Symposium

Staying on track

Tackling early school leaving and promoting success in school

Luxembourg, 9th and 10th July 2015

WORKSHOP 6

Policy Keys

Building relationships between school, family and community to enhance students' school persistence and avoid Early School Leaving (ESL)

July 2015

Débora Poncelet, University of Luxembourg
Jean Billa, Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg
Carmen Schürnbrand, Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg
Sylvie Kerger, University of Luxembourg
Christophe Dierendonck, University of Luxembourg

Historical context for EU and Luxembourg

From the Lisbon extraordinary European Council of March 2000, a real will appears to improve both the quality and the effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union. The new strategic goal for the next decade is "*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"* (European Parliament, 2000)*.* Because early school leaving represents a major obstacle to reach the targeted goal, it becomes a priority for EU. Adopted for a period of ten years, this strategy called each country to halve their percentage of dropout for 2010 in comparison to the figures observed in 2000 (Condat & Plumelle, 2003). At the end of the period targeted by the council of Lisbon, the average dropout rate still reached 14.1% in the 27 EU countries (MENJE, 2014). If progress was observed, it was less important than expected despite the broad range of measures implemented in each country. In 2009, only eight countries[1], including Luxembourg, met the target set by the EU. In June 2010, in order to go further than the results already reached, the European Council adopted the Europe 2020 strategy. Henceforth, the challenge was to enhance the efforts of each country. In order to help each country regarding the development and the implementation of political strategies or concrete actions likely to fight early school leaving, EU proposed a framework. According to Fazukas (2011), the reasons explaining early school leaving are specific to each EU country; therefore, there is no single solution. Thus, the measures taken to deal with the school dropout must be adjusted to each particular context after having identified the main responsible factors at the national, regional or local levels. Moreover, although school plays an important role in addressing school dropout, it is very important not to work in isolation. Each country has to pay a great attention to develop cross-sectorial strategies, "involving stakeholders from policy areas such as youth, social/welfare, employment, health, governance and co-operation, data collection and monitoring, while the focus of the ESL policies should be on prevention, intervention and compensation" (Oomen & Plant, 2014, p. 14).

At the time, one of the five targets drawn up by the European Commission aimed at reducing the average drop-out rate to below 10% by 2020 but also at bringing to 40% the proportion of people aged 30 to 34 years with a degree of higher education or equivalent (European Council, 2010, p. 12).

For the Luxembourgish Ministry of Education, the school dropout issue is a real priority. For Luxembourg, the latest available percentages (for the 2012-2013 school year) reported an average rate of 11.6% regarding permanent dropouts. The percentage was 9% so far. This represents 1.643 students dropping out of school without graduating. In the first study of this type (realized in the school year 2003-2004), the percentage reached to 17.2% (MENJE, 2014).

In response to a parliamentary question in August 2014, the Luxembourgish Minister of Education, Claude Meisch, still asserts the priority status of the fight against school dropout in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: "Le ministère de l'Education nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse attribue à la lutte contre le décrochage scolaire un statut prioritaire. L'analyse chiffrée de ce phénomène met en exergue l'ampleur et l'évolution du décrochage scolaire au Luxembourg. Elle vise à identifier les groupes d'élèves les plus touchés par le décrochage et à mieux comprendre les raisons qui poussent le jeune à quitter prématurément l'école. "(C. Meisch, August 2014).

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[1]   These eight countries are Czech Republic, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Luxembourg.

This will has been reinforced by the findings from the study "*Transition Ecole-Vie active* (TEVA)". In July 2014, a three-year study observing students (graduated or not, who attended a technical or a professional training during the 2007-2008 school year) highlighted questioning results. These results are that 85% of graduates, against 64% of non-graduates, held a job in 2011. Given this difference of over 20%, MEN decided to act in order to maintain non-graduated students at school and to enhance qualification and graduation for a maximum of young people. Moreover, other results, from a MEN survey, organized during 2011-2012 school year (MENJE, 2014), came to the conclusion that some groups of students are more likely to drop out: boys more than girls, foreign pupils more than Luxemburgish students, lower cycle students and those enrolled in a professional training as well as students with a school delay of at least two years.

As described, the issue of Early School Leaving for Luxemburgish government is predominant.

In the Workshop 6, we aim at bringing a more comprehensive understanding of the school-family-community relationship, also called educational partnership, and its possible influence - in a positive or in a negative way - on ESL. In the following lines, we will try to highlight this influence in a theoretical way.

Educational partnerships, parental involvement and ESL

ESL is not new but it has become a social and worrying phenomenon (Rayou, 2000). Education has dramatically changed in the last decades. Social changes have transformed the structure of employment, including the social integration and professional requirements to enter the labour market. During the first half of the 20th century, there was nothing unusual about leaving school at an early age despite a lack of degree (Broccolichi, 2000). Those who dropped out could find work. This is no longer valid nowadays: with the lack of qualifications it is difficult to find an employment even though it is no more a guarantee of employability.

Dropout is a multidimensional phenomenon, resulting from a combination of personal, family and school factors that interact with each other. The combination of risk factors (or protective factors) is an event or a condition that increases (or reduces) the likelihood of an individual experience of emotional or behavioural problems, that may contribute to school dropout. The decision to stop school education is the result of a long evolutionary process that is characterized by an accumulation of frustrations, often induced by academic failures and difficult relationships with peers, teachers, and parents.

Although research literature on school dropout highlights the strong interconnection between individual, family and school factors (Brown and Rodriguez, 2009), Davis and Duper (2004) point out that the majority of studies mainly focus on individual and family factors. However, it appears that school variables are the best predictors of dropout (Janosz, 2000). Recently, research has begun to analyze how these factors can contribute to school dropout issues. It appears that the school climate is statistically the most significant variable (Blaya, 2010; Fortin, Plante & Bradley, 2011). The authors of these studies highlight the role of the teacher-student relationship, especially for at-risk students, and the decisive impact of teachers' beliefs and attitudes on students' achievement.

