MANAGING COOPERATION WITH PARENTS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract. Effective cooperation between primary schools and parents is an important condition for improving educational quality, supporting children's holistic development, and creating a positive learning environment. In contemporary education, parental involvement is increasingly viewed not as an additional activity but as an essential component of school management and educational partnership. This article examines the theoretical and organizational foundations of managing cooperation with parents in primary education. The study analyzes the role of communication, trust, shared responsibility, digital technologies, parental participation in decision-making, and individualized cooperation strategies. A conceptual model of parent–school cooperation is proposed, consisting of needs assessment, communication planning, joint goal setting, collaborative activities, monitoring, feedback, and continuous improvement. The analysis demonstrates that effective cooperation requires a transition from one-way communication, in which schools primarily provide information to parents, toward a partnership model based on dialogue, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and active participation. Particular attention is given to digital communication platforms, parent meetings, individual consultations, family-oriented educational activities, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts. The article concludes that systematic management of parent–school cooperation can strengthen parental engagement, improve communication, support student learning, and contribute to the development of a supportive primary education environment.

Keywords: primary education, parent cooperation, parental involvement, school-family partnership, educational management, communication, family engagement, student development.

Introduction. The quality of primary education depends not only on the professional competence of teachers and the effectiveness of school management but also on the nature of cooperation between educational institutions and families. The family represents the child's first social and educational environment, while the school provides a structured learning environment. Therefore, the interaction between these two institutions has a direct relationship with children's academic, social, emotional, and personal development. In contemporary education, parents are increasingly regarded as important partners in the educational process. Their participation can include communication with teachers, support for children's learning at home, participation in school activities, involvement in decision-making,

and cooperation in addressing children's individual educational needs. The traditional model of parent–school interaction has frequently been characterized by one-way communication. In such a model, teachers and school administrators provide information about students' academic performance, attendance, or behavior, while parents primarily receive this information. Contemporary approaches increasingly emphasize reciprocal communication, shared responsibility, and partnership. Research on family engagement demonstrates that meaningful parental involvement can contribute to students' learning and development. However, the effectiveness of such involvement depends on the quality of school practices, communication mechanisms, family circumstances, and the opportunities provided to parents to participate meaningfully. The U.S. Department of Education's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships emphasizes that effective family engagement requires schools and families to develop the capacity to work together as partners rather than treating parental involvement as a one-sided responsibility. In primary education, this issue is particularly significant because children at this stage are developing fundamental academic skills, learning habits, communication patterns, and attitudes toward education. Consistent cooperation between teachers and parents can therefore provide continuity between school and home environments. The purpose of this article is to examine effective approaches to managing cooperation with parents in primary education and to develop a conceptual framework for organizing sustainable school–family partnerships.

Literature Review. The concept of parental involvement has been widely discussed in educational research. Epstein's framework identifies several dimensions of school, family, and community partnerships, including parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. From this perspective, parental cooperation should not be limited to attending parent meetings. It encompasses multiple forms of participation that connect family resources and school resources in support of children's development. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler emphasize that parents' decisions to become involved in their children's education are influenced by their understanding of their parental role, their perception of invitations from schools and teachers, and their belief in their ability to support learning. The OECD has also highlighted the importance of parental involvement and family engagement in children's educational experiences. International evidence indicates that communication between parents and schools can contribute to stronger educational relationships when it is regular, meaningful, and responsive to the needs of families. The research literature also emphasizes the importance of communication quality. Communication should be understandable, timely, respectful, and adapted to parents' circumstances. Merely increasing the frequency of communication does not necessarily improve cooperation. The content and purpose of communication are equally important. Digital technologies have created additional opportunities for school–family interaction. Online platforms, electronic diaries, messaging systems, video conferences, and digital learning environments can facilitate rapid information exchange and enable parents to monitor children's learning progress. However, digital communication should complement rather than completely replace direct interpersonal interaction. Another important concept is shared decision-making. Parents can contribute valuable knowledge about their children's interests, learning difficulties, emotional needs, and family circumstances. Therefore,

involving parents in appropriate school decisions can strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of educational interventions.

Research Methodology

The study applies a theoretical and analytical research methodology.

The following methods were used:

- analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature;
- comparative analysis;
- systems analysis;
- synthesis and generalization;
- structural-functional analysis;
- pedagogical modeling.

The study examines parent–school cooperation as an organizational system consisting of interconnected components:

Needs Assessment → Communication → Joint Goal Setting → Cooperation → Monitoring → Feedback → Improvement

The proposed model considers parents, teachers, school administrators, and students as interconnected participants in the educational process.

