

Chapter D6 How are the views of parents and students formally represented in the education system?

Highlights

- Although formal requirements regarding parent representation on school governing boards are common in public schools and government-dependent private schools, they are less common in independent private schools.
- Student participation or representation on school governing boards is less frequently required than for parents and requirements on student representation vary widely by education level, generally increasing at higher levels of education.
- Over two-thirds of countries and other participants report equity as a rationale for having students participate in decisions made by public schools; in over half of countries, students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy are also cited as rationales behind such participation.

Context

Parents and legal guardians of children have long been at the centre of research into the influence external actors can have on decisions taken within education systems. Over time, the scope of enquiry has expanded to include students. Today opportunities for students to be heard by and to influence decision makers had become a significant subject of discussion (OECD, 2024^[1]). Analysing the role of outside influences on decision making in education systems thus requires both parents' and students' voices to be considered.

Opportunities for parents and students to influence decision making in education are evolving. In addition to gradual changes in how parents and legal guardians can participate in and influence decisions affecting students' education (see Box D6.1 on changes between 2008 and 2023), it is increasingly important to consider the lens through which society and policy makers view parent and student agency and voice in education. In particular, international conventions dealing with the rights of children, national education law and cross-country studies suggest that there are important links between the right of children to express their views and opinions and the pursuit of equity in education and beyond (see Box D6.2).

The data and analysis presented in this chapter are based on the text of official documents, formal policies and regulations of countries and other participants. Although this approach makes it easier to make international comparisons of qualitative data, it may not capture some forms of voice, participation

and expression in easily comparable categorical form. To give a fuller picture of parent and student participation in OECD countries and other participants, the chapter supplements the analysis with few country-specific examples.

Figure D6.1. Parental and student involvement in school governing boards (2023)

Public schools at primary and secondary levels of education

Parents				Students		
Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary		Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
m	m	m	Australia	m	m	m
			Austria	o		
			Brazil			
			Bulgaria	o	o	o
			Chile¹	•		
			Colombia			
			Costa Rica			
			Czechia²	x	x	•
		x	Denmark			
			Estonia	•	o	
			Finland			
			France	x		
			Germany			
			Greece	x	x	o
			Iceland			
			Ireland	x	x	x
•	•	•	Israel			
			Italy	x	x	
			Japan³	•	•	•
			Korea	o	o	o
			Latvia			
			Lithuania⁴	•	•	•
			Luxembourg	x		
			Netherlands	x		
			New Zealand	x		
			Norway³			
			Peru			
			Poland			
			Romania			
			Slovak Republic	x	x	x
			Slovenia	x	x	
			Spain	o		
			Sweden			
			Switzerland			
•	•	•	Türkiye			
			United States			
			Flemish Comm. (Belgium)	x		
			French Comm. (Belgium)			
			England (UK)	x	x	x

Legend

	Board required, participation required
o	Board required, participation optional
x	Board required, participation not required
	Board not required, but may exist
	Board does not exist
•	Other

Note: Regulations may differ between states, provinces or regions in federal states or countries with highly decentralised school systems.

1. Other refers to student participation through the representation of the president of the student council.

2. Other refers to differences in student participation depending on the age of students (above or below the age of 18).

3. Other refers to the fact that school governing boards (school councils) are required but student participation requirements are decided at school level.

See Table D6.1 and Table D6.2 for data and under Chapter D6 Tables for Statlink. For more information see *Source* section and *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

Other findings

- Parent associations are active in all 39 countries, while the vast majority of them have at least one type of advisory body involving students; in fact, all but 2 countries and other participants have student boards or councils. In contrast, student unions are found in slightly over half, and parent-teacher associations in just one-quarter of these countries.
- Parents' influence, as expressed through governing and advisory bodies, is most commonly exercised in the areas of school budgets and disciplinary action. The types of decisions and degree of influence that students can exercise over different areas vary between countries but are generally more limited than those of parents.
- The typical grievance mechanism most countries and other participants use to address and resolve concerns about education is a formal complaints process. Fewer countries report having a designated agency for receiving complaints, while a designated ombudsperson is the least commonly used channel for challenging decisions.

Analysis

This chapter examines the ways in which parents and students can express their views or take part in decision making in education. These could be through governing and advisory bodies within schools or at different levels of government, i.e. through formal bodies recognised in regulations or policies at the central or national level. It is also common for parents and students to express their views informally, especially by directly communicating with teachers and school administrators.

Even among countries with similar regulations and similar mechanisms to enable parents and students to take part in school decisions, there are likely to be wide differences in the extent to which parents and students make use of these formal mechanisms. This chapter reviews the differences in formal mechanisms across countries but does not cover the actual participation and roles of parents and students in practice.

