

**COOPERATION (PARTNERSHIP) BETWEEN SCHOOL AND FAMILY
AND STUDENT SUCCESS**

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Abstract: Education is a complex and long process. Its outcomes are influenced by many factors. The intensity of particular influence can hardly be confirmed at time of life of children and young people. Considering the long duration of the relationship parent - teacher-pupil, teacher professionalism, and unbroken emotional bonds between parents and children, family and school bear the epithet of "the most influential".

This paper presents some of the results of an extensive study whose subject is the relationship between educational status (socio-economic factors, pedagogical actions of parents in the process of encouraging learning and work, the organization of family life and parent-school cooperation) of the Macedonian family and school success (average grade of pupils, level of effort in teaching, collaboration and participation in extracurricular activities).

The results presented reveal the influence and connection of some aspects of the parent - school collaboration (attitudes of parents about the importance of parent - school cooperation for student achievement, assessment of quality of positive practice in the area - parent - school cooperation, parents` initiative to cooperate with the school, willingness of parents to engage in school activities) to / with the overall success of pupils at the end of the school year.

Key words: school, family, parent - school cooperation, school success

For the successful operation of school communication, cooperation among all members of the school team, between school and family, as well as with institutions from the local and wider social environment is necessary. Communication can be seen as a prerequisite for the existence and functioning of any social group and institution, as a medium through which we implement group activities, and as a result of successful group and institutional actions. Lately, in our conditions discussions on the necessity and possibilities for the development of school practical work based on the principles of effective communication and cooperation between all participants in the process are becoming more and more prevailing. It could be

said that there is a generally accepted view, based on numerous theoretical and empirical findings, that there is a correlation between the quality of communication and cooperation in school and the quality of school work expressed at the level of accomplishing the anticipated outcomes of education (Hebib, 2011).

School, as a social institution, must accept the fact that its own educational work is built on the foundations of family upbringing. Therefore, one of the most important educational activities of the school is to increase the parents' role in school, using different strategies for their involvement in the education of their children.

Some recent studies of the partnership between school and family point to the influence of several factors. The first relates to the processes of democratization and decentralization of education, which are supported by the new reform movement in education in the European area (Farrell & Jones, 2000; Piorkowska, 2007; Polovina, 2008). The second set of factors highlights the importance of quality education, which means that the school is an institution which supports activities that promote relationships among all participants in the educational process (Fergusin, 2005; Polovina, 2008). The third group of factors arises from the development of scientific thought in the psychology of education, by recognizing the importance of the effect of context in the study of education, i.e. the importance of including and understanding social and interpersonal processes that make up the social context of schooling (Anderman & Anderman, 2000, Polovina, 2008). The fourth group of factors is based on the realization that family and school are primary and interrelated microsystems in which the child's life and development take place, and that through the cooperation of parents with school teachers can promote the social support of families and the processes in families, especially those relevant to the development of children (Ahuja, 2008; Polovina, 2008). Exactly from these previously mentioned factors it is clear that the new vision of parental involvement requires a new way of thinking from all listed actors about family, school, school's role in family's life, and about the role of parents in activities related to school and school activities of their children.

There are many reasons for the existence of and for encouraging cooperation between school and family, as well as with the local environment. Cooperation may contribute to the improvement of school programs and school climate, it may provide assistance and support to the family, to boost parents' skills and abilities, to enable the connection between school and family as well as with society, and to help teachers to perform their daily work more easily and in a better way. Above all, the main reason for creating and supporting such cooperation

between the family and the school aims at improving students' success in school, and in their later life. When parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the educational process see and experience themselves as partners in education, then they will contribute to greater student success (Kappan, 1995).

Family - school relations and school success

The study of literature and bibliographical references relating to the research of the relationship between family and school success of children leads us to the conclusion that a new research direction is being intensively developed, which is typically covered by the terms: parental involvement, parental engagement, parental support, family relationships and parental school cooperation / partnership.

Until 1978 on the territory of the American continent, when the book "Separate worlds: the relationships between schools and families" was published, only about thirty scientific papers in this field were published, and in 1998 the number of such publications rose to 450. According to Ryan and Adams (1998; Petrovska, 2009) this tendency is likely to have initiated part of the growing public concern (especially in the USA) that their children show relatively lower school performance in international comparisons. However, this cannot be a general explanation, because researchers from many parts of the world have almost simultaneously started to deal with this issue intensively. This interest could be stimulated because of frequent objections by the direct participants in the educational process (students, teachers, parents) that the barriers between school and family exist and they negatively affect children's progress in school. On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner's (1979; Petrovska, 2009) explanation is also acceptable, that the most important stimulating force for this type of research is the change in the focus of research of psychological sciences from studying intrapsychic processes as determinants of child development towards studying contextual and situational factors.

