

Thematic Article

Parent-Teacher Communication from the Perspective of the Educator

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Abstract

Several, mostly quantitative, studies have already examined the relationship between teachers and parents, as well as the positive effects of parental involvement. The aim of this study is to explore how parental involvement is realized in communication between the two actors. In the framework of a qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 teachers teaching in elementary schools, and the analysis was performed using the Atlas.ti software. Based on our findings, we concluded that regular communication, common language use, a positive attitude from both parties, and the appropriate use of information and communication technology tools are essential for effective communication. The practical significance of this is that teacher trainees should also emphasize practical education, with a special focus on their ability to establish appropriate communication with parents of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Keywords: parental involvement; maintaining contact; communication

Introduction

„*The teacher-student-parent triangle must function rock-solidly and consciously,*” expressed one of the interviewees. In our qualitative research, we investigate how this system of relationships works by examining communication from selected segments of the Epstein model (2010), the main subject of this study. This is done through analyzing interviews with educators teaching in state and church primary schools. All of this is aimed at expanding our previous quantitative research – following the exploration of parents’ and educators’ values and educational principles – to now seek the realization of parental involvement in communication. We present the channels, forms, participants, and challenges of formal and informal, verbal and written, personal and online communication taking place among the actors, whether involving one or multiple individuals.

A review of the literature

A series of domestic and international studies confirm (Epstein, 2001, 2011; Korte, 2001; Hegedűs and Podráczky, 2012; Lannert and Szekszárdi, 2015; Kathyné and Nagy, 2017; Bacskai 2020) that the collaboration between families and schools, parents and educators, occurring with appropriate quality and frequency, positively influences academic performance. Research related to parental involvement was significantly aided by Epstein’s (2010) six-dimensional typology, in which he emphasized that the participation of both families and schools, parents and educators, is equally important in building their relationship.

According to Bacskai (2020), parents’ communication with educators functions properly when there is no significant disparity between the expectations of the family and the school, when parents can accept and support the school’s objectives, and when they focus on similar values. Perlusz and colleagues (2012) suggest that the collaborative partnership between educators and parents is most evident in the communication taking place between them.

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Communication as a channel

In the upbringing and education of children, the communication between educators and parents plays a significant role. The regularity and effectiveness of communication between the two parties allow for effective support of the child's development (Epstein, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). Their interaction can take various forms. The most well-known forms include parent-teacher conferences and office hours, during which opportunities arise to discuss the student's academic performance, behavior, and other relevant general information. In addition to these, electronic communication has become a regular and mutual means of interaction (F. Lassú et al., 2012; Bacskai, 2020), involving individual and group messaging on various digital platforms that facilitate continuous information flow and feedback (Szöllősi, 2022). Thanks to the advancement of information and communication technologies, online communication has evolved significantly, offering opportunities through communication tools like school websites, online forums, meetings, and more, enabling quick and efficient discussions and information sharing.

In this paper, the concept of educational communication refers to the indispensable and essential network of relationships required in education (Dálnokiné, 2001). Just as in any organization, including educational institutions, the quality of relationships among participants in education and upbringing is crucial. This determines how cooperation between them, in this case between educators and parents, is realized in everyday life. A crucial element in communication with parents is that the roles of communicator and receiver between educators and parents, as well as the continuous feedback, can mutually shift (Buda, 1986). In other words, a primary characteristic of these interpersonal relationships is that the roles of participants in the interaction undergo continuous changes within communication actions. Another feature is that the participants in communication, whether intentionally or unintentionally, have some form of influence on each other (citing Korkut, 2000 from Ozmen et al., 2016).

Parental involvement in communication

Parental involvement in the educational process holds a prominent role, with the communication between parents and educators being crucial (Hoover-Dempsey, 1997; Epstein, 2001, 2010; Reilly, 2008; Gu, 2017). Several studies confirm that collaboration and communication between supportive educators and parents contribute to a child's social and academic development (Epstein, 2001, 2011; Imre, 2017). School programs and events offer direct opportunities for educators and parents to meet and converse, as highlighted by Imre's (2002) study. The results suggest that parents with lower levels of education would willingly make use of counseling and excursion opportunities aimed at parents. Kovács and colleagues' (2022) systematic literature analysis also confirms this.

