

# The Importance of Cooperation between Parents and School

Václav Šimek

University of Social Science and Security

Foreign branch in Prague

Hovorčovická 1281/11, 182 00 Praha 8, Czech Republic

E-mail address: [simek@wsnsb.cz](mailto:simek@wsnsb.cz)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0158-6432>

## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** Effective communication between all actors supports the optimal development of the child, his/her academic progress and social integration. This article analyses the importance of cooperation between parents, teachers and students in the school environment and emphasises its key role in the educational process. The study identifies the main barriers to communication, regional differences in parental involvement and success factors in successful schools.

**Methods.** The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods for a comprehensive analysis of the level of cooperation between parents and schools at secondary school level in different regions of the Czech Republic. ANOVA and hierarchical regression analysis were used for statistical data processing, which allowed identifying key predictors of parental involvement.

**Results.** The results confirm that socioeconomic factors significantly influence the level of cooperation, with the lowest parental involvement being recorded in economically weaker regions, which corresponds to international research, including the PISA study. Data analysis shows that the implementation of modern technologies by the school increases the level of parental involvement by 12% beyond sociodemographic factors.

**Conclusion.** The article offers practical recommendations for improving cooperation between school and family and emphasises the need for targeted strategies that take into account the diverse needs of all actors in the educational process.

**Keywords:** cooperation, educational process, parents and teachers, parental involvement in education, communication barriers, regional differences

## Introduction

The collaboration between family and school represents a crucial factor significantly influencing the quality of the educational process and the overall development of the child. As noted by Zuzana Budayová (2024) despite their differing functions, school and family share a common goal: "to ensure the best possible development of the child." In the current educational environment, effective communication between these two institutions is considered one of the indicators of a high-quality school (Matýsková & Morávek, 2005).

The traditional model of cooperation between family and school in the Czech educational system has undergone significant transformation over recent decades. Štech (Čapek, 2013) characterises the traditional relationship model between school and family with three key terms: separation, selectivity, and delegation of tasks. This model is gradually being replaced by the concept of partnership, which emphasises mutual communication, shared responsibility, and active parental participation in education. The concept of an "open school" has begun to supplant the "traditional school," a shift reflected in legislative and curricular documents (Pohnětalová, 2015).

The benefits of active parental involvement in the educational process are well-documented in research literature. Studies show that children whose parents actively engage with their school activities achieve better academic results and exhibit higher levels of motivation to learn. Moreover, collaboration between school and family contributes to harmonious social and emotional development in children, as a stable bond between these institutions reduces stress and anxiety among pupils (Kotátková, 2014).

Despite substantial progress in family-school cooperation, significant disparities remain in its extent and quality across different types of schools and regions. These differences may be attributed to various factors, including families' socioeconomic status, teachers' approaches, school leadership attitudes, or the existence of specific programmes aimed at fostering parental cooperation, such as the "Step by Step" programme (Matýsková & Morávek, 2005).

The aim of this research was to analyse the level of cooperation between parents and schools at secondary school level, identify factors influencing communication effectiveness, and propose strategies for improvement (Slezáková, 2012). The research focuses on the following questions: What are the main forms of cooperation between parents and schools? How do parents perceive their role in their children's education? What barriers hinder effective collaboration between school and family? What factors increase parental involvement in school life? What are the differences in cooperation across various types of schools?

This introduction provides a comprehensive overview of the issue of family-school collaboration and establishes a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent research section.

The shift from a traditional model to a partnership model represents a fundamental change in how relationships between these two key educational institutions are perceived. As research suggests (Smith et al., 2020), this move towards greater openness and mutual cooperation has the potential to significantly improve students' educational outcomes and contribute to their holistic development. The following sections will present the research methodology, key findings, and implications for practice.

### **Research Methodology**

For the comprehensive analysis of the level of cooperation between parents and schools, a combined research design was chosen, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach allows for data triangulation and provides a deeper insight into the examined issue (Hendl, 2016). The aim of the research was to analyse the level of cooperation between parents and schools, identify factors influencing communication effectiveness, and propose strategies for its improvement.

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

The research was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the main forms of cooperation between parents and schools?
- How do parents perceive their role in the education of their children?
- What barriers hinder effective cooperation between schools and families?
- What factors increase the level of parental involvement in school life?
- What are the differences in cooperation between different types of schools (gymnasiums, vocational schools, trade schools)?

