

Functionality of the Educational Institution-Family Partnership: Theoretical and Praxiological Benchmarks

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Abstract

The article explores the functionality of the partnership between educational institutions and families, conceptualized as a strategic framework for inter-institutional cooperation aimed at addressing educational issues of shared interest. Partnership functionality is examined through a systemic and interactionist lens, emphasizing the interdependence of its components and the need to establish a reference framework of functionality indicators. To ensure the effectiveness of the partnership, the paper conceptualizes a set of defining characteristics of a functional educational partnership. This is followed by the presentation of study results on the kindergarten-family partnership, which reveal three distinct levels of functionality: high, medium, and low. Additionally, the article outlines the conditions for optimizing the educational partnership, developed in alignment with functionality indicators, and provides recommendations for both parents and teachers to enhance cooperation among educational agents and strengthen the overall functionality of the institution-family partnership.

Keywords: educational partnership, functionality, defining characteristics, indicators of functionality, evaluation of partnership functionality, optimization, conditions for efficiency, recommendations.

Introduction

Addressing an educational issue of collective concern requires the active collaboration of all parties to resolve the matter effectively. In this context, maintaining the functionality of the educational partnership is essential, as it serves as a strategic framework for cooperation between the educational institution and the family. Ensuring the functionality of this partnership involves establishing cohesive structures for communication, coordination, and shared accountability, capable of generating convergent and sustainable interventions that support the holistic development of the child. From this perspective, the educational partnership functions as a systemic structure oriented toward synergy, facilitating the proactive participation of all actors and the optimal use of educational resources, so that decision-making, actions, and outcomes reflect a common, transparent, and efficient approach. The need for such partnerships arises from the complexity of contemporary educational challenges, which demand intersectoral, adaptive approaches grounded in complementarity, equity, and social cohesion.

Functionality, in this context, refers to the capacity of a system or entity to achieve its intended objectives, meeting performance criteria by executing its functions effectively and

appropriately. Within educational partnerships, this entails the harmonious coordination of relationships and responsibilities between the institution and the family, fostering active and creative cooperation among all stakeholders, ensuring adaptability to the specific needs and resources of each partner, and producing relevant and sustainable outcomes through transparent decision-making, effective communication, and coordinated action focused on the beneficiaries' optimal development.

A functional educational partnership is characterized by reciprocal and interdependent relationships, where elements such as communication, coherence, cohesion, equity, and quality ensure that partners collaborate effectively toward common goals. The effectiveness of such a partnership also depends on the systematic identification and management of shared issues, guided by key parameters including adaptability, creativity, responsibility, flexibility, relevance, inclusion, and sustainability.

The systemic and interactionist perspective on partnership emphasizes the complex interconnections between components, interdependent operations, and consensual, cohesive, and productive relationships that underpin the integrated and high-performing functioning of the partnership. Within this framework, a system of indicators for the functionality of educational partnerships is essential to foster sustainable cooperation that supports the holistic development of all actors involved. From this integrative viewpoint, establishing precise scientific criteria for partnership functionality is crucial, providing a cohesive and flexible theoretical and practical framework for the design, implementation, and assessment of partnerships. This ensures the sustainability, complementarity, and effectiveness of collaborative educational initiatives. Based on this conceptual framework, the conditions for optimizing the educational partnership – developed from our perspective, rigorously aligned with the functionality indicators, and presented in this paper – serve to translate theory into practice, giving partnership interventions dynamism, quality, relevance, and sustainability.

Educational Partnership Functionality: Defining Aspects

In a general sense, functionality refers to the capacity or quality of an object, system, or entity to fulfill the purpose for which it was designed or created, to perform its functions efficiently and appropriately. Functionality, linked to efficiency and performance in meeting set objectives, can be assessed by the degree to which an element effectively executes its designated tasks, roles, and responsibilities, thereby enhancing the success or seamless operation of a system or process.

According to the Praxiological Dictionary of Pedagogy (Bocoș, 2016, p. 300), in the educational field, functionality refers to the set of instructional and educational approaches, as well as interdependent operations, based on biological and psychological considerations, aimed at ensuring optimal functioning (from a somatic, physiological, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual perspective) and the appropriate learners' development.

According to authors Dragomir, Breaz, Breaz, & Pleșa (2001, as cited in Răileanu, Vieru & Alecsa, 2019, p. 475), “a functional partnership aims at action that involves reciprocal relationships of effective interaction.”

Antoci and Andrasciuc-Birtok (2022, p. 86) state that the functionality of an educational partnership necessitates consideration of its pertinent structural components: communication, conformity, creativity, coherence, cohesiveness, and efficiency.

A functional educational partnership exhibits specific characteristics that elucidate the systemic and interactionist approach to the interconnected components, interdependent operations, and cohesive functional relationships, which collectively influence the identification and resolution of shared issues of interest among partners. In this vein, we propose *the reference framework of indicators for the functionality of the educational partnership* – adaptability, quality, coherence, cohesion, collaboration, complementarity, compliance, communication, interaction, cooperation, coordination, creativity, equity, efficiency, flexibility, inclusion, innovation, interculturality, relevance, responsibility, resilience, synergy, sustainability, transparency, valorisation – as an integrated reference system, relevant both for the comprehensive evaluation of the degree of functionality of interactions between educational agents and for the foundation of interventions aimed at optimising the relational framework between the family and the educational institution.

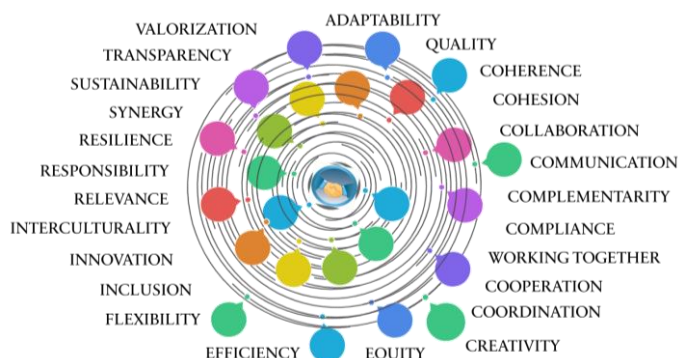


Figure 1. Reference Framework of Indicators for the Functionality of Educational Partnership (V. Mîslîţchi)

Concerned with ensuring the functionality of the educational partnership, we conceptualized (V. Mîslîţchi, 2024, p. 81) a set of defining *characteristics* of a *functional educational partnership*, focusing on:

- Open, transparent, continuous, empathetic, and assertive communication among educational partners;
- Active involvement and participation in educational and decision-making processes;
- Strategic planning and evaluation of partnership projects;
- Leveraging the potential of all educational partners in co-planning and co-implementing innovative and effective educational technologies;
- Collaborative establishment of partnership objectives that take into account the common interests and needs of all parties involved;
- Assuming responsibility and maintaining continuous involvement of partners in joint activities;
- Providing constructive feedback and continuously improving interventions and overall performance;
- Respecting cultural diversity and promoting inclusive practices;
- Making participatory decisions and resolving conflicts cooperatively;
- Receptiveness and adaptation of partners to social and educational changes, adjusting practices to meet the evolving needs of beneficiaries and the community;
- Encouraging innovation and creativity within the partnership, exploring new ways to address challenges and enhance educational interventions;

- Continuous monitoring of beneficiary progress and partnership performance, with strategies adjusted according to results;
- Recognizing and valuing the contributions of all partners in addressing shared issues of interest.

