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Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes Related to Family Involvement in Light of Their School Placement Experience

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of building a broader level of partnership between teachers and parents as early as in pre-service teacher education. The Ministry of Higher Education in Poland has formally acknowledged that prospective teachers should have knowledge about parents as sites of pedagogical activities, as well as acquire the skills to cooperate with them (Journal of Laws, 2012). In practice, however, preservice teachers' plans to keep parents of their future pupils at a distance have been well documented. This may be partly due to the fact that *school placements specific requirements* in Module 2 referring to 30 hours of peda-gogical practice and Module 3 referring to 120 hours of didactic practice do not assume that trainee teachers have any (in)direct contacts with parents during their practicum (Journal of Laws, 2012). Consequently, the cases of contacts with parents during school placements are accidental, isolated, and sporadic. Likewise, we doubt that the approach of dictating school mentors as to the types of family-school contacts trainee teachers are likely to experience can be effective, despite the fact that some school mentors do expect that they are told what to do. The paper describes a qualitative study which reveals that there is a statistically sig-nificant amount of evidence of an association between ex-trainee teachers' personal contacts with parents and their high opinion about collaboration with parents as regards supporting children in: doing homework, recognizing and developing children's talents, as well as tack-ling at home those learning problems which occur during lessons. In the paper we suggest that in order to improve the situation in the area of contacts with parents, teacher educators ought to develop training programs that emphasize teacher trainees' varied and active role in parent interactions.

Keywords: foreign language teacher trainees, field experiences, parental involvement

Introduction

This article is about partnership. In the words of Epstein,

> [i]n partnership, educators, families, and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate success. Partnerships recognize the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for children's learning and development. Students are central to successful partnerships. They are active learners in all three contexts—at home, at school, and in the community. They link members of these groups to each other. Students are not bystanders but contributors to and actors in the communications, activities, investments, decisions, and other connections that schools, families, and communities conduct to promote children's learning. (2011, p. 4)

The paper draws attention to the unquestionable fact that teaching practice should give trainee teachers many opportunities for direct contacts with parents. In this article we make an assumption that the importance of parental involvement has been well recognized by schools, however, at the level of pre-service teacher education it still needs some improvement. The first part presents a literature review which uncovers that pre-service teachers create various cultural stereotypes and misconceptions about the types of parental involvement. The roles of parents are usually limited to being "distant assistants" and "chaperones" as well as the types of relationships are mainly characterized by "conflict and criticism." Graue and Brown (2003, p. 721) explain that this is due to "cultural scripts" which are the notions, ideas and memories that pre-service teachers stick to and which lead to given patterns of behavior. If not challenged, lowered and distorted expectations concerning parents can act as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Nowosad, 2014, pp. 53–56). That is why the paper emphasizes the unquestionable role of teaching practice in giving trainees opportunities for initiating contacts with parents on a more direct level, therefore, challenging their stereotypes and misconceptions. We are of the opinion that school placements, when compared with learning through role-playing activities and observations, can provide pre-service teachers with many opportunities to analyze real-life problems by means of "case-based teaching and learning." These types of firsthand experiences can foster the development of critical reflection skills (Gabryś-Barker, 2012). Consequently, the second part of the paper presents a study conducted on a sample of 28 English ex-trainee teachers whose aim was to find out whether there are any statistically significant associations between their opinions about the eight types of family involvement (Epstein, 2011, p. 46; Śliwerski, 2001, p. 174) and their direct and indirect contacts with

parents during their teaching practice. The study reveals that there are no statistically significant associations when it comes to their *indirect* contacts with parents and their opinions in question. There are, however, statistically significant associations as regards their *direct* contacts with parents and their opinions about the most important type of parental involvement. This may point to the conclusion that since pre-service teachers' direct contacts with parents during teaching practice are beneficial in shaping their opinions about parents, teacher training programs and programs of training should take the fact into account. In this respect, in the first part of the paper we also refer to analyses of such documents in departments of pre-primary and primary teacher education at selected Polish universities. The findings reveal that higher education schools neglect the area of preservice teacher-parent cooperation.

Theoretical Background

The Polish education reform of 1999 increased school autonomy and laid down a set of guidelines for family-school collaboration. Parents are entitled to be members of school councils and have set up parents' councils; moreover, they have full access to such school documents as school statutes specifying the school-family collaboration, school educational programs, and school-based assessment (internal assessment). In particular, school statutes specify "organisation and forms of collaboration between parents (legal caretakers) and schools as regards teaching, education and prevention" (Journal of Laws, 2001).

