

Reframing parental involvement for school self-evaluation and improvement with Epstein's model

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VALU•E



Parents' involvement in the Italian school system

it is regulated by national laws and follows widespread practices (Fiore, 2021; Pieri, 2018; Storai et al. 2018)

1. Parents' participation in the School board, with election of the parents' members
2. Parents' participation in class councils, with election of parents' representatives at class level
3. School funding. The school asks parents to pay an annual voluntary fee for specific purposes.
4. Parent teacher conferences. The school invite parents for general meetings at the class or school level.
5. Individual parent teacher meetings. Teachers inform parents on the progresses of the students.
6. Volunteer activities. Parents collaborate for preparing events, activities and others.
7. Informing and communicating. The school provide information to parents by emails, website and electronic register.

Equity issues:

- How to reach all parents (single parents, foreign parents, parents with lower socio-economic status)?
- How to go beyond a formal involvement of parents?

Epstein's model for parental involvement (2001)

Parenting

Communicating

Volunteering

Learning at
home

Decision making

Collaborating
with the
community

Aim, objectives and tools

Exploring schools' views on the relationship with families and the community



- Examining the section «Relationships with families and local communities» in the School Self-evaluation Reports (RAVs).
- Analyzing the paragraphs “Strengths” “Weaknesses” within the section «Relationships with families and local communities».
- Replying the methodology applied in a previous study (Poliandri et al, 2019) for content analysis of RAVs.
- Content analysis to quantify and analyze the presence, **meanings** and relationships of words; classification of themes

Research questions

- Which themes concerning school, family and community relationships emerge from schools' documents?
- Which are the most discussed themes by schools and why?
- Which are the less explored themes and why?
- Can we link these themes to the Epstein's 6 types of involvement?
- To what extent can Epstein's 6 types of involvement help redesign the framework for school relationships with family and community in the Italian context?

Method

Unit of analysis

A sample of 725 RAVs filled in by schools in school year 2014-2015 and 2017-2018
Corpus: paragraphs "Strengths" "Weaknesses" within the section «Relationships with families and local communities

Lexicometric-hermeneutical integrated approach
(Della Ratta-Rinaldi 2007) in alternative sequence (Niglas 2000;
Poliandri et al 2019; Favazzi 2020)

Sequence analysis

Lexicometric

Hermeneutical

Lexicometric

- Lexical richness measures (type/token ratio, hapax %)
- Word frequency analysis
- Extraction of repeated phrases
- Topic extraction

- Keyword in context
- Keyword retrieval
- Construction of thematic vocabularies

- Cross tabs

Software: QDA Miner WordStat.

Lexicometric approach – first step

LEXICAL FREQUENCY PROFILE 2014/15 RAV

STRENGTHS

Corpus large size (> 100.000 token, Bolasco, 1999)

Words per paragraph: 28,8

8.063 types

148.941 token

Type/token ratio is equal to 0,054
(< 20%)
% hapax = 47,3%

WEAKNESSES

Corpus medium size (58.000 token, Bolasco, 1999)

