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Class Management Focussing on Family-School Collaboration – Research Findings

Adriana Poliaková ^{a,*}, Vladimíra Zemančíková ^a, Eva Tóblová ^a, Mária Pisonová ^b

^a Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

^b Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra, Slovak Republic

Abstract

The authors present partial research results monitoring the educational needs of class teachers at the secondary level (ISCED 2; ISCED 3) of education in Slovakia. Research aims to develop tools to improve the readiness of future lower secondary and upper secondary school teachers for their complex work as class teachers. The research sub-objective is to find out whether there are differences in the educational needs of the class teachers in the area of collaboration with the student's family. Since no standardised research instrument had been developed that specified the needs of class teachers in the past, we applied a questionnaire of our own design, "Educational Needs of Class Teachers", to the data collection. The method of statistical inference was the Mann-Whitney U-test. The sample consisted of lower and upper secondary teachers performing the specialised activity of class teachers (n = 266). Conclusions: Teachers with longer experience as class teachers subjectively perceive a lower educational need in selected collaboration indicators with the student's family than teachers with shorter experience as class teachers. Both lower secondary school teachers and vocational school teachers perceive a higher educational need in selected collaboration indicators with the family compared to grammar school teachers.

Keywords: educational needs, class teacher, family, collaboration, professional training, ISCED 2, ISCED3, verification of research instruments.

1. Introduction

Effective collaboration between school and family is seen as the basis for quality and satisfaction in education and training. The effectiveness of education and training at school is based in many ways on and related to the quality of collaboration between school teachers and student's parents. The limits of this collaboration are mutual and are mainly influenced by the willingness to collaborate. There is still a significant gap between Slovakia and other countries in

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: adriana.poliakova@uniba.sk (A. Poliaková), zemancikova@fedu.uniba.sk (V. Zemančíková), toblova@fedu.uniba.sk (E. Tóblová), mpisonova@ukf.sk (M. Pisonová)

this area. Unlike the United States, which is actively researching the topic of school-family partnerships, they also have a lot more research available. There are family-school collaboration programmes in use that are actively applied in practise, from which we can say that they have a positive impact. In Slovakia, the issue of school-family partnership is in the development stage. Furthermore, the amount of literature and preparation necessary for future teachers to communicate and collaborate with parents of students absent (Frýdková, 2010). The national education policy has always placed a high priority on teacher education (Oňušková, PISOŇOVÁ, 2022). Furthermore, the quality of professional preparation for teachers remains a prominent topic in discussions regarding changes in content in undergraduate teacher preparation programmes at universities. According to Hermochová (2012), we consider that the current state of undergraduate teacher preparation is inextricably affected by the fact that class teacher competencies are not adequately covered in university curricula as a standard practise in the faculty of education. Although, in some faculties, these forms of preparation are already being implemented, in the belief that teachers in the role of class teachers will be competent enough to influence the personal development of their students and their relationships with each other, as well as prepare them not only professionally, but also humanly (Hermochová, 2012).

The aim of the KEGA project 066UK-4/2021, of which the research tool is presented here, is to contribute to content changes in the university education of teachers in the field of classroom management. It seeks to contribute to the development of professional key competencies of the class teacher in the area of classroom management and organisation, coordination of the classroom team, educational activities of the class teacher, in the area of collaboration of the class teacher with legal representatives of students, school management, other pedagogical and professional staff of the school, or other school partners, also in the area of pedagogical diagnostics and preventive activities of the class teacher. In addition to the research outputs, the Web portal will also feature a publication, a university textbook, for classroom management in electronic format, based on the results of the applied research and focussing on the activities of the class teacher, which are absent in our current educational system.

2. Theoretical background

The roles of the teacher and the class teacher overlap in many ways; however, they are not identical. The position of a class teacher carries several specific tasks and expectations associated with it. According to the Slovak legislation, teachers can perform several specialised activities (§ 36, Law n. 138/2019), and the most widespread specialised activity is that of a class teacher, which in Slovakia (for illustration) was performed by 34.2 % of teachers in 2016 (Rehúš, 2017). Instruction of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic no. 39/2017 issued professional standards for pedagogical and professional staff, which also includes the professional standards of class teachers. The class teacher standard, among other things, names activities for which the class teacher as a specialist is responsible, and it is at the same time the basis for the development of specialisation training programmes. It is also the basis for the content of the undergraduate preparation of students in teacher education programmes.