Our analysis of numerous research reports indicates two conceptual approaches to the study of this problem:

1. Supporters of one approach study the problem at an institutional level, treating the family and the school as separate institutions referred to mutual cooperation because of a mutual goal. Guided by this orientation Lightfoot (1978; Petrovska, 2009) in his work critically discusses the insufficient and incomprehensive cooperation between these two institutions. On the one hand he criticizes the inability of school to include the family in its

activities and, on the other hand, he indicates the family's indifference towards being present in school. This approach to the study of the problem entitled "between" is directed to studying the problems related to education policy, administrative practice and advice for parents. Schools are advised on how best to accomplish the communication with parents and how to attract them to cooperation (meetings or significant voluntary activities). One part of literature is intended for parents and its primary goal is to enable them to seek information from the school and how to support school in its implementation of educational objectives.

2. Another approach, called "within the family stream" is primarily directed to studying systems of interpersonal relationships in the family and the ways in which they can affect students' school performance seen from social or educational aspect. Research is mainly grounded on the achievements in the field of psychology, but a lot of it pays attention to the pedagogical actions of parents in the performance of their educational function. Perhaps the highest achievement in this approach is the deeply rooted empirical model for parental involvement, established by Ryan and Adams (Ryan & Adams, 1998; Petrovska, 2009). In the attempt to create order in excessively divergent literature that treats this problem, the authors have included in the model almost all variables that researchers involved, or could involve in their work, especially in the study of within the family processes.

Using non-accidental samples with moderate size of primary school children and their parents, Ryan, Adams & Corville, Smith (1994) and Ketsetzis, Ryan & Adams (1998) also found that family processes and children's features are combined into schemes provided by the model, whereupon the primary family processes such as conflict and cohesion affect school-focused supportive or repressive relations established on line parent-child relationship. The effects which resulted from these two types of parent-child relationships on school achievement and social adjustment in school occur indirectly through the children's features: efforts for learning and intellectual efficiency.

In regard to parental beliefs about their involvement in children's education (Stevenson, Chen and Uttal, 1990; Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Lummis et al, 1990; at Ryan & Adams, 2005), the level of valuing would include aspects of encouraging intellectual opportunities and providing achievement expectations; monitoring would include setting rules, checking on homework completion, or setting limits on television viewing; helping would include direct support for getting school work completed and finding useful resources; while doing would be taking over a task while placing extreme pressure and demand on the child for school performance. Scott-Jones (1995) suggests that these four levels of parent-child interaction can

have direct effects on academic achievement and also indirect effects, where any of the four levels can influence the basic skills or motivations of the child, while in turn, these skills and motivations predict academic achievement (Ryan & Adams, 2005).

School success

In pedagogical - psychological literature: school success, success in teaching, student achievements and learning outcomes are understood and interpreted differently. "Unlike the results in psychology, more or less, they point out objective outcome of an activity, the success highlights the subjective feeling that follows the result, or subjective assessment of an activity. It depends on the level of aspiration and then a retroactive effect of aspiration and motivation, especially among the younger school age "(Krstic, 1991). Results in process of learning and educational process in general, in psychological research are seen as "... a final balance of realized transactions ..." (Krstic, 1991).

Unlike the previously pointed, achieving represents a wider concept. In the didactic sense by the term indicators of achievement the following is meant "... the circle and the magnitude of the changes that have occurred in the development of the individual student influenced by the educational process in teaching. Changes relate and cover the whole personality of the student. This means that the indicators of achievement show the scope of change in different kinds of success that are measurable in both upbringing and education "(Potkonjak, Shimlesha, 1989)

Taking into account the objectives and tasks of primary education in our country, the established system for monitoring, testing and evaluating and the pedagogical-psychological understanding of success, for the purposes of this research we decided to apply the following criteria, i.e. indicators of school success: average achievement of pupils in the previous year, and the indicators derived from the scale of school success through which we studied the following aspects: the attitude of the student towards the rules and regulations of the school, commitment to instruction, sociability (cooperativeness) and interest and participation in extracurricular activities.

Research methodology

The subject of this research is cooperation between school and family and the impact of this cooperation on students' school success in elementary school.

Guided by the determination that the parent - school cooperation depends on children's school success, the purpose of the research is to analyze the views and opinions of parents

whose children show different school success, as well as to study the influence of some aspects of the parent - school cooperation on children's school success.

The empirical research was conducted on the territory in the eastern part of the Republic of Macedonia in 2014 (six urban and six rural schools). Students (seventh and eighth grade), parents and teachers involved in the random survey sample were involved through their primary schools. The survey was conducted on a sample of 578 respondents.

For the purposes of the research the following instruments were used: Questionnaire - scaler for pupils; Questionnaire - scaler for parents and scaler for assessing school success of pupils intended for class teachers of the pupils from our sample.