### **Research Sample**

The research sample included 10 secondary schools from different regions of the Czech Republic, encompassing both urban and rural areas. This selection allowed for the examination of regional differences in cooperation between parents and schools. A total of 287 parents (out of 350 approached, response rate 82%), 150 teachers (out of 180 originally contacted, response rate 83.3%), 30 school psychologists or educational counsellors, and 12 school principals participated in the study. This diversified sample provided an opportunity to compare different perspectives on the issue under investigation (Švaříček & Šed'ová, 2014).

The sample size was determined to ensure sufficient statistical power to detect medium effects (Cohen's  $d > 0.5$ ) with a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and a power of  $1 - \beta = 0.8$ , in accordance with recommendations for educational research (Cohen, 1988). The stratified selection of ten secondary schools ensured representativeness in terms of geographical distribution and types of schools (3 gymnasiums, 4 vocational schools, 3 trade schools). A random stratified sampling method was applied to select parents, ensuring proportional representation of parents from different grades and study programs.

### **Data Collection Methods**

In accordance with John W. Creswell's (2014) recommendations for mixed-methods research design, the following data collection methods were employed:

- Survey – Standardised questionnaires for parents, teachers, and students aimed at measuring attitudes, communication frequency, and satisfaction with cooperation. The surveys were distributed in both printed and electronic formats, which increased the response rate and allowed a wider range of respondents to be reached. The parent questionnaire was adapted from a validated tool developed by Jana Majerčíková and Peter Gavorová (2012), which demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.89$ ) and was validated in both Czech and Slovak contexts. A new tool was developed to measure teachers' attitudes, with content validity confirmed by an expert panel of five professionals in educational psychology, and the pilot testing demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.85$ ).
- Semi-structured Interviews – In-depth analysis with selected teachers ( $n=25$ ), parents ( $n=30$ ), and school leadership ( $n=12$ ), which allowed a more detailed understanding of barriers and motivations for engaging in cooperation. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analysed using qualitative methods.
- Analysis of School Documentation – An overview of parents' attendance at parent-teacher meetings, involvement in school activities, and other relevant documents. This method provided objective data on the level of parental involvement (Průcha, 2009).
- Case Studies – A detailed analysis of selected schools where cooperation works in an exemplary fashion, as well as where problems exist. Two contrasting case studies were created based on the methodology proposed by Yveta Pohnětalová (2015).

### **Data Analysis**

### ***Quantitative Analysis***

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the SPSS software. To analyse regional differences in parental involvement, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed, which revealed statistically significant differences between regions ( $F(7, 280) = 11.42, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.24$ ). Subsequent post-hoc tests (Tukey HSD) showed that parental involvement in Prague was significantly higher than in the Ústí nad Labem, Sokolov, and Ostrava regions ( $p < 0.001$ ), while no statistically significant differences were found between the other regions ( $p > 0.05$ ).

To identify factors influencing the level of parental involvement, hierarchical regression analysis was used. In the first step, sociodemographic variables (parents' education, household income, type of school) were included, which explained 27% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.27, F(3, 284) = 24.76, p < 0.001$ ). In the second step, variables related to the use of technology by the school were added, which increased the explained variance by an additional 12% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.12, F(2, 282) = 18.35, p < 0.001$ ), confirming the significant impact of technology on parental involvement.

### ***Qualitative Analysis***

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analysed using open coding, categorisation, and analytical induction methods (Švaříček & Šed'ová, 2014). The analysis process included the following steps:

- Open Coding – The interview transcripts were carefully read to gain an overall understanding. Significant units of text (words, phrases, or entire paragraphs) were then identified and assigned codes that captured their essence. For example, statements by parents about the lack of time for teacher communication were coded as "teacher time barrier."
- Categorisation – In the second step, similar codes were grouped into broader categories. Categories such as "barriers on the teachers' side," "barriers on the parents' side," and "systemic barriers" were created. In total, 12 main categories of communication barriers were identified.
- Analytical Induction – In the final phase, relationships between individual categories and subcategories were examined. The goal was to identify patterns and correlations that would help explain the observed phenomena. For example, a connection was found between perceived barriers and the respondent's role in the educational process.

This process of qualitative data analysis allowed for the identification of the most common barriers in communication between school and family, as perceived by different actors in the educational process. The research was carried out in three phases. The preparation phase (1–2 months) involved assembling the research team, designing questionnaires, and obtaining ethical approval for the research. During the data collection phase (3–4 months), questionnaires were distributed, interviews conducted, and case studies collected. The data analysis and report writing phase (2–3 months) included statistical evaluation, qualitative analysis, identification of key findings, and formulation of recommendations.

