

Active Involvement in Home-School Collaboration and its Impact on Student Motivation – the Slovenian Experience

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Abstract – Research suggests that home-school collaboration is successful when it involves all elements of the parent-teacher-student triangle. However, Slovenian schools do not practice three-way conferences, since students, who are a crucial part of the collaboration, are often excluded from the process. This paper presents the results of a study conducted in two classes of Year 4 (9 Years old students) at a Slovenian primary school (experimental and control group). The study focused on identifying the effect of involving students in parent-teacher collaboration through three-way conferences. The findings revealed that these conferences contributed to the improved level of student motivation to do schoolwork.

Keywords – three-way conferences, school, students.

1. Introduction

Successful home-school collaboration takes place when it involves all elements of the parent-teacher-student triangle. One such form of collaboration is the three-way conference, performed in many countries worldwide.

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Sadly, Slovenia is not one of them since Slovenian schools only practice two-way conferences (teacher-parent conferences). Thus, Slovenian students, who are a crucial part of the family-school collaboration, are often excluded from this important process relating to their own learning development. This paper presents the results of a study that was conducted in two classes of Year 4 (9 Years old students) at a Slovenian primary school (experimental and control group). The paper describes how these conferences contribute to improved students' motivation to do schoolwork.

2. Family-School Collaboration

The family and the school are the two primary institutions, where children undergo socialisation and acquire intellectual and social capital [19]. The events experienced by a child in one environment (e.g., at home) affect them to the same degree as anything they experience in another environment (e.g., in the classroom) [11]. When a child starts school, the two-way child-parent relationship is expanded to form a triangle, as the relationship now includes the school. This has a significant impact on the child's development. Evidence shows that child development is more successful in a family where the parents are good at working together during the child's upbringing (as opposed to a family that lacks constructive cooperation), and in much the same way, effective parent-teacher collaboration is also important for the child's development [5]. By working together, teachers and parents support one another, as well as lay the foundations for children and young people to acquire the skills necessary for effective learning, problem solving, appropriate behaviour, and socio-emotional competences [57]. Moreover, parent-teacher collaboration fosters higher levels of student motivation to do schoolwork [53].

Motivation to do schoolwork can be defined as the willingness to perform certain learning activities and persistence in learning activities [62]. Collaboration has a positive impact on both their extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and it contributes to student goal orientation [24], [62].

Modern explanations of motivation focus on discussing goals, interests, and emotions. An important factor that influences the students' motivation to do schoolwork is the goals set by the student [62] – one of the key findings of our study.

While collaboration between teachers and parents within the school environment is well received, the same cannot be said for students' participation in the process of school-family collaboration [7]. Several authors have pointed out that students are often excluded from the development of the parent-teacher relationship and that they should be given the opportunity to be actively involved in any decisions that concern them [18], [40], [51]. This poses an obstacle to students' participation, collaboration and optimal development [51]. In fact, optimal student development requires parents and teachers to perceive students not as passive objects, but as actors who are actively involved in their own lives [15], [16], [17]. If parent-teacher collaboration is viewed as a one-way process, wherein students are placed in a passive, subordinate position and perceived merely as being impacted by the decisions made by their parents and teachers, then students are not deemed competent individuals [17]. This kind of view makes it difficult to support optimal student development, since treating students as subjects and partners in the parent-teacher collaboration is essential [6]. The latter encourages students to take responsibility for their own progress. Undoubtedly, students are socially competent beings who have a need to interact with their surroundings [35]. Their active involvement creates new potential for change and their own control over it [22]. According to a study conducted by Geppert, Bauer-Hofmann, and Werkl [23], student participation in parent-teacher collaboration is fundamental to the development of a positive school culture, which in turn influences the level of student motivation to do schoolwork.

Sacher [51], [52] lists the following reasons for the necessity to develop and foster students' active involvement in parent-teacher collaboration:

(1) Collaboration takes place exclusively for the sake of students, their achievement and personal development;

(2) If students are not involved in parent-teacher collaboration, this goes against the school's and parents' task to contribute to the students' maturity and independence through education;

(3) Excluding students from collaboration can increase educational inequality; and

(4) If collaboration only takes place between adults (teachers and parents), students feel left out, which may result in them resisting the agreements reached by the adults.