This set of characteristics emphasizes that a functional educational partnership is defined by open, empathetic, and continuous communication, the active engagement of all partners, strategic planning and evaluation of joint projects, and cohesion in shared responsibilities. Harnessing the potential of each partner, promoting inclusion, adopting participatory decision-making, and providing constructive feedback enhance both the effectiveness and relevance of interventions. Flexibility, innovation, and continuous adaptation to the needs of beneficiaries and the community support the holistic development of the target group, while acknowledging mutual contributions, strengthening the sustainability and efficacy of collaboration. Thus, a functional partnership provides a strategic, dynamic, and high-quality framework in which synergistic cooperation, creativity, inclusion, equity, and recognition of partners define the quality of interactions and facilitate the successful achievement of shared goals.

Evaluating the Functionality of the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership: Design, Results, Interpretations

To enhance cooperation among educational agents, it is essential to evaluate the current state of the kindergarten-family educational partnership. In this context, between October and November 2023, we conducted a study to assess the functionality of this partnership.

The purpose of the investigation was to identify the perceptions of educators and parents regarding the level of functionality of the kindergarten-family partnership, specifically by examining the degree of partners' involvement in cooperative actions across various educational contexts. The instrument employed was the *5CE Educational Partnership Evaluation Questionnaire*, developed by Antoci & Birtok-Andrasciuc (2022, as cited in Birtok-Andrasciuc, 2023, p. 182). This questionnaire evaluates six key components of educational partnership: communication, conformity, creativity, coherence, cohesion, and efficiency.

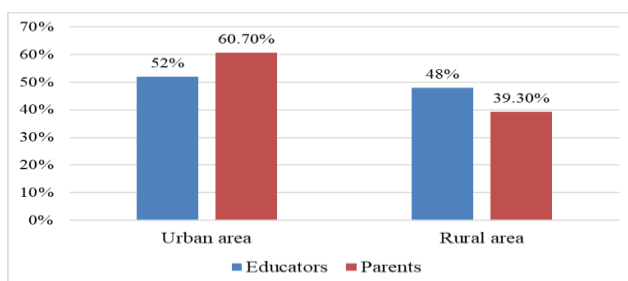


Figure 2. Sample Characteristics According to the *Urban/Rural Environment Criterion (%)*

The study sample comprised 800 educational partners, including 479 educators (59.9%) and 321 parents of preschool-aged children (40.1%). The participants represented both urban (249 educators, 52%; 195 parents, 60.7%) and rural areas (230 educators, 48%; 126 parents, 39.3%).

Processing and interpreting the data obtained from the *5CE Educational Partnership Evaluation Questionnaire* allowed for the identification of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive manifestations of partners, as well as the level of functionality of the kindergarten-

family partnership across its structural components: communication, conformity, creativity, coherence, cohesion, and efficiency.

Regarding the communication *component*, educators consistently take the initiative to engage in dialogue, with 72.2% reporting that they actively seek information about the behavior, engagement, interrelationships, involvement, and well-being of partners and beneficiaries. Teachers generally feel satisfied after communicating and discussing challenges encountered within the partnership. Meanwhile, 27.2% of educators partially engage in these actions and express their impressions, and only 0.6% indicate that they neither initiate discussions with educational partners nor feel satisfied or free in communicating about issues in the educational process. Among parents, 52% consistently initiate discussions with partners to inquire about beneficiaries' behavior, engagement, interactions, involvement, and well-being, while 39.6% report partial engagement in such conversations, and 8.4% do not engage in these discussions at all. In contrast to educators, a lower proportion of parents express satisfaction with discussions regarding challenges in the kindergarten-family relationship: 56.7% (182 parents) reported being satisfied, 37.7% (121 parents) partially satisfied, and 5.6% (18 parents) dissatisfied. This discrepancy highlights the potential for blockages between educational agents that arise from insufficiently open communication, low motivation to engage, poorly communicated expectations, insecurity, distrust of partners, or fear of interpersonal conflict. Nevertheless, the initiative shown by partners in seeking information about the partnership, along with the satisfaction derived from effective communication, are key factors that enhance interest, commitment, and sustained cooperation within the kindergarten-family partnership.

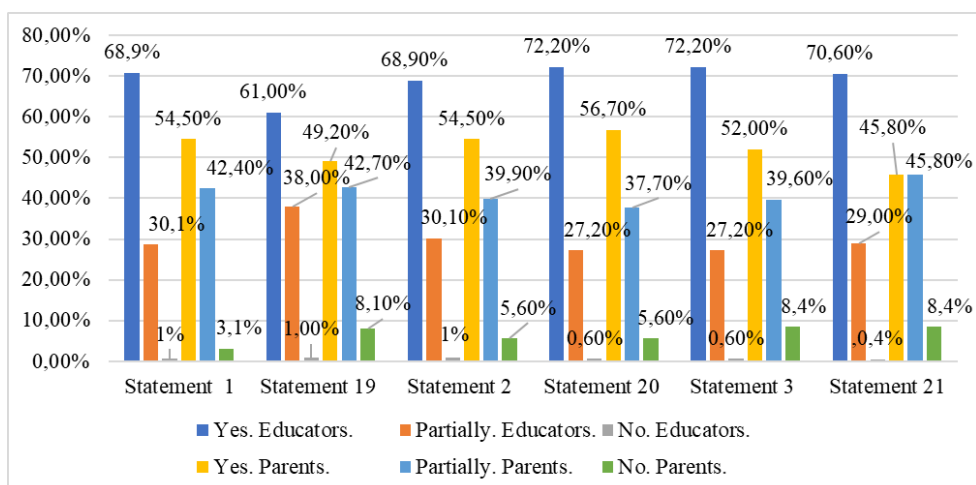


Figure 3. Educators and Parents' Opinions Regarding the Involvement in the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership in Terms of the *Communication* Component (%)

The teaching staff (70.8%) and parents (54.5%) consider that transparency and clarity of messages regarding the organization, implementation, and opportunities for partner involvement in joint activities are ensured. This aspect is only partially acknowledged by a smaller proportion of educators (28.6%) and a larger proportion of parents (42.4%). At the same time, a small percentage of the teaching staff (0.6%) and parents (3.1%) believe that the kindergarten-family partnership does not sufficiently emphasize transparency and clarity in communication related to joint actions.

