

**CONFLICT IN THE HOME–SCHOOL–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MODEL:
CAUSES, FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSES**

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ABSTRACT

Research Purpose: This study explores the dynamics underlying the use of home–school–community partnerships as an essential strategy for addressing the challenges associated with equity and quality in education. Despite the many benefits that such partnerships can offer in different countries, conflict is also common in such partnerships, which has the potential to serve as a catalyst for reflection and improvement. **Method:** Based on a qualitative analysis and a comparative literature review, this study explored the causes of conflict in family–school–community collaboration, particularly with regard to the functions of conflict in the context of collaboration. The findings emphasize the facts that school-led activities must be fully supported by families and communities, that resource integration is important, and that educational responsibilities must be implemented collectively. **Effective collaboration among stakeholders is essential to efforts to improve educational experiences and outcomes. Result:** By recognizing conflict as an opportunity for growth, this study advocates a localized and ultimately a structured approach to the task of strengthening partnerships among families, schools and communities; this approach aims to support student development and reduce educational inequalities.

Keywords: Family education; School education; Community education; Integrated development; Conflict.

1. INTRODUCTION

The school (Meyer, 1977), as a natural institution for promoting children's education, occupies a central position in the entire education system. However, it is difficult for schools to carry the full burden of children's education on their own (Coleman, 1968; Epstein, 2018). Children grow up not only in the school environment (Douglas, 2023) but also in the family and in the community, and this process is influenced by multiple factors, such as macropolicies (Heckmann, 2008; Nan, 2020; Jones, 2021), the institutional environment and the social culture (Martin, 2024). Therefore, cooperation among families, schools and communities (hereinafter referred to as "home–school–society" collaboration) is highly important with regard to attempts to improve the quality of education and promote the overall development of children (Beaulieu, et al., 2003; Haines, et al., 2015). Collaboration among families, schools and communities not only strengthens the functions of school education but also helps families and schools achieve their parenting goals more

effectively. Although home–school–society collaboration has become a major trend in education reform worldwide, it still faces many challenges in practice (Jiménez, et al., 2009). Despite the various models of cooperation that have been implemented at the school level (Epstein, 2018; Moschonas, 2019; Department of Education, 2020), the actual results have failed to live up to expectations, and conflicts and dissatisfaction between teachers and parents have been increasing (Bryan et al., 2020). In addition, the limitations of the traditional education model in terms of goal setting (Dalin, 2010; Wu, et al., 2021), experience transfer and evaluations of effectiveness have also come to represent major challenges to home–school–society cooperation (Zhou, 2023), especially among immigrant families (Hess & Pejic, 2021).

Researchers have explored models of home–school–society cooperation and identified the complex relationship between cooperation (Paccaud, 2021) and conflict (Fàbregas, 2022). In their efforts to "solve issues" (Wu, et al., 2021), some theorists and practitioners have tended to overemphasize the negative aspects of conflict, thereby ignoring the potential value of conflict with regard to facilitating reflection on and improvement of home–school cooperation. In addition, the causes of home–school conflict have not been analysed in sufficient depth, resulting in the development of improvement strategies that fail to achieve the desired results but rather exacerbate the corresponding conflict. Therefore, this research aims to reexamine the phenomenon of conflict in the context of home–school–community cooperation, to explore its underlying causes in depth, and to reflect on how to respond effectively to conflict on this basis with the goal of promoting the positive outcomes of home–school cooperation.

This research aims to provide a theoretical basis and practical guidance for efforts to resolve conflicts that emerge in the context of home–school–society cooperation and to promote the optimization of the home–school–society cooperation model to foster the holistic development of children more effectively. The purpose of this study is thus to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ What are the positive and negative functions of conflicts in the context of home–school–community cooperation?
- ✓ What are the main causes of such conflicts?
- ✓ What conflict management and resolution strategies are effective in this context?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of home–school–community cooperation

