

# Active involvement of parents in the educational process in schools in Slovenia

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**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** sodelovanje, partnerstvo, učitelji, starši, aktivno vključevanje

**POVZETEK** – V prispevku bomo govorili o razlogih za sodelovanje med učitelji in starši in vplivih sodelovanja na učenca, učitelje in starše. Sodelovanje je poudarjeno kot ključno za učinkovito vzgojo in izobraževanje. Analizirali bomo slovensko šolsko zakonodajo z vidika sodelovanja med šolo/učitelji in starši ter prikazali, kje v zakonodaji so vidni temelji partnerskega sodelovanja. Pri tem bomo poudarili pravico staršev do aktivnega sodelovanja pri vzgojno-izobraževalnem delu z vidika stanja in pričakovanih, ugotovljenih v raziskavi. Ugotovili smo pomembne razlike v mnenju anketiranih učiteljev in staršev glede določanja odgovornosti otrok in staršev, načrtovanja sodelovanja s starši, reševanju težav s posameznim otrokom, reševanju širše vzgojne problematike ter načrtovanje dela z otroki s posebnimi potrebami. Raziskava je pokazala, da je za oblikovanje partnerstva v prvi vrsti odgovoren učitelj, ki starše dojema kot enakovredne partnerje pri doseganju skupnih ciljev. Za učinkovitost današnje šole, je oblikovanje partnerskega odnosa s starši nujno.

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**ABSTRACT** – In this paper, the reasons for cooperation between teachers and parents and the impact of cooperation on students, teachers, and parents are discussed. Cooperation is emphasized as the key to effective education. Slovenian school legislation is examined from the perspective of the cooperation between school/teachers and parents, and the basis for partnership in the legislation is shown. In doing so, the right of parents to active participation in educational work is emphasized from the perspective of the status and expectations identified in the research. The research has shown significant differences between teachers and parents' opinion regarding determining the responsibilities of students and parents; planning cooperation with parents; solving problems with individual students; addressing the educational issues of students; and planning the work with students with special needs. Overall, the research has shown that the teachers are aware that the creation of a partnership is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the teacher, who perceives parents as equal partners in achieving common goals. Furthermore, for the educational efficiency of today's schools, the development of a partnership with parents is crucial.

## 1 Introduction

The objectives and strategies of client cooperation or partnership depend on how the cooperation is defined at the school level. Previous research has shown that cooperation with parents is a key factor for effective education and that it helps parents develop a positive role of an aid in the education of their child. In this paper, the reasons for the cooperation between parents and teachers are discussed and it is shown that participation has a positive impact on the student, as well as on the teachers and parents. The means of creating a partnership between teachers and parents are identified, and it is shown

that the formal framework in Slovenia lays down the partnership with parents. In the research part, the results of the research are presented through two research questions:

- How do the respondents feel about the importance of cooperation between parents and the school in establishing the individual elements of the school's educational concept?, and
- What kind of importance do respondents attach to the cooperation between parents and the school in activities that fall under specific educational strategies.

### *1.1 Reasons for cooperation between parents and teachers*

The influence of parents is extremely strong in the period of compulsory schooling, when the practical application of the things learned in school is mainly seen in everyday life experiences. Ecological theory emphasizes that students are an open system, which is experiencing continuous, reciprocal internal changes in relation to everything surrounding it (Downer and Myers 2010, p. 4). One of the main principles of this system theory anticipates that a relationship is formed when two of the systems (such as teachers and parents) interact. This relationship then sets up a new system, which is upgraded to include all those that have influenced its formation; in other words, "the entity is more than just the sum of all the parts" (ibid., p. 5). As explained in the case of the partnership between teachers and parents, the quantity and quality of interactions between them influence the design of their relationship. The interaction between the systems can therefore have a positive impact on the student or on his/her skills because "students' school success does not happen in a vacuum" (ibid., p. 8), but in context, which is described by Saqipi and Vogrinc (2016, p. 105) as "characteristics of the social setting or environment in which the activity is carried out".

Studies (see Schleicher, 1989; Munn, 1993; Rockwell, 1995; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005; Bakker and Denessen, 2007; Kalin, 2009, Larocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011) have shown that the more the parents are involved in the education of their child, the greater are the chances that their child will be successful in school. Furthermore, Henderson and Berla (1994) asserted that the most appropriate predictor of students' school achievement is the ability of the child's family to develop an environment that encourages and supports learning, expresses high but realistic expectations, and is involved in the child's education at school and in the community. It is important to keep in mind that the "parents must be representatives of their children, but they must be guaranteed support in education from experts" (Berčnik and Devjak, 2016, p. 14). Well-planned and effectively developed parental involvement brings positive consequences for the child, parents, teachers, and the entire school (Henderson and Berla, 1994; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005; Smit, Sluiter, Driessen and Slegers, 2007).