The data also highlights the need for educational agents to engage in discussions focused on analyzing the situations and activities carried out daily with the beneficiaries of the partnership. Such discussions are reported as occurring consistently by 61% of educators and 49.2% of parents, while others indicate they occur only partially (educators - 38%, parents - 42.7%). A minority of respondents -1% of the teaching staff and 8.1% of parents - state that they generally do not discuss daily activities with their partners and the direct or indirect beneficiaries.

Differences are evident between educational partners regarding free communication and participation in joint activities (e.g., meetings, consultations, seminars, excursions, competitions). Active and sustained participation is more prevalent among educators (70.6%) than among parents (45.8%). Partial personal involvement is reported by 29% of educators and 45.8% of parents. Complete non-involvement in joint activities and ineffective communication are confirmed by a very small number of the teaching staff (0.4%) but by a noticeably higher proportion of parents (8.4%).

Effective communication between partners is fostered when team members are encouraged to express their opinions and ideas openly and freely. The study findings indicate a need to strengthen actions in this area: 68.9% of educators and 54.5% of parents report that they are consistently encouraged to express their views regarding the design and organization of future activities. However, 30.1% of the teaching staff and 39.9% of parents experience partial encouragement, while 1% of educators and 5.6% of parents report a lack of support from partners in expressing their opinions. This lack of support may lead to reduced motivation to participate, limited diversity of perspectives on the effectiveness of activities, inefficiencies in planning joint actions, and an increased risk of failure in addressing shared problems. Therefore, greater attention must be given to this component of cooperation, as effective communication facilitates accurate message encoding and decoding, mutual understanding, constructive problem-solving, the achievement of common goals, and the overall success of the kindergarten-family partnership.

With regard to the *compliance* component, the majority of educators (86.4%) and parents (73.2%) state that they fully comply with the procedure/logic of the activities planned to address the interests of all beneficiaries; partial compliance with the procedure of the actions planned within the kindergarten-family partnership is reported by 13.6% of educators and 26.2% of parents; there are no teaching staff who confirm that they do not take into account the logic of the planned activities, while 0.6% of parents state that they do not comply with the procedure of the activities planned within the kindergarten-family partnership.

Analysis of the questionnaire data further reveals that most educational agents (teaching staff - 80.2%, parents - 65.4%) believe that prioritising planned formal, non-formal, and informal activities contributes to the development of both direct and indirect beneficiaries. However, a higher proportion of educators (75.5%) than parents (56.7%) report accepting involvement in joint activities without reservation or fear. This finding suggests the need to intensify efforts to create contexts that encourage confident, anxiety-free participation, thereby enhancing flexibility, adaptability, engagement in achieving sustainable outcomes, and overall satisfaction among partners.

A proportion of educational agents (teaching staff - 61%, parents - 49.3%) consider that they are beneficially influenced by their partners in implementing the proposed initiatives aimed at the optimal resolution of issues of common interest. Teaching staff (37.6%) and parents (41.4%) were also identified who consider the partners' influence to be only partially

beneficial in terms of complying to the ideas proposed by other members, while the negative influence of partners in implementing the proposed initiatives was reported by respondents as follows: teaching staff - 1.4%, parents - 9.3%.

Compared with parents (66.3%), preschool teachers (82.5%) demonstrate greater flexibility in accepting their partner's position, opinions, or behaviors when these are supported by convincing arguments or evidence. This openness contributes to effective problem-solving, the prevention and reduction of interpersonal conflicts, improved partner relationships, stimulation of opinion exchange, and increased adaptability to change.

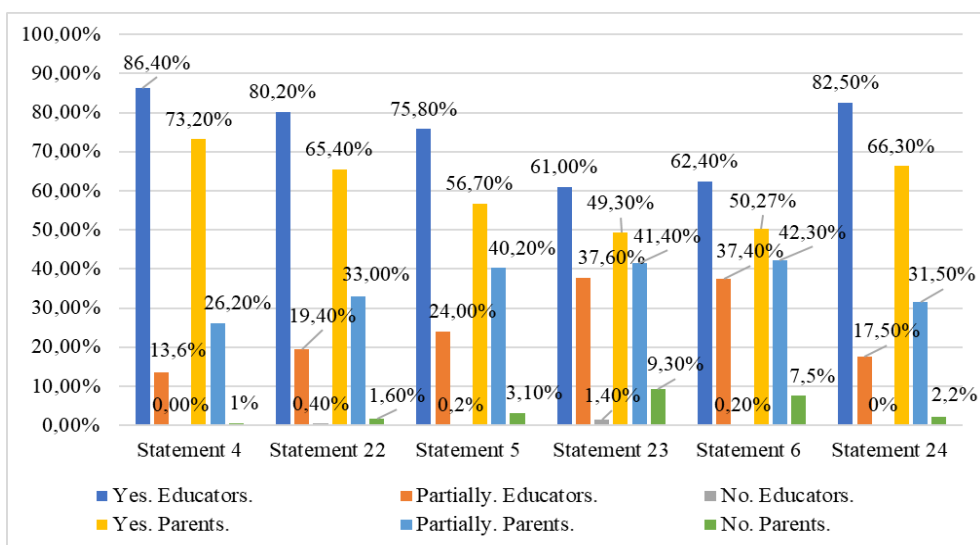


Figure 4. Educators and Parents' Opinions Regarding the Involvement in the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership on the *Compliance* Component (%)

The arguments presented by partners regarding expressed opinions, exhibited behaviors, and implemented interventions are only partially accepted by some educational agents, namely 17.5% of the teaching staff and 31.5% of parents. A small proportion of parents (2.2%) express complete reluctance to accept their partners' arguments, a pattern not reported by educators.

Regarding overcoming obstacles in addressing shared problems, 62.4% of the teaching staff and 50.2% of parents report being able to do so successfully. However, others experience difficulties in this process (teaching staff - 37.4%, parents - 42.3%), while a minority of respondents (0.2% of the teaching staff and 7.5% of parents) report being unable to overcome obstacles encountered within the kindergarten-family partnership. Such challenges may result in disappointment and discouragement among participants, increased interpersonal tensions and conflicts, reduced motivation to engage in joint activities, and ultimately failure, as reflected by both direct and indirect beneficiaries of the partnership. To prevent these negative outcomes, it is essential for partners to adopt a proactive, collaborative approach to overcoming obstacles. Open and transparent communication, constructive problem-solving strategies, responsiveness to partners' needs, and a willingness to adapt to new conditions and contexts are indispensable for the effective management of difficulties within an educational partnership.