The involvement of students and parents has relevance not just for equity (see *Context* Section and Box D6.2), but also for student well-being (OECD, 2023^[2]) and educational attainment (see Chapter A1). Students' involvement in the life of the school or in the education systems may also ease their future involvement in the labour market (see Chapter A3 for information on labour market outcomes).

Participation of parents and students in governing boards

Existence of governing boards

Governing boards are school-level groups that have a direct role in decisions about the school's budgets, hiring and firing of staff, curriculum, and other aspects of school management. They play a key role in setting policies and decision making in schools. The first and foundational way of investigating parents' and students' participation in decision making in education is to look at whether schools are formally required to install a governing board, and what the opportunities are for parents and students to take part in such a board or have their views considered by it.

Schools have governing boards in most of the 38 countries and other participants with available data, with no difference in the existence of – or requirement to set up – governing boards at different levels of education. Only Australia lacks information about requirements for governing boards (for all types of institutions and at any level of education), as state and territory-level government are charged with setting the relevant regulations. The similarities across education levels may result from the fact that schools may cover several levels of education, with governing bodies established at school level taking decisions for all levels of education served by the school (Figure D6.1).

However, there are notable differences in the requirements to set up governing boards by type of educational institution. Public institutions are required to install governing boards in 28 countries and other participants, or roughly three-quarters of the aforementioned 38 countries. A lower proportion of countries require private schools to set up governing boards: among countries where government-dependent private institutions for a given education level exist, requirements to install governing boards exist in around two-thirds of them, ranging from 62% at primary level (13 out of 21 countries) to 65% at lower secondary level (15 out of 23 countries). Central government policies requiring the installation of governing boards are least common for independent private schools, with less than half of countries requiring them for any level of education (Table D6.1).

Governing board participation requirements

Information on the requirements for the representation of parents and students in governing boards is only available when governing boards are required in the schools. The analysis that follows therefore focuses on countries and other participants with such requirements.

Participation requirements for parents

When governing boards are required in schools, parents' participation in these governing boards is also required. This is true for public and government-dependent and independent private institutions at all levels of education in nearly all countries where governing boards are required. The only exception is Denmark, where there is no requirement for parent representation in the governing boards that public upper secondary schools are required to have. Comparing across educational institution types, parent representation is required in (required) governing boards in slightly less than three-quarter of countries with public institutions, in less than two-thirds of the countries with government-dependent private schools and available data, and also in about one-third of countries with independent private institutions (Table D6.1).

In some countries, the regulations requiring the representation of parents on governing boards indicate a minimum (and maximum) number of seats for parents. For public institutions, 16 countries set a minimum number of seats for each level of education (3 additional countries report a minimum at some levels only). This number is usually similar for all levels of education, ranging from one seat (Chile, and Greece) to five seats (Costa Rica, Denmark and Israel). A higher minimum of 6 seats is even set at lower secondary level in France. However, in a few countries, the minimum representation varies by level of education. For example, in Iceland, parent representatives have a minimum of two seats on the governing boards of schools at primary and lower secondary schools, but only one seat at upper secondary level. A few countries express these minimums as a share of the overall number of seats (Czechia, Estonia, Korea, Latvia and Spain) or based on the number of classes in the school (France). Nearly three-quarters of the countries (14 out of 19) which set a minimum also set a maximum for parents' representation in governing boards of public schools. It is usually higher than the minimum (up to 17 seats in Israel), but in Colombia, Costa Rica, England (United Kingdom), Greece, Ireland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia there is simply a fixed number of seats for parents, rather than a range (Table D6.3, available on line). The countries which have private schools and require them to have boards with parental representation usually also set the minimum and maximum numbers of seats for parents on these boards (Table D6.3, available on line).

Participation requirements for students

Contrary to parents, the participation of students in governing boards is not necessarily required when governing boards are required in public schools. For example, at the lower secondary level, among the 28 countries and other participants where public schools are required to have governing boards, student participation is required in 17 of them (63%) and is optional in Bulgaria, Estonia and Korea (11%). In the remaining 8 countries (26%), student participation is not required by regulations set at the central level of government, but may be established at local or regional level, such as in Lithuania (Figure D6.1). In private schools (government-dependent and independent), a similar pattern is observed. Among the countries where a governing board is required, the representation of students in this board is required or optional in about three-quarters of them (Table D6.2).

Student participation in governing boards is more often required at higher levels of education. Among the 38 countries with available data on public schools, the share of countries reporting that public schools are obliged to install a governing board in which students can participate (whether it is required or optional), varies by level of education from 34% at primary level (13 out of 38 countries), to half at lower secondary level (20 out of 38 countries), and 55% at upper secondary level (21 out of 38 countries). At primary level, although students are young, their representation is required in 9 of the 13 countries, whereas it is required in 17 of the 20 countries at lower secondary level and 20 of the 23 countries at the upper secondary level. For example, in Italy and Slovenia, student representation is only required at upper secondary level. No country requires student participation at the lowest levels without also requiring it at higher levels. In other countries not requiring a governing board in public schools, these boards may exist, though information on student participation in such boards is not available. This is the case in an additional 13 countries at primary level and 8 countries at both lower and upper secondary level (Table D6.2).