Words per paragraph: 24,0

4.831 types

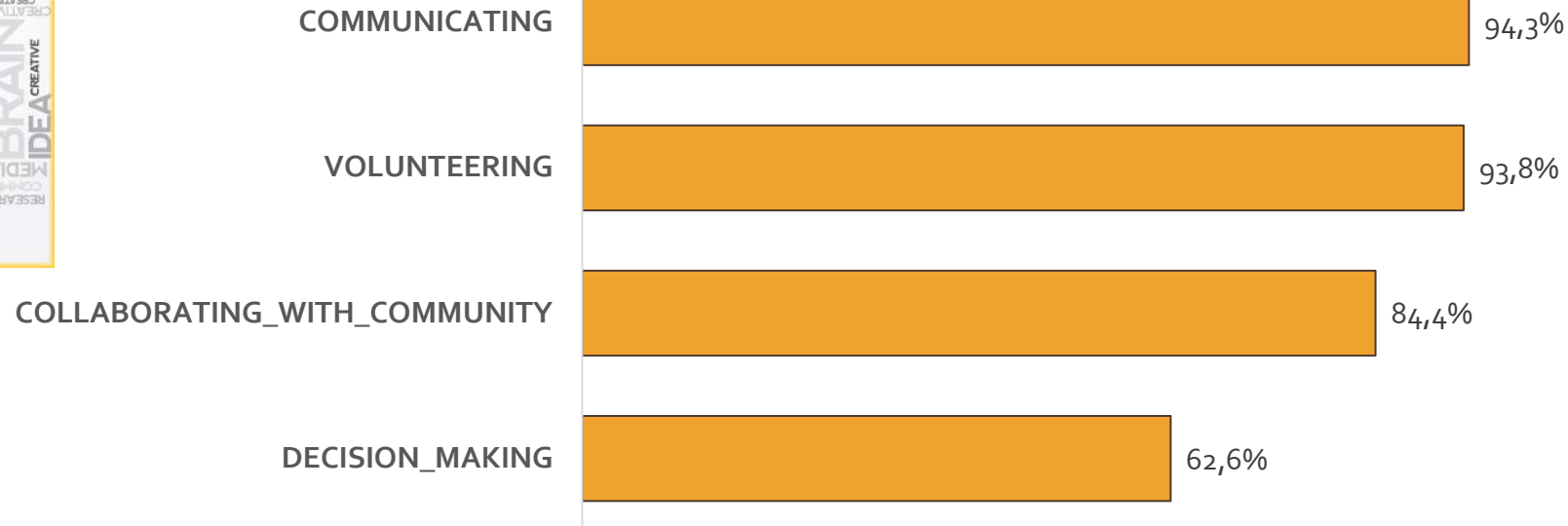
58.527 token

Type/token ratio is equal to 0,083
(< 20%)
% hapax = 49,0%

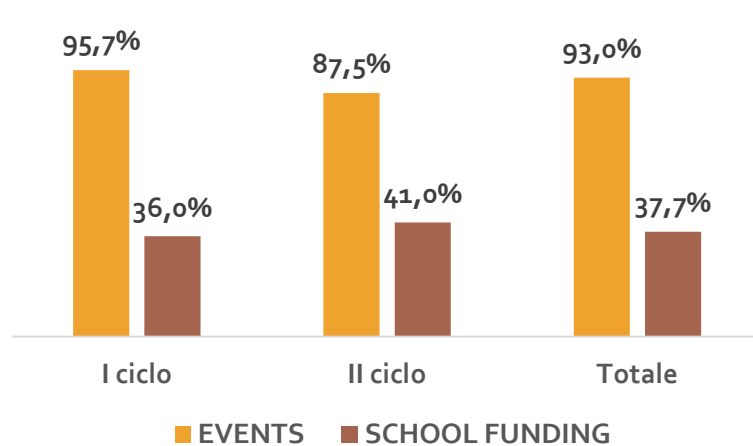
In order to analyse texts thematic structure, WordStat Topic extraction procedure was launched which led to the identification of a limited number of topic for strenghts and weaknesses.

Strengths: thematic vocabulary categories - a.s 2014/15 (% of cases)

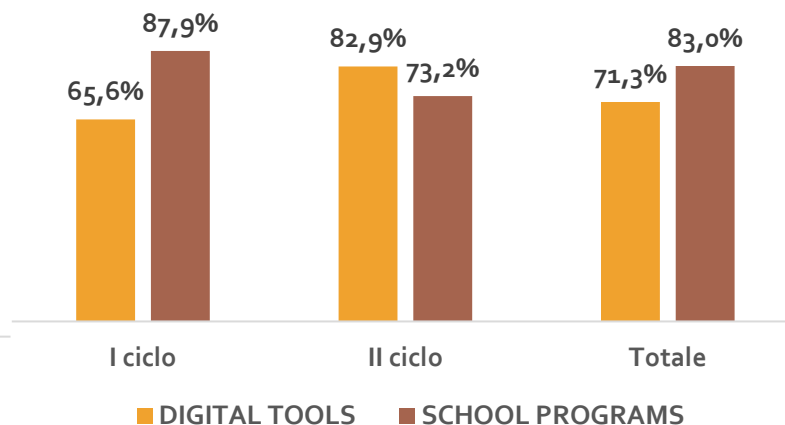
Starting from the results of Topic extraction, a vocabulary of the main topics covered was elaborated