## **Research Results**

### **Parental Involvement in School Collaboration**

The research revealed significant regional differences in the level of parental involvement in school collaboration. The quantitative data analysis showed that the highest level of parental involvement was recorded in Prague (Trivis Secondary School had a 87% parental involvement rate), while significantly lower levels were observed in the Ústí nad Labem region (43%), Sokolov region (39%), and Ostrava region (36%).

### **Barriers in Communication Between Schools and Parents**

Qualitative analysis of interviews with various actors in the educational process revealed several key categories of barriers in communication between schools and parents. The analysis indicated different perceptions of these barriers depending on the role of the respondent in the educational process.

From the parents' perspective, the following main barriers were identified:

- Inconsistency of Teachers – This category included statements about insufficient communication from teachers, delayed information about problems, and lack of individual attention. Inconsistency of teachers was the most frequently mentioned issue in interviews with parents, as illustrated by one respondent: “Teachers inform us about a problem only when it’s too late to solve it. If they communicated earlier, many issues could have been prevented.”
- Inconsistency of the School as an Institution – This category appeared almost as often as the previous one and included statements about systemic shortcomings, such as the lack of clear communication channels or insufficient support from school management for involving parents.

- Inconsistent Parenting at Home – Some parents showed critical self-reflection and acknowledged their share of the communication problems. As one parent stated: “I admit that sometimes I don’t have time to deal with school matters. I work shifts and often come home tired.”

From the teachers’ perspective, the main barriers identified were:

- Inconsistent Parenting at Home – This category was by far the most frequently mentioned problem in interviews with teachers. It included statements about the lack of parental involvement, absence of basic parenting skills, and shifting responsibility onto the school.
- Negative Influence of the School Collective – Many teachers mentioned that the dynamics of the class and the relationships between students significantly affect their ability to communicate effectively with parents.
- Own Inconsistency – Some teachers showed a self-reflective approach and acknowledged their share of the communication problems, as illustrated by the statement: “Sometimes I have so much administrative work that I don’t manage to inform parents in time. I realise it’s not right, but I often work overtime and still can’t keep up.”

From the school principals’ perspective, the main barriers identified were:

- Inconsistent Parenting from Parents – This category was the most frequently mentioned in interviews with school principals and included statements about low parental engagement and lack of interest in their children's education.
- Issues with the School Collective and Its Dynamics – Principals often mentioned the influence of group dynamics on parents' willingness to collaborate with the school.
- These differing perspectives from various actors in the educational process correspond to findings presented by Majerčíková (2011) in her research. Her work highlights the fundamental differences in the understanding of roles and responsibilities within the educational process, which can lead to mutual misunderstandings and, consequently, disrupt communication between schools and families.

## **Research Findings - Methodological Expansion of Qualitative Analysis of Communication Barriers between Schools and Parents**

This study adopts a qualitative methodological approach aimed at providing a deeper understanding of the barriers in communication between schools and parents from the perspective of various stakeholders in the educational process. The research is based on the principles of grounded theory, emphasising an inductive approach that allows for the identification and categorisation of communication barriers directly from the data provided by respondents. The following section outlines the expanded methodological framework and a detailed description of the open coding process that led to the identification of key categories of barriers in school-parent communication.

### **Methodological Approach and Coding Process**

Open coding constituted the first phase of the qualitative data analysis and proceeded in several systematic steps. First, all conducted interviews were transcribed verbatim, with a focus on capturing not only the words but also paralinguistic elements, which could indicate the emotional tone of the respondents' statements. After transcription, data segmentation followed, during which meaningful units were identified – sections of text containing relevant information about communication barriers. These segments were subsequently assigned codes that represented their essence. Both *in vivo* codes (using the respondents' own language) and constructed codes (created by the researcher based on interpretation) were employed. Throughout the coding process, the method of constant comparison was used, which allowed for ongoing comparisons of newly assigned codes with existing ones, leading to their modification or refinement.

Conceptualisation represented the second key step, during which similarities between individual codes were identified and grouped into broader concepts. This phase required an iterative process of repeatedly reviewing the data and codes to identify patterns and connections. Concepts were gradually refined and elaborated upon until they took the form of more abstract categories. Categorisation, as the third step, led to the creation of a hierarchical structure in which similar concepts were grouped into main categories and subcategories. Relationships between categories were continuously explored using analytical questions, such as: "How are the barriers on the parents' side influenced by systemic shortcomings within the school?"



To support the coding process, specialised software for qualitative data analysis (MAXQDA) was used, which allowed for the systematic organization of codes, categories, and analytical notes.