When examining the communication between educators and parents, it's important to note that both parties' social and cultural capital play a role in determining the manner and quality of their interaction. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital contributes to the durability and quality of individual relationships, and, according to Coleman (1988), social capital primarily manifests in the network of relationships among actors engaged in communication. Cultural capital encompasses individuals' values, behavioral norms, knowledge, and traditions. Social capital enables information flow, requests for help, and assistance (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) to occur. According to Coleman (1988), proper, strong, and stable social capital can contribute to school success since parents can more easily access educational resources and, consequently, are more inclined to participate in communication. This cultural background influences the desire for maintaining contact with the school. Cultural capital plays a key role in the communication between educators and parents because linguistic and cultural differences influence how they understand and interpret the exchange of information between them. Parents with higher social and cultural capital tend to exhibit greater partnership with the school and educators than those with lower status (Imre, 2001; Bacskai, 2020). However, as found by Lareau (2011), even parents with lower cultural capital sometimes strive to maintain a respectful relationship with educators and accept their advice. This is evident in their communication, with parents possessing higher social and cultural capital being more effective communicators and more knowledgeable about school affairs. Since educators communicate with parents of varying capital levels, it's essential for them to find common ground with everyone and employ suitable communication strategies to ensure successful collaboration. Hrabéczy and colleagues (2023) have found that social capital contributes to the development and success of children with special educational needs in their families. Approaching it from the perspective of educational sociology, they examined the impact of social capital on academic performance and concluded that the school

plays a crucial role in the supportive system around families. Therefore, they emphasize the importance of fostering relationships between teachers and parents for this purpose. In summary, it can be said that both social and cultural capital play a very important role in the communication between educators and parents throughout the educational process, which is essential for the realization of effective teaching and parenting.

Problems occurring in communication

Alongside the aforementioned differences arising from social and cultural capital, language disparities and varying communication styles can also lead to misunderstandings. Educators and parents may possess differing social and cultural capital, influencing the dialogue between them. Differences in values and traditions can complicate meeting educational expectations, resulting in distinct communication styles. This can manifest in preferences for verbal or written communication, as well as the direction in which various preferences shift during communication interactions. Ozmen and his colleagues (2016), in their examination of the factors hindering the effectiveness of communication between teachers and parents, concluded that a fundamental prerequisite for effective and successful education is the seamless communication among teachers, between teachers and the institution's leadership, with students, and between parents and teachers. During their qualitative investigation, Csók and Pusztai (2022) also observed communication challenges between teachers and parents. They believe that social work professionals can contribute to positive changes in communication. This is especially true when social workers maintain a good working relationship with the family and parents, and can also stay in contact with the teacher, potentially serving as a bridge in these interactions.

Domestic and international research attest to the necessity of family knowledge and extensive involvement in their children's school lives in order to mitigate the disadvantages stemming from socioeconomic backgrounds and socio-cultural differences (Korte, 2001; Imre, 2002; Hunyadiné et al., 2006; Stange et al., 2012; Imre, 2017).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, the communication between educators and parents faced significant challenges. The pandemic's impact became a subject of research regarding parent-educator communication (Engler, 2020; Engler et al., 2020; Riberio et al., 2021). The results indicate that although the pandemic presented difficulties for both educators and parents in this realm, efforts were made to swiftly find suitable solutions for managing the situation.

Engler (2020) examined the situation of families during the first few months of quarantine. The results showed an increased demand for communication with educators during remote learning periods (Engler, 2020), even though this was less effective due to the absence of in-person contact. The transition to remote learning caused the main challenge, requiring a new role in supporting children's home-based education (Riberio et al., 2021). While Lannert and Szekszárdi (2015) previously found that the increasing prevalence of online forms didn't substantially alter parent-educator communication, merely enriching it formally without high utility, opinions shifted since the pandemic. The results of Mandalios and Kyridas' (2020) study indicate that the pandemic fundamentally altered the relationship between educators and parents. The growth of online communication is seen positively as it presents new opportunities for quick and efficient communication.