Beyond the individual factors related to dropout - such as low achievement, lack of motivation, and socio-emotional problems - several studies have also pointed at a series of family characteristics associated with the risk of leaving school early: family socio-economic status, parental support,

involvement, and supervision as well as their values and expectations about their child's school success (Poncelet, 2003). Through involvement in educational aspects, families especially play an important role in student success and affect conditions that might lead to dropping out: positive impact on school performance, enhancing motivation and school involvement, improving well-being and school behaviours (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005; Spera, 2005; Jeynes, 2003, 2005; Pattal, Cooper & Robinson, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009). According to Duval, Dumoulin & Perron (2014), building a constructive and efficient relationship between school and family could be an efficient way to avoid school dropout. Family educational practices as well as coordination with the school are indeed changeable variables. Unlike structural variables (socio-economic background), it is possible to induce changes in parents' behaviours that may have positive influence on the student, his relationship with school and his learning but also, ultimately, on the whole academic success. Indeed, Henderson and Mapp (2002), in their meta-analysis, show that parental involvement in school is as important as what parents do and set up at home to support their children in their schooling and this, whatever the economic, social and cultural origins of these families. In this way, school-family relationships could challenge the conventional findings related to the impact of socio-cultural and economic background of the families on students' success.

However, Colombo (2006) considers that: "for many years experts have touted parent/teacher relationships and the resulting shared understandings between home, community, and school as instrumental in creating school environments of acceptance, caring, and high expectations. Family involvement has a powerful influence on educational success, but it is not an equal opportunity practice. Parent-teacher relationships are formed with relative ease when groups share a common culture, language, and background. Relationships that must bridge cultures and languages, however, require more effort to create and sustain" (p. 315).

According to European Commission, "Europe's future depends largely on its young people. Through its Europe 2020 strategy, the European Union aims to support young people better and to enable them to fully develop their talents to their own as well as to their economy's and society's benefit" (Commission to the European parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, 2011, p. 2). In this way, strategies which have to cope with school dropout, have to take as a starting point an analysis of the national, regional and local specificities of the phenomenon and include policies such as social protection, youth, family, health and employment. Therefore, comprehensive policies have to be developed to reduce early school leaving (Fazekas, 2011). Three axes are suggested to articulate these policies:

1) **Prevention policies**: "aim at reducing the risk of early school leaving before problems start. Such measures optimize the provision of education and training in order to support better learning outcomes and to remove obstacles to educational success" (Fazekas, 2011, p. 4);
2) **Intervention policies**: "aim at avoiding early school leaving by improving the quality of education and training at the level of the educational institutions, by reacting to early warning signs and by providing targeted support to pupils or groups of pupils at risk of early school leaving. They address all educational levels, starting from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education" (Fazekas, 2011, p. 5);
3) **Compensation policies**: "aim at helping those who left school prematurely to re-engage in education, offering routes to re-enter education and training and gain the qualifications they missed" (Fazekas, 2011, p. 6).

Inside these three axes, we find policies directly linked to family and/or to the school-family-community relationships. Regarding the prevention axe, we can read that "enhancing the involvement of parents, reinforcing their cooperation with the school and creating partnerships between schools and parents can increase learning motivation among pupils" (Fazekas, 2011, suggestion 5, p. 5). For the intervention axe, the European council considers that "networking with parents and others actors outside school, such as local community services, organizations representing migrants and minorities, sports and culture associations, or employers and civil organizations, which allows for holistic solutions to help pupils at risk and eases the access to external support such as psychologists, social and youth workers, cultural and community services. This can be facilitated by mediators from the local community who are able to support communication and to reduce disrupt" (Fazekas, 2011, suggestion 3, p. 5). The third and last axe, the compensation one, doesn't include anything regarding our thematic.

Workshop 6: Building relationships between school, family and community to enhance students' school persistence and avoid early school leaving

Introduction

In this session, our exchanges and reflections were leading us to compare and analyze issues, experiences, ideas, and questions from different interventions of EU representatives. Through these different contributions, we tried to highlight concrete policies for EU countries regarding the connections that we can do between school dropout and school, family and community relationships.

Different transversal questions led the exchanges inside the session.

The first questions were used to have a general presentation of the speakers and of their field actions /research/intervention context.

- **As stated above, increasing cooperation with family can contribute to students' school success, enhance students' persistence and avoid early school leaving, especially for at-risk students.**
  a. Could you explain how your country / your region works in this sense? What kind of recent initiatives are carried out across your country / your region? What kind of positive results and/or difficulties can be highlighted?
  b. Could you link the presented initiative(s) to a kind of European policies either prevention, or intervention or compensation.
- **"Given the complexity of the processes leading to school dropout, it seems important for school to cooperate with external bodies from various professional fields, such as youth, health, justice or employment" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013, p. 27).**
  a. Could you explain how your country / your region works in this sense? What kind of recent initiatives are carried out across your country / your region? What kind of positive results and/or difficulties can be highlighted?
  b. Could you link the presented initiative(s) to a kind of European policies either prevention, or intervention or compensation.

These following questions were used to feed the debate between speakers but also between speakers and participants during the session.

- Regarding your working experience with the family and the community context:

a. How can EU countries involve more parents at school? How to reach specifically the vulnerable parents, parents who are the furthest away from school, who do not spontaneously communicate with teachers, who have a bad personal experience with school, etc.?
b. How can EU countries reinforce the connection with its community?
c. What are the main obstacles to a deeper cooperation between school, family and community?

The speakers were:

For Portugal:
- **Mr. Pedro Cunha,** Deputy General-Director of Ministry of Education

For Luxembourg:
- **Mr. Gilbert Pregno**, head of foundation « Kannerschlass ».

For Germany:
- **Mrs. Sabine Rohmann,** coordinator of international affairs in "Pädagogisches Landesinstitut".

For France:
- **Mr. Richard Stock**, leader of European Center « Robert Schuman »

For Belgium:
- **Mr. Michel Vandekeere**, coordinator of "L'observatoire de l'Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l'Aide à la Jeunesse".

Transversal findings from presentation

Through the four different interventions, we will try to write transversal conclusions regarding the influence of educational partnership on ESL.

1. Mrs. Rohmann (Deutschland)

Nobody without an educational qualification

Reducing the rate of dropouts is one of the crucial challenges we meet today on the local, regional, national and European levels.

However, this challenge gives us the opportunity to rethink our pedagogical concepts, approaches and methods as well as the opportunity to rethink education.