When teachers and parents cooperate, children aspire to achieve more; achieve better grades and better final outcomes; are more attentive in class; do their homework regularly; are more frequently involved in school extracurricular and outside-school activities; more frequently assume the responsibilities associated with the school, school's departments and school community; have higher self-esteem; are more self-disciplined; are more motivated for school learning and have higher occupational aspi-

rations; choose advanced subjects and programs in school; have fewer problems; avoid risky and dangerous behavior; and are less frequently referred to social workers for help (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005; Bakker and Denessen, 2007; Kalin, 2009, Larocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011). Cooperation between the parents and teachers also has a positive impact on the parents themselves. Cooperation helps parents understand schoolwork and creates relationships within the school community that act preventively. Parents become more sensitive to their children's social, emotional and intellectual needs; they have greater trust in their parental role and decision-making skills; and have a better understanding of teachers' work and the school curriculum. Cooperation also develops a more positive attitude towards school and school staff (Becher, 1994; Henderson and Berla, 1994; Fritzell Hanhan, 2008; Šteh, 2008; Cankar et al., 2009; Kalin, 2009).

### *1.2 Creation of a partnership between parents and teachers*

In education, the definition of a partnership mainly highlights the equality between the actors involved (e.g. Golby, 1993; Cankar et al., 2009), however, as Golby (1993, p. 67) emphasizes, "the partnership implies the contribution of something of value on the basis of equality (equivalence) of all towards achieving a common goal". Partnership is understood similarly by Cankar, Kolar, and Deutsch (2009), who write that a partnership includes a group of mutually supportive partners who equally participate in the dialogue. The authors believe that a partnership between school and parents is primarily a relationship that involves the sharing of responsibility, power, the setting of common goals, and common action, which, by sharing responsibility and power in the areas of care and education, is in accordance with the professional autonomy of the teacher. Hornby (2000) believes that the most important aspect of a partnership is mutual respect, followed by the division of responsibilities in the planning and decision-making relating to the child. Therefore, there are four key elements of a partnership:

- two-way communication;
- mutual respect;
- joint decision-making; and
- complementarities between learning in school and at home.

Communication is the basis and it is important to emphasize that "the expression of one's opinion is difficult because it is related to the ability, confidence, professional and pedagogical knowledge of each teacher" (Starč, 2004, p. 83). Therefore, teachers must at all times realize that they are the ones leading this communication with their professional knowledge and are therefore responsible for the cooperation with parents (Cankar, Kolar and Deutsch, 2009).

The partnership between parents and teachers should encourage total commitment to the realization of the educational goals of an individual child, formed in an ethos of understanding and openness in the relations between the school and the parents, and help parents develop the active role of an aid in the education of their child (Pugh, 1989; Raab, 1993; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005; Smit, Sluiter, Driessen and Slegers, 2007). Cooperation depends on the concept of school education, regardless of whether it focuses on success or a broader social function; on the gen-

eral understanding of the role of family and school in the child's development; and on the expected roles of parents and schools (Resman, 1992; Bastiani, 1993; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005). For the formation of a partnership, it is important that the school and teachers involve parents as partners in the joint educational activity and recognize them as important, taking into account their strengths and competence (Šteh 2008, p. 33–34).

### *1.3 Formal frameworks of cooperation between parents and teachers in Slovenia*

Slovenian school legislation is based on the theoretical framework and legal basis of the First White Paper on Education (1995, p. 5) and the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. Particular emphasis is placed on the right of the parents to choose the type of education for their children; it is also emphasized that it is necessary to enable parents' greater insight into the work and life of the schools, and to establish effective mechanisms for their participation and cooperation. However, it is also necessary to "clearly [define] the boundaries of professionalism, which are the domain of teachers and school professionals" (ibid., p. 28). Slovenian school legislation has formally regulated the cooperation between school and parents, their possibility of influencing the program of the life and work of the school, and the rights and duties of parents. The articles that govern the above issue can be found in all of its statutory and implementing acts. The Elementary School Act (1996) requires a public primary school to determine the forms of cooperation with parents in its annual work plan (Article 31) and present the rights and duties of students, the characteristics of the program, the organization of the work of the school, and the program of cooperation with parents in a special publication (Article 32).