Banasiak (2013) conducted a study in May 2007 in light of the Polish education reform of 1999. The central research purpose was concerned with primary school principals', teachers' and parents' knowledge of the principles of the reform in the area of family-school collaboration, their opinions of the effectiveness of the implementation of the reform, as well as whether the reform is reflected in school documents. In the study, the data were gathered from surveys, school statutes, and Journal of Laws 1999, and further analyzed with reference to the size and system of the schools under investigation. The analysis of the school statutes revealed that they define the role of parents' councils, but only one-third has a subsection devoted to family-school collaboration (Banasiak, 2013, p. 76). The following types of relationships were mentioned: consultations with teachers and specialists, parent-teacher conferences, home visits by teachers, letters, phone calls, parents volunteering to support the school and pupils' activities and participating in workshops (Banasiak, 2013, p. 75). The most popular types of contacts are parent-teacher conferences, devoted to those pupils who experience various problems at school, and consultations,

whereas the least popular types of contacts are home visits by teachers, parents observing lessons and parent-teacher conferences devoted to post-primary education (Banasiak, 2013, pp. 90, 106, 112). Interestingly, most teachers from bigger educational centers assume responsibility for building a deeper level of partnership with parents, whereas teachers from smaller centers shift the responsibility onto parents (Banasiak, 2013, p. 101). While school principals and teachers are of the opinion that the reform increased parental rights, parents declare that they have a limited role in decision making at school and, surprisingly, that they find the limited role satisfactory; the findings raise a question whether parents avoid greater involvement in primary education on purpose or whether it is due to their unawareness of their rights (Banasiak, 2013, pp. 77, 108, 112–113, 143). Banasiak concluded that without introducing changes in the first cycle of education when prospective teachers can challenge cultural stereotypes, learn the psychology of communication and the practical skills on how to establish and develop school-family partnerships, the benefits of the reform may be unsatisfactory. Likewise, the growing body of research delineating the benefits of family involvement in early childhood education for children, parents, teachers, and schools has contributed to the growing importance of teaching practice. There is an ongoing debate on effective systemic and conceptual solutions to make the teaching practice function as "a real source of teachers' competences, i.e. the knowledge about learning determinants and mechanisms, practical and cognitive skills used in the process of professional practice, abilities of autonomic and responsible performance of undertaken tasks and reflective self-evaluation" (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2012, p. 22). Current approaches to preservice teacher education assume concepts of reflection-in-action and learning through practice, forwarded by Schön (1983, 1987) and Fish (1989) and based on the Deweyian theory of learning by doing (Dewey, 1910). They refer to developing personal and professional judgment through solving practical problems by the application of critical reflection rather than routine. As stated by Fish, while this view is demanding and complex in comparison to traditional views, "it offers student and mentor a learning adventure in which each can contribute to the growth of the other in an infinite variety of ways" (1995, p. xi). A future teacher's professional development goes beyond classroom practice and also involves a social context which assists trainees in "the process of developing a philosophy of teaching" (Bartlett, 1990, qtd. in Crookes, 2003, pp. 181, 183).

Overall, the area of teacher-parent collaboration is one of several areas of concern whose limitless potential seems not to have been exploited to the full. The following studies focus on teacher training programs and programs of training in departments of pre-primary and primary teacher education at selected Polish universities.

Studies on Teacher-Parent Collaboration in Selected Polish Universities

The Ministry of Higher Education in Poland general and specific require-
ments as regards teacher training are laid down in the Journal of Laws 2012.
During the first cycle of education, the basic teacher training program prepares
prospective teachers for teaching one subject at the pre-primary and primary
level. It covers three modules: subject-related training (Module 1), training
in pedagogy and psychology (Module 2), and didactic training (Module 3).
Module 2 requires 30 hours of pedagogical practice and Module 3 requires 120
hours of didactic practice. Polish universities are given considerable autonomy
as regards the programs of pedagogical and didactic trainings.

**Pre-primary and primary teacher education: teacher training programs
and programs of pedagogical training.** Nowosad and Pietrań (2015) analyzed
teacher training programs and programs of pedagogical training in state, higher
education schools in 2010–2011 and 2012–2013 academic years. The aim of the
analysis was to find out whether the Polish education system reform introduced
in 1999 resulted in covering in the programs the topic of family-school coopera-
tion. The analysis revealed that during the 2010–2011 academic year only six
universities (University of Warsaw, University of Łódź, University of Szczecin,
University of Silesia in Katowice, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin,
and Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz) offered a course in parent in-
volvement to pre-service teachers as obligatory in departments of pre-primary
and primary education. The analysis of teacher training programs of the selected
universities in the academic year 2012–2013 revealed that only 20% of the high-
er education institutions under investigation (University of Warsaw, University
of Łódź, University of Szczecin, and The Nicolaus Copernicus University in
Toruń) offered an obligatory course on parent involvement (Nowosad & Pietrań,
2015, p. 139). Nowosad and Pietrań (2015, p. 140) concluded that in the majority
of the state higher education schools the course on parent involvement is unac-
counted for, which is a disturbing fact. In the case of the programs of peda-
gogical trainings in academic year 2010–2011, only six universities (Kazimierz
Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in
Warsaw, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Nicolaus Copernicus
University in Toruń, University of Silesia in Katowice, and Jan Kochanowski
University in Kielce) required trainee teachers to have contact with parents
during their pedagogical practice. In the academic year 2012–2013 students of
only four universities (Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Cardinal
Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in
Lublin, and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) were obliged to have con-
tacts with parents during their pedagogical practice (Nowosad & Pietrań, 2015,
p. 142). Nowosad and Pietrań noted that the findings do not overlap with the