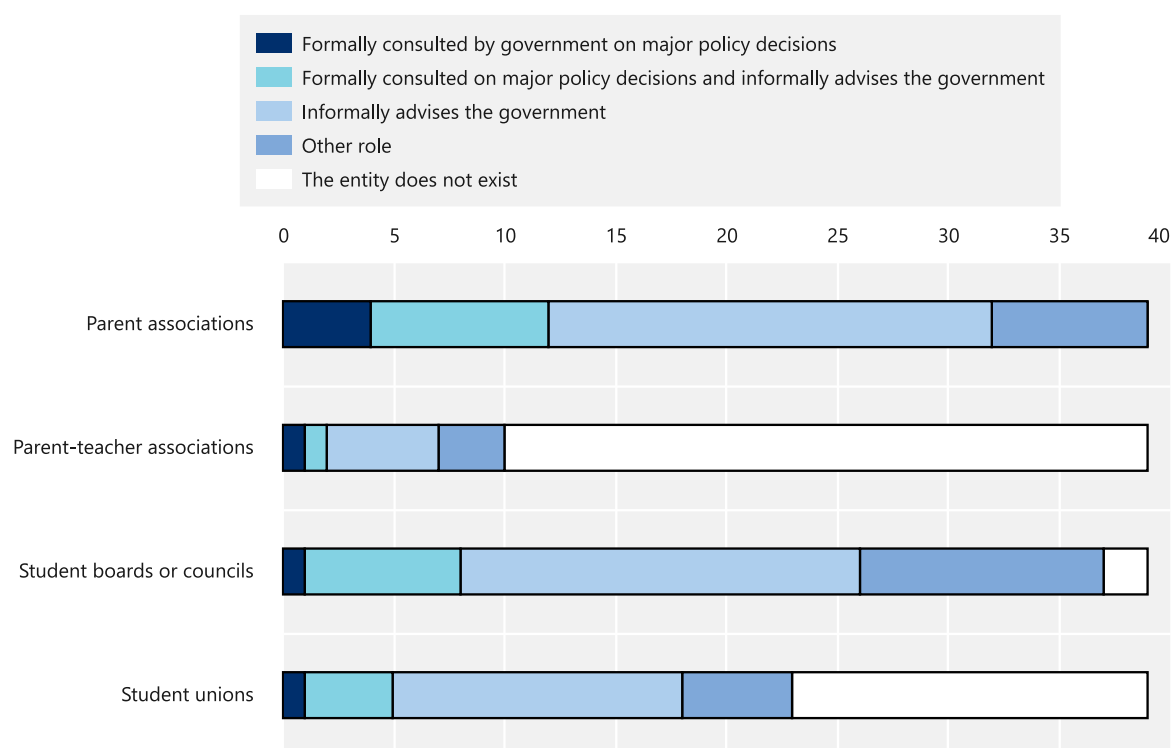
As well as differences between education levels, governing board participation requirements also differs between parents and students. While parents representation in governing boards of public schools is required or optional in more than 70% of countries at each level of education (27 to 28 out of 38 countries depending on the level of education), this is only the case for student representation in about one-third of countries (varying between levels of education, from 13 out of 38 or 34% of countries at primary level to 23 out of 38 or 61% of countries at upper secondary level). Furthermore, unlike for parents, whose participation is always required when schools are formally obliged to install a governing board, student participation on these boards may only be optional (Table D6.1 and Table D6.2).

Participation of parents and students in advisory bodies

Parents and students also influence education system decision makers through advisory bodies, whose main roles are to monitor, advise and relay information from governing bodies. This section discusses two types of advisory bodies involving parents (parent associations and parent-teacher associations) and two types involving students (students unions and student boards or councils). A common characteristic of parent and student advisory bodies is that they lack decision-making authority at the level of the education institution; otherwise, these entities vary very widely across countries in terms of their roles and the level of governance at which they operate.

Figure D6.2. Roles of advisory bodies in which parents or students can take part (2023)

Number of countries and other participants at primary and secondary levels



Note: Advisory bodies do not exercise decision-making power; they have a formal role (being consulted by government), an informal role (advising the government), both a formal and informal role, or provide information to their members. This distinction is not made in the figure. Advisory bodies with "other roles" can either have no defined role or only provide information to their members.

See Tables D6.5, D6.6, D6.7 and D6.8, available online for data and under Chapter D6 Tables for Statlink. For more information see *Source* section and *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>).