The principal is responsible for the school's cooperation with the parents (parent-teacher meetings, office hours and other forms of cooperation), and informing the parents about the work of the school and about the rights and obligations of students (Article 49). The class teacher cooperates with the parents (Article 63), members of the school's counselling service advise parents (Article 67), and expert working groups discuss parental comments in connection with the lessons (Article 64). In the Act Amending the Elementary School Act (2007, Articles 60d and 60e), there is a new chapter called "Educational Operation", which also refers to cooperation with parents. Schools need to develop an educational plan of the school, which must include educational activities and forms of cooperation between the school and the parents, as well as parental involvement in the exercise of the educational plan.

In the new White Paper on Education (2011), the principle of cooperation between school and parents is again highlighted. In this context, it is emphasized that to achieve the optimal development of students, there is a need to cooperate with the parents, with whom it is necessary to reach a consensus on the fundamental objectives of the educational work and an agreement that the achievement of these objectives will be the result of everybody's efforts. Teachers should keep parents up to date, provide information on students' knowledge, behavior, attitude towards school, respect for the rules, participation in class and the school community, etc. Parents should convey to teachers any information that could affect the student's performance in school. For the formation of

a partnership, it is important that the teachers and the school realize that they need the support of parents in their efforts for the success of their students, in which we see the starting point for establishing a partnership between teachers and parents. Furthermore, it is pointed out that it is necessary for the cooperation between the school's professional staff and the parents to ensure the protection of the privacy of both and to clearly define the boundaries of the professional decision of the teacher, which parents do not have the right to influence (*ibid.*).

## 2 Methodology

With this study, we wanted to determine the status and expectations of teachers and parents regarding the cooperation between parents and teachers. We were especially interested to see how important the respondents find the cooperation between parents and the school in the individual elements of the school's educational concept (R1) and the importance the respondents attach to the cooperation between parents and the school in activities that fall under specific educational strategies (R2).

The research included 177 teachers of elementary schools and 165 parents of students. Among the interviewed teachers, 94.9% were female, and only 5.1% were male; among the interviewed parents, 85.0% were female and 15.0% male. The largest proportion of interviewed teachers had a maximum of 10 to 20 years of service (32.7%), which was followed by 20 to 30 years of service (27.4%). Most of the respondents were teachers who taught in the third grade (15.9%); among the interviewed teachers, however, more than two-thirds (71.7%) were class teachers. Most of them had the professional title of consultant (38.1%), followed by mentor (35.8%). Eleven teachers had the title of counsellor. More than half of the interviewed parents had finished technical colleges (57.6%); a third of them had completed a secondary vocational or technical school, or junior high school (34.5%); far fewer parents had completed higher professional education (6.9%). Only two parents had completed (only) primary school. Among the interviewed parents, most of them were the parents of children from the third grade (24.2%), followed by parents of children from the sixth grade (23.1%), and parents of children in the ninth grade (18.9%). More than half of the schools included in the survey (53.6%) are located in urban environments.

Data were collected through questionnaires for teachers and questionnaires for parents. They had been divided into two substantive parts:

- cooperation with parents in the daily educational work, and
- cooperation with parents in designing school documents, consisting of closed, open and combined types of questions and Likert scales of observations and assessment of the charts.

### 3 Results and Discussion

First, we present the opinions of the surveyed teachers and parents about the importance of cooperation between parents and teachers in individual elements of the educational concept.

*Table 1.* The importance of cooperation between teachers and parents in individual elements of public schools' educational concept

<i>Elements of the educational concept</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>s</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Determination of school values	teachers	149	3.88	0.944	0.281	0.596	0.289	0.733
	parents	137	3.85	0.954				
Determination of responsibilities of students and parents	teachers	148	4.55	0.703	2.300	0.130	3.639	0.000
	parents	137	4.23	0.786				
Setting the school rules	teachers	150	3.73	1.129	6.172	0.014	0.314*	0.754
	parents	138	3.96	0.943				
Planning of cooperation with parents	teachers	150	4.02	0.930	0.038	0.845	1.982	0.048
	parents	136	3.81	0.865				
Planning of cooperation with the wider community	teachers	151	3.63	0.822	0.430	0.513	1.802	0.073
	parents	136	3.45	0.876				
Planning of the work with students with special needs	teachers	151	3.75	0.968	0.000	0.993	0.627	0.531
	parents	136	3.86	0.973				
Planning of the work with "difficult" students	teachers	151	3.93	0.971	0.214	0.644	1.073	0.284
	parents	136	3.81	1.000				