According to the data obtained on the creativity component, we can highlight the value of affective manifestations related to the satisfaction of educational agents (teaching staff -

94.8%, parents - 77%), generated by creative initiatives and others' opinions in support of the partnership. Additionally, most educators (86.8%) and a significant portion of parents (66.4%) are inspired by various practices and experiences of their partners, which they subsequently apply with enthusiasm and authenticity to improve interpersonal relationships-parent-child, parent-teacher, child-teacher, etc. This contributes to the authenticity of the partnership, facilitates the creation of a pleasant and productive environment, stimulates creativity and innovation within the partnership, and helps identify new, original, and effective solutions.

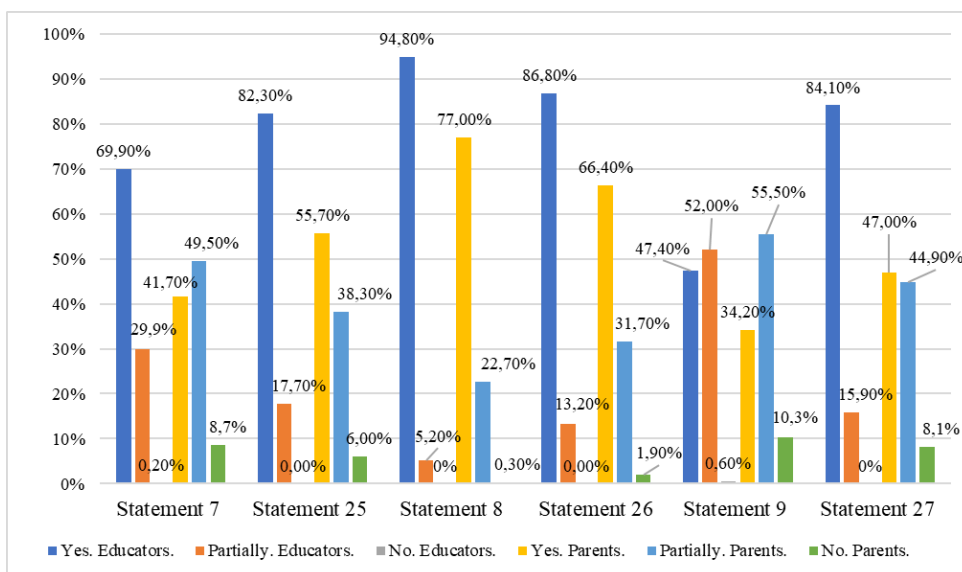


Figure 5. Educators and Parents' Opinions Regarding the Involvement in the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership in Terms of the *Creativity* Component (%)

At the same time, a broader involvement of educators (82.3%) is observed compared to parents (55.7%) in identifying original solutions to address certain problems that arise within the partnership activity program. While most educators (84.1%) confirmed that they fully utilize various materials, forms, methods, and techniques to achieve the objectives proposed within the partnership, among parents, these actions are fully reflected in only 47% of cases. This points to the need for ongoing support and encouragement for parents to leverage their own creative potential to effectively address situations and problems encountered in the educational process, to reflect on the effectiveness of the activities carried out, and to propose recommendations for improving the partners' interventions.

Educational agents encounter the greatest difficulty in identifying at least four applicable solutions to complex situations. Only 47.4% of educators and 34.2% of parents consider that they perform at a high level in this regard. This aspect requires particular attention, as a limited ability to generate multiple viable solutions may delay the implementation of appropriate measures to resolve difficult situations, thereby negatively affecting overall effectiveness. Moreover, it may restrict opportunities for innovation and adaptation to changes in the educational environment, diminish partners' capacity to respond effectively to challenges, and ultimately reduce the quality of educational services.

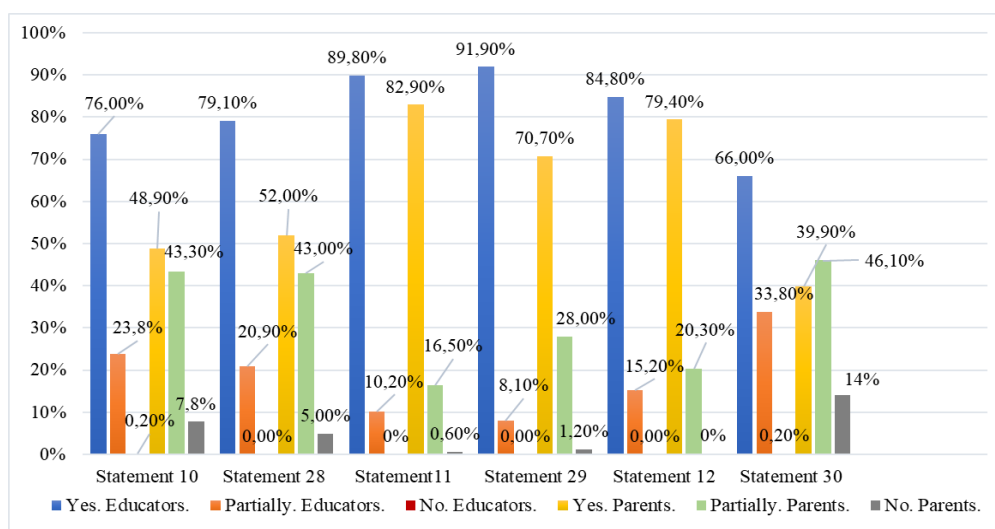


Figure 6. Educators and Parents' Opinions Regarding the Involvement in the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership on the *Coherence* Component (%)

The *coherence* component indicates high levels of positive affective states among educational partners (89.8% of educators and 82.9% of parents), generated by the sustained efforts of participants (children, parents, and teachers) in the continuous and consistent implementation of various partnership activities, such as workshops, consultations, and seminars. In this context, most teaching staff (91.9%) and parents (70.7%) report experiencing a positive mood as a result of the successful and ongoing activities carried out within the partnership.

Although the majority of partners (educators - 84.8%, parents - 79.4%) report that they consistently respect the sequence of actions required to achieve the planned objectives of the partnership, the data reveal a decline in the proportion of partners who organize and implement these activities in a consistent and responsible manner in collaboration with other educational agents. Specifically, this behavior is reported by 66% of educators and only 39.9% of parents. The lack of continuous and responsible organization and implementation of planned activities in cooperation with partners can generate several negative consequences, including failure to achieve partnership objectives, deterioration of partners' image and reputation, increased tensions and conflicts within the team, and the undermining of the partnership's sustainability, with the risk of not ensuring the continuity of benefits over time.