However, valuable information can also be gleaned from teacher research in general that is more closely tied to the position of the class teacher, as will be discussed in the following. Novice teachers, as well as novice class teachers, encounter many difficulties at the beginning of their practise and often perceive that their previous pre-service preparation is insufficient (Johnson et al., 2014; Jones, 2006). Teachers often judge pre-service preparation as too 'theoretical', even though pedagogical practise is also an important part of it and enables prospective teachers to apply the knowledge gained from theoretical training to practise (Širotová, Michvocíková, 2019). In earlier research on novice Czech teachers (n = 141), Šimoník (1994) reports that the beginning of a teacher's career is often accompanied by disappointment from previous faculty preparation, which is "saturated" with theory, and novice teachers perceived the main shortcomings of pre-service preparation in the areas where they expend most of their effort; these areas included (among others) individual conversations with parents of students and conduct parent-teacher meetings. Similarly, Havlik's research (2002) on novice Czech teachers (n = 315) revealed the perspectives of teacher graduates on how they were prepared for their profession by faculty. Young teachers retrospectively gave specific examples of what was lacking in the content of their preparation, again citing communication and collaboration with parents as one of the areas absent from their undergraduate preparation. The lack of preparedness of pre-service teachers has also

been confirmed by research conducted in Slovakia, where, for instance, Valkovičová (2008), in her research on pre-service teachers' perceptions (n = 17), pointed out that although pre-service teachers perceived their preparedness in the field as sufficient, they reported the need to improve their skills in solving relational problems, not only at the level of the teacher-student relationship but also at the level of the teacher-parent relationship. More recent international Czechoslovak research on the induction of novice teachers (Vitečková, Gaďušová, 2015; Záhorec et al., 2023) came to similar conclusions, aiming to understand the needs of novice teachers, including reflexion on the experiences and challenges that teachers face right from the beginning of their practise. One of the research questions investigates how novice teachers in Slovak (n = 132) and Czech schools (n = 148) evaluate their pre-service training in relation to their current teaching practise. In both countries, a lack of preparedness was identified in the area of communication with parents (among others).

Research that focusses more narrowly on the class teacher is rather marginal, either in the domestic or foreign literature. In the Czech environment, Krátka (2007) has carried out research as part of her dissertation. One of her research questions was how class teachers perceived the difficulty of their profession. Among the areas named by class teachers was also collaboration with parents (Krátka et al., 2020). Omerdić, and Riđić (2017) claim that today everyone talks about a partnership between teachers and parents. Partnership relationships between teachers and parents mean that the child is at the centre of every activity they do. The research of Bacúšan Nevoľna (2023) confirmed the above, Slovak teachers (n = 290) consider this partnership necessary to strengthen the area of class teacher preparation not only for working with students during class lessons but also for working with parents. As Epstein (1992, p. 1141 in Symeou, 2006) argues, even the most ardent proponents of initiatives to involve families in schooling admit that the benefits will only be realised when families are aware, informed, encouraged, and involved. According to studies (Viktorová, 2020; Pohnětalová, 2015; Urbanovská, 2017 and others), teacher-parent communication is a significant source of stress and teacher burden. Teachers perceive working with under-cooperative or overly critical parents as challenging (Horká, 2022).

Another study shows that parental involvement in school life is rarely conscious and is rather involuntary. Parental interest in their child's progress in school appears to be the primary factor in their involvement. The degree of interest shown is determined by two very important indicators: the level of education of parents, which seems to have a considerable influence on the mode of collaboration and their standard of living (Omerdić, Riđić, 2017).