Some types of advisory body operate at all governance levels in a country. In Germany and Spain for example, parent associations and student boards (or councils) can be found from the national and regional levels to the local and school levels, for both public and government-dependent private institutions. In other countries, these entities might only exist at some education levels: in Chile, for example, parent associations and student boards (or councils) only operate at school level.

Advisory bodies also vary in terms of the type of role they play (Figure D6.2). For instance, they can wield sizeable influence in countries where decision makers are formally obliged to consult them on significant policy decisions. Their roles range from being primarily informational (raising awareness among parents or students of new developments affecting education) to informal (advising government, even though governments are not required to consult them), to formal (government must consult them in the development of major policies). The specific types of advisory bodies available to parents and students, as well as the roles they play, thus vary widely across countries.

Advisory bodies for parents

Parent associations exist in more than three times as many countries as parent-teacher associations. For public schools, parent associations exist in all 38 countries and other participants with data. Parent-teacher associations, on the other hand, are only found in 8 of 37 countries and other participants with available

data. Both parent and parent-teacher associations also exist for private institutions, with parent associations more prevalent than parent-teacher associations. For government-dependent private institutions, 25 countries and other participants have parent associations, and 3 of them also have parent-teacher associations. For independent private schools, 23 countries have parent associations, and 6 of these also have parent-teacher associations (Tables D6.5 and D6.6, available on line).

The roles of parent associations vary from country to country (specification by institution type within countries is not available). Parent associations have an exclusively formal role (government must consult them in the development of major policies) in Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and Peru, and both a formal and an informal role in Colombia, the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Romania and Spain. Their role may change from formal to informal depending on the level of government at which they are consulted. Taken together, these 12 countries and other participants account for just under one-third of countries in which parent associations exist and play a consultative role. In another 20 countries where parent associations have a consultative role, it is only informal. Finally, in seven countries (Australia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, the Slovak Republic and Türkiye), parent associations play other roles. For example, in Brazil, parent associations (at the school level) inform parents about relevant developments in education, and usually play an important role at this governance level (Figure D6.2 and Table D6.5, available online).

The roles of parent-teacher associations are similarly diverse, but this type of advisory body only exists in public institutions of 8 out of 37 countries and other participants with available data. Parent-teacher associations in Poland have both formal and informal roles, while in Latvia, they only have a formal consultative role (and also a role in informing parents). In Denmark, England (United Kingdom), Japan, New Zealand and the United States, parent-teacher associations have an informal role, while in Brazil and Romania they have no role advising government but may provide information to parents (Table D6.6, available on line).

Box D6.1. Trends in parents' opportunities to exercise their voice

Information on the way parents can express their views or take part in decision making in education through governance and advisory bodies was first collected and published in *Education at a Glance 2010* (OECD, 2010^[3]). At the time, parent voice was presented alongside the topic of school choice, the two being seen as the options available to consumers when facing deteriorating quality of goods or services (Hirschman, 1970^[4]). Presented as substitutes for one another, having different ways to express their views was considered to reduce the likelihood of parents opting for school choice. Conversely, scarcity of school choice made it more likely parents would exercise their voice.

This chapter covers similar themes to those in *Education at a Glance 2010*. Themes common to both include the existence of governing boards and requirements for parents to be able to participate.

Among the 39 countries and other participants providing data for 2023, 30 provided comparable data for 2008 (Hungary, Mexico and Scotland [United Kingdom] participated in the 2008 data collection, but not in the latest round). Of these 30, the requirement for schools to install a governing board changed in 4 countries and other participants, increasing the opportunities for parents to express their views. In Brazil, parent representation on governing boards is now required, whereas schools were not even obliged to have a governing board before 2008. In comparison, school governing boards were already required in 2008 in the French Community of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands but all three countries have since made it a requirement that parents can participate in them.

Changes in the prevalence of parent associations in public schools have been more limited: the Slovak Republic is the only country to report the presence of such advisory bodies in 2023 but not in 2008. However in some cases the roles of parent associations have changed over this period:

England (United Kingdom), the Flemish Community of Belgium and Korea each report that parent associations have at least an informal role in 2023 in providing advice to government. The opposite trend was observed in Brazil and Sweden: parent associations are reported to have an informal advisory role in 2008, but this is no longer the case in 2023.

The availability of formal complaint processes for parents (as provided for in regulations) has also remained almost unchanged between 2008 and 2023 among countries with available information for both years. Korea is the only country to report the existence of regulations providing a formal process for parents to file complaints in 2023 but not in 2008. In contrast, Estonia and Sweden are the only countries which reported having a formal complaints process for parents in 2008 but not in 2023.

Source: OECD (2010^[3]), *Education at a Glance 2010*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2010-en>.

