



A framework for school-family collaboration integrating some relevant factors and processes

Rollande Deslandes

Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières - Canadá

ABSTRACT

Collaboration between the school and the family is increasingly privileged as one of the means to promote educational success and perseverance. This is based among other things on a sharing of responsibilities between parents and teachers. Although knowledge has evolved in relation to collaborative school-family relationships, it has far from developed in all Québec schools. The division of responsibilities appears more rhetorical than practical. More work must be done. The objectives of this paper are to (1) conduct an overview of parental involvement and school-family collaboration literature under the angles of concept definitions and influential factors; and drawing on Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*'s models (1997, 2010), and 2) to propose an integrative model of factors and processes linked to parental involvement and school-family collaboration. Given that the challenges facing teachers appear to have increased exponentially and that parents' conditions for exercising their role have become more complex, it appears to be timely to have parents and teachers sitting together and share their vision in order to develop a common understanding and a collective vision of the current situation regarding school-family collaboration. The proposed integrative framework is intended to provide a tool to the main actors eager to engage in a reflective activity.

Keywords: Integrative framework, school-family collaboration, parental involvement, factors, processes.

Un marco para la colaboración escuela-familia integrando algunos factores y procesos relevantes

RESUMEN

La colaboración entre la escuela y la familia es cada vez más necesaria para promover el éxito y la perseverancia educativa. Esto se basa, entre otras cosas, en compartir responsabilidades entre padres y maestros. Aunque el bagaje de conocimiento sobre las relaciones colaborativas entre la escuela y la familia ha incrementado, está lejos aún de haberse desarrollado en todas las escuelas de Quebec. La asunción de responsabilidades compartidas a este respecto parece más retórica que práctica. Se debe seguir trabajando más en esta temática. Los objetivos de este documento son (1) revisar la literatura sobre la implicación educativa de las familias y sobre la colaboración entre los centros y las familias, considerando definiciones conceptuales y factores que influyen en ella, con especial referencia al modelo de Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (1997, 2010), y 2) proponer un modelo integrador de factores y procesos relevantes relacionados con dicha implicación y colaboración. Dado que los desafíos que afrontan los profesores parecen haber aumentado de manera exponencial y que las condiciones de los padres para ejercer su función se han vuelto más complejas, parece oportuno que los padres y los profesores se comuniquen para compartir su visión sobre esta temática, para entenderse mutuamente y para llegar a una visión colectiva de cómo es la situación actual sobre la colaboración escuela-familia. El marco integrador propuesto tiene como objetivo proporcionar una herramienta a los principales implicados para que puedan reflexionar sobre esta temática.

Palabras Clave: Marco integrador, colaboración escuela-familia, participación de los padres, factores, procesos.

1. Introduction and problem statement

For over several decades in Québec, Canada, there has been a political will to give parents more importance in the school system, first of all by the adoption, in 1997 of Bill 180 related to the role of parents within school boards; then by the establishment or the adoption, in 2002, of Law 124 through which parents, among others, are invited to participate in the development, implementation and

periodic evaluation of the educational project (Deslandes, 2006a). The opening of the school to families is also a bottom line of the Québec Education Program (MEO, 2001). In addition to this legal anchorage, there is also the publication of ministerial documents calling for greater partnership (2009a). Recently, this priority has been reiterated by the Québec Minister of Education in one of his policy orientations aiming to improve students' educational achievement, to enhance parental involvement and support the

relationship between the families and the educational milieu (June, 2017). The logic underlying this shared responsibility with not only the family, but also the community is linked to the fact that the school alone cannot meet all the educational needs of young people given the complexity of today society (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2001; Epstein, 2011; Jeynes, 2005).