The lack of parental collaboration with the school was identified as one of the indicators of school risk behaviour in the investigation of child and young person risk behaviour, based on the results of a depistage questionnaire completed by class teachers in selected primary schools (n = 1509) (Smíková et al., 2018). Likewise, communication with parents and, students' problem behaviours are also among the significant sources of teachers' professional burden. Fazel et al. (2014) in this context described the so-called burnout cascade, where difficulties in managing student behaviour negatively affect the relationships between teachers and parents and the classroom environment, gradually damaging the mental health of both teachers and students. It appears from previous research that one of the key areas for which class teachers are underprepared and needs to be strengthened is the collaboration with parents (Šimoník, 1994; Lasky, 2000; Keyes, 2010; Havlík, 2002; Frýdková, 2013; Vitečková, Gaďušová, 2015; Martanová, Konůpková, 2019; Bacúšan Nevoľná, 2023). Among teachers, the class teacher is the one who is in most personal contact with parents. Furthermore, Martanova and Konůpková (2019), based on the results of their study, recommend including in the teacher training the teacher's communication with adults, especially communication in emotionally difficult situations, or preparation for class teaching (where, according to the authors, the class teacher solves communication difficulties the most).

3. Methodology

The sub-objective of the research was to find out and compare whether there are differences in the educational needs of class teachers in the area of collaboration with the student's family. The educational needs of the class teachers in the subject area were compared with respect to the length of experience of the class teacher and the type of school in which he/she works as a class teacher.

Research questions and hypotheses

Are there differences in the educational needs of class teachers in the area of collaboration with the student's family due to the length of experience as a class teacher?

Are there differences in the educational needs of class teachers in the area of collaboration with the student's family due to the type of school in which the class teacher works?

Hypothesis 1: Class teachers differ in their perceived educational needs for collaboration with the student's family due to the length of experience as a class teacher.

Hypothesis 2: Class teachers differ in their perceived educational needs for collaboration with the student's family based on the type of school in which they work.

Research method

A self-designed questionnaire titled "Educational Needs of Class Teachers" was applied as the data collection method.

The questionnaire consisted of scaled (5-point Likert scale), closed, semi-closed, and open-ended questions. The overall validity and reliability of the questionnaire was verified through triangulation of research methods. As it was a non-standardised instrument, it was validated for its reliability in pilot tests (2022). The overall reliability was measured through the Cronbach alpha, the standardised reliability coefficient, and the correlation coefficient.

$$a = (k/(k-1)) * [1 - S(\text{si}^2)/\text{ssum}^2]$$

In this formula, the si^2 's denote the variances for the k individual items; ssum^2 denotes the variance for the sum of all items.

The measurement findings indicated a high internal consistency of the questionnaire in question and ensured a reliable data collection from the research of Záhorec, Poliaková, and Zemančíková (2023). Data processing methods: statistical description and inference processed through a statistical computing programme. Taking into account the distribution of data, a nonparametric statistical test, the Mann and Whitney U-test, was chosen to test the hypotheses.

The semi-closed and open-ended questionnaire items in the research were complementary in relation to the scaled items. They will be the subject of further qualitative analyses of the research results. The overall validity of the research instrument used was verified through pilot testing. Subsequently, content validity was ascertained through expert judgment by 3 independent experts.

Research sample

The sample consisted of $n = 26^1$ lower and upper secondary teachers performing the specialised activity of a class teacher according to the legislative provision of Section 37(2) of Act no.138/2019 Coll. on pedagogical and professional staff.

Random selection was applied using the RAND random number function.

The administration method was electronic and the principals of the drawn schools were contacted during the distribution of the questionnaire. The number of schools contacted was distributed proportionally to each region of Slovakia.

Of the total of the respondents, 232 (87.2 %) were female and 34 (12.8 %) were male, of which lower secondary teachers (lower secondary schools and lower secondary level of grammar schools) accounted for $n = 113$ (42.5 %) respondents and upper secondary teachers (upper level of grammar schools of 8 years, 4-year of grammar schools and high schools...) accounted for $n = 153$ (57.5 %) respondents.

The average age of the respondent was 45 years.