Furthermore, the data highlight notable differences between educators and parents regarding two key aspects: a) the development of clear beliefs about the effectiveness of the partnership following the implementation of activities aimed at strengthening, harmonizing, and sustaining group cooperation and the continuity of joint interventions: educators - 79.1%, parents - 52%); and b) the rational and ongoing critical analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of actions undertaken within the partnership (educators - 76%, parents - 48.9%). These disparities may lead to disagreements between partners, limit opportunities for learning and continuous improvement of collaborative practices, result in inefficient use of available resources, and diminish or undermine the credibility of partners whose actions are not aligned with the partnership's objectives, ultimately jeopardizing the achievement of

these objectives. To prevent such negative outcomes, it is essential for partners to clarify their beliefs, engage in periodic and systematic analyses, and remain open to continuous improvement within the educational partnership. Creating an environment characterized by ongoing learning and adaptability is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness, success, and long-term sustainability of cooperative efforts.

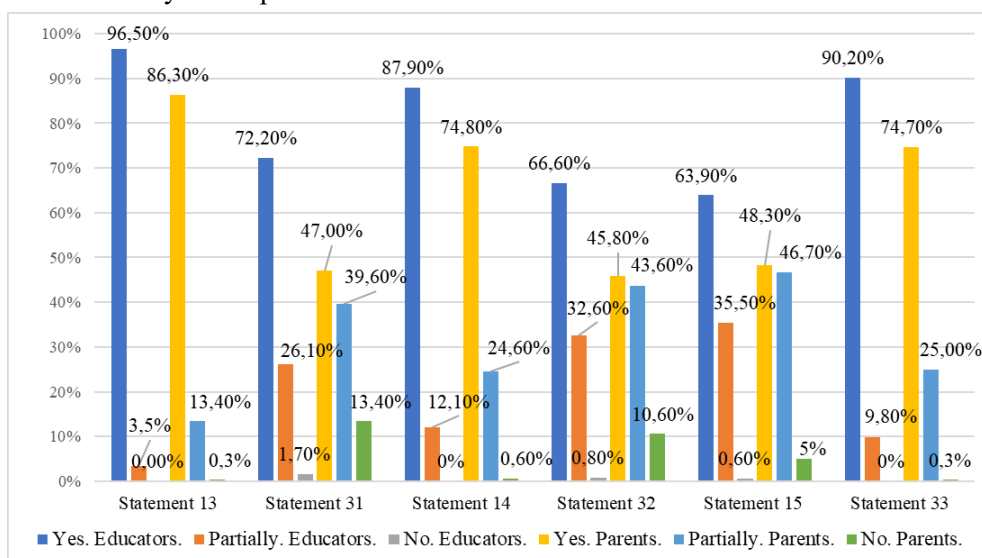


Figure 7. Educators' and Parents' Opinions Regarding the Involvement in the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership on the *Cohesion* Component Dimension (%)

With regard to the *cohesion* component, it should be noted that the highest results are reported by educational agents (educators - 96.5%, parents - 86.3%) in terms of awareness that effective interaction within the partnership ensures the unity of the child-parent-teacher relationship, which indicates that the partners have come to recognize the value of the kindergarten-family educational partnership.

Although only a proportion of the partners (educators - 63.9%, parents - 48.3%) are strongly motivated to become enthusiastically involved in carrying out the tasks within the partnership, fulfilled through the connection and solidarity of all partners, the majority of educational agents (educators - 90.2%, parents - 74.7%) state that they respect and qualitatively fulfill the obligations incumbent upon them within the partnership. This leads to the need for continuous motivation of partners to make their own contribution to the success of the partnership, to carry out their assigned tasks with quality, and to employ effective strategies that increase commitment and encourage partners' performance through the promotion and observance of shared values, the clear definition of common benefits, empathetic and assertive communication, public recognition of achievements and outstanding results, and the qualitative fulfillment of obligations, etc.

The unification of the efforts of all educational agents in achieving the common goal, the increased satisfaction of each party due to close collaboration and positive interpersonal relationships, the efficient management of difficult situations, and the creation of an educational environment that respects diversity and promotes solidarity, equality, and equity are just some of the benefits attributed to the cohesion of the partners. In this context, the study data indicates that a large majority of educators (87.9%) and parents (74.8%)

experience joy as a result of being actively involved in kindergarten-family partnership. This affective state is partially present in 12.1% of the teaching staff and 24.6% of parents, while it is absent in a very small proportion of parents (0.6%).

Difficulties in partnership relationships can arise from the fact that partners do not share their own experiences for fear of being judged. The study data show that only 66.6% of educators and 45.8% of parents confirm that they enjoy the company of other participants within the partnership because they feel they can share their own experiences without being judged. This leads to the conclusion that partners' prejudices and stereotypes can cause difficulties in group interactions, create latent tensions and conflicts, and lead partners to avoid openly communicating about their experiences for fear of judgment. This, in turn, can deepen communication barriers, accumulate resentment and frustration that affect the overall relationship, and reduce mutual trust. To overcome these difficulties, it is important to create contexts in which partners feel safe sharing their experiences without being judged, by establishing norms for open, empathetic, and assertive communication, cultivating a psychosocial climate based on trust, acceptance, and mutual support, and ensuring the well-being of each partner.

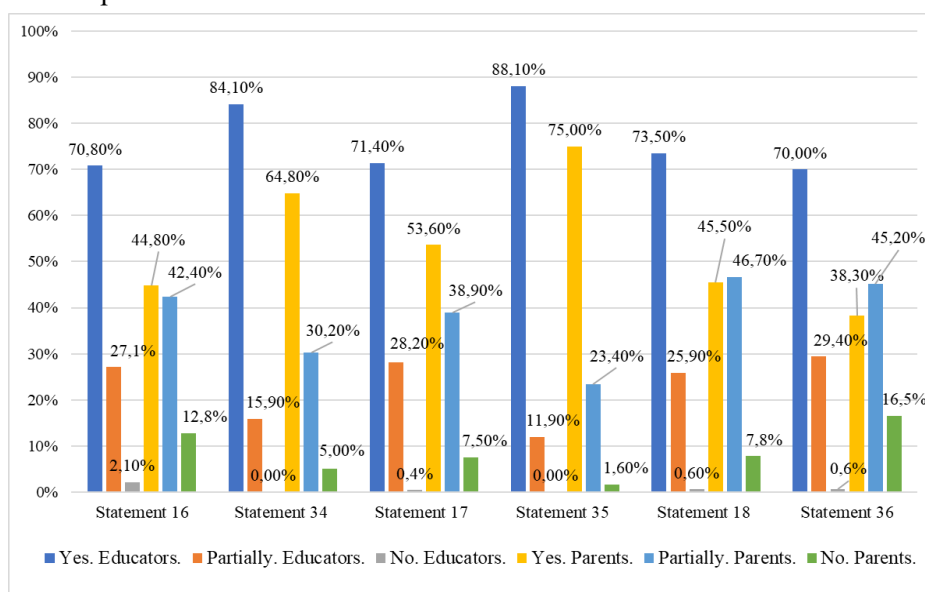


Figure 8. Educators and Parents' Opinions Regarding the Involvement in the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership on the *Efficiency* Component Dimension (%)

Regarding the *efficiency* component of the educational partnership, the study findings indicate that a substantial proportion of partners (88.1% of educators and 75% of parents) believe that the efficiency of partnership interventions is ensured by positive affective states and the satisfaction expressed by children, parents, and teachers. These factors motivate partners to increase their involvement in joint activities and to express appreciation for the partnership team's collective efforts. Additionally, the value of a positive psycho-emotional climate within the partnership, which provides feelings of safety, well-being, and comfort, is recognised by 71.4% of educators and 53.6% of parents.