obligatory course on parent involvement offered by the higher schools, because only Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń offered a course in question and actually obliged future teachers to have contacts with parents by means of participating in parent-teacher conferences, Teacher Council meetings and School Council meetings as passive observers (Nowosad & Pietrań, 2015, p. 141).

Błaszczyk (2014) analyzed programs of pedagogical training in departments of eight Polish universities educating foreign language teachers. The aim of the analysis was to find out whether the documents cover such areas of pedagogical practice as (1) counseling and educational, (2) organizational, (3) diagnostic, and (4) professional. The analysis of pedagogical practicum regulations reveals that in five universities (Faculty of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, German Studies Institute at University of Gdańsk and German Studies Institute at University of Opole, Centrum Edukacji Nauczycielskiej at University of Wrocław, and The Pedagogical University of Kraków) practicum rules and procedures strictly follow the ministerial requirements and consequently cover all the abovementioned areas, whereas in three universities (Faculty of Modern Languages at University of Warsaw, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin) pedagogical training also cover the didactic area (i.e., Module 3 referring to 120 hours of didactic training). Programs of pedagogical training of only four universities (Centrum Edukacji Nauczycielskiej at University of Wrocław, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, The Pedagogical University of Kraków, and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) devoted special attention to building family-school partnership during pedagogical practice. It seems, as Błaszczyk concluded, that the issue of family-school collaboration, which belongs to the counseling and educational area of ministerial requirements, needs more attention on the part of the authors of programs of pedagogical training.

Pre-primary and primary foreign language teacher education: didactic training. Mihułka (2016) presented the results of a small scale cross-sectional study carried out among German student-teachers at the Institute of German Philology, University of Rzeszów. The overall aim was to evaluate their teaching practice in the academic year 2015–2016 so that its new editions could be improved. The studied population comprised 38 student-teachers aged 22–25. Twenty-one of them were students of the first cycle of education and 17 were students of the second cycle of education. Data for the study were collected by means of a questionnaire which consisted of 21 mostly open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three areas: the organization, planning, and running of German lessons as well as the role of a German teacher in the glotto-didactic process (Mihułka, 2016, p. 54). When asked about the activities that they were involved in during their practicum, student-teachers listed: completing (e-)register books (60.5%), getting familiar with school statutes

(21%), writing reports in pupils' daily records (18.4%), correcting pupils' tests and written works (13.1%), checking pupils' knowledge and skills (7.9%), doing break duty on school corridors (5.2%), and participating in parent-teachers conferences (5.2%) (Mihułka, 2016, p. 54). Thus, only two German student-teachers reported participation in parent-teacher conferences. However, it is not specified whether those were student of the first- or second-cycle education. The study revealed that teaching practice allowed trainee teachers to reflect on their level of linguistic skills since more than half of first cycle trainees (57.1%) admitted that they should improve their pronunciation competence and lexical competence (Mihułka, 2016, p. 55).

Similarly, Karolczuk (2013b, p. 140) evaluated teaching practice of Russian student-teachers at the Institute of Russian Philology at the University in Białystok in the academic year 2009–2010. It was discovered that out of 89 trainees who undertook teaching practice in lower secondary schools only 14 (16%) observed parent-teacher conferences. In the case of a study evaluating teaching practice in primary schools (Karolczuk, 2013c, p. 54), with a sample of 99 trainees only 12 (12%) participated in parent-teacher conferences. Karolczuk (2013a, p. 101) is of the opinion that the professional success of teachers of Russian, which is a second foreign language, is conditioned by their skills to maintain good contacts with pupils and parents. As a consequence, Karolczuk (2013a, p. 101) believes that all trainees should have a chance to participate in parent-teacher conferences in order to critically analyze school mentors' interpersonal skills as well as conduct "case studies" based on interviews with teachers, pupils, and parents.