Regarding the length of experience as a class teacher, teachers with extensive experience as a class teacher (15 years or more) participated in the research in the largest number: $n=107$ and, conversely, the least number of novice class teachers (up to 2 years of experience in class teaching experience): $n=28$; then class teachers with 3-5 ($n = 40$), 6-10 ($n = 54$), and 11-15 (37).

4. Statistical analysis

Hypothesis 1: Class teachers differ in their perceived educational needs for collaboration with the student's family due to the length of experience as a class teacher.

The selected items of the questionnaire "Educational Needs of Class Teachers" were used as an indicator of perceived educational needs in the area of collaboration between the class teacher

¹ In the analysis of the selected sub-outcomes, the number of respondents was lower because we had to exclude them due to incomplete responses. For instance, for the hypothesis in relation to length of experience, we worked with a total number of respondents of $n = 251$.

and the student's family, namely the subjectively perceived need for further education in the areas of: “new approaches to school-family collaboration”; “collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes” (uncooperative, hyper-protective, overly involved, etc.); “collaboration with parents of students with poor school performance, problematic behaviour, students with special educational needs” and “written communication with parents”.

The subjectively perceived educational need in each area was determined by the class teachers on a 5-point scale. The higher the value, the more urgent the perceived educational need.

Description

We first briefly delineate the central tendency measures of indicators of subjectively perceived educational needs of class teachers (CT) in the area of family collaboration that are valid for the entire sample. Starting from a Likert scale (1 – no; 2 – rather no; 3 – neither yes, nor no; 4 – rather yes; 5 – yes), teachers expressed the degree of subjectively perceived educational need in the area of collaboration with the family in the following areas: “new approaches to school-family collaboration”; “collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes”; “collaboration with parents of students with poor school performance, problematic behaviour, SEN” and “written communication with parents”. Among the four indicators of perceived educational need in the area of family collaboration, the most frequent option (Mod) was “rather yes” (4). The values of the median (Med), the mode (Mod), and the arithmetic mean (MR) reflect that on average teachers perceive their further education in the studied indicators of collaboration with the student's family to be mostly necessary. According to the MR (mean) values, we conclude that the most significant educational needs are perceived by class teachers in the area of “collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes” (mean = 3.823) and “collaboration with parents of students with poor achievement, problematic behaviour or with SEN” (mean = 3.887). The perceived need for additional training in “new approaches to collaborating with families” was on average slightly lower (mean = 3.504) and additional training in “written communication with parents” scored the lowest mean (mean = 3.086), indicating a subjectively lower perceived need for further training in written communication with parents on average.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the indicators of the educational need of CT in the area of family collaboration

An indicator of educational need is “collaboration with the family”	N	Mod	Med	MR	SD
Collaboration with parents with a “problematic” attitude	266	4	4	3,823	1,147
Collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, SEN	266	4	4	3,887	1,117
New approaches to family collaboration	266	4	4	3,504	1,173
Written communication with parents	266	4	3	3,086	1,296

In the next step, regarding hypothesis 1, we compare measures of central tendency (MR, Med., Mod.) of indicators of perceived educational needs in the area of collaboration with the family among teachers with different lengths of experience as class teachers. Comparing mean values (MR) concerning the length of class teacher experience, in all four measured indicators, teachers with longer classroom experience, i.e., 11-15 years and more than 15 years, show on average lower values of subjectively perceived learning needs in the area of collaboration with the student's family.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the indicators of the educational need of the CT in the area of collaboration with the family in relation to the length of experience of the CT

	LENGTH OF PRACTISE	N	Med	MR	Mod	SD
Collaboration with parents with a “problematic” attitude	0-2	25	4.000	4.080	5.000	1.115
	3-5	38	4.000	4.000	5.000	1.185
	6-10	50	4.000	4.080	4.000	0.853