Advisory bodies for students

In most countries with available information, students in public school can participate in at least one advisory body, either a student board/council or a student union. While the existence of student boards/councils is broadly consistent for all education levels in a given country, student unions frequently do not exist at all levels of education. Student boards (or councils) exist (at all or some levels of education) in most countries (in all 39 countries and other participants except for Colombia and Costa Rica); whereas student unions exist (at all or some levels of education) in less than two-thirds of countries (23 out of 38 countries with available data). Similar trends can be observed in government-dependent and independent private schools. However, based on available data, it is not possible to distinguish the different roles these bodies might play for public or private institutions (Tables D6.7 and D6.8, available on line).

In public schools, student boards (or councils) and student unions can each be found in at least half of countries and other participants. Among the other 37 countries and participants where the student boards (or councils) exist, they usually have an informal role (at the school level or at the local, regional or central level of government). In Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Iceland, Latvia, Romania and Spain these boards also have a formal role, requiring the government to consult them on major policy decision. They have only a formal role (at the regional level) in the Flemish Community of Belgium (Table D6.7, available on line).

Student unions are also widespread, with well over half of countries and other participants (23 of 38 countries) reporting that they exist in public schools. In almost three-quarters of the countries where they exist, student unions have either an informal or a formal role advising government, or both. Although less common than student boards (or councils), they are more likely to have some kind of formal or informal role (or both) advising government, according to official documents (Table D6.8, available on line).

Impact and policy relevance

The specific areas of decision making that are addressed by governance and advisory bodies (for example budgets, disciplinary actions, and school day timetables, among others), adds important nuance when considering the potential impact that parents and students can have through these bodies (when they participate). This impact also depends on whether parents and students have a decision role (the power to block or approve decisions), or only an advisory role.

Information on the role of parents and students in decision making on different areas is only available for the participation of students and parents in all types of governance and advisory bodies combined. It is not possible to distinguish the extent of the decision power in specific bodies.

Areas of impact

Among the seven categories of decision making considered (disciplinary actions, school day timetable, content of curriculum, regulation of assessments and examinations, budgets, hiring and firing, and other areas), budget issues and disciplinary actions are the most common areas where parents have a decision role in public schools. Parents play this role in at least one of these two decision-making areas in 9-13 countries and other participants (depending on the decision-making area). In eight of them (Bulgaria, Colombia, Denmark, England [United Kingdom], France, Ireland, New Zealand and Slovenia), they have decision power over both categories. In the other areas, parents play a decision role in two countries (on regulation of assessments and examinations) to six countries (on school day timetable) (Table D6.9, available on line).

Through governance and advisory bodies of public institutions, parents also have a formal advisory role (meaning governments have to consult them) on budget issues in a further 12 countries. This area is also that for which parents are more often formally consulted. This falls to nine countries (for decisions about school day timetables) and fewer still for other types of decision. Considering both decision and formal advice roles together, budget issues and disciplinary action are the two areas where parents play some role in the most countries (Table D6.9, available on line).

The role and influence of students through their participation in governance and advisory bodies also vary by subject area. Like parents, students on these bodies can either have a decision role or can be formally consulted by government on major policy decisions. The most widespread area where students play a decision role is around decisions related to disciplinary actions (in eight countries). Students may be most widely involved in decisions on these areas as these are typically students' issues. Students are also involved in decisions related to the school day timetable in four countries (Austria, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands), and on budgetary issues in four countries (Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark and New Zealand). For other areas, they only take part in decisions in one or two countries each (Table D6.10, available on line).

Students play a formal advisory role through participation in governance and advisory bodies over all areas in a handful of countries. They contribute to formal advice related to disciplinary actions, school day timetable, the content of curriculum, the regulation of assessments and examinations, or budget issues in 6-8 countries. Hiring and firing is the one area in which they are less involved, playing a decision role in only one country, and not playing an advisory role in any (Table D6.10, available on line).

Participation in decisions and student development

Policies providing for student participation in decisions at school can be connected to areas of student development that matter to parents and policy makers. In fact, research finds that the meaningful participation of children in decision-making processes brings them benefits ranging from increased well-being to greater motivation and achievement (OECD, 2024^[11]).

Among the 37 countries with available data, information collected supports these findings, showing that governments consider equity among students to be relevant when developing policies on student participation. Nearly three-quarters of countries and other participants with available data (27 out of 37) report equity as a basis for student participation in the decision making of public schools for at least one levels of education. Of these, 19 (70%) consider equity as a rationale for student participation in decision making at all levels. In five others, equity is considered at secondary level (in France, Greece, Norway and Poland) or at upper secondary only (in Italy) (Table D6.12, available on line). Box D6.2 considers how equity and participation can be embedded into national legislation with an example from Czechia.

Box D6.2. Equity and participation in decision making

Opportunities for parents and students to participate in policy development promote a shared understanding amongst relevant stakeholders about the goals, means and concepts that education systems adopt (OECD, 2023^[1]).