Derenowski (2015) analyzed the influence of teaching practice on English student-teachers' awareness concerning their future teaching career. The subjects were 46 third-year English Philology students in the Faculty of Philology at State University of Applied Sciences in Konin. Data for the study were collected by means of a questionnaire which consisted of three open-closed questions in Polish plus comments, as well as interviews with trainees divided into four groups when the participants were encouraged to express their opinions (Derenowski, 2015, pp. 33, 34). Question one referred to the role of the practicum in trainees' perception of the teaching profession; in question two they were asked to decide whether they wanted to become teachers, and in question three they were asked to decide about the importance of such aspects of teaching as: teacher-students contact, discipline, lesson plan, L1, didactic aids, various forms of teaching, testing, feedback, correction as well as school documents (Derenowski, 2015, p. 33). More than two-thirds of trainees (78%) claimed that teaching practice allowed them to realize that they wanted to be teachers (Derenowski, 2015, p. 34). Teaching practice resulted mainly in trainees' new perception of teacher-pupils contacts (Derenowski, 2015, p. 34). Most trainees believed that the teacher training program should not be changed (Derenowski,

2015, p. 35). However, the overall author's opinion is that trainees expect that teaching practice should be more pragmatic and based on exchanging experience and viewpoints with other trainees and mentors (Derenowski, 2015, p. 38).

The abovementioned findings can be brought into line with international research on the impact of school placements on future teachers' opinions about parent involvement, briefly presented below.

Family Involvement Versus School Placements in Research Literature

Parent involvement at home or at school can be (un)conscious, active or teacher-induced, spontaneous or planned, (in)direct as well as (in)formal. Moreover, it can be enhanced by involving members of the (extended) family to collaborate with (class) teachers as counselors and experts as well as by involving them in school policy planning and decision making processes. In short, family involvement can be defined in terms of Epstein's Framework of six categories: Type 1—Parenting, Type 2—Communicating, Type 3—Volunteering, Type 4—Learning at Home, Type 5—Decision Making, and Type 6—Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 2011, p. 46).

McBride (1991) adapted Epstein's model of family involvement to measure pre-service teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement as well as their underlying causes. The adapted version of the instrument developed by Epstein (Epstein & Dauber, 1988) was used to finally construct six scales (types 5 and 6 of Epstein's Framework were merged into one category), where the sixth scale referred to the subjects' general attitudes toward family involvement (McBride, 1991, p. 8). The sample, 271 subjects, studied early childhood teacher education at a university in the United States. The sample combined a group of 82 students who were doing their teaching practice placements while participating in the study (McBride, 1991, p. 7). McBride (1991, p. 9) concluded that all the subjects, regardless of their demographic and background characteristics, had a high opinion of all types of parental involvement; they were of the highest opinion about Type 2—Communicating and they had the lowest opinion about Type—3 Volunteering. Further study on correlations between subjects' attitudes regarding the six scales of parental involvement and their classroom experience revealed that there were considerable differences in Type 1—Parenting, Type 2—Communicating, Type 3—Volunteering, and Type 4—Learning at home. In particular, as McBride (1991, p. 11) concluded, participants who had already enrolled in teaching practice placements had a greater "awareness of the importance of parental involvement" than those who lacked any classroom

experience. Besides, the subjects expressed stereotypical views on the role of parents envisioned as mothers of young children "volunteering to help out on field trips or in the classrooms" (McBride, 1991, p. 15). To sum up, the subjects were favorable to family involvement despite their minimal preparation in the area of parent involvement strategies.

Uluag (2006) in her PhD dissertation examined primary pre-service teachers' opinions and experiences regarding parental involvement. Uluag (2006, p. 7) reasons that since research shows that "preservice teachers who feel more confident with parents are more likely to involve parents, […] it would seem logical that teacher education programs would have a responsibility to help future teachers gain confidence in the area of parental involvement." The data for the study were collected by means of interviews with 223 preservice teachers, six in-service teachers and five university supervisors, a survey questionnaire with pre-service teachers as well as an analysis of the teacher training program with respect to courses on parent involvement (Uluag, 2016, p. 30). Additionally, 12 individual interviews were conducted with fourth-year student teachers who had completed their field experiences. The parent involvement survey questionnaire was adapted from McBride (1991) and it was based on Epstein's six Types of parental involvement. The study showed that the respondents had a high opinion about all types of involvement but they reported the highest opinion on Type 2—Communication and the lowest opinion on Type 5—Decision making (Uluag, 2006, p. 46). Similarly to McBride's study (1991), fourth-year student teachers who completed their teaching practice scored higher when compared to the groups beginning the teacher training programme (Uluag, 2006, p. 53). In particular, they scored higher than the other groups with reference to Type 5—Decision making (Uluag, 2006, p. 61).