The cognitive dimension of the *efficiency* component reveals differences between preschool teachers and parents in two key areas: a) continuous critical analysis of partnership outcomes

aimed at self-correction, without personal attacks, labeling, blame, or disrespect toward partners (educators - 70.8%, parents - 44.8%); and b) systematic comparison of previous and current results to inform decision-making in pursuit of the partnership's objectives (educators - 84.1%, parents - 64.8%).

In addition, the study data reveals differences between educational partners with respect to the behavioral dimension of the partnership. These differences are evident in: a) the continuous identification and implementation of various strategies for negotiating and resolving problems or conflicts - such as task distribution, identification of alternatives, and assumption of responsibility - reported by 73.5% of educators and 45.5% of parents; and b) the systematic design and organization of cooperative activities, as well as the ongoing monitoring of progress in solving shared problems of interest, reported by 70% of educators and 38.3% of parents.

The findings underscore the need to provide sustained support and encouragement for educational agents – particularly parents of preschool-aged children – to engage in an ongoing, reflective process of evaluation and improvement. This process should focus on strengthening active involvement and persistence in the critical assessment of current results, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and consistently monitoring partnership activities and outcomes using appropriate data collection and progress evaluation tools. Furthermore, obtaining continuous feedback from partners and adopting reflective strategies can foster openness to change, promote systematic critical analysis of partnership outcomes, and encourage partners to view each experience as an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of interventions to optimally address shared problems of interest.

The study data does not indicate significant differences between urban and rural environments in the involvement of parents and educators in the kindergarten-family educational partnership. Nevertheless, certain contextual factors may lead to differences between the two settings, including differences in infrastructure and facilities, access to resources, the size and diversity of educational communities, as well as variations in priorities, needs, culture, and traditions.

A high level of functionality in the kindergarten-family educational partnership is reported to be primarily ensured by educators in both rural and urban environments, with an average involvement rate of 73.5%. In contrast, parents from both settings report a lower level of involvement, with an average of 53.1%.

In both rural and urban contexts, educators display low and medium levels of involvement in ensuring partnership functionality. Specifically, low levels of educator involvement are observed in an average of 2.05% of cases (1.7% in rural areas and 2.4% in urban areas), while medium levels are reported by an average of 24.4% of educators (23.5% in rural areas and 25.3% in urban areas). Regarding parents, low levels of involvement are observed in an average of 13.8% of cases (12.7% in rural areas and 14.9% in urban areas), followed by medium levels of partnership functionality reported by an average of 33.13% of parents (36.55% in rural areas and 29.7% in urban areas). These situations must be addressed responsibly and proactively. Reduced or absent involvement of educational agents in kindergarten-family partnership can lead to significant dysfunctions in the continuity of the educational process, negatively affecting the quality of pedagogical interactions, the effectiveness of early interventions, and the consolidation of an educational environment that supports children's holistic development. Insufficient participation undermines the creation of a secure, predictable, and cohesive educational climate, limits parents' access to innovative pedagogical approaches, reduces opportunities for joint reflection on children's

progress, weakens the sustainability of trust-based relationships between families and kindergartens, and increases the risk of gaps in children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. These risks highlight the need for coherent, strategic, and sustainable interventions aimed at strengthening cooperation between educational partners.

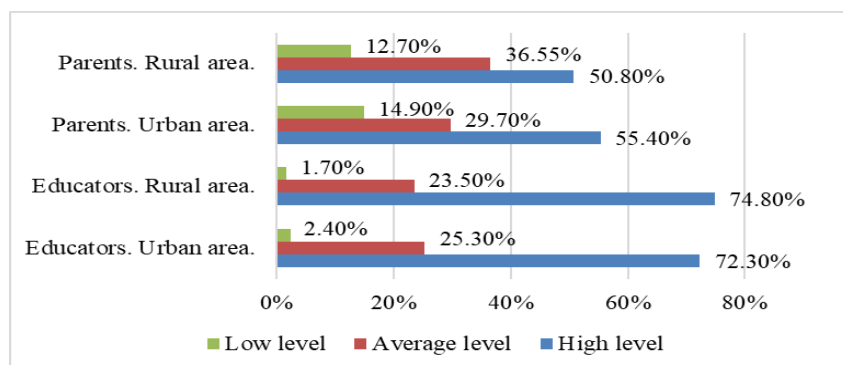


Figure 9. Results (%) Attested by Parents and Educators in Rural and Urban Environments Regarding the Level of Functionality of the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership

The processing and interpretation of data obtained from the questionnaire administered to the full sample of 800 educational partners who voluntarily participated in the study made it possible to identify the actual level of functionality of the kindergarten-family educational partnership.

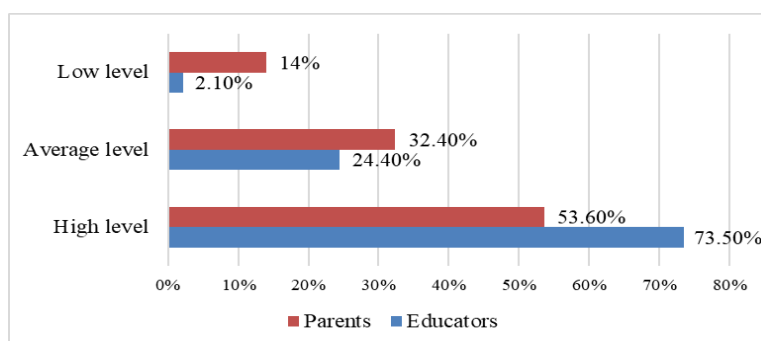


Figure 10. Level of Functionality of the Kindergarten-Family Educational Partnership as Assessed by Parents and Teaching Staff (%)

The analysis of the empirical data indicates that *14% of parents and 2.10% of educators report a low level of partnership functionality*. This finding reflects insufficient concern for strengthening partnerships and ensuring effective, sustainable cooperation among educational agents. Such a level is characterised by minimal involvement, fragmented interactions, and a pronounced absence of consolidated, cohesive, and synergistic behaviours.

From a communication perspective, interactions are sporadic, predominantly formal, and largely one-sided. The exchange of relevant information regarding children's progress is limited, while constructive dialogue occurs only occasionally. In terms of compliance, adherence to institutional procedures is partial and inconsistent, and assumed responsibilities are frequently neglected, undermining the foundation for high-quality and sustainable collaboration.