Home–school–community (HSC) cooperation represents tripartite efforts on the part of and interactions among families, schools and the community in the education and upbringing of children (Keltly, 2020). The theoretical foundations of such cooperation, i.e., the social division of labour theory (Durkheim, 2023), Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory (Guy-Evans, 2020) and Epstein's theory (Epstein, 2018) of overlapping spheres of influence, are based on structural-functional thought. These theories have been widely used to illustrate the value of collaboration between home and school. In particular, Epstein's theory of six types of participants (Epstein, 1992, 1995, 1996, 2018) highlights the importance of family, school and community participation in the educational process and identifies six dimensions of home–school collaboration: home education, school communication, volunteering, home learning, participation in decision making and community collaboration. This theoretical framework emphasizes the multidimensional and complex nature of collaboration and the unique contribution of each dimension to the development of children. In recent studies, many researchers have highlighted the importance of community

cooperation (Husen, & Hunde, 2021; Štefulj, & Kušević, 2021). In a study conducted in Croatia by Štefulj and Kušević (2021), family–school relationships were positioned in relatively unexplored ways within the broader external ecosystems and macrosystems in which they developed.

2.2 Functions of conflict

Conflicts among home, school, and the community provide opportunities to reflect on the boundaries of authority and responsibility in the context of educational cooperation (Epstein, 2011). On the one hand, conflict enables schools, families, and communities to clarify their respective roles and establish a basis for cooperation (Herrera et al., 2020). According to previous research, inappropriate family intervention in education and transgressions of the boundaries of home–school cooperation are exacerbated by the blurring of the boundaries associated with home–school cooperation and other factors (Jung & Sheldon, 2020). On the other hand, conflict serves as a "safety valve" by providing a channel for the expression of dissatisfaction and the release of pressure (Laursen & Collins, 2009). In addition, different areas of study must be considered. Conflict stimulates innovative models of cooperation, and common challenges prompt parents and teachers to explore new educational strategies and solutions, such as joint participation in curriculum development in both cities and rural areas (Jones, 2021) and deepening cooperative relationships with parents at different levels of the family–school relationship (Epstein, 2011). Schools represent the main institution through which children are educated (Uljaevna & Shavkatovna, 2021), and they lie at the centre of the education system (Shaturaev, 2021). However, the education of children can hardly be accomplished by schools alone (Epstein, 2018; Edmonds, 2020). Therefore, cooperation among families, schools and communities has become a common concern with regard to the reform and development of education in various countries (Lidar, 2020; Van Kuijk, 2021). American primary and secondary schools have a long history of home–school–community cooperation and rich experience in this context. Among the many organizations dedicated to researching and advocating for home–school–community tripartite cooperation, the most important is the "Home–School–Community Cooperation", which was established by Johns Hopkins University. The Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships (Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships) was established by Johns Hopkins University, which created the National Network of Collaborative School Relationships (NNCSR) in 1996 under the auspices of the Federal Department of Education's Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD). The goal of this process was to guide schools, school districts, and state education leaders in the process of strengthening partnerships with families and communities with the aim of helping students improve their learning, promote their personal development, and make appropriate use of home–school–community partnerships, thereby promoting student success.

2.2.1 The positive functions of conflict

Conflict is defined in terms of opposition among different interests, expectations or values (Bergström, 1970). According to Putnam and Poole's two-dimensional model (Putnam and Poole, 2023), conflict can be categorized based on the axes of cooperation (focusing on the interests of others) and competition (focusing on individual interests). First, in the context of home–school–community cooperation, participants may come into conflict because they are concerned with different levels of individual and collective interests (Schutz, 2006). Thus, home–school cooperation refers to the interactions between school and family education that occur within the

educational system, which involve the main educational settings—i.e., school and home—and the main educational actors—i.e., teachers and parents—alongside the three-dimensional space of children's development—the community (Cumbo, 2021). This form of cooperation is reflected not only in the functional complementarity between school and home education, which aims to promote the holistic development of pupils, but also in the maintenance of consistency and continuity of learning in different spaces as well as in the core relationship between teachers and parents, which is based on interactive cooperation. Thus, the level of cooperation in education involves the provision of mutual support between schools and homes, which ultimately results in concrete cooperation between teachers and parents.