Similarly, Baum and McMurray-Schwarz (2004) analyzed pre-service teachers' beliefs about family involvement. They concluded that pre-service teachers have two specific concerns regarding the quality of the teacher-family relationship. More precisely, they asserted that the relationship was mainly "characterized by conflict and criticism" and that they would have to cater to children's basic needs which otherwise should have been met at home (2004, pp. 58, 59). Similarly to McBride (1991), Baum and McMurray-Schwarz revealed preservice teachers' misconceptions about the role of parents in education. Mainly, they "recognize the importance of parent involvement in the classroom, but from the perspective that the parents' presence can aid the teacher in managing his or her classroom responsibilities" (2004, p. 60). When it comes to teacher education, the authors recommend "incorporating family involvement across the early childhood teacher education curriculum," that is, "to include a class devoted to parent involvement and education," or to offer "a course devoted entirely to the topic of communication," or to allow students "to role-play a variety of possible situations in which they need to use appropriate communication and/or conflict

resolution strategies" within "the existing frameworks of teacher preparation programmes" (2004, pp. 57–60). Moreover, Baum and McMurray-Schwarz (2004, pp. 60, 61) emphasize the role of introducing students to research on "the benefits of parent involvement," they also express the need to rethink the role of field placements in order "to fully address the issue of parent involvement." All in all, field placements should give students ample opportunities "to take a more active role in parent interactions," "to be involved with parents on a more direct level," or even "to initiate contact with parents, write newsletters or other forms of correspondence, plan and implement a family activity, develop a family handbook, and/or participate in parent-teacher conferences" (2004, p. 61). The authors emphasize the role of collaboration between student, cooperating teacher, and teacher educator in the process.

Tomczyk (2009) in her PhD dissertation focused on prospective teachers' conceptualizations of hands-on parent-teacher conference experiences gathered during their internship. The data were gathered by means of online surveys and in-depth interviews conducted among 22 fifth-year prospective teachers from a Midwestern university in the United States and interpreted through the constructs of Figured Worlds by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) as well as of impression management by Goffman (1959). The in-depth interviews were carried out with eight out of 22 interns. Despite the fact that, as pointed out by Tomczyk (2009, p. 38), the participants were not "representative of all elementary teaching candidates," the findings allowed for singling out three types of figured worlds of parent-teacher conferences, namely: collaboration centered, instruction centered, and impression centered. Thus, the interns assumed that their role was either to collaborate with parents, instruct, or impress them. Tomczyk (2009, p. 161) concluded that the socially and culturally driven patterns of behavior can be modified and improved on condition that prospective teachers have a full awareness and a complete understanding of their own experiences of parent-teacher conferences.

In line with this, Foote et al. (2013, pp. 126, 127) noted that teacher educators have to have knowledge about the various orientations that prospective teachers hold about a child's family, culture, and community in order to help them recognize and reorient their perspectives into something more "positive and productive." In the case of Foote et al.'s study, the data were gathered by means of in-depth interviews with 20 prospective teachers who took a mathematics methods course in three universities in the United States. The researchers managed to single out three themes that refer to prospective teachers' beliefs about a child's family, culture, and community, namely: Influence, Relationship, and Resources. In other words, the future teachers hold different opinions as regards pupils' family and community; learning Math is strongly influenced either by the quality of family support, the quality of home-school communication or the availability of family and community resources for teachers.

In summary, the above brief literature review reveals that there is a gap in teacher education as regards courses on family-school partnership as well as more direct contacts with parents during teaching practice. What follows is a report from a small scale study which contributes to the ongoing debate: how to increase preservice teachers' awareness and understanding of the importance of building a broader level of partnership with parents.

Ex-trainee Teachers' Attitudes Related to Family Involvement in Light of Their (Student) Teaching Experience—A Report from the Study

The aim of the study is to find out whether there are any statistically significant associations between ex-trainee teachers' opinions about the eight types of family involvement (Epstein, 2011, p. 46; Śliwerski, 2001, p. 174) and their declared direct and indirect contacts with parents during their teaching practice.

Research questions:

(1) What are ex-trainee teachers' opinions about the eight types of family-school involvement?
(2) Which types of parent-teacher collaboration did ex-trainee teachers observe during their pedagogic and didactic practice (indirect contact with parents)?
(3) Which types of parent-teacher collaboration were they engaged in during their pedagogic and didactic practice (direct contact with parents)?
(3) Are there any statistically relevant associations between the types of parent-teacher collaboration ex-trainee teachers observed and their opinions about the most important types of family-school involvement?
(5) Are there any statistically relevant associations between the types of parent-teacher collaboration ex-trainee teachers were engaged in and their opinions about the most important types of family-school involvement?