Discussion. The findings of this study demonstrate that effective cooperation with parents is an essential component of successful primary education management. The results indicate that parental cooperation should not be considered as an additional or supplementary activity but as an integral element of the educational management system. When schools establish systematic, respectful, and transparent communication with parents, they create conditions for greater parental engagement, improved understanding of pupils' needs, and stronger cooperation between teachers, school administrators, and families. One of the important findings is that the quality of communication significantly influences the effectiveness of school–parent cooperation. Traditional forms of communication, such as parent meetings and written notices, remain useful; however, they may not always provide sufficient opportunities for continuous interaction. Digital communication platforms, electronic diaries, messaging applications, online consultations, and virtual meetings can make communication more accessible and timely. Nevertheless, digital communication should complement rather than completely replace face-to-face interaction, particularly when discussing sensitive academic, behavioral, or developmental issues. The findings are consistent with Epstein's partnership framework, which emphasizes that effective educational outcomes require coordinated interaction among schools, families, and communities. From this perspective, parents should be regarded not simply as recipients of information but as active participants in the educational process. Such an approach changes the traditional management model from one-way communication to partnership-based cooperation. In primary education, this is particularly important because younger pupils are highly dependent on the consistency of educational expectations between home and school. Another significant aspect identified in the study is the role of teachers in establishing productive relationships with parents. Teachers are often the primary link between the school and the family. Their communication skills, professional attitudes, responsiveness, and ability to provide constructive feedback directly influence parents' willingness to participate in school activities.

Therefore, professional development programs for primary school teachers should include communication strategies, conflict-management skills, parent counseling techniques, and digital communication competencies. The study also suggests that parental involvement should be differentiated according to the needs and circumstances of individual families. Parents have different levels of educational experience, available time, digital access, and expectations concerning their children's education. Consequently, a uniform approach to parental cooperation may not be equally effective for all families. Schools should provide multiple forms of engagement, including individual consultations, group meetings, workshops, online communication, project-based activities, and family-oriented educational events. An important issue concerns the distinction between parental involvement and parental engagement. Involvement may primarily refer to parents' participation in school activities, attendance at meetings, or assistance with homework. Engagement, in contrast, implies a deeper partnership in which parents contribute to educational decision-making, support learning at home, communicate regularly with teachers, and share responsibility for pupils' development. Therefore, primary education management should focus not only on increasing the quantity of parental participation but also on improving its quality. The results further indicate that trust is a fundamental condition for sustainable cooperation. Parents are more likely to communicate openly with teachers and school administrators when they feel respected and when their opinions are taken seriously. Similarly, teachers require an environment in which parental feedback is constructive rather than confrontational. Establishing clear communication rules, maintaining confidentiality, providing timely responses, and using evidence-based feedback can contribute to the development of mutual trust. The findings can also be interpreted in relation to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement, which emphasizes parents' beliefs, invitations from schools and teachers, and perceived opportunities or resources as important factors influencing parental participation. This suggests that schools should actively create opportunities for parents to participate rather than simply expecting them to become involved independently. Invitations from teachers, clear explanations of parents' roles, and flexible participation mechanisms can therefore increase engagement. At the same time, the study highlights several challenges. Excessive reliance on digital communication may create communication overload, while insufficient digital literacy can exclude some parents from participation. In addition, conflicts may emerge when parents and teachers have different expectations regarding academic achievement, discipline, homework, or children's behavior. These challenges indicate the need for institutional policies that define communication procedures and provide mechanisms for resolving disagreements constructively. Overall, the discussion confirms that effective management of parent cooperation requires a comprehensive institutional approach. School administrators should develop a clear parent-engagement strategy, teachers should receive appropriate professional training, and parents should be provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education. The most effective model is therefore based on shared responsibility, reciprocal communication, trust, respect, and continuous feedback. Thus, managing cooperation with parents in primary education should be understood as a strategic management process aimed at creating a sustainable school–family partnership. Such cooperation can contribute to a more supportive

educational environment in which teachers, parents, and school administrators work toward common developmental and educational objectives of primary school pupils.

Conclusion. Managing cooperation with parents is an important component of effective primary education management. The analysis demonstrates that successful school–family cooperation should move beyond one-way information exchange toward a partnership model based on trust, dialogue, shared responsibility, participation, and continuous feedback. The proposed management model includes seven interconnected stages: needs assessment, communication planning, joint goal setting, collaborative action, monitoring, feedback, and continuous improvement. This model enables schools to organize parent cooperation systematically rather than treating it as a collection of separate activities. The study also demonstrates that digital technologies can significantly expand opportunities for communication, information exchange, progress monitoring, and parental participation. Nevertheless, digital tools should complement rather than replace direct interpersonal relationships. Effective cooperation requires teachers and school leaders to recognize parents as important educational partners. At the same time, parents need accessible opportunities to contribute to their children's educational development while respecting the professional responsibilities of teachers. Ultimately, the effectiveness of parent–school cooperation should be evaluated not simply by the number of meetings or communication activities but by their contribution to students' learning, development, engagement, and positive educational experience. Therefore, systematic management of parent–school cooperation can become an important organizational mechanism for strengthening the quality, inclusiveness, and sustainability of primary education.

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