A form of parent-teacher collaboration that excludes students from the process itself or, at the very least, does not actively involve them in the process, is the traditional form of parent-teacher conferences. In fact, students are often either not present at these conferences or are present, but they make almost no contribution to the interaction and are treated as an overlooked audience [60]. Parent-teacher conferences can be more effective if students are actively involved in them [32]. These kind of conferences were researched as part of our study.

3. Three-Way Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are usually a central part of family-school collaboration. At the same time, this form of collaboration provides a means of actively involving students in the collaboration [7] with the aim of fostering their motivation to do schoolwork. The study conducted by Rubach, Lazarides, and Lohse-Bossenz [50] revealed that students' intrinsic motivation to do schoolwork is influenced by the formal collaboration between school and parent, including three-way conferences.

In many countries, this form of student involvement in parent-teacher collaboration is either not present or is present only occasionally, e.g., in the United Kingdom [33], Croatia [30], [47], Israel [45], Slovenia [39], [40] and elsewhere. For instance, in Slovenia, this form of student involvement is not prescribed in the legislation, and observation of the Slovenian school system suggests it is not common practice. Students are only involved when their behaviour is inappropriate. A reason for this may be also found in the specific cultural background. For a long time, it was believed that a child's job was to fulfill the demands of adults. Nowadays, it seems that teachers and parents see no need to involve students in collaboration.

In many other countries, however, students are actively involved in parent-teacher collaboration through three-way conferences, also known as student-led conferences (Germ. Kind-Erziehungsberechtigte-Lehrende-Gespräch, or KEL-Gespräch for short). These are conferences that involve students, parents (or guardians) and teachers, all of whom play an active role. Such conferences are held in Austria [12], [55], [61], New Zealand [9], [46], the USA [25], [27], [28], [41], [26], Canada [10], the Netherlands [59], Norway [3], Sweden [36] and Germany [6].

Three-way conferences are centered on students. They deal with the students' strengths and weaknesses, interests, hobbies, habits, and behaviours [34], [58], [60], [37].

As part of these conferences, students work with their teachers and parents on reviewing their past achievements and setting goals for the future. Thus, they develop responsibility for their actions and education, and they are often more successful in achieving their goals, as they are actively involved in the goal-setting process [2], [4], [13], [34]. Such conferences allow students to communicate directly with adults (teachers and parents) and encourage them to actively participate in the evaluation of their learning progress, which in turn encourages them to think and take action to improve their learning based on personal initiatives [8]. Through these personal initiatives, students develop verbal communication and argumentation skills, as well as the ability to present their own work [26]. Most importantly, three-way conferences empower young people to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour and provide them with an opportunity to participate in decision-making [25], [31].

When it comes to conferences that involve teachers, parents, and students, it is extremely important for parents to be aware that the aim of these conferences is not to analyze their parenting mistakes; in fact, three-way conferences focus on students and their interests, abilities, learning progress and future goals [13]. Instead of looking for faults, the focus is on encouraging a culture of progress, self-reflection and self-evaluation [29]. The aim of these conferences is to homogenize the interests, educational goals, methods and efforts, as well as collaboration and support [58], [60].

Three-way conferences are based on the assumption that a student is more successful in terms of learning and pursuing educational goals if they understand the goals, the means to achieve them, and the results [48]. This, however, is possible only if the student is accepted as a “nascent subject who builds his or her autonomy and responsibility primarily based on the experience in making independent decisions,” [40] or as argued by Musek [44], “it takes one’s own activity and free decision-making for a person to fully realise their capabilities and potentials.”

4. Aims and research questions

This paper presents part of an extensive study that was focused on, among other things, establishing how the implementation of three-way conferences in Slovenian school is reflected in the level of student motivation to do schoolwork.

5. Method

The survey in the form of an experiment was conducted during the 2020/2021 school year in one Slovenian primary school.

We collected the study data through questionnaires and interviews of teachers, students and parents in an experimental and control group.

5.1. Sample

The study presented in this paper aimed at determining whether student participation in parent-teacher collaboration through three-way conferences was related to a higher level of student motivation to actively participate in schoolwork.