*Note:* \* calculated approx. T-test

In Table 1, we present the results of the surveyed teachers and parents regarding the importance of cooperation with parents in designing individual elements of the school's educational concept. The surveyed teachers estimated the cooperation with the parents as important in all the elements of the educational concept, by giving the average score of 3.60. According to the surveyed teachers, the cooperation is most important in determining the responsibility of students and parents (4.55), which shows an awareness of the importance of sharing responsibility for the achievement of the set targets. The surveyed teachers are clearly aware that they cannot avoid responsibility for the educational dimension, as they unavoidably educate, intentionally or unintentionally, in the direction of the defined goals or even beyond them, which are coordinated or mismatched with the value messages of other factors (family, mass media, or other factors), but it is important that they share them with their parents. The surveyed teachers evaluated cooperation with the parents in the planning of cooperation with the wider community as the least important, although still important (3.63). It is interesting that teachers see this as the least important, since the establishment of permanent forms

of connection with artists, scientists, athletes, writers, professors, journalists, editors, and other professionals, which may also represent part of the population of parents, was highlighted in the first White Paper on Education (1995). Teachers should consider cooperation with parents in the planning of cooperation with the wider community to be important, because parents can significantly facilitate and/or contribute to a better connection with the environment.

Looking at Table 1, we can also see that the surveyed parents consider their participation in all the elements of the educational concept to be important, since they are all rated it with a score higher than 3.40. The surveyed parents (like the teachers) assessed their participation in determining the responsibilities of students and parents (4.23) as the most important. The findings indicate that the surveyed parents are also aware that it is important that they (and the students) are included in determining the responsibilities. First, they should be familiar with the rules laid down from the “outside” (by the state, school, teacher), such as principles, norms and other rules, which must be respected and over which they have no influence; then it is necessary to look for options for regulating the rights and rules (Kovač Šebart et al., 2007). Parents can participate in the arrangements concerning the rights, obligations and rules in different ways, however, the agreements on the rules of coexistence, which are necessary for the educational work of the school, for the school as a community, and for the operation of its sections as a group, should be designed together with students and parents. The surveyed parents also feel that participation in the preparation of school rules is important (3.69). We believe that the school rules will achieve their purpose if they are first explained to students and parents, and if the parents are given the possibility to influence certain rules and responsibilities, of course, as long as they are consistent with the operation of public schools. Parents must be involved in the preparation of the rules as well as the consequences of their violation, while it is the job of the teachers to become familiar with the possible ways of implementing educational measures and alternative measures (mediation, restitution and others). The surveyed parents assessed the cooperation with parents when planning cooperation with the wider community as being less important (3.45). These results surprised us, because we believe that by participating in this element parents contribute significantly to raising the standard of the quality of work of the school. The findings, in our opinion, indicate that the cooperation with the community is not presented to the parents as something that they should be involved in, but as something that is a part of the “higher standard” program of schools and is defined and confirmed by the council of parents and the council of the institute. The standard deviation shows that the values of surveyed teachers ( $SD = 0.703$ ), as well as of the surveyed parents ( $SD = 0.5786$ ) are the least dispersed in the element of determining the responsibilities of students and parents.

The outcome of the overall t-test (Table 1) shows that statistically significant differences between the arithmetic means of the surveyed teachers and surveyed parents occur in the element of determining the responsibilities of students and parents ( $t = 3.639$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and the element of planning cooperation with parents ( $t = 1.982$ ,  $p = 0.048$ ).

The parents assessed the cooperation with parents in planning cooperation with parents (3.81) and participating in the planning of the work with difficult children (3.81) as equally important and we analyze this below.

Table 2. The importance of cooperation with parents in the planning and implementation of cooperation with parents

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>s</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Planning of cooperation with parents	Teachers	177	3.86	1.089	0.492	0.484	0.591	0.555
	Parents	154	3.79	1.103				
Implementation of cooperation with parents	Teachers	169	4.02	1.026	1.224	0.269	1.756	0.080
	Parents	153	3.82	1.022				

The surveyed teachers assessed cooperation with parents in planning cooperation with parents as an important factor (4.02). The importance of cooperation between teachers and parents can also be confirmed by the findings in Table 2, which show that the surveyed teachers assess cooperation with parents to be important in the implementation of cooperation with parents (4.02) and in the planning of cooperation with parents (3.86). It is important that teachers develop a partnership with parents, in which parents are not only invited to various formal and informal meetings but are also included in the planning of the forms and modes of cooperation. Other research (Hornby, 2000; Šteh, 2008; Kalin et al., 2009) also shows that parents expect teachers to consult with them, to listen to their points of view, and to be more open to the views of others. Parents can be involved by giving opinions on existing modes of cooperation, or by giving suggestions for the modalities of cooperation. It is important that teachers are open to different forms of cooperation (to which parents are entitled) in order to gain the parents' trust. The standard deviation shows that the values are less scattered in the element of the implementation of cooperation with parents (SD = 1.026).