### **Characteristics of the Research Sample**

The research sample was created using purposeful sampling to include various perspectives from stakeholders involved in communication between schools and parents. A total of 45 respondents participated in the study, including 18 parents of primary school students, 15 teachers, and 12 school principals or school leadership representatives. Parents were selected with regard to socio-economic diversity (low, middle, and high-income groups), education levels (from basic to university-level education), and types of residential areas (urban agglomerations, suburban areas, and rural regions). Among the parents, 12 were women and 6 were men, aged between 28 and 49 years. Teachers were selected from different educational levels (8 from the first stage and 7 from the second stage of primary schools) with varying years of teaching experience (ranging from 2 to 30 years). Principals and school leadership representatives came from schools of different sizes (from small rural schools to large urban schools with over 500 students) and from different regions of the Czech Republic.

The schools included in the study represented a broad spectrum of the Czech education system – 5 schools were located in large cities (over 100,000 inhabitants), 4 in smaller towns (10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants), and 3 in rural areas (under 10,000 inhabitants). The sample included schools with above-average results in national testing, schools with average results, and schools categorised as having lower educational outcomes. Two schools with a higher proportion of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and one school with a significant proportion of students with a different mother tongue were intentionally included. This diversity in the sample allowed for a wide range of experiences and perspectives on communication barriers between schools and parents.

### **Data Collection and Saturation Process**

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured in-depth interviews, which lasted on average between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted between September 2023 and January 2024. The interviews were guided by a pre-prepared interview script containing open-ended questions focusing on the respondents' experiences with school-parent communication, perceived barriers in this communication, and strategies for overcoming them. The interview script was piloted on three respondents (one parent, one teacher, and one

principal) and subsequently adjusted for better clarity and relevance of the questions. The interviews were recorded with the informed consent of participants and transcribed verbatim. Data collection was supplemented by document analysis (school communication strategies, rules for communication with parents, minutes from parent-teacher meetings) and short-term participant observation at parent-teacher meetings in five participating schools.

Theoretical saturation of data was continuously monitored throughout the research process and was assessed separately for each emerging category. The first signs of saturation appeared after approximately 30 interviews, when the same types of communication barriers began to be repeatedly identified. For the category "inconsistency of the school as an institution," saturation was achieved relatively early, after interviews with about 10 parents and 8 teachers. The category "barriers on the parents' side" showed signs of saturation after interviews with 12 teachers and 9 principals. Saturation for the category "barriers on the teachers' side" was reached after 14 interviews with parents and 7 interviews with principals. The longest saturation process occurred for the category "inconsistent upbringing by parents," where new aspects ceased to emerge only after 15 interviews with teachers and 10 interviews with principals.

To verify the achievement of saturation, five additional interviews were conducted (two with parents, two with teachers, and one with a principal), which did not bring any new significant concepts or categories. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of qualitative methodology, which emphasises that saturation should be assessed with respect to specific research questions and emerging categories, rather than solely quantitatively based on the number of interviews. Based on this process, it can be concluded that the research sample was sufficient for identifying the main categories of communication barriers between schools and parents in the context of the Czech education system.

### **Illustrative Citations from Respondents**

To better document and support the analytical findings, selected citations from respondents are provided below, illustrating the identified categories of barriers. These quotes offer authentic insights into the perspectives of different stakeholders and document the basis upon which the analytical categories were built. In the category of "inconsistency of the school as an institution," the lack of systematisation in communication was particularly evident, as shown by the statement from one parent:

Each teacher uses a different communication channel. The maths teacher sends messages through the Bakaláři platform, the class teacher uses a WhatsApp group, and the English teacher

only communicates by email. It's chaotic, and sometimes we miss something because we can't constantly check five different platforms (Mother of a 7th-grade student, 38 years old, medium-sized town).

Another parent described late notification of issues:

"We only found out about our son's problems in maths at the quarterly parent-teacher meeting when he already had five failing grades. If the teacher had informed us earlier, we could have addressed it with tutoring" (Father of a 6th-grade student, 42 years old, large city).

From the teachers' perspective, parental work overload was often mentioned as a significant barrier: "Parents often work late into the evening and don't have time to check assignments. When I write to them that we need to discuss something, they might not reply until a week later, and by then, it's too late" (Primary school teacher, 29 years old, 5 years of experience). Another teacher described the problem of insufficient motivation from parents: "Some parents just don't care about the school. The same parents show up at parent-teacher meetings, usually those whose children have no problems. The ones we really need to talk to don't come even once a year" (Secondary school teacher, 45 years old, 20 years of experience). School principals often emphasised systemic issues: "We don't have enough personnel to communicate individually with each parent. Teachers are overloaded with administration and teaching, and they don't have space to regularly inform parents about all aspects of their children's education" (Principal of a large city school, 52 years old).