Starting from the presentation of the concept and program "Nobody without an educational qualification" of the Land of Rhineland-Palatinate with the strong look at concepts of the promotion of individual learning, capacity building for teachers and students, cooperation with parents, local authorities, representatives of the world of work and all other stakeholders, the author would like to give some support on the discussion regarding the European perspectives.

During the session, the participants discussed the impact of these changes of teaching and learning culture for the development of sustainable democratic societies and for the social cohesion and an education for inclusive societies. The aim is to prepare ALL young people to their life as democratic citizens and future actors on the global labour market.

2. Mr. Vandekeere (Belgium)

Unlikely journeys: 30 stories told by 30 young people

They are called Maxime, Hugo, Karim, Samir, or Sandrine, Katy, Aïcha, Idrissa …; they are 20 to 30 years old; there are 30 of them; 30 young people who agreed to tell the story of their journey; a journey at odds with common likelihoods; a journey which in some way turned positive against the odds.

A team of five sociologists have listened to them, to the story of their journey and tried to understand and to put in perspective what they had heard.

Their analyses identified what was effective in maintaining the motivation and involvement of these young people along their often difficult path out of marginalisation.

They have identified different factors which contributed to significant positive turns of these young people journeys.

This study leads to a better understanding of the different logics at work in different "services" supporting vulnerable young people and helps to clarify "felicity" and facilitating factors in the interrelations between young people and services.

The study also raises questions about the best way to combine individual and collective approaches in supporting young people.

Further reading: http://www.oejaj.cfwb.be/index.php?id=10334

What can be learned from listening to Neet's

During the fall 2012, 31 young people aged 18 to 30 identified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) were interviewed by a team of researchers.

The study aimed to a better understanding of the way these young people live their condition and the way they cope with it, starting from their own point of view and analyses on these issues.

Research started from an overarching idea: that these young people can adopt a reflexive stance on their living conditions and their "journey" and by doing so, can bring new insights on realities otherwise hidden by predominant views.

The research targeted the most vulnerable young people, i.e. those who have the weakest cultural, economic and social capitals and are therefore the least prone to leave their condition of NEET on their own.

These testimonies were collected in order to identify the relevant factors which exacerbate or neutralise the vulnerabilities created by the NEET condition. Final objective was to build policies which are neither stigmatizing nor exacerbating the vulnerabilities of young people.

Further reading: http://www.oejaj.cfwb.be/index.php?id=11412

3. Mr. Gilbert Pregno (Luxembourg)

Enhancing a parents' participative attitude

School is a place where knowledge is transferred, but it is also a social integrator which contributes to the fact that children and adolescents develop a sense of belonging to a community.

But we should be more aware that children never come "alone" to the school system, but always bring with them a part of the relationship their parents have experienced with their own schooling: a story of success or failure, recognition or rejection.

That history is part of the family culture, surrounding the adolescent and deeply influence his or her schooling and future.

For that particular concern a participative context must be raised to give the family confidence in their expectations towards the educational institution.

Creating this environment is part of the school's missions that have to understand that a participative attitude from the parents' side is not always given at the beginning: once installed this context may potentiate the skills of young people.

4. Mr. Richard Stock (France)

French plan of campaign fighting dropping out

First of all, it is important to visualize through a graph the complexity and multiplicity of combinations and interactions between various factors that can lead young people to drop out of the school system.

Through a time scale, it is possible to show the recurrent appearance of factors (which are external of the school system or internal of the system) and their combinations.

The second part presents the relations built up between schools, families and the local community through seven indicators of the student's family living conditions, which have to be taken into account.

The last part presents three main key actions of the French plan of campaign fighting dropping out:

- Mobilizing society against dropping out
- The involvement of parents
- Educational alliances with external partners have to be created

5. Mr. Pedro Cunha (Portugal)

Building relationships between school, family and relationship.

In his intervention, the author focus on two main questions:

1. What do we do with parents at schools?
2. What do parents do at home?

In order to answer to these questions, the speaker presents six types of family and community participation and illustrates his purpose with some concretes examples of activities for each EU axes.

Prevention:

- Playgroups for Inclusion
- Adult education
- National System for Early Intervention
- Glass Classrooms

Intervention:

- Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion (www.epis.pt)
- Cultural mediators at schools
- Homework clubs
- Open Saturdays
- Curriculum Enrichment Activities
- Choices Program (www.programaescolhas.pt)

Compensation:

- Commissions for the Protection of Children´s Right (www.cncpcjr.pt)
- Recognition and Validation of Acquired Skills
- Safe school

We can conclude, as a result of these communications, that in order to struggle against school-dropout, stakeholders have to pay attention to different aspects:

- Mobilizing society against school dropout.
- Building policies which are neither stigmatizing nor exacerbating the vulnerabilities of young people.
- Equipping field actors (including school actors) in order that young people better know their rights and the rules prevailing within institutions, particularly those of employment assistance.
- Ensuring that rules at work in some aid agencies to employment and social welfare do not become exclusionary rules to certain categories of young people.
- Promoting gateways between devices rather than ruptures: access to an assistance device sometimes excludes access to another.
- Promoting individual learning, capacity building for teachers and students, cooperation with parents, local authorities, representatives of the world of work and all the other stakeholders.
- Supporting associations, including ongoing training, which perform an accompaniment of the young people in all its dimensions and enable them to develop skills and self-confidence not necessarily directly related to the job profile.
- Re-examine the overall ideology of the activation policy.
- Fostering a parents' participative attitude (parental involvement) in schooling in order to improve young people's skills.
- Promoting educational partnerships with external partners.

In order to complete workshop contributions regarding the writing of policy keys, we want to explore and analyze what the very recent international and scientific literature can bring to deeply understand the influence of the educational partnership on ESL. The goal is not to present an exhaustive literature review. We just want to highlight concrete and efficient actions likely to foster school-family-community relationship in order to improve students' school persistence.