Although knowledge has evolved in relation to collaborative school-family relationships, it has far from developed in all Québec schools (Dumoulin, Thériault, Duval & Tremblay, 2013). Changes in mentality, attitudes and behaviors are slow in coming (Deslandes, 2006b). It should be noted that this philosophy of shared responsibility is accompanied by a call for a coherence of actions between the school and the family, or even a school-family continuity (MELS, 2009) which can be facilitated by a common understanding of the responsibilities to be shared between parents and teachers (Epstein & Associates, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey, Ice & Whitaker, 2010).

In this paper, we will first conduct a brief review of literature on parental involvement and school-family relationships. Then, after the presentation of Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*'s models (2005, 2010), we will propose a conceptual framework that tries at least in part to illustrate the numerous factors and processes that intervene and influence each other in such a collective enterprise aiming at developing efficacious and collaborative school-family relations. Afterwards, we will conduct the modelling of the dynamic relationships between the factors and the processes and look for the potential applicability of the extended framework that is meant to be more integrative.

2. Overview of Parental Involvement and School-Family Collaboration Literature

Definition, benefits and influential factors associated with parental involvement

The concept of parental involvement in schooling is multidimensional. Based on some of our studies and from a youth perspective, parental involvement includes mainly emotional and instrumental support, parent-adolescent interactions and communication (Deslandes, 1996). According to some parents, there are two dimensions to parental involvement in schooling: 1) at home (supervision, monitoring of schoolwork) and 2) at school (return of telephone calls; signed agenda or school work, attendance at meetings and volunteering) (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Sheldon, 2002). Parent involvement at home has direct impacts on educational outcomes. This involvement can be translated into behaviors such as guiding, discussing, helping, encouraging, teaching children to develop positive attitudes and pro-school behaviors. Parent involvement at school, either in the form of volunteering, attending workshops, etc., has indirect impacts on student learning. For instance, parents are then more likely to gain knowledge on how to help their child in learning activities at home, and to become more able to develop a constructive relationship with the teachers (Deslandes, 2010; Epstein, 2011; Epstein & Associates, 2009, 2019). Indeed, there is a huge amount of studies and meta-analyses in the educational literature have highlighted the benefits associated with parent involvement. Parental involvement in schooling is considered both a key factor in improving student achievement and an avenue for narrowing the gap in student achievement from high and low SES. Other benefits range from increased self-esteem to greater motivation to learn, better social skills and self-regulation, and reduced behavioral difficulties (Adams & Ryan, 2000; Changkakoti & Akkari, 2008; Deslandes, 2009; Fan & Chen, 2001; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005,

2007; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2001; Kreider, Cape Kennedy & Weiss, 2007; Pourtois, Desmet & Lahaye, 2008).

Over the years, research and literature reviews have also identified factors that influence the amount of parental involvement, including the characteristics of parents and families (education level, family size and structure, ethnicity), the characteristics of children (age, academic performance, receptivity to the family influence) and the characteristics and practices of teachers and schools (values, training) (Deslandes & Cloutier, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005; Wong, 2015). These can be risk or protective factors. For example, families' non traditional structure, low SES, and mothers' low educational level and families having children with learning difficulties are perceived by some teachers as risk factors, meaning that they could hinder parental involvement and school-family collaboration (Deslandes & Rivard, 2011; Rodrigo, Martínez-González & Rodríguez-Ruiz, 2018). On the other hand, teachers' training on how to work with parents can be viewed as a protective factor if afterwards, they use efficacious strategies to promote parental involvement (Deslandes, Fournier & Morin, 2008). Obviously, parental involvement fosters school-family collaboration and vice versa.

Definition and influential factors associated with school-family collaboration

In line with Christenson & Sheridan (2001), we define collaboration between school and family as both an attitude and an activity in which student interest is at the center of concern. School-family collaboration refers to family responsibilities and the school's role in updating parents' participation in school monitoring. When there is collaboration, teachers also report advantages over themselves, such as a greater appreciation of their work and a greater complicity with parents as well as school climate improvement (Epstein, 2011; Epstein & Associates 2009, 2019; Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2010). In fact, scientific literature on effective schools suggests improving school-family relationships to optimize students' academic achievement (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). Positive and constructive school-family relationships thus act as mechanisms that can promote the educational success.