	11-15	35	4.000	3.686	4.000	1.157
	more than 15	103	4.000	3.621	4.000	1.181
Collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, SEN	0-2	25	4.000	4.000	4.000	1.080
	3-5	38	5.000	4.184	5.000	1.111
	6-10	50	4.000	4.220	4.000	0.790
	11-15	35	4.000	3.800	4.000	1.079
	more than 15	103	4.000	3.641	4.000	1.187
	New approaches to family collaboration	0-2	25	4.000	3.560	4.000
3-5		38	4.000	3.737	4.000	1.201
6-10		50	4.000	3.640	4.000	1.064
11-15		35	4.000	3.229	4.000	1.285
more than 15		103	4.000	3.437	4.000	1.126
Written communication with parents	0-2	25	3.000	3.280	4.000	1.370
	3-5	38	3.000	3.184	4.000	1.249
	6-10	50	4.000	3.360	4.000	1.208
	11-15	35	3.000	2.914	4.000	1.292
	more than 15	103	3.000	2.932	3.000	1.308

Inference

The distribution of the research population by experience is uneven. We tested the proportions using the Multinomial Test (tested against the expected proportions H_0 (a)). This distribution of the proportions of the research population is significant.

Multinomial Test

$$\frac{\chi^2}{dfp}$$

$$H_0 (a) 72.900 4 < .001$$

Based on the distribution of the data in the set, we chose the type of non-parametric test¹: Mann-Whitney U-test²; we set the significance level at 5 % (= 0.005).

The following significant differences were found between the studied groups regarding the length of experience in the indicator “collaboration with parents with problematic attitude”: Teachers with a length of experience as CT 3-5 years. (mean = 4,000) perceived a greater need for improvement in this area than teachers with more than 15 years of CT experience. (mean = 3,621). Additionally, teachers with 6-10 years of CT experience were more likely to report a higher level of improvement. (mean = 4.080) perceived a greater need for improvement in this area than teachers with more than 15 years of CT experience. (mean = 3.621).

Collaboration with parents of students with poor school performance, with problematic behaviour, with SEN: Teachers with 3-5 years of experience of CT. (mean = 4.184) perceived a higher need for improvement in this area than teachers with 11-15 years of experience. (mean = 3.800). Teachers with 3-5 years of CT experience (mean (1.800)). (mean = 4.184) perceived a higher need for improvement in this area than teachers with more than 15 years of CT experience. (mean = 3.641). Teachers with 6-10 years of CT experience were more likely to have a higher level of improvement than teachers with 6-10 years of CT experience. (mean = 4.220) perceived a greater need for improvement in this area than teachers with more than 15 years of CT experience. (mean = 3.641).

There were no significant differences between the study groups in the indicators “new approaches to collaboration with the family and written communication with parents”.

The measured data support hypothesis 1. Class teachers differ in their perceived level of educational needs in collaborating with the student's family due to the length of their classroom experience. Significant differences were observed in the indicators: “collaboration with parents with a problematic attitude” and “collaboration with parents of students with poor academic achievement, problematic behaviour or with SEN”. There were no statistically significant

¹ Normality testing was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

² Normality testing was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The data in each item did not come from a normal distribution. Therefore, we will use non-parametric tests to test for differences.

differences in the indicators “new approaches to collaboration with the family” and “written communication with parents” between the studied groups.

Table 3. Significant results of the Mann-Whitney U-test in the educational need “collaboration with the student’s family” in relation to the length of experience of the class teacher

	LENGTH OF PRACTISE	N	Med	MR	U	p
Collaboration with parents with a “problematic” attitude	3-5	38	4	4,000	2366.000	0.046*
	more than 15	103	4	3,641		
	6-10	50	4	4,080	3085.000	0.036*
	more than 15	103	4	3,641		
Collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, SEN	3-5	38	5	4,184	833.000	0.049*
	11-15	35	4	3,800		
	3-5	38	5	4,184	2534.500	0.005**
	more than 15	103	4	3,641		
	6-10	50	4	4,220	3268.500	0.004**
	more than 15	103	4	3,641		

Notes: Mann-Whitney U test. *p<.05, **p<.001, ***p<.001

Hypothesis 2: Class teachers differ in their perceived educational needs for collaboration with the student’s family based on the type of school in which they work.