In this way, findings and conclusions will be taken from three different kinds of literature:

1. OECD International research
2. School-family-community programs
3. Meta-analysis regarding influence of parental involvement on students' schooling

OECD International research

Introduction

      International research provide interesting information regarding the understanding of the link between student test scores and the student's school attendance, school policies and practices, students' family background and parental involvement in education. PISA provides data on test scores, schools and family background for hundred thousands of students around the world, which makes it the largest cross-country data set in the world for analyzing the relation between test scores and their potential determinants. Our aim is to focus our attention on the factors of parental involvement associated with student's achievement as is found in OECD studies. If studies have highlighted the beneficial effects of parental involvement in children's educational lives, few studies, however, analyze parental involvement in a cross-national perspective and few evaluate a wide array of forms of involvement.

For this section, we focus on three recent articles:

Borgonovi, F. & Montt, G. (2012). Parental involvement in selected PISA countries and economies. OECD Education Working Papers, 73, OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k990rk0jsjj-en.

Freeman, R. B. & Viarengo, M. (2014). School and family effects on educational outcomes across countries. *Economy Policy, 29*(79), 397-446.

Rakocevic, R. (2014). Implication des parents dans la réussite à l'école : éclairages internationaux. *Education & formations, 85*, 31-46.

In 2009, 14 OECD countries and economies have decided to implement the parental questionnaire option in the PISA data collection. These three articles realize different kinds of analyses using this PISA database. Since the authors investigate different research hypothesis, these three texts offer analysis and contrasting results on the parental involvement and its potential effect on students' schooling.

Borgonovi & Montt (2012) follow two goals: 1) evaluation of parental involvement levels across countries and sub-countries and 2) observation of the influence of parental involvement on both cognitive (reading performance) and non-cognitive outcomes (enjoyment of reading and awareness of effective summarizing strategies). Concerning the first aspect, the authors conclude that some forms of parental involvement would be more powerful explanatory factors than others to explain both

cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. For example, "reading to children when they are young", "engaging in discussions that promote critical thinking and setting a good example" appears to be better determinants. As regards the second aspect, it seems that levels of parental involvement vary across countries and economies. Data show that there are inequalities in parental involvement in nearly all the countries and economies. The authors conclude that a promotion of higher levels of parental involvement could be associated with an increasing in the student's both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. They also underline that this high-quality parental involvement could be an interesting way to reduce performance differences across socio-economic groups.

In their article, **Freeman and Viarengo** (2014) realize an analysis of the link between student test scores and the school students' attendance, the policies and practices of the schools, students' family background and their parents' involvement in their education. Their main results are that:

1) The school students' attendance explains an important proportion of the test scores variation within countries.
2) Beyond national policies or other mechanisms that sort students according their abilities within schools; these are school policies and teaching practices which are likely to explain a fairly large proportion of the school fixed effects.
3) The school fixed effects are a major pathway for the link between family background and test scores. For the authors, understanding what schools do is therefore a very important point in order to interpret the level and dispersion of test scores.

More precisely, as regards parental involvement, the authors try to examine the influence of early parental involvement in their children' schooling. The parental answers to questions like: "how often do parents read books with the child at an early age", "the parental participation in school-related activities such as whether parents participate in the local governance", "the provision of resources to the child such as subscription to a magazine" and finally, "the everydays activities with the child such as discussing political or social issues with the child" constitute the data corpus for analyzing. It seems that the parental involvement variable has a modest effect on social and cultural status (ESCS). In the same direction, it appears that measured school policies and practices have a greater effect in mediating the influence of background on test scores than measured parental involvement activities.

Rakocevic (2014), from international perspective, tries to analyze the active parental involvement in the education of their children. Three different questions guide the work:

1) What do they do when they are involved both at home and at school?

2) How to measure this parental involvement and how to interpret the results?

3) How do the results vary depending on the population characteristics including social status?

In order to bring some elements of answer to these questions, the author uses both PISA database and four national measures (French, Finnish, British and Swedish) likely to explain how parents are involved in students' schooling and give some examples of efficient practices. In conclusion, the author says that national and regional specificities and characteristics have to be taken into consideration in order to be able to give an international interpretation of parental involvement in education. For example, how responsibilities are shared between schools and families and the status of the educational institution in society, specific to each country are these kinds of important elements to consider. Instruments of measures also deserve attention since a valid and reliable measurement, for example

the ability of parents' initiative, is very strongly linked to it. Taking into account the different characteristics of the parental populations consequently refines our understanding of its involvement in education. Socio-economic and cultural disadvantaged parents seem to be, on average, less involved than other parents. The author points at some exceptions as, for example, the spirit of initiative that modest families in Denmark develop and the interest that they have in exchanging with teachers. In other countries, the questionnaires for families easily capture the dynamism of the middle and upper classes parents, but they leave partly in shadow the involvement of popular families that appears as important as in middle and upper families. Culturally far from the school system and ill-equipped to relate to school, these disadvantaged families are naturally the privileged recipients of measures designed to enhance parental involvement. Some of these measures provide interesting ways of improving the link between the school and families. Research carried out in some countries point out that the link is of prime importance to sustainable involvement of parents, especially in disadvantaged communities. In addition, regardless of social status, interactive activities involving families and teachers are likely to generate broad support from parents. However, progress remains to be done to accurately assess the effects of these observed changes in the relationship and parental involvement on student' success. It also seems important to better understand the ways through which this effect is accomplished.

Transversal findings from international research

- Paying a great attention to school and teachers' practices because it seems that parental involvement has not always a direct influence on school success. In some situations, schools effects may be considered like a better determinant of academic outcomes. In this way, stakeholders have to take into consideration school policies and practices since they could have a greater effect in mediating the influence of family background on outcomes than parental involvement activities. Training teachers to foster family-school-community exchanges therefore can become a challenge to improve students' school success.
- Promoting higher levels of parental involvement could be associated with an increasing of student's both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. This high-quality parental involvement could be an interesting way to reduce the performance differences whatever socio-economic groups.
- Taking into account the different characteristics of the parental populations can consequently refine the understanding of its involvement in education: it becomes therefore it is important to act locally and on the basis of a precise context analysis.
- Supporting and promoting the link between the school and families. This link is of prime importance to sustainable involvement of parents, especially in disadvantaged communities. Also, regardless of social status, interactive activities involving families and teachers are likely to generate broad support of parents.
- Reinforcing the research regarding the school-family-community in order 1) to accurately assess the effects of the relationship and parental engagement on student' success and 2) to better understand the ways through which this effect happens.