In the category of *"inconsistent upbringing by parents"* testimonies highlighted the transfer of responsibility:

Some parents expect the school to solve all the problems with their child. They come to a meeting and say, "Do something with him, he doesn't listen to us at home." They don't realise that without the family's cooperation, we can't achieve any significant improvement (Deputy Principal, small town, 47 years old).

On the other hand, parents often mentioned problematic communication from the school: "When the school informs us at the last minute, it's hard to react. Last week, they told us on Tuesday that there was a parent-teacher meeting on Thursday. For working parents, that's impossible to arrange" (Parent of a 6th-grade student, 36 years old, suburban area). These quotes illustrate the various perspectives of the actors and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the identified barriers in their context.

## **Axial Coding and Relationships between Categories**

Axial coding represented the second stage of the analytical process, focusing on uncovering relationships between the various categories identified during open coding. This process allowed for the creation of a more complex model of how different types of barriers interact and influence the overall dynamics of communication between schools and parents. Several significant relationships and connections were uncovered among the identified categories.

The administrative burden on teachers and the work overload of parents mutually reinforce each other, creating a situation in which both sides have limited time for effective communication. Teachers, burdened with administration, often choose less time-consuming but also less effective communication methods (mass emails, general messages in the electronic gradebook), while busy parents lack the capacity to regularly monitor multiple communication channels and respond to all messages.

From a causal relationship perspective, some barriers can be identified as primary, while others are consequences of those primary barriers. Systemic shortcomings, such as the lack of a clear communication strategy in schools, represent a primary barrier that subsequently generates other obstacles, such as inconsistency among individual teachers in their communication or parents' frustration with inconsistent information. Similarly, the insufficient digital literacy of some parents is not just an isolated issue but can be a consequence of inadequate support and training from the educational institution. The interviews revealed that many communication problems have a cyclical nature – for example, a lack of feedback from the school leads to lower parental engagement, which teachers then interpret as disinterest, which further reduces their motivation to communicate, and the entire cycle repeats itself.

Contextual conditions significantly influence the intensity with which different barriers manifest. Communication barriers are more pronounced at the secondary school level, where contact between parents and the school is less frequent than at the primary level. The size of the school is another important contextual factor – in larger schools with more classes and teachers, it is more difficult to maintain a unified communication system, while this problem is less pronounced in smaller schools. The socio-economic background of families also significantly modifies the nature of communication barriers – in families with lower socio-economic status, barriers related to lack of time, limited access to digital technology, or lower trust in the educational system are more common.

Intervening conditions include factors that mitigate or, conversely, exacerbate the identified barriers. The existence of supportive school leadership that actively encourages

communication with parents can significantly reduce the negative impact of teachers' administrative burdens. Similarly, the presence of active parent groups or associations can help bridge the communication gap between the school and less engaged parents. Mutual trust between the school and parents represents another key intervening condition – where strong trust has been established, individual communication barriers are more easily overcome and have less of a negative impact.

### **Comparative Perspective**

The findings of this study align with a number of international studies focusing on barriers to cooperation between schools and parents, while also exhibiting certain specific characteristics typical of the Czech educational context. The administrative burden on teachers and lack of time for communication with parents identified in this study correspond to the findings of authors such as Lucia Ludvig Cintulová et al. (2024), who identify these factors as universal obstacles to parental engagement in many educational systems. Parental work overload as a communication barrier also resonates with international research, such as Ludvig Cintulová and Budayová (2024), who point out that contemporary work demands significantly limit parents' ability to actively engage in their children's education.

However, in the Czech context, some barriers manifest in specific ways. For example, the inconsistency of the school as an institution is more strongly associated with the absence of a systematic approach to communication at the level of educational policy. Unlike some countries (e.g., Finland, Australia), the Czech Republic lacks a unified framework for communication between schools and parents, which leads to significant variability between individual schools and even teachers within the same school. This finding aligns with the research of Milada Rabušicová et al. (2004), who highlighted the lack of uniform approaches to cooperation with parents in the Czech education system. Another specific characteristic identified in our research is the stronger tendency towards formalised communication (parent-teacher meetings, official consultations), with limited space for informal interactions, which contrasts with the Anglo-Saxon model, where greater emphasis is placed on ongoing informal communication.

