

## PARENTAL MODELS AND THE DYNAMICS OF EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

**Estera SÎNGEORZAN, Ph.D. Cnd.,**  
Babeş Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca  
[estera.singeorzan@yahoo.com](mailto:estera.singeorzan@yahoo.com)

**Alina Felicia ROMAN, Prof. Habil. Ph.D.,**  
Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad  
[romanalinafelicia@yahoo.com](mailto:romanalinafelicia@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *This article explores the influence of parental models on the dynamics of educational partnerships, emphasizing a relational perspective. Educational partnerships—defined as the collaborative relationships between families and schools—are essential for creating a cohesive support system around the student. However, such partnerships are not merely procedural; they are relational in nature, deeply influenced by the emotional, communicational, and behavioral models that parents display both at home and in interactions with the school. Using a blend of theoretical references and qualitative insights from eight interviewed teachers, this paper identifies patterns in how parents' attitudes, consistency, and openness affect the climate of collaboration with educational institutions. Additionally, the article incorporates personal reflections drawn from practical educational contexts. Findings suggest that successful partnerships emerge when parents act as positive role models, communicate respectfully, and show trust in educators. These dynamics not only support student development but also foster a school culture built on cooperation, empathy, and shared goals.*

**Keywords:** *parenting styles; educational partnerships; family-school collaboration.*

### Theoretical Background

In recent decades, a growing body of research has highlighted the critical role of parenting in shaping children's academic, emotional, and social trajectories (Bornstein, 2019; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The concept of parenting styles, first conceptualized by Baumrind (1967) and later refined by Maccoby and Martin (1983), offers a robust

framework for understanding how parents influence not only individual child outcomes but also broader relational dynamics within the educational ecosystem. This bidimensional model remains one of the most widely accepted frameworks in developmental and educational psychology (Steinberg, 2001).

- Authoritative parenting combines high responsiveness with high demands, fostering autonomy while maintaining structure. It is consistently associated with higher academic achievement, better self-regulation, and stronger social competence in children (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994).
- Authoritarian parenting, while high in control, is low in warmth and communication. It often results in compliance but can undermine intrinsic motivation and openness to collaboration (Grolnick, 2003).
- Permissive parenting emphasizes warmth but offers minimal behavioral guidance, sometimes leading to reduced academic persistence (Lamborn et al., 1991).
- Uninvolved parenting shows low levels on both dimensions and is correlated with poor academic, emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997).

Many specialists classify parenting models based on specific criteria. A reasonable classification can be found in A. Kohn (2017), who divides parenting styles into: unilateral parenting and collaborative parenting. While unilateral parenting places the parent and their authority over the child at the center, collaborative parenting is characterized by: the parent shows interest in who the child is as a whole, rather than in what the child does, offering love and acceptance unconditionally.

*Table 1. The influence of parenting models on children development and educational partnership*

Criteria / Styles	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Neglectful
<b>Level control</b>	High, balanced	but High, rigid	Low	Low
<b>Emotional support</b>	High	Low	High	Low
<b>Communication</b>	Open, bidirectional	Unidirectional, imposed	Affective, but without rules	Nonexistent or inconsistent
<b>Parent-child relationship</b>	Warm, empathetic,	Distant, based on fear	Friendly, but lacking	Distant or absent

Criteria / Styles	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Neglectful
	collaborative		authority	
<b>Educational implications</b>	Optimal development, autonomy, responsibility	Conformism, anxiety, lack of initiative	Impulsivity, lack of boundaries	Disinterest, attachment and integration issues
<b>School involvement</b>	Active, cooperative, supportive of the child	Only control or punishment	for Superficial, or without rules	Very low or nonexistent

This study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of diverse parenting models on the dynamics of educational partnerships, adopting a relational framework that integrates individual, interpersonal, and contextual variables. Through a mixed-methods approach, we aim to better understand how parenting styles shape the formation and sustainability of collaborative ties between families and educational institutions, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student outcomes and community cohesion. The relationship between family and school has been a central topic in the pedagogical discourse for decades. Numerous studies (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) underline that children benefit most when families and schools form authentic partnerships, rooted in mutual respect, trust, and shared educational objectives. From a relational perspective, these partnerships go beyond formal meetings or parental presence at school events—they are shaped by the quality of interactions, emotional tone, and symbolic messages that adults convey. The concept of parental models refers to the set of behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and values that parents demonstrate both in private (within the family) and in public (in relation to institutions such as schools). These models influence how children perceive authority, responsibility, and the value of education (Albulescu, 2002; Roman, 2020). Musata Bocoș (2013) highlights the importance of the relational dimension in education, noting that emotional intelligence and the ability to build trust-based relationships are just as important as pedagogical competence. In this sense, both parents and teachers become co-educators in a shared relational space. Georgeta Pânișoară (2017) reinforces the idea that the psychological climate of educational interactions is decisive. A parent who models anxiety, distrust, or aggression toward school authorities may unconsciously transmit these attitudes to the child. Conversely, a

