged situation and individually without power, often do not realize the strength and influence they could acquire by uniting together. Nevertheless, it is not rare for people with scarce resources to mobilize and form powerful interest groups on particular issues. These could be associations, political parties, professional unions and so forth, institutions that can attract more of those that feel disadvantaged in some specific area.

Despite of recruitment's positive effect on civic engagement, there is a very high likelihood that people who are drawn to meaningful participation tend to be representing more advantageous groups, i.e. provided with resources like good education, "right" race, ethnicity, and wealth (Morrow, 2001; Geddes, 2002; Byrne,

2005). Thus the more negative effect of stratification around certain activities may overshadow the positives from increased participation, while again resulting in political decisions that are based on a limited or unrepresentative part of population.

This is not always the case, however. Religion for example, can be a powerful political engine and plays a major role in people's political and general civic engagement (Leege, 1993; Kellstedt, 1993). Churches are in a prominent position in many countries, they shape people's beliefs and values, offer social norms and structures for life challenges and puzzles, especially on the local level (Smidt, 1999; Uslaner, 2002). Also Dewey (1994) has classified religion one of the causes of social association and Wilensky (1981) has presented evidence that Christian democracy has played a major role in mediating the differing class interests (see also Van Kersbergen 1995; Esping-Andersen, 1990).

2.5.4 Social capital

It is difficult if not impossible to come to a broad agreement what is the cause and what is the result of people's inactivity and (dis-) engagement from political and civic life. *Social capital* has become one of the leading concepts to describe, measure and analyze the civil society (Von Schnurbein, 2009). Resources, motivation and recruitment can all be gathered under the umbrella-term social capital that can involve both political and non-political dimensions.

Following the observations during his longitudinal research in Italy, Putnam (1993) made further use of and elaborated the concept of social capital in 1990s, a concept that was primarily introduced by Bourdieu and Coleman (although roots go back to

Durkheim, Weber and Tocqueville). Putnam defines social capital as a community organization and a blend of all the three dimensions provided by Verba, Schlozman and Brady in their civic voluntarism model. In his view, the three dimensions or forms of social capital are *norms*, *networks* and *trust* within communities.

Declining levels of trust in institutions are a concern of many democratic systems. Several studies have indicated that trust in institutions influences countries' performance in several ways, including civic engagement (Putnam, 1994; La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1997; Cox, 2003) It has also been implied that trust is both an input and an outcome of effective public policy while the causality can work in different directions: people's trust in government can cause them to be more effective while effective governments increases people's trust (Morrone, 2009).

Stocks of social capital facilitate cooperation among people and should consequently contribute for collective benefit. More specifically, Knack (1992) believes that peoples' participation in governance matters through voting or engaging in associational life, is influenced by intangible solidarity incentives such as status, social pressure, friendships, recreational activities and so on. In short, this kind of activities and resources can increase the feeling of belonging. Putnam (1995) is on the same frequency, adding that political inequality is often embedded in nonpolitical institutional systems, while people's ability and willingness to engage is greatly influenced by those networks a person is involved with: family, school, church, professional organizations and so on. More engagement results in more information. Thus it is important to understand how social capital and networks influence participation, people's agendas and preferences (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 2000).

Adler and Kwon (2002, p.23) have provided a working definition on social capital that would encompass internal and external dimensions and would be attributable both to individuals and groups as:

"the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor".

They also summarized the overall framework of social capital figuratively as has been reproduced in Figure 2.2. Their concept suggests that all three dimensions of ability (resources), motivation and opportunity (recruitment or social capital transactions) must be present for social capital to be activated, while the outcome value of social capital also depends on contextual factors like tasks and symbolic demands placed on the individual or group, and on the availability of complementary resources.

Schneider et.al. (1997), have pointed out that since social capital is built on trust and mutual cooperation, it can reduce transaction costs between people and thus reduce the likelihood of serious conflicts. On the other hand, where social structures are weak, civic engagement and social capital also tend to be fragile. Modern civic organizations where people can be members of clubs and associations but never meet each other, coupled with shrinking families where it sometimes consists only of a single, working mother, contributes to weakening of the social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1991; Portes 2000; Putnam, 1995).

Figure 2.2 *Conceptual Model of Social Capital*
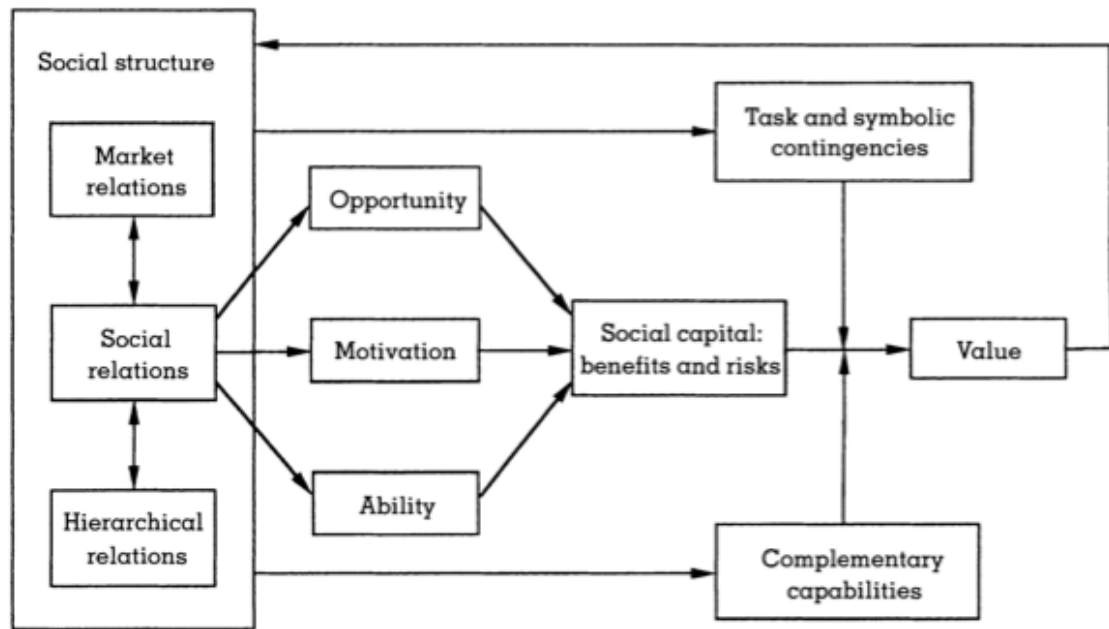
The weakening of social ties has been of concern for early sociologists already. Tönnies (2012) spoke of the shift from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society), while his contemporary Simmel (2006) shared the concern in *Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben* (big cities and the community life) on the impact of the metropolis on people. Inndeed, engagement is a sign and an outcome of social belonging and attachment: those who feel strongly attached to a group should be more likely to act on its behalf than those who do not feel like belonging. A feeling of duty can encourage engagement. Additionally, people are likely to be influenced by the social norms of those they live among. (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003).

Just as in with other resources, Coleman (1998) considered the social capital as having a reproductive nature, i.e. its strength and danger is in social relations that make one person's resources available for others. Or not, if the network is narrow or does not provide necessary resources. Where social capital is abundant, there democracies will

likely thrive due to the trust and reciprocal processes that exists within communities (Fukuyama, 1995). While Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (1995) message that social capital in Western countries is in an alarming decline made headlines for a decade, there are increasingly more of those who argue that rather than declining, it is just changing in nature: becoming more global, digital and so on (Skocpol, 2003; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Michael, 2006).

The challenge for democracies is how to expand the opportunities for people to engage in meaningful ways, how to guarantee that their political rights can be realized, how to alleviate the social bias across societies that segregates people by differentiating their access to decision making. The following chapter provides an overview of basic forms or models of democratic government and their fundamental principles in terms of people's engagement in decision making and governance.

3. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

> *I assume that a key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals* (Dahl, 1971, p.1).

Schmitter and Karl (1991) have noted that when polities leave their authoritarian traditions and move to new ones, they choose and practice different democracy components in various ways and on different time periods of improvement. This results in polities of different character, albeit still democracies if the fundamental requirements have been met. In O'Donnell's (1998) view, while capitalism has been the cause for different democracy forms occurring across the world, we must acknoledge that these ideas are largely imported from West to other parts of the world.

To adapt democratic regimes, different polities have accommodated foreign ideas to their own structural and ideological forms that has caused the spread of many different types of democracies across the globe.

3.1 Small *vs* large democracies

This insight into democracy's antique heritage illustrated the form of governance that was practiced in ancient Greece: a participatory or direct democracy in today's terms. Democracy was seen as tightly related to small, self-governing city-states where decision-making was based on direct participation leading to consensus (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). In the same vein and looking back in history, many modern thinkers believe that little community clusters can practice more inclusive democracy (Barber, 2004; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Remmel, 2010; Lassen & Serritzlew, 2011).

Dag Anckar (2010) has suggested however, that there is a threshold at which the size starts to matter. Relying on his analysis, he agrees that smaller countries have considerably higher degree of democracy than larger countries, but the key factor is how small is small enough to have this effect: according to his calculations it has to mean population of less than 500.000 individuals. When this number has been exceeded, he did not see the association between the size and democracy anymore.

Forty years ago, young scientists Dahl and Tufte (1973) argued that being more homogeneous, small systems are likely to be more consensual, whereas large systems are more likely heterogeneous and thus more conflictual. They provided their own view of pros and cons of small *versus* large democracies that has been adapted to Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 *Pros and Cons of Small and Large Democracies*

	Small democracies	Large Democracies
Citizen participation	More opportunities for participation in decision making	Opportunities to participate, at least by voting. Political system large enough for people to control all or most of the major aspects of their situation.
Security and Order	Easier for people to internalize norms and values, hence to increase voluntary compliance and reduce coercion.	Opportunity to extend the rule of law (as opposed to violence among states) over a larger area. Better equipped to prevent damage to the internal life of the society from outside forces.
Unity and diversity	Likely to be nearly homogeneous in respect to beliefs, values and goals.	Likely to exhibit more diversity in beliefs, values, goals, socio-economic characteristics, etc.
Common interest	Easier for people to relate their own self-interest or understanding of the good with the interests of others.	More opportunities for divergence of views on individual, group, and general interests and goals. Reduced likelihood that single interests of one segment of the members will dominate the whole system.
Loyalties	More likely to generate loyalty to a single integrated community.	More likely to generate multiple loyalties to various communities.
Emotional life	More likely to invest civic relationships with high levels of affect. People are likely to consider each other friends or enemies, according to whether they agree or disagree on politics. Stronger pressures for conformity to collective norms.	More likely to divest civic relations of affect, to make civic relations more impersonal and emotionally neutral. People are less likely to consider their fellows either friends or enemies for political reasons. Weaker pressures for conformity to collective norms. Alienation and anomie – loss of community – are much more likely.
Rationality	Greater speed and accuracy of communication among all members of the system. More opportunities for all to gain knowledge needed for decisions by direct observation and experience. People are likely to understand	More opportunities or all, acting collectively, to exercise control over a broader range of important matters. Greater opportunities for exploring a bigger set of

	their political problems better than people in larger democracies	alternatives; hence they are more likely to understand better their political problems and to control their situations more completely.
Control of leaders	Leaders are likely to be more responsive to people's views.	Leaders are likely to be more responsive to people's views.

Source: Adapted from Dahl & Tufte (1973, p.13-16).

Dahl and Tufte (*idem,* p.16) admitted that almost all these comparisons are politically worth nothing, except the last ones on rationality and the control (*shaded areas – Author's note*) of the leaders where the outcome should to be the same.

Gerring and Zarecki (2012, p.5) take an opposite stance of many political scientists, arguing that in contemporary societies "a larger population fosters greater democracy understood according to the electoral model." Steven Hood (2004) provides supportive empirical evidence by recalling that the founders of America established large, federal republic particularly with the purpose to invite more voices to express their needs and to neutralize internal conflictual forces.

3.2 Basic models of democracies

A structured overview of most common forms of democracy is well justified for the purpose of this monograph. There are countless of ways how to describe different variants, what to emphasize and even to come up with new definitions according to contemporary developments in societies. Held (2006) for example, has defined nine models of democracy with more than seventy characteristics. These will be slightly elaborated later.

Coppedge (2005) has provided a useful, more simplified view by arguing that most definitions of democracy fit under four major types: economic, social, communtiarian and political democray. Furthermore, he has divided political democracy into subtypes that can be seen below:

A. Economic democracy
B. Social democracy
C. Communitarian democracy
D. *Political democracy*
    1. Procedural democracy
        a. Direct participatory democracy
        b. Represenative democracy
            1) Popular sovereignty demcoracy
            2) Liberal democracy
                (- consolidated democracies)
                (- transitional democracies)

This work concentrates on procedural or *political democracy,* on institutions and political process or procedures. Bollen (1980) has noted that while in an ideal political democracy the power of the elite is minimized and that of the non-elite maximized, this definition does not take into account the economic aspect of the system. Hence a communist country may be more democratic than a capitalist one according to this definition.

Nevertheless, moving ahead with democratic concepts, we see that political democracy divides into two dimensions of direct participatory democracy and representative democracy. Both forms allow a certain level and mode of people's engagement and influence. In modern states there is a plurality of individuals and groups with different interests and agendas that differ also of their governments (Dahl, 1989). The philosophy of the political regimes that they live in, defines *who* can be involved, and *how* can people voice their needs and influence decisions.

3.3 Participatory democracy

Participation is both about inclusiveness and equality, about the "rule by the people" as a fundamental criterion of an ideal democratic regime. At Gettysburg in 1863, Abraham Lincoln spoke of a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." This phrase has become infamous for democracy[4]. In democracies by their original idea, people should be able to have the freedom to be able to effectively participate in governance, communicate their interests and pressure them to respond (Heywood, 2002). The founders of the United States however, had mixed feelings about people's political participation and thus built different institutional barriers that would help to limit it (Barber, 1996).

In the 18th century Rousseau - who Pateman (1975, p.22) calls "the theorist *par excellence* of participation" - believed that democracies could be only small. He argued that if each and every person has not participated in law-making, this law is null and void (Rousseau, Book III, Part 15, 1762). During the Renaissance, this form of government was practiced in the area of today's Italy where several small city-states sought independence from conquerors and religion, while it is also where the roots of republicanism lie (O'Donnell, 1998). This practice disappeared after the dissolution of feudal order and with the birth of much bigger and powerful units in

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[4] Lijphart (1999, p.1), however, refers to Clifford May's article where he points out that the original statement belongs to Daniel Webster instead of Lincoln. Webster was an American senator who gave an address in 1830 where he spoke of a "people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people" (May, 1987).

18th century: modern nation states where the participatory democracy transformed to representative or liberal form of government (Held, 2006).[5]

In Mill's opinion, there is no use of universal suffrage and participation in national government if people are not well prepared or educated for that. He rather supported people's participation on local level where they could practice it better and have better options to influence their local governments (Mill, 1859; 1861; see also Pateman 1975). Mill's fear was very much in line with American educator of that time, Horace Mann who pled to the government to move towards universal education, that would help to cultivate knowledgeable citizen engagement among the people (Mann, 1855).

Leege (1993) recalls Toqcueville's speculation that too much equality may eventually lead to despotism. On the other hand, he also saw a remedy for that in the mediating institutions like religion, political system and voluntary organizations that could balance people's interests. A widely discriminative option that states have also always practiced is to allow only limited citizenship. Interestingly, even contemporary political scientists today sometimes slip on that concept, whether deliberately or not. Verba, for example, while stressing political equality as being a fundamental importance of human beings, then narrowed it adding "among citizens" (Verba, 2003, p. 668).

As the historical insight indicated, the Athenian or republican city-states had not achieved their full participatory potential either, if it was ever even intended (Dahl,

1989; Held, 1992). In fact, the majority of world's "democracies" have never been full democracies in terms of Rousseau's requirement, i.e. participation in rule making (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). It has taken countries a few hundred years to elaborate the notion of *people* (or citizen) universally, to a broader amount of people. Universal literacy skills and mass communication have emancipated individuals, cultivated the awareness of their legitimate interests, and in connection to the notion of accountability to demand "no taxation without representation", or to have a role in governance (Menendez, 2000). This development has not always been peaceful: recall French revolution in 1789, reformist movements in Britain and struggles for independence in the United States (Dewey, 1935; Held, 2006).

Beyond directly political participation, there are a number of other ways to engage and participate in ways that influence both civic and political agendas. Volunteering in local communities, helping in election campaigns, joining associations, or becoming a member in school parents' committee would be just some of the examples (Bowler, Donovan, & Karp, 2007; Roberts, 2008). Habermas (1996) elaborates by saying that as the society becomes more divided along functional lines, so does membership and participation in various professional, recreational and other multiple forms and sometimes overlapping subsystems that can eventually overlap with political dimensions (see also Barber, 1996).

Here also technology advancements have to be mentioned as these have brought countless of unseen, extremely fast and effective tools for civic engagement and political participation (Ferdinand, 2000; Bucy & Gregson, 2001). More and more people have internet, computers, tablets and smartphones with elaborate, daily

improving software that can be used for various civic and political actions according to everyone's taste. In democratic countries with free speech, media and internet, almost everyone can find a way to influence politics and could participate in governance of their communities if the institutional options have been created.

This new form of engagement can be called a *virtual democracy* (Norris & Jones, 1998; Hague B., 1999; Van Dijk, 2000; de Zúñiga, Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2010). Less and less people fulfill their civic duties through procedures that require physical activity other than typing on the keyboard. The new and ever widening digital world can help to remove the engagement barriers for those of limited resources: it is all out there to learn and to join forces with other groups with similar concerns or interests. Public libraries and the increasing variety of other opportunities exist for people who do not have personal electronic equipment to use.

3.4 Representative democracy

In her classic text *The Concept of Representation,* Hanna Pitkin (1967) has argued that there is no common understanding about the nature of representation and about what a fair representation is. Almost a century ago, American journalist and satirist Henry L. Mencken (1926, pp. 83-84) wrote that it does not matter, because people cannot make a difference anyway:

> *"The truth is that the difference between representative democracy and direct democracy is a great deal less marked than political sentimentalists assume. Under both forms the sovereign mob must execute its will, and in either case the agents may have ideas of their own, based upon interests of their own, and the means at hand to do and get what they will [...]. Worse, both forms of democracy*

encounter the difficulty that the generaity of the citizens, [...] remain congenitally unable to comprehend many of the problems before them..."

The most important transformation of democratic ideas and practices that has been accompanied city-states transformation to large nation-states, is that of the political representation. The representative bodies have largely replaced the citizen assemblies of Athenian democracy and there are almost no limits to the population size for the representative governments (Pateman,1975; Pitkin, 2004; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Indeed, already Rousseau (*op.cit.*) predicted that the idea of representation will inevitably alter the democratic process and people's ability to meaningfully influence.

As for the first known source mentioning representative democracy, Manin and Urbinati (2007) refer to Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States at the end of 18th century. They also note that at the same time period, French political theorist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès had published a book where he made a clear distinction between two types of representative government. In addition to voting in both forms, the democratic form includes local meetings between the electorate and agents, while the non-democratic form is only about electing representatives to national assemblies (see also Sieyès, 2003).

Governments have tried to limit the circle of individuals who share the control in the ruling processes and structures (Kymlicka, 1995; Phillips, 1995; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). As Hadenius (1992) claims, this is an approach with serious shortcomings as it embraces only a certain groups of people, and leaves many unprotected who are equally contributing to states' wellbeing. On the other hand, he finds it difficult to find

criterions that would equally embrace all those within the borders of a state, be it long- term, non-citizen residents, refugees, businessmen, or some other groups.

The world's oldest, shortest, and still valid constitution is that of the United States. Adopted in 1787 and having the preamble starting with the famous "We the people," it seems to refer to an inclusive democratic stronghold in that country (White House, 2013; Library of Congress, 1787).   Next lines of the constitution refer to delegated political and legislative powers however, through representatives of the House and Senate who are to be "chosen". Dahl (1989) has doubted if the early proponents of representation who aimed at enlarging the franchise as to include more members into the political process, actually intended to create inclusive democracy at all.

Indeed, also Manin (1997) argues that in Madison's America the elected, representative government had nothing to do with democracy in its original meaning of ancient Athens. Nevertheless, while visiting America Tocqueville was awed by the scope of political liberties and opportunities that did not exist in mid-19th century France. Pitkin (1994) on the other hand, views the history from dual perspective and specifies that 18th century American democrats in fact did introduce representation as to enable large-scale democracy, whereas Aristotelian conservatives saw representation as a way to avoid ordinary people becoming involved in policy making.

Claims for representation are part of the process of claiming membership in a polity. Modern governments are presented with a pressing demand from the people: to form representative governments with inclusive electorates where a wide spectrum of civic rights and freedoms are enabled (Dahl, 1989; Fotopolous, 1997). Different policy

debates about representation are part of the democracy development process, and also reflect on how political actors understand democracy by drawing attention to the inclusion and exclusion of various groups.

A vocal opponent to representative democracy, Rousseau voiced his opinion in his *Social Contract* (2008, Book II, Ch. 15) as follows:

> *"Sovereignty, for the same reason as makes it inalienable, cannot be represented; it lies essentially in the general will, and will does not admit of representation: it is either the same, or other; there is no intermediate possibility. The deputies of the people, therefore, are not and cannot be its representatives: they are merely its stewards, and can carry through no definitive acts. Every law the people has not ratified in person is null and void—is, in fact, not a law."*

In his view, there could be no legitimate forms of representation as the whole idea is fundamentally wrong. However, Urbinati (2006) sees the representative government as the first-best option in modern democracies that could be of many forms, while Plotke (2002) argues that the opposite of representation is not participation, but exclusion.

Pitkin's (1997) widely cited four types of political representation serve well to describe possible views on the act of representation: *formalistic, symbolic, descriptive* and *substantive.* Each of these types represents a different view on of the concept.

1) *Formalistic* representation has two dimensions:

- Authorization: the means and process by which a representative obtains his or her standing or status (through elections, for example) and the means of a representative to enforce his or her will and decisions;

- Accountability:

a) The responsiveness of the representative to the voters;

b) The ability of voters to sanction their representative for failing to respond to their needs and interests (to vote the failed representative out of office, for example).

2) *Symbolic* representation reflects the ways and manner how a representative speaks and stands for the represented. As the definition says, in this case a representative has a symbolic meaning for those he or she represents. The question is what kind of a symbol can a representative create and whether it is accepted among the represented.

3) *Descriptive* representation is when a representative stands for a group by virtue of sharing similar characteristics, interests or experiences. The literature attempts to apprehend the reasons for the low number of certain groups of people setting up their candidacy or being elected to representative bodies. The impact of different obstacles can mount here (Mansbridge, 1999; Bird, 2004).

4) *Substantive* representation is when a representative actually tries to make a difference and advance the interests and preferences of the electorate. People's different experiences depending on their various backgrounds and demographics mean that the values, attitudes and priorities may not represent those of currently holding power and making decisions on the areas of people's close concern.

These views on representation could also be employed for holding representatives accountable. Then, the correct form has to be applied to a particular view on representation. Castiglione and Warren (2006) argue that the underlying implication of these four types is obvious, but has not always been well understood: these are all interrelated by the idea of electorate and their representatives.

Representatives are legitimized through the act of voting by the electorate. Voting - a minimum requirement for democracies - is a fundamental and most basic institutional opportunity for people to articulate their interests that, if pursued collectively, can make an enormous difference and build strong democracies (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Barber, 1996). It is a way to practice democracy that generally does not require much effort from the voter. Voting alone however, does not automatically imply democracy since it is just one form of participation and least dependent on people's civic skills (Riker, 1982). Talmon (1955) has called the regime where people have the right to vote, but no meaningful opportunities to participate, a totalitarian democracy.

While Schumpeter (2003) promoted the minimalist idea, i.e. fewer opportunities for people to vote and participate in political decision-making, Knack (2002, p. 773) considers those who do not realize their voting rights, "narrowly self-interested" people. Schumpeter (*op. cit.*) however simply concerned that due to people's general ignorance on political issues, politicians who push their own agendas can easily manipulate them. Thus he proposed only periodic elections that would legitimize governments and keep them accountable.

Barber (1996) suggests that voting might be the least important activity of political participation and emphasizes that free elections are - as an expression of voice - just a starting point of democracy. Verba et.al. (1995, pp. 12, 52), argue that elections are only a limited instrument for people to choose, whereas it is a convenient method for governments to "fulfill" the basic democracy requirement of "mass" political equality. And finally, Talmon (1955) draws attention to the fact that the majority vote does not represent the general will anyway, but only of those who voted and the results are thus biased toward their interests.

3.4.1 Liberal democracy

Representative democracy can be distinguished between popular sovereignty democracy and liberal democracy (Coppedge 2005). By its name, popular sovereignty democracy indicates that the majority rules and the ultimate power belongs to the people. Most modern democracies claim that their political system is based on popular sovereignty. However, in most of these countries the popular sovereignty is commonly placed in the legislative body that has the ultimate power over rule making (Kelsen, 2009; Arendt, 1970).

Liberal democracy is a pragmatic institutional arrangement where the power of majority is limited by certain basic rights of the individual and some groups. In liberal democracy, constitutional checks and balances have been created on legislative, executive and judicial powers and democratic will-formation takes its form through compromises among interests (Bollen & Paxton, 1998; Coppedge, 2005). Basic political rights or liberties have been defined to allow people to participate in political formations, compete for votes and ultimately arrive to power to be able to make

political decisions (Schumpeter, 2003). In liberal democracies, government is accountable to the public who can legitimize them either by voting for or against them at elections (Habermas, 1996; Przeworski, 2003).

In short, liberal view accepts the imperfect form of control and participation by "the people" as the non-utopian form of reality (Hadenius, 1992, p. 20). Its account is conceptually a minimalist one and Gilbert (2009) has argued that while for many democracy means individual freedoms and maximizing choices, its liberal perspectives strip from it its fundamental meaning. In his view, while liberal democracy is ideally a balanced combination of guaranteed individual freedoms and popular sovereignty, it is also a combination of two contradictory tendencies while liberalization has the potential to undermine democracy.

Classical liberals were vocal opponents against direct, participatory democracy (Ryan, 1995). The author of the "Federalist" papers, James Madison supported the federal state by believing that since the conflicts of interests are inherently natural for a man, in the large state with a large population conflicts would less likely arise. He was expecting the enlarged homogeneous group of people to be less likely engage in conflict-prone situations than would occur in smaller city-states. On the other hand, he did not anticipate that the common good that was the welfare of the newborn federal republic, could not really stretch over the heterogeneous body of the people and the diversity of preferences it has (Dahl, 1989; Holmes, 1995).

In the line of Mencken, Mann, and many others that have already been mentioned here, Hadenius (1992) argues that people are not rational and informed enough to

become involved in more complex policy issues. He warns that although people may be disturbed by the unequal opportunities to voice their concerns, large participation may be detrimental due to the decisions made on superficial knowledge. At the same time, more involvement does not automatically mean better informedness. Furthermore, Hadenius (*idem*) questions the legitimacy of decisions made by few active people that later affect the whole population.

In Barber's (1996) view it is unnatural for people to coexist according to democratic principles. Radical democrats claim that people will never rule anyway, that the democratic institutional arrangement and civic engagement are just meaningless performances (Cohen & Fung, 2004). They are concerned that the growing gap between people and their governments leads to increasing disappointment, ignorance, apathy and as a consequence to breakdown of communities' institutional structures (Heywood, 2002). The notion that people's participation may have become a peripheral, symbolic act in today's liberal, capitalism-orientated democracies is also of Habermas' (1996) concern. He refers to modern democracies as double-faced Janus's[6] because instead of the people, economy and bureaucracy that are driven by their internal values of power and money, govern and direct the communities.

Liberal democracies have often an interesting relationship with religion. Although liberals have tried to distance themselves from it publicly, the basic principle of tolerance is historically grounded on religious beliefs (Sullivan, Pierson, & Marcus, 1993). Furthermore, Ruderman and Godwin (2000) stress that since liberalism has been unable to advance or generate the virtues that it requires, it relies on the moral

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[6] Janus: a double-faced God of beginning and transition in ancient Roman mythology with one face looking to the past and the other to the future. In modern times referring to Janus means also being hypocritical. – *Author's note*

capital of religion. Barro (2000) goes even further warning that detachment from religion may eventually decrease states' democracy levels.

O'Donnell (1998) has argued that complexities arise due to the synthesis of liberalism, republicanism and democracy on one hand, and the struggle between the freedom and autonomy on the other hand. Within the idea of liberal democracy many additional distinctions can be made: parliamentary and presidential, unitary and federal, and so on (Norris, 1997; Diamond, 2002; Kesselman, Krieger, & Joseph, 2013). One can also differentiate between consolidated and transitional democracies, the first one being illustrated with the United States and the latter one with Estonia, for example (see also Gunther, Diamandouros, & Puhle, 1995; Linz & Stepan, 1996). These numerous combinations and overlappings have become increasingly challenging to synthesize.

3.5 Polyarchy

This rather long overview of democratic forms and variances could certainly not cover all forms, new forms, hybrid forms and so on. Modern democracies differ from all other types of political regimes that have existed in history and this change in scale has given birth to new systems that may be even difficult to attach to original democratic ideas. Purcell (1973) has recalled that in the early 1900s, scientific naturalists and psychologists rejected the idea that irrational individuals could live by the democratic principles (see also Barber, 1996), since these are too complicated for them. John Wilde (1979, p.15) believes into established control mechanisms however, arguing that uncontrolled, individual freedom is a road to anarchy. In his view "to be

free is the same as to be rational, and to be rational is to give oneself over to the total system that is developing in world history".

While trying to escape from democracy's too large boots to fill, American political theorist Robert Dahl scaled down the whole concept of and offered a model of minimal procedural conditions that must be present and would likely be more realistic to fulfill. He coined a new term and called this concept a *polyarchy* (Dahl, 1971, 1989), which similarly with democracy refers to the rule by many. He explained the nature of polyarchy in mutually complementary terms as:

- An outcome of attempts to liberalize and democratize the nation states*;*
- A distinctive type of political order that is different from small democracies of city-states and also from non-democracies;
- A "Schumpeterian" system where the political elite is motivated to adjust their conduct in order to win over their competitors;
- A system of political rights;
- An institutional setting enabling large-scale democracy (Dahl, 1989, pp. 218-19).

As a matter of fact, Dahl was one of the first scientists to offer a *scale of nominal indicators* (Table 3.2.) that would allow to measure and compare political regimes (Lord, 2008).

Table 3.2. *Robert Dahl's Polyarchy Criteria*

The following institutions…	… are necessary to satisfy the following criteria
1. Elected officials 2. Free and fair elections	Voting equality
1. Elected officials 3. Inclusive suffrage 4. Right to run for office 5. Freedom of expression 6. Alternative information 7. Associational autonomy	Effective participation
5. Freedom of expression 6. Alternative information 7. Associational autonomy	Enlightened understanding
1. Elected officials 2. Free and fair elections 3. Inclusive suffrage 4. Right to run for office 5. Freedom of expression 6. Alternative information 7. Associational autonomy	Control of the agenda
3. Inclusive suffrage 4. Right to run for office 5. Freedom of expression 6. Alternative information 7. Associational autonomy	Inclusion

Source: R. Dahl (1989, p 222, table 15.1)

Dahl did not quite intend his polyarchy to be an equivalent to democracy (Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990), but in his view (*op.cit.*, p.222) *seven* types of *institutions* need to exist to satisfy the *five* critical, core *criteria* of polyarchy that are described in the table above, while he did not believe that many modern democracies could even reach to full polyarchy levels.

Dahl (1971) argued that polyarchy has two separate dimensions that, in some cases, can be mutually exclusive: *contestation* and *inclusiveness*. The first one is where both political and public opposition and competition are allowed, the second one being

political equality to participate and to control the government. The most challenging factor seems to be the practical implementation and execution of institutional opportuntities (O'Donnell, 1996). Habermas (1996, pp.315-17) maintains that one of the main reasons for this is withholding informaton from the public and people's lack of expertise to form independent opinions. He calls it a technocratic form of paternalism.

3.6 Evaluating Participation and Contestation

Elaborating on concepts and terminology is of crucial importance for any research on democracies, but so are the methodological issues that involve evaluating polities (Gerring, 2012). Riker (1982) argues that democracy is both an *ideal* and *method*, while democratic ends can be achieved by democratic means. While only a few concepts in social sciences can be measured simply and directly (Bollen, 1980), the previous overview was a necessary prelude to continue with the inquiry that could present us some tangible democracy indicators.

Besides counting votes, how to evaluate democracies or one of its dimensions like civic engagement? According to Blalock (1971), conceptualization and measurement are the major obstacles in attempting to integrate theory to research. Although there are no universal criteria and standardized measurement for democracies, there are some fundamental indicators that have been developed and used by several research groups and international organizations that will be elaborated below.

3.6.1 Measurement

Bollen (1980) contends that democratic concept might be one of the most complex examples and the controversy surrounding the measurement of procedural or political democracy remains. Stevens (1946) has provided a liberal remedy for that, advising to assign numerals to facts and to conventions about them. The difficult part would be agreeing on rules of this approach, but through this process it is possible to discover the kind of measurement and scales needed.

It is difficult to create measures that would be universally approved and satisfying. Dahl's polyarchy model has been considered as one of the most successful attempts to translate the vague democracy concept into a measurable variable. Coppedge, Alvarez and Maldonando (2008) have also found that many democracy indexes are actually measuring the participation and contestation dimensions that Dahl has proposed in the case of polyarchies. To prepare for "measurement", Coppedge (2005) proposes to go through three following steps that would results in an *indicato*r, whether in qualitiative or quantitative form:

1. *Conceptualization* – what do you want to measure?;
2. *Operationalization* – define procedures;
3. *Measurement* – perform operational procedures.

Przeworski (2003) has called to be careful with the use of the term of "quality" of democracies. In his view this is a geopolitical instrument in the hands of major international financial institutuons and some powerful states that employ it for their own economic interests and political agendas. The first thing he would do, if

measuring the quality of democracy, would be to thoroughly look into rules and practices that regulate the flow of money to politics in a particular country.

As the theoretical review well illustrated, democracy is a thick and relatively abstract concept with a number of characteristics defining its different traits. Bollen (1980) suggests that ideally and to reach to the desired reliability, a random sample of all possible indicators for political democracy should be chosen. This is rarely the case, however, and researchers typically use subjective ratings and some independently created measures. In the worst case, external concepts have been incorporated, skewing the results even more.

3.6.2 Criteria

To measure as multidimensional concept as democracy is, we need to have well-defined and widely accepted criteria for that which in this case is very difficult. Criteria or traits emerge from the conceptualization process that we carried out above. However, if democracy would be measured according to criteria from ancient Athens, no modern country would probably deserve this label. The length of democratic experience might not matter either. Lord (2008, p.1) insist that indicators of democratic performance should be selected for "their normative defensibility, rather than their empirical measurability". At the same time he admits that it is a very challenging task to create normative indicators for democracy.

Generally, existing democracy indicators are well conceptualized within themselves and reliable in global comparison, but less reliable in measuring smaller differences – in more homogeneous world regions, for example, or within one country (Coppedge, 2005). Many international organizations have built datasets (a selection of these will

follow) that contain many indicators that we have broadly already discussed, but that consist of many layers and hybrid forms. Since democracy is not a single concept, these have not been integrated into a single indicator either.

In order for a polity to be even considered democratic, an agreement on minimum or "floor" conditions must be met. However, this would be only minimal terms and revealing only partial information about countries' political institutions and practice (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). Thus it is useful to define also ideal or the "ceiling" conditions. In Coppedge's (*op.cit.,* 18-19) view, a minimal democracy would be where fundamental civil liberties like freedom of speech, association and so on are allowed, but where people cannot participate in politics neither directly nor indirectly. The ideal democracy would be where both the institutional practical opportunities to equally participate in governance and public life are supported.

Riker (1982) has provided another view of minimum requirements, arguing that since voting is the central act of democracy, we need to have participation, liberty and equality to enable that. Lord (*op.cit*) elaborates, adding that political equality needs to go hand in hand with public control. Since there are many ways in which democracy can be organized and run, the minimum standards of public control and political equality need to be well clarified (Lijphart, 1999) and how should these be realized in practice. Clearly, this indicates a large playground to suggest a number of standards. There are concerns that - when it comes to the measurement of democracy – leave only a thin layer of minimal criteria to measure it with. This means in turn, that many countries can satisfy these conditions and be considered democratic, whereas in reality there are large differences with these groups of democracies (Coppedge, 2005).

Almost as many as there are political scientists and practitioners, there are also different beliefs as for which criteria should be included when measuring democracies. Naturally, a narrow set of criteria is theoretically more adaptable and practically better manageable while a broad set of conditions creates more challenges and narrows the membership in the "democratic" group. In Table 3.3 is presented one possible, a broad set of different democratic criteria developed by David Held (2006) and compiled by Coppedge (*op.cit*).

Table 3.3. *David Held's Democracy Criteria*

INSTITUTIONS	SOCIAL STRUCTURE
1. Regular elections	38. Small community
2. Elections for many offices	39. Patriarchal family or society
3. Secret ballot	40. Intense societal conflict
4. Strong executive	41. Autonomous civil society
5. Party politics	42. Free-market society
6. One person, one vote	43. Maintenance of religious worship
7. Multiple or different voting rights	44. Interest-group pluralism
8. Representation	
9. Constitutional limits to state power	**ECONOMIC SYSTEM**
10. Separation of powers/checks and balances	45. Private property
11. Rule of law	46. Market economy
12. Internal party democracy	47. Industrial society
13. Mixed government	48. Non-industrial society
14. Direct participation in decision making	49. Economic inequality
15. Some appointments by lot	50. Priority of economic interests
16. Strict term limits	51. Exclusion of some from effective participation by economic inequalities
17. Payment for participation	52. Redistribution of resources
18. Public campaign finance	53. Experiments with collective property
19. Innovative feedback mechanisms	
20. Universal adult suffrage	
21. Proportional representation	**CULTURE AND PARTICIPATION**
22. Independent, professional bureaucracy	54. Public debates
23. Professional bureaucracy	55. Participation in local government
24. Limited bureaucracy	56. Competition for power

25. Guarantees of civil liberties
26. Guarantees of political rights
27. Workplace democracy
28. Minimization of unaccountable power centers
29. Representation of corporate interests
30. Representation of the powerful
31. Restriction of some interest groups
32. Jury service

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM
33. Global state
34. International competition
35. Pluralist, free-market
36. International order
37. Unequal international order

57. Openness to institutional reform
58. Transparency
59. No distinction between citizens and officials
60. Individualism
61. Poorly informed or emotional voters
62. Culture of toleration
63. Consensus on legitimate scope of politics
64. Procedural consensus
65. Moderate level of participation
66. Liberal leadership

MISCELLANEOUS
67. Strong leadership
68. Popular sovereignty
69. Unbiased state
70. State with interests of its own
71. Large nation-state
72. Right to childcare
73. Demilitarization

Source: Michael Coppedge's compilation of elements discussed in David Held's "Models of Democracy" (Coppedge," Defining and Measuring Democracy", 2005, p. 38)

We see can see that there are many criteria above for ideal democracies to fulfill, most likely impossible for many. Additionally, we can imagine how easy it is to skew the results manipulating the criteria to one way or another.

For Sartori (1987, p.206) who wrote comprehensive volumes on democratic theory – *Democratic Theory* and the *Democratic Theory Revisited* - the previous discussion on various scales and criteria is inherently not understandable. In his view, a country either is democracy or not, there are no degrees for democracy and all different measurment scales increase the chance of mischaracterizations. Sartori instead argues for three distinct, but related definitions: *a contrario* (what democracy is not),

descriptive (what democracy is), and *prescriptive* (what democracy ought to be). He rearticulates the core idea of democracy, saying that it is not a system where all rule, but rather where no one holds power.

3.6.3 Datasets

Tatu Vanhanen (2004, p.32) who has developed a polyarchy scale on 187 countries, argues that most indexes on democracy are too complicated and likely highly subjective. As was mentioned before, also Przeworski (2003, p.23) warns that many of these indicators may hide ideological agendas of powerful countries or organizations. For example, he points out that according to Freedom House data, the United States is one of the top countries in terms of individual and political liberties, while other studies show that half of the Americans do not bother to vote and they do not form new political parties either. Thus Prezeworski (*idem,* p.38) suggests always to look into the conceptualization, then into the purity of data and reproducibility of the research, and finally try to understand the purpose of the particular study.

To conclude the chapter on democracy as a concept of multiple dimensions, criteria and understandings, the following compilation of different measurement and evaluation criteria is provided to illustrate the previous discussion and as an introduction to the later analysis cases study that will employ a selection of these. These datasets have been developed and operationalized by a number of research centers and international organizations across the world, most academic ones characterized by minimalism where the electoral quality plays an important role. Mass-consumption datasets on the other hand, can be described as maximalists,

including multiple factors in their operational definition. The datasets are presented in an alphabetical order.

- **Democratic Audit**

Democratic Audit is an independent research organization based at the University of Liverpool. It conducts most of its research on the quality of democracy in the UK, while gradually elaborating its analyses to other countries of the world (Democratic Audit, 2013).

- **Democracy Barometer**

The researchers from the University of Zürich and Berlin's Social Science Research Center claim that most of the previous indices of democracy have a minimalist conceptual basis, which in their view is useful to distinguish democratic from non-democratic regimes. Their index is based on a middle range concept of democracy, whereas both liberal and participatory ideas of democracy have been included and nine indicators provided as can be seen in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *Democracy Barometer Basic Dimensions*

QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY		
Freedom	**Control**	**Equality**
Individual Liberties	Competition	Transparency
Rule of Law	Mutual Constraints	Participation
Public Sphere	Governmental Capability	Representation

Source: Democracy Barometer (2011): http://www.democracybarometer.org/concept_en.html

- **Bertelsmann Foundation's Transformations Index (BTI)**

Bertelsmann Foundation is a privately run organization in Germany. BTI analyses and evaluates whether and how developing countries and countries in transition (128 countries in 2012) are "steering social change toward democracy and market

economy". BTI aggregates the results into two indices: the Status Index assesses the state of political and economic transformation and the Management Index the quality of governance (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012).

- **Bertelsmann Sustainable Governance Index (SGI)**

SGI examines governance and policymaking in OECD member states to evaluate countries' democracy level, economic capability and the welfare state. Like BTI the SGI is divided into a Status Index and Management Index, measured with 150 indicators. The latest release of the SGI, which are updated every two years, took place in March 2011 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013).

- **Combined Index for Democracy (CID)**

CID was developed at the University of Würzburg in Germany to measure the quality of democratic regimes. The index is based on the combination of the Freedom House, Polity and World Bank's Governance Indicator's rankings. Data is available for 161 countries, from 1996 to 2010 and was published on a two-year basis. (Universität Würzburg, 2013).

- **Democracy Ranking (DR)**

DR is a project of the Democracy Ranking Association in Vienna, Austria. It provides an annual ranking of democracies by focusing on the quality. DR applies the following formula: Quality of Democracy = (freedom & other characteristics of the political system) & (performance of the non-political dimensions). The non-political dimensions are gender, economy, knowledge, health, and the environment (Democracy Ranking Association, 2013).

- **Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)**

EIU is an independent group within the Economist Group. It provides country, industry and management analyses worldwide, also the Quality of Life Index. Its Democracy Index is conducted in 167 countries (as of 2012) and is based on sixty indicators that are divided into five categories – election process, civil rights, government capability, participation and political culture (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013).

- **Freedom House**

Freedom House is an independent organization founded in the United States in 1941. It publishes widely-established, comparative assessment of political rights and civil liberties. A few years ago, Freedom House started to release the ratings for the seven subcategories that are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

▪ Participate freely in the political process;
▪ Vote freely in legitimate elections;
▪ Have representatives that are accountable to them;
▪ Exercise freedoms of expression and belief;
▪ Be able to freely assemble and associate;
▪ Have access to an established and equitable system of rule of law;
▪ Enjoy social and economic freedoms, including equal access to economic opportunities and the right to hold private property (Freedom House, 2013).

- **Polity IV**

Polity IV is managed by the Center for Systemic Peace that operates under the Colorado State University. It is one of the most commonly used datasets in quantitative comparative politics. Polity measures governance on the basis of

executive recruitment (competitiveness, regulation and openness), constraints on the executive, and political competition (competitiveness and regulation of participation) (The Center for Systemic Peace, 2013).

- **Polyarchy Dataset (Vanhanen)**

An earlier version of what is now called the Polyarchy Dataset was produced by Tatu Vanhanen in the early 1970s. The dataset contains an index of democracy on 187 countries from 810 to 2000 and has been used in several studies that seek to provide a theoretical explanation for the emergence of democratic regimes. The index is usually named as the Vanhanen index after its author, but was given the name Polyarchy Dataset when it was made public in electronic form by the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Norway (International Peace Research Institute, 2013).

- **Polyarchy and Contestation Scales**

The polyarchy scale was developed by Coppedge and his team. It measures the levels of the contestation dimension of polyarchy in the world in mid-1995 and mid-2000. The principal components of the dataset about contestation and inclusiveness capture 75 percent of variation in the most commonly used democracy indicators and measure Robert Dahl's two dimensions of polyarchy: contestation and inclusiveness. (Coppedge, Data on Democracy and Democratization, 2013).

- **Unified Democracy Scores**

Unified Democracy Scores (UDS) is a set of measures that leverage the efforts of a variety of experts to provide a composite scale of democracy, accompanied by estimates of measurement uncertainty. The scores are available for virtually every country in the world from 1946 through 2008. The UDS are estimated using a

Bayesian statistical measurement model and can be used to make probabilistic statements about other useful quantities (Melton, Meserve, & Pemstein, 2011).

- **Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)**

V-Dem distinguishes among seven principles of democracy: electoral, liberal, participatory, majoritarian, consensual, deliberative, and egalitarian. It is disaggregated into lower-level components of democracy such as regular elections, judicial independence, direct democracy, and gender equality, and provides disaggregated indicators for each conception and each component. V-Dem covers all countries (and some dependent territories) from 1900 to the present, whenever possible (Coppedge, Michael; Lindberg, Staffan; Gerring, John; University of Notre Dame; University of Gothenburg; Kellogg Institute, 2013)

- **Worldwide Governance Indicators**

Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project reports aggregate and individual governance indicators for 215 economies over the period 1996–2011 for six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, control of corruption. These aggregate indicators are based on 30 individual data sources produced by a variety of organizations (World Bank Group, 2012).

There are dozens of additional indexes and datasets that provide some quantitative information on countries' development. These are provided by organizations in the areas of human rights, individual liberties, elections, direct democracy, transparency, freedom of the press and media systems, bureaucracy and the rule of law, constitutions and much more. Below is a selection of these, compiled by the researchers at Democracy Barometer project (University of Zurich, Social Science

Research Center Berlin, 2011):

- Amnesty International reports on human rights
- Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data Project
- UNDP Human Development reports
- Political Terror Scale (Gibney, M., Cornett, L., & Wood, R.,
- Religion and State Project (Bar Ilan University in Israel)
- Human Rights Reports (U.S. Department of State)
- ACE Electoral Knowledge Network (IDEA, EISA, Elections Canada, the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico , IFES, UNDESA, UNDP, UNEAD)
- CSES - Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (U.S. Center for Political Studies, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences)
- Database of Political Institutions (World Bank)
- Direct Democracy, Voter Turnout, and Political Finance databases (by International IDEA)
- Election Resources (by M. Alvarez-Riviera)
- Manifesto Project Database (election programs by Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung)
- Privacy International (UK based charity)
- Global Integrity Report (independent org. based in the U.S. and South Africa)
- Transparency International Corruption Perception Index
- Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum)
- International Country Risk Guide (Political Risk Services Group)
- World Competitiveness Online (IMD business school in Switzerland)
- Economic Freedom of the World (Fraser Institute)
- Index of Economic Freedom (Heritage Foundation)
- Comparative Constitutions Project (Z. Elkins – Univ. of Texas, T .Ginsburg – Univ. of Chicago)
- European Social Survey (Norwegian Social Science Data Services)
- Eurobarometer (European Commission)
- Gallup World Poll
- International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)
- World Values Survey (WVS Association, Sweden)
- Comparative Political Data Sets (University of Bern, Switzerland)
- Democracy Crossnational Data and Democracy Timeseries (P.Norris, Harvard Univ.)
- Eurostat (European Commission)
- Gapminder (foundation, Sweden)
- Quality of Government Data (University of Gothenburg)
- United Nations various statistics
- OECD various statistics

The idea of this compilation was to illustrate the complexity of the democratic concept and of many ways it can be defined, measured and evaluated. Clearly, no dataset and criteria is inherently superior to another, and no measurement is immune to a human error. A scale cannot be better than the empirical methodology by which the analysis is conducted, whether the selection of criteria is affected by some bias, of the quality of their collected data and so on (Stevens, 1946; Munck & Verkuilen, 2002). Thus in addition to carefully selecting an appropriate set of measures and criteria to evaluate democracies, a special emphasis needs to be placed on the action plan and field work which will also define the reliability of collected data and further conclusions.