School-family-community programs

Introduction

According to Domina (2005), since the 1980s, a great attention has been given to improving children's school education by enhancing parental involvement. However, it appears that the effectiveness of parental involvement is not always proved. The reason is maybe, already pointed by Baker in 1997, that there is little consensus about what constitutes effective parental involvement: what kind of activities, goals or desired outcomes have to be considered in parental involvement program and practices. Moreover, it seems that parents meet few opportunities to express their own feelings and perspectives regarding what parental involvement means to them and what they need to become efficient in accompanying their children's schooling and to make school-home partnerships work. Therefore, it appears important to underline what kinds of results are highlighted by the analysis of parental involvement programs.

For this section, we focus on two recent articles:

Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education, 47*(4), 706-742.

Larivée, S. (in press). Les programmes d'implication efficaces en milieux défavorisés : une recension des écrits. *Revue Internationale d'Education Familiale*.

In his meta-analysis, **Jeynes** (2012) examines, through 51 studies, the relationship between different types of parental involvement programs and their influence on the academic achievement of pre-kindergarten-12th-grade school children. Two research questions guide the analysis and the interpretation of the results: 1) "Is there a statistically significant relationship between school-based parental involvement programs and students' academic outcomes?" and 2) "What specific types of parental involvement programs help those students the most? "

For the first question, the results indicate that there is a significant relationship between parental involvement programs, whatever their specificities, and the academic success of students. The author points out that the strongest influence is observed for the programs established elementary school rather than the secondary level. Two hypothesis are given by the author to explain this difference: 1) the value of parental involvement seems to be more easily emphasized at the lower grades than at the higher grades and 2) for schools, it seems easier to enhance parental involvement when students attend elementary school than when they are in secondary school.

For the second question, the author underlines the fact that parental involvement can be efficient and he specifies what kinds of parental involvement are the most powerful. It seems that parental programs dedicated to involving parents and their children reading together, enhancing parents to check their children's homework, fostering the parents-teachers communication and partnering with one another are those that are the most positive influence on academic outcomes.

The author concludes that: "the positive association between parental involvement programs and educational outcomes also suggests a direction of causality. That is, academic achievement would not influence the presence of parental involvement programs; rather, the reverse would be true. Although fathers and mothers who initiate high levels of support are more likely to have an ameliorative effect than those parents responding to a particular parental support initiative, it is nevertheless important

to discover if parental involvement programs benefit students. For years, teachers and others have opined that many of the scholastically weakest students suffer from a dearth of parental support and engagement. As a result, inspiring parents to become involved, through various programmatic means, could spawn a considerable improvement in educational outcomes among these students" (p. 731).

In his article, **Larivée** (in press) presents the results of a literature review from 2000 to 2009, on parental involvement programs in disadvantaged areas. Specifically, this review tries to highlight the types of programs and the most effective forms of parent involvement to support student success in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Thirty-two programs were analyzed, which identified the characteristics of effective parental involvement in programs dedicated to socioeconomically disadvantaged families. The review also highlights the dynamic, complex and multidimensional characteristics of school-family-community relationship and parental involvement process.

This literature review underlines some positive influence of the programs on the parental involvement. These results belong to two main dimensions: 1) organizational and 2) relational.

For the first point, the organizational one, it appears that taking into consideration the place where the intervention will be held (home, school, and day nursery) is important. Behind this concern appears the problem of the parental time management: it is necessary to help parents balance their professional time with the family time. Another point is related to the scheduling of meetings and/or activities. It is necessary to take into consideration the needs, the availability of parents and to suggest flexible schedules. Reflecting on the pertinence of intervention programs objectives seems to be another aspect that also influences the parental involvement. Finally, the author insists on the fact that, to be efficient, programs have to examine other organizational aspects before implementing. One of these is the quality of the program itself or offered services linked to human, economic and material resources and enabling the sustainability of the program or planned activities (at short, medium or long term). For example, it seems that the more efficient programs are those that anticipate time to enable the meetings between actors in order to plan action, to collaborate, to exchange, etc. Moreover, efficiency is further reinforced when there is a real continuity between policies, services, resources and actions taken.

For the second point, the relational one, few facilitators are identified. However, the author points out some essential aspects. The first one is related to parental invitation and the energy that is used to enhance parental involvement. Few parents are present if activities and/or meetings are not advertised and if parents are not directly and personally solicited to get involved. Another element is related to the communication. It seems important to adapt to the targeted parents both the content and the form of messages. The paper must be easily understood. This challenge is particularly important for disadvantaged families with low literacy level or if parents belong to a pluricultural or multilingual background. To maximize the exchanges with parents, establishing a positive and constructive relationship, as soon as possible, constitutes an efficient way. Too often, professionals-parents relationships are part of the problem-solving process without previously establishing "neutral or positive" contacts. Finally, Larivée asserts that a follow-up of the relationship with parents must be realized: home visiting, phone calls, text messages or any other strategies adapted to the realities of families, maintaining a link through regular exchanges can be efficient.

In conclusion, the author insists on the fact that the literature identifies school-family collaboration as one of the important determinants of academic success. Studies also show that schools that put into

practice one or more forms of school-family collaboration (communication with parents, parental involvement in school management or educational activities, etc.) promote students' academic success. However, these collaborative practices are not always sufficiently described in the programs to easily replicate these interventions in other settings. The author also notes that these actions focus more on the primary school than on secondary level. The author also notices the lake of consideration for the relationship with community. It appears that it is still important to continue the review of approach and analysis in connection with these objectives. Focus has to be granted on programs themselves, contexts of intervention and level of education attended by children of targeted parents. The goal is to identify research evidence supporting the dissemination of the best practices on the field.