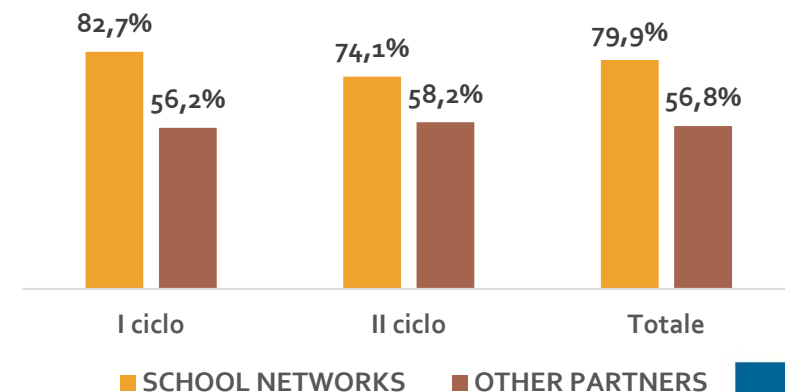
VOLUNTEERING



COMMUNICATING

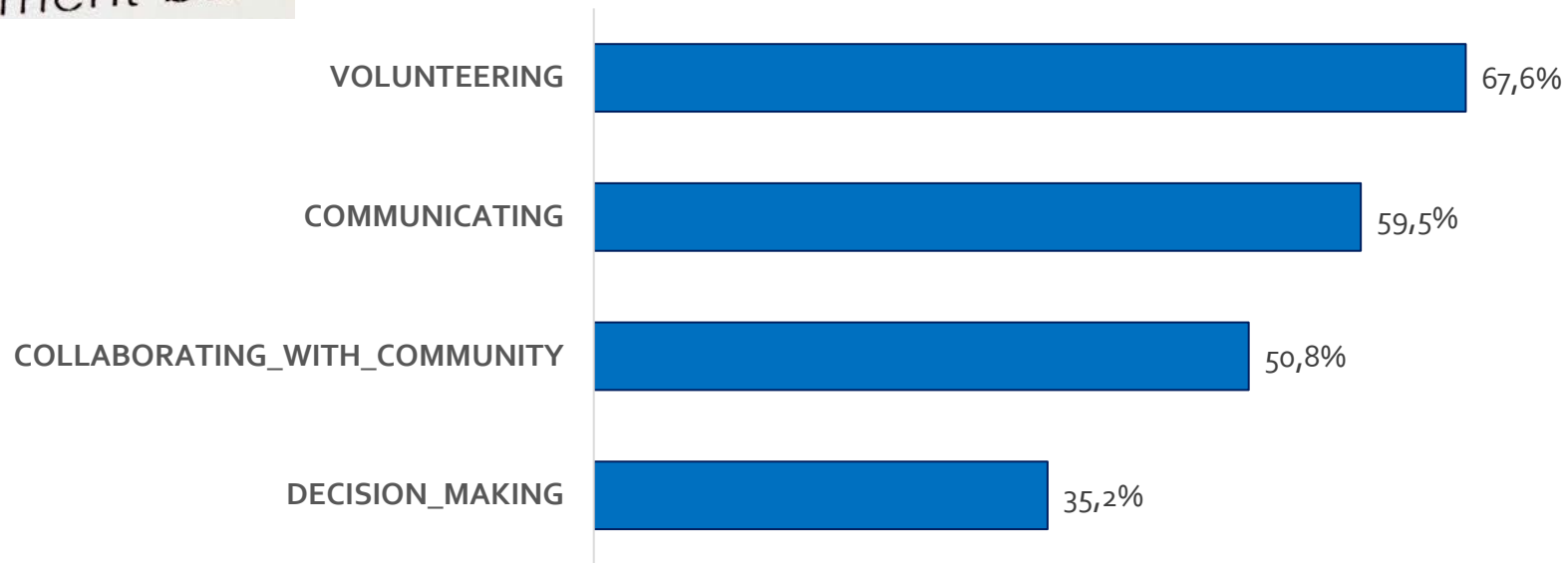


COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

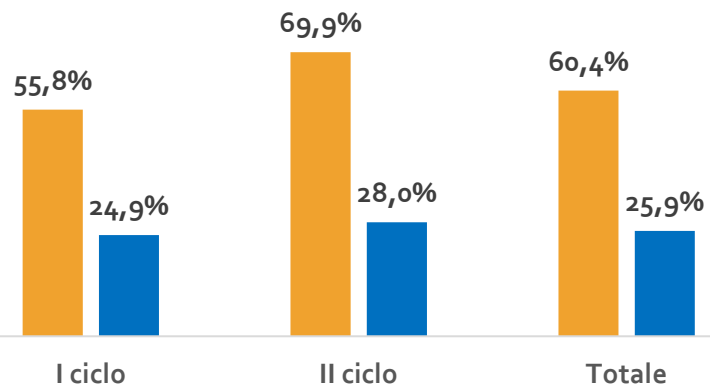


y weaknesses
al investment bank

Weaknesses: thematic vocabulary categories – s.y. 2014/15 (% of cases)