Furthermore, we also might want to rethink the purpose of democracy – why do we need it for and whether these results and rankings reflect what people really want and need? Heywood (2002) argues that non-western societies may not rank well based on democracy indicators for example, but can nevertheless have strong and well-off communities.

OECD studies point to decreasing voter turnout in most of its member states and admit that more transparency and institutional efforts to narrow the gap between the government and the public has not led to expected results, i.e. to higher civic engagement (OECD *How's Life*, 2011). There are reasons to be concerned about the massive non-participation in political life and political inequalities that exist and contribute to this tendency while undermining the legitimacy of our democracies of today. This work will elaborate on that in the further analysis.

There are quite a few of those who believe in the positive relationship between economic and democratic development. Lipset (1959) has no doubt that prosperity

promotes democracy. Juxtaposing countries' economic indicators and different scales of democracy development, a positive correlation during the process of democratic development or transitioning can be noticed. When countries have achieved a relative political freedom, the growth rate tends to be negative, however. Friedman (2008, p.122) argues that this tendency provides legitimacy to transitioning and young democracies, assisting to preserve their new political orders. The survival of democracy increases with the growth of economy and wellbeing. Too much is on the stake for people in wealthier countries to try to overturn the political regimes that they reside in (Przeworski, 2003, p. 23).

We have to keep in mind though, that these scores are largely based on subjective variables and correlations, and using observable measures might give a whole another account. And as many probably remember from the beginners' statistics class: correlation does not mean causality. Thus there is always the chicken and egg dilemma that we face when suggesting solutions for democratic development and better life: do we first need to have enough resources to create desired political culture, or does an appropriate political regime need to exist first to create enough resources?

4. PUBLIC SCHOOLS: WHO GOVERNS?

This chapter is the final stage of the necessary theoretical background building before we can move to the analysis. It adds to what Barber (1996, p.9) has said about the interconnectedness of the areas under the investigation of this study:

"...no community, no communication;
no communication, no learning, no education;
no education, no citizens, no freedom;
no freedom, no culture, no democracy,
no schools, no civilization."

Sharing John Dewey's view of schools as major players in community life, Barber believes that the education that is delivered by schools is a function of community. How schools and education function however, depends on the ideological foundations of the governing regime.

Public institutions serve as a litmus test of governing regimes. Life in the umbilical cord between the civic society and the state (or the state and its people, depending on the angle of the perspective) depends on the nature of the interaction between all stakeholders, on the interests and goals that they have. Ultimately, these relationships define the functioning ideology of the state.

Every system or organization has its stakeholders or interest groups who may define their roles, rights and responsibilities very differently. In the case of public education and schools, it may not be so clear who the stakeholders are and who should exercise final authority over the education or schools. Answers to the following three fundamental questions can assist in defining interest groups in the system, their rights and responsibilities:

- *For whom* and *for what purpose* are the public education system and schools tailored?

- *Who is responsible* for the quality content of the education, its appropriate delivery in schools and for its outcome?

- *Who should be kept accountable* if these services fail, either in quality, delivery or outcome?

As their definition indicates, public institutions and services should be established *for* the people, designed to manage and organize specific areas of community life. The purpose of public schools is to give universal, basic education for young generations independent of their parents' financial situation or social belonging. Whether these institutions are built *by* the people – theoretically through a universal agreement between the public and the government – again depends the underlying ideology of the regime.

A common purpose and agreement of "why", "for whom" and "by whom" need to be identified among all parties who have a stake in it : from students and their parents to teachers and community leaders. Among other things, what kind of democracy and citizenship should the education and schools bring about (Biesta, 2009)? This is where the demarcation line between the state and people's autonomy acquires a tremendous importance and requires theoretical explanations.

4.1 Liberalist Theories

The following discussion will elaborate on different sources on these issues while paying close attention to liberal theories as most modern democratic regimes are built on liberal ideas.

4.1.1 Schools and education

Liberalism has always had a powerful concern with the education of its people, thus the belief that the state should have no authority to regulate schooling runs counter to liberal democratic theory (Kunzman, 2012). A founder of European liberalist thought Thomas Hobbes (1660) believed that instruction is one of the main duties of the sovereign who has through its public servants the authority to:

> *... teach, or to enable others to teach the people their duty to the sovereign power, and instruct them in the knowledge of what is just and unjust, thereby to render them more apt to live in godliness and in peace amongst themselves, and resist the public enemy.*

Hobbes's contemporary, British liberal political philosopher John Locke (1764a, pp. 79-80) preferred homeschooling to those schools in England at that time, believing that being schooled around ill-mannered and maybe not very bright "boys" would be rather damaging for children's education. In his view, the state should have limited powers and intervene only in the cases of abuse and neglect (Locke, 2002). Locke resisted both state's or any organized supervision on schools while he feared indoctrination and that the intervention would suffocate youth's creative, liberal thinking (Ruderman & Godwin, 2000; Tarcov, 1999). He yielded only in one area:

> *Breeding at home has too little Company, and that at ordinary Schools, not such as it should be for a young Gentleman, I think there might be Ways found out to avoid*

the Inconveniences on the one Side and the other (Locke,

1764a, p. 86).

Also the 19th century British philosopher Mill expressed his dislike against the idea of universal education. In his view individuals possess so many different characters, opinions and abilities that the state would neither be able nor could it afford such diversity in its publicly provided education. He suggested - unless the "society in general is in so backward a state that it could not or would not provide for itself […] proper institutions of education" - the state rather to require than to provide the education. The only state intervention he could agree with was the state financially supporting those in need and setting certain national standards for the quality of education (Mill, 1869, Ch.V).

Karl Popper (1945, pp.135-36) largely shared the views of Mill and Locke. Firstly, he saw state's involvement in education dangerous as possibly suffocating children's naturally critical mind and curiosity, replacing it with "dogmatic self-satisfaction and massive intellectual complacency". Secondly, in his opinion the Platonic demand that the state should take over children's education so that they would not be shaped by different individual tastes according to Athens's *laissez-faire* policy, would be a straight road to totalitarianism. As Mill, also Popper saw the state's role rather in protective terms by assuring that its people get an education that enables them to engage in civic life, while the state should not be the provider of it.

4.1.2 Parental authority

Aiming to advance the welfare of his ideal commonwealth, Plato suggested a law that should take children away from their parents at an early age, while by "children" he meant those of the guardians or the ruling class:

> *"The children [...] will be in common, and neither will a parent know his own offspring, nor a child his parent. [...]...as the offspring are born, won't they be taken over by the officers established for this purpose [...] ...the will take the offspring of the good and bring them into the pen to certain nurses who live apart in a certain section of the city* (Plato, 1991, pp. 136,139).

In Sparta, the education of the "good breed" was completely in state's hands and children were taken under its supervision as early as possible. In order to submerge the individual and and develop ideal citizens, Sparta assembled boys into barracks and intrusted their subsequent education and training to official guardians (Marrou, 1956, pp. 19-26). Parents were generally considered as "common people" who should not be trusted to educate future citizens of the state.

Liberal theorists have different perspectives and initially, liberalism sought to overcome the patriarchal family without subordinating it to the state. Once the family is liberated, also from religion, it could protect itself from illiberal, paternalistic influences (Ruderman & Godwin, 2000, p. 505). Liberals generally acknowledged the primacy of parental authority in the domains of child rearing, thus the general

educational direction and parental control was supported already by the earliest liberal thinkers.

In the view of Mill (1869, Ch.5) providing appropriate education is parents' *moral duty*, the idea supported also by Locke (1764). Both men saw education as a prerequisite for a free society. Believing in the separation of parental and political authority as the basis of liberal government, Locke was an avid supporter of homeschooling, rather than educating children in the schools of England in that era. In his mind, a responsible parent can provide a much more advanced education than any school could (*ibid.* 1764, p. 82).

Rawls (1999, p.405, 446) has established a comprehensive theory upon the liberalist ideals of freedom and equality. He stipulates that in a fair and well-ordered society "children are at first subject to the legitimate authority of their parents" since their basic rights are executed through their parents. Furthermore, Amy Gutmann (1999, p.39) takes the stance of Rousseau arguing that if people are deprived of the opportunity to participate in decision-making and the educational decisions have not been agreed collectively upon, then these decisions are unwarranted. In this case the decision-making is also discriminative and decisions might be repressive on those who could participate.

4.1.3 Minimalist views

Modern liberals tend to support states' autonomy against parental authority (Ruderman & Godwin, 2000, p.505). This is in line with another side of Mill's view, in that everyone should have the freedom to decide for their own interests, but "he

ought not to be free to do as he likes in acting for another" (Mill, 1869, p. 202). It can be seen as having second thoughts about parents' capability to educate their children well.

Civic minimalists argue that parental authority in public schools and education should be limited only to essential involvement while people or their representatives may mandate this minimum (Gutmann, 1999). In this sense liberal states can be seen as acting paternalistic – a social order that they originally tried to change - denying parental authority to secure the liberty of other individuals like children (Ruderman & Godwin, 2000, p. 507).

Sometimes, parents may not be fit or able to represent their children in schools and provide them appropriate education. In this case the state should take over this responsibility according to the doctrine of *parens patriae* to look out for the interests of those who are weak and dependent (Mill, 1869; Custer, 1978). Callan (2003, p.145) provides a similar track of thought while calling to find a compromise on conception that would do justice to parents' rights to direct their children lives and simultaneously would not warrant children's rights.

It depends on the liberal democratic principles where the distinction between the state-regulated formal schooling and parental authority is drawn and how policies are formulated (Kunzman, 2012). There are many of those dissatisfied with existing schools and education system, but still hesitating to support more choice-based approach to children's education and schooling. The main argument seems to be that

it might endanger liberal democracies by not enabling to unify diversities through universal education and public schools (Ruderman & Godwin, 2000, p.504).

4.2 Contemporary Practices

The society has gone through enormous changes since the conception of democratic government in Athens and more recently since the establishment of the mass education institutions of public schools. French historian Marrou (1956, pp.336-40) considers sixth century Presbyterian schools around church parishes as the beginning of Western-type of schooling. As the masses had been successfully converted to Christianity, they needed to be educated to reduce the effect of the surrounding barbarism. The village priests gathered groups of boys to whom they passed on literacy skills, the church dogma and moral in a systematic manner. Thus the vitality of academic institutions of city-states gradually transformed from private to public sphere while depending more and more on public money and organization.

Education has become highly institutionalized, having network of rules that classify knowledge that allows to attach value on individuals (Meyer, 1977). At the same time, while forming an important part of democratic structures and development, education and schools cannot operate in a vacuum. Skocpol and Fiorina (1999) recall that American sociologist Coleman frequently addressed the controversy between the states, schools and families. Indeed, also he has called to reach community consensus on the question of authority, autonomy and responsibilities within the parents-schools-state relationship. In a contemporary world where both parents have become active in the labor market, or where a child has only one parent, or where families have little

available resources to contribute to their children's upbringing, the articulated community consensus on schooling issues is crucial (Coleman 1991).

4.2.1 Purpose of schools and education

Coleman (1991) saw the school as a constructed institution that has been assigned a specific purpose to take over a major part of the childrearing function of the weakening families. At the same time the principle of *in loco parentis*, or the school standing in the place of the parent presents a confrontational principle: the modern education has extended beyond the simple schooling or curriculum and thus the critical question lies in defining the line between the public and private, i.e. what are the responsibilities of schools and families, and what is expected of education.

Biesta (2010, p.289) suggests that by and large, *education* has three purposes that need to be distinguished between and answered separately:

1. Qualification;
2. Socialization;
3. Subjectification.

In his view, the *qualification* function of education contributes to the "acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and dispositions" that allows forming adequate judgments. The *socialization* is the process of education by which individuals become part of "existing social, cultural and political orders". While education is never neutral and always represents something, it contributes to continuing traditions and culture. Biesta argues that the third function of education, *subjectification* can be understood as exactly the opposite of socialization and exists already since Immanuel Kant, who

in his *On Education* (1899) saw the purpose of education as contributing to children's ability of becoming independent from the existing social order.

According to this view, *school* is an instrument of socialization and rather works against the subjectification. Shatkin and Gershberg (2007, p.583) for example, regret that schools' role in the decline and revitalization of local communities has so often been underestimated. Also Galston (2004, pp.59-61) sees the purpose of schools from the pro-socialization perspective. While calling to pay attention on their internally contestable character, he differentiates between four purposes:

1. By teaching basic skills and imparting knowledge, schools are expected to prepare students for *economic life* and possibly for *further education* and/or training;

2. By socializing students and teaching them skills of cooperation, schools are expected to prepare students for *social life*;

3. By teaching students the knowledge and skills of civil society and governance, schools are expected to prepare them for *democratic citizenship* whereby they could actively engage in improving the community life;

4. As a general cultural purpose, schools are expected to impart to students a love of knowledge, learning, and artistic excellence.

All these dimensions hold internal controversies and are subject to modifications as political leaders change, purposes are amended or new overriding goals added (think of international standardized tests for comparing countries academic excellence, for example). Disagreements over the purposes of public schools and education arise

from differences in worldviews, political ideas and interests of different stakeholders involved.

4.2.2 School autonomy and educational accountability

Today, public schools and education exist in all democratic societies and governments have both the right and duty to require the education of all children. Governments also regulate the education that is delivered in public schools and set certain national standards that apply to all (Galston, 2011).

Emotional debates over the school autonomy, over its control mechanisms and the distribution of power have acquired much media space across many countries (Fuller & Rasiah, 2005). By nature, school is a bureaucratic, hierarchical organization where its staff is not elected but chosen and appointed by politicians or education administrators. As a result, decisions that affect public schools' and education are done top-down or horizontally on the higher spheres of political and bureaucratic hierarchies.

Schools and education system are funded on the principle of solidarity, meaning that every working individual contributes periodically a certain amount of money through taxes that is then redistributed to support the public education and schools (Heywood, 2002, p.8). Thus all participate in funding of the system whether they want it or not. Galston (2011) has elaborated arguing that while having the right to tax all its citizens, the government does not have the right to create school monopoly and demand people to educate their children in public schools.

As for having a voice in this system, in representative democracies people vote for those who they expect to represent their interests while supporting them through the tax money or campaign donations. Often, it is "taxation without representation" for parents where they have no proxies in the system who would deliver their concerns and proposals to governments. Through these developments and progressing constructs, the public for whom public education services are rendered has generally lost touch with the progress and changing purposes.

Guided by principles of Thomas Jefferson, the Northwest Ordinance 1787[7] Article 3 declared that:

> *Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged* (Our Documents, 2013).

In the United States, two Supreme Court landmark desicions in 1920s have shaped the legal relationship between the public and private in education questions for almost a century: *Meyer v. State of Nebraska* in 1923, and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* in 1925 (Cornell University Law School, 2013). It was declared that on the basis of due process clause of Fourtheenth Amendment,[8] parents have the sole authority in directing the education of their children (Ross, 2000). Both decisions firmly

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[7] The Northwest Ordinance, adopted in July, 1787 by the 2nd Continental Congress, chartered a government for the Northwest Territory, provided a method for admitting new states to the Union, and listed a bill of guaranteed rights guaranteed. Following the principles outlined by Thomas Jefferson in the Ordinance of 1784, the authors of the Northwest Ordinance spelled out a plan that was subsequently employed as the country expanded to the Pacific (Our Documents, 2013).

[8] U.S. Constitution's 4th Amendment, Section 1: All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without **due process** of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws (Cornell Unviersity Law School, 2013).

established parents' right to direct the education of their children, while at the same time making clear that the state has the right to regulate schooling.

In the case of *Meyer v Nebraska*, the Court referred to Plato's idea to create educational institutions for individuals where they would be spearated from their families, as inappropriate for a country that is built on liberal ideas and protects individual autonomy. It also noted that:

> *"the power of the State to compel attendance at some school and to make reasonable regulations for all schools, including a requirement that they shall give instructions in English, is not questioned nor has challenge been made of the State's power to prescribe a curriculum for institutions which it supports."*
> (Cornell University Law School, 2013).

Two years later, the *Pierce vs Society of Sisters* parental pro-choice decision cited *Meyer* when it rejected Oregon's law that intended to dismantle the parochial school system and require all children to attend public school. The court concluded:

> *The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments of this Union rest excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only* (Cornell University Law School, 2013).

Since then, this decision has been commonly used by American homeschool advocates (Ross, 2000). On the other hand, *Pierce* also asserted that "no question is raised concerning the power of the state reasonably to regulate all schools, to inspect, supervise and examine them, their teachers and pupils," and to require "studies plainly essential to good citizenship" (*ibid*).

Past few decades have seen a rise of measurement culture in education, i.e. how to measure educational outcomes and thus the quality of systems both nationally and on international levels. Probably the most known comparative studies are Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

The results of these studies can be broken up also regionally within the participating states that can provide performance indicators and serve as possible instruments for keeping systems and institutions accountable. While it has been argued that students' results are largely affected also by their socio-economic conditions and differences between school populations in different neighborhoods, alternative democratic options have usually been limited (Biesta, 2010; Granger, 2008; Dimond, 2005, p. 333).

Coleman (1991, p.16) believes that when the school ultimately becomes a school of choice, then a new form of social contract of education is due between all stakeholders. However, school choice is something that cannot be easily organized, and there are various structural and cultural factors that affect students learning against which school and education administrators are often powerless (Hess, 2006; Levinson, 2011).

4.2.3 Parental autonomy and authority

Above, two important court decisions were mentioned that are based on the constitutional right of individual autonomy in most democratic societies. Since democracy is largely a Western-born product, these century-old decisions have helped

to shape not only American but also other liberal democracies' understanding of the line between the state and the family. Following the Fourteenth Amendment in *Meyer*, the court emphasized the freedom of parents to "establish a home and bring up children", calling it "a private realm of family life which the state cannot enter" (Cornell University Law School, 2013). In *Pierce,* parental freedom to decide and choose their children education and schooling was re-emphasized by stating that:

> ... [It] *is an unreasonable interference with the liberty of the parents and guardians to direct the upbringing of the children, and in that respect violates the Fourteenth Amendment.* (Cornell University Law School, 2013).

The court acknowledged that "the child is not the mere creature of the state" and that parents have the right to "direct the education of children by selecting reputable teachers and places" (Cornell University Law School, 2013).

In most democratic systems, parents have the obligation to choose some form of schooling and nationally accepted curriculum for their child. If it is not possible to choose a particular school of preference and children are assigned to schools according to the area they live at, most parents still have a moral obligation to represent their child's interest at the school he or she was assigned to (see also OECD, 2011, p. 436-7).

A decade ago, Henderson and Mapp (2002, p.7) concluded the synthesis of more than fifty studies on parental involvement by stating that "families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life". Their analysis underlined the previous findings that when schools and families cooperate, children tend to do be

academically more successful. Since then, there has been another decade of research and the conclusions are usually the same, rarely pointing to neutral effect (Griffith, 1996; Fan & Chen, 1999; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Quigley, 2000; Jeynes, 2005; Houtenville & Conway, 2008)

However, as parents' time to spend with their children has become increasingly limited, the school is often considered to be as a natural institution to take over parenting responsibilities during a large part of the day (Coleman 1991). In a public discourse it is frequently overlooked that is the primary duty of parents to raise and educate their children, which involves being aware of and if necessary, getting involved in decisions regarding schools and education

Jonathan (1993, p. 18-19) believes that "parents are the most strongly motivated and often best situated to act as their children's trustees until their offspring is competent to choose and act autonomously". She sees parents as *proxy choosers* for their children who may be too young and inexperienced to express their own preferences or to know to choose in a way that is in their best interests (see also Macbeth, 1993).

Parents represent their children whose right to choose is exercised through the filter of adults' knowledge, preferences and values. Thus the responsibilities of a parent-proxy are an extremely delicate matter to define. While choosing and making decisions regarding their offspring, it is difficult if not impossible for adults not letting their personal interests and value systems to interfere with their decisions (Freeman, 1997, p. 5), even if it is the act of not choosing or deciding.

In addition to being immediate "proxies", there is also another way of looking at parents' role and to see them as *governors* whose active participation in schooling and education could help to strengthen local democracies. Since public schools and education structures operate with public money and are directed to public, parents should theoretically have the right and the obligation to keep the systems accountable and from keeping them becoming authoritarian in nature (Abrahamsson, 1977, p.117-18; O'Brien, 1998, p.79).

Whatever is the form parents fulfill in schools and education, it is critical that while representing their children and family interests, they cannot simultaneously harm other children's interests through their decisions (see also Mill above). These may children whose parents do not have either the motivation or resources to engage and participate (see also Munn, 1993, p.8). For instance, this can be the case of the minority family where parents do not the necessary instruments – language, information, networks or education – to participate and are thus also not recruited.

Indeed, providing formal instruments is just one side of the coin. There may be an abundance of reasons why parents do not reach out to influence schools and the education that is delivered to their children, and eventually has a long-term impact on their families. Verba (2003, pp.666-67) asserts that is important to differentiate between reasons why people do not participate in processes where they could change something. In his view, it is a violation of the norm of equal voice if parents cannot become engaged due to having to work late evening shifts or not being able to afford a nanny for the time of parents' meeting at school.

Another issue is when parents do not want to take any role in shaping the institutions of education. Coleman believes that the reduced consensus and weak community ties have freed deviant parents from their responsibility to contest schools' authority (Coleman, 1991, p. 15). Indeed, in the case when an individual chooses to watch a TV program or attend a yoga class instead of engaging in school activities, this person's civic rights have not been violated. But his or her child's right may be.

And finally, there are cases where some parents should not be trusted the authority to act as their children trustees for their upbringing and education. Of course, the question remains how to define the "ability" of parents to raise and educate their children, i.e. what are the criteria and where is the line from where the state has the right to interfere, according to which values and standards.

4.2.4 Types of parental engagement

Parental engagement and representation has more forms and options than just occasional parent-teacher meetings while the initiatives should be bi-directional. Epstein (2009) has developed a framework of six possible forms of parental involvement where states and schools could positively contribute:

1) *Parenting* - assisting families with parenting and child-rearing skills;

2) *Communicating* - creating effective home-school communication channels;

3) *Volunteering* – improving recruitment and training to involve families to participate in supportive projects at schools;

4) *Learning at home* – creating conditions that stimulate parents to engage in learning activities at home;

5) ***Decision making*** – developing parent leaders and representatives by supporting their interlinking, including them as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through parent-teacher associations, school councils, committees and other parent organizations;

6) *Collaborating with community* – coordinating the resources and services *for* students, schools and families in collaboration with community organizations, businesses and other groups to give back services *to* the community.

Due to the political inclination of this research, this study is particularly interested in the decision making dimension of parental involvement, although all these levels are strongly interrelated through the general parental, schools' and community characteristics.

Hirschman (1970) sees the participation in decision making through expressing one's *voice* as an interest articulation for changing the practices, policies and output of the organization: whether by collective or individual action, directly or through representatives. Although voices can be confrontational, in democracies channels should exist for people to express their needs, interests and dissatisfaction when necessary. Also Crozier (2000, p.117) warns against confrontations and power struggles in parent-school relationships, although in her view it mostly takes implicit than explicit forms.

In democratically governed countries, choice and voice are the primary methods for parents to express their needs and preferences (see also Goldring & Shapira, 1993). Historically, one of the options for parents to exercise the voice is either by setting up

their own candidacy in general elections or at some parent organization, or vote for someone else to represent his or her family's interests. The other option is to exit one structure and enter another as a way of expressing the opinion about the system and its practices (Hirschman, 1970, p.30-33). The extent to which parents can engage in decision-making and express their preferences varies across countries.

Goldring and Shapira (*op.cit.*) who carried out their study on parental participation in Israel, differentiate between *parental empowerment* and *parental involvement*. In their view, parental empowerment signifies actual parental control in schools and relevant decision-making processes. Parental involvement on the other hand, rather refers to reactional activities that are initiated by the school or are types of activities where parents realize that they do not have much influence on their children schooling and education issues. Golden and Shapira also found that parents with higher socioeconomic status expect greater empowerment, are more likely to exit the system and choose other options for their children.

Crozier's (2000) qualitative study of parents' and schools' relationship reinforced the belief that parents' social class is a defining factor in this equation. Also Gewirtz, Bowe, and Ball (1995) emphasize the diversity aspect among parents. Their study in Britain revealed that parents are not monolithic groups who will respond similarly to opportunities to engage either in decision-making or in other types of activities at their children's schools. Socioeconomic inequalities are proved to be a major factor affecting parents engagement levels and how they advocate for their children: better-off parents capitalize the opportunities more skillfully than those with fewer resources (see also Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Carolan, 2000). Here, we must also recall Anne

Phillips' (1991, p.44) view on participatory democracy, seeing it as possibly an additional burden on women's already busy daily schedules.

Beyond inequalities in families' backgrounds, their informed and adequate engagement is one of the keystones for communities' democratic functioning and development. Normally, democratic systems provide various mechanisms and tools for parents to employ to act as "proxies" for their children. The most common are informal, parent-teacher meetings and communications. Formal opportunities may range from parent-teacher associations to governing bodies that have substantial statutory responsibilities either on local or national level, while these options vary across countries. Except for OECD's "Education at a Glance 2010" report (OECD; 2011), there are currently no comprehensive, comparative accounts of countries' practices in regards to formal parental engagement.

Estonian educational scientist Carl Niggol (1920) has emphasized that only trustful relationship and mutually agreed goals between parents and schools can lead to results that are satisfactory for all parties. Indeed, it is a two-way road: if this process does not already exist naturally, democratic expectations that could be expressed and meaningfully realized require states to create multilevel institutions that enable equal voice and engagement for parents, and responsive actions for governments.

4.2.5 Social (re-)production

Modern education systems are powerful societal classification machines that construct, assign and alter societal roles, creating elites and ordinary members of the societies (Meyer, 1977, p. 3). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) have argued that

education and schools have a considerable role in reproduction the existing social order and deepening social inequalities within communities. In their view, schools reflect the overall distribution of the state resources while some parent groups tending to be better informed and having access to a wider variety of educational resources than others. Rawls asserts, however, that it is the responsibility of the state and its school system to "even out class barriers" (Rawls, 1999, p.63; see also Heywood 2002, p. 415).

Also Putnam (1995, p.68, 73) considers parental involvement a "particularly productive form of social capital". He notes that American parent-teacher organizations are one of those formal institutions where community's social connectedness is well observable. Shatkin and Gershberg (2007, p.582) agree by adding that meaningful parental engagement in schools can act as a catalyst not only for students and schools' performance, but also for communities' democratic development.

In democratic public school systems educational goals should represent constituents' collective agreement. As the political units increase in scale and scope, the more the question of diversities and inclusion comes to the forefront, as to "representativity" of their interests (see also Dahl, 1989, p. 217). Parents are a united interest groups in terms of "parenthood", but they simultaneously represent all possible types of diversities from gender, ethnicity, income, neighborhood unit and so on. Thus parent-represenatives' views and interests may cardinally differ from those they represent. Through these social mechanisms and whether consciously or not, the society is engaging in continuous social reproduction (Gutmann, 1999, p.3).

Parents who have been chosen or elected to represent other parents, carry a considerable responsibility of being "double-proxy-choosers": they represent other parents who represent (or should do so) their children's rights and interests, but for some reason cannot or have chosen not to do it. Hence parents' representatives represent the collective will and interests of all parents within their organization and thus also of a large part of their local community. However, Crozier (2000, p.118) doubts if this kind of governing boards have any considerable influence on acute issues and refers to Phillips (1991) who questions if better-off parents should even have a mandate to represent the diversity of other parents with weaker voices.

To give people more opportunities to influence decision-making and neutralize the effect of inequalities, Ranson and Stewart (1989) see the solution in decentralizing powers and responsibilities to local units that would enable more diverse perspectives to be channeled. Higgins and Richardson (1976) argue however, that instead of going the path of decentralization of powers, decision-making levels should be relocated and shared so that people would have access to different stages of this process: during the mobilization of support or at the final choice. Wössmann (2000) has come to similar conclusion, arguing that more autonomy and "increased decision-making power at the school level establishes freedom to decide within schools" that leaves more options for schools to respond to parents needs. It might be appropriate to conclude this with Coleman's (1991, p.13) acknowledgement that while guarding their autonomy and rejecting community intervention, schools are "ill-adapted" to adequately respond to the needs of changing communities and weakening family ties.

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Major historical changes, political reforms and developments have been taken place since the time of Athens city-states practiced their social order that is frequently seen as an ideal form of coexistance, a democracy. It is difficult to define and name the current governing regimes of multiple types, even if we constrain us to so-called democratic regimes only. Literature on the topic is overwhelming, rather confusing and ever-increasing, new and hybrid definitions on modern governing regimes are created every decade if not more frequently. The core problem is very simple though, it is an ever-lasting power struggle for power and resources and while these are limited, the circle of those who can access these is under permanent attempts of limitation.

A few clear suggestions have occurred that would help in these discussions, in trying to understand the character of modern governing systems. Dahl's proposed participation and contestation dimensions or his polyarchy lenses serve well in analyzing the regimes that we live in. Since it is about power struggles around access to resources, the contestation dimension helps to measure openness of the government to people, or the nature of its institutions. The participation dimension on the other hand, would assist in analyzing people's practical engagment in governance, their ability to influence the processes and decisions that affect their lives. Investigating the character of both dimensions would also help to understand the institutional and social fairness that either empowers or hinders different interest groups' access to decisions and resources, whether it is better pay, more educational options or something else.

This review on concepts of democracy and people's participation in governance issues has provided a solid conceptual background to attempt an evaluation and comparison

of political regimes that have been categorized as representative, liberal democracies. The account on parents' formal engagement and opportunities to influence schools remained lighter however, indicating the substantial space to fill in what comes to parental formal involvement and influence in modern societies that live by fundamental democratic governing principles. The following chapters and analysis are author's attempt to help to fill in some of this area.

5. METHODOLOGY

The previous chapters provided a theoretical discussion of the concept of democracy, civic engagement and parental role in schools. This chapter gives an overview of the methodology that was employed to conduct the empirical research for the study. The topics to be addressed include the method and operationalization of the analysis and the sample selection.

This was a comparative research that enables to compare societies, a common and fascinating activity for people and agencies across the world (Landman, 2000, p. 5). Nevertheless, following Przeworski (2003, pp. 28-29), the underlying purpose is not so much the comparison itself, but explaining, answering the research question and grounding the assumptions in different historical and geographical conditions

5.1 Context

There is an inextricable link between the type of democratic regime, civic engagement and public school systems. Different democracy reports show varying rankings and

differences in people's engagement in decision-making processes. Recent OECD study on parental engagement in schools and education among its member states – the first one of the kind - raised further interest in autonomy and authority lines between the state and the people in public institutions of schools and education. The theoretical review allowed the author to believe that there may be undemocratic practices found that have been implanted into modern institutions and internalized by the people as such.

This study is investigating *different polities* from the perspective of *polyarchy*, to see whether there are *differences* in *institutional options* and *practical application* of *parental engagement* in *public school systems.*

Deriving from the theoretical perspectives that were described above, the study is built on the following assumptions:

1) In public school systems of *mature democracies*, *many institutional opportunities* for formal parental engagement exist, and their *engagement* in formal decision-making processes *is higher.*

2) In public school systems of *young democracies*, *less institutional opportunities* for formal parental engagement exist and their *engagement* in formal decision-making processes *is lower.*

Furthermore, the researcher also *assumed* that in different democracies, parents are not equally deliberative in expressing their dissatisfaction with school systems but

where they are, it translates into higher engagement levels. Parents' informedness of relevant rules and regulations is expected to be equally average, while parents' demographic background to have similar effects on engagement.

This approach could be described as *raison d' être* (Mayer, 1989) of comparative politics, assisting in identifying important variables and illustrate relationships between them comparatively (Landman, 2000). The results provide an aspect to describe modern *democracies* through parental engagement, to see how close are these polities to the ideal democracy or its operational version, polyarchy.

5.2 Methodological Approach

There are three primary questions that the researcher is facing that need to be answered to plan the following actions:

- Which data is *relevant*?
- How to *access* the data?
- How to *analyze* the results?

The approach derives from the hypotheses raised, while the critical dilemma of *representation* and *legitimatization* of the empirical data also need to be kept in mind.

This research is interested in democracy development and application through the lense of parental engagement in different contexts, both from ontological and epistemological perspectives. Thus a *comparative case study* approach was chosen,

employing both *qualitative* and *quantitative* research methods that would allow rich, holistic descriptions. King et. al, (1994, pp. 4, 475).   argue that the differences between the quantitative and qualitative traditions are only stylistic, fundamentally do not contradict and are methodologically and substantively unimportant. Hypotheses support the combined approach that aims to describe and explain the phenomenon under investigation as richly as possible.

Different research purposes require different methods, while there is always a trade-off between the level of abstraction and the scope of cases that will be studied (Mair, 1996). Here, rather than choosing a *large-n* approach and concentrating on analytical relationships between variables, this research is more case-oriented (Ragin & Janoski, 1992). Concentrating on fewer countries or on *small-n* allows using more scrutiny on selected contexts (Landman, 2000; Hague P. N., 1992).

This research concentrates on investigating *institutional opportunities* available for parents to engage in decision-making, and *parents' practical application* of these opportunities. The multiple-level approach enabled to give broader explanatory ground for *dependent variable*, which is *parental engagement*. For comparing the engagement between selected communities, a survey was carried out among parents.

Independent variables are articulated through communities' *socio-historical* and *institutional setting* that enables engagement in decision-making. To capture the extent to which independent variables influence parental engagement, a custom-made analytical approach was employed to assist to frame and explain as many connections as possible in polities (see also D.Held, 2006; Kuhn, 1970).

5.2.1 Method of comparison and cases

The method used for this comparative case study was Mill's *method of agreement* or a *most different systems design (MDSD)* where the population is treated as a homogeneous group, even if they are actually samples from different systems (Meckstroth, 1975; Przeworski & Teune, 1970). In the tradition of Popperian philosophy of science, the basic logic of the most different systems is falsification. The fundamental argument is that science progresses by eliminating possible causes for observed phenomena rather than by finding positive relationships (Popper, 2002).

The goal was to find and describe differences in implementation and application of democratic norms and institutions. This type of *multiple-level* study allows to see how democratic principles have been established and internalized (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Campbell (1975, pp. 181–82) has argued that in cross-cultural research design a theory designed to explain key differences "also generates predictions or expectations on dozens of other aspects of the culture" while a case includes many observations on the same variable. At the same time, it is very difficult to identify cases that are truly comparable and either identical or different in all respects but one (Levy, 2008).

The researcher considered the *cases* of *Tartu in Estonia* and *Huntsville in Alabama*, the United States as a relatively good fit to satisfy the requirements of the MDSD. By geographical location, population, level of democracy, strength of economy, religion

and several other factors, these communities differ considerably and as can also be seen in Table 5.1. They are similar only by one major factor - their political regimes of electoral or liberal democracies.

Table 5.1 *Most Different Systems Design*

	Estonia	Alabama in the U.S.
Features	- North-East Europe - Young republic - Long historical presence - Frequently occupied / Different political regimes - Universal suffrage since 1920 - Small state - Developing economy - Weak military - Non-Indo-European language - Racially homogeneous - Low religiousness	- North-America - Mature federal republic - Younger historical presence - Not been occupied/ continuous political regime - Universal suffrage since 1965 - Large state - Strong economy - Strong military - Indo-European language - Racially heterogeneous - High religiousness
Explanatory variable:	Liberal Democracy / Polyarchy	Liberal democracy / Polyarchy
Outcome to be explained	Engagement	Engagement

5.2.2 Sample

A review of the research indicates that parents are more engaged in their children's schooling during their elementary school years (El Nokali, Bachman, & Elizabeth, 2010; Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006) and that it is steadily decreasing afterwards. Neverthless, adolescents' need for parental involvement is not any less and might be especially critical during their *transition from middle to high school* (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Barber, Maughan, & Olsen, 2005).

To contribute to the research ot parental involvement during this transitional period, the researcher chose *middle schools last graders' parents* as the population for this study. For choosing the school district, the author realized that urban, suburban, and rural school areas have all unique characteristics that will affect the research (Prater, Bermudez, & Owens, 1997). Thus to investigate a "middle" area, both in Alabama and Estonia towns were chosen that are not capital cities, and would be comparable by their character. In Estonia, the second largest city Tartu (pop. 98.000) and in Alabama the fourth largest city Huntsville (pop.180.000) was chosen, both serving as major resesearch hubs for their countries.

To research the behaviour of average parents, only *public schools* where the language of instruction is the *local official language* were included to the study. In Tartu, there are twelve municipal middle schools and in Huntsville fourteen. In Estonia, the middle school's last grade is 9th and students in this grade level are usually between 14 and 15 years old, while in Alabama the middle school ends with 8th grade and students are generally 13 to 14 years old.

5.3 Operationalization

The theoretical review has set the trajectory of thought for the empirical analysis, briefly introducing different ideas of many thinkers on democracy, the criteria, measurement approaches and possibilities. The variation of democracy indicators that have been and are available for use is striking (Hadenius, 1992, p. 5). Thus having undertaken the task of evaluating the basic democracy criteria – civic engagement through parents' perspective – in different communities was a challenging navigation

between different concepts, theories and models that are available for use. Nevertheless, the analysis was set up cross-sectionally and as follows:

1) Providing a synthesized account on communities' general *political and socioeconomic background*;

2) Investigating *institutional opportunities* that are available *for parents* to influence decision-making processes in schools and education;

3) Surveying parents to describe their engagement behavior.

5.3.1 Background analysis

Firstly, selected communities' background data was analyzed and synthesized. Without understanding their historical, cultural and socio-economical background, it would not be possible to place the final findings into an appropriate context. We know that the selected cases' political regimes are similar, but it is important to understand other factors that can possibly influence parental engagement, either in similar or different ways in comparison.

Since these are two similar political regimes, Dahl's *polyarchy model* is employed to assist in illustrating two communities from the perspective of these criteria. Riker (1982, p. 8) has supported this approach, arguing that democracy is both an ideal and a method. This approach is a "powerful incentive for empirical analysis" (Keman, 2002, p. 40) and has been used by many researchers to evaluate polities' democracy levels (see also Pennings, Keman, & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006).

The Table 5.2 recalls the existence and functioning of the institutional pillars that satisfy the criteria of polyarchy:

Table 5.2. *Polyarchy Model for Analysis*

Institutions required to satisfy…	…the criteria of polyarchy
1) Voting equality	1) Elected officials;
2) Effective participation	2) Free and fair elections;
3) Enlightened understanding	3) Inclusive suffrage;
4) Control of the agenda	4) Right to run for office;
5) Inclusiveness	5) Alternative information;
	6) Associational autonomy;
	7) Freedom of expression.

For this purpose, *selected democracy rankings* were used to reflect on these criteria. This will assist in grounding the premise of similar systems comparison. It will also help to point on measured differences within these systems, differences that make them either weak or strong polyarchies (O'Donnell, 1998; Dahl, 1989).

Additionally, *key background information* on communities' history, geographical and socio-economical factors was synthesized and added to the analysis provided. These are independent variables that have shaped the institutional settings and people's engagement behavior.

Polyarchy model has two internal, separate dimensions that can be mutually exclusive in some cases: *opposition* or contestation and *participation* or inclusion. The first one is where both political and public opposition and competition are allowed and shoew the level of *liberalization*, the second one signifies the level of political equality to participate and control the government. Where both dimensions are high, it indicates the presence of a full polyarchy (Dahl, 1971). These dimensions were of undrerlying interest of the researcher and guiding her through various stages of this analysis.

5.3.2 Institutions

Institutions are directly related to democratic performance since they embody both representative and participatory functions, and also provide legitimacy and accountability of the system (Landman, 2000). In 2011, OECD published its report "Education at a Glance, 2010" that provided an international comparison of options that are available for parents to express their voice in schools. According to OECD, it was a first study of the kind (OECD, 2011). OECD's *four-dimensional approach* is employed for the purpose of this study to investigate closer the character of these institutions available for parents:

- Requirement for schools to have a *governing board* in which parents can participate;
- *Parent associations* exist that can advise or influence decision making;
- *Regulations* that provide a formal process that parents can use to file *complaints*;
- A designated ombudsman or agency exists that receives complaints.

5.3.3 Survey

The third part of the analysis was a survey of parents that was carried out in the form of *questionnaire*. The purpose was to test the hypotheses on *parental engagement* in showing that in more mature democratic systems, parents are more engaged.

In addition to looking at engagement levels, the survey followed Verba, et.al. (1995) *civic voluntarism model's* (elaborated in the theoretical chapter) dimensions of resources, motivation, and recruitment. The researcher was especially interested in parents' possible *motivation* and resources, including these dimensions to the survey. The overall survey design is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 *Analysis Design*
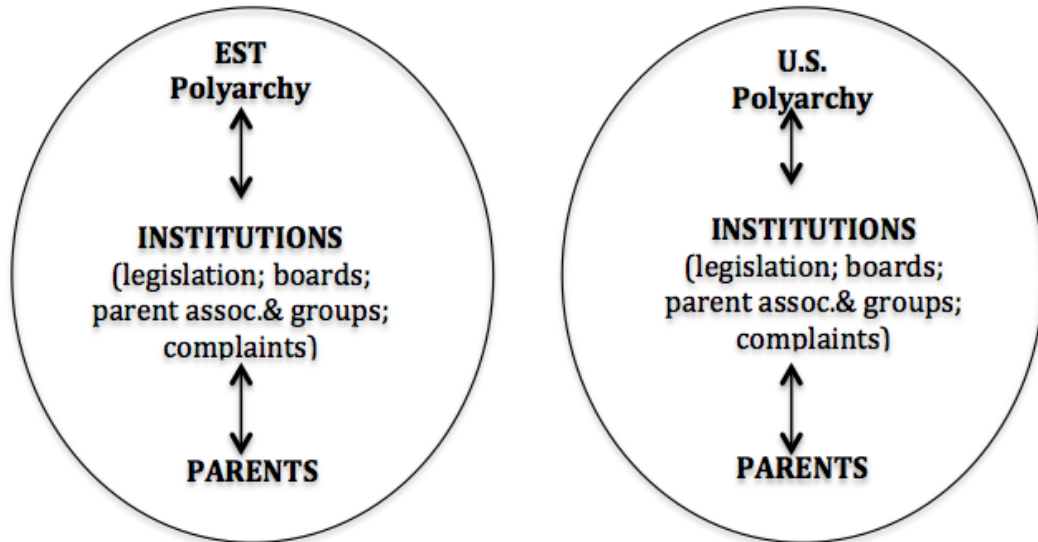
5.4 Survey

The survey was carried out in the form of structured, self-completed *questionnaire* (see Appendices A and B) that consisted of twenty-one questions where the respondents were asked to tick applicable answers. The dimensions that the researcher was interested in were 1) engagement, 2) motivation, and 3) resources.

The answer options were built on evaluative Likert-scale and dichotomous "yes" and "no" method. It has been said that objective measures provide only an incomplete picture of what we want to measure, and that perception-based data can provide valuable insights into the objective data (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2005). Thus three of the questions asked parents to briefly elaborate on their answers, while the researcher recognized that these questions would require more cooperation on the part of the respondent. Hence these questions proposed the addition of a narrative only as

an option and it was designed so as to clearly indicate a brief response, while not over-dominating the importance of the structured part.

5.4.1 Questions

The order of questions was chosen so that it would allow both "soft landing and ending" in as brief format as possible. The researcher acknowledged respondents' time constraints and was aware of possible sensitive questions. Previous research and experience on methodology recommends to keep questionnaires as short as possible and articulate questions as simply as possible (Rea & Parker, 2005; Biemer, Groves, Lyberg, Mathiowetz, & Sudman, 1991). This is an important advice keeping in mind the realities of the respondents who are likely to reject or neglect the survey if their time is scarce and clear motivation to participate in the survey is missing. Due to these considerations, the questionnaire did not consist any "filler" question and questions were articulated in a short manner (see Williams, 2003, p.247-48).

The format was prepared so as to lead the respondent into the topic with three Likert-scale questions that are concerned of respondents' satisfaction with the school and education system. These followed with two questions regarding parents' informedness in legislation and (political) agendas in what concerns public schools and education on different levels. Next questions were interested in parents' opinion on who should be involved in decision making, whether they have been exercised their voice by voting, and if they have been candidates themselves. These questions were concluded with the last question of this section, parents' motivation about being more included.

The last section was created with the purpose of collecting parents' demographic characteristics so that it would be later possible to correlate it with their previous

answers and see whether some basic similarities and differences in people's background imply for similar relationships in their attitude towards engagement. The questions and answer options were carefully formulated so that they would not be leading and would not be insensitive (Tanur, 1994; Biemer, Groves, Lyberg, Mathiowetz, & Sudman, 1991). Cultural differences were acknowledged and questions were composed so that these would be comparable not only linguistically but also in terms of interpreting the context.

The questions themselves were *formulated* as follows. The first three questions inquire about parents' overall satisfaction with their child's school, city's school system and with the secondary education in general. This was asked as to indicate possible *motivation* for their engagement.

Answer options were formulated on the Likert scale method. On each scale, parents were asked to circle the number above their answer. The questions are presented in the Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. *Survey Questions 1-3: Parents' Satisfaction*

Questions no. 1, 2, 3	Answers
Are you satisfied with:	Very satisfied
1) your child's school?	Rather satisfied
2) Huntsville City school system?	Don't with to evaluate
3) the quality of Alabama's K-12 education?	Rather dissatisfied
	Very dissatisfied

The next two questions as presented in the Table 5.4, asked parents to self-evaluate their informedness about legislation and ongoing policies that are in preparation. This dimension serves as a *resource* for engagement and should indicate whether parents

know about the instruments they have to engage in decision-making. The space was provided and parents were asked also to briefly comment their answer.

Table 5.4 *Survey Questions 4, 5: Parents' Informedness*

Questions no. 4, 5	*Answers*
4) Do you feel that you are well informed about legislation that affects K-12[9] schools and education?	Yes
5) Do you feel that you are informed about the current K-12 schools' and education policy agendas currently in the works?	No

Then, parents were given eight options inquiring about their opinion of who should be engaged in questions regarding general secondary education (Table 5.5). Parents were asked to tick all options that they think apply. This question was added to see parents' opinions on who should be those engaged in school and education issues and indicates their *motivation* for engagement.

Table 5.5. *Survey Question 6: Parents' Opinion on Participating Groups*

Question no. 6	*Answers*
6) When making decisions regarding K-12 education, the following parties should be involved:	Local government officials
	Public
	Alabama State Department of Education /Estonian Ministry of Education
	Local politicians
	Parents
	Teachers
	Students
	State politicians

The previous questions were designed both as to indicate parents' resources and motivation for engagement, while also serving as a "warm-up" for the core questions on dependent variable that is parental engagement. Thus the following four questions

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[9] It is in common to abbreviate general secondary education as K-12 (or kindergarten to 12th grade) in the United States. In Estonia, *üldharidus* or general education has been commonly used.

as shown in the Table 5.6, were inquiring on parents' voting and candidacy behavior in two spheres: general political and more interest-group centered.

Table 5.6 *Survey Questions 7-10: Parents' Voting and Candidacy Behavior*

Questions no. 7, 8, 9, 10	Answers
Have you voted for someone who has represented your interests in:	Yes, he/she was elected
7) the political system in educational issues?	Yes, but he/she was not elected
8) an organization involving parents (e.g. PTA)?	No
Have you been a candidate:	Yes, I was elected
9) in local or state elections?	Yes, but I was not elected
10) for an organization involving parents?	No

Then the following two questions as can be seen in the Table 5.7. were designed as to inquire some more about parents' *motivation* in terms of bigger involvement, and also to wind down the tone to prepare for the last section on the demographic data.

Table 5.7   *Survey Questions 11-12: Parents' Opinions on More Involvement*

Questions no. 11, 12	Answers
Would you like to be more involved in decision making:	
11) in K-12 education issues?	Yes
12) at your child's school?	No

Finally, parents were asked about their general background information in a comparable and sensitive manner that might be of importance when looking into possible *resource* and *motivation* variables that may influence their engagement levels (Table 5.8.). For example, while asking about marital status it may seem irrelevant, but when the respondent answered that he or she is raising a child alone, it indicates for possible time and money scarcity. Similarly, the question about education is a resource of not only knowledge to understand the instruments of engagement, but it is

also indicating a possible social status and is thus both a *motivation* factor and also of recruitment, although this dimension was not specifically analyzed.

Table 5.8. *Survey Questions 13-21: Demographics*

Questions no. 13 to 21	*Answers*
13) Gender	Female
	Male
14) For student	Parent
	Stepparent
	Grandparent
	Other
15) Marital status	Married
	Co-habiting
	Raising child alone
16) Native language	English / Estonian
	Other (*please specify*)
17) Education[10]	Up to middle school
	Up to high school
	Unfinished college
	College degree
18) Employment	Unemployed
	Employed full time
	Employed part time
	Homemaker
	Retired
	Unable to work
For your child you got the desired school	Yes
	No
Your financial situation is	Good
	Satisfactory
	Difficult
Number of K-12 children in the household	…..