Creativity among educational agents is also reduced, as joint initiatives and innovative proposals are scarce, reflecting rigidity and resistance to alternative educational approaches. Action coherence is weak, with interventions remaining isolated and insufficiently aligned with the overarching objectives of the partnership. This lack of alignment prevents the establishment of a consistent pace and a logical continuity of cooperation.

Relational cohesion is fragile, marked by distancing, disinterest, and a limited willingness to engage in teamwork, which hinders the development of trust-based relationships between the educational institution and the family. Consequently, the effectiveness of joint actions is diminished, participation in cohesive activities remains minimal, and outcomes are discontinuous and unsystematic, failing to provide genuine support for the progress of direct beneficiaries.

Overall, the low level of functionality reflects a partnership that is either in an early developmental stage or dysfunctional, with formal, limited interactions prevailing over a truly collaborative approach. As a result, the educational potential arising from the synergy between kindergarten and family remains largely unexploited.

An average level of functionality of the kindergarten-family educational partnership is reported by 32.4% of parents and 24.4% of the teaching staff. This level suggests fluctuating involvement, characterized by alternation between cooperation, collaboration, and coordination of educational interventions, alongside tendencies toward withdrawal or reduced commitment.

At this level, communication is moderate: there is a willingness to exchange relevant information, but the depth, continuity, and promptness of dialogue are limited, and the effectiveness of interactions varies. Compliance with institutional rules and procedures is partial, with parents and teachers assuming certain responsibilities while postponing or only superficially fulfilling others, thereby undermining the coherence of their interactions.

Creativity manifests occasionally through initiatives and openness to original solutions; however, inconsistent support and a tendency to disengage constrain the full realization of innovative potential. In terms of coherence, actions are only partially aligned with partnership objectives, and the implementation of joint plans is incomplete, requiring frequent adjustments and resulting in an uneven pace of cooperation.

At the average level of functionality, cohesion is moderate: acceptance of collaboration and a degree of relational stability are evident; however, systematic involvement in group activities and sustained relational investment are not fully established, and episodes of hesitation or avoidance may occur. Consequently, effectiveness reflects only partial progress. Joint activities yield results in certain contexts, but their overall impact on children's holistic development remains moderate, underscoring the need for more consistent, coordinated, and structured involvement in order to fully achieve the partnership's objectives.

A high level of functionality - reported by 53.6% of parents and 73.5% of educators reflects mature and stable involvement, grounded in genuine cooperation, mutual trust, and a shared orientation toward addressing common problems of interest.

At this level, communication is continuous, bidirectional, and transparent, supported by a genuine commitment to equitable dialogue. Information exchange is timely, opinions are clearly articulated, and feedback is both received and constructively integrated, facilitating an efficient and needs-responsive flow of information for all beneficiaries.

Compliance is evidenced by full adherence to established norms, procedures, and responsibilities. Educational agents actively participate in decision-making processes and assume responsibility for their roles, thereby contributing to the stability, predictability, and reliability of cooperative efforts.

Creativity is consistently stimulated, as partners identify and capitalize on innovative solutions to encountered challenges and actively engage in meetings, workshops, seminars, roundtables, and similar activities, where relevant and authentic experiences are shared.

The coherence of actions is particularly strong: planning and implementation are strategically aligned with shared objectives, the pace of interventions is steady and logical, and activities are systematically monitored, ensuring the integration of all efforts into a functional, cohesive, and sustainable framework.

Partner cohesion is robust, characterized by relationships grounded in trust, mutual support, and a strong sense of belonging. Partners demonstrate solidarity, empathy, and openness, consistently working toward common goals.

In terms of efficiency, joint activities generate tangible and sustainable outcomes, effectively support the progress of direct beneficiaries, and maintain a stable, motivating, and conducive-to-optimal-development educational climate, reflecting the high performance of the partnership.

Finally, it is important to note that the data obtained in this study reflect the perceptions of educational agents regarding their own level of involvement in kindergarten-family cooperation. As such, a degree of subjectivity may be present, particularly among partners who have difficulty accurately assessing their own engagement. Additionally, participation in the study was voluntary, and educational practice suggests that individuals who are already committed to ensuring educational quality and supporting children's development are more likely to engage fully in such research. This may have influenced the composition of respondents. These considerations point to certain limitations of the study. Nevertheless, the findings provide valuable and conclusive insights into the functionality of the kindergarten-family partnership across its core components-communication, compliance, creativity, coherence, cohesion, and efficiency-offering a comprehensive perspective on the strengths and areas for development within this collaborative framework.

Optimizing the Educational Partnership Between the Educational Institution and the Family: Conditions and Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of interactions between partners, we propose that educational agents adhere to the *following conditions for optimizing the educational partnership*. These conditions are formulated from our own perspective (V. Mîslițchi) and aligned with the system of indicators for partnership functionality:

- Ensuring coherent, consistent, and constructive cooperation, supported by consensual and complementary relationships among partners.
- Promoting open, transparent, continuous, empathetic, and assertive communication among parents, educators, psychologists, special education teachers, support teachers, speech therapists, managers, and all educational stakeholders involved in supporting the holistic development of the partnership's beneficiaries.

- Designing, developing, and implementing educational partnership projects focused on addressing concrete problems of common interest through cooperation, communication, creativity, coherence, cohesion, efficiency, and compliance.
- Facilitating collaboration among educational agents through diverse formats – such as consultations, round tables, meetings, workshops, psychosocial training sessions, lectures, and councils – conducted in a coherent, responsible, and collaborative manner, with an emphasis on transparency, complementarity, equity, and alignment with shared objectives.
- Ensuring the systematic, coherent, cohesive, and high-quality implementation of educational activities oriented toward clearly defined and expected outcomes.
- Encouraging the full commitment of all partners to the effective, relevant, responsible, coordinated, and creative identification and implementation of joint educational interventions.
- Providing continuous, transparent, and coherent support for mutually agreed-upon feedback, along with prompt and adaptive responses to contextual changes.
- Promoting continuity, diversity, consistency, quality, and sustainability in educational interventions implemented collaboratively to address shared issues of interest.
- Ensuring the relevance of the partnership by flexibly responding to the needs, specific characteristics, and educational contexts of both direct and indirect beneficiaries.
- Strengthening the unity and synergy of expectations, requirements, decisions, bio-psychosocial-pedagogical interventions, and shared values among educational agents.
- Creating a cooperative environment that actively includes all stakeholders—children, parents, teachers, community members, and others—in decision-making and implementation processes, while recognizing the diversity of needs, perspectives, and resources across participant groups.
- Ensuring consistent and responsible adherence by all educational agents to the provisions of the Educational Partner’s Code of Ethics.
- Fostering sustainable collaboration grounded in equity, flexibility, resilience, respect for cultural diversity, and the encouragement of innovation in both decision-making processes and educational interventions.
- Clearly distributing tasks and responsibilities, while ensuring that all partners assume ownership of the achievement of common goals and the outcomes obtained.
- Encouraging each partner to acknowledge and assume the risks and potential failures inherent in partnership projects, which should be anticipated and responsibly managed.
- Promoting authentic appreciation of each educational partner by recognizing individual and collective contributions, strengthening the sense of belonging, and stimulating active and creative participation in joint decision-making and action processes.
- Conducting rigorous, consistent, and transparent monitoring of the educational partnership project’s progress in a collaborative and adaptive manner, in order to ensure its effectiveness, relevance, and long-term sustainability.