parent who shows empathy, openness, and confidence in the educational process helps cultivate similar dispositions in their child. In the Romanian context, partnership practices are also shaped by broader cultural narratives regarding authority, institutional responsibility, and family roles (Voinea, 2018). As highlighted by Petre (2021), schools often adopt a formalistic or hierarchical approach to collaboration, which may limit authentic engagement, especially among parents with low educational capital or from rural areas. From my own educational experience, I have observed that families who treat school as an ally, rather than a source of stress or conflict, tend to have children who are more cooperative, motivated, and resilient. Educational partnerships grounded in relational values have the power to transform not only academic results, but also the emotional wellbeing of students.

### Research

The primary objective of this research was to explore how teachers perceive the role of parental models in shaping and sustaining strong educational partnerships. Specifically, the research aimed to identify the ways in which parents' attitudes, behaviors, and relational styles contribute to—or hinder—the collaboration between family and school. This inquiry was motivated by the increasing need to move beyond theoretical frameworks and capture the lived experiences of educators who interact daily with students and their families. A qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher perceptions. The study involved semi-structured interviews with eight teachers working in both urban and rural primary schools in Romania. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a range of teaching experience (from 5 to over 20 years) and exposure to diverse socio-cultural school environments. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in responses, enabling participants to share personal stories, reflect on specific cases, and elaborate on their emotional and professional reactions to various types of parental involvement. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minute. The interview questions were of the types:

1. Can you tell us a bit about your experience as a teacher? (e.g., years of experience, type of school, urban/rural setting)

*Example answer:*

*„I have been a teacher for over 10 years, working primarily in public schools in rural areas. I've taught both primary and lower secondary students. Working in a rural setting has given me insight into the close-knit nature of these communities, but*

*also the unique challenges they face in terms of access and resources.”*

2. How would you describe, in general, the relationship between school and family in the community where you work?

*Example answer:*

*In general, the relationship is respectful but often distant. Many parents trust the school, but they are not very involved in the educational process beyond basic communication. There's still a perception that education is solely the responsibility of teachers.*

3. What types of attitudes or behaviors have you most frequently observed among the parents you work with?

*Example answer:*

*„Most parents are well-meaning and care about their children's future, but some are disengaged due to work pressures or a lack of understanding about how to support learning at home. Others are very involved but sometimes overstep by questioning professional decisions without full information.”*

4. In your opinion, how does parental behavior influence the relationship with the school?

*Example answer:*

*„Parental behavior has a strong impact. When parents show interest and support their children's learning, it fosters a positive relationship with the school. On the other hand, when parents are indifferent or confrontational, it creates tension and affects communication.”*

5. Are there parenting models that, in your view, support optimal child development and educational partnership? Can you give examples?

*Example answer:*

*„Yes, the authoritative parenting style tends to support healthy development and good collaboration with the school. For example, I had a student whose parents were firm but nurturing—they set clear expectations, encouraged autonomy, and regularly attended school meetings. The child was confident and performed well academically.”*

6. How do children respond depending on the parenting style in their family? Do you notice certain patterns?

*Example answer:*

*„Definitely. Children from supportive and structured families tend to be more engaged and emotionally balanced. Those from permissive or neglectful backgrounds often struggle with*

*discipline and focus. I've also noticed that authoritarian parenting can lead to high-achieving but anxious students."*

7. What are the biggest challenges you face when working with parents?

*Example answer:*

*"One major challenge is lack of communication. Some parents are hard to reach or do not respond to school invitations. Another challenge is when parents deny their child's issues and refuse to collaborate in finding solutions."*

8. What behaviors or attitudes from parents have been most helpful to you in your work?

*Example answer:*

*"Open-mindedness and consistency are incredibly helpful. When parents listen, provide feedback, and follow through at home, we see real progress. Also, when parents appreciate and trust the work of the teachers, it builds a strong partnership."*