Verba et al., emphasize that "what matters, is not simply what participants think but who they are" (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995, p. 15). Thus the combination of these questions in this respondent-saving format gave a good description of parental

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[10] Educational systems and degrees, and thus also their standard questions differ considerably between Estonia and the United States. Therefore very general categories were provided that would be easy to answer, support straightforward responses and would be later comparable.

engagement in two communities. Although religion is considered a possibly important factor in defining people's engagement (Smidt, 1999; Strømsnes, 2008), this question was avoided on purpose due to its sensitivity and probably incomparable answers due to Estonians' relationship with religion as can be seen in the country analysis.

5.4.2 Languages

In comparative, international study, language is a powerful tool that can be manipulated either willingly or not. Thus linguistically, a comparative researcher must be careful in translating and interpreting questions from one language and cultural context to another (Koponen, Mäki-Opas, & Tolonen, 2013).

Conducting surveys in different languages can pose difficult interpretation questions and we can find examples even from major international surveys, where translations and interpretation to different languages and cultural contexts is questionable (Rea & Parker, 2005).[11] This in turn raises the question of the "comparability of comparative data" that has been and will be generated across countries, but this is a problematic left for further studies.

Subjects of this research required the survey to be prepared in two languages – Estonian and English – while translating and interpreting final results into English only. There was no "source" language as both questionnaires were developed parallelly, translated back and forth to confirm their comparativeness while at the same time the appropriateness for different language, institutional and cultural

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[11] The author has noticed some contestable translations and interpretations from English to Estonian in the PISA survey, just to give one practical example. This is slightly elaborated below, in the analysis section.

environments. Testing the questionnaires on a small number of native Estonian and English speaking parents (not bilingual, however) enabled to edit and correct the articulation where needed.

It is important to emphasize the difference between "translating" and "interpreting". It is difficult to ensure the comparability just by translating questions and answers as accurately as we can. Sometimes there is no equivalence to a term of our particular concern thus the researcher has to find a way to control the meaning of different concepts across countries (see also Przeworski & Teune, 1970).

5.4.3 Layout and respondent protection

The layout of the questionnaire was important both for ensuring good response rate, but also for simplifying later encoding and analysis. It is important to capture respondents' attention and keep them interested to fill in the whole questionnaire. Thus the first impression of the questionnaire was important to the researcher.

Both in Estonia and Alabama, the questionnaires were formatted as a booklet: due to different paper formats it was a folded A4 in Europe and a folded 8x11 paper in the United States. The paper was of high quality white, while the print was dark blue.

On the title page were the name and the logo of the University of Bologna, and the title of the questionnaire. On the last page was the informed consent, researcher's and her supervisor's contact information.

Inside the booklet the questions were formatted on two pages. To avoid clustering, questions were formatted as concisely as possible, while carefully following the research purpose and the selected criteria.

To protect the anonymity of the respondents and in a hope also to increase the response rate through this measure, questionnaires were placed into sealable envelopes. Each envelope was provided with a label (Figure 5.2. and 5.3.) that provided the information about the contents, emphasized that this is an anonymous survey, and in the case of the United States it was added that it was approved by schools' superintendent. To protect respondents' privacy, they were asked to place the questionnaire to the envelope and seal it.

Figure 5.2.   *Envelope Label in English*

QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR 8th GRADER'S PARENT

By Katrin Elliott, MA, MBA
University of Bologna

This questionnaire is approved by Superintendent Casey Wardynski. It is anonymous. After filling it in, please seal the envelope and return it to your child's school within this week.
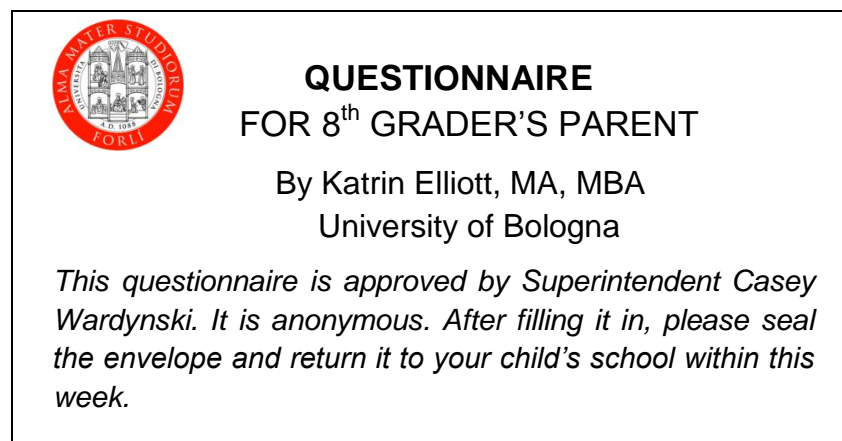
Figure 5.3. *Envelope Label in Estonian*

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>

KÜSIMUSTIK
9. KLASSI ÕPILASE
LAPSEVANEMALE

Läbiviija: Katrin Elliott, Bologna Ülikool

Küsimustik on anonüümne. Peale täitmist, palun sulgege kleepribaga ümbrik ja tagastage oma lapse koolile käesoleva nädala jooksul.

</td></tr>
</table>
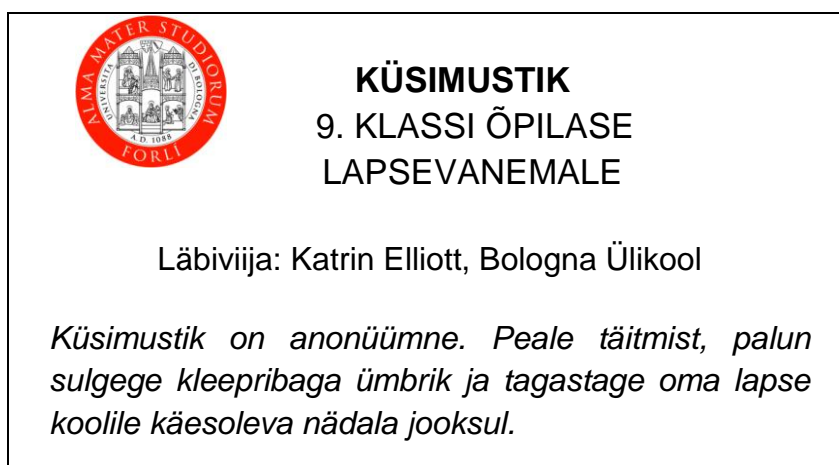
On the last page of the questionnaire there was a note for parents, titled the "informed consent" (Appendix A) and *Küsimustikust* or "about the questionnaire" (Appendix B) in Estonian as that fitted better to Estonian context. It was formulated so as to be both informative, appreciative, confirm the anonymity of parents' responses and to offer them an option to contact the researcher or her supervisor.

Lastly, questionnaires that were distributed to schools were provided with accompanying letters for teachers (Appendices C and D), explaining the purpose of this survey, that it had been approved by superintendent, thanking them for the collaboration, and providing researcher's contact information.

5.4.4 Implementation

Accessing schools for surveying requires different approach in different countries. In Tartu, schools are rather autonomous in granting or rejecting research requests, thus all Tartu middle schools' principals were contacted directly. In Estonia, the preliminary research requests were sent out by postal mail in spring 2012. One school

denied the request and three schools agreed by responding via email. One school took more time to think about it. The researcher contacted Estonian schools again in fall 2012 via email (except the one that did not wish to participate).

Access was granted to and subsequently the questionnaires distributed in *seven Tartu schools* in November 2012. The questionnaires were taken to school administrators on Monday morning and picked up on Friday afternoon on the same week. These were distributed by teachers in classes on Monday afternoon or on Tuesday and collected either on Thursday afternoon or Friday morning.

The United States is a federal country with decentralized school system. Thus there are certain regulatory differences between different states. On the other hand, school districts themselves are strictly centralized, hence the survey request had to be directed to the Huntsville City Schools authority. In this case, the access to research was asked from and granted by Superintendent of Huntsville City Public Schools, the chief executive of schools. Following superintendent's permission, the Huntsville City Schools Research and Development (R&D) department sent out an email to all its middle school principals and school counselors, notifying about the incoming questionnaires. The survey was carried out in *thirteen schools* in December 2012. The R&D department sent out a collaboration reminder to schools between the time the questionnaires were distributed and collected.

5.4.5 Analysis

The first step for data analysis was *data coding*. This was relatively straightforward and the response values were entered into the Statistics Package for the Social

Sciences (SPSS; student package, version 21.0). As an important preliminary preparation and to prevent the occurrence of extreme "findings", the data was also cleaned to identify and code missing values, inconsistencies and outliers.

Data analysis can produce overwhelming amounts of data if the research purpose is not kept in mind. The first goal was to test the hypotheses and see whether two communities differ in their engagement levels.

American and Estonian parents' answers were analyzed in two *independent groups*, i.e. none of the observations in one group are related to observations in the other group (Coladarci, Cobb, Minium, & Clarke, 2011, p. 283).

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the sample, generating the joint frequencies between two groups and presenting Tartu parents' responses in relation to Huntsville parents. Pearson chi-square test was used to analyze the correlations or relationships between groups and variables. Cross-tabulation procedure was used to see the relationship between parents' motivation, resources and engagement levels.

5.5 Originality

Considering that the comparative political research is "scandalously data-poor" because of the costs of collecting the original data (Coppedge, 2005, p. 35), this work has contributed to the data pool on democratic institutions and civic engagement in two very different countries and their communities on a grass-root level. Furthermore, this has been done from the perspective of parental involvement as a possible indicator of the political regimes, a perspective rarely studied.

This is an original comparative study also from its most different systems design perspective. For the author, it implied an extensive and multilayer approach to create the holistic view of polities' political principles, of institutions that parents could use to influence schools and education, and finally of parents' own opinions delivered through tailor made survey. There are many aspects that can be presented by the medium of numbers and statistics, but many that require personal observations and connecting different nuances to provide valid conclusions. This research of mixed methods aimed to satisfy all these dimensions and add new, original data to the data pool that can be used for further theoretical assumptions, theory generation, and hopefully for further investigations in this area.

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Next, to help to answer the research question and test the hypotheses, a three-level analysis was designed. Firstly, Tartu in Estonia and Huntsville in Alabama, the United States were investigated from the perspective of *polyarchy*. The purpose was to find and describe the fundamental *differences* and *similarities* in their overarching *contextual setting* and to see how are their political regimes, contestation and inclusiveness described by reputable country analyses and rankings. Secondly, a thorough legal and institutional analysis was conducted in Tartu, Estonia and Huntsville, Alabama, whereas in the case of he United States also federal level had to be included. This is to provide a comparative perspective on formal opportunities through which parents can exercise their right to voice. And finally, the survey analysis provides indications on parents' behavior and attitudes regarding formal engagement.

6. COMPARING POLYARCHIES

In 2010, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released its Democracy Index while warning that globally, "democracy is in retreat" (EIU, 2011). The former Soviet Union area, according to EIU, is facing either halt or decline in their democracy developments. A year later in 2011, EIU announced that world's democracy is in "stress" (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

These characterizations might provoke one to ask: "Democracy…Who?" Indeed, if it can retreat and then be in stress, these are humanly qualities and so indeed is democracy – a human form of cohabiting and collaboration *by the people* and *for the people* as a fundamental idea. On the other hand, we must face the realities of the life and human nature and maybe give in a little and rather than trying too big shoes to fill, find ones that fit better.

This study is comparing two democratic regimes from the base assumption that they both practice liberal democracy or in other words, represent polyarchic regime. Hence while aiming to plausible results from the perspective of most-different systems design, starting with the description of the broader socio-historical context is well justified. This approach helps to identify independent variables in selected communties and to describe their differences. Thus at first, the key indicators and background information was juxtaposed as presented in the Table 6.1.

Table 6.1   *Key statistics on Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia / Tartu[12]	United States / Alabama / Huntsville[13]
Political regime (similar)	Liberal democracy	Liberal democracy
Government type (different)	Parliamentary, unicameral, constitution-based republic	Presidential, bicameral, constitution-based federal republic
Independence (younger vs older)	1918-1939; since 1991	Since 1776
Universal suffrage (earlier vs later)	1918	1965
Constitution adopted (younger vs older)	1938, 1992	1787 / 1901
Legal system (different)	Civil law	Common law
Population (smaller vs bigger)	1.3 mln / 98,522	314 mln / 4.7 mln / 180,105
Land size (total, sq km) (smaller vs bigger)	45,228 / 39	9,826,675 / 133,915 / 525
Official language (different)	Estonian	English[14]
Ethnicity / Race (homogeneous vs heterogeneous) (Tartu and Huntsville)	Estonians 72.5% Russians 14% Other ethnicities mainly Finns and Slavic. Nearly 100% Caucasian	Mostly Americans 60.3% White 31.2% Black 58% White, not Hispanic
Primary religion; religious people, % (low vs high)	Protestant; 16%	Protestant; 65%
Currency (different)	Euro	Dollar
GDP per capita (poorer vs wealthier)	$20,400	$48,300
Income (USD/year) (poorer vs wealthier)	13 149	37 708
Unemployment (higher vs lower)	12.5%	9%

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[12] Estonian Statistics Office (2013), CIA Factbook (2013)
[13] U.S. Census Bureau (2013), CIA Factbook (2013)
[14] Hawaiian in the State of Hawaii

Employment (25-64 year old) (lower vs higher)	61%	67%
Population below poverty line	17.5%	15.1%
Life expectancy (shorter vs longer)	74	78

Sources: Estonian Statistical Office (2013); U.S. Census Bureau (2013); Central Intelligence Agency's data as of January 2013; Gallup 2009; OECD Society at a Glance, 2011.

We see that except of the political regime of each polity, other variables differ considerably. The following overview goes further in to this context, providing the synthesis of the communities and comparing them through the lenses of polyarchy.

6.1 Estonia

The Republic of Estonia is a small country in North-East Europe by the Baltic Sea (Figure 6.1), first attained its independence in 1918. Estonians are of Caucasian ethnicity and were recognized as a homogeneous ethnic group around the second part of the 19th century. The country has been ruled by Danes, Swedes, Germans and Russians, and was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. Estonia was able to restore its freedom in 1991 and ratify its second Constitution (see the link in Appendix E) when the Soviet bloc collapsed. The Constitution establishes country's democratic foundations, while the preamble states:

Figure 6.1. *Map: Estonia in Europe*

Source: Cartographic Research Lab, University of Alabama (2013)

With unwavering faith and a steadfast will to strengthen and develop the state,

which embodies the inextinguishable right of the people of Estonia to national self-determination and which was proclaimed on 24 February 1918,

which is founded on liberty, justice and the rule of law,

which is created to protect the peace and defend the people against aggression from the outside, and which forms a pledge to present and future generations for their social progress and welfare,

which must guarantee the preservation of the Estonian people, the Estonian language and the Estonian culture through the ages [...].
(Riigi Teataja , 2012).

This preamble states the underlying purpose for the state – to protect Estonia and preserve Estonian ethnicity – while honoring the liberal values of liberty, justice and rule of law. The first paragraph states country's political regime and defines the highest governing body, the people:

> *§ 1. Estonia is an independent and sovereign democratic republic*
> *wherein the supreme power of state is vested in the people.*

Due to geopolitics and historical turbulences, Estonia was not a nation-state and could not have any experience with democracy before the end of World War I. Estonian Republic was announced in 1920 and it had two decades to develop and practice electoral democracy until 1939, when it was occupied by the Soviet Union. For almost half of the century, the country was governed by the communist rule that was largely dictated from and by Moscow's central authority.

By the time of re-independence after the Soviet Union disassembly in 1991, the memory of the previously independent democratic republic had largely waned. Due to this lack of knowledge and practice of the democratic government and citizenship, much of the democratic ideal and practices had to be "imported" from the past and from Western countries.

In February 2013, Estonia celebrated its 95th anniversary. It is an independent state and electoral democracy where its Parliament (*Riigikogu*), the President, the Government of the Republic and the courts are organised in accordance with the *principles of separation and balance of powers* (§ 4 of the Constitution).

Largely as a result of the Soviet "russianization", labor migration and deportations, one third of Estonian population today is of Slavic ethnicity (see also Freedom House, 2013). Country's official language is Estonian that belongs to Finno-Ugric language group. Estonia has become a member of numerous of international organizations, including European Union, NATO, OECD, World Bank and IMF (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012; Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

Religion

Religious worldviews and political philosophies are built on the collective memory, while the collective desire and action is to make lives predictable (Leege, 1993). On one hand, Estonia has been far from the mainstream political waves of the Western world, and on the other hand it has been a desired land throughout thousands of years for many conquerors.

Until country's independence in 1918, the institutional religious life was dominated by foreign ruling classes, mostly through Lutheran and in lesser scope through the Roman Catholic Church. The Soviet occupation demolished these connections until some reawakening after the re-independence in 1990s. From 1940 until the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, religious expression was restricted in Estonia. Partly as a result of this, only 16% of the Estonian population says that religion is important in their daily lives (Crabtree, 2010; Crabtree & Pelham, 2009; see also Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012) and younger generations are increasingly estranged from the religion (Remmel & Friedenthal, 2012). The Soviet occupation is not the sole reason for this phenomena, the roots for this can be tracked down even to earlier times.

Many Estonians follow indigenous belief system or *maausk* (*maa* can be translated as

land, earth, soil, rural and also country; *usk* signifies belief, faith or religion). It is a nature worship that has evolved along with the traditional culture of Estonians since their ancestors inhabited their land some 10,000 years ago and were *maarahvas* (*maa* + people). The British newspaper The Guardian has called it neo-paganism (Ringvee, 2011), a definition Estonians would rather not agree with (Toomepuu, 2012).

6.1.1 Tartu

Tartu is the Estonian second largest city (Figure 6.2) of 98,522 inhabitants (Tartu Statistika, 2012), where three quarters of the people are ethnic Estonians, others mostly of Slavic ethnicity although Finns form a numerous group of one thousand people, too. Tartu lies on the area of 38.8 square kilometers and is considered as the center of Southern Estonia (Tartu City Government, 2011).

Figure 6.2. *Map: Tartu in Estonia*

Source: Map courtesy National Geographic Education. National Geographic does not review or endorse content added to this background by others (2013).

Historically, Tartu has been called Tarbatu according to a 5th century Estonian fortress founded in the 5th century, was named Yuryev by Yaroslav I the Wise in 1030, and Dorpat by the German crusaders in the 13th century (Batten, 1988). The first written record of Tartu dates from 1030. The first Estonian university (then second in Swedish Empire) was established in 1632 and Tartu has traditionally been considered as a cradle of Estonian academia ever since (Tvauri, 2001).

In Tartu, there are fourteen municipal schools providing middle school education that fall under the general administration of Tartu City Education Department. Of these schools, two provide instruction in Russian language. As of September 2012, there were 13,094 students enrolled to Tartu's secondary schools (Tartu Linnavalitsus, 2013). According to the data from 2011, there are 942 9th graders in Tartu, including Russian speaking children and children of special needs that go to state schools (Tartu Statistika, 2012). The drop out rate from basic school is less than 2%. (Tartu City Government, 2011).

6.2 United States, Alabama and Huntsville

The United States of America is situated between Canada, Mexico, Atlantic and Pacific Ocean. In 1776, it declared its independence and was recognized by Great Britain in 1783.

The United States was the first democracy to adopt a written constitution. It is the world's shortest and longest lasting ones, an eight thousand word long organic

document. It defines the basic relationships between the people and the government and defining the nature of the legal and political organizations in the whole United States. Its famous preamble states:

> *We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America* (White House, 2013).

The current government began functioning in 1789, following the ratification of the Constitution by most of the States (White House, 2013). Based on three equal branches of executive, legislative and judicial authority, the governmental system was set up so as to leave many powers for state governments and the citizens (Freedom House, 2013).

Initially, the U.S. was a limited democracy in modern terms, although ahead of most other countries at that time. For example, only free white males who had a certain amount of wealth, could vote. As a result of the developments in thinking, the country has changed considerably throughout these centuries and different institutional forms of discrimination have been removed (Friedman, 2008). The United States has rich experience with democratic development, and Barber (1996) notes that although the Founding Fathers were quite suspicious of democracy in action, they always believed in the sovereignty of the people.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the nation expanded across the North American continent. Today, The U.S. is considered the world's most powerful state (Nye, 2010) while its economy is in steady growth despite of the global, ongoing economic recession.

Majority of Americans are white, about 13% black and less than 5% Asian (about 15% define themselves as Hispanic, while can also belong to white, black or other race) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

Religion

In the United States, religious worldviews are deeply insinuated in political institutions and serve as points of reference for many (Leege, 1993). According to Gallup statistics, the most religious countries are also the poorest. Only the United States "bucks the trend" while about 65% of its population saying that religion is important in their daily lives. More than half of Americans define themselves as Protestant and one-third as Roman-Catholic (Crabtree, 2010).

Historically, for most Americans religion preceded politics due to the fact that while immigrating to America they also "imported" their religion. Religion is an important factor that is daily diffusing the American political life and is routinely mixed with democracy, citizenship and other issues (Kellstedt, 1993). American churches serve as educational institutions where people, despite their resources and background, can learn civic skills and acquire necessary social capital through various voluntary activities that churches provide (Verba, 2003).

6.2.1 Alabama

Alabama is located in the Southeast part of the United States (Figure 6.3.) It has a population of 4.78 million. Developing the state of Alabama from the Mississippi Territory began in 1819.

Figure 6.3. Map: Huntsville (AL) in the United States

Source: Map courtesy National Geographic Education (2013). National Geographic has not reviewed or endorsed content added to this background by the Author.

Alabama's constitution, ratified in 1901, is the longest in the United States and in the world. It consists of over seven hundred amendments and the current, sixth version consists of over three hundred-fifty thousand words (Hamill, 2002; Alabama State Bar, 2012).

Article 4 of the Constitution of the United States (so-called guarantee clause) states that "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government" (White House, 2013). It allowed states to adopt their own basic state law or the constitution. Additionally, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, part of the Bill of Rights, provides that "The powers not delegated to the United States

by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." This is important to understand how, why and by whom American public schools are established, managed and governed.

Alabama belongs to "Bible Belt"[15] states. In America and in the South especially, religious institutions play a role that cannot be neglected when analyzing its democratic practices (see also Verba, Schlozman, & Brady,1995). The Southern states residents identify themselves mostly as Protestant or non-Catholic Christians while black Americans have the highest church-attendance averages of any major racial group, and a relatively high number of black population lives in the Southern states (Newport, 2010).

Across the states there is a wide regional variation in religiosity whereas nine of the top ten states in church attendance are in the South. Alabama is number two on the list with 58% of the people attending the church weekly and also number two of the percentage of people who says that religion is important in their daily lives – 82% (Newport, 2009, 2010).

In Alabama there are 65 city and 67 county school districts with 1523 public schools and nearly 750 thousand students (Alabama State Department of Education, 2010). In terms of students dropout rate, Alabama fares worse than the national average by only about sixty percent of students finishing high school (Coe, et al., 2012).

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[15] Bible Belt: an area chiefly in the southern United States whose inhabitants are believed to hold uncritical allegiance to the literal accuracy of the Bible (Merriam-Webster, 2013)

6.2.2 Huntsville

Huntsville is the fourth largest city in Alabama, located in Northern part of the state, nestled between the Tennessee river and the Appalachian mountains (City of Huntsville, 2011). The area was named "Huntsville" after John Hunt - the first settler in this area in the beginning of 19th century. Today, a number of higher education institutions have been established in the city or in its vicinity. Huntsville has become a city of major importance for aerospace and defense research and industry, manufacturing, biotech and telecommunications industries (City of Huntsville, 2013; Chamber of Commerce, Huntsville, 2013).

As of October 2011, 23,336 students had enrolled in Huntsville city municipal schools. The mission statement of Huntsville City Schools has been articulated on its website as follows:

> *The mission of Huntsville City Schools, the Nation's premier educational system in one of the world's most technologically advanced communities, is to guarantee that every student will graduate with the capacity to compete successfully and contribute responsibly in a global technological society through an educational process characterized by effective instruction, individualized learning, superior academic and personal achievement, and safe and orderly centers of excellence, in partnership with families and the community. "To provide a quality education that prepares all children for a successful future."* (Huntsville City Schools, 2013)

The city is known for its technological ambitions. For example, in fall 2012 all city's public school students were provided with laptops (middle to high school) and iPads (elementary schools) while partly switching to electronic textbooks for more modern learning experience (Bonvillian, 2012).

In addition to regular public schools, the city sponsors magnet programs at the elementary through high school level that are designed to provide more intensive instruction in selected disciplines like languages, art, science and technology. The city has developed partnerships with local industries and government through its educational programs (Redstone Arsenal and NASA, for example).

There are also several independent and religiously affiliated private schools in the area. Homeschooling is available to parents as an option as well. Over eighty percent of city's high school graduates enroll in college (City of Huntsville, AL, 2011).

6.3 Rankings: Polyarchy, Democracy and Engagement

In Dahl's view, ideal democracies need to fulfill at least two dimensions: public contestation and the right to participate. World's regimes are located somewhere in between these dimensions and instead of classifying them, he offered a model of *polyarchy* to rank them according to different criteria that were discussed above and that fall under these two dimensions that the Figure 6.4 illustrates.

Figure 6.4. *Polyarchy Model*
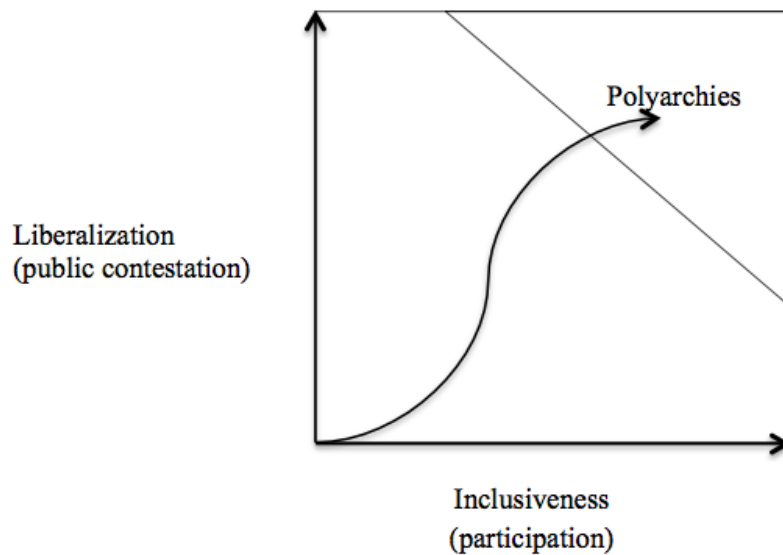
Source: Adapted from Dahl, R. (1971, p.7 Figure 1.2.)

According to Dahl, democracy should lie in the upper right corner of the figure, although in his view no country could fully reach that, but can become close to it (Dahl, 1971).

The following is a selection of international reports that have provided criteria and indexes on Estonia and the United States. The selection of indexes was chosen so that they would report on the polyarchy criteria and institutions that were described in the methodology chapter, i.e. also satisfying the contestation and participation dimensions. Longer list and descriptions of various international agencies and research groups' reports and rankings was presented in the theoretical chapter. The first two indexes are polyarchy scales, then the next two cover only Estonia as a "transitional" regime and the latter ones provide comparisons both for Estonia and the United States.

6.3.1 Tatu Vanhanen's Polyarchy Dataset

The Peace Reseach Institutute in Oslo (PRIO) has made available Tatu Vanhanen's Polyarchy dataset that covers 187 countries over the period 1810 to 2000. PRIO is also contributing to Polity dataset that is introduced later (PRIO, 2007).

Vanhanen conceptualized democracy in a similar way as Dahl did, but he went further and operationalized the dimensions of contestation and participation. Vanhanen considered most measures of demorcacy too complicated and having too many indicators, while relying mostly on subjetivity and qualitative data. He built his polyarchy ranking on electoral data, based on the total population.

The data for Estonia and the United States have been compiled to Table 6.2., covering and comparing the years when Estonia has been independendent, until the year 2000 when the dabase development was stopped (in the original database, the indexes for United States are from 1810 onwards).

Table 6.2. *Vanhanen's Polyarchy Ranking 1918 – 2000: Estonia and the United States*

	Competition		Participation		Parl. vs Presid.	
	EST	**US**	**EST**	**US**	**EST**	**US**
1918	0	50.6	0	18.33	0	9.27
1919	66.8	50.6	41.1	18.33	27.45	9.27
1920	70	39.5	42.26	25.09	29.58	9.91
1921	70	39.5	42.26	25.09	29.58	9.91
1922	70	39.5	42.26	25.09		9.91
1923	70	39.5	41.26	25.09	28.88	9.91
1924	70	45.9	41.26	25.49	28.88	11.7
1925	70	45.9	41.26	25.49	28.88	11.7
1926	70	45.9	46.95	25.49	32.86	11.7
1927	70	45.9	46.95	25.49	32.86	11.7
1928	70	42	46.95	30.61	32.86	12.85
1929	70	42	45.21	30.61	31.65	12.85
1930	70	42	45.21	30.61	31.65	12.85
1931	70	42	45.21	30.61	31.65	12.85

1932	60.2	42.7	44.61	32.06	26.85	13.69
1933	60.2	42.7	44.61	32.06	26.85	13.69
1934*	0	42.7	0	32.06	0	13.69
1935	0	42.7	0	32.06	0	13.69
1936	0	39.2	0	35.61	0	13.96
1937	0	39.2	0	35.61	0	13.96
1938	14	39.2	19.7	35.61	2.76	13.96
1939	14	39.2	19.7	35.61	2.76	13.96
1991	68	46.1	57.92	36.3	39.39	16.74
1992	70	57.1	29.92	40.95	20.95	23.38
1993	70	57.1	29.92	40.95	20.95	23.38
1994	70	57.1	29.92	40.95	20.95	23.38
1995	67.8	57.1	35.67	40.95	24.19	23.38
1996	67.8	50.8	35.67	36.26	24.19	18.42
1997	67.8	50.8	35.67	36.26	24.19	18.42
1998	67.8	50.8	35.67	36.26	24.19	18.42
1999	70	50.8	34.38	36.26	24.07	18.42
2000	70	51.3	34.38	37.19	24.07	19.08

* A coup d'état in 1934 in Estonia resulted in authoritarian government from 1934 to 1937.
Source: adapted from Vanhanen's (PRIO,2000) polyarchy scale.

The degree of *competition* is calcluated as the share of smaller parties of the votes cast by subtracting the percentage of votes won by the largest party from 100. The degree of *participation* is calculated by measuring the same population that voted in the same election, from the total popualation). Vanhanen has also calculated the relative importance of parliamentary and presidential elections which enables to see which of the two branches of government (or two branches of concurrent powers) is more dominant (Vanhanen, 2000).

Throughout the years presented, Estonian data shows considerably more diversity in terms of party competition, i.e. more political factions in comparison to the United States where the primary competition has always been between Republican and Democratic parties. After the World War I and new Estonian Republic, Estonians voter turnout was higher than in the United States during that era. However, the autocratic regime before the World War II suffocated the popular participation among

Estonians and during the occupation the participation was rather a farce. Immediately after the re-independence in 1991, Estonians showed remarkable voting activity, but during 1992 to 2000 it fell lower than in the United States.

6.3.2 Coppedge & Reinicke's Polyarchy Scale

The polyarchy scale that Coppedge and Reinicke's built in 1990, measured the "degree to which national political systems meet the minimum requirements for political democracy". Authors emphasize that although the multidimensional reality does not actually allow for such simple comparison as rankings, they have tried to develop a rough typology. According to them, a polyarchy scale can serve as a checklist for researchers who are trying to identify similar and dissimilar countries and their political regimes (Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990).

For this ranking, polyarchies were measured from the dimensions of the free and fair elections (FAIRELT), the freedom of organization variable (FREORG), the freedom of expression (FREXT) and the availability of alternative sources of information (ALTINF), and the right to vote (SUFF). Vanhanen has noted that their scale is undimensional and identical to the scale of public contestation (Vanhanen, 2000).

Their scale provided a view on the state of contestation and participation during the era of Cold War when Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union (USSR or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Table 6.3.). The authors claimed that this scale is composed of data from 1985 and of "independent nations" (Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990, p.56).

Table 6.3. *Coppedge & Reinicke Polyarchy Scale 1985: USSR and the United States*

	FAIRELT	FREORG	FREXT	ALTINF	SUFF
USSR	3	4	3	4	1
United States	1	1	1	1	1

Source: adapted from Coppedge, M.; Reinick, W. (1990), Appendix C.

The United States was a perfect scale type (1 1 1 1 1) and categorized as a full polyarchy (1st of 10 defined groups) where "meaningful fair elections are held, there is full freedom for political organization and expression, and there is no preferential presentation of official views in the media". On the other hand, in the type of polyarchy that USSR (last group of 10, scoring 3 4 3 4 1) represented, "no meaningful elections are held, all organizations are banned or controlled by the government or official party, all public dissent is suppressed, and there is no public alternative to official information (Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990, p.63, 66).

6.3.3 Freedom House "Nations in Transit"

Nations in Transit is an annual, multidimensional report by the Freedom House (2013) that covers democratic development of the former communist states in Europe and Eurasia in seven categories. The Democracy Score is an average rating of all scores on political rights and civil liberties, while 1 represents the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

The experts examine various criteria under the categories of national democratic governance, electoral process, civil society, independent media, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence and corruption. The Freedom House has frequently emphasized that the purpose of its rankings is "not to rate governments", but rather to evaluate practical effect of the state and nongovernmental

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actors on individual's rights and freedoms.[16] In 2012, 29 countries were studied and the scores for Estonia are presented in the Table 6.4.

Table 6.4. *Nations in Transit 2012: Estonia*

	Score
Electoral Process	1.75
Civil Society	1.75
Independent Media	1.50
National Democratic Governance	2.25
Local Democratic Governance	2.50
Judicial Framework and Independence	1.50
Corruption	2.25
Democracy Score	**1.93**

So*urce: adapted from Nations in Transit 2012 (Freedom House 2012)*

Estonia ranked second in comparison to other countries evaluated. Its highest rankings were in media and judicial independence, and the lowest in democratic governance on local level. The latter analyzes the decentralization of power; the responsibilities, elections, the capacity of local governmental bodies and the transparency and accountability of local authorities (Freedom House, 2013).

6.3.4 Bertelsmann's "Transformation Index"

Bertelsmann Foundation's Transformation Index (BTI) analyses and evaluates whether and how developing countries and countries in transition (128 non-OECD countries in 2012, according to Bertelsmann's Foundation) are steering toward democracy and a market economy. The data was collected before and after Estonia became an OECD member state in June 2010 and was thus still considered as a transition country. Country experts assess seventeen criteria within the core rankings

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[16] See the methodology at http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit-2012/methodology

of Status Index and Management Index while several of these falling under participation and contestation dimensions of polyarchy model.

The Status Index is a synthesis of all political and economic developments as of spring 2012. The Management Index is concerned of transformation management and is assessing how key agents of reform have sought to consolidate a democracy under the rule of law and a market economy, while following principles of social justice. The indicators were collected between 2009 and 2011. The results on the lowest 1 to highest 10 scores are compiled to the Table 6.5 while a few categories are additionally presented as to refer to several independent variables that may have an effect on the overall situation and people's behavior. If available, also country's ranking among all 128 countries has been added (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012).

Table 6.5. *Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2012: Estonia*

I Status Index: *1. Democracy Status*	9.28: 5th, highly advnced 9.55: 5th, democracy in consolidation
a) *Stateness* (monopoly on the use of force 10; state identity 8; no interference of religious dogmas 10; basic administration 10)	9.5
b) *Political Participation* (free and fair elections 9; effective power to govern 10; association/assembly rights 10; freedom of expression 10)	9.8
c) *Rule of Law* (separation of powers 10; independent judiciary 10; prosecution of office abuse 9; civil rights 10)	9.8
d) *Stability of Democratic Institutions* (performance of democratic institutions 10; stability of democratic institutions 10)	10
e) *Political and Social Integration* (party system 9; interest groups 8; approval of democracy 9; social capital 9)	8.8
2. Market Economy Status	9: 5th, developed
a) *Level of Socioeconomic Development* (socioeconomic barriers)	8

b) *Organization of the Market and Competition* (market-based competition; anti-monopoly policy; liberalization of foreign trade; banking system)	10
c) *Currency and Price Stability* (anti-inflation / forex policy; macrostability)	9.5
d) *Private Property* (property rights; private enterprise)	10
e) *Welfare Regime* (social safety nets; equal opportunity)	9
f) *Economic Performance* (output strength)	8
g) *Sustainability* (environmental policy; education policy / R&D)	8.5
II Management Index	7.41: very good
a) *Level of Difficulty* (structural constraints 2; civil society traditions 3; conflict intensity 3; GNI p.c. PPP rescaled 1; UN Education Index rescaled 1; BTI Stateness & Rule of Law 4)	1.9: negligible
2. Management Performance	9.03
a) *Steering Capability* (prioritization; implementation; policy learning)	9
b) *Resource Efficiency* (efficient use of assets; policy coordination; anti-corruption policy)	8.7
c) *Consensus-Building* (consensus on goals 10; anti-democratic actors 10; cleavage / conflict management 7; civil society participation 9; reconciliation 8)	8.8
d) *International Cooperation* (Effective use of support; Credibility; Regional cooperation)	9.7

Source: adapted from Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012.

Estonia has scored maximum on all those levels, except one point lower on free and fair elections. Estonia had high democracy index and was ranked as a "democracy in consolidation" where the institutions that enable contestation are well in place, although political and social integration (party system, interest groups, social capital) still has some room to develop.

Bertelsmann's report brings attention to Estonia's unique democratic transformation where it did not establish, but restored its statehood based on a legal continuity from the pre-1940 republic (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012). The data shows that as of

today, in Estonia free and fair elections, effective power to govern, association and assembly rights, freedom of expression and civil rights are fully in place.

It is important to note the index of "level of difficulty". It measures to what extent the management performance may be limited by some structural constraints that are likely not easy to overcome and are not a result of the current political leadership's actions. This was also measured from 1 to 10, whereas 1-3 showed low structural barriers. In Estonian case, its civil society traditions that fall under the interest of this study, were among the weakest dimensions, whereas it was still considered relatively strong.

Today, interest groups in Estonia are well organized according to the report, but they are few and quite weak, with just 10% of Estonians being members according to Bertelsmann Foundation's country report (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012). As was the European Union accession requirement, the government has adopted a code for best practice for consulting with interest groups. How much their input is sought depends on different government agencies, but mostly only in the opening stages of legislative work. Closely related to this is the low participation in voluntary or charitable organizations – according to the report less than 25% participating and civic organizations employing only around 4% – 5% of the labor force.

The report also points out that according to several surveys through the previous decade, over half of the Estonian population is rather satisfied with the democratic process in the country. Frequent changes during the last century and economically difficult transformation period may be one of the reasons why Bertelsmann country report finds Estonians' trust in political institutions rather low (less than 50%). One of the reasons, however, may be due to socioeconomic inequalities and barriers that

seem to exist in the society according to the data above (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012).

6.3.5 Bertelsmann "Sustainable Governance Indicator"

Bertelsmann Foundation's Sustainable Governance Indicator (SGI) was first published in 2009 and was developed largely to form a counterpart to BTI that had first appeared five years earlier. The SGI subjects the OECD member countries to a detailed comparison of their performance. As with BTI, also SGI has two dimensions of Status and Management Index, but these measure slightly different areas than does the BTI. The Status Index of democracy measures includes political participation, electoral competition and the rule of law. The Management Index identifies government as the key actor in governance and examines the extent to which core executives act strategically and can rely on institutional capacities. Also the role of actors outside the executive and the extent to which they hold governments accountable is measured.

The last report was issued in 2011, of OECD member states as of May 2010. Estonia became the member in June 2010, thus was not included in this study. The findings for the United States have been compiled to the Table 6.6, whereas the main emphasis is placed on characteristics more relevant to this study and others are compressed to save the space and reader's patience. For indicators that might be more relevant to this study, scores have been shown for each subcategory.

Unfortunately it is not possible to juxtapose BTI and SGI results, but together these two indicators provide a solid overview on Estonian and the United States' democracy

levels. Behind each indicator in brackets is country's overall ranking among the other

OECD states (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2011).

Table 6.6. *Bertelsmann Sustainable Governance Indicator (SGI) 2011: the United States*

I Status Index:	7.49 (13th)
1. Quality of Democracy	8.6 (8th)
a) *Civil Rights*	8.7 (9th)
(political liberties 10; non-discrimination 9; civil rights 7)	
b) *Access to Information*	8.7 (7th)
(media freedom 10; media pluralism 8; access to gov.information 8)	
c) *Rule of Law*	8.5 (10th)
(judicial review 10; corruption prevention 9; legal certainty 9; appointment of justices 8)	
d) *Electoral Process*	8.5 (11th)
(candidacy procedures 10; voting and registration rights 9; party financing 8; media access 7)	
2. Policy Performance	6.38
A Economy and employment	6.2 (15th)
a) *Enterprises*	8 (1st)
b) *Economy*	7.8 (4th)
c) *Labor market*	6.2 (19th)
d) *Taxes*	5.5 (19th)
e) *Budgets*	3.4 (28th)
B Social Affairs	6.7 (14th)
a) *Integration*	7.4 (6th)
(foreign-born-to-native empl. 7.4; integration policy 8; foreign-born unemployment 7.96; foreign-born tert. attainment 5.47; foreign-born sec. attainment 4.36)	
b) *Pensions*	7.0 (13th)
c) *Health Care*	6.6 (24th)
d) *Families*	6.1 (18th)
(fertility rate 9.45; family policy 7; child care density 5.52; spending on family policy 2.91; child poverty 2.87)	
e) *Social Inclusion*	6.1 (18th)
(social/political participation 8.42; life satisfaction 8.09; gender equality 6.79; youth not in empl./educ. 6.74; social inclusion policy 6; Gini coeff. 5.5; poverty 1.89)	
C Security	6.2 (29th)
(internal, external)	
D Resources	6.4 (9th)
a) *R&D*	7.4 (5th)
b) *Education*	7.3 (6th)
(continuing education 9.27; upper sec. attainment 8.50; tertiary attainment 8.08; education policy 7; PISA results 6.61; pre-primary education 5.33)	

c) *Environment*	4.5 (30th)
II Management Index	7.24 (7th)
1. *Executive Capacity*	7.78
A Steering Capability (strategic capacity 7; inter-ministerial coordination 9.4; evidence-based instruments 9.7; consultation, i.e. negotiating public support 9; communication capacity 9)	8.8 (1st)
B Policy Implementation (implementation: auditing, monitoring, compliance, national standards, gov, efficiency)	7.5 (12th)
C Institutional Learning (adaptability: domestic & international cooperation; reform capacity)	7 (10th)
D *Accountability*	6.7 (11th)
a) Oversight (audit office, ombudsman, summoning experts etc)	9.3 (7th)
b) *Legislature* (legisl. research staff; number of committees etc)	8.7 (1st)
c) *Parties/Associations* (business assoc. competence 8; "other" assoc. competence 7; party competence 7)	7.3 (15th)
d) *Citizens* (policy knowledge 6; voter turnout 4.62)	5.3 (20th)
e) *Media* (media reporting 6; newspaper circulation 3.54; quality newspapers 3.44)	4.3 (18th)

Source: adapted from Bertelsmann Foundation, 2011.

To summarize the United States' rankings, it ranks eight among other countries in its overall quality of democracy. Its electoral process is generally open and fair, but access to media resources has a heavy price tag. Also political process is open and can be characterized by embracive approach towards different interest groups and actors. On the other hand, the indicators show people's low awareness on political issues, which can hinder their constructive role and participation in decisions that affect their lives.

Media is mostly private while traditional channels hold rather pluralistic tendencies. After the 9/11, civil rights have been slightly compromised, but political liberties are well protected. Administrative and executive action is generally tightly tied by the

boundaries of law. Judiciary has broad authority supervising statutory or constitutional compliance.

The United States' economy has had difficult times like many countries since the global economy went to recession in 2007, thus these results are relatively mixed. Social inclusion indicator shows visible inequalities among the population, access to affordable health care is still a major problem and inequalities in terms of income are very high. Also governmental family support programs are lower than in most other OECD countries, which may indicate that parents' opportunities to balance their family and work lives are limited and the choices are expensive. All these problems can play a considerable role on civic and political participation.

And finally about country's education rankings, although it shows high scores in Research and Development, the overall educational situation has been causing concerns. The quality of the primary and secondary education is considered mediocre and high-school graduation rates are low, around 70% (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2011).

6.3.6 Freedom House "Freedom in the World"

The Freedom in the World survey provides an annual, global evaluation of the progress and decline of freedom – measured in broad categories of civil and political rights - in more than two hundred countries and territories. Each country is assigned a numerical rating from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the most and 7 the least free. The recent results are presented in Table 6.7.

Both the United States and Estonia are categorized as "free" countries. Political rights'

analysis is based on an evaluation of electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government.

Table 6.7. *Freedom in The World 2013: Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia	United States
Political Liberties	1 (free)	1 (free)
Civil Liberties	1 (free)	1 (free)

Source: adapted from Freedom in The World 2013: Democratic Breakthroughs in the Balance (Freedom House, 2013)

Civil liberties ratings are based on an evaluation of freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. Each of these has several subcategories that have been individually analyzed.[17]

6.3.7 Polity IV

The Polity IV Project codes the "authority characteristics of states in the world system for purposes of comparative, quantitative analysis". The experts and researchers constantly monitor regime changes and conjoined qualities of governing institutions that range from fully institutionalized autocracies to fully institutionalized democracies. Over the years, the project has become an invaluable resource for political scientist and others who are looking for an aggregate data on political regimes. The data from year 2011 has been presented in the Table 6.8. Polity IV experts acknowledge that their database is closely monitored and scrutinized, and that its coding has been frequently challenged (Marshall, Keith, & Gurr, 2012).

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[17] For methodology and the checklist questions, see http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2013

Table 6.8. *Polity IV Global Report 2011: Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia	United States
Fragility Index*	0	3
Effectiveness Score*	0	2
Legitimacy Score*	0	1
Security Effectiveness	No fragility	Moderate fragility
Security Legitimacy	No fragility	Low fragility
Armed Conflict Indicator	-	War
Political Effectiveness	No fragility	No fragility
Political Legitimacy	No fragility	No fragility
Regime Type	Democracy	Democracy
Economic Effectiveness	No fragility	No fragility
Economic Legitimacy	No fragility	No fragility
Net Oil Production or Consumption	Moderate consumer (1-10 barrels/capita)	Major consumer (more than 10 barrels/capita)
Social Effectiveness	No fragility	No fragility
Social Legitimacy	No fragility	No fragility

*State Fragility Index = Effectiveness Score + Legitimacy Score; **Effectiveness Score** = Security Effectiveness + Political Effectiveness + Economic Effectiveness + Social Effectiveness; Legitimacy Score = Security Legitimacy + Political Legitimacy + Economic Legitimacy + Social Legitimacy
Source: adapted from Polity IV Global Report 2011

Polity categorizes both Estonia and the United States as fully institutional democracies, although the United States' fragility index is lower than that of Estonia due to America's war on terror, related policies and activities. Other indicators, except the net oil consumption, are the same.

6.3.8 Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is a branch of the Economist group. It has issued its democracy rankings since 2007 that are based on five categories. EIU sees democracy more than just a "sum of its institutions" and considers the political culture and participation as crucial elements for democratic development and retention. Thus

it has combine several criteria under the core dimensions of electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of the government, political participation and political culture. These are presented in Table 6.9 both for the United States and for Estonia.

Table 6.9. *Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2011: Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia	**United States**
	Flawed democracy	*Full democracy*
Electoral Process and Pluralism	9.58	9.17
Functioning of Government	7.14	7.50
Political Participation	5.00	7.22
Political Culture	7.50	8.13
Civil Liberties	8.82	8.53
Overall Score	**7.61**	**8.11**
Rank	**34**	**19**

Source: adapted from Economist Intelligence Unit, 2011

EIU has categorized Estonia as a "flawed" democracy and the United States as "full", although the latter one with a caution that while having been falling on annual basis it is now at the very bottom of this category of twenty-five countries. Each of these categories above has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall democracy index is the average of these. Full democracies score 8 to 10, and flawed democracies 6 to 7.9 points.

Although the United States scored the lowest in the participation indicator (7.22), in Estonia the situation (5.0) seems to be much dimmer while also its political culture (7.50) is considered to be lower than that of the United States (8.13). These indicators measured more than a dozen of areas, starting from the voter turnout and minority participation, to perceptions of democracy and political order. Clearly, abstention and apathy are consistent neither with ideal democracies nor with the concept of full

polyarchy. As we know and can see also by these scores, these two liberal democracies have provided the formal institutions of participation, through electoral process and pluralism for example where the also scored the highest: Estonia 9.58 which is higher than 9.17 that of the United States. These also appear to be the areas where both countries fare the best.

Both countries indicate flaws in the functioning of government, which includes both the dimensions of participation and contestation: Estonia has scored 7.14 and the United States 7.50. Among a dozen of other areas it was evaluated whether the freely elected representatives can determine government policies; whether there is an effective systems of checks and balances on the exercise of the government authority; whether the functioning of government is transparent and people having access to information; and also what are the popular perceptions of the extent to which they have free choice and control over their lives.