Home–school–community partnerships involve a set of activities and relationships that aim to promote the growth and development of students (Epstein, 2011); in this context, the school, family, and community form a new community of interest through a shared vision and a shift in identity from "I" to "we" (Jones, 2021). Researchers have noted that teachers and parents embody the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural needs of individuals, which are shaped by the social structures that define their roles and expectations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Skinner, et al. 2022). The interactions among these factors reflect the impacts of individual experiences and interactions among educational agents (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). This dual nature illustrates the multiple meanings of home–school–community cooperation and the multidimensionality that characterizes relevant issues, particularly in the context of home–school relations, thus revealing that the corresponding sources of conflict are diverse and cannot be generalized (Gao, 2008; Jones, 2021).

2.2.2 Expectations and perceptions of roles in conflicts

Home–school cooperation should essentially take the form of an interactive exchange between schools and families on the basis of their respective uniqueness rather than seeking to replace or smooth out the differences between these parties. In the context of information technology and globalization, social change is accelerating, and the number of factors that influence role expectations is increasing, thus leading to rapid changes in role expectations. Due to the influence of both traditional and modern approaches to education, teachers and parents face rapidly changing social expectations and must often adjust their roles before they can adapt fully to the current role expectations; in turn, this situation often leads to mismatches between role expectations and people's actual perceptions.

Previous research has demonstrated the existence of two principal perspectives on this topic. One such perspective asserts that the primary responsibility for education resides with the teacher, who should therefore play a leading role in this process. The other perspective emphasizes the pivotal role played by parents in their children's growth and development, thereby suggesting that parents should take on more significant responsibilities for education than should the teacher. Such disparate expectations and perceptions of the roles of the other party give rise to a discrepancy that reflects the absence of a clear definition of the division of roles between parents and teachers in children's education. This discrepancy may, in practice, result in a mutual avoidance of educational responsibilities or inappropriate interference with the work of the other party, thus making conflict an inevitable outcome. The discrepancies between teachers' and parents' expectations and perceptions of each other's roles are also indicative of the lack of clarity pertaining to the division of roles between these parties in children's education. This situation may result in the shifting of

educational responsibilities to the other party or inappropriate interference in the other party's work in practice, thus making conflict inevitable.

Home–school cooperation involves communication and interaction on the basis of the uniqueness of the school and the family rather than the replacement of these different parties or their combination in the form of an undifferentiated unity. This situation also implies that teachers and parents each play a distinctive role, which is informed by the expectations associated with that role. In ancient societies, in which the natural economy was the dominant economic system, parents were solely responsible for the upbringing and education of their children. The modern education system has resulted in a shift in authority for children's education from the family to the school. This shift has led to the emergence of teachers with specialized knowledge, who play an important role in the growth and development of children. Teachers with specialized knowledge have thus begun to play a pivotal role in children's growth and development.

3. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

3.1 Communication conflicts

3.1.1 Communication and the conflation of the trust gap

The Thomas conflict model (Thomas, 1992) provides a theoretical framework for managing and resolving conflicts in the context of home–school–community cooperation (Yu, et al, 2024) and consists of five basic strategies: competition, cooperation, compromise, avoidance and conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). According to this theory, the concept of trust is a fundamental aspect of social interaction, which serves as a crucial foundation for the establishment of positive and productive relationships among individuals. In the context of home–school collaboration, the level of trust between teachers and parents plays a pivotal role in determining the success of the partnership. The development and maintenance of a trusting relationship between home and school depend heavily on effective communication during the process of collaboration. Various factors influence the process of communication between home and school. The first such factor is the change in the academic qualifications of teachers and parents. In the past, parents placed trust in teachers on the basis of the latter's professional status as authorities on popular knowledge and culture. However, as people become more educated, teachers gradually begin to separate themselves from the elite group of intellectuals and to become more professional and civilianized.