In conclusion, trust-based communication between parents and educators contributes to the exploration of difficulties, problem-solving, and the shared creation of solutions (Ozmen et al., 2016).

In our study, based on the reviewed literature, we formulated three research questions and, accordingly, three hypotheses.

The first research question is about the impact of the frequency of communication (Lannert and Szekszárdi, 2015; Kathyné, 2017) on the effectiveness of communication. Consequently, our first hypothesis posits that regular, two-way communication ensures proper communication between teachers and parents.

The second research question explores how practical collaboration that is functioning helps to increase parental involvement in school life. We consider parental involvement in their children's studies to be one of the most important parental tasks (Epstein, 2001, 2010; Koltói, 2019; F. Lassú et al., 2012), and it is essential that cooperation between the two parties is established. We assume that aligning parental involvement in school and at home, enforcing shared educational values and principles (Major, 2021) contributes to the development of proper collaboration between teachers and parents.

The third research question delves into how the socio-economic background of students affects the realization of communication between teachers and parents. Several studies have already confirmed (Korte 2001, Imre 2002, Hunyadiné et al. 2006, Stange et al. 2012; Imre 2017) that the socio-economic and sociocultural

background of families has an impact on the multifaceted involvement of parents in their children's school life, and those involved in education strive to address the problems arising from differences. Based on this, we hypothesize that the lack of communication between teachers and parents is exacerbated by the poor socio-economic status of families, which has been exacerbated due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kyridas, 2020).

Presentation of the research – method

The study is based on research conducted by the Research Group for Cooperation Between Families and Teachers at the MTA-DE-Family and Teachers Cooperation Research Group and was supported by the Public Education Development Research Program of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The qualitative research was conducted in the counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, where there is a high proportion of schools with disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged student compositions. The study population consisted of educators from primary and secondary schools operating in these counties across all sectors. A multi-stage, stratified sampling approach was utilized.

Based on the county, school type, as well as the site-specific data from the National Competence Measurement, the combined results of success rates adjusted for social backgrounds and parental involvement data obtained were used to establish four separate school-level sub-samples. In the second step, non-representative (availability sampling) was employed to select educators associated with these groups of schools. From the audio recordings of 45 semi-structured, on average 68-minute individual interviews conducted in the fall of 2021, a textual database was compiled. This study examines various aspects of the transcribed version of 31 interviews conducted in primary schools.