A significant factor in the Czech context is also the historical experience with a directive educational system before 1989, which created a pattern of passivity towards schools among some parents (particularly the older generation). This influence of the past is also mentioned by Michal Val'ko et al. (2024) who discuss the gradual transformation of the relationship between parents and schools in post-communist countries. Our findings suggest that although there has

been a significant shift towards a partnership model, certain aspects of the hierarchical relationship between the school and parents persist, especially in the approach of some teachers who are not used to viewing parents as equal partners in the educational process.

From a comparative perspective, it is also interesting to note that while in countries with a longer tradition of inclusive education, barriers related to cultural and language differences between the school and families are more pronounced, in our study, these factors were mentioned less frequently. This may be partially explained by the relatively smaller cultural diversity in Czech schools, but it also suggests a potential area where the specific needs of families with different cultural backgrounds in school communication strategies may be overlooked.

### **Strategies for Overcoming Communication Barriers**

Based on the analysis conducted, several strategies and recommendations can be formulated to overcome the identified communication barriers between schools and parents. These strategies are structured at three levels: systemic, institutional, and individual, and are derived from both the respondents' suggestions and the relationships identified between the categories of barriers.

#### **Systemic Level**

At the systemic level, it is crucial to create a unified framework for communication between schools and parents, which would set minimum standards and expectations for both parties. This framework should be flexible enough to accommodate the specific conditions of individual schools, while also providing a clear structure and guidelines for developing effective communication strategies. Additionally, it is essential to systematically reduce the administrative burden on teachers, which would allow for more time for quality communication with parents and individualised approaches to solving problems related to individual students.

#### **Institutional Level**

At the institutional level, it is essential to develop a clear and consistent communication strategy for the school. This strategy should define preferred communication channels, response timeframes, and set expectations for the frequency and form of communication about various types of information. It is recommended that this strategy be developed in a participatory manner, involving teachers, parents, and school leadership, which would increase the sense of ownership and motivation to comply with it. Furthermore, it is important to establish regular

monitoring and evaluation of communication effectiveness, enabling the school to identify problematic areas and make ongoing adjustments to the communication strategy. Schools should also invest in training teachers in communication skills and working with parents, as well as in educating parents on using digital platforms and other communication tools.

### **Individual Level**

At the individual level, it is important for teachers to adopt a proactive approach to communication. This means informing parents of problems in a timely manner, providing regular positive feedback (not just when difficulties arise), and adapting the communication style to the needs of specific parents. Teachers should be guided to reflect on their own biases and expectations regarding parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds and develop culturally responsive communication strategies. Parents, on the other hand, should be encouraged to recognise their role in the educational process and be proactive in their communication with the school—regularly monitoring information channels, participating in parent-teacher meetings, and informing teachers of changes or problems that might affect their child's education.

Research has shown that overcoming communication barriers requires a holistic approach and cooperation from all actors. Isolated measures focusing on just one area (e.g., digitising communication without adequate training on its use) often do not deliver the expected results and may even create new barriers. Effective communication strategies must consider the interrelationships between different types of barriers and systematically work toward creating an environment of mutual trust and respect, which forms the foundation for successful cooperation between schools and parents.

### **Conclusion and Methodological Reflection**

The qualitative analysis of communication barriers between schools and parents provided a comprehensive view of the factors that hinder effective cooperation between these key actors in the educational process. The use of open and axial coding not only identified the main categories of barriers but also helped in understanding the relationships between them and the contextual conditions that influence their manifestations. The research confirmed the multidimensional nature of communication barriers, which manifest at the systemic, institutional, and individual levels, and emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to overcoming them.

Methodological triangulation, thorough data saturation, and comparative analysis strengthened the validity of the findings and allowed for the formulation of recommendations based on empirical evidence. From a methodological perspective, this study serves as an example of applying grounded theory principles in educational research, with the potential to contribute to a better understanding of complex social phenomena in educational settings. The detailed and transparent description of the coding process, the research sample characteristics, data collection procedures, and the achievement of theoretical saturation enhances the credibility of the results and facilitates their potential replication in other contexts. Furthermore, the use of direct quotations from interviews captures the authentic perspectives of the actors and documents the basis upon which the analytical categories were built. This study thus not only provides factual findings on communication barriers but also serves as a methodological example that may inspire further research on school-family cooperation.