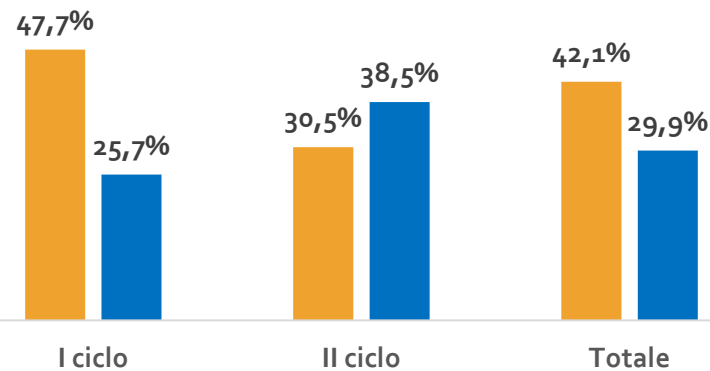


VOLUNTEERING



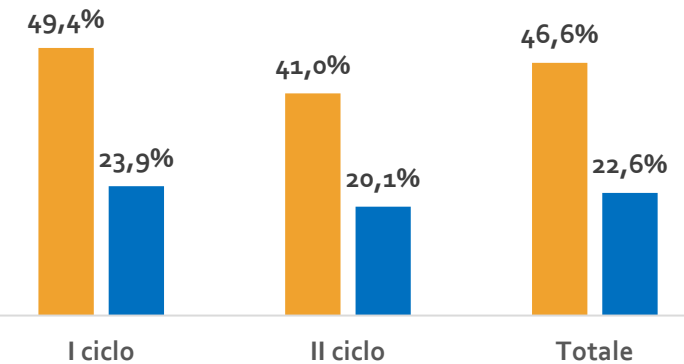
EVENTS SCHOOL FUNDING

COMMUNICATING



DIGITAL TOOLS SCHOOL PROGRAMS

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY



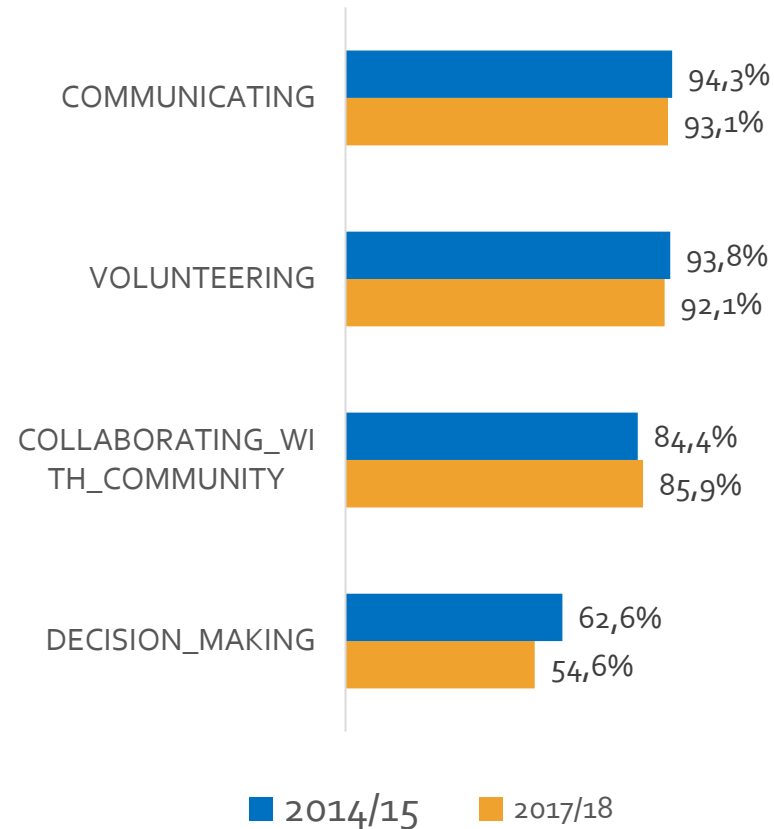
SCHOOL NETWORKS OTHER PARTNERS

Strengths & weaknesses - Thematic vocabulary – s.y. 2014/15 and 2017/18* (% of cases)

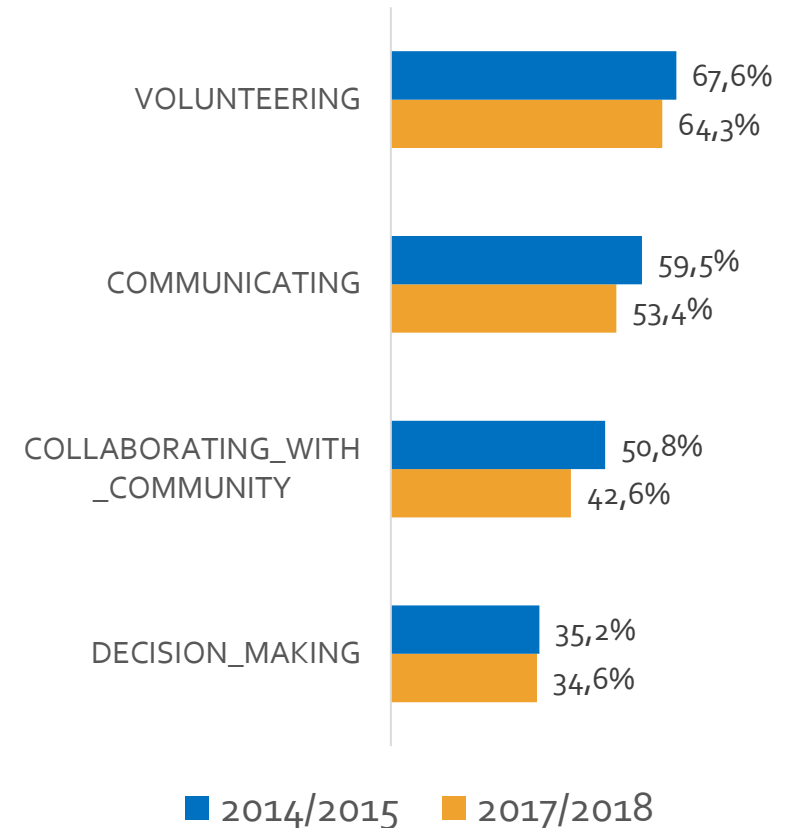
What has changed and what has been confirmed comparing 2015 and 2018?



Strengths



Weaknesses



* Same sample of schools.

Discussion & future developments

- Two types of parental involvement in RAVs are missing, **Parenting** and **Learning at home**. The Covid 19 health emergency has changed - among other things - the school-family relationship, showing the importance of family resources, well-being at home and parents' support for children learning.
- The other Epstein' types of involvement are explored by the schools in some respects, while others remain unexplored. For instance, **Communicating** should concern not only the availability of digital tools, but also the quality of communication. **Decision Making** should consider not only the level of parents' participation, but also how parents contribute to decision making.
- We suggest it would be useful defining a new framework for school family partnerships for the Italian context, by introducing new aspects, related to the role of schools and families as partners for supporting students' learning, and by revising the aspects already present.
- Finally, the section concerning the relationships with parents in the RAV format should be revised in order to support schools reflecting on their actual practices and develop strategies for improvement.

References

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