For the analysis and interpretation of results a quantitative-qualitative approach using descriptive statistics was used. From descriptive statistics percentages determining mean values (arithmetic mean), identifying the range of variation and identifying the degree of dispersion of results around the median, average deviations from the mean, and ponders were used. Considering that the measurement was made using an ordinal (attributive) scale, in the processing of collected data nonparametric statistical procedures were applied.

The procedures of inference statistics were used in areas where our intention was to draw conclusions about the existence/non-existence of certain differences and the existence or lack of association between the variables surveyed: χ^2 - test; Spearman (ρ) rank correlation coefficient; T-test; and contingency coefficient (C).

Results and Discussion

Parent- school cooperation and school success of pupils

Guided by the determination that the school success of children depends on the parent - school cooperation, in this part we present the results obtained on the views and opinions of parents whose children show different school success. In this way we directed our efforts towards the realization of the research task: to study the impact of some aspects of the parent - school cooperation on the school success of children.

The results presented in Table 1 clearly showed that the majority of parents (75.73%) agreed with the view - the school success of children depends on the quality of the parent - school cooperation. In this context, the spreadsheet view number 2 reveals that the parents of all three categories of pupils (according to the average success) stated their views in an approximately equal way. These data follow the tendency of the total sample. However, the highest percentage of parents whose children show little success at school (18, 52%) are of

the opinion that school success does not depend on the quality of the parent - school cooperation. The amount of $\chi^2 = 15.94$ reveals the significance in the differences, but the coefficient of contingency suggests an evidently weak correlation between attitudes about the importance of the parent - school cooperation and pupils average school success.

Table 1.

Parents' views on the importance of parent - school cooperation for school success

Parent s	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
village	12	52.34	77	32.7	15	6.38	10	4.25	10	4.25	23	100
	3		6								5	
Town	17	50.00	66	19.3	80	23.39	12	3.51	13	3.80	34	100
	1		0								2	
Total	29	50.95	14	24.7	95	16.46	22	3.81	23	3.99	57	100
	4		3	8							7	

df = 4	$\chi^2 = 35.09$	p < 0.01	C = 0.24
Agreement index	Village: 4.25	Town: 4.20	

Legend:		
1 - totally agree	2 - agree	3 - partly agree
4 - disagree	5 - totally disagree	

Table 2.

Parents' attitudes to the importance of parent - school cooperation for school success of pupils

13.	Excellent		Average		Poor		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Agree	219	77.11	182	76.15	36	66.67	437	75.74
Partly agree	53	18.66	34	14.22	8	14.81	95	16.46
Disagree	12	4.22	23	9.62	10	18.52	45	7.80
Total	284	100	239	100	54	100	577	100

df=4	$\chi^2 = 15.94$	p < 0.01	C = 0.16
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Table 3 presents how the assessment of the quality of parent - school cooperation, from parents of different categories of pupils, affects their school success. Although more than half of the parents of the total sample assessed the parent - school cooperation as unsatisfactory, the data divided according to the average school success reveal disparity. In the column for assessment there is a tendency of decline in the proportion of the statements of the parents of

excellent students compared to the statements of the parents whose children show poor success. The same is observed in the column for assessment designated as "good". Quite the opposite, in the column for assessing as unsatisfactory the percentage is increasing and ranges from 46.13% over 61.51%, up to 72.22%. The $\chi^2 = 22.84$ confirms that the observed differences are not random, and $C = 0, 20$ indicates low correlation between variables.

Table 3.

Assessment of cooperation and school success of children

14.	Excellent		Average		Poor		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Excellent	82	28.87	39	16.32	6	11.11	127	22.01
Good	71	25.00	53	22.18	9	16.67	133	23.05
Unsatisfactory	131	46.13	147	61.51	39	72.22	317	54.94
Total	284	100	239	100	54	100	577	100

$$\underline{\underline{df = 4 \quad \chi^2 = 22.84 \quad p < 0.01 \quad C = 0.20}}$$

Despite the knowledge that only 13.52% of parents visit the school their child attends whenever when they feel the need for it, the data on parents' opinions categorized by the success of their children and the values of the calculated statistical parameters ($\chi^2 = 141.46$ and $C = 0,44$) indicate that the differences are statistically significant, and that the impact of this parental variable has a moderate influence on school achievement.

Table 4.