Principles for both equity and stakeholder participation in education governance can be found in international treaties, declarations and conventions. Adopted in 2019, the Abidjan Principles compile and provide guidance to governments about the obligation of countries to provide public education (Abidjan Principles, 2019^[5]). Notably, Principle 32 addresses stakeholder participation in educational governance and specifies the requirement for education to be “accountable, participatory, inclusive and transparent” (OECD, 2023^[2]).

Although having parents participate in decisions related to the education of their children is not new, there is an increasing focus on students’ ability to influence their education and on the relevance to equity of such a participatory approach to decision making.

Legislation and regulations at national government level also reflect the link between equity and participation in decision making. In Czechia, for example, the main law governing education establishes “equal access [...] to education without any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, faith and religion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, birth and health or any other status...” among the principles and goals of education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004^[6]). The legislation then sets out the rights and duties that may give effect to such objectives. Those for pupils and students explicitly entitle students of legal age to be elected to the School Board, to establish self-governing bodies, the opinions and comments of which head teachers are obliged to address, and to “express their opinions on all decisions concerning essential matter of their education, whilst their opinions must be devoted attention appropriate to their age and development level” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004^[6]). The link between students’ participation and self-expression and equity in education law in Czechia demonstrates how principles and entitlements expressed in international agreements and conventions can relate to the design of education policy at national level, recalling the “right to express [...] views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” set forth in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989^[7]).

Source: The Abidjan Principles (2019^[5]), *Abidjan Principles on the Right to Education*, <https://www.abidjanprinciples.org> (accessed 02 June 2024).

Students’ sense of belonging and self-efficacy are also factored into considerations of policies on student participation in decision making in public schools. These two rationales were less frequently cited than equity but over half of countries and other participants (23 out of 39) indicated that fostering a sense of belonging was a rationale for policies enabling student participation, while just over half (20 out of 39) reported the same for self-efficacy (Table D6.12, available on line).

More than one-third of the countries and other participants cited all three areas (equity, sense of belonging and self-efficacy) at all levels in public education as a rationale for enabling student participation in decision making. In Türkiye, all three areas are cited, although self-efficacy is only specified as applying in secondary education. All three also serve as a basis for policies in France, Greece and Poland, but only at secondary level (Table D6.12, available on line).

The results for government-dependent and independent private schools are similar to those for public schools. Equity is most often cited as the basis for participation policies for government-dependent private institutions (in 14 countries) and independent private institutions (in 12 countries). However, students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy together come a close second. For both types of educational institutions, sense of belonging and self-efficacy are cited as part of the basis for involving students in decisions in 10 or 11 countries (Table D6.12, available on line).

Formal processes and mechanisms available to file complaints or appeal decisions

Channels and mechanisms

Education systems differ in the channels and mechanisms available to parents and students with grievances about education. Systems to file complaints and grievances can include the recourse to a formal process, or a designated ombudsperson or agency to receive complaints. Whether and how students participate in grievance actions initiated by parents may also vary across countries.

Parents can file complaints related to public schools through formal processes in over three-quarters of countries and other participants (33 countries), while the use of a designated agency is reported in nearly two-thirds of countries (25 countries). A designated ombudsperson to deal with complaints, is also available to parents in half of countries (20 out of 39 countries) (Table D6.11, available on line).

Among countries where a formal channel to lodge complaints is available to parents, at least two-thirds provide for student participation in the corresponding channel. When there is a formal process for parents to lodge complaints related to public institutions, 21 out of 33 countries require or allow student participation in this process. Student participation is optional or required in 14 out of 20 countries with designated ombudspersons and in 17 out of 25 countries with agencies for complaints filed by parents about public schools (Table D6.11, available on line).

The prevalence of the three different mechanisms to file complaints related to private institutions, whether government dependent or independent, is similar to that of public institutions. A formal process to file complaints is available in most countries (in 19 or 22 countries, depending on the type of private school). A designated agency can receive complaints in 13 or 18 countries, while a designated ombudsperson is available to receive complaints in 11 or 13 countries. Student participation is less often required for private institutions than for public institutions. Across the three different complaints mechanisms, student participation is required in a maximum of three countries for complaints related to government-dependent or independent private institutions. However, as with public institutions, student participation is either required or optional for both types of private institutions in more than 45% of countries (Table D6.11, available on line).