The processing and interpretation of the data attested in the study we conducted led to the formulation of the following *recommendations for parents* to optimize their partnership with the teaching staff:

- Be open and transparent in your communication with the teaching staff; express your thoughts, feelings, and concerns clearly and respectfully!
- Respond promptly to requests for information and relevant interventions to ensure the well-being of children and other educational partners!
- Discuss your child’s needs, interests, and preferences with educators!

- Share your experiences and evidence-based educational practices from home with teachers to ensure continuity in the educational institution!
- Organize and carry out planned activities responsibly and with dedication in partnership with the teaching staff!
- Demonstrate openness and empathy toward your partners' positions, opinions, or behaviors, especially when compelling arguments and evidence are presented!
- Collaborate with teachers to identify at least four applicable solutions for resolving challenging situations!
- Systematically reflect on past situations and activities and propose authentic solutions to improve partner interventions!
- Critically analyze actions taken within the partnership – such as support offered during difficult periods – to optimize child-parent-teacher relationships!
- Constructively address the outcomes achieved within the partnership with the aim of self-correction, avoiding personal attacks, labeling, blaming, or disrespecting partners!
- Respect and fulfill your obligations within the partnership consistently!

We propose the following *recommendations for the teaching staff* to enhance the effectiveness of the partnership with parents:

- Communicate with parents in an accessible manner, creating an open and continuous exchange of information about the child's progress, needs, and the partnership itself!
- Promote transparency and clarity regarding the organization, implementation, and opportunities for parental involvement in joint activities!
- Support parental engagement in the educational process to foster the creation of a cohesive educational community!
- Assist parents in supporting their child's learning at home, thereby strengthening the learning environment between the family and the educational institution!
- Encourage parents to express their opinions regarding the planning and organization of joint activities!
- Ensure the prompt resolution of problems arising within the partnership through cooperative action with parents, recognizing that proactive problem management maintains trust and motivation!
- Systematically guide parents in reflective activities, analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of actions taken within the partnership!
- Share educational experiences and best practices with parents to ensure continuity within the family environment!
- Recognize, highlight, and appreciate parents for their outstanding achievements and for the qualitative fulfillment of their obligations!
- Offer support to parents in overcoming challenges encountered in addressing problems of common interest!
- Encourage parents to identify original and practical solutions to situations and difficulties encountered in the educational process!
- Provide parents with opportunities to play an active role in decision-making processes!
- Involve parents in the continuous monitoring of activities and documented outcomes achieved during the implementation of the partnership!
- Conduct periodic joint evaluations with parents to monitor beneficiaries' progress and provide constructive feedback!

Conclusions

1. A functional educational partnership is shaped through open, transparent, and empathetic communication, active involvement of all stakeholders in educational and decision-making processes, and the strategic use of their potential in planning, implementing, and evaluating innovative and relevant actions. Its functionality is reinforced by collaborative goal setting, shared responsibility, constructive feedback, and inclusive practices that respond to cultural diversity and the evolving needs of beneficiaries and the community. Continuous monitoring, collaborative conflict resolution, adaptability to socio-educational transformations, and recognition of mutual contributions strengthen cohesion and ensure the partnership's sustainability, efficiency, and relevance.
2. A functional educational partnership integrates a set of defining characteristics that reflect a systemic and interactionist approach. It establishes interdependent connections and operations, consensual and cohesive relationships, and productive collaboration. This is materialized through the strategic use of partners' skills and resources, responsible cooperation, transparent communication, and participatory decision-making. Such processes stimulate adaptability, innovation, and efficiency in joint actions, thereby enhancing the sustainability and positive impact of educational interventions. In this way, a functional partnership emerges as a dynamic and inclusive framework where synergy, equity, and mutual recognition define the quality of relationships and the achievement of shared goals.
3. The study data revealed the presence of a low level of functionality in the kindergarten – family educational partnership, reported by 14% of parents and 2.10% of the teaching staff. This reflects minimal involvement and fragmented interactions among educational agents. Communication is predominantly superficial, occurring sporadically with incomplete information exchange. Compliance with institutional procedures is inconsistent, and willingness to engage in joint initiatives or innovative solutions is limited. Actions are implemented in a discontinuous and strategically incoherent manner. Relationships are fragile, marked by low trust and shared responsibility, and the impact of cooperation on children's progress is minimal. This indicates a partnership in its early or dysfunctional stage, where the potential of educational agents remains largely untapped.
4. The average level of functionality of the kindergarten-family educational partnership, reported by 32.4% of parents and 24.4% of the teaching staff, indicates fluctuating involvement characterized by alternating cooperation, compliance, collaboration, and occasional withdrawal. Communication occurs regularly, but the pace and consistency vary, and transmitted information is only partially complete. Adherence to rules and procedures is selective and inconsistent. Creative initiatives appear sporadically but lack consistent support. The coherence of actions is variable, with frequent adjustments to joint plans. Relationships between partners show partial stability, yet coordinated involvement and sustained investment in cooperation remain moderate. Consequently, the effectiveness of partnership activities is limited to certain contexts, producing fragmented results and failing to ensure the continuous progress necessary to achieve common goals.
5. The high level of functionality of the kindergarten-family educational partnership, reported by 53.6% of parents and 73.5% of teaching staff, is characterized by authentic cooperation, transparent communication, and clearly assumed responsibility. This level is supported by consistent action, continuous creativity, and strong cohesion. Stable, sustained engagement by all partners in addressing common problems ensures a significant positive impact on beneficiaries, fostering a stimulating, supportive, forward-looking, inclusive, innovative, transformative, and sustainable educational climate.

6. The reference framework of indicators for educational partnership functionality constitutes an integrated system composed of 25 defining indicators – adaptability, quality, coherence, cohesion, collaboration, complementarity, compliance, communication, cooperation, coordination, creativity, equity, efficiency, flexibility, inclusion, innovation, interculturality, relevance, responsibility, resilience, synergy, sustainability, transparency, and valorization. These indicators are essential for comprehensive evaluation and for optimizing the complex Interactions between families and educational institutions.

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