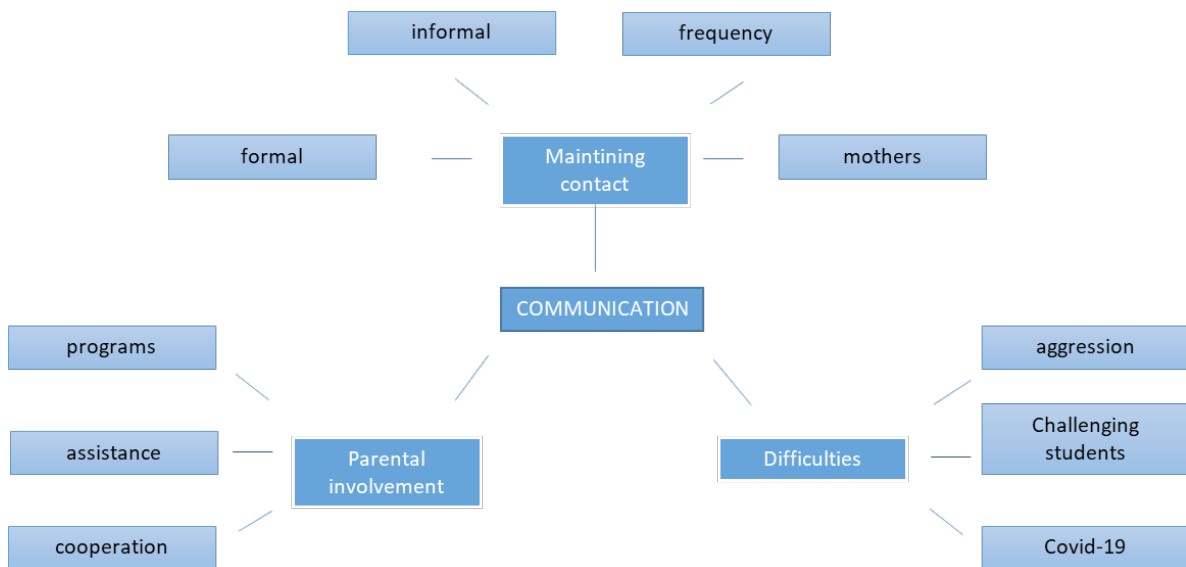
Processing the data

The textual versions of the interview audio recordings were first organized based on Epstein's six dimensions (parental tasks, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community involvement) from Epstein's works (1995, 2001, 2011). Subsequently, we focused on the dimension of communication, which is the subject of this study. The analysis of the interviews continued with multiple readings of the faithful transcripts. Following this, the processing began with a simple manual coding approach (Creswell, 2012), and then axial and selective coding were carried out using machine software.

For the communication dimension focused on children that we aimed to investigate, we highlighted relevant sections of the interviews. The text corpora were subjected to examination using the Atlas.ti 23 program and were provided with thematic codes. In the coding process, we utilized a hybrid approach that includes both deductive and inductive coding. During deductive coding, we initially determined the main codes, which were then detailed through inductive coding within the specific details of the interview texts. Following an inductive logic approach, we coded based on the content of the text. During the creation of categories, open coding was employed, allowing for the labeling of individual text segments, sentences, and syntactic structures.

Presentation of the research results

The presentation of our research results is carried out by introducing the three main categories we established, along with descriptions of their corresponding families of codes, while marking them within the text using quotes from individual interviews. Our three main code families were maintaining contact, parental involvement, and difficulties observed in communication.

Figure 1: Code families(3) and subcodes(10) of communication – own creation

(Source: author's own editing)

Maintaining contact

The communication dimension stands out prominently from Epstein's (2010) six-dimensional typology when reading the interview texts. The presence of information and communication technology is highlighted. Our previous quantitative study (Major, 2021) confirmed that the existence of traditional and modern forms is not related to the age of the teachers (Lannert and Szekszárdi, 2015), as older teachers also willingly embrace new opportunities. This was also evidenced in the interviews, and although the age of the teachers was not disclosed in the interviews, the reference to years spent in the profession was helpful in this regard. Various forms of information and communication technology are used alongside formal communication methods, not bypassing them.

Several interviewees emphasized that while online communication was strengthened due to Covid-19, traditional communication forms such as email, Facebook groups, and electronic diaries are equally present in communication. The most common form of verbal communication between teachers and parents is the parent-teacher meeting, which is a group communication format where the primary sender, the teacher, communicates with the parents as recipients. This form of communication mainly serves informative and explanatory purposes related to the entire class. However, teachers note that although parents participate in parent-teacher meetings and consultation hours quarterly or biannually (mostly), there are those who do not engage in other forms of communication. The most useful form was found to be the consultation hours, as it provides an opportunity for personal interaction.

The realization of communication is facilitated by internal regulations, as referred to by several interviewees: „*The pedagogical program specifies communication with parents, consultation hours, parent-teacher meetings, parent working group meetings, open days*” (A31). School pedagogical programs specify that the school administration considers parents as partners along with the teaching staff, and organizes various forums to facilitate communication. They precisely determine how often parent-teacher meetings should be held each year, and under what circumstances (e.g., summer camps, field trips) extraordinary parent-teacher meetings can be convened. Primary schools strive to ensure that parents get to know and accept the school's life and activities as much as possible, so they organize open days, various cultural events, exhibitions, concerts, ceremonies, and even family worship services in church institutions, where parents are invited and welcomed.