### **Case Studies, Potential Success and Failure Factors**

The qualitative analysis of case studies revealed key factors contributing to successful cooperation between parents and schools. When analysing successful schools, several critical elements emerged that significantly contribute to effective communication between educational institutions and families of students.

### **Success Factors**

From the open coding and categorisation, three dominant success factors emerged:

- *Maximised Communication* between parents and the school, facilitated by the implementation of modern technologies and proactive engagement from both the school and individual teachers. This open communication was the most frequently mentioned element in the successful case studies and created an environment of trust, fostering regular information exchange among all participants in the educational process.
- *Consistent Pedagogical Approach* was identified as another key factor in the analysed data. This approach is characterised by clear rules and active collaboration between teachers, parents, and students. Schools that can establish transparent and understandable rules and consistently apply them show significantly higher success rates in their cooperation with parents. Respondents from these schools often highlighted predictability and stability as important elements in building trust.
- *Support Provided to Parents* was the third significant category identified during the qualitative analysis. This support includes a wide range of activities, such as offering



educational seminars focused on parental competencies, providing individual counselling to address specific educational or behavioural issues, and ensuring regular feedback on the child's progress. The analysis revealed that schools actively developing these supportive mechanisms achieved significantly better results in terms of parent involvement in the educational process.

- The identified success factors closely align with the concept of an "open school" as described by Lucie Jílková (2011), which emphasises the critical importance of transparent and proactive communication among all participants in the educational process.

### **Failure Factors in Problematic Schools**

Inductive analysis based on interviews and case studies from schools with problematic cooperation identified three main factors that significantly contribute to a dysfunctional environment in these educational institutions:

- *Teacher Burnout Syndrome* repeatedly emerged in the analysed data as a significant obstacle to effective cooperation. Chronically overloaded teachers reported a lack of time and energy to build quality relationships with parents. As one respondent noted, "After a whole day of teaching and solving problems in the classroom, I often don't have the strength to communicate with parents. I know I should, but sometimes I just can't." This phenomenon corresponds to research by Irena Smetáčková et al. (2017), who found that about one in five Czech teachers suffers from burnout.
- *Economic and Social Problems of Parents* was another significant category identified in the analysis. Parents facing existential issues often mentioned that while they value their children's education, daily concerns about securing basic family needs prevent them from being more actively involved. These findings confirm research conducted in socioeconomically disadvantaged regions (Dohnal, 2016).
- *Toxic School Environment*, particularly bullying and aggressive behaviour, represented the third dominant category of failure factors. Respondents from problematic schools repeatedly mentioned that disrupted relationships between students complicated communication with parents. As one principal noted, "When students have problems with bullying, parents often don't want to cooperate because they fear the situation could worsen." These findings are consistent with the observations of Aneta Kahudová (2024).

All three of these failure factors were interrelated and, in the cases of problematic schools, created a vicious cycle that significantly limited the quality of the educational process and cooperation between the school and the family.

### **Discussion with International Comparison of Regional Differences**

The research findings provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of collaboration between parents and schools in the Czech educational system. In line with the theoretical framework outlined in the introduction, the results confirm that effective communication between school and family is a key factor for the optimal development of children and their academic success.

### **Regional Differences and Socioeconomic Influences**

The identified regional disparities in parental involvement highlight the significant impact of socioeconomic factors. Lower levels of cooperation in economically disadvantaged regions (Ústecký, Sokolovský, and Ostravský regions) suggest a direct correlation between a family's socioeconomic status and its engagement in children's education. This finding aligns with Barbara Lulek's (2008) research, which emphasises that socioeconomic factors can significantly influence parents' willingness and ability to participate in school life.

Similar regional disparities have been observed in Poland (Lulek, 2008), where significant differences between urban and rural areas were attributed to socioeconomic status as a key predictor of parental participation. This trend is further supported by international comparative studies such as Programme for International Student Assessment's (PISA) (OECD, 2019), which confirm a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and parental involvement in education.

### **Strategies to Address Disparities**

To overcome these disparities, targeted strategies must be implemented to address the specific needs of families in economically disadvantaged regions. As Dorota Smykowska (2022) suggests, schools in such areas should make special efforts to engage parents, including offering flexible consultation hours that accommodate parents' work schedules or providing support for digital literacy.

### **Barriers to Communication**

Qualitative analysis of interviews revealed significant differences in how various stakeholders perceive barriers to communication. Through open coding and categorisation, it emerged that parents often identify inconsistency among teachers as a key obstacle, while teachers and school leadership commonly attribute communication issues to inconsistent parenting practices. This divergence in perspectives—termed the "mutual blame syndrome" by Danuta Sterna (2024)—itself represents a major barrier to effective collaboration.