This collaboration develops in the presence of shared responsibilities, mutual trust and open communication between the partners. In a collaborative school-family relationship perspective, Christenson & Sheridan (2001) recommend focusing on four aspects: 1) an approach that places importance on the roles of key actors, and 2) positive attitudes toward change. 3) a welcoming and respectful atmosphere and 4) actions that are actualized by facilitating activities (Deslandes, 2010). For school-family relationships to be collaborative, they must respond to the information, support and training needs of families as well as take into account their socioeconomic and social differences and their diversity (Christenson 2003; Grant & Ray 2013; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies 2007; Kanoute & Lafortune, 2011; McAndrew, Milot & Triki-Yamani, 2010; Wong, 2015).

Not everything is done by magic, which is why it is accepted that school-based practices associated to school-family collaboration facilitate parent involvement in schooling (Epstein, 2011; Epstein & Associates, 2019; Henderson *et al.*, 2007; Simon, 2004). Teachers and school administrators are key players in this process of promoting school-family collaboration. To this end, the school can initiate communication activities in the form of personalized and sustained contacts aimed at creating a welcoming atmosphere and promoting exchanges on learning and youth development such as person-to-person interactions, when submitting a newsletter or at other times and using means

such as notices, calls, mailings, e-mails, newspaper articles or media clips. It can also include activity programs to support and inform parents, such as conferences, workshops and other training related to school functioning, curriculum content or the development of knowledge and skills to better support his child in his learning (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). These practices also encourage invitations to attend school as volunteers or to raise funds, or to become members of the school board or to attend children's shows (Epstein, 2011; Larivée, 2011).

In the next section, we will first present Hoover-Dempsey et al.'s models (2005, 2010) of the Parental Involvement Process which are the cornerstone of our suggested framework. Then, we'll pursue the following objectives: (1) to propose an extended version of Hoover-Dempsey et al.'s models (2005, 2010) that includes the parents' and the school system's motivational processes as well as the personal, family and teacher characteristics involved in parental involvement and school-family collaboration, and (2) to conduct the modeling of the interactions between the factors and the processes in order to demonstrate the potential of this extended framework in contributing to the development of collaboration and this, in a perspective of youngsters' greater educational success. Hopefully, the present approach will contribute to the research field and to practitioners insofar as it clarifies the roles of the two groups of key actors and suggests some intervention avenues.

3. Theoretical Models

Model of the parental involvement process

The first Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model (1995, 1997) of the parental involvement process has experienced some changes from its original configuration. Based in part on the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model (1986) and psychological and sociological findings, the model supports, in its revised version (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010) and at its first level, that parents participate in their students' learning based on: 1) personal motivators (*understanding of their parental role, parents' self-efficacy*); 2) parents' perceptions of contextual invitations to involvement (*from the school, the teachers and the students*), and 3) the school's responsiveness to the parents' life context variables (*taking into account parents' knowledge, skills, available time and energy, and family culture*). This last component is a remarkable addition to the 1995 original model and means that the school must be aware of the characteristics and daily realities of families and ensure that the means or events planned to support the work of parents with their children are in tune with their knowledge and their ways of doing things (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Revised Model of the Parental Involvement Process

Categories of Motivators
<i>Personal Motivators</i>
Role construction for involvement
Parental efficacy for helping the student
<i>Contextual Motivators</i>
General school invitations
Specific teacher invitations
Specific student invitations
<i>Responsiveness of the school in relation to the elements of parents' life context</i>
Knowledge and skills
Time and energy
Family culture

Based on:
Hoover-Dempsey, Ice & Whitaker, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005