Additionally, spontaneous communication also plays a significant role. This primarily revolves around immediate information related to a specific child since the last encounter and requires immediate transmission. Both parents and teachers contribute to this type of communication. Several lower-grade teachers mentioned how and when they interact with parents on a daily basis: „*Every morning I go out to the parents in front of the school and ask how things are, if anyone needs help*” (A13). They also indicated when parents' daily inquiries typically take place: „*Most parents bring their child to school every morning and pick them up in the afternoon.*”

During these times, they usually meet the teacher and ask if there's anything new" (A4), and if any issues arise during the day, they can usually discuss them at this time.

For communication to be effective, it's essential for both parties to be accessible to each other. In the lower grades, parents mostly accompany their children to school and pick them up at the end of classes, providing teachers with an opportunity for short conversations almost every day. This changes somewhat in the upper grades, where daily contact is not as common, as students commute independently. Therefore, interactions between parents and teachers occur mostly during pre-arranged time slots. Consequently, consultation hours play a more significant role here, but in general, parent-teacher communication is open for parents to reach out to teachers for discussion in case of any immediate issues.

As demonstrated, effective communication is achieved when various and diverse communication forms are consistently practiced between parents and teachers, families and schools. This multi-directional communication ensures proper information flow, informs parents about children and school matters, and must be conducted in a common language and an appropriate and understandable style.

Parental involvement in communication

The collaboration between teachers and parents is most prominently realized in the mode and extent of parental involvement. The following section provides a brief overview of this. Based on the interviews examined in this study, it can be said that teachers have a significant desire for the development of cooperation with parents. Epstein (2001) offers practical possibilities for the creation of collaboration, enabling a partnership between parents and teachers, families and schools. An example is assisting families in creating the most suitable learning environment, such as acquiring various tools. The teachers we interviewed confirm this, with some stating that institutions strive for this: *„The necessary technical equipment can be fully provided by the school" (A17).*

According to the interviews, the „education" of parents can be best achieved through various discussions and programs, where child-rearing issues and their potential solutions can be discussed. However, several interviewees also mentioned *„that „parenting" parents should be the first step before focusing on the child" (A10).*

While reading the interviews, we noticed that different occasions and other interactions contribute to teachers and parents understanding each other's worldviews and parenting practices. These opportunities allow for jointly discussing emerging problems and seeking solutions together. This is possible because *„parents open up, they share their family problems, and I gain insight into their lives, unfortunately into their parenting issues as well" (A31).*

A well-established practice (and a reemerging need perceived by teachers) is family visits. These visits are not mere curiosity but represent professionally important and useful interactions. During such visits, teachers have the opportunity to become familiar with the child's microenvironment and assess the parents' attitudes toward upbringing. Currently, this is merely an option, and teachers can freely decide whether to use this form of family visits.

„In the past, there used to be pedagogical practice of family visits, twice a year, where the teacher went alone or with a colleague to the given family, visited the family, sat down, and talked about school, child, behavior, conduct, learning, further education. This practice, I see that it has disappeared. It had its advantages... and disadvantages that time passed, but I would rather list the advantages." (A11).

The success of collaboration and the establishment of a proper teacher-parent relationship are essential for school success and the quality of education. It forms the basis for social and academic development and achievement if parents maintain contact with teachers and cooperation between them is successful. However, for *„this to be truly successful and for children to develop, there is a great need for the coordination of parental and school collaboration, and tasks should be dealt with together" (A17).* Reading the interviews reveals various forms of parental participation. Whether it's participation in school programs, sports days, school balls, or informal discussions, teachers often mention joint cooking sessions.

„We organized a full-day school family day. Here, the parents of the classes could be together in a very good atmosphere, they baked, cooked, participated in a father-son football match, mother-daughter volleyball, and there was an opportunity for informal conversations." (A19)

According to teachers, achieving these requires adaptability from both parties, a positive attitude, and a mutual understanding of the importance of holding these events. Understanding each other, having a common language, nurturing social relationships, and paying attention to each other are all essential for these activities.