Transversal findings from school-family-community programs

- Developing parental involvement programs appears to have a positive impact on academic achievement whatever the specificities of these parental involvement programs. It seems that powerful programs are those both oriented to enhancing home parental involvement as well as improving school parental involvement.
- Paying attention to a series of concrete elements that can improve the efficiency of the school-family exchanges such as the place where the meetings are held, the schedule of these meetings regarding the needs and the availability of parents or the quality of the communication regarding the parents' literacy ability for example.
- Taking into consideration, before implementing, the quality of the developed programs to maximize their short-medium and long term influence : definition of goals, evaluating the real needs related to human, economic and material resources and ensuring the continuity between policies, services, resources and actions taken.
- Involving community actors in the programs not only schools and parents.
- Suggesting school-family-community programs for primary and secondary levels.
- Fostering a constructive and positive relationship with parents before problems and difficulties occur.
- Still developing the research, both in qualitative and quantitative ways, in order to bring new elements of understanding to this school-family-community relationship issue.

Meta-analysis and research review

Introduction

Meta-analysis and research review include statistical methods or synthesis approach in order to contrast and to combine results from different studies. The aim is to identify patterns among study results, sources of disagreement among those results, or other interesting relationships that may be highlighted in the context of multiple studies. In this way, meta-analysis and research review can be considered as global studies about previously led research on the same issue. The main goal of a meta-analysis and research review is to aggregate information in order to achieve a higher power (statistical or not) for the measure of interest, as opposed to a less precise measure derived from a single study.

We aim at underlining some convergent and interesting findings resulting from the crossing of many studies related to the issue of school-family-community relationship and parental involvement. Bringing together many data on a same problematic can lead to a better understanding of concrete difficulties and hence, bring better solutions to durably implement the results.

We underline again the fact that through this text, we do not seek completeness. We would just like to highlight recent and validated research findings to guide us in finding concrete and strong ways to improve the school-family-community relationships. This work is just a recent overview of what the research points as levers to enhance the parental involvement in their children' school education.

In this session, our focus will be on:

Castro, M., Exposito-Casas, E., Lopez-Martin, E. Lizasoain, L., Navarro-Asencio, E. & Gaviria, J. L. (2015). Parental involvement on student academic achievement. *Educational Research Review, 14*, 33-46.

Dusi, P. (2012). The family-school relationships in Europe: a research review. *CEPS Journal, 2*(1), 13-33.

Fan, X. & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: a meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review, 13*(1), 1-22.

Wider, S. (2013). Effects of parental involvement on academic achievement: a meta-synthesis. *Educational Review, 66*(33), 377-397.

Castro et al. (2015) realize a quantitative synthesis about parental involvement and academic achievement. Their meta-analysis includes 37 studies in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools carried out between 2000 and 2013. Different components of parental involvement are considered: 1) general description of parental involvement, 2) communication with children on school issues, 3) parental supervision on homework, 4) parental expectations, 5) reading with children, 6) parental attendance and participation in school activities and 7) parental style. Regarding the academic achievement, seven categories were used: 1) general achievement, 2) mathematics, 3) reading, 4) sciences, 5) social studies, 6) foreign language and 7) other curricular subject (art, music, etc.). The authors conclude that the variables related to 1) the parental expectations (maximum level of studies parents expect for their children), 2) the communication with children about school activities and schoolwork and 3) the development of reading habits constitute the strongest constitute the strongest factors linked to academic achievement (the strongest association is found for the general measure of achievement). These findings are consistent with previous research and point out that the most efficient kinds of parental involvement has to do with accompanying and supervising children's main school goals, which are to study and to learn. Briefly, according to Castro and his colleagues, the most successful parental involvement, regarding the positive influence on school achievement, corresponds to an active intervention pattern of parents. A last conclusion deserves our attention. The authors wonder if the variable related to parental expectations, given its nature, must be taken into consideration in parental involvement research. Even if this concept reports a passive attitude of parents rather than an active behavior, it seems that it is actually important to include this aspect in the studies. As the strength of the associations found and its constant presence in almost every study hold in the meta-analysis, authors therefore "wonder if there is any way to influence it through specific interventions, aimed at improving parents' perceptions of their children, and the possibilities offered by education for the bettering of their children's life" (p. 44).

Dusi (2012) presents and argues findings from a research review in the field of school-family relationships realizing for the whole of Europe. It appears that the same conclusions can be drawn from parents' and teachers' declarations: good collaboration between home and school is useful to the child-student for his education and learning. However, the author highlights that parent-teacher relationships in Europe constitute an unsolved issue. She completes the conclusion pointing out the fact that parent-teacher relationships is complex: it calls into play various social spheres: macro (social), intermediary (institutional) and micro (relational). If the reality is clearly different for each school, transversal conclusions can nevertheless be made: scarce parental participation, lack of adequate forms of home-school communications, and the need to make investments in parent and teacher training. Despite these critical findings, Dusi (2012) reminds that, to contribute to the processes of new training generations, family and school have to develop constructive and efficient exchanges: "they both need each other in order to carry out that task in the best way" (p. 13).

Since **Fan & Chen** (2001) considered the results from empirical studies on parental involvement were inconsistent, they decided to conduct a meta-analysis on this issue. Both the multifaceted nature of the parental involvement and different measurements for academic achievement have been probably contributed to these inconsistencies. Their meta-analysis synthetize the quantitative literature about the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. As results, the authors show that there exist a small to moderate relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. They highlight that the strongest association, observed with the achievement, refers to parental expectation for children's education achievement. They also point out that home supervision appears to have the weakest relationship with the academic achievement. Finally, they show that is the general variable reporting students' academic achievement constitute the better indicator for reporting the school output. They finish their conclusion as saying that: "Researchers who plan to examine the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement should pay special attention to the operational definition and measurement of parental involvement, and should carefully document such definition and measurement. If possible, different dimensions of parental involvement should be measured separately, instead of being summed up into a general composite. Also, in future studies, researchers should carefully consider how academic achievement can be measured most appropriately" (p. 17).

Wilder (2015) makes the synthesis of nine meta-analysis that analyze the influence of parental involvement on academic achievement. Parental involvement, generally considered as parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children, appears to adopt various components given the considered study. In the meta-analysis analyzed by the author, the most prominent types of parental involvement are: communication between parents and children regarding school, checking and helping with homework, parental educational expectations and aspirations for children, and attendance and participation in school activities. Three main question research guide the analyze work (p. 379):

1. "What findings regarding the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement are supported by the majority of meta-analyses included in the meta-synthesis?
2. However, parental involvement is a complex concept that encompasses various components, such as participation in school activities, homework assistance, and academic expectations for children. In addition to multiple definitions of parental involvement, various assessments of academic achievement could also present problems during the synthesis stage of the study that would

challenge the usefulness of the findings. To address these concerns, we considered two subsidiary research questions: Do different definitions of parental involvement contribute to the inconsistencies in the findings of meta-analyses with regard to the impact of parental involvement on student academic achievement?