Model of the school promotion of the parental involvement process

Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2010) have more recently suggested in a similar fashion a model of promoting parental involvement process that applies to teachers and school staff. The model postulates that teachers promote parental involvement if they understand that this function is part of their professional responsibilities, that it, if it corresponds to what is expected of them (*understanding their role*), that they are capable of to do it (*feeling of self-efficacy*) and, that it will bear fruit (*personal motivators*). They will be more likely to promote parental involvement if they perceive that the collaboration with parents is a school priority, that it represents one of the parameters considered in the school hiring policies, in the evaluation of the teachers' practices and that training sessions are planned for in-service teachers (*contextual motivators*). This tendency will be maintained if the school administration supports them and shows a clear commitment in this direction and that the school-family collaboration becomes an integral part of the habits and customs of the school (*responsiveness of the school*) (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Simon 2004).

Table 2.
Model of the Promotion of the Parental Involvement Process by the School System Members

Categories of Motivators
<i>Personal Motivators</i>
Role construction: understanding of their professional responsibilities in relationship with families
Self-efficacy : teachers' sense of competence to work collaboratively with families
<i>Contextual Motivators</i>
Invitations from the school system, explicit requests and support being offered
Invitations from school administrators
<i>Responsiveness of the school in relation to the elements of parents' life context</i>
Knowledge and skills
Time and energy
School culture

Based on: Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010

In sum, the reviewed factors of influence and the two above models attempt to explain in their own way certain aspects of school-family collaboration. It seems highly relevant to gather together those factors and processes in order to illustrate the complexity of school-family relationships and to offer a tool to stakeholders eager to undertake a collective reflection on this issue.

4. Integrative model of factors and processes linked to parental involvement and school-family collaboration

To depict and model the proposed integrative framework, we build upon the models described previously to which we add the knowledge from the reviewed literature including our own works. A number of findings were put into light. For example, we now know that it is important to consider the two modes of parental involvement, at home and at school. Personal and risk or protective factors associated with parental involvement and school practices related to school-family collaboration were identified. Others were further explored and interactions between some factors and processes were highlighted such as the interactions between socioeconomic status, parental involvement and teachers' practices to foster involvement.