3.1.2 Communication boundaries

The boundaries between teaching and other professions have become increasingly blurred (Kandemir, 2023), thus leading to a gradual erosion of teachers' unique professional identity (Gao, 2008) and giving rise to threats to their professional prestige (Klimek, 2019). Parents, who are equipped with specialized knowledge and skills, increasingly tend to view teachers more critically in the context of their interactions (Pelemo, 2022). Consequently, teachers who do not feel fully respected (Troman, 2000) or trusted (Dolloff, 2022) may struggle to provide positive feedback or to engage in trust-based interactions.

Additionally, the demands on teachers' time, energy, and knowledge entailed by parental involvement have increased (Jadoon et al., 2021; Pelemo, 2022; Williams, 2023). An increasing number of activities are needed in this context. Although the division of labour between home and school has long been established, the increasing emphasis on home–school cooperation has come to represent a significant burden in terms of teachers' workload.

3.2 Conflicts regarding the uneven distribution of power

The fact that teachers and parents have the right to express their opinions on matters pertaining to school education has been widely acknowledged. However, due to the lack of institutional regulations and constraints, many ambiguities and malpractices characterize the power game that takes place between these two parties. The prevalence of an emphasis on teacher professionalism implies that teachers are according more prestige, which inevitably leads some teachers to believe that they have full decision-making power in the context of school education. This belief leads to scepticism regarding or refusal of interventions on the part of other stakeholders, namely, parents. Empowering parents inevitably offers parents a stronger voice in the school environment. The empowerment of parents also inevitably leads to behaviour that might be perceived as 'aggressive' parental involvement in schools, which can entail uncertainty with regard to teachers' work and threaten their professionalism.

On the one hand, teachers' professional autonomy, which represents a key dimension of professionalism, is an important component of the process of teacher professionalism. Teachers are called upon to free themselves of the constraints of rigid textbooks and syllabuses and to exercise more autonomy in the implementation and reform of education and teaching, in the process of guiding their students to grow and develop, and in the manner in which related assessment activities are performed. On the other hand, the importance of parents as children's first teachers cannot be overlooked. The concept of home-school cooperation, which was first introduced in the form of "parental participation in education", implies that parents are empowered and strengthened, not only with regard to enriching family education activities but also with respect to encouraging parents to play an active role school education and advocating that parents should not be subordinated to teachers' instructions. This concept implies that parents should be empowered in a number of ways. First, parents should be enabled to complete family education programmes. Second, they should be encouraged to participate actively in school education. Third, they should be supported through efforts to advocate their freedom from the dictates of teachers. As the influence of neoliberal education continues to deepen, parents, as "consumers" of school education, must exercise their right to choose schools. However, they must also be empowered and enabled to speak out on an ongoing basis.

3.3 Conflicts of interest

Willard Waller, a prominent American sociologist of education, once posited that teachers and parents are, to some extent, "natural opposites". This perspective is predicated on a fundamental assumption: although teachers and parents share a common commitment to the growth and development of students, their interests diverge significantly due to the disparate roles that they play in the process of education and nurturing. The school is an institutionalized and professionalized educational environment in which teachers are tasked with promoting the holistic development of all students. In contrast, the home is a private sphere in which parents are more concerned with their children's individual success and expect teachers to meet their individual needs. This difference in roles inevitably leads to conflicts of interest.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Correcting conceptual biases

Before exploring specific models and strategies for improvement, it is important to employ differentiated strategies to address home–school conflict, to investigate the possibility of errors in action due to perceptual biases, and finally to make the necessary corrections. First, research and practice on home–school cooperation should focus not only on the negative aspects of conflict but also on the potential positive effects of such conflict. Conflicts resulting from natural differences between the interests of teachers and those of parents should not be expected to be resolved or eradicated but should rather be viewed as an opportunity to promote understanding and to optimise the relationship between home and school. Conflicts resulting from inappropriate systems, such as the excessive use of power by home teachers, mismatches between role expectations and actual perceptions, and communication barriers, should be transformed through concrete action.