Description

In the data collection, 10 categories of schools were identified, where teachers identified the type of school in which they performed the specialised activity of the class teacher: lower secondary school (lower secondary); 8-year grammar school (lower level of grammar school); 8-year grammar school (upper level of grammar school); 4-year grammar school (upper secondary); vocational school (upper secondary) with study fields; vocational school with apprenticeship fields (upper secondary); vocational school with both study and apprenticeship fields (upper secondary); conservatory, school of industrial design, sports school (upper secondary).

Due to the over-differentiation of the research set and the very large partial differences, we have grouped related school types into one set:

- 8yGS – 8-year grammar schools (both lower and upper levels);
- VOC – vocational schools (vocational schools with a study field, vocational schools with an apprenticeship field, vocational schools providing education in both study and apprenticeship fields);
- OTH – other schools (conservatory, school of industrial design, sports school).

Lower secondary schools (LSS) and 4-year grammar schools (4yGS) have been retained as separate categories.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of indicators of CT’s educational need in the area of collaboration with the family in relation to the type of school

	TYPE OF SCHOOL	N	Med	MR	Mod	SD
Collaboration with parents with a “problematic” attitude	8yGS	16	4.000	3.750	4.000	1.065
	4yGS	52	4.000	3.442	4.000	1.349
	VOC	80	4.000	3.950	4.000	1.005
	LSS	94	4.000	3.936	4.000	1.096
	OTH	9	4.000	3.889	4.000	0.782
Collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, SEN	8yGS	16	4.000	3.625	4.000	1.088
	4yGS	52	4.000	3.577	4.000	1.273
	VOC	80	4.000	4.088	4.000	0.970
	LSS	94	4.000	4.032	4.000	1.062
	OTH	9	3.000	3.111	4.000	0.928

New approaches to family collaboration	8yGS	16	4.000	3.625	4.000	1.204
	4yGS	52	3.500	3.212	4.000	1.160
	VOC	80	4.000	3.500	4.000	1.201
	LSS	94	4.000	3.649	4.000	1.114
	OTH	9	4.000	3.556	4.000	1.014
Written communication with parents	8yGS	16	3.000	2.625	1.000	1.360
	4yGS	52	3.000	2.865	3.000	1.253
	VOC	80	4.000	3.237	4.000	1.324
	LSS	94	3.000	3.181	4.000	1.270
	OTH	9	3.000	2.889	3.000	1.054

From the data of descriptive statistics (MR values), it appears that on average, mostly lower secondary school class teachers and VOC school class teachers perceive a higher educational need in the indicators of collaboration with the family: “collaboration with parents with a problematic attitude”;

“collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, with SEN” and “written communication with parents”.

In the indicator “new approaches of collaboration with family”, the mean values (MR) of the perceived educational need of CT of all the schools surveyed – except for 4yGS teachers – were close to each other. The descriptive data show that 4yGS teachers perceived on average a lower need for training in new approaches to family-school collaboration compared to teachers of other schools.

Inference

Despite the above adjustment of the set concerning school type (merger of related schools), the set is significantly skewed in terms of proportions. We tested the proportions using the Multinomial Test (tested against the expected proportions H_0 (a)).

However, except for the other schools (OTH), the other proportions are represented at least slightly more abundantly than they were originally, which allows us to perform difference testing via non-parametric tests. The chosen statistical test was the Mann-Whitney U-test.

Multinomial Test

$$\chi^2 \quad \text{df} \quad \text{p}$$

$$H_0 (a) \quad 111.075 \quad 4 < .001$$

Table 5. Significant results of the Mann-Whitney U-test in the educational need “collaboration with the student's family” concerning the type of school

	TYPE OF SCHOOL	N	Med	MR	U	p
Collaboration with parents with a "problematic" attitude	LSS	94	4.000	3.936	1959.500	0.037*
	4yGS	52	4.000	3.442		
	VOC	80	4.000	3.950	1672.000	0.047*
	4yGS	52	4.000	3.442		
Collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, SEN	LSS	94	4.000	4.032	1956.500	0.035*
	4yGS	52	4.000	3.577		
	VOC	80	4.000	4.088	1628.500	0,025 *
	4yGS	52	4.000	3.577		
New approaches to family collaboration	LSS	94	4.000	3.936	1926.000	0.027*
	4yGS	52	3.500	3.212		
	VOC	80	4.000	3.950	1783.500	0.152
	4yGS	52	3.500	3.212		

