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## Family and school – partners or rivals?

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### Abstract

The article presents selected results of research in inter-relationships between parents and teachers in primary schools. The research was conducted in connection to an already realized project (Pecháčková et al., 2011) whose aim was to describe the existing forms of cooperation between school and family. The research was made in order to find out the expectations of teachers and parents and to what extent they vary from one another. 44 parents and 16 teachers were involved in the research. Semi-structured interviews were held with both respondent groups and the acquired statements were subsequently coded and analyzed. The article primarily presents parents' attitudes to teachers, school and secondly, the teachers' attitudes to parents.

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### 1. Introduction

School and family work as systems which are governed by law, rules, relationships and standards. Out of these systems there should be issued a certain intervention so that above mentioned regularities could be respected and preserved.

A good relationship is not obvious it is built upon a friendly communication, certain requirements and leads towards successful cooperation and participation. The participation is being developer in accordance with the view at development of education within a society. The issue of family cooperation and school in the world is

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often a discussed issue. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) on base of their research pointed out the fact that climate of school can support or tie down family relationship and they have examined the effect of approaches and attitudes of teachers towards parents. In an extensive study J. L. Epstein (2010) focused mainly on building of relationships between school and family.

The research which took place at the Faculty of Education University of Hradec Kralove (Pecháčková et al, 2011) investigated an existing form of cooperation at primary schools in the Czech Republic and opened a wide range of further questions: What relationship do parents have towards school? What type of school do parents want? What do teachers want from parents? Is there an agreement on a division of basic tasks of school and family? The answers onto these questions have been gained by qualitative investigation which helped us to penetrate deeper into relationships and context.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. The research aims*

The research survey was aimed at primary schools where due to the beginning of education and curriculum content, there is a closer link between teachers and the pupils' parents. The main objective was to find out what parents want from schools and what teachers want from parents. Furthermore, we used research questions to investigate what relationship parents have towards school, what school they want and what teachers consider as crucial for the success of their work. The results helped to state in what parents and teachers agree, and also what they disagree on.

### *2.2. The research methodology*

To meet the objectives of the project a semi-structured interview was chosen as a significant tool, which can be defined as non-standardized interviewing of one research participant by one researcher, using a pre-established list of open questions (Švaříček, Šed'ová, 2007, p 159). Semi-structured interview allows for deeper penetration into the research environment, and therefore it seemed to us as appropriate to identify relationships.

We focused on the first stage of primary school. In order to gain insight into their relationship, it was necessary to obtain the responses of both parties. Therefore, we created two types of semi-structured interviews of our own design, one for parents who have children at primary school, and the second one for primary school teachers. Sections in the parents' interview were made by open-ended questions and were divided into four thematic areas: school, teacher, child and co-operation. There were also no less important identification sections. The interview for teachers was also formed by open-ended questions and in addition to identification questions it contained three thematic areas related to the profession, parents and co-operation. The interview for parents contained a total of 18 sections and the interview for teachers 12 sections. The research survey was therefore based on semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers. In order to achieve the highest number of respondents, three researchers were involved in the interviews, all interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The person who led the interviews also transcribed them, in order to achieve maximum consistency. It was followed by open coding of the data and grouping into categories, then a descriptive and comparative analysis.

### *2.3. The research group*

The research group consisted of the parents of students and teachers (from the 1st grade of primary school in the Czech Republic). Due to the time-consuming method, only 44 parents and 16 teachers were contacted. In our previous research, which investigated the implemented forms of co-operation between school and family, we

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