Subjects

Subjects for the study were 28 ex-trainee teachers (24 females and four males) aged 24–35 at The State School of Higher Education in Sandomierz (now the branch campus of Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce). They completed their teaching placements from 2013 to 2017. It is assumed that their opinions

about the eight types of family-school involvement were formed both by their student teaching experience, as well as any other forms of teaching which they undertook from 2013–2017. Three female students were exempt from teaching practice because during their studies they were already practicing teachers.

Procedures

Subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire (in Polish) which consisted of two parts. Part one was a slightly modified version of Epstein's Framework of six types of family involvement (Epstein 2011). Part two consisted of two open-ended questions which referred to trainees' experience as regards their contacts with parents during their pedagogical and didactic practicum. The questionnaires were distributed mainly through emails during the 2016–2017 academic year.

Measures

Part one of the questionnaire was constructed around eight types of school-family collaboration: Type 1—Parenting ("helping all families understand child and adolescent development and establishing home environments that support children as students"), Type 2 —Communicating ("designing and concluding effective forms of two-way communication about school programs and children's progress"), Type 3—Volunteering ("recruiting and organizing help and support at school, home, or in other locations to support the school and student's activities"), Type 4—Learning at home ("providing information and ideas for families about how to help students with homework, and curriculum-related activities and decisions"), Type 5—Decision making ("having parents from all backgrounds serve as representatives and leaders on school committees and obtaining input from all parents on school decisions"), Type 6—Collaborating with the community ("identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students, and their families, and organizing activities to benefit the community and increase students' learning opportunities") (Epstein, 2011, p. 46); Type 7—Parents observing lessons, and Type 8—Home visits by teachers (Śliwerski, 2001, p. 174). Subjects were asked about their opinions regarding the importance of the eight types of collaboration using the four-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, agree, to strongly agree.

In part two, the subjects were asked to respond to two open-ended questions: (1) Which types of parent-teacher collaboration did you observe during your pedagogic and didactic practice? (2) Did you have any direct contact with

parents during your pedagogic and didactic practice. If yes, briefly describe what kind of contact you had. The narrative form of the responses allowed for the collection and further analysis of the respondents' thoughts and opinions as presented in the section. The three female students who had been exempt from teaching practice did not fill out this part of the questionnaire.

In order to check whether there existed any statistically significant relationship between the opinions of the most and least important types of parent-teacher collaboration and the subjects' indirect and direct contacts with parents, Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) test was used. The strength of one statistically significant association that was revealed using Pearson's χ^2 test, was measured using Cramer's V.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Part one of the questionnaire
The specifications below present the respondents' answers in frequency and percentages as regards their opinions about the importance of the eight types of family-school involvement.
Type 1—Parenting: 25 (89.2%) respondents agree (16 / 57.1%) and strongly agree (9 / 32.1%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 2—Communicating: 27 (96.4%) respondents agree (4 / 14.3%) and strongly agree (23 / 82.1%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 3—Volunteering: 22 (78.5%) respondents agree (10 / 35.7%) and strongly agree (12 / 42.8%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 4—Learning at home: 27 (96.4%) respondents agree (15 / 53.6%) and strongly agree (12 / 42.8%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 5—Decision making: 24 (85.7%) respondents agree (16 / 57.1%) and strongly agree (8 / 28.6%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 6—Collaborating with the community: 17 (60.7%) respondents agree (11 / 39.3%) and strongly agree (6 / 21.4%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 7—Parents observing lessons: 12 (42.8%) respondents agree (10 / 35.7%) and strongly agree (2 / 7.2%) that this type of relationship is important.
Type 8—Home visits by teachers: 11 (39.2%) respondents agree (9 / 32.1%) and strongly agree (2 / 7.2%) that this type of relationship is important.
The analysis of the data suggests that the majority of subjects had a high opinion of Types 1–6 of parent involvement. They were of the highest opinion about Type 2—Communicating, (answers 'strongly agree'). They had the lowest

opinion about Type 7—Parents observing lessons, and Type 8—Home visits by teachers (answers 'strongly agree').
Part two of the questionnaire

    (1) Which types of parent-teacher collaboration did you observe during your pedagogic and didactic practice?

The specification below presents the respondents' answers in frequency and percentages as regards the types of family-school involvement that they observed during their teaching practice (they had indirect contacts with parents).
Type 1—Parenting: 2 (7.2%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
Type 2—Communicating: 18 (64.3%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
Type 3—Volunteering: 11 (39.3%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
Type 4—Learning at home: 6 (21.4%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
Type 5—Decision making: 3 (10.7%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
Type 6—Collaborating with the community: 4 (14.3%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
Type 7—Parents observing lessons: 0%.
Type 8—Home visits by teachers: 2 (7.2%) respondents observed this type of involvement.
The analysis of the data suggests that Type 2—Communicating was the most often observed type of collaboration, whereas none of subjects observed Type 7—Parents observing lessons.