Table 3. The importance of cooperation with parents in specific educational strategies

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>s</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Problem-solving with individual student	Teachers	176	4.35	0.968	11.285	0.001	4.428*	0.000
	Parents	157	3.81	1.236				
Addressing the educational issues of students	Teachers	177	4.24	0.979	0.425	0.515	2.356	0.019
	Parents	157	3.97	1.103				
Planning of work with students with special needs	Teachers	175	4.02	1.085	21.193	0.000	2.879*	0.004
	Parents	152	3.62	1.376				
Implementation of the work with students with special needs	Teachers	176	3.61	1.190	8.205	0.004	1.268*	0.206
	Parents	153	3.43	1.390				

Note: \* calculated approx. T-test

The findings of the research (Table 3) showed that the surveyed teachers assessed cooperation with parents in activities related to specific educational strategies, primarily in the case of individual activities or activities linked to each child, as important. Among

such activities, the surveyed teachers consider problem-solving with individual students (4.35), addressing the educational issues of students (4.24), the planning of work with students with special needs (4.02), and the implementation of the work with students with special needs (3.61) to be significant. Furthermore, regarding the reasons for the most common cooperation with parents, the research shows that teachers frequently get in touch with the parents when they encounter problems (in class during instruction, absence from school, etc.) with individual students (92.7%) and when deviant behavior appears (74.6%). In this context, deviant behavior is any behavior that violates social norms, and thus deviates from the expectations and requirements of society or a social group; children with special needs can be included here.

Among specific educational strategies, the lowest rating was given to the importance of cooperation with parents in the implementation of the work with students with special needs (3.61); in our opinion, this is due to the fact that there are experts and counsellors in school, e.g. special and social pedagogues working with pupils with special needs, because such students have the right to obtain additional professional help (Placement of Children with Special Needs Act 2011, Article 8). If the student has additional professional help, the school does not need the assistance of parents. However, because additional professional help can be implemented in school and at home, we believe that cooperation with parents is crucial. The involvement of parents in the schooling of their children also contributes to a reduction in behavioral problems, such as aggression, low attention span, and social problems that make it difficult to learn. With cooperation, parents can obtain effective expert information that improves their ability to effectively influence the child's behavior (Cugmas et al. 2010).

The surveyed parents also assessed that cooperation with parents is important in planning cooperation with parents (3.81). That this day-to-day interaction between parents and teachers is important is also confirmed by the results in Table 3, which show that surveyed parents assessed the cooperation with the parents in the implementation of cooperation with parents (3.82) and in the planning of cooperation with parents (3.79) as important. The cooperation with the parents in the planning of the work with students with special educational needs was evaluated with an average score of 3.86 and the cooperation with parents in the planning of the work with "difficult" students with that of 3.81. Furthermore, regarding mutual cooperation (Table 3), the surveyed parents stressed the importance of participation in specific educational strategies, in which we pointed out the resolving of students' educational problems (3.97), solving problems with individual students (3.81), planning of work with students with special needs (3.62), and the implementation of work with students with special needs (3.45).

The outcome of the general t-test between the arithmetic means of the surveyed teachers and parents in the area of specific educational strategies shows statistically significant differences in the cooperation of parents in solving problems with individual students ( $t = 4.428$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), addressing the educational issues of students ( $t = 2.356$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ), and in the planning of the work with students with special needs ( $t = 2.879$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). In all the questionnaires, the surveyed teachers assessed cooperation with parents as more important.