To bridge these differing viewpoints, it is essential to create platforms for open dialogue where all stakeholders can express their concerns and expectations. As Joyce L. Epstein et al. (2002) propose, regular meetings involving teachers, parents, and school leadership—structured as collaborative discussions rather than formal consultations—can foster mutual understanding and trust.

### **Impact of Technology on Parental Engagement**

Hierarchical regression analysis confirms the positive impact of modern technologies on parental involvement in school life. Schools effectively utilising online platforms and applications for communication achieve higher levels of parental participation. Notably, technological factors account for an additional 12 % of explained variance beyond sociodemographic variables ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.12$ ,  $F(2,282) = 18.35$ ,  $F(2,282) = 18.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

This finding expands our understanding of factors influencing parental engagement.

Digital technologies can help overcome traditional barriers to collaboration, such as time constraints or geographical distance. As Matthew A. Kraft and Todd Rogers (2015) highlight, even simple measures like regular email updates on a child's progress can significantly enhance parental involvement. However, it is crucial to recognise that not all parents have equal access to digital technologies or possess adequate digital literacy skills. Iwona Ocetkiewicz (2024) stresses that schools should offer diverse communication channels to ensure no parent is excluded due to technological limitations.

### **Key Factors for Effective Collaboration**

Qualitative analysis of case studies from successful schools identified three dominant factors contributing to effective collaboration with parents: maximised communication, consistent pedagogical approaches, and support provided to parents. These factors align with the concept of partnership between school and family described by Anne Henderson et al. (2007).

Conversely, three main categories of factors negatively impacting collaboration were identified: teacher burnout, economic and social challenges faced by parents, and toxic school environments, particularly bullying. Analytical induction revealed that these factors are interconnected, creating a vicious cycle that significantly hampers effective communication between school and family.

### **Practical Framework for Improvement**

These insights provide a practical framework for implementing strategies aimed at improving collaboration. Schools should strive to create inclusive environments that are welcoming to parents and respectful of their diverse needs and expectations. As Smith et al. (2020) propose, effective strategies for parental engagement should not only provide information but also create opportunities for active parental participation in school life.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This research provides a comprehensive insight into the current state of collaboration between parents and schools in the Czech educational system. It offers a significant contribution to both theoretical understanding and practical solutions for identified challenges. The findings confirm that effective communication between school and family is a key factor for the optimal development of children and their academic success.

The statistical analysis unequivocally demonstrated the influence of various factors on the level of parental involvement. Hierarchical regression analysis was employed to identify these factors. In the first step, sociodemographic variables such as parental education, household income, and type of school were included. These variables explained 27 % of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.27$ ,  $F(3, 284) = 24.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the second step, variables related to the use of technology by schools were added, which increased the explained variance by an additional

12 % ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.12$ ,  $F(2, 282) = 18.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This confirms the significant impact of technology on parental engagement.

The research also highlights substantial differences in the degree and quality of collaboration. These differences are influenced by socioeconomic factors, school type, and regional specifics. The findings expand theoretical knowledge in the field of family-school collaboration by providing an empirically grounded analysis of the impact of digital technologies, a perspective largely absent in the Czech context. Additionally, they offer new

insights into regional inequalities in parental involvement that align with international trends observed in Central European countries.

The study provides three key implications for educational practice. First, improving collaboration between parents and schools requires implementing targeted strategies that address the diverse perspectives and needs of all educational stakeholders. Second, modern technologies serve as an effective tool for overcoming traditional barriers to collaboration; however, their use must be inclusive and considerate of parents' diverse access to and proficiency with digital tools. Third, schools should systematically work towards building a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders to overcome the identified "mutual blame syndrome."

Future research should focus on three key areas. Long-term studies tracking the evolution of family-school collaboration throughout a child's schooling could identify critical points where parental participation declines and uncover factors contributing to this decline. Experimental studies testing specific interventions aimed at increasing parental involvement such as personalised digital communication tools or parental mentoring programmes could provide empirically validated strategies for practice. Comparative studies across countries would help identify universal and culturally specific factors influencing family-school collaboration.

Special attention should be given to developing and validating metrics for measuring not only the quantity but also the quality of collaboration between schools and parents. This would enable more precise evaluations of the effectiveness of various approaches. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to investigate the long-term impact of different collaboration models on academic outcomes, social skills, and overall well-being of students, particularly in the context of educational digitalisation and evolving family structures.

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