When parents visit school and school success

15.	Excellent		Average		Poor		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Whenever I feel the need for it	64	22.54	9	3.77	5	9.26	78	13.52
Always when I am invited	18	64.79	141	59.0	5	9.26	330	57.19
I avoid going to school	4	12.68	0	37.2	44	81.4	169	29.29
Total	36	100	89	100	54	100	577	100
	28		239		54		577	
	4							

$$\underline{\underline{df = 4 \quad \chi^2 = 141.46 \quad p < 0.01 \quad C = 0.44}}$$

Parents of excellent pupils (22, 54%) visit the school whenever they feel the need. Only 3.77% of parents of average students and 9.26% of poor students visit school because of internally felt need. The parents of pupils with excellent and average school success, visit the school whenever they are called in a dramatically higher percentage (64.79% and 59.00%),

compared to parents of pupils with weak success (9.26 %). The differences in the responses of parents marked as: I avoid visiting the school are evident. This is done by only 12.68% of the parents of pupils with excellent success, by more than a third of parents of average and by about four-fifths of parents of the pupils with weak success. We can freely conclude that pupils whose parents demonstrate self-initiative to visit the school or contact it whenever when they feel the need for it, achieve higher formal success.

Table 5.

Parents' readiness to engage in school activities and school success

16.	Excellent		Average		Poor		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Always when I am invited	228	80.28	185	77.4	38	70.37	45	78.16
Only if I have no other family or work responsibilities	44	15.49	29	12.1	8	14.81	81	14.04
I'm not willing to participate, there is no need	12	4.23	25	10.4	8	14.81	45	7.80
Total	284	100	239	100	54	100	57	100
							7	

$$\underline{\underline{df = 4 \quad \chi^2 = 11.90 \quad p < 0.05 \quad C = 0.14}}$$

Despite the perceived decline in the percentage of parents of pupils with excellent school success (80.28%), of parents of pupils with average school success (77.41%), and of parents of pupils with weak school success (70.37%) who said they were willing to participate in activities that are initiated by the school attended by their children, it can be concluded that the distribution of frequencies and their percentage representation follow the results of the total sample.

Therefore, declaratively, parents of all three categories of pupils in the highest percentage expressed readiness for such a commitment (engagement). They would be engaged in an almost equal percentage (15,49%, 12,13% and 14.81%) only if they are free of other responsibilities. The lowest percentage (4.23% 10,46% and 14.81%) is that of parents who are not willing to do that. Statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 exist between the responses of parents whose children show different formal success, but the impact of their attitude to readiness to engage in school activities of children is negligible

concerning success.

Table 6.

Who participated in the research and school success

13.	Excellent		Average		Poor		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Mother	240	84.50	78	32.64	48	88.89	366	63.43
Father	44	15.49	161	67.36	6	11.11	211	36.57
Total	284	100	239	100	54	100	577	100

$$\underline{df = 2 \quad \chi^2 = 167.19 \quad p < 0.01 \quad C = 0.47}$$

We expressed interest in the fact who filled out the questionnaire - scaler because we wanted to determine the parental role in the educational engagement of children. In fact, this parental activity was treated as an aspect of parental involvement in school engagement of children. The results presented in Table 6 explain that the greatest percentage of parents of pupils with excellent school success (84.50%) and pupils with weak school success (88.89%) who are involved in the educational engagement of children in this way, are mothers. In contrast, about two-thirds of the parents of average students are fathers. The observed differences are statistically significant, but considering the complexity of family factors that determine school success of pupils we cannot confirm that assistance from mothers produces pupils with excellent and weak school success, and assistance from fathers pupils with average school success. It seems that the reasons for these differences should be looked for in the parental educational style rather than in parents' gender.

Conclusion

The analysis of the research results on the impact of selected aspects of the parent - school cooperation on school success of children showed that it can be considered as a segment of the educational status of the family. Statistically significant differences were observed between the attitudes of parents, whose children have shown different formal success regarding the significance of the parent - school cooperation for the school success of children. In addition, parents of pupils with excellent school success in a significantly higher percentage versus parents of pupils with average and weak school success evaluated positive parent-school cooperation as excellent and good, and the parents of the pupils with weak school success in a dramatically higher percentage versus parents of excellent and average

students avoid going to the schools their children attend. Despite these differences, the data that reveal that the parents of all categories of students in the highest percentage reported that whenever they are called by the schools their children attend they are willing to participate in school activities are optimistic.

The benefits of parental involvement for both the pupils and the school are large and numerous. For pupils the benefits are: formal higher success and higher scores on tests of knowledge; positive attitudes towards school and learning; positive, responsible attitude towards school requirements; cooperative and coordinated support from parents and teachers. For parents: introduction to school rules and regulations, requirements that are set in front of their children, developmental and school needs of their children etc. For school: teachers become better acquainted with family conditions of their students; school programs are implemented more successfully; as a whole school works more effectively, and it also becomes a natural extension of the family, the forefront of family culture and values.

Once again the view that the school is in a position to encourage and implement effective cooperation that would lead to a strengthening of parental feeling of belonging to the school community and coordination of educational impact of the two most important educational institutions in the lives of children has been supported.

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