Difficulties

The interviews shed light on the reasons and challenges for communication between teachers and parents, whether it is realized or not. Obstacles include challenging student behavior issues, difficulties in maintaining contact, and problems stemming from distance learning, as well as the lack of information and communication technology tools. The interviews revealed a variety of complex challenges. Teachers' emotional issues became apparent, sometimes explicitly stated and other times implied „between the lines.” They express disappointment and frustration because there is a group of parents who don't participate in offered meetings, don't attend parent-teacher conferences or joint events. Pessimism is also evident due to shallow relationships and indifference. Some parents are unreachable, either not answering their phones or providing non-functioning phone numbers. The lockdowns resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic created an „indifferent” group who are not willing to engage with teachers or collaborate. Fundamental problems (misbehavior, poor academic performance, etc.) in schools become more complex due to various parenting types. Aggressive parents might barge into the school when there is a problem, not handling situations properly. Different parenting styles influence their conflict resolution and problem-solving abilities. Fear of failure, disappointment, and related negative emotions also impact the solutions teachers come up with for handling situations. These existing problems were exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic, further amplifying the difficulties that were already present in daily life. One major challenge was initiating contact on both sides. Teachers understand that each parent requires a unique approach for communication, but they also need to understand the reasons for the parent's absence.

As mentioned above, the pedagogical program mandates that schools inform parents about their child's academic performance, behavior, and school programs/events. While this is optimal, it's often fraught with difficulties and tasks to address in daily practice.

„As many parent groups, that many languages, or as many social groups, that many languages, so this was an interesting experience for me. ... finding a communication path to them is a separate task, and you need to find it so you can speak their language as much as possible.” (A8)

Finding solutions might involve teachers understanding and recognizing communication styles that parents are familiar with.

„Praise. So, positive reinforcement. You always have to start with that. If the parent is not receptive, then you should explain to them a bit that this problem can't be swept under the rug because everything has consequences. It would be good if we could prevent these consequences by reaching a common ground.” (A4)

Additionally, both teachers and parents struggle with a constant lack of time, which makes meaningful conversations challenging. This applies to both verbal and written communication. We didn't find a solution for this during the interview, but at least they are conscious about the problem.

„Superficial. I think it's superficial. Because I don't think there's any point in getting into a deeper conversation, as I believe parents don't like their time being stretched. And they might not want to hear what I have to say.” (A10)

Following this, we present the two most prominent areas that emerged as the main hindering factors and issues for teachers. One is the communication with parents of challenging students, the other is the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this regard, all interviewees agreed that it is the parents who maintain contact with teachers more, those whose children have no or only minor issues. However, most interviewees pointed out that parents of students with existing problems are less willing to participate in parent-teacher meetings or personal conversations because they do not want or may not want to face the problems. This is why teachers often only contact parents in the most extreme cases: *„I only call a parent when I see that there is a real problem” (A3).*

The primary education system is increasingly facing students with special educational needs (SEN) and those with behavioural and learning difficulties. Maintaining contact effectively with their parents is particularly

important (or would be) for these students, as it helps both teachers and parents better understand and assist the individual needs and requirements of the students. Different opinions were expressed on this matter. Some interviewees emphasized that parents of SEN students themselves may struggle with some difficulties, so they may not be able to interpret the teacher's observations properly:

„I see SEN students, I know their parents, it's likely that there's difficulty in communication with the parents because we might not speak the same language. And the problem that arises in connection with the child may not be understood by the parent.” (A11), and „communicating with parents of challenging students requires more frequent contact and it's harder to come to an understanding with them compared to the better ones.” (A21)

Several also noted that precisely for this reason, it is necessary to communicate with the parents of problematic students more frequently, but contact and discussion often face obstacles. This could be due to the lack of proper telecommunications devices in the family or the inability to use them, and traditional methods of communication are slower and more difficult. However, we also see examples where not every teacher finds it difficult to contact the parents of challenging students: *„Parents of SEN students can also be cooperative, they can be partners, they might help their children...” (A10).*

It's worth considering what might influence the extent to which this poses a problem among teachers. Their life experience? Or have they participated in training sessions where they could acquire methodological knowledge not only about teaching and educating SEN students, but also about communicating with their parents? It's possible that teachers also possess different abilities and skills, their knowledge of communicating with parents may be incomplete, they might not know the possibilities for greater parental involvement in school life. But they might also fear passive, rejecting behavior from families, or due to excessive investment of energy and time, they might not even attempt to establish communication.