Notes: Mann-Whitney U test. *p < .05, **p < .001, ***p < .001

Significant differences were found in the type of school in which class teachers work in the indicator “collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes”: lower secondary school teachers (mean = 3.936) perceived a greater need for improvement in this area than 4yGS teachers (mean = 3.442). Also, VOC school class teachers (mean = 3.950) perceived a greater need for improvement

in this area than 4yGS class teachers (mean = 3.442). Statistically significant differences between the studied groups were also observed in the indicator “collaboration with parents of students with poor school performance, problematic behaviour or with SEN”, where lower secondary school teachers perceived a greater need for improvement (mean = 4.032) than 4yGS class teachers (mean = 3.577). Additionally, the VOC school class teachers perceived a greater need for further training in this area (mean = 4.088) than the 4yGS teachers (mean = 3.577). Lower secondary school teachers also reported a significantly higher need for in-service training in “new approaches to working with families” (mean = 3.936) compared to 4yGS teachers (mean = 3.212). No statistically significant differences were observed between the groups of teachers studied in the “written communication with family” indicator.

The measured data support hypothesis 2: There are differences in perceived educational needs between teachers in terms of the type of school in the area of family-school collaboration. Lower secondary school teachers and vocational school teachers perceive a greater need for training in the subject area compared to grammar school teachers. Significant differences were found in the indicators “collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes”, “collaboration with parents of students with poor grades, problematic behaviour, SEN”, and “new approaches in collaboration with the family”.

5. Discussion

We aimed to compare the subjective perceived learning needs of the class teachers in the area of family collaboration. The lack of pre-service teacher training in collaboration with parents has been pointed out by many authors and this fact has been confirmed by several studies (Šimoník, 1994; Lasky, 2000; Keyes, 2010; Havlík, 2002; Frýdková, 2013; Vitečková, Gadušová, 2015; Martanová, Konůpková, 2019; Bacúšan Nevoľná, 2023). We have more closely identified that, on average, class teachers perceive a need for further training in the area of collaboration with the family, naming the most prominent training needs in the areas of “collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes” and “collaboration with parents of students with poor achievement, problematic behaviour, or with SEN”. Teachers perceived the need for further training in “new approaches to working with families” to be slightly lower on average. Thus, according to our findings, class teachers perceive the need for their further training primarily in the area of “collaboration with parents with a problematic approach”, or “parents of students with challenging behaviour, poor achievement, or SEN”. As well as the problematic behaviour of students themselves, communication with parents, especially parents of students with problematic behaviour, is one of the significant sources of teachers' professional burden. Teacher-parent communication is often a source of stress and professional burden for teachers (Viktorová, 2020; Pohnětalová, 2015; Urbanovská, 2017; Mlčák, 1999 and others), and teachers perceive it as particularly challenging to work with uncooperative or overly critical parents (Horká, 2022), and especially to communicate with emotionally challenging situations, and it is clear that such challenging communication situations occur particularly in the context of student problem behaviours (Martanová, Konůpková, 2019). From the above, it is clear why more training in the area of collaboration with the above-mentioned groups of parents is perceived more intensively by class teachers.

The lowest subjectively perceived educational need was in the area of “written form of communication with parents”. These results also correspond to the findings of Beňo, Šimčáková, Herich (2006), who investigated the preferred form of mutual collaboration between teachers and parents. The respondents agreed that the most preferred for both parties is a personal meeting with parents, i.e., individually (at the request of the teacher or parent), followed by regular meetings of the parents' association, followed by visits to students' families, and other forms of collaboration. Written or other forms of information exchange received the least preference.