## 4 Conclusion

The partnership between parents and teachers includes a commitment of both parties to fulfil their responsibilities, to maintain high-quality two-way communication, and to search for arrangements for solving problems. It is a form of cooperation that is oriented towards establishing the optimal conditions for realizing the educational objectives and has a positive impact on students, parents and on teachers. As shown by the research (see Munn, 1993; Henderson and Berla, 1994; Hornby, 2000; Cankar et al., 2009; Berčnik, 2014), cooperation between parents and teachers affects the efficiency of the schools, the quality of the implementation of education and training, the learning performance of children, the motivation and expectations of students, the development of working and learning habits, the attitudes of parents and students towards the school, the reputation of schools, and the understanding of and respect for the work of the teacher. Esler et al. (2002) stress that it is essential that schools and parents unite, coordinate and cooperate with the aim of supporting and promoting the child's learning, physical, social and cognitive development. Participation should not be limited only to information and situations when students' issues arise. As the research results show, in the opinion of the teachers, cooperation with parents is the most important factor in determining the responsibilities of students and parents, which shows an awareness of the importance of sharing responsibility for the achievement of the set goals. The findings indicate that the parents are also aware that it is important that they (and the students) are involved in determining the responsibility of the parents and students. First of all, they should be familiar with the rules set from "outside" (i.e. by the state, school, teacher), and with the principles, norms and rules that should be respected and over which we have no influence; afterwards, it is necessary to look for options for making arrangements concerning the rights and rules (Kovač Šebart et al., 2007).

*Dr. Sanja Berčnik, dr. Tatjana Devjak*

### **Aktivno vključevanje staršev v vzgojno-izobraževalni proces v šolah v Sloveniji**

*Sodelovanje s starši je ključni faktor učinkovite vzgoje in izobraževanja, partnerstvo med šolo in starši pa naj bi spodbujalo k skupni zavezanosti k uspehu posameznega učenca, oblikovalo etos razumevanja in odprtosti v odnosih med šolo in starši ter pomagalo staršem razviti pozitivno vlogo pomoči pri vzgoji in izobraževanju njihovega otroka. Vpliv staršev je namreč izjemno močan v obdobju osnovnošolskega izobraževanja, kjer se praktična uporabnost naučenega v šoli kaže predvsem v vsakodnevnih življenjskih izkušnjah. Znane so mnoge raziskave in študije, ki dokazujejo pomembnost vpliva sodelovanja med starši in učitelji oz. družino in šolo. Downer and Myers (2010, str. 4) pišeta o ekološki teoriji, ki poudarja, da na posameznika vplivajo spremembe v odnosih med učencem, družino, šolo in skupnostjo, ob napredovanju iz razreda v razred. V prvi vrsti poudarjata, da so učenci odprti sistem, ki doživlja kontinuirane, recipročne notranje spremembe v odnosu do vsega kar ga obdaja (npr. šolska učilnica, družina). Gre*

za nenehne spremembe, ki se odražajo v učenčevih dosežkih, kar predstavlja povratno informacijo za sistem. Avtorja pa izpostavljata tudi pomembnost odnosa med sistemi, ki ne sme biti zgolj seštevek svojih delov. Eden od glavnih principov sistemske teorije namreč predvideva, da se, kadar sta dva sistema (kot na primer učitelji in starši) v interakciji, oblikuje odnos. Ta odnos nato vzpostavi nov sistem, ki je nadrejen vsem tistim, ki so vplivali na njegov nastanek – z drugimi besedami “celota je več kot le seštevek vseh delov” (prav tam, str. 5). Če pojasnimo na primeru partnerstva med učitelji in starši, lahko zapišemo, da količina in kakovost interakcij med učitelji in starši vpliva na oblikovanje njunega odnosa, ta odnos pa postane več kot le celota vseh interakcij med njima, še več, postane torej svoj sistem, ki vpliva na ostale. Interakcija med sistemi lahko torej pozitivno vpliva na učenca oz. na njegove spretnosti.