Reading the interviews, references to the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic stood out. It brought about many changes in the education system as well, and these presented new challenges and tasks to students, parents, and teachers alike. Contacts related to personal meetings were pushed into the background, and they had to adapt to the new, difficult situation that had arisen. New possibilities had to be sought that would continue to ensure and maintain communication. Due to the prohibition and lack of the possibility of personal communication, almost without exception, every teacher referred to the use of information and communication tools that were becoming more prominent. These tools represented a communication channel that not only facilitated communication, but also helped with academic work.

„Parents contact us through Messenger with their problems. They ask for homework here or turn to us with their requests. Distance education was also realized in our school in this way, as this is the channel that can be used and present in the lives of every parent due to the use of Messenger.” (A21)

Based on the opinions of the interviewees, it is clear that while teachers do see the benefits in this, the easier communication opportunities, the faster possibilities for informing, they judge that the impersonal nature of all of this greatly ruins it, and they do not necessarily find these platforms more efficient.

„Before the pandemic, parents could come into the school and wait for their children in the corridor. Well, this was a very good opportunity for them to start long conversations with each other. However, the pandemic overruled this, and now parents wait outside the school walls.” (A19)

Additionally, a negative aspect is that online communication is not equally available to everyone. Lack of internet service or the absence of suitable devices caused problems in many families, which the teachers also experienced.

„Online communication is very difficult. Due to a lack of devices. Families don't have devices. At most, they might use Messenger in a way, reaching parents perhaps. Because for Facebook, not much is needed, just internet. They go to that spot in town where they can catch a bit of free internet signal, and then they use the internet there. Otherwise, it doesn't really work.” (A4)

As the biggest problem in communication was that parents couldn't enter the school building, a solution had to be found for this. The well-established practice was that, while maintaining the necessary distance, they exchanged a few words only in front of the school gate, on the street, in stores: *„I meet parents on a daily basis, be it in a store, on the street, coming to or leaving school” (A22).*

As a solution to the situation that had arisen, schools established online platforms, communication channels that they had not used before, such as conference calls used for parent-teacher meetings. However, as we saw, not everywhere were the necessary conditions available.

Discussion

In summary, based on the literature reviewed, we were able to examine the different forms of communication highlighted in the Epstein typology, as well as the presence of various types of relationships, parental involvement, and emerging challenges. Although we presented these three areas separately, they are actually interconnected and mutually influential. If successful communication cannot be established – that in itself is a problem – then cooperation cannot be achieved. If the parents raising the child and the educators do not speak a common language, both personal and online communication will not yield results. If the teacher needs to contact the parent due to behavioral or academic difficulties but lacks proper contact information, no matter how well-intentioned the effort, the opportunity for collaborative thinking will not materialize. If parents do not attend parent-teacher meetings and the educators do not inquire about the reasons, such as an inappropriate starting time, caring for younger children, or lack of interest, then the dissemination of information about school programs and matters affecting the children will not be adequate.

Numerous studies (Epstein, 2001, 2011; F. Lassú et al., 2012; Imre, 2017;) suggest that for this reason, establishing, nurturing, and maintaining effective communication is essential for the collaboration between educators and parents, as well as between schools and families. Educators must make every effort to strive for constant communication using one of the available information channels and formats, to regularly inform parents about their child's progress.

A review of our established hypotheses reveals the following:

The first hypothesis, which states that regular two-way communication ensures proper communication between teachers and parents, has been fulfilled. As previous quantitative studies (Füle, 2002; Kathyné, 2017; Hegedűs and Podráczky, 2012; Lannert and Szekszárdi, 2015; Major, 2021) have found, both traditional and modern forms of communication take place between teachers and parents, in organized and spontaneous settings. Effective forms of communication and proper information flow occur when both parties ensure their availability and allocate sufficient time (Hegedűs and Podráczky, 2012) and find a common language for communication.