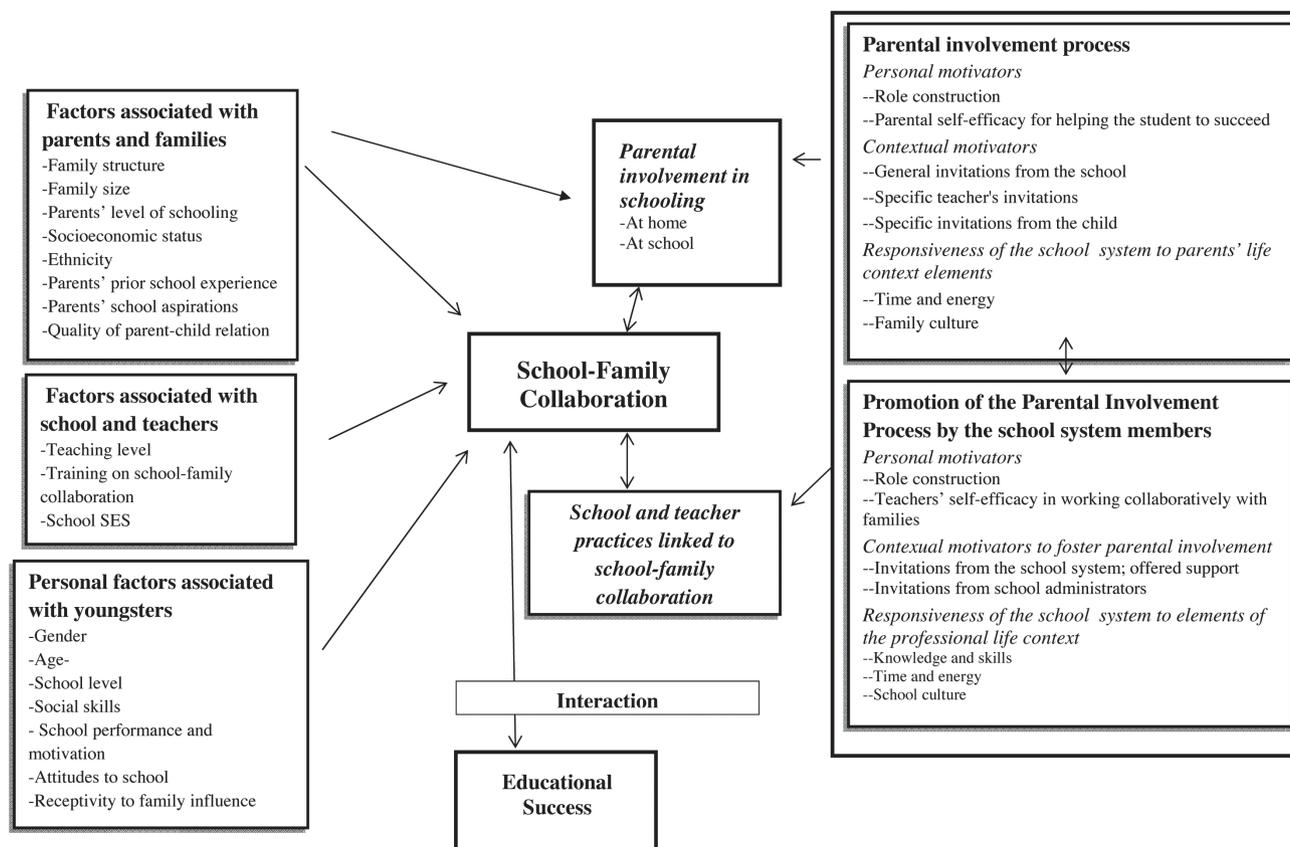


Figure 1. Integrative Model of the factors and processes linked to parental involvement and school-family collaboration
(Based on Hoover-Dempsey et al's work, 2010)

In this modeling process, it would be presumptuous to claim an exhaustive list of factors and processes. The model should not be seen as definitive, but as an evolving, *in-progress*, a model that if desired, can provide a backdrop for applied work and research on school-family collaboration. In the diagram, the bidirectionality of the arrows show interactions between factors and process components (Figure 1). On the left are the categories of factors, namely those associated with families and school and the personal factors associated with youngsters. To the right of the model are the two process groups for parental involvement at home and at school and teacher and school promotion of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010). Depending on their nature, the factors shown on the left of the diagram will facilitate or hinder the involvement of parents and of teachers in developing school-family collaboration. In this line of thought, the literature cited earlier has revealed direct associations between some of these factors (age and educational level of the child, parents' schooling, previous school experience and teacher training related to working with parents), parental participation in school monitoring and promotion by teachers. For their part, the two groups of processes not only influence each other, but they also lead to specific practices of parental participation and promotion of it by the school and teachers. When positive and effective, these practices that emanate from the home and the school environment lead to informative, collaborative school-family relationships that are built on trust and mutual respect. It is in this context that the impact on youngsters' educational success is optimal (Christenson 2003; Christenson & Sheridan 2001; Epstein & Associates, 2009, 2019).

In order to read adequately the model, it becomes relevant to focus on some facilitators and obstacles to school-family collaboration from studies we have conducted and to take into account the nature of the relationships between the different elements interacting in the model. Factors (left) have a direct and indirect influence on parental involvement in schooling, for example, by relating to the beliefs and ideas that parents have about their role (understanding the role), their sense of competence and their perception of invitations to participate (family processes). For instance, in the specific context of homework, study findings (Deslandes et al., 2008) show that parents from non-traditional families with low level of schooling (*family factors*) tend to feel less competent to accompany their child (*family processes*) and therefore are less inclined to participate in his/her schooling and less likely to collaborate with the school. This dynamic illustrates hindering conditions unless teachers and schools (*school processes*) put in place practices aimed at empowering parents and at increasing the parents' sense of competence, and consequently their involvement and improved school-family relationships. In such a dynamic, the school environment contributes to reduce the deleterious effects of the risk factors.