We also analysed the perceived learning needs concerning the length of experience of the class teacher and the type of school in which the teachers work. We hypothesised that the above variables play a significant role in the perceived need of class teachers to further their education in the subject area. The measured data supported our hypotheses, and we found that class teachers differed in their perceived level of educational need in the area of collaboration with the student's family due to the length of their class experience.

We found that teachers with longer experience as class teachers subjectively perceived a lower educational need in selected indicators of collaboration with the student's family (collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes" and "collaboration with parents of students

with problematic behaviour..."). Our findings support selected results of other research in which, for instance, Havlik (2002), Šimoník (1994), Vitečková and Gadušová (2015), pointed to the lack of perceived preparedness of especially novice teachers in the area of communication and collaboration with parents. It goes without saying that with the increase in professional experience of class teachers in the field of collaboration with different types of parents and different situations, the class teacher gains more confidence and competence in collaboration with parents, and along with this, his/her educational need in the subject area decreases. The importance of their own pedagogical experience and also their own parental experience for the performance of the position of class teacher was confirmed in the research within the final thesis of Boďo's (2011) by the class teachers themselves (n = 129), according to whom many of them found the undergraduate preparation for the position of class teacher only minimally helpful, in practise they drew the most from their own pedagogical and parental experience. However, we see a need to strengthen the preparation of preservice class teachers in working with families and not leave novice class teachers fearful, uncertain, and unprofessional about working with students' parents. Similar conclusions are confirmed by the results of research by Krátka (2007, p. 73). Specifically in relation to the educational issues that class teachers address with students' parents.

Class teachers also differ in their perceived educational needs for collaboration with the student's family, depending on the type of school in which they work. We found that lower secondary and vocational school teachers perceived their need for improvement in this area more than grammar school teachers. One of the explanatory reasons for the more intensive perceived educational need of lower secondary and vocational school class teachers in the area of collaboration with the student's family could be the different incidences of students' problem behaviour in particular schools. Grammar school teachers perceived a lower educational need in the indicator "collaboration with parents of students with problem behaviour...". However, according to Zemančíková's research (2014), grammar school teachers are the least confronted with the problem behaviour of students compared to teachers of lower secondary and vocational school teachers. From this, we conclude that one of the reasons for the lower educational needs of grammar school teachers in the area of collaboration with the student's family is the lower incidence of problem behaviour of students.

According to other findings, GS teachers also perceive a lower need for training in the area of collaboration with parents with problematic attitudes compared to lower secondary and vocational school teachers. GS teachers may come into contact less frequently with parents with problematic attitudes, which could be suggested by Pétiová's research (2015), which investigated the views and experiences of class teachers and prevention coordinators working in lower secondary and vocational schools on the quality of relationships between teachers, students and their parents. The research findings showed that the respondents teaching in grammar schools were most satisfied with the quality of parent-teacher collaboration, while the respondents from vocational schools expressed the most critical views.

6. Limitations of the study

Survey instrument was too time-consuming to complete and could lead to response bias, i.e. a systematic tendency to answer similarly worded questions in the same way regardless of their content. Which is a risk for all questionnaire surveys with Likert scaling (Bahna, Zagraban, 2019: 5). Considering the results published at this point, we perceive the application of only quantitative analysis as a partial limitation, which we plan to complement in the next steps of the research with a qualitative approach (Focus Group).

7. Conclusion

Through the research and its partial results, we wanted to point out that the area of family-school collaboration is one of the keys, but at the same time, most neglected areas in terms of teacher preparation.

It is a part of the class teacher's agenda in which there is a significant professional impact, mainly due to the lack of undergraduate preparation (Krátka, 2007: 77). However, according to Frýdková (2013), based on analyses of teacher education programmes (at pedagogical or philosophical faculties), there is an obvious tendency to pay more attention to the theoretical preparation of teacher collaboration with parents, and this preparation is implemented only marginally.

The above-mentioned area of the class teacher's work is all the more challenging if the practise was preceded by insufficient undergraduate training for this area of activity. Frýdková (2013) perceives the necessity to strengthen the preparation of future teachers for the area of family collaboration.

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