Dosedanje raziskave (Bastiani, 1993; Henderson in Berla, 1994; Butterly in Anderson, 1999; Kalin, 2009; Downer and Myers, 2010) so pokazale, da je sodelovanje s starši ključni faktor učinkovite vzgoje in izobraževanja, z vključevanjem staršev pa se zblížujeta tudi domače in šolsko okolje, otrok se počuti pomembnega, saj se starši zanj zanimajo, prav tako pa otroku sporočajo, da je izobraževanje zanje zelo pomembno. Gre pa tudi za obraten vpliv, starši se vključujejo še bolj, ko vidijo, da je njihov otrok motiviran. Kadar učitelji in starši dobro sodelujejo otroci stremijo, da bi dosegli več, dosegajo boljše ocene in boljši končni uspeh, so bolj pozorni pri pouku, bolj redno delajo domače naloge, se pogosteje vključujejo v šolske interesne in izvenšolske dejavnosti, pogosteje prevzemajo odgovornosti povezane s šolsko in oddelčno skupnostjo, imajo boljše samopodobo, so bolj samodisciplinirani, bolj motivirani za šolsko učenje in imajo višje poklicne aspiracije, izbirajo zahtevnejše predmete in programe, imajo v šoli manj problemov in se izogibajo rizičnemu in nevarnemu obnašanju (Kalin 2009). Prednost sodelovanja z vidika staršev, kot zapišeta Henderson in Berla (1994) pa je v tem, da postajajo starši z večjo povezanostjo in ob pogovorih z otrokom bolj občutljivi za otrokove socialne, čustvene in intelektualne potrebe, bolj zaupajo v svojo starševsko vlogo in spretnosti odločanja, bolj razumejo učiteljevo delo in šolski kurikulum. Izboljša se tudi pogled staršev na šolo ter se oblikuje večja povezanost ter pripadnost šoli. Kadar so starši aktivno vključeni v otrokove priprave na pouk, to pozitivno vpliva na njihov odnos do šole, saj bolj spoznajo šolski program in imajo boljši vpogled v učiteljevo delo, so bolj pozitivno usmerjeni do šolskega osebja, imajo bolj celostno oblikovano mnenje o vplivu šolskega dela na otrokov razvoj, so aktivnejši glede predlogov o spremembi politike strategije šolskega vzgojno-izobraževalnega dela, pogosteje pa tudi podpirajo šolske programe (Golby, 1993; Bastiani, 1993; Hornby, 2000; Kalin, 2009; Downer and Myers, 2010).

Avtorji na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja (npr. Golby, 1993; Cankar idr., 2009) pri partnerstvu poudarjajo predvsem enakovrednost med vključenimi akterji. Golby (1993, str. 67) tako zapiše, da “partnerstvo implicira doprinos nečesa vrednega na podlagi enakopravnosti (enakosti) vseh proti doseganju skupnega cilja”. Pri sodelovanju, ki je usmerjeno k partnerstvu je pomembno, da vsaka stran prispeva tisto, na kar se spozna. Poudariti želimo, da imajo starši in učitelji različno vlogo v partnerskem odnosu, bistveno pa je, da s svojim prispevkom povečajo njegovo moč. Hornby (2000) meni, da je najpomembnejši vidik partnerskega odnosa obojestransko spoštovanje, temu pa sledi delitev odgovornosti pri načrtovanju in sprejemanju odločitev vezanih na otroka. Spregovori tudi o štirih ključnih elementih partnerskega sodelovanja: dvosmerna ko-

munikacija, obojestransko spoštovanje, skupno sprejemanje odločitev in dopolnjevanje učenja v šoli in doma. Starši in učitelji se morajo tako po njegovem mnenju naučiti poslušati drug drugega, sodelovati pri reševanju težav ne glede na to, ali gre za težave pri njegovem otroku, oddelku, razredu ali za težave na ravni cele šole. V ospredju partnerstva je torej sposobnost dvosmernega komuniciranja, sposobnost sprejemanja kompromisov, medsebojno poslušanje ter odgovornost za lastna dejanja.

Sodelovanje s starši je kot pomembno izpostavljeno tudi med načeli in teoretičnimi izhodišči Bele knjige o vzgoji in izobraževanju (1995), kjer je posebej poudarjena pravica staršev do izbire vrste izobrazbe za svoje otroke, poudarjeno pa je tudi, da je treba staršem omogočiti večji vpogled v delo in življenje šol ter vzpostaviti učinkovite mehanizme za možnost njihovega soodločanja. Zapisano je, da je treba "jasno začrtati meje strokovnosti, ki so domena učiteljic in učiteljev ter šolskih strokovnjakov" (prav tam, str. 28). Med načeli strukturiranja šolskega sistema v zasnovi osnovne šole pa je zapisano tudi načelo sodelovanja učencev, učiteljev in staršev, pri čemer je poudarjena "dostopnost informacij o delovanju šole kot institucije, o šolanju njihovih otrok ter možnost dejavnega vključevanja v delo šole ob upoštevanju strokovne avtonomnosti učiteljev" (prav tam, str. 91). Slovenska šolska zakonodaja je zakonsko uredila sodelovanje šole in staršev, njihovo možnost vplivanja na program življenja in dela šole ter pravice in dolžnosti staršev. Tudi v novi Beli knjigi o vzgoji in izobraževanju (2011) je med načeli nadaljnjega razvoja osnovne šole, ponovno posebej izpostavljeno načelo sodelovanja strokovnih delavcev šole s starši. Pri tem je poudarjeno, da je za doseganje optimalnega razvoja učencev nujno sodelovanje s starši, s katerimi je treba doseči soglasje o temeljnih ciljih vzgojno-izobraževalnega dela in dogovor, da si bodo za doseg teh ciljev prizadevali vsi.