In addition, the youngsters' low performance (*a personal factor associated with the student*) that could appear as an obstacle to parental involvement in schooling, may constitute a facilitator as an implicit invitation to parents to supervise their work more closely (*family processes*) or to increase communication with the school and teachers (Pomerantz, Grolnick & Price, 2005). Through a welcoming climate, adequate communication skills and consideration of the knowledge, skills and availability

of parents (*school processes*), teachers can also communicate invitations to parents thus contributing to collaborative school-family relationships. In the same vein, some studies report that when parents perceive that they are welcomed (*warm and caring team members*) and that the teachers and the school administrators show concerns, respect and relate well with their child, parents participate more in school-based or home-based activities, thus strengthening the relationships between school and families (Christenson 2003; Deslandes, Fournier & Rousseau, 2005; Epstein, 2011; Griffith, 1998; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski & Apostolaris, 1997).

In the same line of thought, teachers who have previous positive experiences and specific training in school-family collaboration (*school factors*) tend to recognize the importance of their professional responsibilities in relation to working with parents, to manifest a high sense of competence (*school processes*) and therefore, to promote school-family collaboration practices (Deslandes, 2007; Paratte et al., 2008). However, these facilitators may be neutralized by a lack of support from the school administrators or by a school culture and organization that leaves little room for work with parents, or even for school-family collaboration (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010). The modeling of the interactions between the factors and processes of parental involvement and school-family collaboration highlights the importance for parents and teachers to be aware of their responsibilities so that they can move from intention to action. In addition, it puts into evidence the role of the school and teachers in this dynamic of interactions in collaborative school-family relationships. However, there is reason to question the means currently available in some schools to guide teachers and parents in the exercise of their respective roles.

5. Conclusion

The proposed integrative model has made it particularly enlightening in terms of challenges and facilitating conditions as well as processes at work in the development of collaborative school-family relationships to enhance students' success. It suggests elements of justification with respect to the observed disparities in parental involvement and in school-family collaboration in different educational institutions. It is important to note the crucial role of the parents and of the school system members in this dynamic interplay. Comments brought to our attention, either by the media (Gervais, 2013), or by participant teachers in prior studies, mention expectations from parents, sometimes excessive, which suggest a misunderstanding of their own responsibilities (Deslandes et al., 2015). Low SES parents, with low education level, parents who are poorly informed about school functioning, those who don't take time to sign their child's agenda, are only a few of unflattering comments reported by exasperated teachers. Others add the classic and recurring following statement: *The parents we want to see are not the ones who come to the report card night*. The above comments reflect some family characteristics and some elements of the parental involvement process depicted in the proposed integrative model. In a similar fashion, some teachers deplore a lack of support from the school administration regarding the promotion of parental involvement in schooling. They also feel that school-family collaboration has become too difficult, too heavy and that it takes too much time (Deslandes et al., 2015). Once more, those factors and processes can be traced in the proposed integrative framework. Obviously, there has not been a fundamental transformation in the sharing of responsibilities over the past 20 years. The division of responsibilities appears more rhetorical than practical. Given that the challenges facing teachers appear to have increased importantly and that parents' conditions for exercising

their role have become more entangled, it appears to be timely to have parents and teachers sitting together and share their vision in order to develop a common understanding and a collective vision of the current situation regarding school-family collaboration. As in other countries (e.g., Spain), some contradictions seem to still prevail (Vigo & Dieste, 2017). Further clarification is needed. The current massive renewal of the school system members and the arrival of new students and new parents make this activity even more relevant. The proposed integrative framework is intended to provide a useful tool to parents and school staff members eager to engage in a reflective activity aiming at improving school-family collaboration. Despite its limitations mainly in terms of the absence of the student voices, the proposed framework could also be utilized as a foundation for research works aiming at a better understanding of the factors and processes at play in the development and improvement of a school-family collaboration.

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