The study was conducted on a convenience sample, which consisted of two Year 4 classes (ISCED 1, according to the International Standard Classification of Education, 9 Years old students) from the selected primary school in Slovenia.

The experimental group consisted of the students (16 students) in one Year 4 class, their parents (16 parents), the form teacher, and two other teachers who taught this class (a teacher of English as a foreign language and a computer science teacher), i.e., a total of three teachers. It should be noted that all 16 students and their parents participated in three-way conferences. Interviews were conducted with all 16 students and their parents. A questionnaire was completed by all 16 students, but only 14 out of the 16 parents. The students were aged 9 and 10. Of the 16 students, 5 were girls (31%) and 11 were boys (69%).

The control group consisted of the students (17 students) from the other Year 4 class at the same school, who were also aged 9 and 10, their parents (17 parents), the form teacher, and two other teachers who taught this class (a teacher of English as a foreign language and a computer science teacher), i.e., a total of three teachers. Of the 17 students, 8 (47%) were boys and 9 (53%) were girls.

5.2. Research Instrument

The research data were obtained by means of questionnaires and interviews, which were conducted as part of the experimental model focused on three-way conferences. An experimental variable, i.e., three-way conferences, was introduced into the experimental group, while no such conferences were held in the control group. Before the study, the school head teacher and the parents were asked for permission to conduct the study, and the teachers who taught in the selected classes were asked to participate in the study. The study was carried out in line with the basic code of ethics principles that apply in the field of educational research. All participants – teachers, students, and parents – took part in the experiment voluntarily.

Both the questionnaires and the interview questions were prepared specifically for the purpose of this study.

The questionnaires and the interview questions were first pretested on a small sample. The interview questions were open-ended, while the questionnaire questions were both closed-ended and open-ended. For the closed-ended questionnaire questions, the respondents used a five-point Likert scale to specify their level of agreement or disagreement with a given statement. The student questionnaire included questions about basic student-related information and an assessment of their motivation to do schoolwork. The post-experiment questions for the experimental group students also included questions about their motivation to do schoolwork. The questions in the form teacher interview were about the teachers' willingness to work with the students' parents and their satisfaction with parent-teacher collaboration. The teacher of the experimental group also answered questions about the efficacy of three-way conferences.

5.3. Data Collection Process

Prior to the introduction of the experimental variable, i.e., the three-way conferences, the following was conducted in the experimental and control groups: (1) an individual interview with the form teacher, (2) a student survey, and (3) a survey of the students' parents. After both rounds of three-way conferences, which were held five months apart, the following was conducted in the experimental and control groups: (1) individual interviews with the two form teachers, (2) a student survey, (3) a parent survey, and (4) individual interviews with both teachers who taught in the experimental group. Additionally, an interview with a student focus group and individual parent interviews were conducted in the experimental group.

Three-way conferences in the experimental group were held for each student individually. They were held twice – the second round of conferences took place five months after the first one. The initial plan was for both three-way conferences to be held in person at school, however, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent distance learning, this was unfortunately not possible. Therefore, the first round of three-way conferences in January 2021 was conducted via videoconferencing (Zoom). The second round of three-way conferences was held in June 2021 in person on school premises. Each three-way conference was attended by the form teacher, a student, and his/her parents (one or both). The experimental-group form teacher, parents, and students received guidelines to help them prepare for the three-way conference before the first round of conferences.

The conference preparations for the form teacher were done individually, and the students' preparations were carried out in small groups (each consisting of four students).

Owing to distance learning (related to the COVID-19 pandemic), the student preparations took place via Zoom. The parents were provided with the guidelines in printed form by mail.

The collected data were entered into an electronic database using Excel and processed and analysed statistically using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 21). The results were presented with percentages and basic descriptive statistics (the mean, percentages, standard deviation). A nonparametric test, i.e., the Mann Whitney-U test, was used for the purpose of determining the differences between the measurement stages (pre and post questionnaire), since a comparison of two independent groups was implied (to ensure the respondents' anonymity, no records of the questionnaires were kept, which did not allow a direct comparison of the pre- and post-experiment questionnaires) and because the sample was smaller than 25 (Field 2013) [20]. Assumptions about differences in time and the differences between the control and experimental groups were confirmed or rejected with a 5% risk ($p \leq 0.05$).