Areas of decision making that can be appealed

Parents may have the right to appeal some types of education decisions. Which types of decision can be challenged varies by country, ranging from disciplinary actions to decisions about special needs provision, or a school's refusal to enrol a student. In addition, the level of governance responsible for receiving and addressing complaints can vary significantly. Among the 37 countries and other participants with available data on public institutions, parents can appeal decisions made by schools in at least one area of decision making in all these countries except Japan. Parents can challenge disciplinary actions (such as expulsion or suspension of students) taken by public schools in 35 of the 36 countries where parental access to appeal generally exists (Denmark is the only exception). Decisions related to special needs provision or refusal to enrol are also subject to appeal by parents in a large number of countries (32 countries or more). Access to appeal in other areas, such as school fees and the regulation of assessments and examinations are less widespread. Nevertheless, even these two types of decisions can be appealed by parents in at

least one half of countries. The type of decision that is least frequently open to appeal is on school fees and voluntary financial contributions, with parents able to appeal in just 20 countries (Table D6.13, available on line).

Among countries with available data on government-dependent or independent private institutions, decisions by private schools can be appealed by parents in at least in one area of decisions in all countries except in Denmark. For government-dependent private schools, decisions related to disciplinary actions are open to challenge by parents in most countries. This is not the case for independent private schools, where decisions concerning special needs provision can be appealed by parents in all 20 countries where parental appeal is possible. Decisions related to special needs provision, school fees and voluntary financial contributions, regulation of assessments and examinations, disciplinary actions and to refusal to enrol can be appealed in 14 to 21 countries when these decisions take place in government-dependent private institutions, and in 14 to 20 countries when they take place in independent private schools (Table D6.13, available on line).

Definitions

Equity refers to student participation creating the opportunity for all students to have a say in what, when and how they learn, regardless of their background or socio-economic status or that of their family.

Sense of belonging refers to students' "need to form and maintain at least a minimum number of interpersonal relationships" based on trust, acceptance, love and support.

Self-efficacy refers to the extent to which individuals believe in their own ability to engage in certain activities and perform specific tasks, especially when facing adverse circumstances.

Governance as a form of voice occurs when parents or students serve on boards or councils with a direct role in making decisions about, *inter alia*, budgets, hiring and firing, curriculum, and school policies.

Advising (non-governance) as a form of voice occurs when parents or students participate in associations, boards, councils or unions through which they may express their wants, needs or desires to those with direct decision-making authority.

Complaint/grievance as a form of voice occurs when parents or students can express their concerns about education with a representative of an education institution or education authorities, in a formal complaint, or submitted in request for appeal of a decision affecting the education of a student. Such acts usually occur on the initiative of parents but may enable or require the participation of student. Regulations may provide for students having reached the age of legal majority before they can initiate such action independently.

Methodology

For country-specific notes, see *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources, Methodologies and Technical Notes* (OECD, 2024).

Source

Data are from the 2023 OECD-INES-NESLI survey on student/parent voice and refer to the school year 2022/23 (or 2023).

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Chapter D6 Tables

Tables Chapter D6. How are the views of parents and students formally represented in the education system?

Table D6.1	Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which parents can take part (2023)
Table D6.2	Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which students can take part (2023)
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StatLink  <https://stat.link/p2yozs>

Cut-off date for the data: 14 June 2024.

Table D6.1. Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which parents can take part (2023)

By level of education and type of institution

	Primary			Lower secondary			Upper secondary		
	Public schools	Government-dependent private schools	Independent private schools	Public schools	Government-dependent private schools	Independent private schools	Public schools	Government-dependent private schools	Independent private schools
OECD countries	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Australia	m	m	a	m	m	a	m	m	a
Austria	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	m	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	m	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	m
Canada	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Chile	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)
Colombia	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)
Costa Rica	Y (par. req.)	N	N	Y (par. req.)	N	N	Y (par. req.)	N	N
Czechia	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a
Denmark	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. not req.)	m	m
Estonia	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)
Finland	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a
France	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Germany	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a
Greece	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)
Hungary	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Iceland	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)
Ireland	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)
Israel	Other	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other	Other	a
Italy	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)
Japan	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)
Korea	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a
Latvia	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)
Lithuania	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)
Luxembourg	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Mexico	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Netherlands	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)
New Zealand	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)
Norway	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Poland	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Portugal	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Slovak Republic	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a
Slovenia	Y (par. req.)	m	m	Y (par. req.)	m	m	Y (par. req.)	m	m
Spain	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)
Sweden	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	m	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	m	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	m
Switzerland	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Türkiye	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other
United States	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)
Other participants									
Flemish Comm. (Belgium) ¹	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Other	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Other	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	Other
French Comm. (Belgium)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	m	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	m	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	m
England (UK)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	N (may exist)
Scotland (UK)	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Partner and/or accession countries									
Argentina	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Brazil	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (par. req.)	a	N (may exist)
Bulgaria	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)	Y (par. req.)	a	Y (par. req.)
China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Croatia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Indonesia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Peru	N	a	Other	N	a	Other	N	a	Other
Romania	Y (par. req.)	a	m	Y (par. req.)	a	m	Y (par. req.)	a	m
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

Are schools required to have a governing board and should parents be represented on them?