3. Do various measures of academic achievement contribute to the inconsistencies in the findings of meta-analyses with regard to the impact of parental involvement on student academic achievement?" (p. 379)

For the first question, the author, as already shown in previous research, the variable related to parental expectations is the strongest association with academic achievement. The author does not reveal any positive relationship between homework assistance and student academic achievement. We also note that, for some studies, it seems that the relationship is negative. The author suggests the hypothesis that most parents are not trained to teach some contents, regardless of their difficulty or they may not be at ease with teaching methods. The author also adds that some students may not benefit much from this type of involvement. The results further highlight that parental involvement significantly and positively influences children's academic achievement regardless of their grade levels even if some studies underline a difference in favor of primary level. The author explains that parents may have a better mastery of contents in earlier grades. He also suggests that, when students become older, they need autonomy and want to become independent from their parents. A last result is related to the ethnicity aspect. Findings bring to light that, regardless the cultural background of families, parental involvement still positively influences academic achievement. For the researcher, this result is very important because "it confirms that parental involvement may significantly contribute to reducing the achievement gap between different ethnic groups (p. 393).

For the questions 2 and 3, the results of the meta-analysis highlight that parental involvement has a positive influence on academic achievement whatever the considered type of parental involvement. Moreover, it appears that this positive association is still be present whatever the type of academic achievement measure. Nevertheless, it seems that the strength of the relationship is affected: the more the measure is global, the more the relationship is strong.

Wilder suggests some advice to go further in the understanding of parental influence on academic achievement. If it is clear that the various components of parental involvement differently impact the academic achievement, it appears important, to Wilder, to understand why. "There are plausible rationales for promoting both standardized and non-standardized measures in order to more effectively capture the impact of parental involvement on academic achievement, but there is still no sufficient evidence that confirms that one type of measure is more appropriate than the other" (p. 394). Finally, regarding the inconsistency of findings related to parental homework supervision and assistance, it could be interesting to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research in order to determine how this type of parental involvement can lead to improvement in children's academic performance.

Transversal findings from meta-analysis and research review

- Fostering schools and families in order to develop constructive and efficient exchanges likely to contribute to the processes of new training generations because it is clear that, schools and families, both need each other in order to carry out that task in the best way.

- Reflecting on the operationalization of the parental involvement measurement in order to better understand the presence or the absence of relationship between some components of this measure and academic achievement.
- As the strength of the associations found between parental aspirations / expectations (considered as the maximum level of studies parents expect for their children) and academic achievement, developing practical ways to influence it through specific interventions, aimed at improving parents' perceptions of their children, and the possibilities offered by education for the bettering of their children's life.
- Still conducting research, both qualitative and quantitative, on the influence of parental homework supervision and assistance to better understand why and how this measure could lead to improvement in children's academic performance.
- Deeply investigating the relationship between the various components of parental involvement, the cultural and ethnic background of parents and the academic achievement.

Policy Keys

Through the EU experts' contributions but also through the research literature review, we can conclude that it may be efficient that schools, families and communities work together to build strong educational partnerships. Both the experts' conclusions and research findings highlight the positive influence of bringing closer school, family and community on the level of parental involvement, regardless the socio-economic and cultural status of families. Moreover, it becomes clear that parental involvement can become an efficient way to improve students' school persistence and reduce early school leaving.

We will structure the presentation of policy keys delivered from "workshop 6" reflections on the basis of the EU three axes: prevention, intervention and compensation. According to Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2005), if we have to focus on parental involvement, we also have to pay attention to the ways we use to reach that goal. The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's model of parental involvement takes into consideration three central questions that are: **Why do parents become involved in children's education? What do they do when they are involved** (i.e., what mechanisms of influence do parents engage when they are involved)? **How does their involvement, once engaged, influence student outcomes?** To be efficient, school actors - stakeholders, headmasters, teachers, social workers, psychologists, health workers, etc. - have to be conscious that understanding the reasons why parents become involved, how they are involved and why they still continue this process along the whole students' schooling is the key of success of an efficient school-family-community relationship.

Axe 1: Prevention

Developing a coherent set of actions against school dropout inside a comprehensive and systemic child policy:

- **which addresses childhood from birth to the end of compulsory education**
- **which considers the different life environments of the child (not only school) and transitions**
- **which clarifies what type of family/community involvement is expected**
- **which supports equity**

Setting good conditions to foster family-school-community relationships:

- **By providing training and information to each actor and working on parents/teachers mutual attitudes and beliefs**

Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misperceptions and distrust can flourish between parents and school actors (teachers, headmasters, psychologists, etc.). Programs (both for pre-service and in-service teachers and for the other actors, parents included) dedicated to communication have to be developed in order to teach to each actor how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school.

In order to concretely and efficiently act towards parents, different typologies exist to improve intervention related to communicational improvement. The Epstein's typology is one of the best and most famous typology. The author defines six axes that make the intervention towards families more efficient using a positive and constructive communication.

1. **Parenting** : promotes and supports parenting skills and the family's primary role in encouraging children's learning at each age and grade level;
2. **Communicating** : promotes clear two-way communication between the school and families about school programs and children's progress;
3. **Volunteering** : provides appropriate training and involves families in instructional and support areas both in and out of school;
4. **Learning at home** : involves families in learning activities at home, including interactive homework and other curriculum-linked or enrichment activities;
5. **Decision making** : provides opportunities for all families to develop and strengthen their leadership role in school decisions;
6. **Collaborating with the community**: provides coordinated access to community resources for children and families, and serves as a resource to the community.

- **By taking into account the characteristics of specific school and family contexts**

This can consequently refine the understanding of its involvement in education: it becomes therefore important to act locally and on the basis of a precise context analysis.

- **By supporting and promoting the link between school and families**

This link is of prime importance to sustainable parental involvement, especially in disadvantaged communities. In addition, regardless social status, interactive activities involving families and teachers are likely to generate broad support of parents.