Raziskava, s katero smo raziskovali, kako pomembno se zdi anketiranim učiteljem in staršem sodelovanje med starši in šolo pri posameznih elementih vzgojne zasnove šole; ter kak pomen anketiranci pripisujejo sodelovanju med starši in šolo pri dejavnostih, ki spadajo v specifične vzgojne strategije, je pokazala, da je po mnenju anketiranih učiteljev najpomembnejše sodelovanje s starši pri določanju odgovornosti učencev in staršev, pri načrtovanju sodelovanja s starši, načrtovanju dela s "težavnimi" otroki, določanju vrednot šole, načrtovanju dela z učenci s posebnimi potrebami, postavljanju pravil hišnega reda in pri načrtovanju sodelovanja šole s širšo skupnostjo. Zanimivo je, da so učitelji kot najmanj pomembno ocenili sodelovanje s starši pri načrtovanju sodelovanja s širšo skupnostjo, saj je že v prvi Beli knjigi o vzgoji in izobraževanju (1995) poudarjeno vzpostavljanje stalnih oblik povezovanja z umetniki, znanstveniki, s športniki, pisatelji, profesorji, z novinarji, uredniki idr., ki lahko predstavljajo tudi del populacije staršev. Učitelji bi morali pojmovati sodelovanje s starši pri načrtovanju sodelovanja s širšo skupnostjo kot pomembno, saj lahko starši bistveno olajšajo in/ali prispevajo h kakovostnem povezovanju z okoljem. Tudi po mnenju anketiranih staršev je sodelovanje pri vseh elementih pomembno, saj so vse postavke ocenili z oceno, višjo od 3,40. Najpomembnejše so anketirani starši šole ocenili sodelovanje pri določanju odgovornosti otrok in staršev, sledi sodelovanje pri določanju vrednot šole, načrtovanje sodelovanja s starši in načrtovanje dela s "težavnimi" otroki, nato sodelovanje pri postavljanju pravil hišnega reda, načrtovanju dela z učenci s posebnimi potrebami in pri načrtovanju sodelovanja s širšo skupnostjo. Statistično pomembne razlike med aritmetičnimi sredinami anketiranih strokovnih delavcev šole in anketiranih staršev šole se

pojavi pri postavkah določanje odgovornosti otrok in staršev ( $t = 3,639$ ,  $p = 0,000$ ), pri načrtovanju sodelovanja s starši ( $t = 1,982$ ,  $p = 0,048$ ). pri reševanju težav s posameznim učencem ( $t = 4,428$ ,  $p = 0,000$ ), obravnavanju vzgojne problematike učencev ( $t = 2,356$ ,  $p = 0,019$ ) in pri načrtovanju dela z otroki s posebnimi potrebami ( $t = 2,879$ ,  $p = 0,004$ ). Pri vseh postavkah so sodelovanje s starši kot pomembnejše ocenili anketirani učitelji, kar kaže na zavedanje učiteljev o pomenu vključevanja staršev. Pomembno je, da učitelji za razvoj partnerstva s starši starše ne le vabijo na različna formalna in neformalna srečanja ter z njimi načrtujejo predvsem časovni okvir srečanj, ampak jih vključijo tudi v načrtovanje oblik in načinov sodelovanja. Kot kažejo raziskave (Hornby, 2000; Kalin idr., 2009), starši od strokovnih delavcev šole pričakujejo, da se bodo bolj posvetovali z njimi, da bodo prisluhnili njihovemu pogledu in da bodo bolj odprti za poglede oz. stališča drugih.

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*Sanja Berčnik, PhD (1981), assistant of educational theory and pre-school pedagogy at the Faculty of pedagogy in Ljubljana.*

*Address: Ljubljanska cesta 20 a, 3000 Celje, Slovenia; Telephone: (+386) 041 369 496*

*E-mail: sanja.bercnik@pef.uni-lj.si*

*Tatjana Devjak, PhD (1955), assistant professor of educational theory and pre-school pedagogy at the Faculty of pedagogy in Ljubljana.*

*Address: Cereja 11, 1315 Velike Lašče, Slovenia; Telephone: (+386) 041 399 015*

*E-mail: tatjana.devjak@guest.arnes.si*