Moreover, individuals should not be blamed for systemic problems. Teachers and parents, as the main actors involved in home–school cooperation, play important roles in with the process of addressing conflict, but their behaviour is both influenced by their personal experiences and constrained by their social identities and role expectations. Conflict both exists at the individual level and is strongly influenced by institutional factors. In recent years, confrontations and disputes between teachers and parents have often been rooted in deeper institutional conflicts, thereby reflecting problems in wider social relations and institutional arrangements.

Therefore, we should update our understanding of conflict in the context of home–school–community cooperation rather than considering adjustments only at the individual level. An approach that involves ignoring these deeper systemic issues and simply blaming individual teachers and parents for such conflicts not only fails to address the challenges of home–school cooperation effectively but may also exacerbate the confusion and pressures faced by both parties and thus exacerbate home–school conflict. The correct approach in this context is to seek systemic and structural solutions that can help promote more harmonious and effective home–school collaboration.

4.2 Empowering teachers in terms of their involvement skills

To balance the professional autonomy of teachers with the involvement of parents, a well-established regulatory framework is essential with regard to mitigating conflicts between home and school. An institutionalized framework for home–school cooperation emphasizes both the professional autonomy of teachers and the empowerment of parents with regard to their participation in education, thus helping stimulate motivation and creativity among both parties. However, this process does not entail that autonomy is unlimited and boundless. In the field of education, the balance of power between teachers and parents must be regulated by clear institutional norms and constraints: the definition of teacher autonomy, the specific criteria used for participation in education on the part of both teachers and parents, and the means of redress in cases of autonomy violation must be clearly addressed.

To address these issues, a sound set of regulations, policies and institutions based on jurisprudential thinking is needed. This task involves, on the one hand, clarifying the rights and responsibilities of teachers and parents, delineating the boundaries of relevant rights and responsibilities, ensuring that the exercise of autonomy is systematic and standardized, and reducing the ambiguities resulting from unclear regulations; on the other hand, it involves the establishment of a mechanism for preventing and responding to conflicts between home and school, which includes not only establishing organisations to protect the rights of teachers and parents, raising awareness of the rights of teachers and parents among both parties, and ensuring

that these parties can lodge effective complaints in the event of violations as well as the development of a mechanism for regulating conflicts between home and school. It is also necessary to establish a mechanism for regulating conflicts between home and school, thereby providing a channel for mediating the tensions that emerge between teachers and parents, fostering a cooperative environment and promoting communication and understanding between these two parties. Through the implementation of these measures, a healthier and more supportive environment for home–school cooperation can be established with the goal of jointly promoting the overall development of pupils.

4.3 Promoting collaborative global family research projects

Based on an analysis of national models that have already been implemented, we conclude that, whether with regard to the legal framework of Sweden, the cultural consensus of Finland, or the specific policies and practices implemented in Japan and Singapore, home–school–community collaboration strategies that emphasize cooperation over competition, inclusion over exclusion, and coconstruction over a go-it-alone approach are essential with regard to the development of successful students, the establishment of harmonious communities, and the implementation of education systems that can foster sustainable development. In summary, if home–school conflict is managed effectively, it can not only foster clearer lines of authority and responsibility but also serve as a channel for alleviating stress while stimulating cooperation and innovation, thereby laying the foundation for the establishment of closer and more positive home–school relationships. This attitude, which focuses on facing conflict positively and managing it appropriately, is key to deepening home–school collaboration and promoting student success through joint action.

5. LIMITATIONS

Home–school–community cooperation is a strategic tool that has been produced and developed to address the outstanding problems of equity and quality of education at the level of the country, the locality, the school and the individual child. Each country and region is characterized by a different level of social development and faces different problems and difficulties with respect to improving the quality of and access to education; however, this study was limited to an exploration of the issue of conflict in the context of cooperation, and many other state-of-the-art approaches could also be explored in depth. Although this research has identified a relevant research gap in this context, the power of the investigation is small and scattered, the theoretical background is weak, systematic empirical research on this topic is lacking, and the vision of this research is limited to experience rather than being open. Future research can integrate the professional strengths of sociology, psychology, education, policy research, management and social work into both policy research and practical research.

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