The second hypothesis, which suggests that the coordination of parental involvement in school and at home, as well as the enforcement of shared educational values and principles, contributes to the development of proper collaboration between teachers and parents, has also been confirmed. A series of studies (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Epstein, 2001, 2010; Hill and Taylor, 2004; Avviasati et al., 2010; Hegedűs and Podráczky, 2012; Bacskai, 2020) have shown that building and maintaining a relationship between parents and teachers is important for both parties, as their cooperation affects the academic success and school integration of the child. Many school programs (e.g., discussions, sports days, joint cooking, cultural events) are organized by the school to enhance successful collaboration between parents and teachers. It has become apparent that teachers also express a desire to reinstate the practice of home visits, which would provide them with greater insight into the socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of students. This is important because, as Avvisati et al. (2010) suggest, the level of parental involvement increases with socio-economic status, meaning that parents with a higher socio-economic status tend to invest more energy and money in their children's studies. The lack of this, however, has given rise to our third hypothesis, which states that the lack of communication between teachers and parents is exacerbated by the poor socio-economic status of families, which has been exacerbated due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kyridas, 2020). Families living in a poor socio-economic situation often face challenges due to their work commitments, financial difficulties, daily challenges, or a lack of sufficient time, preventing them from actively participating in their child's school life, including communication with teachers (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Lareau, 2011). Additionally, lower-educated parents may face difficulties in communication due to their linguistic and/or cultural differences. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to pay more attention to recognizing these issues and to facilitate support structures for families with lower socio-economic status and promote effective communication.

All of this was further complicated by the transition to digital education and communication due to the pandemic. In families where suitable devices and internet access were not available, communication with teachers became even more challenging. Even when these resources were accessible, parents who have less

experience with these devices, faced difficulties in using them. Schools and teachers made efforts to support parents during this period, but it was a challenging time for collaboration and communication on all fronts.

Summary

In our study, we presented a part of our qualitative research that examines the communication between educators and parents, focusing on the results related to Epstein's six dimensions of communication, as well as addressing parental involvement and the difficulties that arise in their dialogue. During the coding of the interview texts, we distinguished three aspects within communication: communication within the relationship, parental involvement, and communication-related problems.

Overall, it can be said that these three areas are interrelated and mutually influential. If establishing communication fails, it becomes a problem. If the parents and educators do not share a common language, both in personal and online communication, the desired outcomes will not be achieved. Furthermore, if a teacher attempts to contact a parent regarding behavioral or academic difficulties, but lacks appropriate contact information, effective collaboration cannot be realized. If parents do not attend parent-teacher meetings and educators do not investigate the reasons, such as inconvenient timing, childcare responsibilities, or disinterest, effective communication about school programs and matters affecting students will not occur.

The study underscores the importance of nurturing communication between educators and parents, as it is fundamental to effective collaboration between schools and families. According to Lannert and Szekszárdi (2015), the majority of communication is still held with mothers. While formal communication channels such as parent-teacher meetings and conferences remain dominant, the level of parental participation is not always satisfactory. The role of these formal opportunities should be reconsidered, as effective engagement occurs in schools where conversations, parent education, and involvement beyond mere information sharing take place.

The regular use of information and communication technology tools, especially heightened by the shift to online education during the Covid-19 pandemic, facilitates ongoing communication and interaction. However, a lack of appropriate tools poses difficulties, primarily for families in disadvantaged areas. Even though most institutions aim to support families, maintaining contact with these parents remains challenging.

Initiating communication with parents is often taken on by educators, especially when behavioral issues or changes in academic performance are detected. While addressing the difficulties that arise during the communication between educators and parents, it's important to continuously seek solutions. Empathy, tolerance, and open communication can aid in establishing a relationship based on mutual partnership.

Different cultural backgrounds of parents should also be considered, and educators need to find common ground in order to foster effective communication. The novelty of our work lies in the fact that conclusions about the realization of communication between educators and parents were primarily drawn from quantitative surveys. Our qualitative research, involving educators from primary education institutions, is less focused on parental involvement within the context of Epstein's typology dimensions, which center on the child.

From an educational policy perspective, it's important to recognize the need for educator trainees to gain practical insight into how active educators communicate with parents of varying socio-economic statuses.

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