9. How do you handle situations where parents are resistant or hostile in their relationship with the school?

*Example answer:*

*"I try to stay calm and focus on the student's needs. I listen carefully, acknowledge their concerns, and try to find common ground. Sometimes it helps to involve a school counselor or mediator to improve communication and de-escalate conflict."*

10. Could you describe a specific case where the parental model significantly influenced a student's development?

*Example answer:*

*"Yes, I had a student who was initially very withdrawn and had poor academic performance. His mother was overprotective and rarely let him make decisions. After we worked with her to encourage more independence and self-expression, the child gradually became more confident, started participating in class, and improved his grades."*

Results: Three dominant themes emerged from the analysis, each highlighting a specific aspect of how parental models impact educational partnerships:

- Modeling respectful behavior. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of how parents communicate and behave during interactions with the school. When parents engage respectfully, listen actively, and express their concerns constructively, children tend to reflect the same attitudes. This positive modeling fosters a culture of mutual respect and cooperation in the classroom. One teacher remarked: *"Even if there are disagreements, it makes a big difference when parents*

*approach us with empathy. Their children learn that dialogue is possible, even when things aren't perfect."*

- Consistency and structure at home. Another theme was the value of stability and predictability in the home environment. Teachers noted that students from homes with clear routines, emotional security, and a consistent approach to learning (e.g., reading together, homework support) were generally more focused and emotionally regulated at school. Parental consistency was seen not only as a sign of involvement but also as an educational model that supports long-term student growth. As one participant observed: *"Children feel safe when things are predictable at home—and that sense of safety translates into better attention and behavior at school."*
- Openness to collaboration and shared responsibility. The third key theme centered around the quality of the relational partnership between parents and teachers. Educators valued parents who viewed the teacher not as a subordinate or an opponent, but as a partner in a shared educational mission. When parents expressed trust in the school, were open to suggestions, and actively participated in discussions about their child's progress, the overall climate improved—not just for the child, but for the teacher's motivation as well. A recurring idea was that trust and openness act as bridges between the family and the school. "You can tell when a child comes from a home where education is valued," one teacher stated.

These findings suggest that parental models are not neutral—they actively shape the nature of educational partnerships. Positive behaviors, even simple acts of encouragement or respectful dialogue, have long-term benefits for the school climate and student well-being. From my own experience in educational settings, I've noticed that when parents treat teachers with suspicion or hostility, children mirror that skepticism. On the other hand, when parents build constructive relationships with schools, students thrive. I believe that educational partnerships are not just formal arrangements, but living relationships that require empathy, effort, and time from both sides.

### **Conclusion**

Educational partnerships are significantly strengthened by positive parental models that promote mutual respect, open communication, and emotional support. When parents model constructive behaviors—such as empathy, active listening, and respect for school rules—these attitudes are often reflected in the child's own approach to learning and relationships within the school. The family thus becomes not just a

parallel educational agent, but a co-participant in the broader learning ecosystem. Schools, in turn, must take responsibility for creating genuine spaces for dialogue, not only through formal meetings but through informal, consistent, and empathetic interactions. The educator's role should not be confined to instruction but should expand to include relationship-building with families, particularly in a society where many parents feel disconnected or intimidated by institutional settings. As Muşata Bocoş (2013) emphasizes, relational pedagogy must form the foundation of all school-family interactions. It's not enough to implement programs or send newsletters home; what matters is the quality of the relationship—the feeling that the teacher and the parent are on the same side, working together for the well-being of the child.

From my own experience, I have found that the most successful educational partnerships are not necessarily those with the most involved parents in terms of time or presence, but those where parents show emotional availability, respect for the teacher's role, and a willingness to listen and collaborate. In these cases, the child becomes the bridge between two worlds that work in harmony, rather than being caught in the middle of tension or indifference. Unfortunately, I have also witnessed the opposite: relationships in which distrust, judgment, or lack of communication from either side creates confusion and instability for the student. In such situations, the child often becomes insecure or disengaged, reflecting the cracks in the adult partnership meant to support them.

Therefore, I believe that the most urgent task today is not only to reform educational policies, but to humanize the dialogue between school and family. We must foster a culture where teachers feel supported, not attacked; and where parents feel heard, not judged. Only then can we say that we are truly educating together—with the child at the center, and trust as the foundation.

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