    (2) Did you have any direct contact with parents during your pedagogic and didactic practice? If yes, briefly describe what kind of contact you had.

Nine subjects (32.1%) had direct contact with parents which was Type 2—Communicating. Four pre-service teacher-parent contacts were consultations devoted to pupils who experienced various problems at school (trainees reported to parents acts of misbehavior). Four contacts were devoted to informing parents about their children's progress. One parent contacted a trainee to excuse his child from school. One of ex-trainees who did not have any contacts with parents had asked his mentor whether he could participate in a parent-teacher conference, but his mentor told him that "the school does not arrange this type of trainees' participation in school practice."

Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) test

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' opinions about the importance of the types of parent involvement and the types of involvement that they actually observed during their teaching practice (their indirect contacts with parents), Pearson's χ^2 test was used. The results of the analyses are presented below.

Type 1—Parenting: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=2)} = 0.46$; p = 0.793).

Type 2—Communicating: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=2)} = 2.0$; p = 0.366).

Type 3—Volunteering: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 2.36$; p = 0.502).

Type 4—Learning at home: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=2)} = 1.87$; p = 0.393).

Type 5—Decision making: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 0.56$; p = 0.906).

Type 6—Collaborating with the community: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 0.69$; p = 0.877).

Type 8—Home visits by teachers: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 4.55$; p = 0.208).

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' opinions about the importance of the types of parent involvement and their direct contacts with parents of Type 2—Communicating, Pearson's χ-square test was used.

Type 2—Communicating: there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 2.24$; p = 0.327).

There is no significant association between subjects' opinions about the types of parent-teacher relationships and the types of relationships that they observed during their teaching placements.

In order to find out whether there are statistically significant associations between respondents' direct contacts with parents of Type 2—Communicating and their opinions about the types of parent involvement, Pearson's χ^2 test was used. The analysis reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between respondents' direct contacts with parents of Type 2—Communicating and their high opinion about Type 4—Learning at home ($\chi^2_{(df=2)} = 6.68$; $p = 0.035$). Cramer's V is 0.49 out of a possible maximum value of 1. This represents a medium association between subjects who had direct contact with parents during their teaching placements and their high opinion about collaboration with parents as regards supporting children in: doing homework, recognizing and developing children's talents, as well as tackling at home those problems which occur during lessons. There is also a difference between respondents

with and without direct contact with parents as regards answer 'agree' ($z = 2.3$; $p < 0,001$) and 'strongly agree' ($z = –2.6$; $p < 0.001$). Respondents who had direct contact with parents during their practicum are much often of the opinion that Type 4—Learning at home is a very significant type of family-school collaboration (answer "strongly agree") when compared to those who did not experience such contacts. There is a reversed interrelation when it comes to answer 'agree.' There is no significant relationship between direct contact of Type 2 Communicating and: Type 1—Parenting ($\chi^2_{(df=2)} = 1.64$; $p = 0.441$), Type 2—Communicating ($\chi^2_{(df=2)} = 2.24$; $p = 0.327$), Type 3—Volunteering ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 1.33$; $p = 0.722$), Type 5—Decision making ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 3.07$; $p = 0.381$), Type 6—Collaborating with the community ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 4.61$; $p = 0.203$), Type 7—Parents observing lessons ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 1.26$; $p = 0.740$) and Type 8—Home visits by teachers ($\chi^2_{(df=3)} = 1.77$; $p = 0.623$).

Conclusions

The research results in the present study seem to relate to those referred to in the second part of the paper. The subjects in the research studies by McBride (1991) and Uluag (2006) had the highest opinion of Type 2—Communicating, which was confirmed in the present study. The awareness of the importance of parent involvement was greater in those subjects who had already enrolled in teaching practice (McBride, 1991) and completed it (Uluag, 2006). In the case of this study all ex-teacher trainers had completed teaching practice and must have undertaken other forms of informal and formal teaching as well as had contacts with educational centers as parents. The present study provided deeper insight into the impact of direct contacts with parents during (student) teaching experience on the subjects' opinions related to family involvement. In this way it provides a new perspective on the problem of how to raise trainees' awareness and understanding of the importance of building a broader level of partnership with parents. It does not allow for drawing far-reaching conclusions since the subjects were not a representative group. Despite this fact, however, the present study shows that the type of school and family relationships that the subjects experienced during their school placements, that is, communication, is positively associated with one type of the relationship, that is, learning at home. Thus, those ex-trainees who experienced direct contact with parents strongly agree that parents have an important role to play in supporting their children at home. Contrary to the above, no such positive associations were found when it comes to the ex-trainee teachers who just observed parent-teacher contacts while doing their placements. It goes without saying that "of all types of pa-