The situation with civil liberties is almost equal in both countries, while Estonia faring slightly better at 8.82 than the United States at 8.53 points. In addition to inquiring about basic civic liberties, the indicator evaluated the situation of the pluralistic, free electronic and print media; open and free discussion of public issues with a reasonable diversity of opinions; the degree to which citizens are treated equally under the law; the freedom of citizens to form professional organizations and trade unions and so on. One of the subcategories that likely brought the United States' scores down, was the "use of torture by the state": during the "war on terror" several cases have occurred where the state has imprisoned and tortured its citizens with the purpose of getting the needed information.

In addition to experts' assessments the EIU has been using various surveys where available, noting the World Values Survey, Eurobarometer surveys, Gallup Polls and various national surveys. Survey results are predominantly used for political participation and political culture categories, also in civil liberties and functioning of government categories.

EIU describes full democracies as countries where the political and civil liberties are not only respected, but where the also the overall political culture is open and vibrant. "Flawed" democracies may have the basic political and civic liberties, but EUI warns that there may be significant weaknesses in some aspects of democratic governance, including underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation The checklist of the indicators in different categories includes the fundamental criteria that were employed also in the parents' survey that was carried out to complement this research (see Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012, pp. 30-41).

6.3.9 OECD "Better Life Index"

In 1950s, an anecdote circulated among Austrian emigrates in America. Two of them meet in New York and one asks another: "Are you happy here?" The other responds: "*Ja, ich bin happy aber glücklich bin ich nicht*" ("Yes, I am "happy", but I am not happy"), meaning that man's life was comfortable, but being *glücklich* is a notch stronger and more spared statement than *happy* in English (Buchacher, 2008). Indeed, having a good life is difficult to define.

To many, "democracy" associates with peace, health and being happy. Or to put it more simply, democracy might be synonymous to good life, at least ideally. We know that it is good when we feel safe and comfortable, not when the statistics says so.

However, this "good" part is difficult to define during times of prolonged economic hardships and financial problems both on local and global levels. Whether it is voting equality or better informedness – a few of the many accepted indicators of democracy – these need not to be goals in themselves, but serve as instruments for responding to peoples' needs, aspirations and for establishing sustainable communities (OECD, *How's Life,* 2011, p. 14). Aspiring towards "better" democracies, we should be able to define what is the broader purpose, for whom and what does "good" or "better" mean in real terms.

A few years ago, OECD started to measure or evaluate its member states' living conditions and wellbeing using the "quality of life" scale - a scale that would grasp broader perspective and include more factors than usual economic statistics is able to do. Below in the Table 6.10 is a condensed compilation of social indicators on the grading scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), reflecting the overall wellbeing and life satisfaction in Estonia and United States, as reported by the OECD experts and national statistical offices in these countries. In a few instances the OECD used the Gallup World Poll sources.

Table 6.10 *OECD Better Life Index 2011: Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia	**United States**
Housing	2.4	7.8
Income	1.3	10
Jobs	3.9	7.5
Community	7.5	8.0
Education	7.9	7.0
Environment	6.8	7.9
Civic engagement	**2.1**	**7.7**
Health	4.4	8.4
Life Satisfaction	1.9	7.6
Safety	6.7	8.8
Work-Life Balance	6.5	5.7

Source: adapted from OECD Better Life Index 2011

As we can see, overall the United States performs very well according to peoples' well-being index, ranking among the top countries in a several areas. Estonia, despite of its remarkable progress over the last two decades of independence, ranks lower than the United States and many other OECD countries in several criteria, except in education and work-life balance.[18]

In terms of employment, 67% of people aged 15 to 64 in the United States have a paid job, slightly above the OECD employment average of 66%. In Estonia the number is 61%, i.e. lower employment than in the OECD in average. Some 71% of American men and 62% of Estonian men are in paid work, compared with 62% of women in America and 61% in Estonia. These numbers suggest that both in the U.S. and Estonia, women are able to balance their family life and career quite successfully.

Adequate income is necessary means to reaching better living standards. In the United States, the OECD reports the average income per person is 37,708 dollars a year. In Estonia, this indicator is 13,149 dollars a year (these numbers differ by different sources), which is considerably less than even the OECD average of 22,387 dollars. Here the report draws attention the wide income equality both in Estonia and the United States – top 20% of the population earn approximately five (Estonia) to eight (U.S.) times as much as the bottom 20%. In both countries, growing income inequality is seen as a significant problem (see, for example, Friedman, 2008)

Estonians work almost one hundred hours or two full work weeks more than Americans: 1879 hours against Americans' 1778 hours a year. This is an interesting

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[18] The complete database is available at www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org

finding since Americans have, in general, only two weeks of paid holidays against Estonians' four weeks. In any case, that is more than most people in the OECD countries work (1749 hours). On the other hand, Americans report to work more very long hours than in Estonia : 11% against Estonia's 6%.

Having a good education is an important requisite for finding a job. Both in the United States and Estonia, 89% of adults aged 25-64 have earned the equivalent of a high-school degree. In terms of the quality of the educational system, the average Estonian student scored 514 and American 496 in reading literacy, math and science in the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). OECD average is 497, indicating Estonian students considerably higher academic performance (see more about PISA below, in the parental engagement section).

In terms of health, life expectancy at birth in the OECD in average is 80 years, while Estonians' life expectancy is four years and Americans' one year less than that. This is indicated also in the key indicators' table above.

And finally, Estonians are much less satisfied with their lives than other OECD member states' inhabitants: only 60% of Estonians against to OECD's 72% and the United States' 76% are saying that they have more positive experiences in an average day (feelings of rest, pride in accomplishment, enjoyment, etc.) than negative ones (pain, worry, sadness, boredom, etc.) (OECD, 2011).

6.3.10 OECD: civic engagement and social cohesion

At this point, the researcher is moving analysis closer to the area of civic engagement. OECD' report on people's wellbeing, the Better Life Index and Society at a Glance

indicators serve well for that reason. One of the criteria of "good life" is developed civic engagement and inclusive governance. OECD admits that although these are essential for democracies, they are very difficult to measure and a better conceptual foundation for their measurement is needed (OECD *How's Life?*, 2011, p. 187).

Below in the Table 6.11 is some statistical evidence of civic engagement and social cohesion situation in Estonia and the United States (of thirty-six is countries analyzed).

Table 6.11 *OECD Better Life & Social Cohesion Indicators: Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia	**United States**
Consultation on rule making	3.3 (33rd)	8.3 (13th)
Voter turnout %		
- registered voters	62% (30th)	90% (4th)
- share of the population of voting age	62% (25th)	48% (34th)
Trust in political institutions (%)	42%	58%
Can rely on someone	91%	92%
Pro-social behavior	22%	60%

Source: adapted from OECD's Better Life Index 2012 and OECD's Society at a Glance, 2011

A cohesive society is the one where citizens have a high degree of confidence in their governmental institutions and public administration (OECD *Better Life Index*, 2011). These indicators provide information about the possibility for citizens to express their voices on some aspects of the quality of governance, and on people's satisfaction with public institutions. The overall ratings for civic engagement (2.1 for Estonia and 7.7. for the United States as seen above in the overall ratings) placed Estonia to the third worst performing and the United States to the third best performing place. Furthermore, it is very important to point out the large difference in terms of consultation in rule-making. This indicator reflects on formal procedures that are in

place for engaging in multilateral consultation process on enacting new government decisions. In this case, it raises justified questions about whose preferences do Estonian governmental decisions reflect.

OECD has found a strong correlation between people's trust in institutions and voter turnout (OECD *How's Life*, 2011, p.199). In the United States, 58% of people say that they trust their political institutions, close to the OECD average of 56% whereas in Estonia only 42% of people say that they trust their national institutions. Since the formal consultation process seems to be lacking in Estonia, it is maybe even positive to notice people's low trust: lack of information or knowledge about the possibility of public consultation might in the worst case result in higher trust.

In both countries, most people indicate that they have someone to rely on in time of need. On the other hand, whereas Americans have reported the highest levels of pro-social behavior, Estonians are among the least helpful ones among all OECD countries, in terms of volunteering their time, donating money to a charity or helping a stranger last month.

High voter turnout is another measure of public trust in government and of citizens' participation in the political process. In the most recent elections for which data is available, voter turnout of those registered in the United States was 90% and in Estonia 62% of those registered. However, these numbers may be misleading. It is important to differentiate between "registered" voters and voters of the total number of citizens of voting age. These are identical measures in Estonia as eligible voters are registered automatically. In the United States however, the registration is not automatic and citizens typically have to register on county level. Thus the first step to

political participation is the act of registering oneself for voting[19] and only then can go and vote on the election day. The author looked up another data collected by the OECD and its partner organizations which revealed that of the whole population of voting age, the United States' numbers are very low: only 48% percent of eligible citizens voted at most recent presidential elections (OECD *Society at a Glance*, 2011, pp.96-97).

On the other hand and what has not been indicated in the previous table, OECD's "How's Life" report reveals (based on self-reported voter turnout, not official turnout statistics) that in the United States, voter turnout for the top 20% of the highest earning population is close to 100%, whereas the participation rate of the bottom 20% income population is only 72%. In Estonia the difference was minimal and to the advantage of the least earning part of the population. The ratios as created based on national elections in 2004, can be seen in the Table 6.12 reflecting on correlations on gender, age, education, employment and income.

Table 6.12 *Voter turnout by selected socio-economic characteristics (OECD): Estonia and the United States*

	Gender	Age				Educational attainment		Self reported employment status				Income			
	Women relative to men	Persons aged 65 and over relative to:				Persons with tertiary education relative to:		Employed relative to:				Top income quintile relative to:			
		15-24	25-34	35-54	55-64	Less than secondary	Secondary	Un-employed	Retirees	Students	House-wives	Bottom quintile	2nd quintile	3rd quintile	4th quintile
EST	1.12	1.09	1.07	0.97	0.96	1.03	1.03	1.00	0.97	0.92	0.94	0.99	0.97	0.98	0.95
US	1.03	1.32	1.08	1.02	0.98	1.65	1.20	0.91	0.99	1.32	1.03	1.41	1.21	1.07	1.00

Source: OECE How's Life 2011, Table 9.4, p. 202

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[19] To increase the voter turnout, it has been made easy and brought to grass-root level opportunities in the United States, where people can register even at the driver's license or car registration offices, for example.

Furthermore, the education levels may have a considerable effect for electoral participation: in the United States the gap is one of the largest, having a worrysome effect on those with less than secondary education against people with tertiary educaton levels, In Estonia the gap is minimal while its largest difference is among genders: Estonian women report to have higher voter turnout than men (OECD How's Life?, 2011. pp.201-2).

6.4 Summary of Polyarchies

The author considered it important to include both qualitative and dimensions to this research on democratic development and civic engagement. This summary will synthesize the previous multisource information, while elaborating on their possible causes and effects on institutions, political liberties and civic engagement that may have effect on parental involvement in schools.

This is a study designed on most different system's comparison. It relies on the premise that despite of the similar outcome, i.e. its formal political regime, most other historical, social, cultural and economic variables are different. To ground these premises, brief descriptions of selected cases' primary indicators, data and characteristics were provided at first. The results supported the assumption that both Estonia and the United States are indeed different in most of their independent variables, but both are built on liberal democratic principles, i.e. on the constitutional protection of civil liberties and the protection of basic human rights. In terms of polyarchy, this means that both countries should be on the adequate level of contestation to be defined as liberal democracies.

Since full polyarchy requires both dimensions of contestation and participation to be balanced, more information was needed to be able to place the later survey findings into logical and elaborated context. A polyarchy or modern, realistic form of democracy is expected to be a set of institutionalized principles and practices that can protect people's liberties and freedom. The question is from which sources to get the reliable information on these dimensions and how to decide which criteria, "thick" or "thin", best evaluate the state of the political order in selected polities.

Indeed, while under these terms one set of quantitative data could not be reliable or explanatory enough on its own, the selection of ten indexes was compiled to show overall, statistics-based tendencies. These provide numerical insight into Estonian and American political regimes and public participation throughout the recent history until 2012, whereas Estonian occupation and subsequent transition period has been presented so as to emphasize its possible effect on country's contemporary practices. In general, all indicators that were chosen and presented fall under the contestation and participation dimensions of Dahl's polyarchy regime, while some additional measures have been presented that may have an effect on either participation or contestation.

In short, the findings can be summarized so as to claim that based on the findings, both American and Estonian political regimes have adequate institutional systems that allow public contestation, although these do not seem to be as fully developed in Estonia than in the United States. On the other hand, public participation on governance and decision making processes is low in both countries, while the data on United States allows to be concerned also of its voter turnout levels that in some cases

indicate to be lower than in Estonia. Indeed, the relevant numbers fluctuate across databases and on different periods, although the notable tendency if falling engagement levels is of visible and pointed out by many organizations. The Figure 6.5 below illustrates the findings.

Figure 6.5. *Summary of Polyarchies: Estonia and the United States*

	EST	USA
Elected officials	Yes	Yes
Free & fair elections	Yes	Yes
Inclusive suffrage	Yes	Yes
Right to run for office	Yes	Yes
Freedom of expression	Yes	Yes
Alternative information	Yes	Yes
Associational autonomy	Yes	Yes

POLYARCHY

LIBERALIZATION

PARTICIPATION

	EST	USA
Voting equality	Yes	?
Effective participation	?	?
Enlightened understanding	?	?
Control of the agenda	?	?
Inclusion	?	?
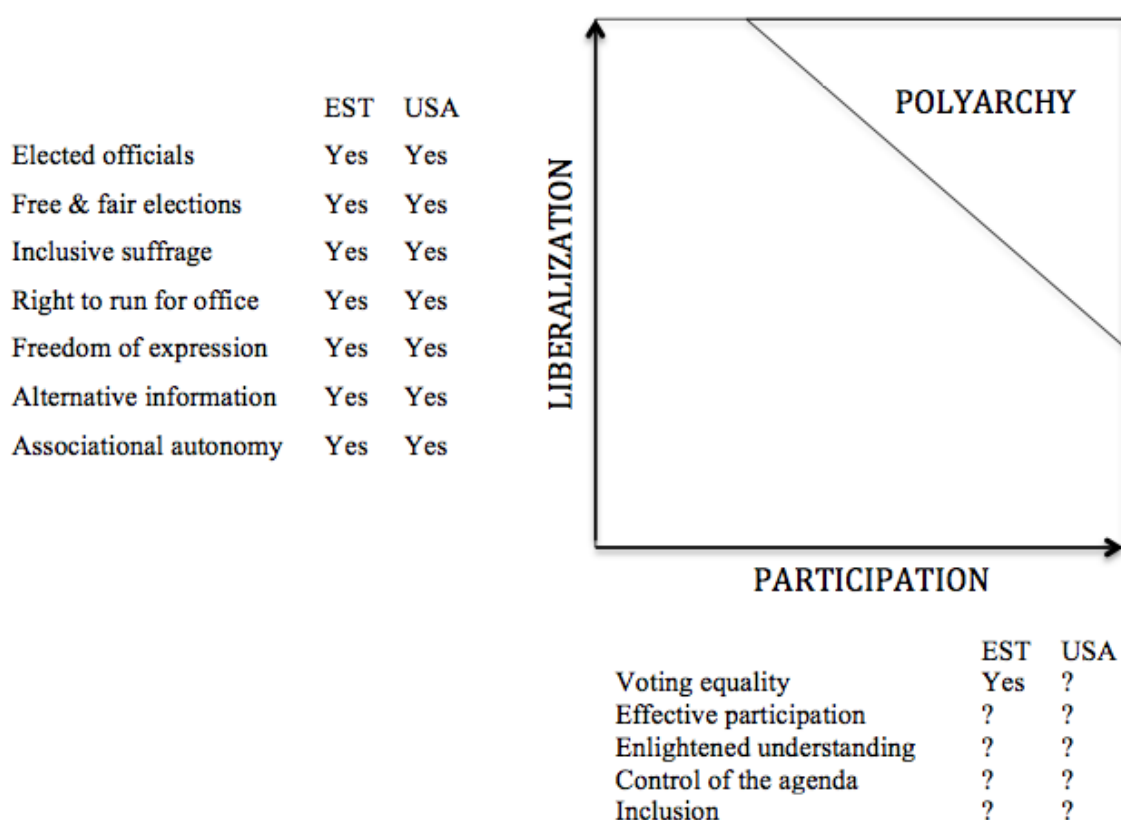
The institutions on the liberalization arrow or that defines the degree of contestation, exist in both countries, albeit the degrees vary. However, both regimes do not seem to be substantive polyarchies in terms of political participation and political culture. The participation dimension is where both countries seem to fall short, but since the author cannot make ultimate statements based on the data collected during this study, these are marked with question marks as areas of concern and would require further,

thorough analyses that are fully comparative. The fact that in Estonia eligible voters are registered automatically, while in the United States they have to register for that, including when they change the residence, is a considerable factor to argue that in practice, voting in the United States is not fully inclusive.

Democracy or its more moderate definition polyarchy needs to be more than the sum of its institutions and to have legitimacy, people need to participate to make their voices heard. Low public participation in both countries indicates a degree of democratic deficit, while it does not satisfy full polyarchy requirements either. On one hand, low engagement may reflect satisfaction with the country's government and overall management, but on the other hand, it implies that the political system reflects the will of a limited number of people. Estonian situation may be slightly dimmer since it does not also not have strong civil society transitions, peoples' engagement in voluntary activities and trust to political institutions is low, and the ongoing economic crisis in Eurozone may eventually be just too much for this young democracy to swallow.

7. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT: INSTITUTIONS

This subchapter is looking into institutional options that Estonia and the United States have for parental voice and participation in decisions that affect their children schooling and education. The overview is two-dimensional, consisting of the 1) review of OECD's two surveys, and 2) country-analyses that are, in turn, guided by the OECD institutional review.

7.1 OECD: "Education at a Glance" and PISA

Two OECD initiatives have provided internationally comparative data that can be used for this analysis. The first, "Education at a Glance" is an annual OECD publication on education systems' indicators in OECD and partner countries. Its findings are based on a broad range of statistical data and on data from international comparative studies, such as PISA (OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment).

The main purpose of the "Education at a Glance" (2011), according to the OECD, is to address the policy development needs of member states. Its indicators change annually, in the 2010 report also parent involvement indicators were provided. PISA, on the other hand, evaluates the "quality, equity and efficiency of school systems" worldwide. The program represents a commitment made by governments to regularly monitor the outcomes of education systems within an internationally agreed framework. School administrators fill in questionnaires that ask also about parents' involvement and influence, results of which can be used for this comparative analysis (OECD, *PISA 2009 Results*, 2010).

7.1.1 "Education at a Glance"

The first international study that investigates institutional parental engagement opportunities was carried out and reported by the OECD in the "Education at a Glance 2010" (OECD, 2011, pp. 434-438). The report was largely conducted in 2008 and it divides the options into three broad dimensions:

1. *Participation in governance:* parents serve on boards or councils with a direct role in making decisions about budgets, hiring and firing, curriculum, and school policies;

2. *Involvement in advising (non-governance):* parents serve on boards, councils, or associations and may thus influence school policies by expressing their wants, needs or desires to those with direct decision-making authority;

3. *Complaints or grievances:* parents express their concerns about their children's education or school to a representative of the educational institution, file a formal complaint, and/or appeal a decision made by educational authorities.

Hence OECD experts and member states tried to capture the formal types of parent voice, i.e. their opportunities to engage in schools and education either by means that are specified in regulations or that are "recognized and measurable at the central and national level" (OECD, 2011, p. 436). The findings on public schools are summarized in the Table 7.1. below.

Table 7.1 *OECD: Parents' opportunities to exercise voice in public schools: Estonia and the United States*

	Estonia	**United States**
Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which parents can take part	Yes	No*
Parent associations exist that can advise or influence decision making	Yes	Yes
Regulations provide a formal process that parents can use to file complaints	Yes	Yes
A designated ombudsman or agency exists that receives complaints	Yes	No[20]

* Boards are not required, although in some cases they might exist. Source: OECD "Education at a Glance 2010", Annex 3, Table D6.3.

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[20] Table D6.3 "Regulations that provide a formal process which parents can use to file complaints regarding education of their children" states "no", but Annex 3 on Indicator 6 notes that in some cases, this type of agency may exist (OECD, 2011). See also www.oecd.org/edu/eag2010

OECD has added that in Estonian public schools, if parents are in a disagreement with a school regarding teaching and education, students and their parents have the right to address the school board of trustees and the state official exercising school supervision. Schools, on the other hand, are required to display the contact details of the state supervisory authority in a visible place so that students and parents could have access to the contact details. Estonia did not have any statistics on complaints or court cases (OECD, *Education at a Glance 2010, Annex 3,* 2011).

For the United States, it has additionally been reported that in addition to federal guidelines, public school district have their own policies for parents to file complaints and concerns. As regards to a special ombudsman or agency, it varies across school districts. The number of complaints and court cases has not been reported. It has been added that "As consumers, parents can always voice their complaints or concerns with an individual institution. Additionally, parents retain the right to pursue legal action should they feel their student's rights have been violated" (OECD, *Education at a Glance 2010, Indicators, Annex 3,* 2011)

Parents associations can exist on several levels, have different forms and play a number of roles. According to OECD they are a means of advising or influencing education (OECD, *Education at a Glance,* 2011, p. 437) that can occur on four levels: national, state or regional, local/district, and school. These opportunities have been compiled to the Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 *OECD: Parents'/Parent-Teacher Associations or Organizations (PA/PTA, PTO) in Estonia and the United States*

	National level	Regional / provincial level	Local / district / municipal level	School level	A formal role: the government is obliged to consult them on major policy decisions	An informal role in advising government	Inform parents about relevant developments in education
Estonia (PA)	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
United States (PTA/PTO)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Source: Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators, Indicator D6, Table D6.2. Existence and role of parent associations (2008)

We notice that in Estonia, parent associations exist only at the national level. The report adds that Estonia is one of the very few OECD countries where these associations on school level do not exist (OECD, 2011, p. 437). Furthermore, it is noted that parent-teacher associations (PTA) are not very common in Estonia, while the United States is one of the few OECD countries reporting having them on all levels. In the United States, progressing from school to local and national levels, advising the government function increases. In the opposite direction from national to school level the information sharing function takes on a larger role.

The report admits that "unfortunately, this indicator [*parent voice*] is not able to capture actual practice" and that it is common for parents to express their voice in informal ways, communicating directly with the school staff, for example. Additionally, the report warns that despite of seemingly similar opportunities and regulations, large differences exist across countries in ways parents make use of formal mechanisms available for them (OECD, *Education at a Glance,* 2011, p. 436).

7.1.2 PISA

PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) is an international study that was launched by the OECD in 1997. By today, over 70 countries have participated in PISA that evaluates worldwide education systems by assessing 15-year-old students' math, science and reading knowledge. As of January 2013, the most recent PISA material available was that of 2009.

To establish more comprehensive context for students' test results, schools' administrators have also been surveyed (self-administered questionnaires).[21] Both Estonia and the United States carried out school surveys in late 2008. There are also optional surveys like parents' survey for example, that both the United States and Estonia have opted out from.

In the school survey, there are two questions that the author would like to bring out in a comparative format and to provide Estonian and United States' school administrators' responses.

Parents' expectations, Q18: *"Which statement below best characterizes parental expectations towards your school?"*

Answer choices:

1) There is constant pressure from many parents, who expect our school to set very high academic standards and to have our students achieve them;

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[21] Questionnaire in English can be found at
http://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/downloads/PISA09_School_questionnaire.pdf. Both Estonian, English language and American versions for questions 18 and 25 are provided in Appendix F.

2) Pressure on the school to achieve higher academic standards among students comes from a minority of parents;

3) Pressure from parents on the school to achieve higher academic standards among students is largely absent.

Schools' average responses are given in the Table 7.3. Although it is not specifically the core interest of this research (although closely related), parental involvement and academic correlations have been presented. [22]

Table 7.3. *PISA: Parents' Pressure on Schools: Estonia and the United States*

Country	Pressure from…	%	Reading Mean	Math Mean	Science Mean
Estonia	…many parents	13.86	518	533	539
Estonia	…minority of parents	52.71	495	507	523
Estonia	…parents largely absent	33.43	504	512	532
United States	…many parents	33.72	533	521	537
United States	…minority of parents	45.17	496	482	498
United States	…parents largely absent	20.11	454	444	454
OECD Average*	…many parents	18.54	526	530	533
OECD Average	…minority of parents	47.46	490	492	498
OECD Average	…parents largely absent	32.69	475	478	483

Source: PISA 2009
*OECD Average - the average of the valid percentages and mean performance of OECD countries.

As the results show, American parents seem to put more pressure on schools than Estonian parents. In both countries parental involvement affects students' test results positively, while especially strong correlations are in the case of the United States. It

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[22] Interactive study results can be combined according to different countries and variables at http://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/interactive.php and Excel datasheets can be downloaded at http://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/downloads.php

does not differentiate between different forms and areas of parental influence and pressure, thus more information is needed to make further conclusions. The next set of questions-answers is a step towards the elaboration.

Parents' influence, Q25: *Regarding your school, which of the following bodies exert a direct influence on decision making about staffing, budgeting, instructional content and assessment practices?*

The option "b" is "the school-level governing board" and option "c" is "parent groups". Estonian and the United States results can be seen in Table 7.4., also the correlation of parental involvement with students' PISA results in science is presented as to show some possible relationships.[23]

Table 7.4. *PISA: The School-level Governing Board's Influence on School Decisions: Estonia and the United States*

	%				Mean science			
	Estonia		United States		Estonia		United States	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Staffing	28.82	71.18	56.38	43.62	526	529	509	492
Budgeting	74.62	25.38	64.64	35.36	526	533	507	492
Instructional content	47.63	52.37	50.21	49.79	527	528	497	507
Assessment practices	27.18	72.82	50.49	49.51	523	530	504	500

Source: Database PISA 2009

The data indicates that in Estonia, school-level governing boards seem to have most influence on budgeting issues and the least in staffing and assessment practices. In the United States the influence is divided more equally between all four areas and can be considered quite substantial. The involvement of school-level governing boards does

[23] It is very difficult to compare the data due to differences in the context and terminology in different countries. U.S. Education Department has issued a technical compendium, where these particular questions and terminology are not specifically mentioned. These terminological issues will be further elaborated in this chapter, while one has to be cautious interpreting this kind of data without particular institutional knowledge. – *Author's note.*

not seem to have considerable influence on students' PISA results. Interestingly, where "boards" are more involved in budgeting (almost 75% of schools in Estonia have reported so), students' mean science results are also considerably lower.

"Parent groups'" influence shows a different picture and is presented in the Table 7.5.

Table 7.5. *PISA: Parent Groups' Influence on School Decisions in Estonia and the United States*

	%				Mean science			
	Estonia		United States		Estonia		United States	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Staffing	1.81	98.19	7.82	92.18	541	528	500	502
Budgeting	5.19	94.81	19.57	80.43	527	528	487	506
Instructional content	39.91	60.09	27.25	72.75	522	532	499	503
Assessment practices	17.16	82.84	7.94	92.06	514	531	493	503

Source: Database PISA 2009

In Estonia, parent groups do not have any influence on staffing and budgeting issues, a minimal (17%) on assessment practices and some on instructional content (40%). Interestingly, in this case these schools have also reported students' lower PISA results in science (522 against 532). In the United States the picture is very similar and parents' influence on instructional content is even smaller (27%).

From comparative perspective, the data above regarding school-level governing boards' and parents' groups influence on school decisions is terminologically and conceptually confusing for those who are slightly familiar with the country context. This opens up another complex, but necessary path for investigation to determine the

responsibilities and structure of those institutions, the terminology in different countries and if necessary then also in selected communties.

7.2 Estonia and Tartu

According to the "Citizenship Education in Europe" report by the European Commission (European Commission, 2012, pp. 52-54), Estonian parents can participate in schools' governance throughout the secondary school both on school and class level. According to the report, the primary functions and activities where Estonian parents' representatives can have, or not have any formal or informal role are as follows:

- *Consultative role*: school rules, extra-curricular activities, budget, school action plan, optional lessons, acquisition of educational materials, teaching content, recruitment of teachers, support measures;
- *No role:* assessment criteria, expulsions, termination of teacher employment;
- *Varies across schools:* informing other parents.

The report states that Estonian parents *do not have decision-making role* in school governance, if even consultative role. The following chapter investigates the situation more closely while the OECD structure of boards-association-ombudsman has been employed as a broad model to carry out this institutional analysis. The legislative dimension has been added to start with an overall understanding of parental rights and duties in the country, and if applicable then also on the community level.

7.2.1 Legislation and general situation

M.K.,[24] an Estonian parent has expressed the opinion on parental involvement as follows:

> *"A hundred years ago, children were taken to school on the horse carriage, given a stack of food and clothes, and the whole child's education was delegated to the school. That is the fundamental idea of the community, that we can delegate some responsibilities. [...] If parents get involved with their primitive views, then it is not a democracy, it is dictatorship over children"* (Author's interview, 2011).

A thorough understanding of communities' attitudes on public education and schools is a complicated process. The previous statement was just one opinion on parental involvement in Estonia, but to understand the context better we need to understand the fundamental legal context and mentality that derives from Estonian constitution. From this and from the general perspective on investigating democratic institutions, the following excerpts from *constitutional paragraphs* are important to understand parents' rights, responsibilities and basic institutional setting for people to be able to engage, and will reflect in the further analysis:

> *§ 12 Everyone is equal before the law.*
> *§ 15 Everyone whose rights and freedoms have been violated has the right of recourse to the courts.*
> *§ 19 Everyone has the right to free self-realization.*
> *§ 27 The family, which is fundamental to the preservation and growth of the nation and which constitutes the foundation of society, enjoys the protection of the government.*

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[24] Interviewees and schools have been granted anonymity throughout this study.

Parents have the right and the duty to raise their children and to provide for them.

§ 37 Everyone has the right to education. Education for school-age children is compulsory to the extent specified by the law, and is free of charge in general schools established by the national government and by local authorities.

In order to make education accessible, the national government and local authorities maintain a requisite number of educational institutions.

Parents have the deciding say in the choice of education for their children.

The provision of education is overseen by the national government.

§ 139 The Chancellor of Justice is a government official who scrutinizes legislative instruments of the legislative and executive branch of government and of local authorities for conformity with the Constitution and the laws [...].

The Chancellor of Justice considers proposals made to him or her concerning the amendment of laws, the passage of new laws and the work of government agencies, and, if necessary, reports his findings to the Riigikogu[25] (Riigi Teataja , 2012).

To summarize, Estonian constitution clearly states the right, duty and authority to direct their children's education while allowing turning to the court if they feel that their rights and freedoms have been suppressed. The constitution has assigned the ombudsman role to the Chancellor of Justice.

School choice can be an important factor influencing parents' engagement in school and education issues and expressing their voice, whereas less choice should result in more voice (Hirschman, 1970). Following the constitutional requirement, Estonian

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[25] Estonian Parliament.

Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools' Act (BSUSSA, see the link in Appendix E) § 10 requires from all school districts, also Tartu's children have the right to attend their neighborhood school (Tartu City Government, 2011). However, there is one magnet school (called "elite schools" in Estonian vernacular), Härma Gymnasium where children are accepted based on entrance exams' results and other criteria.[26]

Estonian government's coalition agreement promises to promote higher parental involvement in the academic process and to enable for school any necessary preparation for this (Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus, 2011, p. 10). As a concrete action, the new education act (BSUSSA) that promised to broaden parents' rights and responsibilities (Raun, 2010), became into force at the end of the coalition's previous governing period in 2010.

Based on Estonian government's information (Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus, 2012) and its Ministry of Education and Research websites, further actions have planned but remain opaque. The Ministry of Education's strategy plan[27] for 2011-2013 is unclear about the concrete action plan regarding parental involvement, but states that parents will get more options to become engaged in questions regarding curriculum, instruction and school environment (Haridusministeerium, 2010, pp. 10, 26, 30). For increasing parents' role in schools and education, the budget of approximately one million euros was planned (Haridusministeerium, 2010, p. 39).

Visiting Tartu city's webpage, the only resource that is specifically for parents is on the general secondary schools' page and listed as "To assist a parent", last modified in

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[26] It has been said that if one lives in Tartu area and the child is not in this school, then he or she is in "nowhere" (Kaio, 2008).

[27] Estonian national Parents Association has been included to represent parents' voice in its preparation (see its scope and membership information below).

2007.[28] It is a short page with a preamble as follows:

> *Parents have the constitutional right and responsibility to raise their children. It is normal that parents raise their children according to their beliefs, their best knowledge and skills. A parent has the right to be accepted as his/her child primary caretaker. It is very important that different systems (school, home) and adults (parents, teachers, specialists) would support child's development in a coordinated and collaborative manner* (City of Tartu, 2007).

The rest of the page asks parents "not to worry and not to be sad if their child's grades are not very good" and lists which habits children should be taught at school. The page has three links to short notes, regarding which signs indicate that a child needs help, how can the school help a parent (special teaching methods are listed) and a brief constitutional statement that "A parent has a decisive role in educating his/her child" (*Lapsevanemal on otsustav sõna oma lapse koolitamisel*). These are rather basic, instruction-related notes and could not guide a parent to any information on more meaningful, formal engagement if one wishes to do so.

BSUSSA § 66 requires all schools to have statutes that lay down "the rights and duties of students and parents". Indeed, all Tartu schools have statutes that have been authorized by Tartu City Council in spring 2011 and are available on city's website. The statutes are almost identical and present a synthesis of BSUSSA requirements. The role of schools and parents, and their collaboration have been stated as follows (excerpts)[29]:

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[28] http://tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=8&page_id=3720
[29] This paragraph is from Tartu's Descarte's Gymnasium statute. The statutes are available on city's website at http://tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=8&page_id=2042

parents have the right to:

- receive information and explanations from the school about the school organization, instruction, parents' rights and responsibilities;

- execute student's rights in the case if student's limited capacity;

- be elected as parents' representative to school's trustee board;

- make proposals to school to improve the instruction;

- turn to local education department, Estonian Ministry of Education; to county governor, school's trustee board, police or social worker for the protection of his or her rights.

Parents are required to:

- become familiarized with acts that regulate school life;

- cooperate with school to guarantee the instruction that responds to student's individual needs [….].

*- In order to coordinate cooperation between the school and the parents, the head of school calls a **meeting of the parents** of the students studying in the stationary form of study, thereby giving all parents the chance to participate in the parents' meeting at least **once a year**. In the event of the stationary form of study the head of school is obligated, at the request of the parents of at least one-fifth of the students of the class, to call a meeting of the parents of the students of the class (BSUSSA § 56);*

- A developmental conversation is held at school with each student at least once per academic year for the purpose of supporting the development of the student, and further study and development goals are agreed on the basis thereof.

The latter clause has been added since the BSUSSA § 37 additionally requires that "The student, class teacher and, in the event the student has limited active legal capacity, a parent participate in a developmental conversation".

§ 67 of BSUSSA also requires schools to have development plans that are "drawn up for the purpose of ensuring the consistent development of the school. The development plan shall be made for at least three years." Among other parties, the Act requires schools' trustee boards to participate in preparation of the plan. All Tartu development plans fall under separate directives of city government by which these are authorized. The plans are public and available online on Tartu city government's website. Most schools have some mentioning of cooperation with interest groups, including parents in forms of meetings, surveys and trustee boards through which to improve the school life.

7.2.2 Boards

Before the Soviet occupation in 1920s and 1930s, the leaders of Estonian education system considered parental involvement in schools an important measure to balance the goals of both institutions: the family and the school. Parent associations, trustee boards and school councils were established by the schools where parents could become members of (Kurvits, 1937). Every trustee board by the school consisted maximum of three parents, teachers and local government representatives. Their responsibilities reached from fining the parents of disobedient children to supervisory role of school's economic management (Andresen, 2007, p. 19)

In deep communist era, the whole ideology was driven by raising obedient and loyal citizens by directions given by central authority in Moscow. King (1963) has written that in Soviet Union, the main responsibility of children's education lied on the state, parents are just agents to fulfill their civic duties. By Soviet law, schools were required to have official parents' committees that would organize relations between school, work factories and so on. The parents' committees had sub-committees, which

had several responsibilities from investigating the reasons of children behavior to their living conditions at home (Lonkila, 1998).

Today, in Estonia the school-level governing board or *hoolekogu* is required by the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (BSUSSA) § 73 (Riigi Teataja, 2010). The law was enacted in 2010 and it states that the board of trustees:

> *(1) ... is a standing body whose function is to ensure the joint activities of the students, teachers, owner, parents of students, graduates and organizations supporting the school in guiding, planning and observing teaching and education, and creation of better opportunities for teaching and education. The board of trustees performs the functions imposed on it in and on the basis of acts and makes proposals to the owner of the school for better resolution of matters relating to the school. The board of trustees is formed and its rules of procedure are established pursuant to the procedure established by the owner of the school.*
>
> *(2) .... of a basic school comprises the owner of the school, the teachers' council, representatives of parents, graduates and organizations supporting the school, whereby the representatives of parents, graduates and organizations supporting the school make up the majority of the members of the board of trustees.*
>
> *(9) .... elects a chair and a vice chair from among its members. Meetings of the board of trustees are held at least once every four months during the academic year.*
>
> *(10) The head of the school reports to the board of trustees.*
>
> *(11) A student and a parent have the right to address the board of trustees of the school in the event of matters of dispute concerning teaching and education.*

Before finalizing the direction of this study, the author touched the ground by discussing with and interviewing a few key people in Estonia who are known to be

involved either in overall civic or parental engagement issues. The purpose was to get the "local feeling" of the necessity of this type of research on democracy and its institutions, and if necessary, to change the focus. An email from a member of Estonian Parliament confirmed the need for further research specifically in this area:

> *"The truth is that in practice, Estonian legislation that touches upon parents' inclusion and involvement leaves all decision making on the leaders of local institutions. Thus the legislation enables an absolute democracy, but does not hinder a complete lack of it either. Therefore both options are practiced. [...] ...although the parental demand exists, this is very generally regulated by the legislation, enabling everything and not obliging for nothing.*
> *The reason* (or "justifications given", depending on interpretation - Author's note) *why institutions have not been obliged to involve parents more [...] speaks for itself: "They are not capable for it", "There is no interest" etc."[30]*

Participation on school governing bodies, according to the European Commission, is the most common way for parents to be involved in school governance. It states that parent all parents in a school can elect representatives, and that usually official regulations exist that allow schools to decide about appointment procedures. (European Commission, 2012, p. 53)

Estonian schools' trustee boards operate following the BSUSSA that defines their basic, advisory role and the areas they can operate. Tartu city council has posted the regulation on schools' trustee boards on its website. Among other things, it emphasizes that the decree is enacted based on the BSUSSA § 73 (1), § 82 (10). The

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[30] Here and onwards, Estonian sources are translated to English by the author of this study.

task of a trustee board is to monitor that the instruction and schooling responds to children's development and interests, and to cooperate with the school staff in that matter. A long list follows that are more or less excerpts from the BSUSSA, listing various tasks that the board may need to deal with. Most of these fall under categories of expressing opinions and making recommendations either to the school or city council on various matters from language classes and budget, to swimming pool problems and afterschool classes. The decree also states that the board will participate in developing school's strategy plan, and by school principal's approval can also generate a policy for hiring new teachers (Tartu City Council, 2011; see also Appendix E with links to further resources).

It has been required that the meetings take place at least once in very four months. § 4 of this ordinance says that in middle schools, up to three and in upper schools (or in schools where both blocks operate as one school) three to six parent representative should be elected, based on school principal's recommendation. Parent representatives will be elected by voting, while:

> *...Every parent can set up a candidate. Every parent can be a candidate. The representative will be elected by the simple majority. […]. Parent representative represents the opinions of the electorate at the board of trustees, of which he or she will find out in his or her own way* (Tartu City Council, 2011).

H.T., a teacher and board member in Tallinn, suggested that the organization of school boards is suitable for small local governments of few schools, as they existed a century ago. In his view, this idea cannot function well in bigger city school districts where there are many school boards and the distance between local governors is

wider. Furthermore, board elections are often just a farce in his view where in bigger schools parents do not know each other, there are no election campaigns and somebody is usually just been asked by the administrator to set up his or her candidacy (H.T., 2011).

In fall 2011, the researcher of this study agreed on an interview with Peeter Kreitzberg, ex-Minister of Culture and Education in Estonia and lecturer at the Tallinn University. Unfortunately and as enormous loss for Estonian education and politics, Kreitzberg passed away just days before the interview could take place. Nevertheless, his opinion about boards has been published in print as follows:

> *"No one has been against the* [bigger decision making role – K. Elliott] *role of trustee boards. The problem is rather that in some schools they function quite well, in others not… We must consider whether trustee boards can, in addition to the right to decide of many issues, also responsibility for these decisions. Rights cannot be viewed separately from responsibilities"* (Raun, 2010a).

At an interview with the author, A.M., a principal in Tartu has acknowledged that after the reindependence, for almost a decade schools were rather resistant for having parents at the school to demand something or participate in decisions. Considering parents as possible partners has started to gain some acceptance only during the last few years. At this school, the trustee board usually consists of four to six parents and the principal does not see this body as representative for all parents at the school. Due to diversities among parents and their different abilities, usually only most active parents' voices are echoed at the board level (A.M., 2011).

The school board meets according to the need, usually one to two times a year. Board members are elected and appointed at schools' annual, general parents' meeting, whereas according to A.M. parents are usually relatively passive in expressing their preferences. She sees the problem partly in too large and diverse group and would suggest to meetings divided to smaller groups by grade levels where parents would feel having more common interests. She admits that formally, someone makes the proposal for a candidate and then the at the general meetings parents vote either for or against it. A.M. has noted the tendency that most parents hope that their name will not be announced and are happy to vote for anyone else. There are no open elections where everyone can present themselves or campaign for support. At many schools, there are "quasi-elections":

> *"If some parent leaves the board then the administration will discuss who could replace him or her. Usually it will be a parent who has been active and collaborated with the school before. Then the school representative calls to this parent and asks if she or he would agree. Then, the proposal is made at the annual parents' meeting by one of the teachers. It is asked who is against, and sometimes some parent asks that "What do you do at the board then?" But the board does not function well because most parents do not know this person and nobody will start writing him or her later either [...]During the last five years we have received two complaints only, regarding one teacher. Sometimes parents also complain about the school lunch."*

The board can influence only on a few, minor issues and is rather an advisory board. On the other hand, principals cannot submit any changes to school regulations without board's acceptance. A.M. saw major contradictions between OECD/ PISA results and

the reality, and expressed the concern that the terminology and their interpretation can partly be blamed on that. She suggested that the formal form of parental involvement does not work in Estonia:

"In this sense, there is no democracy. In reality, maybe we do have a flawed democracy, just playing the democracy. The fundamentals are democratic and parents know that they could go and participate. The state has given the democratic, institutional options, but people do not use these options. […] Maybe the problem is in our history where in the previous regime it was better to live unnoticed. […] On the other hand, Tartu's local government is afraid of parents and if the board is active, the local government is responsive. […] Parents take schools as institutions providing the service – they push the whole control of educating their children on schools. […] Educating and informing parents do not exist in this state."

There appears to be gradual improvement in parent-school communication in Tartu. For example, one school that also participated in the survey for this analysis has developed a document about school principles, and among other issues elaborates also on parental engagement in school. As for boards, the document says:

In our school, the trustee board is actively engaged in school's periodic development strategy. Members make proposals during the process that is more than just a fictive overview and agreeing afterwards. During our last planning, we took boards suggestions into account on many levels. […].

It has been added that in addition to trustee boards, parents have another way to forward their concerns to school's administration:

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"Through the meetings on child's progress, parents have the opportunity to comment and make proposals to the school which is protocolled and forwarded to the administration through e-school platform. [...] All this information is processed at the school council at the end of the academic year and taken into account when preparing goals and tasks for the new school year."

Two Tartu schools have posted the protocols of board meetings on their websites (links to schools' websites and trustee boards can be found in Appendix E). The author investigated the most recent ones in both schools, from October 2012 and January 2013.

At the first school, the board meetings seem to take place approximately four times a year. As for the membership there are twelve members: seven parents', two teachers', one students', one alumni and one city representatives. According to public information on internet, parents' professions are from the accountant, police and ornithologist to theater executive and oil businessman. The agenda of the October board meeting included the following topics:

- overview of school's ongoing renovation project (a project manager invited to the meeting);
- discussing school's parents' survey that was carried out in spring 2012;
- school's medical officer's account on the regulation of medical services at the school;
- trustee board's plan of action for 2012-2013

- discussion of proposals that have been forwarded by parents: regulation of electing members to the trustee board and organizing bees;

- additional question: approving school's rental prices.

Regarding the school's renovation project, it was an informative account. In terms of medical services, the board suggested to organize first aid training to teachers and make recommendations to parents to inform the teachers about child's health problems that might be life threatening. The board was informed that parents have asked to switch the election of board members from fall to spring when they have parents' class meetings. The board decided to return to this question at meeting at the end of February 2013 (as of March 4 the protocol was not available yet). As for organizing bees by parents, probably community or neighborhood cleaning bees were thought of, while the issue was postponed to the next meeting. Also rental prices question was postponed.

Additionally, the board had received the summary of the parent survey that had been conducted by the school in spring. The board decided that the school principal will forward the answers to the teachers' council who will analyze and select those to which should be reacted. The board then will send the summary to parents while emphasizing to be cautious with generalizations. At the next meeting, the board will discuss about parents' increased involvement to schooling processes. The survey will be repeated in spring 2013, a more efficient way to inform parents will be established and if necessary, parents' responses will be analyzed by grade levels.

The protocol from another school's trustee board meeting that took place in January 2013, had five agenda points: analysis and recommendations regarding health protection; questions regarding school food; evaluating proposed measures to minimize risks to students' safety; propsals regarding after-school classes; and "other" topics, including summary of "the information on engaging parents and students". The latter agenda point would be the interest of this study, but unfortunately that discussion had not been included to the public protocol. Reasons for this are unknown.

A.M., the principal in Tartu has seen that rather than boards, the mandatory parent-teacher meeting on student's progress (required by the BSUSSA § 37 (3) to have at least once a year) carries parents' voices better and further than trustee boards. During these meetings, parents can express their concerns to teachers who can forward them to school administration that can also forward these to local government. Through this medium a few developments have taken place, initations that were first channeled from parents to teachers during the obligatory meeting on child's progress (see also Riigi Teataja, 2010; Tartu Kivilinna Gümnaasium, 2012, p. 15).

Furthermore, A.M. mentioned that also parents' surveys that the school can conduct, are a good way to get an insight into possible weak points or problems at the school level. The author had access to one parents' survey at another Tartu school that had asked parents opinions on six different categories: relationships with teachers, access to information, instruction, students' extracurricular opportunties; support systems for more or less successful students; schools overall image and satisfaction. Parents reported on five-point Likert scale.

In this school, parents were satisfied with relationships with the school staff, and most parents reported as getting most of the information from school's website and through the e-school platform where all parents can access with their unique ID code and where schools can post all the relevant information. Over half of the parents reported that they are not aware of the activities of the board of trustees and over half of the parents also considered meetings on student progress very useful (Tartu Kunstigümnaasium, 2012).

7.2.3 Parent associations, groups

According to the OECD data, in Estonia parents associations do not exist on the public school level but on national one. Also the school principal A.M. argued that parents' associations on the school level do not exist and that in general, this kind of organizations are lacking in Estonia. On the other hand, European Commission reports that Estonian schools can establish parents' associations which are usually voluntary groups set up to assist parents in matters concerning their children's education, to support schools' educational activities and promote parental involvement in school management. (European Commission, 2012, p. 55). Hence the picture about associations is not very clear.

Estonian Parents' Association was established in 1998 and according to its statute it is "an autonomous, politically and religiously independent non-profit organization" whose main purpose is to value Estonian children, child-rearing and parents (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011). It also has a few local chapters (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011)

The statute states that anyone respecting Estonian constitutional values and accepting this basic document can become its member. According to members' list on its website, the association had 1614 members as of June 2012 (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2012). According to Statistics Estonia, there were 277,237 children between ages 0-19 living in Estonia in 2012 (Statistics Estonia, 2013). This would make about 177 children's interests to be represented by one parent in the Association.[31]

The Parents Association considers education among its highest priorities and influencing public opinion as their main activity (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011). The editorial piece on its website argues that the biggest threat to child's wellbeing, health and future in Estonia is its school system. It refers to a study which has found that more than eighty percent of Estonian basic school students do not want to go to school. The Association claims that the Estonian school system needs a fundamental reconstruction (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011).

According to OECD data that was presented above, Estonian Parents' Association has an informal role towards governing institutions and informative role towards parents. It is not clear how much can it actually influence decisions that affect Estonian education or school system. Estonian Ministry of Education's strategy plan for 2011-13 indicates that Parents' Association's role will be increased in the consultation and decision making process on education policy, especially on the demand side (Haridusministeerium, 2010, p. 26). The list of activities on the Association's website indicates that its main activity is to influence public opinion. For this purpose they carry out studies, use media channels, organize events, send inquiries and proposals to

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[31] As a side note, a glance at members' last names indicates that a large majority of members are likely of Estonian ethnicity. This is another area worth of further investigations, of ethnic and other minorities' participation in schooling and education issues.

municipalities and government, to politicians and to ombudsman (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011).