- **By reinforcing the research regarding the school-family-community**

Two main goals are targeted: 1) accurately assessing the effects of the relationship and parental involvement on students' success and 2) better understanding the ways through which this effect happens.

- **By clarifying the roles, rights and duties of each actor and emphasizing their complementarity**
- **By considering parents and community as true partners**

Developing parental involvement programs, involving at the same time school, family and community actors, from preschool to secondary levels.

These parental involvement programs appear to have a positive impact on academic achievement whatever the specificities of these programs. It seems that the most powerful programs are those both oriented to enhancing home parental involvement as well as improving school parental involvement.

Axe 2: Intervention

Promoting parental involvement by implementing an effective collaboration, based on respect, between involved actors

- **By beginning and implementing the relationship before problems and difficulties emerge**

It seems very important to get in touch and develop relationship before problems occur. The exchanges appear to be easier if a prior knowledge of everyone involved has already begun before looking for solutions to personal and complex difficulties.

- **By implementing an effective information and communication between actors (basis of a future collaboration/ cooperation/partnership) in order to build reciprocal trust**

Trust between parents and teachers is a vital element in building and maintaining the family-school-community relationship. If a reciprocal trust is developed between each involved actor, each of them tends to believe that the others are qualified, fair, and dependable and focuses on the interest of the young above all. It seems that trust is built little by little, based on sustained interactions between the parties in question. The more parties interact over time, the more their willingness to trust one another is based upon the other party's actions and their perceptions of one another's intentions, competence, and integrity.

- **By understanding roles and responsibilities of all the actors**

Parental role refers to parental beliefs about what is possible for them to do for their child. It appears that parents would be likely to invest better in the school education of their children if they become aware that participation is an integral part of their parenting. This understanding of parenting will determine the kind of activities that parents will consider as important. The construction of parenting may take three distinct forms depending on whether the focus is on: 1) the parents (parents are absolutely convinced that they are primarily responsible for the academic success of their children); 2) school (parents think school is ultimately responsible for the academic success of the child) or 3) partnership (parents believe that their child's academic success depends on the relationship they have with the school and the teacher). Parenting is influenced by groups which parents belong to such as family, school and workplace. This understanding of parenting is therefore of particular importance since it is responsible for the kind of activities that the parents think necessary for their children's education. Furthermore, parents who develop active perception of parenting tend to involve themselves more significantly in their children's education than parents who have a more passive perception of their role.

- **By supporting parental efficiency and helping parents to develop their school knowledge and skills**

The parental efficiency includes the beliefs of the parents, with respect to their personal skills, to be able to make the difference in the academic performance of their children through their involvement in their children's school curriculum. It seems that they will decide to get involved in the school education of their children only if they believe they have the skills and knowledge to support their children in their academic tasks.

- **By taking time and paying attention to invite and answer questions from each actor**

If school invitations are made in a positive and constructive climate, they can participate to encourage parents to be involved in children's learning at home. Different kinds of invitations exist:

- **General invitations** : from school regarding a special event or activities that are dedicated to all parents and tell them that they are welcomed and considered as a valuable resource for supporting students' learning and success. A welcoming school-climate, friendly newsletters describing students' grade-level works, and clear suggestions for home-based support of learning constitute some examples of concrete contents of these general invitations. The main goal of this kind of invitation is to show to parents that their involvement is expected, wanted and important to the child's learning. By these invitations, parents can only understand that what they do at home or at school is efficient and can positively influence the child's academic achievement. It seems that such invitations are particularly important for families who feel uncertain and ill at ease about involvement because they did not well in school themselves, they come from another country (and mainly for those who are not native speakers), they care alone for their children, they feel on the margins of society in general and schools in particular, etc.

- **Specific invitations**: from school or community actors (teachers, headmasters or any community actors) regarding a specific task or question related to child's schooling. This kind of invitation is related to request from teachers or community actors likely to help child at home or promoting the parental involvement in school-based activities. The focus is on how parents can concretely help their children succeed in school.

- **Specific invitations:** from children regarding a request of help for school-related-activities, at home or at school. This kind of invitation is related to child's requests, formulated towards parents in order to help him/her to achieve school tasks at home or to attend a school event. It is important to note that specific invitations from children can be explicit or implicit. A child output (for example, grade level, general school performance) and behaviors (for example, difficulty with homework or valuing parental help) can be invitations as valid as : "I don't understand this problem ! Help me" or "It helps when you explain things!" Most parents are responsive to their child's general characteristics and, most parents try to bring a support to the child's explicit needs. It seems that these two kinds of child's invitations constitute two important contextual motivators of parental involvement.

- **By holding meetings at mutually convenient times and places**

In order to build strong relationships, families, community actors and school staff members need time to get to know one another, plan how they will work together to improve student learning, and carry out their plans. In order to develop school-family-community partnerships, successful interventions underline that time and resources are necessary for teachers, community actors and parents.

- **By presenting information necessary for decision making and insuring that everyone has the same information**

- **By bridging school and family**

Language and cultural differences as well as differences in educational achievement are able to create a gap between families and school staff. This gap can therefore makes communication and family participation in school activities difficult. Strategies to address these differences include reaching out to parents with little formal education, addressing language differences through bilingual services for communicating both orally and in writing with families about school programs and children's progress, and promoting cultural understanding to build trust between home and school.

- **By using external supports for partnerships**

Many schools have strengthened partnerships by using the supports available in their local communities and beyond. Collaborative efforts to provide schools and families with the tools they need to support children's learning can include partnerships with local businesses, health care and other community service agencies, as well as colleges and universities.

- **By supporting teachers and parents in their projects through multi-professional teams**

Axe 3: Compensation

- **Equipping field actors (including school actors) in order that young people better know their rights and the rules prevailing within institutions, particularly those of second chance education and employment assistance.**

- **Providing individual support for students and families through school and local authorities, representatives of the world of work and all the other stakeholders.**

- **Supporting associations, including those offering ongoing training, which perform an accompaniment of the young people in all its dimensions and enable them to develop it.**

- **Diversifying strategies in order to reintegrate young people either back to school or to work places**

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