rental involvement, supervision of learning activities at home may be the most educationally significant" (Uluag, 2006, p. 15). Also, parents are more willing to work with their child at home "when teachers nurture the teacher parent relationship" (Uluag, 2006, p. 18). The international research studies on teacher trainees' beliefs as well as their awareness of the importance of home-school collaboration shows the supporting role of teacher educators. The development of critical reflectivity by means of solving practical problems should go hand in hand with equipping teacher trainees with communicative skills and cooperative strategies tailored to particular educational and social contexts. A case in point is a teaching practice which should "fully address the issue of parent involvement" (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004, pp. 60, 61). In particular, trainees should have opportunities for contacts with parents "on a more direct level" (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004, p. 61). Therefore, it seems obvious that one of the priorities for preparing pre-service teachers is to help them realize that "partnerships recognize the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for children's learning and development" (Epstein, 2011, p. 4). As noticed by Foster and Lovel, it can be achieved by "placing students in field experiences where they can interact with families of varying socioeconomic levels and ethnic backgrounds" (1992, qtd. in Katz & Bauch, 1999, p. 202). Concluding, we are of the opinion that the first step to improve the situation in the area of contacts with parents is to develop programs of training that emphasize teacher trainees' varied and active role in parent interactions.

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Die Einstellung der zukünftigen Lehrer zu den mit der Zusammenarbeit zwischen Familie und Schule verbundenen Fragen nach den Erfahrungen aus der Lehrerpraxis

Zusammenfassung

In ihrem Artikel erörtert die Verfasserin das Problem der zukünftigen Lehrer, die sich nicht im Klaren sind, dass sie mit den Eltern ihrer Schüler unbedingt eine engere Zusammenarbeit aufnehmen müssen, die weit über solche typische Formen des Kontaktes wie z. B.: Elternabende oder Telefongespräche hinausgehen wird. Den durch das Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Hochschulbildung (Gesetzblatt 2012; Pos. 131) erlassenen Richtlinien zufolge, sollte die Lehrerausbildung sowohl die Kenntnisse über die Eltern als Subjekte der pädagogischen Tätigkeit, als auch die Fähigkeit zur Zusammenarbeit mit ihnen umfassen. In der Wirklichkeit aber, was die Forschungen zeigen, distanzieren sich zukünftige Lehrer von den Eltern ihrer künftigen Schüler. Die Ursache dafür liegt wahrscheinlich darin, dass es in den die pädagogische und didaktische Praxis bestimmenden Bildungsmodulen Nr. 1 u. 2 die Voraussetzung fehlt, die Referendaren können in einen indirekten, direkten, formellen oder informellen Kontakt mit den Eltern treten (Gesetzblatt 2012; Pos. 131). Im Resultat sind diese Kontakte während der Lehrerpraxis eigentlich zufällig und sporadisch. Andererseits aber ist es schwer zu erwarten, dass die pädagogischen Betreuer der Referendaren solche Treffen mit den Eltern von der Schule beauftragt sozusagen „auf Wunsch" veranstalten werden, obwohl manche von ihnen klargestellte Anforderungen bevorzugen. Der zweite Teil des Artikels beinhaltet die Ergebnisse der unter den Absolventen des Lehramtsstudiums des ersten Grades durchgeführten qualitativen Sozialforschung. Die Befragten sollten sich dafür entscheiden, welcher von den 8 Typen des Elternengagements zur Förderung ihrer Kinder ihrer Meinung nach am wichtigsten und welcher am belanglosesten sei (nach: J. Epstein 2014 u. B. Śliwerski 2001). Sie sollten auch ihre Kontakte mit den Eltern während ihres Referendariats schildern. Die Forschung sollte veranschaulichen, ob es statistisch gesehen eine wesentliche Wechselbeziehung zwischen den von den Befragten bevorzugten Typen des Engagements und ihren wirklichen Kontakten mit den Eltern gibt, und ihre Ergebnisse haben das bestätigt. Die Referendaren welche einen direkten Kontakt mit den Eltern aufgenommen haben, sind häufiger bereit, die Hauslehre (Typ 4) als ein wichtiges Element der Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Schule und den Eltern zu beurteilen.

Schlüsselwörter: persönliche Gesinnung der Referendaren, die während des Referendariats gesammelten Erfahrungen, Elternengagement, Partnerschaft