As stated above, one of the key areas where the Estonian Parents Association is more involved, is that of the status and role of the board of trustees at schools, and its possibilities to influence issues that are fundamentally important (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011). The current chairman of the Association believes that Estonian parents are capable for much more meaningful influence and can take more responsibility than the boards and regulations currently enable (Eesti Lastevanemate Liit, 2011). Estonian Ministry of Education seems to acknowledge trustee boards' increasing role in the school system and is supporting trainings for trustee boards across Estonia, initiated by the Parents' Association (Haridusministeerium, 2010, p. 26)

The chairman of the Association commented Estonian BSUSSA when it became effective in 2010 (Riigi Teataja, 2010), that despite of parents' representatives' efforts, the new act did not change the role or competences of the board of trustees:

> *Board of trustees' role is legally still vague. Basically, the board of*
> *trustees decides about nothing but luckily is also legally responsible*
> *for nothing. [...]Right now, a board of trustees is like a pendant whose*
> *work's success depends on school leader's will* (Raun, 2010b).

At the meeting with the author in September 2011, the chairman still held this opinion adding that despite of their lobbying in the Parliament and presenting proposals to roundtables at the Ministry of Education, none of these efforts produced expected results.

European Commission report refers to targeted training initiatives that have been established on national level "to foster parent involvement in school activities and governance" (European Commission, 2012, p. 56). Here, the Commission refers to Estonian Parents' Association's training for members of trustee boards in Estonian schools. Investigating the local situation, the Association has indeed established training courses for all categories of members of the boards of trustees, including for representative parents. The Association aims to raise parents' awareness of opportunities for more meaningful engagement. The program is financed by the Ministry of Education and Research and is implemented at national level.

7.2.3.1 Parent groups

PISA 2009 school questionnaire for Estonian schools does not elaborate definitions, as for what to consider under "parent groups", their formal or informal influence on school or national level. "Parent groups" has been translated as *lastevanemate kogud* which, translating it back to English, can also be understood as parents' councils, associations or assemblies. In short, leaves much room for interpretations.

The representative of Estonian National Examination and Certification Center (the organization responsible for PISA management in Estonia) suggested via email in September 2011 that it could refer to parental committees that might exist in some schools. In Estonia, neither national nor local regulations foresee formal "parent groups" in schools but a quick Internet search indicates that while this is not the case with Tartu schools, in some schools and classes across Estonia some type of only-parents' councils or meetings have been created. Thus it is not clear how different schools have interpreted this question and we have to be careful making comparisons

across countries on "parents' groups" influence since it may be an overlapping theme with school boards or just be an incomparable dimension.

PISA results show that in Estonian schools parents have almost no influence on staffing and budgeting, whatever form or organization the school administration were reporting about. In comparison, parents seem to have a considerable influence on instructional content (though less than boards of trustees), however, and a moderate influence on assessment practices.

These results are in a slight contradiction with OECD "Education at a Glance 2010" Indicator D6 or "Parent Voice" results. Web-based Table D6.4 lists parent-teacher associations' existence and purpose. Here, Estonia has not provided any data, resulting in "data is not applicable because the category does not apply" (OECD, 2011). Indeed, Estonian legislation does not foresee formal parent-teacher associations in Estonia. Responses to PISA Q25 and Estonian Parents' Associaton's only symbolic political and practical capability allow us to believe, however, that parent-teacher councils may exist in some Estonian schools, at least on informal level. As people's awareness of the importance of their participation increases, more parents' groups that collaborate with schools to express their voice an influence, can emerge.

During the interview, the principal A.M. acknowledged that this school's parents have no other organized means at school level than the trustee board. However, she mentioned that after attending Gordon's family school[32] in Tartu, some active parents

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[32] Thomas Gordon was a clinical psychologist and the author of the classic parenting book, *Parent Effectiveness Training*. He promoted participative management that would lead to greater leadership effectiveness at schools than the traditional hierarchical approach. Several licensed training programs

continued their meetings informally under the Family Club name. This is their own initiative where they invite educators, school psychologists and so on (Tartu Kivilinna Gümnaasium, 2012, p. 16)

There is another problem that has been pointed out by Wendy Kopp, the founder of Teach for America. She wonders if in Estonia's high PISA test results may mask deeper socio-economic problems in the society that people dare to admit. She is asks to what extent is Estonian students' academic achievement influenced by their parents' educational levels and whether Estonian schools are reproducing inequalities among children of different socio-economic background (Kopp, 2011).

Indeed, the OECD "Better Life" Index above showed relatively large inequalities among the Estonian population, a result of rapid transition from socialism to liberalism that has unavoidably created differences among the population, of their general wellbeing and thus also of educational opportunities, albeit still within the mostly public school system. This is not an unrelated issue for reasons that were pointed out in the literature review and will be dealt with in further analysis below that follows: resources like time, money, education and so on, can play an influential role in parental engagement in school life.

7.2.4 Ombudsman, complaints and grievances

Estonia has answered "yes" to OECD's inquiry of whether formal institutions exist that enable parents to file complaints. More than half of the countries, including

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for parents, families and schools have been developed that have gained international popularity (Gordon Training International, 2011).

Estonia, have reported that parents can appeal schools' decisions at multiple levels and in several areas. The report also confirms that there is a "designated" ombudsman or agency that receives complaints".

Estonia's legal chancellor (*Õiguskantsler*) is a constitutional overseer whose tasks are to monitor, examine and arbitrate cases where people's basic rights and freedoms may have been violated, either on national or local level. The legal chancellor bears additional role of an ombudsman to whom people can turn if they feel that their constitutional rights have been violated by the government (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2012).

In 2011, to comply with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Article 4[33], Estonian parliament assigned to legal chancellor also "children's ombudsman's" (*lasteombudsman)* duties. Legal chancellor can investigate cases where children's rights have been violated, make proposals to improve the legislation on children's rights and has a a few other, related duties (Sulbi, 2011; Lasteombudsman, 2011). Ombudsman's website summarizes parental rights and responsibilities as follows (excerpts):

> *In Estonia, relations between children and parents are regulated by the Constitution and the Family Law Act. In addition, children and parents must be guided in their mutual interaction by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. [...]The introduction of the Convention was intended to emphasise that a child is a person and*

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[33] Article 4 of the Convention of the Child Rights: States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

*has the same kinds of rights, duties, interests and needs as an adult. [...] the child is not subject to rights of ownership by anyone, not even his or her parent. [...]***Until a child is not able to exercise his or her rights, his or her parents or representatives will do it for him or her.*** *[...] The exercising of the child's rights must be guided by the child's interests always. The child's primary helpers and guardians are his or her parents* (Lasteombudsman, 2011).

§73 (11) of BSUSSA instructs parents and students to appeal to school's trustee board in disputes regarding teaching and education. §20 of Tartu's decree on school boards re-states this option. Paragraphs §84 to §87 set up procedures for state supervision that is also a basis for schools' external evaluation priorities, annually revised by the Minister of Education and Research. The previous education act (§33) allowed students and their parents to appeal also to state's supervising agency, this opportunity has not been foreseen by the current BSUSSA.

OECD report refers that statistics on complaints or court cases is not available for Estonia (OECD, 2011), thus in fall 2011 the researcher contacted the Estonian Chancellor of Justice Office (CJO), who might have been referred in OECD's report as an "ombudsman" or "agency" that receives complaints. The CJO office responded that they do not any specifically categorized statistics on parents' complaints. However, they could report that as a result of parents' appeals, thirty-seven procedures related to school organization had been initiated by CJO between 2008 and 2011. Parents have appealed about the school choice, student's appearance, school reorganization, the language of instruction, restraining students' freedom of mobility, teachers' action, violence and the instruction of a child of special needs.

The previous analysis showed that the legislative landscape is relatively quiet about parents' appealing options whereas country's feedback to OECD team seems to give a picture of quite many opprtunities. It needs to be taken into account however that OECD collected the data in 2008 when the current BSUSSA had not been adopted yet. Nevertheless, the new act does not seem to be more inclusive than the previous one and the primary option that parents have is to complain to the school's governing board that is a relatively distant organization for parents. The new act does not state any other option for parents to appeal.

To summarize Estonian analysis that was framed around the information available through major international reports, we can see that for the purpose of comparison, the greatest problem might be that of terminology, translations and data given by or to different sources that may be incompatible between different languages, countries and organizations.

7.3 The United States, Alabama and Huntsville

American institutional setting provides many arenas for civic and political engagement, both formal and informal. Although this study concentrates on parental engagement within public schools, it is important to note that American parents can choose among many alternative schooling options – from private schools and homeschooling to local schools of choice (so-called magnet schools). There are also charter schools, which is a format where parents' and their children have a decisive say over the schooling, even in the case of charter schools that are publicly funded and accountable by national academic standards. In short, there are plenty of options

while the question is about access in terms of the tuition, academic or some other thresholds.

Federal government considers local parent organizations as important elements for the advancement of children education. From its own side and in addition to specific legislation that will be elaborated below, it also provides information to parents through its specifically created website called Parents' Page, managed by the Education Department (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The site contains federal legislation materials and initiatives, information brochures and much more that has to do with the situation and developments in terms of children's education and parents' role in it. The materials are available also in Spanish. American education system on school, local, state and federal level can be further explored with the assistance of the information provided in Appendices G and H.

7.3.1 Legislation and general situation

Constitution

As in the case of Estonia, we must start with the description of the fundamental legal basis for the institutional setting. Alabama Constitution's sections 256 to 270 that are provided below, cover education as follows (see the link to full legislative resources in Appendix I):

> *The legislature shall establish, organize, and maintain a **liberal system of public schools** throughout the state **for the benefit of the children** thereof between the ages of seven and twenty-one years. The public school fund shall be apportioned to the several counties in proportion to the*

> *number of school children of school age therein, and shall be so apportioned to the schools in the districts or townships in the counties as to provide, as nearly as practicable, school terms of equal duration in such school districts or townships.*

The section 256 of the Alabama Constitution that was ratified in 1901, requires local school districts to establish segregated school system:

> *Separate schools shall be provided for white and colored children, and no child of either race shall be permitted to attend a school of the other race.*

The courts have invalidated this language since years already, but the section stays strong. In November 2012, the Alabama Segregation Reference Ban Amendment that would have changed this section was added to the Presidential election ballot, but was defeated (Britt, 2012).

Section 262 states that the supervision of public schools is vested in superintendent of education whose powers, duties, and compensation shall be fixed by law. In Alabama as in many other states, the state-level chief education officer is referred to as state superintendent. On the district or local level, the supervision is in the hands of the superintendent of schools.

Code of Alabama (Alabama Laws)

Alabama Code's Title 16 is dedicated to education and consists of 65 chapters (FindLaw, 2013). For the purpose of this analysis the following sections are fundamentally important:

*§ 16-3-11 The **State Board** of Education shall exercise, through the State Superintendent of Education and his professional assistants, **general control** and supervision over the public schools of the state [...], and shall consult with and advise through its executive officer and his professional assistants, county boards of education, city and town boards of education, superintendents of schools, school trustees, attendance officers, principals, teachers, supervisors and **interested citizens**, and shall seek in every way to **direct and develop public sentiment** in support of public education.*

*§16-10-1 The county board of education may appoint for every school in the county,[...] three persons residing near the schoolhouse and having the respect and confidence of the community to serve for a term of four years as **trustees of the school**, to care for the property, to look after the general interest of the school and to make to the county board of education, through the county superintendent of education, from time to time, report of the progress and needs of the school and of the **will of the people** in regard to the school.*

*§16-11-2 (b) The general administration and supervision of the public schools and educational interest of each city shall be vested in a **city board** of education, to be composed of five members who shall be residents of the city, and who shall not be members of the city council or commission.*

*§16-11-2 The **city board** of education shall **appoint** a **city superintendent** of schools to hold office at the pleasure of the board. The city superintendent of schools shall receive such compensation as the city board of education shall direct.*

*§16-28-2.2(a) Local **boards of education**, pursuant to guidelines established by the State Board of Education, shall establish educational programs to **inform parents** of school children of their education-related responsibilities to their children.*

Alabama also offers **grants** to local school districts to support and create incentives for parental engagement. Code of Alabama § 16-6B-3 requires schools and school boards to develop assistance programs for students performing below state standards. Funds of at least $100 per student may be expended for a variety of purposes, including programs encouraging the parental involvement of parents of at-risk students.

Furthermore, 1994 Alabama Laws, page no. 159 requires: "the business community and governmental agencies are encouraged to give administrative leave to parents for the purpose of parent-teacher conferences and involvement in other educational experiences of the child" (National PTA, 2012, p. 151).

Accountability

In March 2013, the Alabama Accountability Act or "school flexibility bill" was passed that gives parents an option to pull their children out from poorly performing schools and even from the school districts they are residents in. The bill gives criteria for failing schools and enables parents who choose to change the school, to have tax credit to enroll them to another school, even to private ones. The Alabama State Department of Education has yet to determine which schools fall in that category (Lough, 2013).

A Huntsville parent interviewed by local newsstation expressed her support for the bill:

"I think parents should have the choice if their in a district
that failing to put their kids in a district where they can receive
a better education."

While understanding that the bill was passed to support impoverished population, a Huntsville city school board member who was also interviewed by the journalist in this matter, did not believe in the efficiency of this new regulation (Reid, 2013).

A democrat senator of Alabama Senate calls the bill a "poor choice for Alabama school system" while believing that it would only allow charter schools to get stronger hold in the state, something that democrats strongly oppose and see as a privatization of the public school system. Democrats have also been blaming republicans over how the bill was voted into effect, arguing that they violated state policy by "meeting in an undisclosed location, taking a quorum, and then forcing it through the senate without debate or discussion" (Waxel, 2013).

Parental involvement

In the early 19th century, the community and the parents had considerable control over the school decisions while they also had the church support to promote same agendas (Prentice & Houston, 1975). Parents were involved to develop and decide on curriculum, teachers hiring and firing and many more areas (Epstein, 1986). In the beginning of 20th century, different structures of responsibility started to develop (Katz M. B., 1971) and the school gradually distanced itself from parents with the underlying reasoning of specialization that the schools have but parents are lacking (Berger E. H., 1995). Henderson has called the new form of parental involvement a "bake sale" mode (Henderson, 1988). By the mid-20th century the general attitude had

rooted that it is natural of schools' taking over certain responsibilities from parents and for large part of the day (Berger, E.H. 1995; Bushweller, 1996).

American school systems had always been governed locally, but 1960s brought along federal legislation mandating parent involvement in schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed as a part of president Johnson's "War on Poverty" in 1965 and it was one of the first legislative acts linking parent involvement to education. ESEA defines primary and secondary education in the United States, while forbidding the establishment of a national curriculum. It required that parents serve on school advisory boards and participate in classroom activities. It emphasizes equal access to education, establishes achievement standards and accountability. The current reauthorization of ESEA is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Goverment Printing Office, 2011) is based on four principles: accountability for results, local control and flexibility, *expanded parental choice,* and programs that reflect scientifically based research. The parental involvement provisions in Title I, Part A of the ESEA reflect these principles, stressing shared accountability between schools and parents for high student achievement, including expanded public school choice and supplemental educational services for eligible children in low-performing schools, local development of parental involvement plans with sufficient flexibility to address local needs, and building parents' capacity for using effective practices to improve students' academic achievement.

Title I establishes funding for the use of improving academic achievement for students in low-income households. The funding is based on different formula and there are special criteria how school districts are allowed to measure poverty levels. Schools may receive funds only if they implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents consistently with the requirements of the Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2013; Cornell University Law School, 2013). Districts and schools receiving Title I funds (Office of the Law Revision Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives, 2012) must have a *parental involvement policy* (Section 1118 of the ESEA). In 2011, the total funds were nearly $14.5 billion across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Parental involvement has been defined as "the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities." Among other things, a *district* parental involvement policy must ensure that:

- parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
- parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Throughout the years, several requirements have been modified and repealed (having district-wide parent advisory councils, for example), but despite of the ongoing difficulties in implementation of the Title I requirements, the provisions of the ESEA have provided various empowerment opportunities for less well off and minority parents (Mapp, 2012).

Huntsville has developed a Title I policy plan for 2012-2013 that has been added to Appendix J. The general guidelines are stated in the education board's policy manual (Huntsville City Board of Education, 2011, para. 7.14). According to the data from year 2011, there were 15 schools in Huntsville receiving federal Title I funding (Huntsville City Schools, 2011) of nearly six million dollars (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Of these, four are middle schools (Huntsville City Schools, 2011).

7.3.2 Boards

As the OECD report indicated, in the United States governing boards on school level are generally not required. However, it is important to call attention to possible confusion about the type of board in discussion. Whereas in Estonia "school boards" are boards of trustees on school level and consist of elected or appointed representatives of teachers, parents and students (high-school level), a school board in the United States has a different meaning and thus has to be elaborated more thoroughly here.

In the United States a "school board" is generally a local governing body, sometimes also known as a board of education, school committee, school directors, or trustees. School boards have governed American schools and school systems for more than a

century. "Nearly 14,000 school boards are responsible for the well-being of 52 million children, the expenditure of $600 billion per year, and the supervision of six million employees" (Hess & Meeks, 2010). It is an elected (sometimes appointed) body whereas according to the report released in 2010, more than nine out of ten board members (94.5 percent) responded that they were elected to office while 5.5 percent were appointed (*op.cit.,* p.14).

Authorized by the state and in compliance with state and federal laws, school boards establish (but do not implement) policies and regulations by which their local schools are governed. They are responsible for employing superintendents and setting policy for hiring other personnel; overseeing the development of and adopting policies; setting a direction for and adopting the curriculum; establishing budget priorities, adopting the budget and overseeing facilities issues; and providing direction for and adopting collective bargaining agreements (National School Boards Association, 2013).

As for the background of those who serve on school boards, most of the respondents of the nationwide survey on school board members in 2009 reported as being white (almost 81 percent) while the large urban areas are likely to attract more minority members. More than half do not have school-age children (age 3 to 17), while the share of those who has increases by moving from urban to rural areas. School board members tend to have higher education and higher annual incomes than does the American adult population as a whole. Additionally, more than one-quarter of board members reported to be current or former educators, as well reporting boards to have substantial impact of teachers unions on many decisions (Hess & Meeks, 2010, pp. 20-22).

In Alabama, all city boards of education are required by the Title 16, Chapter 11 of the Code of Alabama (above). School boards work closely with school district's superintendents. To better understand the roles of each body, the Alabama School Boards Association has listed the responsibilities of school boards and superintendents as has been presented in the Table 7.6 (Alabama School Board Association, 2013).

Table 7.6 *Roles of School Boards and Superintendents in Huntsville*

School Boards	Superintendents
• To make clear that the board's primary role is the establishment of policies. • To delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative functions. • To support the superintendent fully in all decisions that conform to professional standards and board policy. • To hold the superintendent responsible for the administration of the school system through regular, constructive, written and oral evaluations of the superintendent's work. • To provide the superintendent with a comprehensive employment contract. • To give the superintendent the benefit of the board's counsel in matters related to individual board members' expertise, familiarity with the local school system, and community interests. • To hold all board meetings with the superintendent or his/her designee present. • To consult with the superintendent on all matters, as they arise, that concern the school system and on which the board may take action. • To develop a plan for board-superintendent communications.	• To serve as the board's adviser and the school system's chief executive officer. • To serve as the school system's educational leader. • To keep the board informed about school operations and programs. • To interpret the needs of the school system to the board. • To present and recommend policy options along with specific recommendations to the board when circumstances require the board to adopt new policies or revise existing policies. • To develop and inform the board of administrative procedures needed to implement board policy. • To manage the school system's day-to-day operations. • To evaluate personnel and keep the board informed about evaluations. • To develop an adequate program of school/community relations, which keeps the community

• To channel communications that require action through the superintendent and to refer all concerns, complaints and other communication to the superintendent. • To take action upon the recommendation of the superintendent. • To provide the superintendent with sufficient administrative personnel. Including the area of monitoring teaching and learning. • To work with the superintendents and the community to develop a vision for the school system. • To work closely, where appropriate, with other governmental agencies and bodies. • To provide resources for and encourage quality board and staff professional development. • To provide for self-evaluation of the board's effectiveness. • To periodically review all school board policies. • To provide leadership to seek necessary funds for the system and to oversee system financial operations to maintain financial accountability. • To ensure board members understand that, under law, the school board acts as a board and that individual board members have no independent authority.	informed about board policies, programs and procedures. • To propose and institute a process for long-range and strategic planning. • To develop and carry out a plan to keep the total staff informed about the mission, goals and strategies of the school system. • To ensure that professional development opportunities are available to all school system employees. • To develop and implement a continuing plan for working with the news media. • To provide board members with information on any recommendations for school board action in advance of each board meeting, if possible. • To oversee the school system's finances and provide the board with regular reports on the school system's financial operations.

In Alabama, city boards are usually composed of five members. City councils or commissions appoint majority of city boards, although some cities authorized to elect board members (National School Boards Association, 2009). City board members serve without compensation, unless the city population is 300,000 or more, in which case the board members may receive $50 for each meeting that is attended (Alabama State Department of Education, 2005).

Huntsville City Board of Education consists of five elected members who are listed in Appendix K with their biographic information. While most school districts do not compensate their members, Huntsville school board members are paid around $24,000 a year (Stephens, 2011). Its purpose is to be:

> *…. the policy-making body of the School District. Its powers and duties are set by state law. The Board is responsible for educational planning and evaluation, staffing and appraisal, school facilities, financial resources and communication. **The Board acts as a court of appeal for staff members, students and the public on issues involving board policy or implementation of that policy.** The Huntsville City Board of Education encourages you to become involved in education. The School District offers many opportunities for community members to participate. You are invited to attend Board of Education Meetings* (Huntsville City Schools, 2013).

Huntsville board has joined with an online platform eBOARD[34] that enables better community governance by enabling to follow its meetings in live and access the relevant information on one site.

In a situation where two thirds of the cities in Alabama appoint their board members (which is in contradiction with America's general tendency where most are elected members, according to the study described above), Challen Stephens (2011) from Huntsville Times reflects the feelings among the residents and representatives:

> *Mayor Tommy Battle said talk of changing the board is a distraction, as a $20 million shortfall in the school system raises*

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[34] https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/ePolicy/listing.aspx?S=2061&Sch=2061&C=2#

more pressing matters, such as staff cuts and school closures. [...]
We have the people in place that have to move forward. They've
*been elected. That's just it." [...] But [*Rep.Phil Williams,
Republican – Author's note*]Williams said elected members may be*
reluctant to cut a program or sell a school because they hope to hold
onto their seat. [...] Huntsville, in addition to having the highest
paid superindentent in this state, also has the highest paid school
board. [...] there is also a matter of low participation in the
selection process. Despite all that cash [that is poured into election
campaign by businesses and interest groups – Author's note], *only*
about 4,000 people voted in the runoff between [two candidates –
Author's note]

On its policy manual that was issued in June 2012, the board emphasizes their
commitment to efficient parental involvement in schools, while supporting relevant
initiatives on training and facilitating the cooperation in all schools and at all grade
levels. The board suggests the following components for successful parents-school-
community relationship, while emphasizing that these need not to be limited as such:

> *- Family and school communications is two-way, regular,*
> *meaningful and respectful of diversity;*
> *- Promotion and support of responsible parenting enable*
> *families to participate actively in their children's development*
> *from birth through their school years;*
> *- Recognition that parents play an integral role in assisting*
> *students' learning;*
> *- Parents and the community are welcome in the school, and*
> *their active support and assistance are sought;*
> *- Inclusion of parents and community as partners in the*
> *decisions that affect children and families; and*
> *- Community resources are used to connect students and families*
> *with resources that strengthen school programs and provide*

> *educational enrichment and support in daily life* (Huntsville City
> Board of Education, 2011, para. 4.6)

As we can see, these statements are relatively opaque while the author was not able to connect it to particular measures except the Title I parental involvement policy that was described above and can be found in Appendix J.

7.3.3 Parent associations, groups

For most Americans, PTA is a synonym for the term "school parent group" (PTO Today, 2012). The overall purpose the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is "to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children" (National Parent-Teacher Association, 2013).

Local level PTA-s are linked to the state and national level PTA-s, thus forming a nationwide membership network. National PTA sees the strength of local PTA-s in their ability to access to programs that benefit children and their families, and to influence the formulation of laws, policies, and practice, whether legislative or in education. In some cases, also Parent-Teacher-Student Associations exist, providing an opportunity for active youth to promote students interests.

National Congress of Parents and Teachers that is commonly known as National PTA, is more than a century-old formal membership organization headquartered in Chicago with a lobbying office in Washington, D.C. Most state PTAs advocate at their respective state capitals. Member PTA-s must pay dues to the state and national organizations and abide by state and national group rules. In return, they get member

benefits and voice in the operations of National PTA. The average local PTA forwards nearly $1,000 to its county, state, and national organizations in dues. States, and sometimes PTA county councils also charge per-member dues, usually remaining under $10 per year, while also accepting donations. Since it is carefully protecting its name, theoretically only due-paying members can call themselves a PTA (PTO Today, 2012).

The National PTA has issued the bylaw (National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 2011) where Article II states the purposes of the PTA as:

> *- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship;*
> *- To raise the standards of home life;*
> *- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth;*
> *- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth, and;*
> *- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.*

The bylaw adds that nationally, these purposes should be promoted through advocacy and educational programs directed toward parents, teachers, and the general public. Separately, the National PTA emphasizes inclusion and respect for diversities by stating that on every level, PTA-s must:

> *Openly assess beliefs and practices to assure inclusiveness*
> *and guard against discrimination;*
> *Make every effort to create a PTA board and membership*
> *that is inclusive and reflective of its community;*
> *Encourage that all PTA activities at the school be planned by*
> *a committee which is representative of the population*
> (National Parent-Teacher Association, 2013).

Alabama' PTA was established in 1911 and its mission statement on its website reads as:

> *The Alabama PTA is the strongest statewide organization*
> *working exclusively on behalf of children and youth. Founded in*
> *1911, Alabama PTA's primary objective is to strengthen the*
> *family unit through parent involvement.*

Alabama PTA bylaw is similar to that of the national one. Its membership and fees are based on the following regulation (excerpts; Alabama Congress of Parents and Teachers, 2011):

> *Art.4, Sec. 7; (i),(j): Only members of a local PTA who have paid*
> *dues for the current membership year may participate in the*
> *business of that PTA. Only members of local PTAs within a*
> *council may hold elected or appointed positions in a council.*
> *Each local PTA shall collect dues from its members and shall*
> *remit a portion of those dues to Alabama PTA.*
>
> *Art 5, Section 1: Every individual who is a member of a local PTA*
> *organized by Alabama PTA also is a member of National PTA*
> *and the state PTA.*
>
> *Section 2: Membership in PTA shall be open, without*
> *discrimination, to anyone who believes in and supports the*

mission and purposes of National PTA. Each local PTA shall conduct an annual enrollment of members, but persons may join at anytime.

Section 3: Each member of a local PTA shall pay annual dues as may be determined by the organization. The amount of dues shall include the portion payable to the state PTA as determined by the state, and the portion payable to National PTA as recommended by the board of directors and approved by a two-thirds (2/3rds) majority of the voting body at the National PTA Annual Convention.

Section 4: The state and national portions of dues paid by each member of a local PTA shall be set aside by the local PTA and remitted to Alabama PTA as state bylaws provide. Alabama PTA shall pay to National PTA the national portion in the manner prescribed by National PTA.

The Huntsville Council of Parents and Teachers Associations or just Huntsville Council PTA, is organized under the authority of Alabama PTA and National PTA and includes nearly 13,000 city parents (Campbell S. , 2010). According to its bylaw, its purpose is similar to that of the Alabama and National PTA-s while the organization is "noncommercial, nonsectarian, and nonpartisan" (Huntsville Council of PTAs, 2013).

Its purposes are to:

- Unify and strengthen local PTAs that are members of the council PTA;
- Provide for the cooperation of the local PTAs in the council PTA membership in order to create a public opinion favorable to the interests of children, to encourage programs and projects in the

various PTA units which will carry out the purposes of PTA, and to assist in the formation of new PTAs, and

- Promote the interests of National PTA and Alabama PTA (Huntsville Council of PTAs bylaw, 2010).

The Council plays a major role in the elections of the local board of education. For its efforts to mobilize parents during the election in 2010 through various initiatives, the Council was awarded the PTA Outstanding Advocacy Award by the National PTA, and was invited to a luncheon with U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (Bonvillian, 2011), which can be considered a remarkable attention and achievement considering the size of the United States.

This is chronologically in line with the news from Huntsville Times in 2010, according to which by Council's pressure a bilateral initiative was launched to increase the cooperation between parents and school leaders. The newspaper reports that the purpose of the initiative was to "improve the school system, raise academic achievement, and get support from city residents by earning their trust". Informal, open meetings between schools' administration and parents were set up at local schools to attract neighborhood residents. The group also had a representative of the Huntsville Education Association, a school employee support organization (Campbell S. , 2010).

The Council has regulated the membership and fees according to its bylaws as follows:

Membership in this council PTA shall consist of local PTAs chartered by Alabama PTA in Huntsville City upon payment of dues.

Membership in this council PTA shall be made available without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin to any local PTA that subscribes to the purposes and basic policies of PTA.

This council PTA shall conduct an annual enrollment of members but may admit local PTAs to membership at any time.

Each member of this council PTA shall pay annual dues as prescribed in the Huntsville Council PTA bylaws.

Annual membership dues in this council PTA shall be $30 for each local PTA in membership [...]. In addition, all schools are encouraged to pay a voluntary scholarship donation of $65 each year to provide college scholarships to students from member high schools.

The Huntsville PTA offers also grants and scholarships for which funds are raised through operating concessions at two city stadiums during the football season. In 2013, these funds have allowed the Huntsville PTA to set aside "$7,000 for the 2012-2013 school year to award grants to our local units to support their projects and programs." In spring and fall 2013, they will award fourteen $500 grants to local PTAs that support PTA standards (Huntsville Council of PTAs, 2013).

In addition to funds raised during the football season, the contributions from members allow the Council to fund a scholarship program for Huntsville high school students that are local PTA members. The selected students are awarded two $500 scholarships for high school seniors (*ibid*).

Parent-Teacher Associations exist in all Huntsville middle schools, most of which are also listed in Appendix I with links to their websites. Every parent is encouraged to join these organizations, while 100% membership is the stated goal in all schools. Two middle schools have created their own PTA websites; six have some information on schools' websites; and five have no information on it on schools' websites. Three of the latter ones are Title I schools that should have special parent involvement programs and initiatives. In the case of all four Huntsville's Title I middle schools, no relevant information could be found that would be targeted to parent involvement in those schools.

To become or remain a member of the PTA, all parents are required to pay annual membership fees. Two sample membership forms with the fee requirement have been added to Appendix L. Browsing the PTA information on Huntsville schools' websites, these remain between $5 and $10 per year, of which a portion goes to Alabama PTA and also to national PTA. Usually approximately half of the dues are kept by the school PTA. School PTA's also frequently ask for tax-deductible donations, while the donors can remain anonymous.

Parents can belong to as many PTA-s as they wish, as long as the pay the membership fees. Everyone who joins a local PTA automatically becomes a member of both the state and national PTAs. Local PTAs elect their presidents, vice-presidents and other officers according to the need, sometimes reaching to a few dozen people for different tasks and purposes. Top officers represent their PTAs at the Huntsville Council of PTAs.

Thinking of children of special needs, whether in special classes, receiving counseling, occupational therapy or other special assistance, the Huntsville Special Education Parent Teacher Association has been established to "provide a forum for parents, educators and experts in the field of special education to share resources, knowledge and experience across city and school district boundaries" (Huntsville Council of PTAs, 2013).

7.3.3.1 Parent-Teacher Organizations

Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO-s) are technically different than PTA-s and present a more generic form of a PTA. These are mostly single-school groups that operate independently, under their own bylaws and are driven by local concerns and interests. The acronym PTO is the most popular name, but there are other versions like PCC, PTG, and HSA which stand for parent-child centers, parent-teacher groups, and home and school associations. The main difference with PTA is that these organizations mostly do not collect any membership fees (PTO Today, 2012). A comment on the PTO Today's website might be suitable to conclude the topic:

> *My mom was PTA president for most of my elementary and middle school years. Recently, I helped to organize a PTO at my own son's school. I agree with the folks who have said that in this country, isn't it great to have a choice? There are differences between PTO and PTA and each group can determine which is best for its own members and the school. Most importantly, these are two type of organizations that share an interest in our kids. Get off the sniping and focus on why they both exist.*

7.3.3.2 Other parent organizations in the United States and in Huntsville

In addition to these formal opportunities that were investigated above, there are numerous other organizations and support groups across the United States, often with local branches that have been established either specifically to support parental involvement or do this as part of their main activities.

The first example could be illustrated with an organization called *Families and Schools Togethe*r, a nonprofit agency whose mission is to empower families, and design parent involvement programs that would connect parents with schools to provide safer growth environment for children (Families and Schools Together, 2013). The other good example is *American Association for Retired Persons* (AARP) that has not only created an informative and frequently updated webpage for grandparents who raise their grandchildren alone, but also GrandCare: a site for support groups through which grandparents can locate other groups in their area, according to specific issues and language of communication (American Associaton for Retired Persons, 2013).

Also *Parents for Public Schools* could be mentioned, an organization founded in Mississippi a few decades ago. Its goal is to improve public schools through engaging parents of different stratums of society, educating and mobilizing them. The organization provides parent engagement trainings across the country, and believes that "excellent public schools should be a fundamental right and that an informed citizenry upholds our democracy in the United States" (Parents for Public Schools, 2013).

In Huntsville in 1993, a Christian non-profit organization Second Mile Development initiated a program called *Parent Initiative*, to support parents' increased involvement whose children attend Huntsville's Title I schools. Their goal is to "build relationships and community through the empowerment of parents". The program involves now over 1,000 children and their parents. It partners with Huntsville City schools to meet the "No Child Left Behind Requirements" regarding parental engagement, while providing support and educational training for parents. The initiative has expanded to twelve schools in the district, including one middle school that belongs to this case study (Second Mile Development, 2013).

More than a decade ago, Second Mile Development also developed a patented, interactive toolkit called *Parent Parties* to promote parent education and increase their involvement in schools across the United States. According to the information on their website in 2013, 48 states have adopted this toolkit that involves games and different activities for collaboration (Parent Parties, 2013).

Huntsville parents generally appear to be active in searching for other parents with similar concerns and interests. A simple web search results in dozens of different groups for stay-at-home-moms and –dads, to military families, homeschooling families and so on.

7.3.4 Ombudsman, complaints and grievances

Above we saw the indication by the board of education that it also serves as a sort of an ombudsman, which was one of the institutions that OECD was inquiring about.

Formally though, in Alabama ombudsmen do not exist for complaints and grievances on schooling issues.

As for filing complaints and grievances, the Policy Manual that was issued by Huntsville City Board of Education in summer 2012, states that:

> *It is the policy of Huntsville City Schools to address all concerns brought forth by parents and citizens regarding matters governed by Huntsville City Schools' policies and procedures and/or the Huntsville City Board of Education. This policy supports the goal of the Board of Education to encourage the best possible relations among students, parents, citizens, teachers, and administrators and to ensure a happy, healthy, and safe learning environment for all students.*
>
> *The Board has confidence in its professional staff and parents and desires to be supportive. Therefore, whenever a concern is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board Member as an individual, it will be referred to the appropriate administrative staff for review and resolution. The Board expects that all concerns will be reviewed/resolved in a timely manner at the appropriate level.*
> (Huntsville City Board of Education, 2011, para 4.6)

In 2011, Huntsville teacher Russell Winn wrote in a blog about his experience with trying to file a grievance against the board and superintendent. He found a form and procedures from City Schools website and has provided links to them on his blog (Winn, 2011). As of February 2013, these links are inactive and directing to administration's new website where these forms and procedures are not to be found. Winn wrote a sequel, noting that he got a call from the administration regretting that he could not file the grievance after all, since the form that he was using was designed for complaints on teachers and schools, not against the superintendent and board.

Americans can file complaints on civil rights issues (discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, language, disability that arise from the Title IX of the 1972 Education Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504[35]) on federal level to the Department of Justice or Department of Education (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). For example, in 2011 the Department of Justice started to investigate complaints that Alabama's immigration law is running afoul of federal civil rights laws by denying children access to public education (Orndorff, 2011).

In the new policy manual, Huntsville City Schools Board of Education has provided a set of procedures in the case of violation on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion or language in their school system. They have defined the criteria and ask to file a "written complaint to the principal of the school or the coordinator of the center" where the violation occurred. The principal or the center coordinator will investigate the matter and notify the complainant within fifteen days, either on the decision or advising to appeal to the superintendent within the next thirty days. The superintendent needs to set up a hearing and within two weeks after the hearing to release the decision. The appealing party can further appeal to the board of education if the decision is unsatisfactory. The board's decision will be final (Huntsville City Board of Education, 2011, para. 4.7). The complaint can be filed also to the Education of Justice or Education as described before.

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[35] Legislation available at the U.S. Department of Justice website: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titleix.php and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 at U.S. Department of Labor website: http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/sec504.htm

In the case the disability act has been violated in the school system, parents need to file to human resources department of the Huntsville city schools' administration. If the decision is not satisfactory, it can be forwarded to the superintendent who will make the final decision on the matter (Huntsville City Board of Education, 2011, para. 4.8).

There are a few informal ways for parents to express their content or dissatisfaction, just by spreading the word about particulars schools or their staff. One is national non-profit organization GreatSchools' online platform that allows parents across America to evaluate schools and comment on them, state-by-state and school-by-school. The purpose of the founders was to "engage parents more deeply in their children's education" by offering community ratings and reviews of school (Great Schools, 2013).. It also provides tips and information for parents that would help to boost their children education. As of February 2013, the information and comments were available for thirty-four middle schools, both public and private (*ibid*).

7.4 Summary of Formal Parent Voice Options

A brief summary is that albeit similar institutions seem to exist when looking at some international, comparative reports, their definition and character differs considerably in both communities and countries. On the contrary to what the OECD reports expect us to find, Tartu parents have less institutional opportunities to participate than do Huntsville parents.

Even though this is a case study of two communities Tartu and Huntsville, it was not possible to analyze their institutional structures without understanding national

legislation and policies that may define or influence parental involvement. The structure of the analysis was built on OECD reports "Education at a Glance 2010" and PISA 2009. "Education at a Glance" is the only source that has provided institutional, comparative perspective on institutional opportunities for formal parental involvement in its member states. Additionally, during PISA testing schools were asked a few questions regarding parents' influence on schools that were also integrated to this study.

The "Education at a Glance 2010" findings indicated that in Estonia, all four dimensions of investigated formal opportunities for parents to express their voice, existed:

- *Requirement* for schools to have a *governing board* in which parents can take part;
- *Parent associations* exist that can advise or influence decision making;
- *Regulations* provide a formal process that parents can use to *file complaints*;
- A *designated ombudsman or agency exists* that receives complaints.

The United States responded as having parent associations and regulations that provide a formal process to file complaints. As for governing boards and ombudsman, it was noted that these are usually not required in the United States, although in some cases they might exist. "At a glance", Estonia seems to have broader spectrum of formal opportunities through which parents can influence decisions within school systems, while in the case of the United States the report suggests that public school districts have their own policies across the states.

Initially and from the comparative perspective, the data from OECD regarding school-level governing boards' and parents' groups influence on school decisions was terminologically and conceptually confusing, expecially if one is slighty familiar with country contexts. Also, although OECD report indicated that in the United States the school-level governing boards usually do not exist, PISA reported as these boards having a considerable influence there.

According to PISA, American schools reported considerably more parental pressure than did Estonian parents, in terms of students' academic achievement. The question left the form of parental pressure undefined, thus comparisons would be difficult to make. The next question about whether the "school-level governing board" or "parent groups" have more influence on staffing, budgeting, instructional content and assessment practices, revealed possible discrepancies in how questions may have been translated and also how different schools might have interpreted them. Nevertheless, summarizing these dimensions American parents seem to have more influence on schooling issues that do Estonian parents. Interestingly, more involvement has translated also to better PISA results among American students.

The controversies and issues of comparability further motivated to carry out a more insightful country and community analysis. Table 7.7. represents the findings from the focused analyses of formal opportunties that exist for parents in Tartu and Huntsville to express their voices on school and educaton matters.

Table 7.7. *Summary of Analysis: Formal Opportunties for Parents' Voice: Tartu and Huntsville*

	Tartu	Huntsville
Legislation & policies	Parents have constitutional right to decide on their children education. Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools' Act (BSUSSA) requires schools to have statutes that define the roles and duties of all parties. All Tartu schools have statutes that require to have: - annual parent meetings; - annual meeting on child's progress. Government has a coalition plan which implies that more attention on parent-school cooperation should be placed. Activites are not clear, also not on ministerial level, although considerable funds seem to be spent.	Education is a function of the states, Code of Alabama 1975 and Alabama Laws 1994 have enacted several laws that have been specifically designed to improve parents' involvement by different and concrete measures. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires expanded parental choice and involvement. Schools of student population at a certain poverty level can apply for federal funding. One of the criteria is for them to have parental involvement policies in place. In Huntsville, four middle schools receive this funding while Alabama state adds its own funding. The Constitution of Alabama established "liberal school system" and racially segregated schools in 1901. The language still remains, amendments have not been passed. The Code of Alabama requires: - local boards of education to establish educational programs to inform parents of their education-related responsibilities; - each school and school board to

| | | create programs to assist students who perform below grade level, whereas it can grant funds for interventions, including encouraging parental involvement.

Alabama Laws encourages employees to give administrative leave to parents for the purpose of parent-teacher conferences and involvement in other educational experiences of their children.

Huntsville city schools administration has made a general policy statement regarding the overall parental involvement in schools. To fulfill the NCLBA requirements, a detailed policy plan for parental involvement has been established. |
|---|---|---|
| **Government; management** | Estonian Ministry of Research and Education; Tartu City Education Department, supervised by the director of the department | Alabama State Department of Education; Alabama State Board of Education; Huntsville Board of Education; Huntsville City Schools, supervised by superintendent |
| **District level board** | N/A | Huntsville Board of Education is a local policy-making body on city's secondary schools' and education. Its powers and duties are set by the state law. Consists of five elected and paid members. |
| **School level** | BSUSSA requires schools to have | N/A |

board	*boards of trustees* that have elected parent representatives and also representatives of students (on high school level), teachers and local government. Formally, they are elected at the annual, general parents' meeting. In practice, parents are often asked by schools to become representatives. Trustee boards have *advisory role* and meet once or a couple of times per year.	
Parent Associations	On national level. Non-profit, no member fees. A couple of small, local branches. Small membership. Advisory role, but low influence on government policies. Over 1300 members across Estonia.	Parent-Teacher Associations (or Organizations) exist on school, local, state and national level. Non-profit, collects membership fees. Perceived as a synonym with "parent groups". Members elected on school level. An advisory body, but relatively influential and certainly a large organization. Over 13,000 PTA parents in Huntsville.
Complaints: regulations & ombudsman	It is people's constitutional right to appeal to court in the case of violation of rights and freedoms. BSUSSA advises parents to appeal to trustee board if complaints or grievances are about teaching or education.	Federal laws exist that allow people to appeal to court if they have been discriminated based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, language or disability. School districts set also their own policies. In Huntsville, parents have to

	Legal Chancellor of Justice has been assigned child's ombudsman duties. 37 cases were reported between 2008 and 2011 on school organization issues.	appeal first to principal. If not satisfied with the results, forward the appeal to superintendent. The final instance to report would the board as the highest decision making body in district. Ombudsmen for schooling issues di not exist in Alabama. Several informal, popular online platforms to comment on schools and systems.
Other forms	BSUSSA requirement to annual parent-teacher meetings on child's progress seems to be a valid medium for Estonian and Tartu parents to forward their concerns through teachers to administration Few informal parent groups, one known to be in Tartu.	Second Mile Development, a Christian non-profit organization to increased parental engagement in Huntsville schools that receive No Child Left Behind funding. Several other informal groups that can set up meetings via internet platforms.
Summary	Few formal options to meaningfully participate in decisions on schools' and education issues.	Several options to engage in school affairs either by voting for board or PTA members, becoming a candidate or engaging in informal groups. Since the board of education is an elected body, it can be assumed that its policies can be and are influenced by messages received from parents.

The investigation revealed possible differences in parental activity that may be shaped by the character of institutional options, by the community character or some other

factors. In general, Estonian parents in Tartu seem to reflect more passivity than do American parents in Huntsville, but it was the purpose of the following parents' survey to inquire more about this.

By investigating institutions that are available for parents to engage, influence and express their voice, it catches the eye that Estonian parents are quite poorly organized as an interest group. There is only one, national parents' association where the membership is relatively low, that does not seem to have strong presence and any considerable political power. It is an interesting finding since the OECD and PISA international reports may mislead on the first glimpse while looking at the Estonian data, since the organizations that should enable parents to participate, seem to exist and the system leaves rather an open impression.

8. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT: APPLICATION

The primary purpose of this study is to outline multi-level factors that affect parents' participation in public school system in different democracies. By now a comprehensive two-sample context has been provided that enables to proceed to survey analysis, which should reveal parental engagement in selected public schools.

8.1 Conducting the survey

8.1.1 Tartu

As the access was granted to seven Tartu's Estonian language, municipal middle schools out of 12, 438 questionnaires were distributed in 7 schools' 9th grades while

each school provided the number of its students (by class) in advance. Participating schools' administrations were remarkably supportive throughout, from granting the access to distributing, reminding students and parents, and collecting the surveys. In a few cases, school directors were personally involved. The summary of the distribution and the response rate is presented in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 *Distribution of Surveys in Tartu*

School	Students	Qs distributed/received
1	50	0/0
2	62	62/42 (67.7%)
3	46	46/19 (41.3%)
4	77	77/43 (55.8%)
5	44	44/35 (79.5%)
6	107	107/79 (73.8%)
7	68	0/0
8	54	54/38 (70.4%)
9	85	0/0
10	49	49/35 (71%)
11	78	0/0
12	61	0/0
TOTAL	**768**	**438/291**
		Response rate: 38% of 768 and
		66% of 438 questionnaires

The numbers by schools and classes were available on Tartu City Government's website for double-check before and after the survey (City of Tartu, 2012) This results in 38% of total response rate, i.e. of Tartu's total 768 9th graders, and 66% of those who received the questionnaires.

8.1.2 Huntsville

The survey in Huntsville was conducted in December 2012. With the support of the city schools R&D department, questionnaires were distributed to all public middle

schools. R&D department notified school principals and counselors about the research via email and in a few days after the questionnaires had been distributed, it sent out also a reminder. Each school had five workdays to distribute the questionnaires to 8th graders, ask them to hand these over to their parents and collect the answers within a week.

R&D department provided the number of 8th graders in Huntsville by schools and grades – 13 schools and 1781 8th graders while offering to distribute these to schools by their special schools' postal service. Due to technical issues this method was used with seven schools while the researcher herself distributed the questionnaires to six other schools on the same morning. All questionnaires were picked up from the schools by the researcher. The distribution of the questionnaires and the response rate is presented in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 *Distribution of Surveys in Huntsville*

School	Students	Qs distributed/received
1	108	108 / 0
2	144	144 / 35 (24.3%)
3	135	135 / 10 (7.4%)
4	57	57 / 9 (15.8%)
5	55	55 / 14 (25.5%)
6	186	186 / 9 (4.8%)
7	96	96 / 15 (15.6%)
8	194	194 / 11 (5.7%)
9	176	176 / 41 (23.3%)
10	212	212 / 65 (30.7%)
11	137	137 / 17 (12.4%)
12	178	178 / 21 (11.8%)
13	103	103 / 6 (5.8%)
TOTAL	**1781**	**253**
		(14.2% of 1781 questionnaires)

In Huntsville, access was granted to all schools and the survey got considerable support from the City Schools R&D department. Nevertheless, out of 1781 questionnaires distributed to 13 schools, only 253 or 14 % were returned. A few empty questionnaires had been sealed to the envelope, which could have been students' attempt to "complete the task" for teachers who collected them. The response rate seems not to have been affected by who delivered the questionnaires, whether the researcher or the school' postal service directly from the central administration.

Of these schools, four receive Title I funds according to Huntsville City Schools data (schools no. 2, 3, 6 and 7), meaning that the federal law requires them to have policies in place for parental involvement (see the previous chapter about legislation). Schools no. 4, 5 and 13 are magnet schools, meaning that these are schools of choice and the admission to these schools is competitive, requiring also considerable parents' initiative.

8.2 Survey analysis

For Tartu the sample size of the population of 768 needed to be *circa* 250. While 291 parents responded, it can be considered a representative sample of Tartu's 9th graders parents. In Huntsville, however, the representative sample of 1781 parents would have needed to be at least 315 responses according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), thus 253 responses cannot be considered as a representative amount of the population. For this reason, the results of the hypotheses testing cannot applied as representing all 8th graders' parents in Huntsville. Nevertheless, all responses were thoroughly analyzed as to investigate general trends and comparing these with Tartu parents' responses.