Y (par. req.) – Yes, governing board is required and some parent representation is required

Y (par. opt.) – Yes, governing board is required and parent representation is optional

Y (par. not req.) – Yes, governing board is required, but without requirement on parent representation.

N (may exist) – No, governing board not required, although they may exist

N – No such governing boards exist

Note: See under Chapter D6 Tables for statlink and Box D6.3. for the notes related to this Table.

Table D6.2. Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which students can take part (2023)

By level of education and type of institution

	Primary			Lower secondary			Upper secondary		
	Public schools	Government-dependent private schools	Independent private schools	Public schools	Government-dependent private schools	Independent private schools	Public schools	Government-dependent private schools	Independent private schools
OECD countries	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Australia	m	m	a	m	m	a	m	m	a
Austria	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	m	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	m	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	m
Canada	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Chile ¹	Other	Other	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)
Colombia	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)
Costa Rica	Y (stud. req.)	N	N	Y (stud. req.)	N	N	Y (stud. req.)	N	N
Czechia ²	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Other	Other	a
Denmark	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. opt.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. opt.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. opt.)	m
Estonia	Other	Other	Other	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. opt.)
Finland	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a
France	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Germany	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a
Greece	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. opt.)	a	Y (stud. opt.)
Hungary	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Iceland	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)
Ireland	Y (stud. not req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)
Israel	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a
Italy	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)
Japan ³	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other
Korea	Y (stud. opt.)	a	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	a	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	a
Latvia	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	a	Y (stud. req.)
Lithuania ⁴	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other	Other	a	Other
Luxembourg	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	m	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	m
Mexico	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Netherlands	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)
New Zealand	Y (stud. not req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	a	N (may exist)
Norway ⁵	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Poland	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Portugal	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Slovak Republic	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	a
Slovenia	Y (stud. not req.)	m	m	Y (stud. not req.)	m	m	Y (stud. req.)	m	m
Spain	Y (stud. opt.)	Y (stud. opt.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	N (may exist)
Sweden	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N
Switzerland	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	N (may exist)
Türkiye	N	a	N	N	a	N	N	a	N
United States	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)	N (may exist)	a	N (may exist)
Other participants									
Flemish Comm. (Belgium) ⁶	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	Other	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Other	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	Other
French Comm. (Belgium)	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	m	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	m	Y (stud. req.)	Y (stud. req.)	m
England (UK)	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)	Y (stud. not req.)	Y (stud. not req.)	N (may exist)
Scotland (UK)	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Partner and/or accession countries									
Argentina	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Brazil	Y (stud. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	a	N (may exist)	Y (stud. req.)	a	N (may exist)
Bulgaria	Y (stud. opt.)	a	m	Y (stud. opt.)	a	m	Y (stud. opt.)	a	m
China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Croatia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Indonesia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Peru	N	a	Other	N	a	Other	N	a	Other
Romania	Y (stud. req.)	a	m	Y (stud. req.)	a	m	Y (stud. req.)	a	m
Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

Are schools required to have a governing board and should students be represented on them?

Y (stud. req.) – Yes, governing board is required and some student representation is required

Y (stud. opt.) – Yes, governing board is required and student representation is optional

Y (stud. not req.) – Yes, governing board is required, but without requirement on student representation

N (may exist) – No, governing board is not required, although they may exist

N – No such governing boards exist

Note: See under Chapter D6 Tables for statlink and Box D6.3. for the notes related to this Table.

Box D6.3. Notes for Chapter D6 Tables

Table D6.1. Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which parents can take part (2023)

Regulations may differ between states, provinces or regions in federal states or countries with highly decentralised school systems. See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information.

1. Other for independent private schools refers to the fact that there is no regulation for parent participation.

Table D6.2. Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which students can take part (2023)

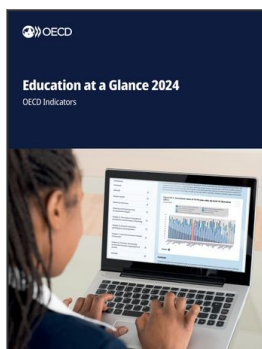
Regulations may differ between states, provinces or regions in federal states or countries with highly decentralised school systems. See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections for more information.

1. Other refers to student participation through the representation of the president of the student council.
2. Other refers to differences in participation depending on the age of students (above or below 18 year-old).
3. Governing boards may exist: no provision exists for student participation therein, while parent participation is possible.
4. Other refers to the fact that school governing boards (school councils) are required but student participation requirements are decided at school level.
5. Other refers to the fact that in independent private schools there is no regulation for student participation in governing boards.

See *Definitions* and *Methodology* sections and *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources Methodologies and Technical Notes* (<https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en>) for more information.

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

Annexes



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OECD Indicators

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