8.2.1 Demographics

First, to have an overview of respondent general background, a simple descriptive analysis was conducted and the results are presented in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3. *Parents' Demographic Characteristics*

Variable	Frequency		Percent	
	Tartu	**Huntsville**	**Tartu**	**Huntsville**
Gender				
Female	235	212	81.3	84.5
Male	54	39	18.7	15.5
For student				
Parent	282	232	97.9	95.5
Stepparent	4	3	1.4	1.2
Grandparent	0	7	0	2.9
Other	2	1	0.7	0.4
Marital Status				
Married	150	175	52.3	70.9
Co-habiting	85	12	29.6	4.9
Raising child alone	52	60	18.1	29.6
Native language				
Estonian / English	278	242	95.9	97.2
Other	12	7	4.1	2.8
Education				
Up to middle	9	7	3.1	2.8
Up to high school	136	36	46.9	14.5
Unfinished college	20	55	6.9	22.2
College degree	125	150	43.1	60.5
Employment				
Unemployed	3	18	1.0	7.2
Employed full time	231	139	79.7	55.6
Employed part time	25	43	8.6	17.2
Homemaker	28	41	9.7	16.4
Retired	1	4	0.3	1.6
Unable to work	2	5	0.7	2.0
Our financial situation is				
Good	86	133	30.0	53.4
Satisfactory	167	73	58.2	29.3
Difficult	34	43	11.8	17.3

Number of K-12 children				
1	128	62	44.9	25.9
2	122	120	42.8	50.2
3	26	39	9.1	16.3
4	5	12	1.8	5.0
5	1	5	0.4	2.1
6	0	1	0	0.4
7	1	0	0.4	0
10	2	0	0.7	0

In both communities, the majority of the respondents were females and mothers. There were a few stepparents filling in the questionnaire in both countries and seven grandparents in Huntsville. There were major differences in respondents' marital status: 70.9% of Huntsville and 52.9% of Tartu's parents were married (one marked his status as "harem", *sic!*), while almost 30% of Huntsville parents were raising their children alone. In Tartu, 18.1% of parents were raising their children alone. For the researcher, the marital status that is illustrated in the Figure 8.1 indicates parents' possible time and money resources, which may have effect on their engagement.

In both countries, less than 5% of the respondents noted their native language other than the local, official language. In Huntsville three respondents marked their native language as Spanish, one Hindi, one Korea and one German. In Tartu, there are two municipal schools for Russian-speaking families and thus this ethnic group is likely concentrated to these schools. It is not always the case however, and in this case eleven parents had marked their native language as Russian and one Azerbaijan. It is possible that three respondents were Estonian-Russian speaking bilinguals since they had marked both boxes and elaborated on the second language. According to statistics, there are about 8% non-English speaking families in Huntsville (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013) and in Tartu the large Slavic population are generally at least 3rd generation immigrants (if that term is even applicable then). Thus it is not very

likely that the questionnaires were rejected due to language barriers.
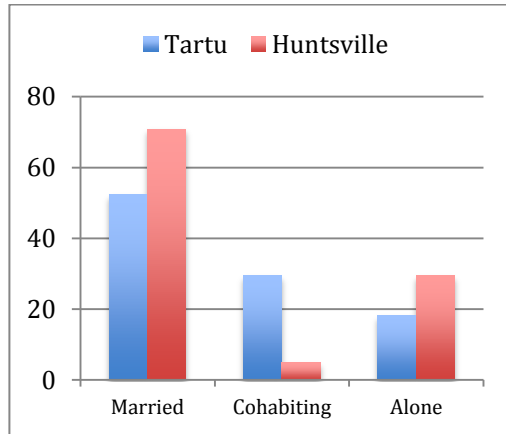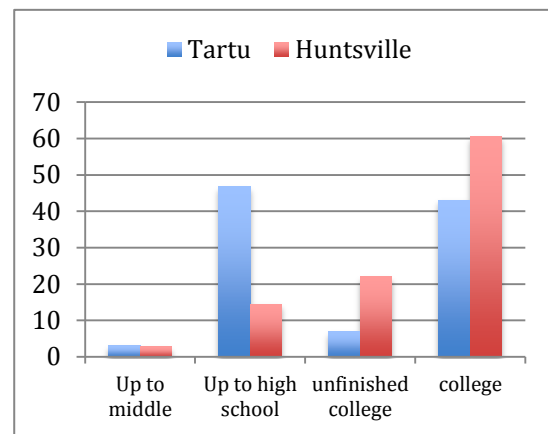
Figure 8.1. *Parents' Marital Status*

Figure 8.2 *Parents' Education*

Differences in education (Figure 8.2.), employment (Figure 8.3.), and how respondents rate their financial situation (Figure 8.4.), differed also considerably. Huntsville parents reported higher education levels and were more content with their financial situation than Tartu parents (one Tartu respondent marked his situation as "s…", however). On the other hand, Tartu parents reported higher employment. These variables are very likely to affect respondents' motivation and resources to engage.

Figure 8.3. *Parents' Employment Status*
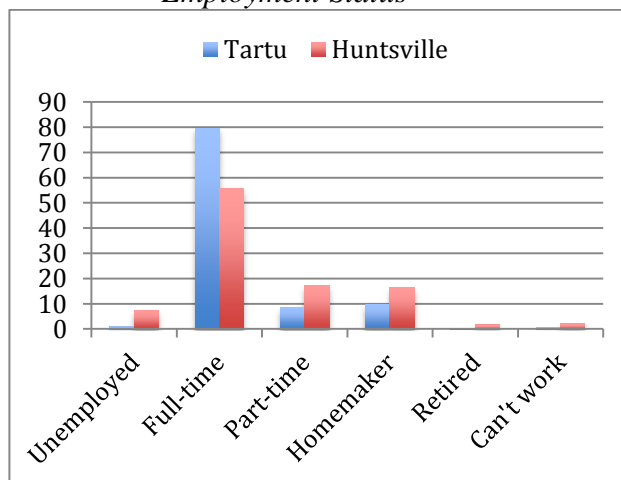
Figure 8.4. *Parents' Financial Situation*
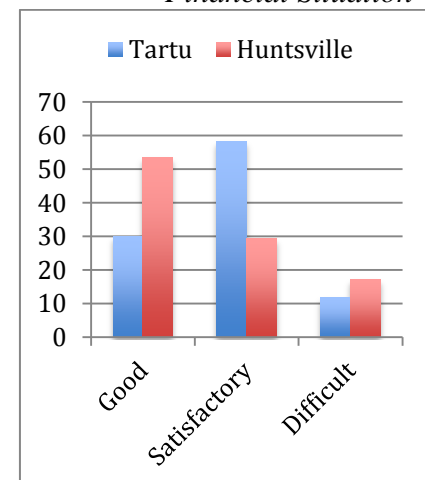
In Huntsville, most parents reported having two school age children (50.2%) while Tartu parents' had almost equally either one or two children. Huntsville parents had larger families, by almost 25% reporting having more than two children. At this age (13-15 year olds), these responses likely reflect the total number of minor children in the household.

8.2.2 Voting and candidacy

To see the differences between Tartu and Huntsville parents' voting and candidacy behavior in percentages, the cross-tabulation procedure was used. The results that are presented in Table 8.4, show that in general, Tartu parents execute their voting rights and opportunities considerably less than do parents in Huntsville. More than half of Tartu parents (56%) have not voted for someone to represent their school-related interests in politics, and almost 80% have not voted for another parent to represent their interest in parents' organization. In Huntsville, these numbers are 34% and 55% respectively.

Table 8.4. *Parents' Voting Behavior*

	Voted for someone in politics (educational issues)%		Voted for someone in parents' org. %	
	Tartu (285)	Huntsville (236)	Tartu (284)	Huntsville (228)
Yes, he/she was elected	24.9 (71)	50.8 (120)	17.6 (50)	39.9 (91)
Yes, he/she was not elected	18.9 (54)	15.3 (36)	2.8 (8)	5.3 (12)
No	56.1 (160)	33.9 (80)	79.6 (226)	54.8 (125)

To assess the relationship between parents' voting behavior in Tartu and Huntsville, Pearson chi square (χ^2) test was used. It helped in examining whether the frequency

distribution in one community matches that of another community, or whether the voting behavior is significantly associated with nationality.

As we could expect to see from the frequencies above, the difference between Huntsville and Tartu parents' voting behavior was is statistically significant and the null-hypothesis is not supported (general politics: $\chi^2 = 38.570$, df=2, ρ=0; parents' org: $\chi^2 = 36.091$, df=2, ρ=0). The results are illustrated by Figures 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, and 8.8, that well visualize the findings.

Figure 8.5. *Tartu Parents Voting for a Politician*
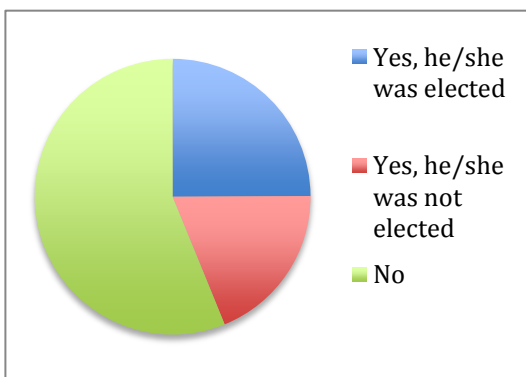
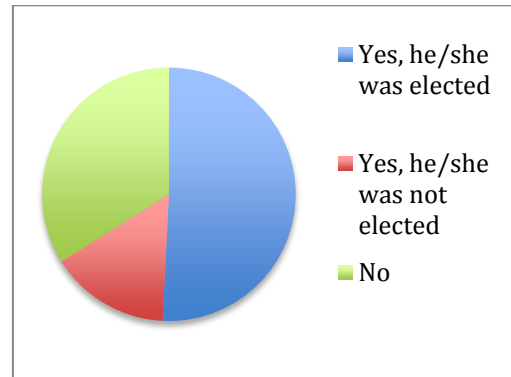**Figure 8.6.** *Huntsville Parents Voting for a Politician*

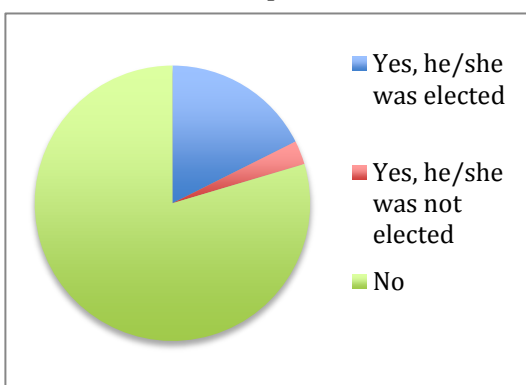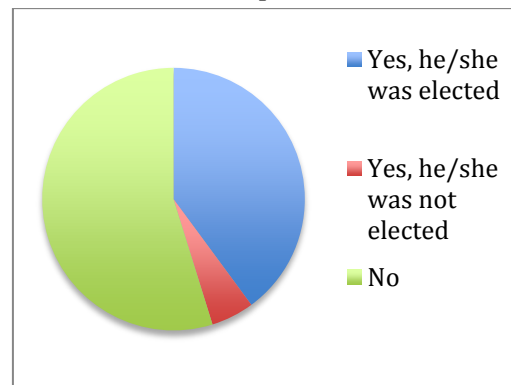**Figure 8.7.** *Tartu Parents Voting for Parent Representative*

Figure 8.8. *Huntsville Parents Voting for Parent Representative*

The responses regarding the question about their own candidacy were slightly different as shown in Table 8.5.

Table 8.5. *Parents' Candidacy Behavior (frequencies)*

| | Have been a candidate in general elections % | | Have been a candidate to org. involving parents % | |
	Tartu (288)	Huntsville (250)	Tartu (290)	Huntsville (239)
Yes, I was elected	0.3 (1)	0.8 (2)	6.9 (20)	16.3 (39)
Yes, but I was not elected	2.8 (8)	0.0 (0)	1.0 (3)	2.1 (5)
No	96.9 (279)	99.2 (248)	92.1 (267)	81.6 (195)

Neither group of parents have been active on general political level, although more Tartu parents (3.1%) than Huntsville parents (0.8%) had been candidates. 18.4% of Huntsville parents and 7.9% of Estonian parents had been candidates to parental organization, and were mostly elected. The difference between Tartu and Huntsville parents' attitude towards becoming a representative for other parents is statistically significant (χ^2 = 13.044, df=2, ρ=0.01).

Again, since comparing parents' voting and candidacy behavior are the primary purpose of this study, the author prefers to visualize and juxtapose these findings in Figure 8.9, 8.10, 8.11 and 8.12 .

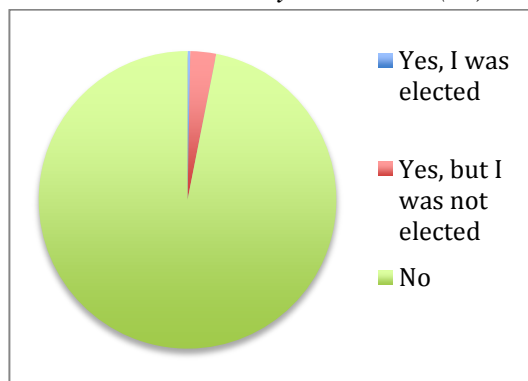**Figure 8.9.** *Tartu Parents' Candidacy in Politics (%)*

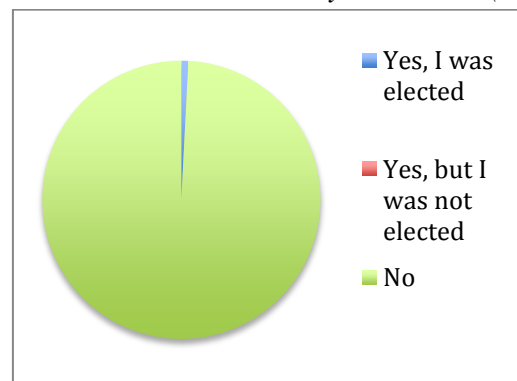**Figure 8.10.** *Huntsville Parents' Candidacy in Politics (%)*

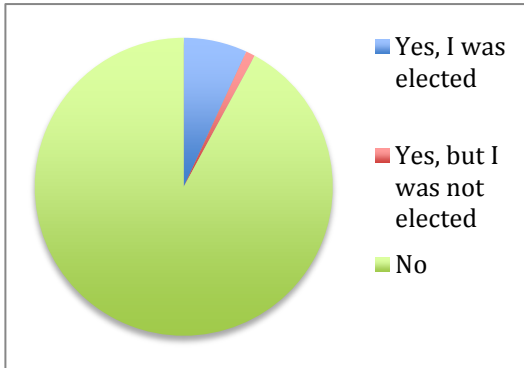**Figure 8.11** *Tartu Parent's Candidacy to Parent Organization (%)*

- Yes, I was elected
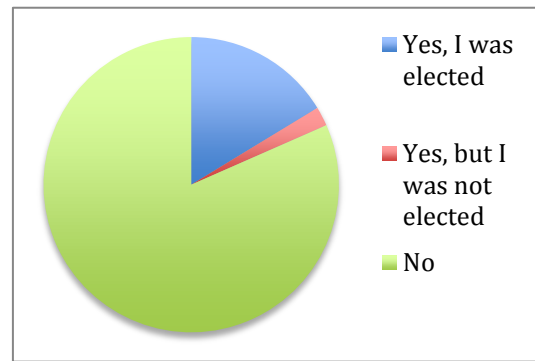- Yes, but I was not elected
- No

Figure 8.12 *Huntsville Parents' candidacy to Parent Organization (%)*

- Yes, I was elected
- Yes, but I was not elected
- No

And lastly, as sort of a double-check was conducted by calculating the means to show the results in a different manner. These are given in Table 8.6. and were calculated on the scale from 1 to 3 (1:Yes / 2: Yes, but.. / 3:No).

Table 8.6. *Parents' Voting and Candidacy Behavior (means)*

	Tartu	Huntsville
Voted for politician	2.3123	1.8305
Voted for parent representative	2.6197	2.1491
Candidate in gen. elections	2.9653	2.9840
Candidate to parent organization	2.8517	2.6527

Mean values, cross-tabulation and chi-square confirm the finding that the biggest differences between American and Estonian parents lie in voting behavior, that these differences are significant, and that the desire to be a representative is very low in both countries, while voting at general elections is the most reported activity: still relatively low among Tartu parents, especially taking into consideration that eligible voters are registered automatically in Estonia and that everyone can vote online, both on national and local elections.

Next, the researcher investigated parents' opinions on more intensive participation while they were asked to explain briefly if not desiring to be more involved. The findings are presented in the Table 8.7.

Table 8.7 *Parents' Opinions on Increased Involvement*

	Would like to be more involved in education questions %		Would like to be more involved in child's school %	
	Tartu (285)	Huntsville (244)	Tartu (286)	Huntsville (240)
Yes	47.7 (136)	76.2 (186)	54.5 (156)	78.3 (188)
No	52.3 (149)	23.8 (58)	45.5 (130)	21.7 (52)

Huntsville parents were considerably more interested in being more engaged, both in education (76.2%) and schooling issues (78.3%). Tartu parents were slightly more interested in being involved in school issues (54.5%), but still less than Huntsville parents. The author also preferred to visualize these tendencies in Figure 8.13.

Figure 8.13 *Parents' Opinion about Increased Involvement*
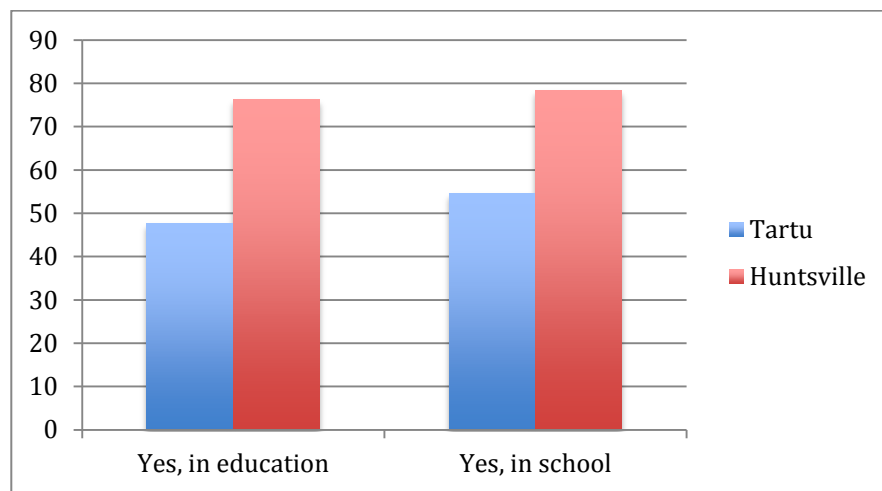
Parents were also asked to briefly comment on if they answered "no" to whether they would like to be more engaged. A selection of their responses is presented in the Table 8.8, while all responses are compiled to Appendices M and N.

Table 8.8. *Parents' Narratives on Involvement*

Tartu	Huntsville
• Not competent enough	• Too busy
• Not enough time (32 similar responses)	• Nothing changes, decision is made by others and parents are left out
• Not enough information is given to parents (3 similar responses)	• I don't want what I say or do to affect my child's relationship at school
• Child will leave this school (7 similar responses)	• Feel uninformed @ present, high school counselors <u>NOT</u> helpful, middle school <u>ARE</u> helpful
• I'll not send my kids to this school anymore (2 similar responses)	• I have no desire to be attacked by the public press for making a less popular decision
• Works well at the moment, don't see the reason to break the system (12 similar responses)	• We elect school board to make these decisions along with our school administrators
• Many decision makers already (3 similar responses)	• I cant speak well English
• Cannot present [*myself – Author*] tough	• It wouldn't help. The Union is too powerful and "No Children Left Behind is a farce
• I am involved enough (He responded "yes" to having been elected to some parents' org. – Author. 2 similar responses.)	• Too quiet/shy
• Due to my work I am already involved with these questions (s*he works as a teacher – Author.* 3 similar responses*)*	• "System" too divisive & politicized
• Nothing will change (7 similar responses)	• I am a good worker, not a decision maker
• Education officials are actually not interested in parents' opinion	• I trust our Superintendent + local school officials.
• I am already involved enough (3 similar responses)	
• Decisions are made without taking into account citizens, children or their parents	
• Because the Ministry of Education does not take it for the consideration, so there is no point to hit the head against the concrete *(this respondent had left most other fields empty, except stating as*	

being very satisfied with the school, mostly unsatisfied with the general education system, not well informed about the legislation and plans. To the latter one has been written and then deleted "And don't want to know, because…." – Author)

One hundred and eight (108) Tartu and twenty-eight (28) Huntsville parents responded longer to the inquiry about *why they do not want to be more involved*, which is 37% of Tartu and 11% of Huntsville parents who had returned the questionnaire, responded to this question in narrative. Nine (9) Huntsville parents said that they do not have time for this, while seven (7) felt that they are involved enough already. Two (2) parents mentioned that their children will graduate from this school soon and two (2) believed that their involvement would not change anything. One parent did not want to be more involved as she feared that it might compromise her child's wellbeing at school. Similarly, one parent did not want to be attacked by the local press if making unpopular decisions. There was also a parent who believed that her English is not good enough and another one said that she is too quiet and shy for that. And finally, there was one respondent in whose opinion voting for school board members is enough and another one said that the board and superintendent can be trusted enough for not getting more involved.

Thirty-three (33) Tartu parents consider the main reason for not being able to be more involved their time constraints, often related with workload or children. Twenty-nine (29) Tartu parents believed that they are not competent enough for higher involvement, while six (6) more parents found that it is better when specialists deal with these issues. Eight (8) parents did not believe that their participation would

change anything, while six (6) said that their children will graduate from this particular school soon and they did not see the reason to get involved anymore. One parent did not believe that she can present herself well enough, and the rest of the parents were alright with how the things currently are in the system.

Parents were also asked who should be included in decision-making on schools and education issues. Proportionally, their opinions were relatively similarly divided in both countries as can be seen in Table 8.9, except that in Huntsville parents wanted to see themselves first and foremost involved (95%), then teachers (91%) and then education department administrators (76%). In Tartu the numbers were 83% for parent involvement, 89.5% for teachers and 79% for education department officials.

Table 8.9. *Parents' Opinions on Who Should be Involved in Decision Making*

	Tartu	Huntsville
Local government officials	48.6 (139)	46.0 (115)
Public	35.7 (102)	45.2 (113)
State Dept. of Education / Ministry of Education	**78.7** (225)	**76.0** (190)
Local politicians	29.4 (84)	22.8 (57)
Parents	**82.9** (237)	**95.2** (238)
Teachers	**89.5** (256)	**91.2** (228)
Students	64.7 (185)	55.6 (139)
State Politicians	28.0 (80)	20.8 (52)

It is an interesting finding, since although Tartu parents are less engaged and have less information, they feel that they should be the among the first ones to be consulted with, in education and schooling questions. Two Tartu parents and one Huntsville parents had added to the "student" option that they should be "older", "10+grades" and "high school students". One Huntsville parent had underlined politicians on both level and written "keep politicians out of it", while two Tartu parents shared this

opinion adding that "Education minister, not an ordinary politician who is lacking appropriate expertise" and "+ competent and experienced education specialists. Education should not be a political question".

8.2.3 Satisfaction with schools and education

Voting and candidacy are driven by parents' resources and motivation. Resources are time, money, information and so on, and this background data was presented - as thoroughly as it was possible to inquire - in the demographics table. Parents' satisfaction with their child school, the school system and education overall can be a big factor for their motivation to engage or not. The satisfaction results are presented Table 8.10.

Table 8.10. *Parents' Satisfaction with Schools, School System and Education*

	Satisfied with child's school %		Satisfied with school system %		Satisfied with education %	
	Tartu (289)	Huntsville (249)	Tartu (291)	Huntsville (250)	Tartu (287)	Huntsville (249)
Very satisfied	14.2 (41)	32.9 (82)	7.9 (23)	10.4 (26)	8.4 (24)	12.4 (31)
Rather satisfied	73.4 (212)	48.6 (121)	58.8 (171)	58.8 (147)	72.5 (208)	52.6 (131)
Don't wish to evaluate	7.6 (22)	4.8 (12)	19.6 (57)	10.8 (27)	8.7 (25)	12.9 (32)
Rather dissatisfied	4.2 (12)	8.8 (22)	10.7 (31)	16.0 (40)	9.1 (26)	17.3 (43)
Very dissatisfied	0.7 (2)	4.8 (12)	3.1 (9)	4.0 (10)	1.4 (4)	4.8 (12)

Combining categories to dichotomous "satisfied" and "dissatisfied" sections, then in comparison to Tartu parents, nearly 10% of Huntsville parents are more dissatisfied with their children schools and education, and 6% more dissatisfied with their school

system. Within the category of "satisfaction", all respondents preferred to opt to "rather satisfied" answers, except in satisfaction with their children's schools where 33% of Huntsville parents reported that they are very satisfied while only 14% of Tartu parents thought so. In terms of differences between parental satisfaction between Tartu and Huntsville parents in these three categories, the differences in satisfaction with schools and education are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 48.856$, df=4, ρ=0; and $\chi^2 = 24.860$, df=4, ρ=0), while in the "school systems category it is not ($\chi^2 = 10.858$, df=4, ρ>0.05). The results are illustrated by Figures 8.14, 8.15, and 8.16.

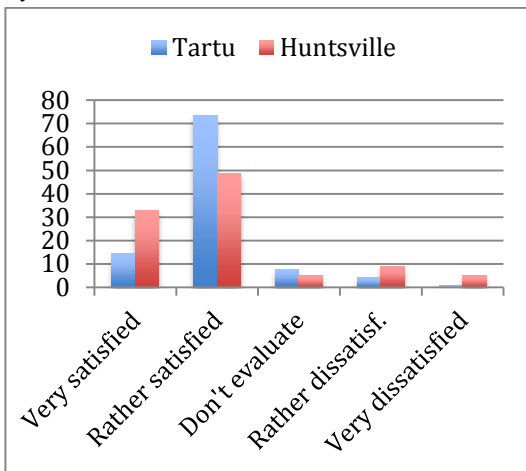**Figure 8.14** *Satisfied w/Child's School System*
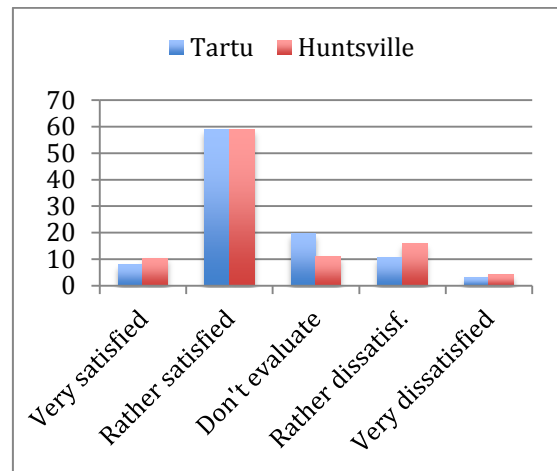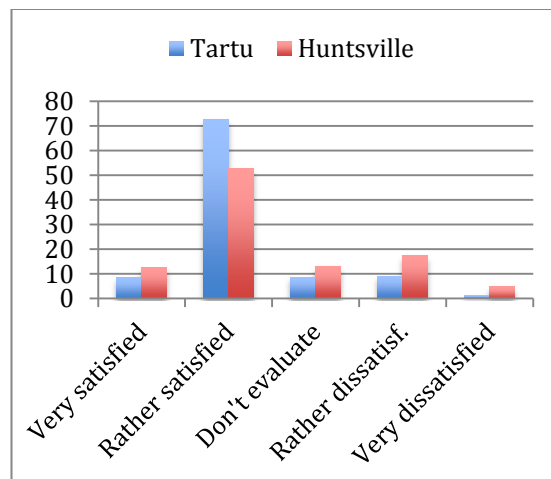

Figure 8.15 *Satisfied w/City School*

Figure 8.16 *Satisfied w/Education Quality*

One Tartu's single mother had attached a handwritten letter between the returned questionnaire that expressed dissatisfaction with the school and education. It read:

> Sometimes it feels that curriculum has been created students with for above the average capabilities, who are healthy and strong.
>
> My child has bronchial asthma. He/she[36] is often ill and tires quickly. There are probably other weaker ones. Nobody takes this into account.
>
> The student is overloaded. There are 7-8 classes at the school. Also at home [my child – K.E.] studies until 22:00 - 23:00. Sometimes there are two tests on the next day.
>
> Student's work is marked with "1"[37] offhandedly. I do not know what grade is that. The teacher could also be more like a friend and supporter.
>
> I often sense that student's low grading is caused by the female teachers' incapability and helplessness, a disciplinary method. Receiving a series of bad grades causes the student to lose confidence in his/her capabilities. Teachers could concentrate to help the student to search the cause that hinders the learning.
>
> Teachers could be more understanding.

This mother has one child, considers her financial situation as difficult, has a college degree and got her child to the school desired. She had marked her satisfaction with the school and Tartu's school system as "rather satisfied", the satisfaction with Estonian overall education quality as "rather unsatisfied". In her responses, she indicated as not being informed about the legislation and agendas. She felt that parents

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[36] Estonian language does not have grammatical genders. *Tema* can mean both "he" and "she". In this case, the letter does not reveal the gender of the student.. However, the mother wrote *tema* only once, using the "student" later. – *K.Elliott*

[37] Grade "1" corresponds to American "F" (5=A) – *K. Elliott*

should be involved in deciding on school and education questions, but at the same time she had not been voting for anyone to represent her interest in some parental organization. She had never been a candidate and had stated as not desiring to do so, considering herself as "not competent enough".

It would be interesting to see how does parents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the school influence their engagement at school, through a parent organization. For that purpose, cross-tabulation was carried out and the results are presented in Table 8.11.

Table 8.11. *Parents' Satisfaction with School and Engagement*

		Not satisfied with the school, %
Voted for someone in parent org.	Huntsville	48.4 (15)
	Tartu	21.4 (3)
Been a candidate for parent org.	Huntsville	20.6 (7)
	Tartu	7.1 (1)

Dissatisfaction with the school either does not seem to be enough motivation for parents to vote or become a representative for other parents, or it can imply to structural barriers and to the lack of needed resources to get engaged. The situation in Tartu looks especially lethargic.

To add to these results, a question that asked whether parents got the school of choice for their child was added to the analysis as a possible motivating factor. The theory says that having less choice (or few possibilities to exit the system), people should be more keen to express their voice as a remedial option while staying within the system (Hirschman, 1970). The results that are presented in the Table 8.12 showed that most parents had gotten the school that they preferred for their child.

Table 8.12 *Parents' School Choice*

| | Got the desired school for the child % | |
| | Tartu | Huntsville |
	(284)	(241)
Yes	87.3 (248)	90.0 (217)
No	12.7 (36)	10.0 (24)

The author investigated further to see whether those parents who did not get the desired school, were more motivated to engage in school or politics to have their voice heard. The results of the cross-tabulation procedure are below in the Table 8.13, while the number of parents is given in brackets.

Table 8.13 *Relationship between School Choice and Engagement*

	Did not get the desired school, %	
Voted for someone in politics	Huntsville	60.9 (14)
	Tartu	47.1 (16)
Voted for someone in parent org.	Huntsville	45.5 (10)
	Tartu	14.3 (5)
Been a candidate in local/state elections	Huntsville	0
	Tartu	0
Been a candidate for parent org.	Huntsville	19.0 (4)
	Tartu	5.6 (2)

These results show that of those parents who did not get a desired school for their children, 61% have voted for someone in politics. Since in Huntsville the school board is an elected body and the school neighborhoods are divided into "good" and "bad" regions among Huntsville residents, this level of motivation could reflect parents' desire to influence the situation through an elected representative either on city or state level. Nearly half (45.5%) of those Huntsville parents who did not get the desired school, voted also for another parent representative. In Tartu, the school choice did not motivate parents to become more engaged with an organization that involves

parents, while almost half of them (47.1%) had been voting for someone in politics. None of these parents had wanted to engage in politics as candidates.

8.2.4 Informedness

Information is another key factor that can influence parents' behavior. The understanding of legislation gives instruments to engage and being informed on agendas planned or in works can be a motivation to get become involved and influence decisions. The results are presented in the Table 8.14.

Table 8.14 *Parents' Informedness*

	Informed about legislation %		Informed about agendas %	
	Tartu (287)	**Huntsville** (247)	**Tartu** (290)	**Huntsville** (245)
Yes	27.2 (78)	59.9 (148)	38.6 (112)	54.3 (133)
No	72.8 (209)	40.1 (99)	61.4 (178)	45.7 (112)

As we can see, Huntsville parents consider themselves remarkable better informed, both on legislation (60%) and agendas (54%), than do Tartu parents (27% and 39%, respectively). Parents were asked to briefly comment their answers and a selection of these is presented in the Table 8.15. For all responses please see Appendices M and N.

Table 8.15 *Parents' Narrative Responses on Informedness*

	YES	**NO**
Tartu parents' informedness on legislation	• It's possible to get the information from the computer • I'm working in the same system • I belong to school's trustee board • I am a teacher • Everything is available in internet	• Lack of info • Have not investigated • Because the secondary education is in a constant reform almost, then cannot follow all that enough • No interest in reading complicated documents • Lacking public information • Don't see the reason

	YES	NO
	- I am interested in it - There is enough information in the media - Because of my profession - I follow educational portals in internet and read newspapers - I have been trying while fighting against this senseless school system reform and become informed of it, but ineffectively (*He added another comment below the page that: "Demolishing the current Tartu's education system is criminal and the destroyers should be criminally convicted", and to the next question: "Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union run over the people and the education with a roller" and marked the satisfaction with Tartu's school system as "very unsatisfactory". He has been elected to a parent's committee, has not been a candidate at local/state elections, has voted for those who did not become elected. Higher education, fin. situation good, an entrepreneur – Author's note.*)	- Don't know anything about these - Everything is changing too fast - Only what have heard from the teacher - Don't know where to look from either - Not much time to deal with it - Could know more (although she does belong to a parents' org. and has also voted for one – *Author*.) - Have not been enough interested myself - Not enough information in the media - Because there are very many acts (he has become elected in local or state elections – Author's note.) - I know some (she has also voted for someone at her school, who became elected – Author's note.) - Reasons given why the gymnasium part (*10-12 grades – K.E.)* was closed, were incompetent and unjustified - Where can I get to know them?
	YES	**NO**
Huntsville parents' informedness on legislation	- The messages from principal - Either on school TV or phone call - Via newsletters and school website - Because I take the time to read about legislature affecting the school system (elementary) - Both by internet and hard copy - But tends to be too politically slanted	- Not enough info - If parents are unable to attend PTA or are unwanted - Because I'm not - It's just words, no support or discipline - The school system does everything it can to keep the parents uniformed - Even though I am on the PTA board, information is not getting out to the parents - Not easily available

	• Through PTA newsletters + email • I pay close attention to all legislation • Great email communication! • My child provides me with info • But its what you read in the newspaper or see on TV. You get some feedback from school board meetings, but seems only on negative or controversial issues. We need some POSITIVE stories to tell!	• Not enough communication • Parents must seek out information instead of being informed ahead of time • Seems like you only hear about things around election time • I feel disconnected from the process • Parents are last on the list to consult & inform • I don't know anything about it
	YES	**NO**
Tartu parents informedness on policy agendas	• Somewhat aware of plans to close gymnasiums • I am aware (she is working in the same system – from response above – Author's note.) • I know that [*a number of*] secondary schools will be reduced • Media • These have been analyzed plenty in the trustee board (She responded to the previous Q: "Because I belong to school's trustee board"- Author's note) • Reforming gymnasiums[38] • I am a teacher • I am interested in what's going on • Through media • Only media based information • I am investigating, because worrying about my child's educational path • Political "messages" spread	• Lack of info • Politics does not work and I do not trust • Because they change all the time • It's not talked about • Again, don't feel anything (he answered to previous Q: "I just don't have the feeling, that I know in depth" – K.E.) • Don't follow politics • Nothing depends on me • I have heard something in general, but even not the school knows • Don't have the interest towards political decisions and plans • Info is confusing and contradictory • As little as we have read from the newspaper • Since educational reforms are so frequent in our country, have not been able to follow • These are publicized minimally

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[38] In Estonian terminology, *gümnaasium* or gymnasium is the highest level of Estonian secondary education, comprising of grades 10 to 12. A school that has, in addition to the gymnasium level, also elementary and/or middle school levels, can be called a gymnasium too. It can also be called *keskkool* that would translate directly as a middle school, but signifies secondary school in the international context – *K.E.*

	YES	NO
	• through media more • Has been talked about at the school meetings, media • I am a teacher, deal with these issues daily • It is idiotic to close schools	• Because I have not been interested in it • It is difficult to get a comprehensive overview or more information about prepared plans • Where are those plans? • Every minister comes with his/her "own plan", no stability
Huntsville parents informedness on policy agendas	• More is being done than in the past • Both from faculty and board meetings • Again, too politically motivated • Online news + neighborhood info • Via school TV channel • Principal is trying to keep us abreast • Newspaper • Have frequent opportunities/access to info • They are keeping me up to date • This information was communicated • The school calls me all the time • School sends home info • PTA (Probably a PTA member, answered above "Because of our great PTA!" – K.E.) • I attend school meetings • School board meetings are televised	• Information could be mailed or sent home • Because I'm not • By teachers' websites • May need a monthly newsletter • Not enough communication • We usually read about them in the paper after-the-fact • Not much communication w/the school board • I feel disconnected from the process • We are not well informed, we are the last to know • Should add that info w/handbook • Don't believe I know • Pretty quiet on "what's in the works". Don't hear of plans or issues or <u>visions</u> until in place. Need more! • I feel like we only hear about it after the vote • If it weren't for AM talk radio more things would be hidden[39]

After coding the answers, most respondents in Huntsville who considered themselves

well informed (39 responses) on *legislation*, mention different media channels like

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[39] There are a few radio channels on AM frequency that can be listened in Huntsville area (see http://radio-locator.com)

school TV, internet and newspapers (including the PTA newspaper) as important sources. Schools seem to play important role for these parents to mediate the info including phone calls and school emails. On the other hand, of informed Tartu parents (52 responses) sixteen respondents work in the education system or schools themselves, two belong to parents' organization, seven get the information through internet and others claim to be informed by general media outlets. Five responded to be interested enough to keep themselves aware of it, while one responded that his motivation has been that "demolishing the current Tartu education system is criminal and the destroyers should be convicted".

Thirty-seven (37) Huntsville parents responded as *not being well informed about the legislation*, mostly arguing that the information does not reach them and is difficult to access. Three people note that they are informed after the fact or at the time of elections, one brings the lack of time as a hindering reason. Of eighty-seven (87) Tartu parents twenty-seven responded that they do have any reason or have had necessity to become informed, although one of these had been elected to a parents' organization. Five argued that they cannot keep up with changing legislation, six wrote that the information is not available while one was asking: "Where can I read them"? Two mentioned that they have not had time to investigate and most other answers were just statements that they have not been investigating the laws and act themselves or are consider them moderately informed. One parent, who had been a representative on local or national elections, argued that there are too many acts to know them all.

Of those Huntsville parents who are *aware of ongoing policy agendas* in the works (21 respondents) most argue that the school and media are keeping them well informed. In one case the PTA role was highlighted and one parent said that she gets the info from school meetings. Seventy-three (73) Tartu parents responded "yes" to being aware of the ongoing agendas, while eleven said that they have this information since they work in the same system (incl. two indicated as belonging to school boards). One mentioned directly that she knows thanks to her trustee board membership status. Sixteen parents referred to the reform of the school system where high school level will be separated from basic schools and thus many schools will be reorganized or even closed. Twenty-five indicated the source as the general media reporting on these issues, two have received the information from school meetings.

Huntsville parents who said that they are *not aware of the agendas* (37 respondents) gave mostly general responses *a la* "because I'm not" or "I don't believe I am". School board was addressed as not being too communicative and one parent suggested adding this information to (student-parent) handbook. Six parents argued that they hear about plans after the fact only, while a few believed parents are left out from these processes. One parent wrote: "You have our email addresses. School system/schools should communicate better." Only one parent reported lack of time as the main obstacle for being better informed. Of fifty-six (56) Tartu parents, most said that they have not been interested enough to search for the info. A couple of parents wrote that the info is not well publicized and several parents indicated that these agendas are too political, while changing with each new minister. One parent said that she does not have enough time for that and one also asked: "Where is this info?"

8.2.5 Influence of resources on engagement

Finally, the author investigated how does parents' background in terms of their possible resources that could influence their voting habits or candidacy. Education level, employment and financial situation and marital situation can all affect people's ability to engage: whether it is a single parent with time constraints, education differences that may exclude some parents from the system, or money problems that can cause several negative consequences. Instead of initial three categories, "Yes" and "Yes, but…" were now recounted as one category, thus eventually just "Yes" and "No" categories remained. The findings are presented as follows and represent parents who answered "Yes" to either voting or candidacy question.

Table 8.16 represents the percentage of parents who had either been voting or been candidates themselves, among respondents on each level of education while the number of these parents is added in brackets.

Table 8.16 *Influence of Education on Parents' Engagement*

		Education, %			
		Up to middle school	Up to high school	Unfinished college	College degree
Voted for someone in politics	Huntsville	57.1 (4)	38.2 (13)	54.7 (29)	78.3 (108)
	Tartu	12.5 (1)	35.3 (48)	40 (8)	56.2 (68)
Voted for someone in parent org.	Huntsville	33.3 (2)	24.2 (8)	23.5 (12)	58.5 (79)
	Tartu	11.1 (1)	12.1 (16)	35 (7)	27.6 (34)
Been a candidate in local/state elections	Huntsville	0	0	1.8 (1)	0.7 (1)
	Tartu	0	1.5 (2)	0	5.6 (7)
Been a candidate for parent org.	Huntsville	0	2.9 (1)	23.5 (12)	21.8 (31)
	Tartu	11.1 (1)	3.7 (5)	10 (2)	12 (15)

Huntsville parents who have college degree, reported to be most active electorate both on general political level (78% of all parents who reported having college degree) and voting for parent representatives (56%). However, this indicator does not seem to reduce by each following education level in Huntsville: the next active group seems to be parents having just a basic education, while over half of them has been voting for politicians on educational questions and one third to another parent. As for being a candidate oneself, whether in politics or for parent organization, then as only two Huntsville parents had reported as having done so, one had not finished college and the other one had college degree. The results are presented also in Figure 8.17.

Figure 8.17 *Influence of Education on Engagement, Huntsville*
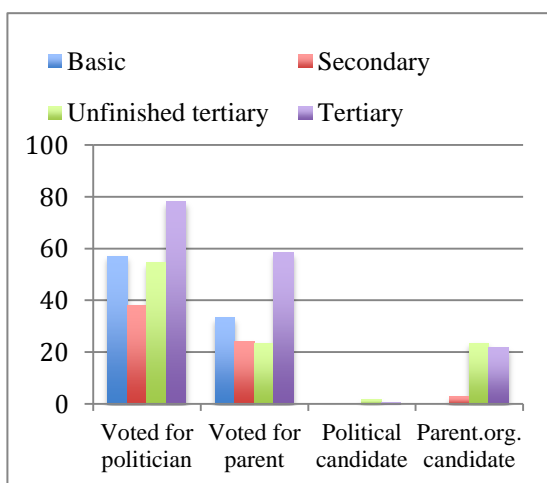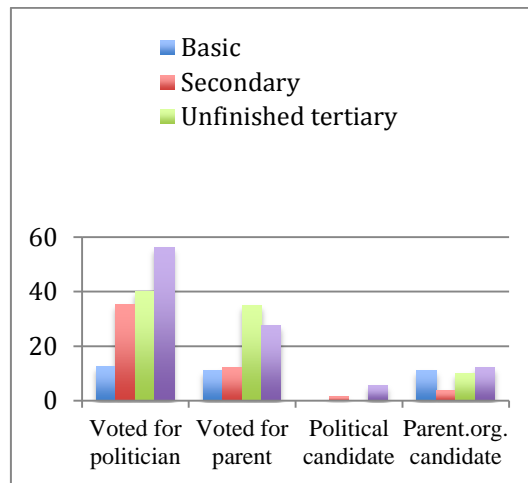
Figure 8.18. *Influence of Education on Engagement, Tartu*

In Tartu, the Figure 8.18 illustrates the voting indicators on general political level well: it is lined as theory and previous studies have generally suggested, that people having lower education are also relatively more passive, while the activity rises with education. However, the numbers at the upper portion in voting for parent representatives are switched: 35% of those having unfinished college degree and

27.6% of finished college degree reported as having voted for another parent. Of eleven parents who had been a candidate at local or state elections, eight had college degree. Of those parents who had been candidates to parent organization, the education levels were almost equal, except for much lower high school education level.

Next, the author looked at the correlations between parents reported employment situation and their engagement activity. To simplify the measurement, employment categories were merged to three instead of six in the questionnaire: unemployed and unable to work were categorized as "not working", full- and part-time employment as "working" and homemaker and retired as "at home". In comparison to other parents who are at home might have the most time to engage in affairs where they can influence their children schooling issues. It is difficult to estimate how the working *versus* not working situation might affect their engagement, thus let us look at the Table 8.17 that hopefully gives us some indications on that.

Table 8.17. *Influence of Employment on Parents' Engagement*

		Employment, %		
		Not working	Working	At home
Voted for someone in politics	Huntsville	52.2 (12)	67.1 (114)	70.7 (29)
	Tartu	40.0 (2)	43.8 (110)	44.8 (13)
Voted for someone in parent org.	Huntsville	33.3 (7)	42.8 (71)	59.0 (23)
	Tartu	0	22.6 (57)	3.7 (1)
Been a candidate in local/state elections	Huntsville	0	1.1 (2)	0
	Tartu	20.0 (1)	2.8 (7)	3.4 (1)
Been a candidate for parent org.	Huntsville	4.3 (1)	17.3 (29)	28.9 (13)
	Tartu	20.0 (1)	7.8 (20)	6.9 (2)

Interestingly, as for having been candidates themselves for a parent organization, Huntsville parents-at-home reported to be most active with nearly 30% among other stay-at-home parents. In Tartu, the tendency is opposite, but since there were only five parents reporting as not working but having been candidates, the base is thin from which to evaluate. These categories should also be approached with caution on two primary reasons: it was self-evaluated reporting and the employment status may not refer to the time a parent reported a specific engagement activity. Nevertheless, despite of the employment status, voting on general level seems to be most accessible for all parents and since the voter registration is automatic in Tartu and can be done online, the differences are minor.

Next, we will look into respondents' financial situation and their engagement activity (Table 8.18), another factor that may or not be related to employment, but can likely affect people's confidence levels, time and so on.

Table 8.18 *Influence of Financial Situation on Parents' Engagement*

| | | **Financial Situation, %** | | |
		Good	Satisfactory	Difficult
Voted for someone in politics	Huntsville	74.4 (90)	60.3 (41)	55.8 (24)
	Tartu	46.4 (39)	43.3 (71)	44.1 (15)
Voted for someone in parent org.	Huntsville	55.1 65)	34.8 (23)	34.1 (14)
	Tartu	23.5 (20)	18.5 (30)	23.5 (8)
Been a candidate in local/state elections	Huntsville	0.8 (1)	0	2.3 (1)
	Tartu	3.5 (3)	2.4 (4)	5.9 (2)
Been a candidate for parent org.	Huntsville	24.6 (31)	10.0 (7)	15.4 (6)
	Tartu	12.8 (11)	6.6 (11)	2.9 (1)

In Huntsville, respondents' better financial situation seems to translate into higher voter turnout both on general political level and also for voting for parent

representatives. In Tartu, despite their financial situation only around one fifth of parents has been electing for another parent for a parent organization and voting habits are equally divided also in general political level, around 45% of parents voting no matter what is their financial situation. Financial situation is not having any significant correlation on parents' general candidacy neither in Huntsville nor in Tartu, but in both cities it does have an effect on setting up their own candidacy for parent organization: people who reported better financial situation are more likely to be candidates.

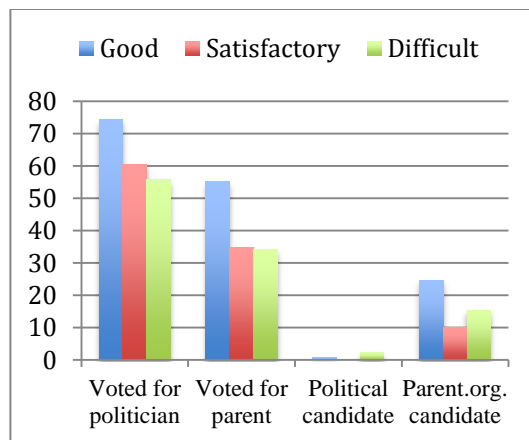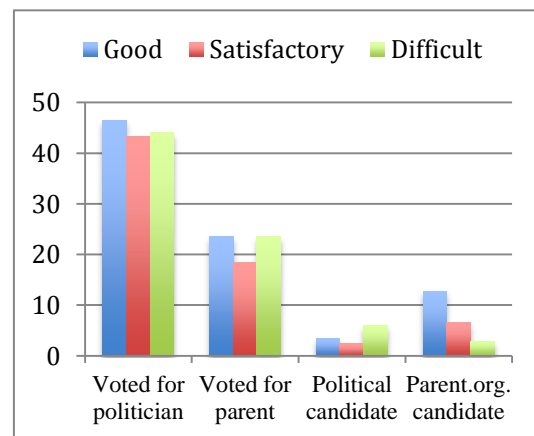**Figure 8.19** *Influence of Financial Situation on Engagement, Huntsville*

Figure 8.20 *Influence of Financial Situation on Engagement, Tartu*

Finally, parents' marital situation was cross-examined with their engagement indicators. Being married or cohabiting likely gives a sense of security and can avail time to engage in such activities. Raising children alone, however, as so many parents in Huntsville parents reported to do, can have negative effect on their ability to engage in any other activities outside work and home. The results are presented in Table 8.19, while being married or cohabiting were merged to a one "partnership" category.

Table 8.19 *Influence of Marital Status on Parents' Engagement*

		Marital status, %	
		In partnership	Alone
Voted for someone in politics	Huntsville	69.8 (120)	56.9 (33)
	Tartu	45.0 (104)	39.2 (20)
Voted for someone in parent org.	Huntsville	48.8 (82)	32.1 (18)
	Tartu	21.3 (49)	17.6 (9)
Been a candidate in local/state elections	Huntsville	0.5 (1)	0
	Tartu	3.0 (7)	3.8 (2)
Been a candidate for parent org.	Huntsville	19.9 (35)	12.1 (7)
	Tartu	8.5 (20)	5.8 (3)

The effect of marital status on parents' engagement both in Tartu and Huntsville is visualized by Figures 8.21 and 8.22.

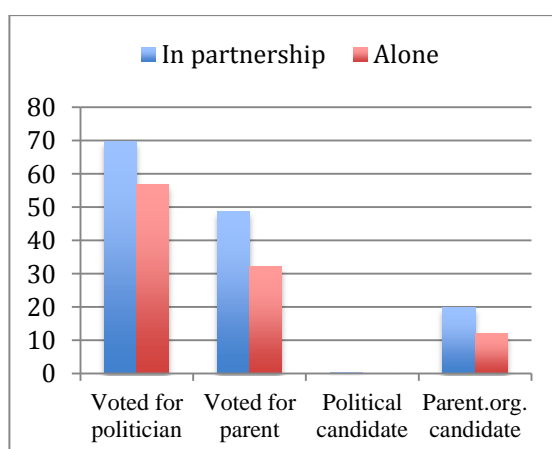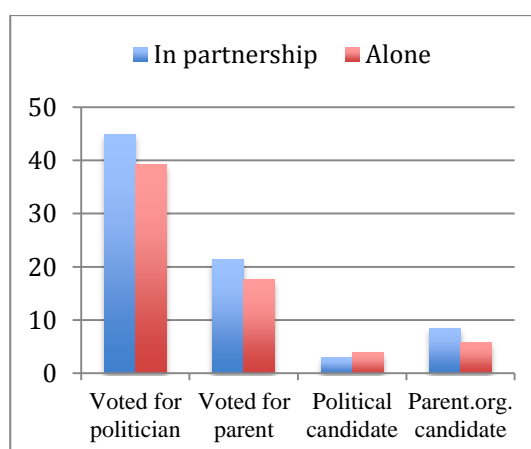**Figure 8.21.** *Influence of Marital Status on Engagement, Huntsville*

Figure 8.22. *Influence of Marital Status on Engagement, Tartu*

8.3 Summary of the Survey

The main purpose of the final part of this multilevel analysis – the parents' survey - was to see whether the second part of the hypothesis can be supported, i.e. whether Huntsville parents are more engaged than Tartu parents, and whether the assumptions regarding parents' motivation and resources hold.

The results showed that Huntsville parents are considerably more active than Tartu parents, although it was expressed rather through voting for a representative than becoming one. In comparison to Huntsville parents, Tartu parents were also significantly less interested in more substantial engagement. At the same time, both groups ranked the importance of parental involvement at the highest levels in comparison to other possible stakeholders.

However, since Huntsville schools returned only fourteen percent of distributed questionnaires, the sample did not reach its required representativeness and the results should not be considered as being definite characteristics of all Huntsville 9th graders' parents. Due to this, also comparisons between Tartu and Huntsville parents should be viewed rather as indicators how institutional systems serve parents in practice, and whether or how do parents tend to realize their voices and opportunities available.

As for reaching the required sample size, it might indicate Huntsville parents' indifferent attitude towards participating in this or any other survey, but the author would be rather careful with this assumption. The central school administration offered considerable support for the execution, but in a few cases it did not seem to get much beyond the school thresholds. As the author was distributing and collecting the surveys, she noticed mismanagement in a few schools, some administrations' unawareness of the survey, problems in locating the person responsible, or staff's inability to collect these questionnaires on time or at all. Having superintendent's permission and being supported by the administration via announcements and reminders, this result and these observations are even more astonishing. Since the

questionnaires had to pass so many delivery stages from schools to students, to parents, and then back, then it is understandable that one weak link can considerably affect the result. In this sense, it is also possible that the weak link lay in students, but none of these assumptions can be further explained at this point.

The situation was different in Tartu, where there was no central support, but the schools that agreed to participate were welcoming and helpful. In all cases they were prepared to receive these questionnaires, and in all cases these had been collected and ready when the researcher arrived to pick them up. Unlike in Huntsville where the researcher did not see much beyond the front desk, a few Tartu principals were personally involved during the beginning and the end of the survey.

Coming back to parents' formal engagement in forms where they might be able influence schools and education, then despite of the low response rate of which the reasons are unknown, Huntsville parents reported to be more active in all forms: either voting for politicians or parent representatives, or having been candidates at political level or some parent organization. In both communities the participation was the highest for voting at the political level to someone to represent their educational concerns. At the same time, Tartu parents reported relatively low voting levels in general, which is surprising taking into account country's automatic voter registration and opportunities to vote online.

Big differences were also in voting for parent representative, that in Tartu's case may imply not only parents' own passivity, but also weak institutional options for parents to influence anything in these areas. Plus, as the institutional analysis described,

school level trustee boards are the only local-level organizations where parents could change something, but these seem to be rather elite organizations for a few parents who are mostly asked to become engaged by school staff, although formally elected on annual parents' meeting. Furthermore, knowing that the trustee boards do not have any real power, most parents might not perceive it as worth of trouble to either participate in voting for them, or setting up their own candidacy.

Since in Huntsville PTA's are voluntary organizations that aim for maximum parental engagement while electing their presidents and other management members, it can be assumed that parents who have not voted for other parent representatives, are not active PTA members either. Nevertheless, through extensive PTA network from local to national level, PTA's are organizations that can have a strong voice and influence. Nevertheless, neither in Huntsville nor in Tartu parents indicated as desiring to be the representatives themselves.

Then, the researcher was interested in parents' possible motivation and resource factors that could affect their engagement in schooling questions. Firstly, respondents' average demographical data told us that only half of Estonian parents were married and that nearly one third of Huntsville parents were raising their children alone. In terms of education that could translate to relevant engagement skills and also define people's socio-economic belonging, Huntsville parents in general might be better equipped for more meaningful engagement. On the other hand, Huntsville parents' employment levels were remarkably lower than those of Tartu parents' and they also considered their financial situation more difficult than Tartu parents.

The analysis showed that in Huntsville, higher education translated in higher voting levels and setting up the personal candidacy, although parents who had reported having only a basic education, were also surprisingly active. Among Tartu parents those who had college degree were the most active in voting at general elections, while those with unfinished college degree were more likely to vote for a parent representative. In Tartu, education could not be considered as a determinant for becoming a parent representative. In Huntsville, difficult reported financial situation showed also lower engagement rates among these parents. In Tartu it was not so clearly the case, except in terms of being a candidate for a parent organization that had been the activity for better-off parents. In both communities, raising children alone indicated lesser involvement in all fields.

Percentage-wise, Tartu parents considered themselves much less informed about relevant legislation and agendas than Huntsville parents, while it is important to note that those Tartu parents who were informed, were often working in the same system or were the members of school's trustee board. High number of respondents commented on these questions and in comparison to Huntsville parents' opportunities to get information, Tartu parents seemed to have considerably less channels for that and felt rather excluded from the system. This shows both passivity from parents' side, and also the large gap between the institutions and the public. While Estonian law requires parents to be informed about rules and regulations on school and education, it is highly likely that most parents are not aware even about that.

Dissatisfaction with school and education could be motivating factors for engagement, thus the survey investigated that as well. Most parents in Tartu and Huntsville

reported as having gotten a desired school for their child. However, Huntsville parents were more dissatisfied with their children schooling issues, although of those who reported to be dissatisfied, only about half voted for a parent representative and one fifth had been candidates themselves. On the other hand, of those who did not get the desired school in Huntsville, more than half reported as having voted for someone in politics on educational issues.

Reading Tartu parents' narrative responses on legislation and agendas, their dissatisfaction with the school system and education was obvious and it is even more interesting that it did not seem to lead to their higher involvement in areas where they might change things. On the contrary, of those Tartu parents who were dissatisfied with the school or did not get the desired school, very small percentage had tried to influence it through a parent organization and slightly higher number had voted for someone to represent their concerns on political level.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This was a comparative study of most different systems design that was set up to investigate formal parental engagement in two contemporary liberal democracies, where the political regime would be similar but that would differ in terms of many other characteristics. Hence Tartu in Estonia, and Huntsville, Alabama in the United States were chosen for a more targeted investigation of rule "by the people" and "for the people". Or as Dahl's polyarchy model proposed, to investigate polities' performance along the axes of contestation and participation.

Public schools provide the education service for the public at large, and are also paid by the public at large. The slogan "no taxation without representation" well illustrates the fundamental principle of modern democracies. Parents of liberal democracies have the full right to participate in formal decision-making processes that affect their children's schooling and education. Furthermore, since parents are legal "proxies" for their children, they are obliged to do so, at least so as to keep the schools and education institutions accountable.

The hypothesis statement was that a mature democracy provides more institutional opportunities for parents to engage than does younger one, and that parents in older democracy better execute their right to engage. The analysis of countries' background and democracy rankings allowed to believe that both are indeed governed by fundamental democratic principles, albeit one just barely emerging and characterized by frequent regime changes during the last century. In both countries civic engagement indicators were frequently among the lowest among all criteria analyzed, while in Estonia considerably lower than in the United States.

In terms of Estonia, it indicated that while it is possible to rapidly transform regimes and institutional framework, it is not possible to change people's mindset and traditions overnight or during a generation. Country's governing elite has been born during the soviet, centralized and paternalistic regime, thus there has been no personal experience about the rule "by the people" and the population at large has had no experience or knowledge how to practice it, rather been taught to oblige and not to intervene.

Further analysis of Huntsville revealed a variety of options through which parents can engage to keep their school systems and education officials accountable. Huntsville and American parents in general are well organized on associational level. Parent-teacher associations exist in all schools and are open to all parents, while these associations extend to city, state and national level councils with a central lobby-office in the capital. All Huntsville residents can participate in the elections of the members of the city board of education, the primary governing body in the district. To reduce the gap between different stratums of the society, the parental involvement policy concentrates on engaging families in poverty, while these outreach and educational programs are supported by federal and state funds. Also religious organizations collaborate with schools to contribute to the latter purpose.

No such opportunities exist in Estonia. The law foresees two primary options for parents to engage: either through electing parent representatives to school's trustee board that gathers a few times a year and has of little influence; or through an annual student evaluation meeting with teachers. Hence only minimal opportunities to formally engage exist, are likely of similar character across Estonia but present a very different picture than that of Huntsville. Tartu middle schools' parents did not seem to be organized as a considerable interest group also locally. Indeed, Estonian parents' association exists on national level, but can be described as a rather invisible body of little influence and low membership. These findings supported the first part of the hypothesis in terms that in a mature democracy more institutional options exist for parents to engage and influence public schools and education.

The purpose of the parents' survey was to see whether the second part of the hypothesis can be supported, and whether the assumptions regarding the effect of parental motivation and resources on their engagement hold the ground. Since the response rate in Huntsville did not provide a representative sample of parents, this part of the hypothesis could not be tested as a fully representative data. While it is not clear whether the reason for the low response rate lay in parents, in schools or in teachers who mediated the survey, it is not possible to interpret this as to indicate parents' attitudes. Nevertheless, the findings certainly do indicate some trends and can serve as for further investigations in this area.

The survey findings are much in line with international indicators that were discussed before. There were significant differences between Huntsville and Tartu parents' self-reported engagement levels, while in both countries they rather vote for someone than are candidates themselves. Nevertheless and despite differences, parents in both communities seemed to be relatively inactive and Tartu parents' responses indicated worrisome detachment. On the other hand, knowing now the almost non-existent meaningful institutional opportunities for Tartu and Estonian parents to engage, in combination of little experience with democracy this apathy can be explained.

Tartu parents' narrative responses revealed a large gap between the state and the society. While they reported low engagement, their messages revealed problems rather in the state system and institutions than in their own passiveness. There was dissatisfaction with Tartu's school system and education, will to know more and engage more, but the primary obstacles seemed to be the lack of information and thus also feeling of incompetency for being more involved. Many parents reported not to

have time for this, again a problem that the state or local government could help to soften. In Alabama there is a law that urges employers to enable parents to take some time off if that would be required to attend a school meeting, just to give one example. If parents do not have time to be there for their children's sake, then to find the culprit we have to look towards the government.

Dissatisfaction with schools and education did not seem to be a motivating factor for bigger engagement in Tartu; in Huntsville it was more visible. Parents' resources like education and financial situation had linear relationship with Huntsville parents' engagement, it did not have that much effect in Tartu. In both communities single parents reported lower engagement than those in partnership.

The informedness was expected to be equally average in both countries, but Huntsville parents reported to be better informed. In Estonia, the education act requires parents to be familiar with the legal instruments. However, Tartu parents' reported awareness of school- and education-related legislation, and agendas was alarmingly low. While Huntsville parents reported frequent influx of multichannel information, Tartu parents rather had to search for it themselves, and much more frequently claimed to be left out from ongoing processes.

The results indicate that in both countries and communities from the perspective of parental engagement, the situation with the "rule by the people" is murky. Further research should be conducted that would investigate why do parents in Huntsville or in other American communities do not wish or cannot engage more, while having relatively broad institutional opportunities and incentives created for that. Despite of

the reported higher engagement levels, the fact that in Huntsville the response rate was that low and based on author's personal observations at some schools, certain lethargy was definitely present. And while in Tartu and in Estonia in general paternalistic and elitist tendencies seem to prevail on governmental levels, those school administrations that agreed to participate in the survey made a great effort to guarantee highly successful response rate and rather reflected openness.

To summarize, this study revealed several tendencies, some expected results and some controversies, which will hopefully become source for further investigations. Firstly, this analysis demonstrated that one should be careful with making categorical statements about civic engagement without thoroughly investigating and explaining communities' backgrounds from multilevel perspective. The statements on engagement should always be well nested in these frameworks.

Secondly the background study, survey results and local observations warn not to make groundbreaking declarations based on such a small sample as this case study was able to gather; especially in the area that remains continuously important for all communities and where a "hunch" is not enough to characterize populations in definite terms.

Thirdly and as Benjamin Barber said, if one feels the necessity to investigate civic engagement, it suggests that there is something "wrong" with democracy, either by its ancient ideals or measuring by polyarchy compass. It is possible that it is not because the institutions are weak or participation is low, but that it is the definition itself that does not fit to describe imported ideals and contemporary developments.

Finally and for these considerations, the author is hoping that the question of parents'
role in their children schools and education, and the division of roles and
responsibilities between the state and modern family will acquire much more attention
by the researchers than it has received today. The final goal is a strong state and
individual wellbeing. It is the task of the people and their states to figure it out how to
reach this by consensual agreement, with the label of democracy or without.

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APPENDIX A. *School Questionnaire in English*

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM · UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for finding the time to fill in this short questionnaire. The survey is approved by Superintendent Casey Wardynski. Your straightforward answers are an invaluable contribution to a doctoral research project that compares parents' involvement in Estonian, Italian and U.S. public schools.

The results and the final work will hopefully be interesting reading for you. It will be available in summer 2013.

To protect your privacy, I will collect and analyze all questions anonymously and publish the results in the dissertation in an aggregate format.

For any additional information or if you would like to provide a longer commentary, you are most welcome to contact me or my supervisor Prof. Emanuele Padovani. Our contact information is below.

Please return the questionnaire to your child's school within the next few days.

Thank you again for your cooperation,

Katrin Elliott
PhD Candidate
Diversity Management & Governance Program
University of Bologna

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QUESTIONNAIRE
Parents' school involvement

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1. Are you satisfied with:
(On each scale, please circle the number above our answer)

a) your child's school?

1	2	3	4	5
very satisfied	rather satisfied	don't wish to evaluate	rather dissatisfied	very dissatisfied

b) Huntsville City school system?

1	2	3	4	5
very satisfied	rather satisfied	don't wish to evaluate	rather dissatisfied	very dissatisfied

c) the quality of Alabama's K-12 education?

1	2	3	4	5
very satisfied	rather satisfied	don't wish to evaluate	rather dissatisfied	very dissatisfied

2. Do you feel that you are well informed about legislation that affects K-12 schools and education?
(Please mark your answer with an "x" and comment briefly)

☐ Yes..

☐ No...

3. Do you feel that you are informed about the current K-12 schools' and education policy agendas in the works?
(Please mark your answer with an "x" and comment briefly)

☐ Yes..

☐ No...

4. When making decisions regarding K-12 education, the following parties should be involved:

☐ local government officials
☐ public
☐ Alabama State Department of Education
☐ local politicians
☐ parents
☐ teachers
☐ students
☐ state politicians

5. Have you voted for someone who has represented your interests in:

a) the political system *(educational issues)?*
☐ Yes, he/she was elected
☐ Yes, but he/she was not elected
☐ No

b) an organization involving parents (e.g. PTA)?
☐ Yes, he/she was elected
☐ Yes, but he/she was not elected
☐ No

6. Have you been a candidate:

a) in local or state elections?
☐ Yes, I was elected
☐ Yes, but I was not elected
☐ No

b) for an organization involving parents?
☐ Yes, I was elected
☐ Yes, but I was not elected
☐ No

7. Would you like to be more involved in decision making:

a) in K-12 education issues?
☐ Yes
☐ No

b) at your child's school?
☐ Yes
☐ No

If you answered "No", please briefly explain why:

....

8. Some general, but important questions about you*:

Gender	☐ female	☐ male		
For student	☐ parent	☐ stepparent	☐ grandparent	☐ other
Marital status	☐ married	☐ co-habiting	☐ raising child alone	
Native language	☐ English	☐ other ....*(please specify)*		
Education	☐ up to middle	☐ up to high school	☐ unfinished college	☐ college degree
Employment	☐ un-employed	employed ☐ full time ☐ part time	☐ home-maker	☐ retired ☐ unable to work
For your child you	☐ got the desired school	☐ did not get the desired school		
Our financial situation is	☐ good	☐ satisfactory	☐ difficult	

Number of K-12 children in your household: ....

*Regarding privacy, please see the Informed Consent on the next page.

APPENDIX B. *School Questionnaire in Estonian*

KÜSIMUSTIKUST

Aitäh, et leidsite aega ja olete valmis vastama sellele lühikesele küsimustikule. Teie otsekohesed vastused on hindamatuks abiks doktoritööle, mis uurib lapsevanemate osalust Eesti, Itaalia ja Ameerika Ühendriikide üldhariduskoolides. Tulemused ja valminud töö on loodetavasti huvitav ka Teile lugeda. Sellega saate tutvuda järgmisel suvel, vastava info saate oma lapse koolist.

Eraelu kaitse huvides kogun ja analüüsin küsimustikud anonüümselt ja tulemused avaldan doktoritöös koondvormis.

Kui soovite lisainfot või lisada pikema kommentaari, on Teie pöördumine igati teretulnud. Minu ja minu juhendaja professor Emanuele Padovani kontaktandmed on toodud allpool.

Palun Teil küsimustik saata oma lapse kooli tagasi järgnevate päevade jooksul.

Koostöö eest veelkord tänades,

Katrin Elliott
Doktorikandidaat
Bologna Ülikool

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katrin.elliott@unibo.it
Emanuele Padovani, PhD, tel. +39 0543 374 621,
emanuele.padovani@unibo.it

KÜSIMUSTIK
Lastevanemate osalus
üldhariduses

1. Kas olete rahul:
(Palun ringistage igal skaalaal number oma hinnangu kohal)

a) oma lapse kooliga?

1	2	3	4	5
väga rahul	enamasti rahul	ei soovi hinnata	enamasti rahulolematu	väga rahulolematu

b) Tartu koolivõrguga?

1	2	3	4	5
väga rahul	enamasti rahul	ei soovi hinnata	enamasti rahulolematu	väga rahulolematu

c) Eesti üldhariduse kvaliteediga?

1	2	3	4	5
väga rahul	enamasti rahul	ei soovi hinnata	enamasti rahulolematu	väga rahulolematu

2. Kas tunnete, et olete hästi kursis üldharidust ja –koole puudutavate õigusaktidega?
(Palun märkige "x" oma vastuse ette kastikesse ja põhjendage lühidalt)

☐ Jah...

☐ Ei..

3. Kas tunnete, et olete teadlik hetkel töösolevaist, üldharidust ja - koole puudutavatest poliitilistest kavadest?
(Palun märkige "x" oma vastuse ette kastikesse ja põhjendage lühidalt)

☐ Jah...

☐ Ei..

4. Üldharidust puudutavates küsimustes peaksid osalema:
(Palun märkige Teie sobivad vastused "x"-iga)

☐ omavalitsuse ametnikud   ☐ lapsevanemad
☐ elanikkond   ☐ õpetajad
☐ haridusministeeriumi ametnikud ☐ õpilased
☐ kohalikud poliitikud   ☐ riigi poliitikud

5. Kas olete hääletanud kellegi poolt, kes on Teie huve esindanud:

a) poliitikas, haridusküsimustes?
☐ Jah, ta osutus valituks
☐ Jah, aga ta ei osutunud valituks
☐ Ei

b) Teie lapse kooli vanemate- või hoolekogus?
☐ Jah, ta osutus valituks
☐ Jah, aga ta ei osutunud valituks
☐ Ei

6. Kas olete kandideerinud:

a) kohalikel või üleriigilistel valimistel?
☐ Jah, osutusin valituks
☐ Jah, kuid ei osutunud valituks
☐ Ei

b) mõnda lastevanemaid hõlmavasse ühendusse?
☐ Jah, osutusin valituks
☐ Jah, kuid ei osutunud valituks
☐ Ei

7. Kas sooviksite olla praegusest enam kaasatud otsuste tegemisse

a) üldharidusküsimustes?
☐ Jah
☐ Ei

b) Teie lapse koolis?
☐ Jah
☐ Ei

Kui vastasite "Ei", palun põhjendage lühidalt, miks:

....

8. Mõned üldised, kuid olulised küsimused Teie kohta*:

Sugu	☐ naine	☐ mees		
Õpilasele	☐ lapsevanem	☐ kasuvanem	☐ vanavanem	☐ muu
Perekonnaseis	☐ abielus	☐ kooselus	☐ kasvatate last üksi	
Emakeel	☐ Eesti	☐ muu ....*(palun täpsustage)*		
Haridus	☐ põhi -, kutse	☐ kesk-, keskeri	☐ lõpetamata kõrgharidus	☐ kõrgharidus
Tööhõive	☐ töötu	☐ töötate täiskohaga ☐ osalise ajaga	☐ kodune ☐ pensionil	☐ töö-võimetu
Lapsele	☐ saite soovitud kooli	☐ ei saanud soovitud kooli		
Me majanduslik olukord on	☐ hea	☐ rahuldav ☐ raske		
Kodus kasvab	.... 1.-12. klassi last *(palun märkige laste arv)*			

*Eraelu kaitset puudutavas küsimuses vt info tagaküljel

APPENDIX C. *Survey's Accompanying Letter to Teachers, Huntsville*

Huntsville, December 5, 2012

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for your assistance in carrying out this questionnaire – that is of invaluable help toward gathering valid research data.

Dr. Casey Wardynski approved this survey on December 3, 2012.

The purpose of my doctoral research is to study participatory democracy in the United States and Europe from the perspective of **parents' engagement** in schools.

School districts of similar size have been chosen as a sample with Huntsville, Alabama being one of them. The questionnaire is designed to gather the responses of **8th graders' parents**.

The questions are carefully formulated and protect the identity of the individual, class and school. Each questionnaire can be sealed into an envelope. In the final work, only aggregate data will be reported.

The survey has been successfully carried out in Europe already with a high response rate.

I would be the grateful if the questionnaires could be collected by Wednesday, December 12. I will come by your school and pick them up on Thursday, December 13.

Sincerely,

Katrin Elliott
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Doctoral Candidate
Cell no. 256-714-4849
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ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
www.eng.unibo.it

APPENDIX D. *Survey's Accompanying Letter to Teachers, Tartu*

Tartus, 12. Novembril 2012

Lugupeetud Õpetaja,

Tänan Teie abi eest küsitluse korraldamisel, mis on uurimustöö jaoks olulise väärtusega.

Võrdleva doktoritöö eesmärgiks on uurida Eesti, Itaalia ja Ameerika Ühendriikide osalusdemokraatiat, lastevanemate kaasatuse vaatevinklist.

Valimisse on võetud eelnimetatud riikide kolme sarnase suurusega linna põhikoolide viimaste klasside õpilaste lastevanemad. Põhikoolide viimased klassid on valitud põhjusel, et üleminek põhikoolist järgmisse astmesse on olulise tähtsusega ja lastevanemate roll on sel perioodil oluline.

Andmeid kogutakse anonüümselt ja väitekirjas kajastatakse ainult koondtulemusi.

Töö kaitsmine toimub 2013 aasta suvel. Seejärel saadan doktoritöö digitaalses vormis ka Teie koolile.

Olen tänulik, kui saaksite vastused koguda kaasa pandud kastikesse. Tulen sellele järgi reedel 16.novembril, koolipäeva lõpus.

Lugupidamisega,

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APPENDIX E. *Estonia and Tartu: Links to Resources*

Legislative

Constitution of the Republic of Estonia
https://www.riigiteataja.ee/tutvustus.html?m=3 (in English, click on *Põhiseadus*)

Upper Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act
https://www.riigiteataja.ee/tutvustus.html?m=3 (in English, click on *Põhikooli- ja Gümnaasiumiseadus*)

Education in Estonia

Estonian Ministry of Research and Education (in English)
http://www.hm.ee/?1

Education and Research in Estonia 2010/2011
http://www.hm.ee/raamat2010-2011/en/avaleht_eng.html

Tartu schools

Schools' statutes (in Estonian)
http://tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=8&page_id=2042

Schools' trustee boards (in Estonian)
http://tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=8&page_id=2475
("vanemate esindaja": parents' representative; "linna esindaja": city's representative; "õpetajate esindaja": teachers' representative; "õpilaste esindaja": students' representative; "vilistlaste esindaja": alumni representative)

Statistics on schools (in Estonian, numbers of students by grades, schools etc)
http://tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=8&page_id=63 (at the bottom of the page, click on "Statistika 2012")

Tartu middle schools' websites
(instruction in Estonian. Several have English website introductions)

Descartes' Lütseum Descartes Lyceum (1-12 grades)
http://portal.tdl.ee;
board of trustees:
http://portal.tdl.ee/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=9&MMN_position=18:15

APPENDIX F. *PISA 2009 School questionnaire Q18, Q25*

(For comparative reasons, presented in ENG-EST format. USA's amended questions[40] have been provided where applicable.)

Q18	**ENG: Which statement below best characterizes parental expectations towards your school?** **EST: Milline järgnevatest väidetest kirjeldab kõige paremini lastevanemate ootusi Teie kooli suhtes?** *ENG: (Please tick only one box)* *EST: (Palun tehke ristike (✗) vaid ühte kasti)*

ENG: There is *constant pressure* from many parents, who expect our school to set very high academic standards and to have our students achieve them

■₁

EST: Paljudelt lastevanematelt on tunda *pidevat survet* koolile, et meie kool kehtestaks väga kõrged akadeemilised eesmärgid ning aitaks oma õpilastel neid saavutada

ENG: Pressure on the school to achieve higher academic standards among students comes from a *minority of parents*

■₂

EST: Vaid *vähesed lapsevanemad* avaldavad koolile survet kõrgemate akadeemiliste eesmärkide saavutamiseks

ENG: Pressure from parents on the school to achieve higher academic standards among students is *largely absent*

■₃

EST: Lastevanemate surve koolile kõrgemate akadeemiliste eesmärkide saavutamiseks *üldjuhul puudub*

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[40] See the U.S. Education Department's Technical Notes (2011)

		ENG: Area of Influence / *EST: Mõjuala*			
		ENG: Staffing *EST: Õpetajate töölevõtmine*	ENG: Budgeting *EST: Eelarve koostamine*	ENG: Instructional Content *EST: Õppesisu*	ENG: Assessment Practices *EST: Hindamine*

Q25 **ENG: Regarding your school, which of the following bodies exert a direct influence on decision making about staffing, budgeting, instructional content and assessment practices?**
EST: Millistel järgmistest organitest on Teie koolis otsene mõju õpetajaskonda, kooli eelarve koostamist, õppesisu ning hindamist puudutavate otsuste tegemisel?

ENG: (Please tick as many boxes as apply) EST: (Palun tehke ristike (✗) nii mitmesse kasti igas reas kui vajalik)

		ENG: Staffing *EST: Õpetajate töölevõtmine*	ENG: Budgeting *EST: Eelarve koostamine*	ENG: Instructional Content *EST: Õppesisu*	ENG: Assessment Practices *EST: Hindamine*
a)	INT: Local education agency or local school board[41] EST: Kohalik omavalitsus või riiklik haridusorgan[42]	■₁	■₁	■₁	■₁
b)	INT: The school's <governing board> USA: School-level governing board EST: Kooli hoolekogu	■₁	■₁	■₁	■₁
c)	ENG: Parent groups EST: Lastevanemate kogu	■₁	■₁	■₁	■₁
d)	ENG: Teacher groups (e.g. Staff Association, curriculum committees, trade union) EST: Õpetajate kogu (nt kooli õppenõukogu, ainesektsioon, ametiühing)	■₁	■₁	■₁	■₁
e)	ENG: Student groups (e.g. Student Association, youth organization) EST: Õpilaste kogu (nt õpilasomavalitsus, noorteorganisatsioon)	■₁	■₁	■₁	■₁
f)	ENG: External examination boards EST: Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus	■₁	■₁	■₁	■₁

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[41] As the option a), the United States' schools had "State or federal education agencies (e.g., state education department)" The next one, "local education agency…." was an option b) and so on (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p.D-57) – *K.Elliott*

[42] In Estonian, *riiklik haridusorgan* translates as a "state education agency", i.e. two categories are counted as one in Estonian case that has likely biased the final results. – *K.Elliott*

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APPENDIX G. *Organization of U.S. Education: Federal, State, Local, School Level*

(Document from the United States' Department of Education website)

FEDERAL ROLE

The U.S. federal government does not have any direct authority over education in the United States. There is no national ministry of education and no education framework law or laws in the United States.

The role of the U.S. federal government is limited to the following:

- Exercising leadership in promoting educational policies and reform efforts of national scope;
- Administering federal assistance programs authorized and appropriated by Congress;
- Enforcing federal civil rights laws as they pertain to education;
- Providing information and statistics about education at the national and international levels; and
- Providing technical expertise to the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, other federal agencies and Executive Office of the President in conducting the foreign affairs of the United States as these pertain to education and within the limited scope of federal power in this area.

The federal government does not:

- Own, control or oversee U.S. schools or postsecondary institutions*;
- Inspect, accredit, or license schools, postsecondary institutions, or other educational providers;
- Set curricula or content standards for academic or professional subjects;
- Hire or license faculty or other educational professionals;
- Set educational standards for the admission, enrollment, progress, or graduation of students at any level;
- Set standards, license, or regulate professional occupations or practicing professionals (other than federal civilian and military personnel); or
- Determine or allocate educational budgets for states, localities, or institutions.

*Except for institutions established to serve federal personnel and their families, such as the military service academies and advanced service schools, plus public schools located overseas to educate children of U.S. personnel stationed abroad.

The U.S. Department of Education is the lead federal agency in education. Its roles are limited to: establishing policies on federal financial aid for education and administering programs and funds; collecting data on America's schools and disseminating research;

focusing national attention on key educational issues; and prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education.

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) is the lead federal agency in foreign affairs. It cooperates with ED and other federal agencies on international matters pertaining to their expertise and jurisdiction, including education, and oversees federal educational and cultural exchange programs.

Other Federal Agencies have significant commitments to education at various levels, particularly in the provision of assistance and supporting research, training, and development.

STATE ROLE

Primary and Secondary Education

U.S. state and territorial governments exercise direct oversight over most aspects of education at all levels. They perform the political, administrative, and fiscal functions that are often the work of ministries of education in countries with centralized education systems. State governments have the authority to regulate public preschool, primary and secondary education; license private preschool, primary, and secondary schools; and license or otherwise regulate parents providing home schooling. They also, in many cases, establish and oversee curricula, standards, and procedures.

Education is the largest budget item for each of the 50 state and 5 territorial and commonwealth governments within the United States. The degree to which states and territories control education depends upon their constitutions, statutes, and regulations. Most state governance occurs via state departments and boards of education, but certain other aspects are often regulated through specialized agencies.

Among the duties performed by state authorities are:

- Providing funding for public education at all levels;
- Licensing or chartering private schools and public and private institutions of higher education;
- Providing oversight and guidance to local school boards;
- Setting broad policies for school-level curricula, texts, standards, and assessments (but not higher education);
- Licensing school teachers and other educational personnel;
- Overseeing the provision of educational services for persons living with disabilities, adults needing basic education services, and other special needs populations;
- Setting the standards for examining and licensing persons seeking to work in any regulated professional occupation; and
- Electing or appointing some or all of the members of the governing boards of public higher education institutions and state boards of education.

GENERAL STATE RESOURCES

State and Local Government on the Net provides a topical directory of state web pages organized by state and territory.

STATE GOVERNORS

National Governors' Association (NGA) Education Division provides information about educational policy and initiatives in U.S. states and territories.

STATE LEGISLATURES

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) provides information about the state role in funding education as well as current issues and a legislative tracking database for pending state laws.

STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Educational Resources Online Directory (EROD) provides a searchable database of links to most of the state-level and regional education agencies and organizations.

MULTI-STATE EDUCATION POLICIES

Education Commission of the States (ECS) is a cooperative inter-state association providing extensive information and resources on state level education issues.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) is the national organization representing the 55 state, territorial, and commonwealth boards of education. State boards of education are bodies of prominent citizens appointed by either the legislature or the governor for fixed terms, whose job it is to conduct oversight of statewide educational policies and operations, determine budget priorities, approve new policies and guidelines (such as for curricula), approve certain professional appointments and new schools, consider requests from local education agencies, and investigate problems. In some cases the state board is responsible for all levels of education, but in most states the board concentrates on education at the primary and secondary levels. State boards exercise close governance of state education agencies and the state superintendent or chief school executive usually reports to them.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is the national membership association representing the head officials of state education agencies. It provides an extensive array of professional resources and links to state agencies. State superintendents or commissioners are the highest education officials in state government, and are usually appointed by the state board of education or the governor (a few states elect the superintendent). The generic name for such positions is chief state school officer. These individuals manage the day-to-day affairs of state education agencies and report periodically to the state board, the legislature, and the governor. In some states the laws

provide for certain specialized types of education, such as vocational training, to be managed by a separate chief executive.

EROD Directory of State Education Agencies provides contact information and links to the state and territorial departments of education. State departments of education, also known as state education agencies (SEAs), administer state programs and enforce state regulations. While many SEAs deal with all levels of education, others concentrate primarily on early childhood, primary, and secondary education plus vocational education and special needs services. The head of an SEA is generally the chief state school executive (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

LOCAL ROLE

The local level of control is the heart of the U.S. education system at the primary and secondary levels. Local communities operate schools, implement and enforce state laws and policies, develop and implement their own educational policies, hire and supervise professional teaching staffs, and raise money to pay for schools (usually through property taxes plus special bond issues).

School district resources

Public education at the local level is organized by school districts, of which there are over 14,000. These districts are governed by school boards comprised of elected citizens who exercise broad policy oversight of operations, budgets, and staff, and may oversee local school curricula within state guidelines. Local education agencies perform operational oversight and administrative support for U.S. public pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools as well as many special education, adult learning, and vocational training centers. School boards generally oversee district operations via professional district superintendents and district administrative staffs.

Local agencies do not usually exercise authority over local private schools or higher education institutions, except for a few municipally operated public colleges and universities.

National School Boards Association (NSBA) provides information, resources, and databases related to the work of the over 14,000 local school boards across the United States.

School District Demographic System (SDDS) is a national cooperative database on the characteristics of American local school districts administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is the national association for chief executives, usually called superintendents, of local school districts.

Related local government resources

U.S. Conference of Mayors Education Page provides information about educational issues and initiatives of importance to the municipal governments within the United States.

National Association of Counties (NACO) provides information on policies and initiatives concerning education of interest to the county governments within each U.S. state and some territories.

Urban and rural special interest resources

Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) is a national association of the local education authorities in the largest U.S. metropolitan areas and provides information related to issues affecting urban and inner city education.

Urban Superintendents Association of America (USAA) is a national organization bringing together the chief school executives of major metropolitan school districts to work on issues of common concern.

Organizations Concerned About Rural Education (OCRE) is a coalition of national associations involved in issues and initiatives related to education outside U.S. cities and suburbs.

National Rural Education Association (NREA) is an association promoting relations among rural area schools and school districts.

Parental involvement

Parent organizations are important components of education at the local level. Parental involvement is essential to U.S. primary and secondary education and is organized in every school district, as well as for individual schools.

ED Parents' Page provides information on the initiatives being taken at the federal level to strengthen parental involvement and make resources available.

EROD Directory of State Parent-Teacher Association Offices provides links and contact information for the state offices that coordinate PTA activity.

National Parent-Teacher Association (NPTA) is a nationwide coalition of organized parent groups in local communities that have developed formal arrangements with individual schools. The PTA provides information on current issues of concern to member chapters and extensive resources.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) is an organization that seeks to help parents and schools build effective collaborations, both in regular schooling and special education.

Community partnerships

Community cooperation and support for the schools is an important resource that creates partnerships, provides student work opportunities, contributes extra funds and educational resources, provides supplemental services, and promotes support for the educational program. School-business partnerships are important resources for investment in local programs and providing learning opportunities for students.

ED Supplemental Services Page provides information and resources for creating local community partnerships.

National Community Education Association (NCEA) is a national organization dedicated to assisting school districts and community partners – businesses, civic organizations, and others – to build learning communities.

Council for Corporate and School Partnerships is a national organization that continues the work of the National Alliance of Business in helping schools, districts, and business form effective learning collaborations.

School choice

School choice involves the provision of educational options for parents and students. These may be alternatives to traditional public schools, such as magnet schools or public charter schools, or they may include voucher and other programs to enable private schools to be part of school choice programs. In all U.S. states, choice also includes the legal right for parents to homeschool their children.

ED School Choice Home Page contains definitions of the various choice alternatives and links to information resources for each.

SCHOOL ROLE

The individual school, postsecondary institution, or other provider is the competent authority in the United States for nearly all academic matters. There are nearly 130,000 individual institutions in the U.S. education system, including almost 117,000 primary and secondary schools, nearly 6,000 postsecondary career and technical schools, and just under 4,000 degree-granting institutions of higher education. These institutions vary widely as to type, ownership, and governance arrangements.

Primary and secondary schools

Primary schools are called elementary schools, intermediate (upper primary or lower secondary) schools are called middle schools, and secondary schools are called high schools. Heads of public primary and secondary schools are called principals, while the heads of private schools may be called principals, headmasters, or heads of school. In addition, schools may have other administrative staff in addition to teachers and teaching assistants. There may also be teaching assistants, counselors, librarians and computer specialists, school nurses, food service staff, custodial staff and administrative staff.

Public Schools. Primary and secondary public schools are governed by local school districts and their boards. Policies and regulations tend to be uniform across all schools within a district, but can vary among districts. Individual schools are administered within the confines of these general requirements, so autonomy is limited. States vary as to the curricular freedom they give local schools, but most impose a basic statewide curricular framework which local schools may embellish to a limited degree, and also issue a statewide list of approved textbooks for each grade level from which locals may select or, in some cases, require the use of a single set of approved texts.

Schools are organized into elementary (primary) schools, middle schools, and high (secondary) schools. Primary or elementary education ranges from grade 1 to grades 4-7, depending on state and school district policy. Middle schools serve pre-adolescent and young adolescent students between grades 5 and 9, with most in the grade 6-8 range. Middle schools in the upper grade range (7-9) are sometimes referred to as junior high schools. Secondary or high schools enroll students in the upper grades, generally 9-12 with variations. In the United States these tend to be comprehensive schools enrolling students of widely different interests and capabilities who follow different educational tracks within the same school.

American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is a national association of school district and school building administrators concerned with promoting public education.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is the professional association representing the heads of primary schools.

National Middle Schools Association (NMSA) is the organization serving the professional educators who work in middle schools and parents whose children are enrolled in such schools.

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the national association for heads of secondary schools.

NCES National Public School and District Locator is a searchable database of all individual public schools and local school districts participating in the Public School Universe Survey.

Private primary and secondary schools are governed by their own self-appointed boards of trustees and raise their own operating incomes without state or local government support. They may be operated by independent boards or they may be affiliated with a religious organization such as a diocese, religious order, local church, or state or national religious organization.

Private schools make their own hiring and admissions policies and determine their own curricula and other academic policies. Private schools do, however, pay close attention to local and state school curricula and graduation policies in order to facilitate the transfer of students to and from public schools and to ensure that students who graduate

from secondary programs have met or exceeded the expectations for state graduation requirements and – when appropriate - for admission to postsecondary institutions.

Alternative schools

Traditional public and private schools are not the only recognized types of schools in the U.S. education system. In addition to regular public schools and private schools, there are several other forms of schooling that are legally recognized and that serve as successful models for parents seeking different educational experiences for school-age children.

Charter Schools. Charter schools are public schools established by parent groups, communities, or organizations to fulfill specific needs, serve special populations, or adhere to special curricula or instructional practices. They receive public funding and support but are freed from school district regulations and may enroll students from anywhere in a district. Charter schools operate via a performance agreement, or charter, that sets forth the mission, program, student population, and methods of evaluation and assessment. Charters usually last from 3-5 years and are renewable. Over 3,000 charter schools have been established since the early 1990s.

Magnet Schools. Magnet schools are regular public schools that have a special educational theme, mode of instruction, subject emphasis, or other characteristic and are permitted to enroll students from across the entire school district rather than being confined to normal school attendance boundaries. Magnet programs have similar features but are located within regular public schools rather than being separate schools. The legal purpose of magnets is to promote equal access to unique educational opportunities by minority students who would otherwise be confined to regular schools based on residence. Examples of magnet schools and programs are frequently found in curricular areas such as science and technology, the arts, or career education; and in modes of instruction such as experimental, traditional, Montessori, or others.

Home Schooling. Individual instruction of children and young adults at home has a long history in North America, and was in fact the first method of education available to the European colonists prior to the establishment of schools. Home instruction was typically performed by parents or itinerant teachers called tutors. Today, there is again a popular interest in home schooling, and over 1 million students receive home schooling annually. Home schooling is legally recognized and regulated in all U.S. states. Home schooling is usually performed by parents and there is an extensive array of services, materials, and resources to assist homeschooling parents and children. Qualified home school graduates are recognized as school graduates by the states and may be admitted to U.S. higher education institutions.

Contemporary professional tutors offer services ranging from coaching in specific subjects to a full range of school instruction to children living at home, who are homebound, or whose personal or parental responsibilities make regular schooling impossible. Tutors are licensed by states and are often certified by professional associations.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2008

APPENDIX H. *Organization of U.S. Education: General Information Resources*

Education laws and regulations

The U.S. education system is not based on one, or even a few, framework laws. Instead, there are a wide variety of federal, state and local laws, plus court decisions and regulations that define various aspects of our decentralized system. In addition, there are rules and policies adopted by educational associations and individual schools and institutions that often have legal status with respect to matters within their competence.

Findlaw Library: Education provides links to court decisions and other materials organized by issue topic.

Findlaw State Resources Directory provides links to state constitutions, law codes, regulations, courts, and legislatures.

Municipal Codes on the Internet provides searchable links to city and county legal codes that have been mounted on the Internet.

The Cornell Legal Information Institute's Education Law Page provides easily used links to all federal and state statutes, regulations, and court decisions respecting education.

Federal Education Legislation provides an overview of the development of federal legal statutes pertaining to education and links to current legislative resources.

Federal Education Regulations provides links to current compilations of the regulations developed to implement federal education laws.

Federal Statutory and Regulatory Guidance provides information on policy letters issued by the U.S. Department of Education to clarify laws and regulations.

National education policy

While the federal government has a very limited role in running the U.S. education system, it does provide important policy leadership and provides assistance in support of education throughout the nation. The following resources may be helpful.

The White House Home Page provides information on Presidential activities and initiatives related to various topics including education, including links to speeches, press releases, executive orders, and other documents.

The Department of Education's Home Page describes the federal government's role in education, federal initiatives and programs, and much more.

FirstGov's Education, Jobs and Volunteerism Page provides links to a wide variety of federal education information and resources from all agencies.

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor provides information on legislative bills, hearings, testimony, and other actions pertaining to education in the lower house of the U.S. Congress.

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions provides information on legislative bills, hearings, testimony, and other actions pertaining to education in the upper house of the U.S. Congress.

The role of national associations

Non-governmental associations provide much of the leadership and activity on issues of nationwide importance in education. They also function as representatives of various constituencies and stakeholders, ranging from citizens' groups to professional and technical organizations.

Educational Organizations and Associations provides an annotated directory of many national associations, particularly those involved in primary and secondary education and educational reform efforts.

The Washington Higher Education Secretariat (WHES) provides links to major national higher education associations.

National educational research and statistics

An important role of the federal government is the collection, analysis and publication of national education statistics. The federal government also supports some educational research activities. Educational research is also supported by private organizations, universities, and foundations.

Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is the principle federal office concerned with research on education.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the federal educational statistics office and the principle source for national data on education topics.

The Digest of Education Statistics is the online version of the official U.S. annual compilation of statistics on education. It is searchable by chapter, tables, and topics.

National Education Data Resource Center (NEDRC) was created by NCES to deal with customized data requests and to help users who do not have direct access to NCES datasets.

FEDSTATS is a directory linking all the federal statistical agencies and offices, many of which have education data pertaining to their programmatic areas of focus.

American Education Research Association (AERA) is a national association concerned with research in all areas of educational theory, practice and policy.

Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) is a national association concerned with research on postsecondary (tertiary) education, with links to many subject-specific research organizations.

APPENDIX I. *Alabama and Huntsville: Links to Resources*

Legislative

Constitution of Alabama 1901 (Education: Sections 256 to 270)
http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/acas/ACASLoginMac.asp

Code of Alabama 1975 - Title 16: Education
http://law.onecle.com/alabama/education/chapter1.html

No Child Left Behind Act. Parental Involvement: Title I, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance
www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinvguid.doc

Administrative

Alabama Department of Education
http://www.alsde.edu

Policies

Huntsville City Board of Education Policy Manual
http://www.huntsvillecityschools.org/Download.asp?L=2&LMID=470001&PN=DocumentUploads&DivisionID=11142&DepartmentID=11320&SubDepartmentID=&SubP=&Act=Download&T=1&I=206046

Huntsville City Student-Parent Handbook 2012-2013
http://www.huntsvillecityschools.org/Download.asp?L=2&LMID=470001&PN=DocumentUploads&DivisionID=11142&DepartmentID=11320&SubDepartmentID=&SubP=&Act=Download&T=1&I=186319

Boards

National School Boards Association
http://www.nsba.org

Alabama School Boards Association
http://www.alabamaschoolboards.org

Schools

Huntsville City Schools
http://www.hsv.k12.al.us

Huntsville Virtual Volunteer Center for Schools
http://volunteer.hsv-k12.org/?criteria=volunteer&SearchType=partial

Parent-Teacher Associations

National Parent-Teacher Association
www.pta.org

Alabama Parent-Teacher Association
http://www.alabamapta.org

Huntsville Parent-Teacher Council
http://www.huntsvillepta.org

Huntsville middle schools' Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA's)

Academy for Academics and Art http://www.aaamagnet.org
PTA:
http://www.aaamagnet.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID='24899'
PTA's bylaw:
http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/AL/HuntsvilleCity/AcademyforAcademics/Uploads/Forms/PTAbylawfinal.pdf

Academy for Science and Foreign Language http://www.asflmagnet.org
PTSA: http://asflpta.org

Challenger
PTA
http://www.challengermiddle.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID='24925'

Davis Hills
PTA info could not be found at http://www.davishillsmiddle.org
An agreement called "Parent Compact" between D. Hills' teachers, parents and students is located at (as of Feb.12, 2013):
http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/AL/HuntsvilleCity/DavisHillMiddle/Uploads/News/Documents/Parent%20Compact.pdf

Ed White
PTA
http://www.edwhitemiddle.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID='24861' (as of Feb.12, 2013, an empty page)

Hampton Cove
PTA
http://www.hamptoncovemiddle.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID=24995 (as of Feb.12, 2013, an empty page)

Huntsville

PTA
http://www.huntsvillemiddle.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID='248 48

Mountain Gap
PTA
http://www.mountaingapschool.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID=' 24895

Providence
PTA http://providencepta.com

The Chapman Schools
PTA
http://www.thechapmanschools.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID=' 26162'

Westlawn
PTA
http://www.westlawnmiddle.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID='249 07 (as of Feb.12, 2013, an empty page)

Whitesburg
PTA http://www.whitesburgschool.org (as of Feb.12, 2013, no information could be found)

Williams
PTA
http://www.williamsmiddle.org/?PageName='OrganizationPage'&OrganizationID='2497 1

APPENDIX J. *Huntsville's Title I Parental Involvement Plan 2012-2013*

HUNTSVILLE CITY SCHOOLS
DISTRICT TITLE I PARENTAL INVOVLVEMENT PLAN
2012 - 2013

Part I. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

The Huntsville City Schools District agrees to implement the following statutory requirements:

a. **Huntsville City Schools** will put into operation programs, activities and procedures for the involvement of parents in all of its schools with Title I, Part A programs, consistent with Section 1118 of the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**. Those programs, activities and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.

b. **Huntsville City Schools**, consistent with Section 1118, will work with its schools to ensure that the required school-level parental involvement policies meet the requirements of Section 1118(b) of the ESEA, and each include, as a component, a school-parent compact consistent with Section 1118(d) of the ESEA.

c. **Huntsville City Schools** will incorporate this Local Education Agency (LEA) parental involvement plan into its LEA plan developed under Section 1112 of the ESEA.

d. In carrying out the Title I, Part A parental involvement requirements, to the extent practicable, district and its schools will provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under section 1118 of the ESEA in an understandable and uniform format, and including alternative formats upon request and to the extent practicable, in a language parents can understand.

e. **If the LEA Plan for Title I, Part A, developed under Section 1112 of the ESEA**, is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the school district will submit any parent comments with the plan when the school district submits the plan to the State Department of Education. (Please refer to Parent Comment Form, page 7)

f. **Huntsville City Schools** will involve the parents of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how the 1 percent of Title I, Part A funds reserved for parental involvement is spent, and will ensure that not less than 95% of the 1% reserved goes directly to the schools.

g. **Huntsville City Schools** will be governed by the following statutory definition of parental involvement, and expects that its Title I schools will carry out programs, activities and procedures in accordance with this definition:

Parental involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring the following:
   (A)   that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning process
   (B)   that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school
   (C)   that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child
   (D)   the carrying out of other activities such as those described in Section 1118 of the ESEA

h. **Huntsville City Schools** will inform parents and parental organizations of the purpose and existence of the Alabama Parent Information and Resource Center Alabama (PIRC) in the state.

PART II.   DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE DISTRICT WILL IMPLEMENT REQUIRED LEA
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

"Parents and the community are welcome in the school, and their active support and assistance are sought."

A. **Huntsville City Schools** will take the following actions to involve parents in the joint development of its District Parental Involvement Plan under Section 1112 of the ESEA:

1. The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) is a partnership of parents, school representatives and local community agencies and (students as needed).
2. The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) should represent a cross section of the school district and community.
3. Parents must be informed in a language that is familiar to them, and in a timely manner of the opportunity to serve on the District Parent Advisory Council.
4. Principals and/or their designee may select at least three parent representatives.
5. A letter of invitation must be sent to parents who have been selected in a language that is familiar to them, and in a timely manner.
6. Parents who accept this invitation must have the opportunity to work with other parents, school staff and community partners to review annually and assist in implementing changes to the district's plan. (See 1-5)
7. A district parent advisory council must be maintained to develop and implement the district parent involvement plan.
8. The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) meeting must be assembled at least a minimum of two meetings, but more if needed during a school year to review suggestions and revise the district plan accordingly.
9. A partnership (parents, schools and stakeholders) meeting will be held at least, but not limited to twice a year to support, share and encourage building a strong team for Parental Involvement.
10. A draft of the plan must be given to all parents of children in Title I schools, the school staff and the community for comments. All comments must be submitted in writing to the District Parent Advisory Council to be reviewed for consideration then submitted when the district plan is made available to the State.
11. The adopted plan must be included in the Title I district's information materials and distributed to all parents in a language that is familiar to them at all Title I schools, to school staff and community.
12. The LEA Parental Involvement Policy/Plan must be posted on the schools and district's website in a language that is familiar to them

"Inclusion of parents and community as partners in the decisions that affect children and families"

B. **Huntsville City Schools** will take the following actions to involve parents in the process of school review and improvement under Section 1116 of the ESEA.

1. Parents must be included in the review process by doing a survey.
2. Parents must be recruited to participate on the school's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), budget and Parent Advisory Council (PAC), and other Title I committees as needed.
3. Parents must be notified of "free tutoring" known as Supplemental Education Services (SES) in a language that is familiar to them.
4. Parents must be provided information at annual Title I meetings, parent involvement workshops and through the following: school newsletters, School Cast (a district wide communication system that provides information to parents by phone), district and school websites, Educational Television Network (ETV), and the schools' marquees.
5. Parents must be involved in reviewing and revising the school and the district's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP).

"Recognition that parents play an integral role in assisting students' learning."

C. **Huntsville City Schools** will provide the necessary coordination, technical assistance, and other support to assist Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance.

1. Conduct monthly parent workshops on Title I requirements, including the School Parent Compact
2. Provide parent workshops designed to provide parents with strategies to reinforce student learning and discipline
3. Ensure each school has included parents when reviewing and updating the School Parent Compact
4. Inform & stress importance of parental accountability in regards to the compact
5. Ensure that the school parent compact is provided in the language that is understandable and most familiar to the parent
6. Provide additional assistance through community resources. (See school secretary for list.)
7. Provide parent involvement workshops at flexible times
8. Inform parents through the following: newsletters, SchoolCast (district wide communication system that communicates information to parents by phone), notices posted in the community, at parent involvement meetings and printed information sent home and posted on the school and district 's website
9. Provide on-going assistance and support by the district's parent involvement team

"Promotion and support of responsible parenting to enable families to participate actively in their child's development from birth through their school years."

D. **Huntsville City Schools** will coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies in collaboration with the following programs: Head Start, Huntsville City Schools Pre-K Programs and State-operated preschool programs by:

1. Collaborating with the organizations listed above to provide strategies that can be used by parents to help students learn.
2. Conducting parent involvement workshops that are easy to understand and in a language familiar to the parents.
3. Conducting workshops such as building parenting skills, improving reading, math and writing skills, improving student discipline and understanding the testing programs.
4. Coordinating with other local community agencies that provide similar services for families such as those listed above.

"Recognition that parents play an integral role in assisting students' learning"

E. **Huntsville City Schools, along with parents,** will conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parental involvement plan, in improving the quality of its Title I, Part A schools. The evaluation will include identifying barriers by parents in parental involvement activities (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The school district will use the findings of the evaluation about its parental involvement plan and activities to design strategies for more effective parental involvement and to revise, if necessary its parental involvement policies.

1. Develop a survey in English, Spanish and other languages as needed.
2. Conduct meetings to explain the results of the Alabama Reading and Math Test (ARMT +) and other tests in a language understandable for all parents including limited or non-English speaking parents.
3. Use the findings from the evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the school's parent involvement policy, identify barriers, and develop strategies for increased parental involvement.
4. The findings of the evaluation will be reviewed by the district Parent Advisory Council and shared with Title I parents through school meetings.
5. An interpreter and translator will be provided as needed.
6. Offer information to parents about community programs that hold literacy classes for free.

"Community resources are used to connect students and families with resources that strengthen school programs and to provide educational enrichment and support in daily life".

F. **Huntsville City Schools** will build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement with the support of community partners. This will be done to ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the schools. A capacity for strong parental involvement will be done through the following activities:

   1. Huntsville City Schools will assist parents whose children are served in Title I, Part A schools in understanding the following topics:

      a. the State's academic content standards
      b. the State's student academic achievement standards
      c. the State and local academic assessments including alternate assessments
      d. the Title I requirements
      e. how to monitor their child's progress
      f. how to work with educators

   2. The topics listed above will be addressed through the following:

      a. Annual Title I Meetings to discuss testing and parental involvement requirements
      b. Building support among local community organizations that provide training and skill building workshops for parents: Huntsville Public Library, Alabama PIRC and Second Mile Parent Initiative promoting parent involvement through their educational and creative "Parent Parties" Program
      c. Ensure parental involvement policy is included in the school's Continuous Improvement Plan
      d. Attendance at local, state and national conferences; pending availability of funds.
      e. Parent workshops conducted by district, school, state level Title I staff
      f. The District's Report Card will be available for the public to review
      g. Providing workshops for parents in regards to discipline for their children in school

G. **Huntsville City Schools**, will with the assistance of its schools, provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement, such as literacy training, and using technology as appropriate, to foster parental involvement, by:

   1. Conducting Title I Meetings to explain parent involvement requirements
   2. Providing monthly newsletters in English and Spanish on parent involvement opportunities and academic success
   3. Providing workshops on reading and literacy
   4. Providing workshops on the link between parental involvement and student achievement
   5. Providing technology workshops for parents on how to use a computer as a means to access their children's grades, communicate with the teacher, find academic websites and use on-line library services
   6. Provide incentives for parental involvement (district level awards and recognitions)

H. **Huntsville City Schools** Federal Programs Parent Involvement team will educate its teachers, pupil services personnel, principals and other staff, in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as partners. This will be done by:

   1. Conducting an Annual Title I meeting to inform parents of their participation in Title I and rights to be involved
   2. Reviewing and revising the school-parent compact outlining how parents, school staff, and students all share the responsibility for student academic success
   3. Keeping parents informed of district, school level meetings and events
   4. Providing resources and assistance for school staff on how to communicate and work with parents

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5. Organizing monthly meetings for parent coordinators to review ideas and best practices on how to work with parents
6. Conducting staff development workshops for teachers and administrators
7. Attending school faculty meetings
8. Participating in local, state, and national parent involvement trainings and conferences

I. **Huntsville City Schools** will organize and include parental involvement programs and activities with public preschool and other programs, conduct activities at parent resource centers that encourage and support parents through:

1. Orientation programs for Kindergarten, Head Start, Pre-school at each school
2. Back-to-School Night programs
3. Include parents from Head Start and Pre-school programs in schools' parental involvement programs and surveys
4. Collaboration with Community resources presenting in-service programs to parents
5. Empowering parents through participation in training programs such as; The Alabama Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), Academy for Parent Leadership and Engagement (APLE), Second Mile Parent Initiative and other parent training programs.

J. **Huntsville City Schools** will take the following actions to make sure information relating to the school and parent programs, meetings and other activities are provided in the language most familiar to the parent and presented in a way that makes it possible for them to understand by providing:

1. Information through the district wide telephone communication system – School Cast, (messages are available in other languages)
2. Emails
3. Newsletters maybe provided to parents by individual schools
4. Provide multilingual translators as needed
5. The District Parent Handbook
6. Parent involvement printed material
7. Powerpoint presentation of Title I, Part A programs
8. Parent involvement information, if requested, in audio and/ or visual formats

PART III.   DISCRETIONARY LEA PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

NOTE: The LEA Parental Involvement plan may include additional paragraphs listing and describing other discretionary activities that the school district, in consultation with its parents, choose to undertake to build parents' capacity for involvement in the school and school system to support their children's academic achievement, such as the following discretionary activities listed under Section 1118(e) of the ESEA:

- involving parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of that training;
- providing necessary literacy training for parents from Title I, Part A funds, if the school district has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for that training;
- paying reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;
- training parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;
- in order to maximize parental involvement and participation in their children's education, arranging school meetings at a variety of times, or conducting in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend those conferences at school;
- adopting and implementing model approaches to improving parental involvement;

- establishing a LEA Parent Advisory Council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in Title I, Part A programs;
- developing appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses, including faith-based organizations, in parental involvement activities, and
- providing other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under Section 1118 as parents may request.

PART IV.   APPROVAL

This LEA Parental Involvement Plan has been developed jointly with, and agreed on, with parents of children participating in Title I, Part A programs, as evidenced by _the list 9 signatures below._ The school district will distribute this plan to all parents of participating Title I, Part A children on or before _October 1, 2012_ .

_____
Carol Pope, Federal Programs Coordinator

_4/12/12_
DATE OF APPROVAL

Participant's Name (print)	Participant's Signature
Gloria P. Batts	
Desireé C. V. Ligon	
Abeni Welcome	
Demetria Braudaway	
Coretta Gholston	
Tanisha D Smith	
Vanessa F. Glover	
Joanna Martinez	
Sitka Tamy Poon	
Carol D. Harris	
Bessie R. Allison	
Pamela Henderson	
Gina Martin	
Gail E. Montgomery	
Alexis Williams	
Virginia Rice	

APPENDIX K. *Huntsville City Schools Board Members*
(Excerpts from bios from Huntsville City Schools' website)

District 1: Ms. Laurie McCaulley

Laurie McCaulley is a proud mother of four children. After her divorce, she faced the challenge of raising four children on her own. All of her children received scholarships to their respective college or university. All of her children graduated from James Oliver Johnson High School in Huntsville City Schools (HCS) which is a Title 1 school.

Laurie McCaulley is also a product of HCS system and was elected in 2008 to a four year term as HCS Board of Education Representative for District 1. In 2009, she was elected as their Third Presiding Officer. Laurie was the founder of "That Parent Place, Inc" a nonprofit organization that addresses the role of parents in education. It has a freelance column for Speakin' Out News weekly newspaper the leading African American newspaper in North Alabama. Laurie is an Associate Minister at Union Hill Primitive Baptist Church and a member of Alabama Caucus of Black School Board Members.

Laurie has had the honor of being recognized nationally and statewide by several organizations or entities which includes 2009 Cambridge Who' Who of Executives, Professionals and Entrepreneurs, 2009 Continental Who's Who in Professional Leadership, Distinguished Service Award National PTA, the National Coalition of ESEA Title I Parents, and a resolution from Alabama State Senate for Pioneer Women of Madison County. Laurie has had the honor of presenting to delegations from Rwanda, China, India, Bulgaria and other countries of Asia. These presentations exemplify her willingness to include all parents in the education of their children.

Her current community service: Alabama A&M University and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Health Careers Opportunity Program Advisory Board of Directors; WDJL LOVE 1000 Broadcast Corporation as Advisory member of the Board of Directors; She continues on the Executive committee for Alabama PTA as their Immediate Past President. She is a community activist with a passion to serve.

Her past honors: a member of the National PTA (NPTA) Board of Directors, NPTA Field Service committee, NPTA Committee on Diversity chairperson, a member of the Governor's Congress on School Leadership, an alumni member of Huntsville/Madison County Leadership Class 19, The Outside the Boxx Parent, Inc., Parent of the Month Alabama Department of Education State Superintendent Advisory Committee, State Children's Policy Council, Founder of Northwest Huntsville "Celebrating Education Parade and Festival, Past President of Huntsville Council of PTAs, Past President of J. O. Johnson High School PTSA, and Past President of Davis Hills Middle School PTSA.

District 2: Mr. David Blair

David was raised in Memphis but visited his Grandmother, aunts and uncles here in Huntsville often. He received an Engineering degree from Memphis State University. Not wanting to get a real job, he went back to school and received a Masters degree in Physics from Memphis State University. Upon graduation, he married his wife Jammie and moved here to Huntsville over 20 years ago. He has worked in Huntsville supporting the Department of Defense as well as writing law enforcement software. He currently works supporting the Missile Defense Agency. He has two children that will be members of the Huntsville High graduating classes of 2012 and 2013.

District 3: Dr. Jennie Robinson

Dr. Jennie Robinson was re-elected to a third term on the Huntsville City Schools Board of Education in 2010. Before being elected to the board in 2002, Dr. Robinson served five times as a PTA president in Huntsville schools. She also currently serves on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the Alabama Association of School Boards.

Dr. Robinson owns Personal Best Training & Development, a management consulting firm specializing in strategic planning and leadership development for corporations and non profits. Dr. Robinson and her husband, Dr. Michael Robinson, are the parents of five children, all graduates of Grissom High School.

District 4: Mr. Topper Birney

After living the first 11 years of his life in a small town 17 miles southwest of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Topper Birney moved in 1947 to El Paso, Texas, where his father was working with a group of German rocket scientists. This stay lasted until 1950 when the rocket team was moved to Huntsville, thus changing Huntsville from the watercress capital of the world to Rocket City, USA.

Topper graduated from Huntsville High School and later from the University of

Alabama with an engineering degree. After working a few years with the Department of the Army, he transferred to the Marshall Space Flight Center where he spent the rest of his working career.

In 1967, he met a young schoolteacher named Sherry Burnett whom he married the following year. They celebrated the birth of their son Toby in 1971 and the birth of their daughter Kelley in 1973. Both children graduated from the Huntsville City Schools and later from the colleges they attended.

Topper spent many of his years in Huntsville as a community volunteer serving various agencies such as Chi Ho, T.A.S.C., CASA, the Food Bank of North Alabama, and the HEALS Clinic. He has also driven the Mobile Soup Van each month since its inception and tutors as often as he can. He is a member of the South Huntsville Kiwanis Club, Madison County Emergency Food and Shelter Board, HEALS Board, CAJA Friends Board and First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

When Topper retired from NASA in 1993, he wanted to continue his volunteering in Huntsville by helping young children. He called Lincoln Elementary School and talked to Larry Rice, who convinced him that Lincoln was where he needed to be. Jim Black, the principal, made Topper's volunteer service with Lincoln some of the most rewarding hours he has ever had. Later Jim convinced Topper to become a substitute teacher, which opened a new door for him. It helped make him aware of the problems teachers face in the classroom and what the schools need to prepare their students for the future.

Sometime during these years as a substitute teacher, the idea of running for the school board entered his mind. This dream became a reality in 2002 when the voters in District 4 elected him to the school board and re-elected him in 2006. He enjoys working with the other board members and meeting all the wonderful people employed by the Huntsville City Schools and looks forward to providing many years of dedicated service.

District 5: Mr. Mike Culbreath

Mike Culbreath is a lifelong resident of Huntsville. He graduated from Lee High School and then Athens State University with a degree in Public Safety Administration and earned a Masters from Auburn University Montgomery in Science in Justice and Public Safety. Culbreath worked as a Huntsville Police Officer for almost fifteen years and then as a Program Manager in the Planning Department for the City of Huntsville. He is currently a retail developer in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas.

Mike and his wife Michelle, have three daughters, Courtney, Rachel, and Haley. They attend Cross Point Church. He is an active member in the Elks Lodge.

APPENDIX L. *Huntsville Middle Schools' PTA Membership forms (two samples)*

Huntsville Middle School PTA Membership Information

To all families who have students attending HMS in 2012-2013 - Welcome from the HMS PTA!

Your HMS PTA unites the Huntsville Middle School administration, teachers and parents for the benefit of your children. When you join the HMS PTA, you show your commitment to our school and to your child's education.

Our membership goal is 100% of the student population and for every student to have two supporting members. These two memberships may include two parents, a parent and a grandparent, a relative and a friend, etc. Additionally, we are asking for a tax-deductable donation of $75 (or any amount you can give) to help meet the growing financial needs of our school. All donors of $75 or more will have their names listed in the HMS directory, unless you indicate that you would like the gift to remain anonymous.

Below is a partial listing of your PTA contributions at work at HMS:

- Providing classroom money for every teacher at Huntsville Middle School
- Purchasing new computers to replace out-of-date, unsupported computers in the computer lab and teacher classrooms
- Capital improvements to the school

- Providing technology consumables, such as ink cartridges and projector bulbs.
- Funding teacher/classroom requests, such as lab materials, technology, and other specialty classroom supplies
- Teacher Appreciation Events

Please complete the information below and return on Registration Day, August 10, 2012 or to your child's homeroom teacher after school begins.
Thank you for helping make Huntsville Middle the great school that it is!

PTA Member Names

Member 1 _____

Member 2 _____

Student 1 _____ Grade ____

Student 2 _____ Grade ____

Student 3 _____ Grade ____

Volunteer Opportunities:

____ I want to volunteer for HMS PTA.
Circle interests: Hospitality, Fundraising, Technology, Pantheree, Student Activities, Clinic, Grounds, other_____

Student Directory Information:

Parents' Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Primary Address: _____

_____

Phone Number(s)_____

Email(s)_____

☐ Yes, my child's info may be included in the HMS Directory. ☐ No, please do not include my child's name or info.

PTA Fees:

Dues: ____ x $10.00 per member = $ _____

Tax-deductible Donation ($75 requested) $ _____

Student Directory: ____ x $5.00 = $ _____

Total………………………………….... $ _____
☐ *I would like my donations to remain anonymous*
Make check payable to HMS PTA. Check #_____

Corporate Sponsorship Fees:

Business Card Student Directory Ad ($15)
    (business card must be returned with payment)

Gold Sponsor ($500 and up) includes:

- Full Page Student Directory Ad
- Signage at Pantheree

Company Name:_____

Contact Name/Phone: _____

Amount included: $_____

➢ *Gold Sponsors should email artwork to* rcox@hiwaay.net
➢ *All logos and business cards must be submitted by September 1st for printing deadlines.*

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Total Amount Paid: $ _____

☐ Cash ☐ Check # _____

There is a $15 return check fee.

ACADEMY
For Academics and Arts

PTA
everychild.onevoice.®

PTA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Join the fun and help support child's education by joining the AAA PTA! Memberships are **$6.00 per person.**
Note: Only 1 class will receive credit for each membership
To minimize data entry, online sign up & payment is preferred . Please email aaaptamembership@gmail.com to sign up online. Please make checks payable to **AAA PTA.**

Date   /   /

1st Member _____ Email _____

Phone _____ home   work   cell   *(circle)*

Class/Teacher to receive credit **(one only!)** _____

☐ parent   ☐ faculty/staff   ☐ other relation to student _____

2nd Member _____ Email _____

Phone _____ home   work   cell   *(circle)*

Class/Teacher to receive credit **(one only!)** _____

☐ parent   ☐ faculty/staff   ☐ other relation to student _____

3rd Member _____ Email _____

Phone _____ home   work   cell   *(circle)*

Class/Teacher to receive credit **(one only!)** _____

☐ parent   ☐ faculty/staff   ☐ other relation to student _____

4th Member _____ Email _____

Phone _____ home   work   cell   *(circle)*

Class/Teacher to receive credit **(one only!)** _____

☐ parent   ☐ faculty/staff   ☐ other relation to student _____

5th Member _____ Email _____

Phone _____ home   work   cell   *(circle)*

Class/Teacher to receive credit **(one only!)** _____

☐ parent   ☐ faculty/staff   ☐ other relation to student _____

*use back for additional members

Attach money at top left hand corner. Note: There is a $15 return check fee.

APPENDIX M. *Parents Narrative Responses to Questions 4, 5 and 11, Huntsville*

	Q2A: YES	Q2B: NO
Q2: Well informed about legislation (K-12 schools, education)	• I just moved to this state • The messages from principal • Very good about what's going on • Either on TV or phone call or etc. • Via newsletters and school website • Because I take the time to read about legislature affecting the school system (elementary) • Up to date information • I like that you can and inform me of upcoming changes • I am very informed • Both by internet and hard copy • But tends to be too politically slanted • Through PTA newsletters + email • I pay close attention to all legislation • Somewhat • PTA does a good job passing along info • Via school TV channel • Great email communication! • My child provides me with info • Not until they make their announcements • Newspaper • By media • Have frequent opportunities/access to info • But its what you read in the newspaper or see on TV. You get some feedback from school board meetings, but	• Not enough info • If parents are unable to attend PTA or are unwanted • Only well informed about the *illegible* issues • Because I'm not • It's just words, no support or discipline • Not in the past • The school system does everything it can to keep the parents uniformed • Even though I am on the PTA board, information is not getting out to the parents • Not easily available • Not enough communication • Don't get much information • Sex ed? Homosexual! • Parents must seek out information instead of being informed ahead of time • Informed some, not well informed • Seems like you only hear about things around election time • Not well – reported locally in a timely way • Only what I hear on the news • I feel disconnected from the process • Parents are last on the list to consult & inform • I don't know anything about it • We don't get info about what's going on

	seems only on negative or controversial issues. We need some POSITIVE stories to tell! • We stay informed by reading various sources • Such legislation is publicized in the paper and other news outlets • Because they are always keeping me up to date • The school calls me on everything • School sends home info • By the school, but is info biased • Info comes from HMS, newspapers etc. • From school weekly or as something comes up • Because of our great PTA! (*likely a PTA member based on "yes" to Q6B – K.E.*) • Although occasionally it takes a while for info to get to parents • I try to keep up via TV and paper • Info posted in teachers' workroom where I work. Also, info sent to parents when necessary (*likely works at the school – K.E.*) • News (local) and AEA • But feel like we have little voice when calendar changed by state e.g. • Only because I try to stay informed	• "well informed" – NO • Not enough info • Not widely publicized • Not enough communication from central office • very little information in media • I don't have much time for TV news or reading newspapers • I feel like we only hear about it after the vote • It was not clear to me and others • The unions hide their real agenda • Sometimes yes, sometimes no • Too new • Would like more information • Things are done behind closed doors (i.e. school calendar) • My children have only been in HSV schools for 2 years, and so far, I am not impressed • Communication was slow getting out • It can be a little difficult to find just the facts • Only seem to find out about things a day or 2 before something major happens – then it's too late • Get info from the news or school
	- **Q3A: YES**	- **Q3B: NO**
Q3: Informed about the current policy agendas in the works	• More is being done than in the past • I have not been here long • Both from faculty and board meetings	• Information could be mailed or sent home • Because I'm not • Students behavior is bad in school

| (K-12 schools, education) | • Again, too politically motivated
• Somewhat
• Online news + neighborhood info
• via school TV channel
• Principal is trying to keep us abreast
• Newspaper
• Have frequent opportunities/access to info
• They are keeping me up to date
• This information was communicated
• The school calls me all the time
• School sends home info
• PTA (P*robably a PTA member, answered above "Because of our great PTA!" – K.E.*)
• I attend school meetings
• Info posted in teachers' workroom where I work. Also, info sent to parents when necessary (*Same person, same answer above – likely works at the school – K.E.*)
• Newsletter, websites
• School board meetings are televised
• Our principal keeps us informed with changes at school
• Again, because I work to stay informed (*Answered above "only because I try to stay informed" – K.E.*) | • Somewhat
• By teachers' websites
• May need a monthly newsletter
• Not enough communication
• Not informed
• Sex ed? Homosexual!
• We usually read about them in the paper after-the-fact
• Instead of sending home w/student – just mail it to the home (*"too many papers" stroked through by the respondent – K.E.*)
• Not much communication w/the school board
• I feel disconnected from the process
• We are not well informed, we are the last to know
• Should add that info w/handbook
• Don't believe I know
• Several issues that have not been thoroughly covered, for instance the future of Grissom HS
• Haven't gotten any information yet
• We hear about most issues after they pass
• Not enough info
• Not enough information
• Info, needs to be a better way to get
• Pretty quiet on "what's in the works". Don't hear of plans or issues or <u>visions</u> until in place. Need more!
• You have our email addresses. School system/school should communicate better
• I don't have much time for TV news or reading newspapers |

		• I feel like we only hear about it after the vote • If it weren't for AM talk radio more things would be hidden[43] • Unaware of any specific education policy • Too much going on behind parents' backs • Too new • Things are done behind closed doors (i.e. school calendar) • Sometimes info comes out last minute • More info about the new 9th grade school would be helpful • *Both "Yes" and "No" had been marked, for "Yes" written (K.E.):* Some, because of my leadership position within school (*probably PTA, since "homemaker" – K.E.*), *for "No written:* not the general population as much • I would like to receive more info • Only seem to find out about things a day or 2 before something major happens – then its too late • Although, I keep up through the papers and school newsletters
	- **Q7A: YES**	- **Q7B: NO**
Q7: Interested in more involvement (K-12 education issues at child's school)	• In whatever way I could help • We count too • The quality of teachers and amount of homework	• Too busy • Nothing changes, decision is made by others and parents are left out. Even if you were in the meeting • I don't want what I say or do to affect my child's relationship at school

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[43] There are a few radio channels on AM frequency that can be listened in Huntsville, AL area (see http://radio-locator.com)

		• Will not be in the school system next year
		• No time
		• Do not have time
		• Children aging out (*might mean that children will leave this school soon – K.E.*)
		• Feel uninformed @ present, high school counselors <u>NOT</u> helpful, middle school <u>ARE</u> helpful
		• School *illegible* firmly in place
		• I am also a full time student, don't have time for a leadership position (*She has marked as being unemployed, though – K.E.*)
		• I have no desire to be attacked by the public press for making a less popular decision
		• Satisfied with current level of involvement
		• We elect school board to make these decisions along with our school administrators
		• Teachers should be given more influence
		• Time constraints. Was more involved in elementary school
		• I cant speak well English
		• *Has been elected in parent org (Q6) and thus replies.*: "been there, done that"
		• It wouldn't help. The Union is too powerful and "No Children Left Behind is a farce
		• Only because of time constraints
		• Don't have the time
		• I am involved, just not on PTA
		• Too quiet/shy

	• I believe ample opportunities exist for involvement already • "System" too divisive & politicized • I am a good worker, not a decision maker • Time issues • I trust our Superintendent + local school officials. I don't have time with my full time job and raising a family • Feel like we are involved already
Other languages	Spanish x 3; Hindi; Korean; German

Additional notes	Comments, data were added and/or omitted frequently. Some examples:
	
	Q1A: satisfaction with the school
	    • I believe that children should attend school in their district! (*has marked "4": rather dissatisfied – K.E.*)
	    • "Too much "automation" – especially <u>writing</u>. Also, one teacher told her advanced science class that she liked the online tests because she didn't have to grade them and she didn't have to return/go over them. I can home school or pay for private school – my child is not well-served by this "new attitude" (*has marked "4": rather dissatisfied – K.E.);* This respondent had also added additional note at the bottom of the page: "I think that the laptops idea sucks because it is making these kids lazy. The spend about 10 min on it & think that's all they need to do. I think they need books that will help them be more productive"
	Q1C: satisfaction with the Alabama K-12 education
	    • Country schools are much better at education (*has marked "5": very dissatisfied – K.E.)*
	    • Two respondents have underlined their unhappiness with <u>Alabama's </u>K-12 education
	Q3: Informedness with education, schools' related agendas
	    • One respondent left it blank, adding: " I feel like the agenda has less to do with education + more to do with bodies to fill the seats - quality should be what drives the funding."
	Q4: Who should be involved in decision-making
	    • A respondent has underlined **politicians** on both options (local, state), and wrote: "keep the "politicians" out of it"

| | • A respondent has added, regarding not selecting **Education Department officials**, **local politicians** and **state politicians**: "depends on the nature of the decision"
• A respondent has left all options blank, but has drawn an additional box, not filling it in, but writing: "State tourism board – decisions should be local"
• One respondent added behind **student's** option: "high school students"
Q6B: Have you been a candidate to some parents' organization
• One respondent ticked "yes" and added: "no one ran"
• One respondent ticked "no", adding "nominated board member PTA"
Q8: Demographics
• One respondent gave no demographic info, but wrote "status quo" to financial situation
Q8G: Did you get a desired school
• A respondent marked "yes", adding that "didn't matter"
• A respondent left options blank, adding: "we don't get to choose" |

APPENDIX N. *Parents Narrative Responses to Questions 4, 5 and 11, Tartu*

	Q2A: YES	**Q2B: NO**
Q2: Well informed about legislation (K-12 schools, education)	- It's possible to get the information from the computer - I'm working in the area of education, although not in secondary education - I have read - I'm working in the same system - Elementary is known - Journals - Because I also work in an educational organization - I belong to school's trustee board - I am a teacher - I have read - Because no problems have risen (3 kids have gone to school, 2 now) - I work as a teacher - Because of my university studies - Most important points are actively reflected by media - Info is available - Everything is available in internet - I am interested in it - There is enough information in the media - Internet - Because of my profession	- Lack of info - Not informed - Have not investigated - Because the secondary education is in a constant reform almost, then cannot follow all that enough - No interest in reading complicated documents - Lacking public information - I just don't have the feeling that I know it thoroughly - Have not had time to get to know in depth - Don't see the reason - Cannot keep up with changes and stay informed - Have not been interested - Informed as much as I have investigated myself - Don't know anything about these - Have had no need - Cannot say, maybe the info is not available. Own negligence probably, too - Have not read - Have not had the need to read - Have not informed myself with these - Have not had a reason to investigate - Have not needed

• Whether in depth, but enough to know about child's rights	• Changes very much
• I'm interested and am reading (*she has been elected to a parent org. – K.E.*)	• I know the portals (riigiteataja.ee;[44] websites of the Ministry of Education and the school; but do not visit these daily or frequently)
• Info is available	• Everything is changing too fast
• Working in the educational are myself	• Because have not concentrated enough
• I am a teacher, I have to know them	• Have not considered it necessary
• I follow educational portals in internet and read newspapers	• I have not considered it important to become informed
• Everything is available in the internet	• Have not needed
• I have been trying while fighting against this senseless school system reform and become informed of it, but ineffectively (*He added another comment below the page that: "Demolishing the current Tartu's education system is criminal and the destroyers should be criminally convicted", and to the next question: "Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union run over the people and the education with a roller" and marked the satisfaction with Tartu's school system as "very unsatisfactory". He has been elected to a parent's committee, has not been a candidate at local/state elections, has voted for those who did not become elected. Higher education, fin. situation good, an entrepreneur – K.E.*)	• Not much aware of these
	• Due to the lack of information
	• Have not had the reason to concentrate on it
	• Lack of information
	• Have not had the necessity to become informed
	• Only what have heard from the teacher
	• Don't know where to look from either
	• Have not had the reason to concentrate
	• Lack of info
	• Not much time to deal with the legislation aside from rearing children
	• Could know more (*although she does belong to a parents' org. and has also voted for one – K.E.*)
	• Not too much
	• Have not been enough interested myself
• Because I work myself as a teacher in Tartu	• Don't have a reason
• Because I have not considered it necessary to become actively informed with this topic (*she has been elected*	• Not aware

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[44] *Riigi Teataja* or State Gazette is Estonian official online publication – *K. Elliott*

to an organization involving parents – K.E.)	• Not well informed about the legislation
• All information is available in the internet	• Because I have not been interested in it
• Have not researched	• Don't have direct contact
• I work in this sphere myself	• Have not concentrated on legislation
• I am well informed about schools' legislature	• Not enough information in the media
• There is nothing complicated	• Have not been interested
• Estonian journalists have written much about the education reform	• Not well
• I work at the school	• Cannot comment
• I'm quite well aware of schools-related legislative acts	• There is always something that don't know
• I work in the educational institution myself	• Have not been capable to show interest
• Don't know much about them	• Because there are very many acts (*he has become elected in local or state elections – K.E.)*
• All information is available	• I know some (*she has also voted for someone at her school, who became elected – K.E.)*
• I belong to Teachers' Association and to one subject association	• Somewhat
• I work in the general education	• Have not had the need
• I work in education (*she has stated below that she is "involved, participating in a working group". She has also voted for someone who got elected in politics and in her school's parent committee or trustee board; she herself has become elected to an organization where parents are involved. – K.E.)*	• Have not had time to investigate (*She writes later that she has three job and thus has no free time – K.E.)*
	• I have had little interest
	• Has not been necessary
	• Because I have not considered it necessary to become actively informed with this topic (*she has been elected to an organization involving parents – K.E.)*
• Info is available enough	• Reasons given why the gymnasium part (*10-12 grades – K.E.)* was closed, were incompetent and unjustified
• I'm trying to be involved	
• Have not felt the need	• Where can I get to know them?
• Somewhat aware (not fully)	• Have not specifically researched
• TV, Internet	• I am moderately informed
• Aware in general	

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• I have investigated these documents (*she has stated below that she is working in the same area, and that is rather unsatisfied with her child's school and Tartu's education system – K.E.*) • Laws are available in Estonia	• Have not investigated • Because there have been no problems, have not become informed • Because child is active and can stand for his/her[45] rights • As a parent these are not introduced to me • Have not had a specific reason to become informed • Have not had a need • Have not been interested enough myself • Have not studied it lately • Informed only via media • I am aware somewhat, but not well • Partly aware with legislative acts • Don't have time to follow • Have not had problems to have the need to become informed • I know: education law[46] and vocational education standards • I know as much ha been talked about at the school. If it would be necessary, I'd investigate closer • Have not had too much need • Because I haven't researched it thoroughly • Constantly changed • Partly informed • Not completely understandable • I have never read any

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[45] In Estonian there is no grammatical gender, i.e a fully gender neutral language – *K.Elliott*
[46] He might mean Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act – *K.Elliott*

	- **Q3A: YES**	- **Q3B: NO**
		• Have not read legislative texts
Q3: Informed about the current policy agendas in the works (K-12 schools, education)	• Somewhat aware of plans to close gymnasiums • I am aware (*she is working in the same system – from response above – K.E.*) • I know that [*a number of*] secondary schools will be reduced • Media • These have been analyzed plenty in the trustee board (*She responded to the previous Q: "Because I belong to school's trustee board"- K.E.*) • Reforming gymnasiums[47] • I am a teacher • Tartu schools • From the media • We are aware of the planned schools' closures • I work as a teacher • I am interested in what's going on • I am aware • these were introduced at the general meeting[48] • It can be seen from political decisions • through media • Only media based information	• Lack of info • Politics does not work and I do not trust • Because they change all the time • Have not familiarized • same explanation as for the previous point (*He responded above: "Because the secondary education is in a constant reform almost, then cannot follow all that enough" – K.E.*) • I know what media introduces • It's not talked about • Again, don't feel anything (*he answered to previous Q: "I just don't have the feeling, that I know in depth" – K.E.*) • Don't follow politics • Nothing depends on me • I have heard something in general, but even not the school knows • I have not researched it too much either • Don't have the interest towards political decisions and plans, either • Info is confusing and contradictory

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[47] In Estonian terminology, *gümnaasium* or gymnasium is the highest level of Estonian secondary education, comprising of grades 10 to 12. A school that has, in addition to the gymnasium level, also elementary and/or middle school levels, can be called a gymnasium too. It can also be called *keskkool* that would translate directly as a middle school, but signifies secondary school in the international context – *K.E.*

[48] The respondent is likely referring to a regular parents' meeting, usually takes place a couple of times in a year – K.Elliott

• I am investigating, because worrying about my child's educational path	• As little as we have read from the newspaper
• Based on what has been read from media	• I'm not in touch with these areas
• 2012-13 reorganization of the school system (*illegible)*	• Cannot say, maybe the info is not available
• There is enough information in the media	• Not interested in politics, in general
• I am aware, but do not agree with all of it	• Definitely do not know about all plans
• Political "messages" spread through media more	• I hope that politics and education are not related
• Because of my profession	• I have not concentrated on it too much
• That affects Tartu's school reform	• Have not investigated
• Have heard something	• Since educational reforms take place so frequently in our country, have not been able to follow
• issues published in media	• Could be more informed, info is available in the media, internet and other places. I am aware of the basic necessary information.
• I'm informed and aware (*she has been elected to a parent org. – K.E.),*	
• I'm interested	• Don't follow
• Info is available	• These are publicized minimally
• I know that some gymnasiums will be closed	• Have not needed to know
• Has been talked about at the school meetings, media	• Not much aware of these
• There was the news about closing the gymnasiums, then started to interest (*he has become elected in local or state elections – K.E.)*	• Due to the poor coverage of the information [*transfer – K.E.*]
	• Lack of information
• I am a teacher, deal with these issues daily	• Have not been too interested
• I have been interested myself and have researched (*she has also voted for someone at her school, who became elected – K.E.)*	• These are not publicized
	• There is no relevant info, in the newspaper for example
• It is idiotic to close schools	• Don't have info
• I follow educational issues through media	• No interest
• it was in the media	• Have not been enough interested myself, I think that I cannot influence politicians' decisions
• Have been informed by the school and media	• There is no broad publicity on that

• Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union run over the people and the education with a roller • Media and at have been informed at children's school at the parents' meeting • Through media • Have read from media • I follow what's going on through media • Reforms • I work in this sphere myself • This reorganization does not fit me • I have heard about them • Education reform • In general, media publish • These agendas are much covered in radio • I work at the school • Info has been available • I have heard about the consolidation of schools • Political agendas have been covered a lot in TV, internet and media • I have information through one subject list (*she is a teacher at a school – K.E.*) • what concerns closing the gymnasiums • Because media covers this topic every day!! • I participate in my school's trustee board and schools' reorganization committees (*she has wrote above that: I work in the general education" – K.E.*) • Don't support innovative reforms every year! • Gymnasium reform, creating state gymnasiums	• Aware of general problems, not in depth • Politics is a bit far….. from me and from the school in general • Because I have not been interested in it • It is difficult to get a comprehensive overview or more information about prepared plans • Only as much has been talk about in the media • Have not been interested • Unfortunately do not have the resource of time • Have not been capable to show interest • Also, I am "blind" (*she wrote above that she "hasn't had time to investigate". She writes later that she has three jobs – K.E.*) • I don't consider it necessary (*she has been elected to an organization involving parents; and answering to the question as for not being well informed, that she has "not considered it necessary to become actively informed with this topic" – K.E.*) • Where are those plans? • Have not searched for information • Have not kept myself informed • Have heard nothing about implementing the new curriculum, restructuring the school system • Not informed • Have not become informed • Don't get involved in politics • I only know that gymnasiums are formed to basic schools, e.g. that's all

	• I am involved, participating in a working group (*she has stated above that she works in education. She has also voted for someone who got elected in politics and in her school's parent committee or trustee board; she herself has become elected to an organization where parents are involved – K.E.*) • Based on what's been heard through media • Have got info from school • reform plans (schools gymnasium's consolidation) • TV, Internet • based on media separating gymnasium from basic school • Aware in general since I work in public institution • I work in the same area • Partly informed • Media reflects enough • Media has enlightened this topic • I'm aware of general changes	• different opinions, not clear to which direction changes will go • Every minister comes with his/her "own plan", there is no stability
	- **Q7B: NO**	
Q7: Interested in more involvement (K-12 education issues at child's school)	• Will graduate from this school soon • Not enough information is given to parents • Don't consider myself competent enough • I'll not send my kids to this schooll anymore • Works well at the moment, don't see the reason to break the system ("*yes*" to Q7A – K.E.) • Not competent enough • Lack of time • I am very occupied	

	• Not competent enough, time constraints
	• Child graduates the middle school soon and will choose the next one
	• Let it be the arena of the competent
	• Child's further plans are not tied to the current school
	• Cannot present [*myself – K.E.*] tough
	• I am involved enough (*He responded "yes" to having been elected to some parents' org. – K.E.*)
	• Don't have time aside the work and children
	• Don't have time
	• Don't have the competency, at the same time there are no problems either
	• Current decisions are OK
	• Do not consider myself an area expert
	• Long workdays
	• Due to my work I am already involved with these questions (s*he works as a teacher – K.E.*)
	• Don't feel myself competent enough to become involved in educational questions
	• Many other activities
	• don't know this area that thoroughly
	• I think I'm not too competent in these questions
	• Don't have the free time to devote to this issue
	• There are others more competent
	• Does not depend on my opinion
	• I think lacking in competence
	• Not competent for complex decision making
	• Always more active [*people- K.E.*] can be found
	• I don't find myself for it competent enough
	• I'm not competent. Unfortunately no time either.
	• Don't know this area too well
	• Due to lack of time
	• Not that competent in these issues

- I'm probably not competent enough in educational questions, let specialists decide
- Don't have the opportunity
- The school's trustee board is usually very good
- Dealt with these issues enough in the past
- Child will graduate from middle school
- I feel that I'm not competent enough
- Child will graduate the school this spring
- Children are already big, does not affect much
- Don't have this competence
- In general, I trust people who have been elected or have learned for that
- Due to my profession I have been involved, but due to the current heavy workload bigger involvement would not be possible
- I think I'm involved enough. Don't wish to get involved too much (*she belongs to a parents' org.– K.E.*)
- Don't know where to look for it
- Don't have enough time to concentrate
- Not aware of the details in this area
- Don't have time
- Don't have enough time for it
- I am already involved enough
- I feel lacking in competence
- Lack of time
- It's not a good school
- Not enough time (*to participate in educational issues – K.E.*), graduates this school in spring (*to participate in school – K.E.*)
- Don't have time to deal with it
- There are wiser people for that
- I'm satisfied with the current decisions
- I think that I'm already participating enough (*she is also a teacher, has voted for people who became elected in*

politics and her school's trustee board, and has been elected to some parent org. herself – K.E.)

- Don't have specific education, don't have time aside the main job
- Don't have time
- Parent's decision does not influence anything (she has voted for someone who became elected at her school's parents' org. or trustee board; has stated that would not like to be more involved in general education questions, but would like to be more involved in school – K.E.)
- I have three jobs and do not have any available time
- don't have time
- Don't have time
- There are many decision makers already
- Heavy workload
- Everything is fine at the school anyway
- Don't have time for it
- Decisions are made without taking into account citizens, children or their parents
- Participation is adequate (*she has stated as "I work in this sphere myself" and has voted for people who have become elected– K.E.*)
- Because the Ministry of Education does not take it for the consideration, there is no point to head on against the concrete *(this respondent had left most other fields empty, except stating as being very satisfied with the school, mostly unsatisfied with the general education system, not well informed about the legislation and plans. To the latter one has been written and then deleted "And don't want to know, because…." – K.E.)*
- I don't have specific ideas
- Don't have enough strength to deal with so much
- Let those who have a special preparation, to deal with it
- Everything has been fine so far, have had no reason to get involved
- too heavy workload
- Because I'm not informed about agendas and legislation
- Education officials are actually not interested in parents' opinion
- No reason

	• They don't listen
	• I am content with what is
	• Because would not find common understanding
	• Not competent. As a parent I express my opinion to the teacher/at the school
	• Not competent enough
	• I'm too overloaded with the work, don't have neither time nor strength
	• Pointless
	• Lack of time due to increasing workload
	• Don't have much time
	• Don't have time
	• Family reasons, children don't live with me (*written by a father – K.E.*)
	• Lack of time
	• Let specialists deal with it
	• Lack of available time
	• Don't want to comment (*she works in education and is involved in a working group regarding school/education agenda. – K.E.*)
	• I'm content
	• I trust others, specialists
	• Have not felt the need
	• Lack of time hinders
	• In general education teachers could have added voice
	• Too occupied with other activities
	• I'm not competent and don't find time aside the family; child goes to the gymnasium to another school
	• I feel that I'm informed about things and engaged enough
	• Not competent enough in this topic (*although she has marked as having been elected to an organization involving parents – K.E.*)
	• When I've wanted, I have been able to present my wishes
Other languages	**Russian** x 11; (*Additionally, three respondents had ticked both "Estonian" and "other", adding that it's Russian –*

	likely bilingual, thus coded as Estonian – K.E.); **Azerbaijan**
Additional notes	Comments and data were added and/or omitted frequently. Some examples below:
	Q1A – satisfaction with child's school
	• I was very satisfied, but it goes down now (*responded "2, mostly satisfied" – K.E.*)
	Q1B – satisfaction with Tartu's school system
	• I was satisfied before, not with what is planned (*responded "5", very unsatisfied – K.E.*)
	Q4 Which parties should be involved in regarding general education
	• adding to *yes* to *student's involvement*: "10 + grades"
	• adding to *yes* to *student's involvement*: "older"
	• under the *sate's politicians* option: "Education minister, not an ordinary politician who is lacking the appropriate, specific knowledge".
	• "+competent and experienced education specialists. Education should not be a political question"
	Q5A
	• "But turned out to be unstable!! (influenced)"
	Q8C Marital status
	• One respondent added and ticked the box for marital status as a "harem"
	Q8G Getting a desired school for the child
	• One respondent had not marked whether got the desired school, but wrote: "according to the residency"
	Q8H Financial situation
	• One respondent added an option box "s…" and ticked it
	Q8I Number of children in grades 1-12
	• Two respondents had marked as having 10 kids (although due to illegibility issues, one of these responses could have been 16 also), one 7 kids (while the respondent mother working full time) and the respondent above who said of living in harem and called his financial situation as s…., stated as having 12 kids (this was counted as missing value due to his previously omitted responses.[49]

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[49] According to Tartu City's press release as of Dec.12, 2012, there are 47 families in Tartu with more than 5 children (up to 18 years old). All total there are 270 children in these families. (see http://uudisvoog.postimees.ee/?DATE=20121212&ID=299445) – *K.Elliott*