6. Discussion and findings

The study conducted by Kodele [38] found that students' active participation in parent-teacher conferences contributed to their motivation to do schoolwork. The answers given by the experimental group of students regarding their motivation to do schoolwork showed that the students' motivation increased slightly after the experiment, however, the difference was not statistically significant (see Table 1). There was no statistically significant difference between the mean ($M = 4.06$) in the experimental group before the experiment and the mean ($M = 4.25$) after the experiment, $U = 113.000$, $z = -0.635$, $p = 0.590$.

Likewise, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean ($M = 4.24$) in the control group before the experiment and the mean ($M = 3.76$) after the experiment, $U = 107.500$, $z = -1.344$, $p = 0.205$ (see Table 2).

A comparison of the means in the experimental and control groups regarding student motivation to do schoolwork showed that after the experiment, student motivation in the experimental group increased and that of the students in the control group decreased. The mean of the experimental group students increased by 0.19, while the mean of the control group students decreased by 0.48.

However, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed no statistically significant difference in either case. A calculation of the differences between the experimental and control student groups likewise showed no statistically significant differences either before the experiment $U = 120.500$, $z = -0.615$, $p = 0.581$, or after the experiment, $U = 100.000$, $z = -1.372$, $p = 0.204$.

Although the difference in the expressed motivation was not statistically significant, the results of the qualitative research part indicated that the students expressed support for the three-way conferences and satisfaction with some aspects that can be related to their motivation to do schoolwork. This is mainly evident from their answers during the interview, as follows:

Student 1: "I was able to express my opinion, both in terms of learning and education. Above all, I was happy because my opinion was taken into account. That's why I also worked to achieve the goals that we set during the first three-way conference."

Student 2: "I was able to set goals on my own. It was the first time I was able to set goals for myself at school. It was a special feeling. The teacher and parents listened to me and took into account what I had said. I was very happy about that."

Student 3: "I had the opportunity to convey my worries and problems. If my parents hadn't been with me, I wouldn't have dared to do it."

Student 4: "I was able to solve some things that had been weighing on me. So I could set new goals. I struggled to reach them."

Student 5: "I presented my achievements. I worked hard to achieve them through the whole school year."

Student 6: "I set my goals and signed a contract. That's why I made an effort to achieve the goals we had agreed upon."

Student 7: "I assessed what goals I had achieved, and I was proud of it. I will also set them for next year, regardless of whether we have three-way conferences or not."

Several studies have revealed benefits similar to those that were mentioned by the students. According to a study conducted by Geppert, Bauer-Hofmann, and Werkl [23], students feel understood and acknowledged when they participate in parent-teacher collaboration. In a study conducted by Mann [42], students highlighted the following benefits: the opportunity to present their strengths to parents and teachers, to show parents what they do at school, and teachers and parents being able to help them find the means to achieve their goals. Furthermore, students in a study by Pihlgren [48] reported satisfaction with three-way conferences, as the conferences provided them with an opportunity for the adults to listen to their opinions, an opportunity to influence decisions and gain a better understanding of how they can improve their knowledge.

Moreover, when collaboration is centred on students, they do not feel left out, which makes them less likely to resist decisions [51] and more motivated to do schoolwork. The students in a study conducted by O'Fee [46] also reported that the three-way conferences contributed to them talking about school more at home. Furthermore, these conferences made them feel more confident about their learning and assume more responsibility for it.

Another comparison as part of our study was focused on the answers given by the parents of the experimental group students regarding their satisfaction with their child's motivation to do schoolwork. The parents' answers revealed that the parents were more satisfied with their child's motivation after the experiment than before the experiment (see Table 3). There was a statistically significant difference between the mean ($M = 3.71$) in the experimental group before the experiment and the mean ($M = 4.57$) after the experiment, $U = 45,000$, $z = -2.605$, $p = 0.014$.

This was followed by a comparison of the answers given by the control group parents regarding their satisfaction with their child's motivation to do schoolwork. The mean remained unchanged (see Table 4). No statistically significant difference was found between the mean ($M = 3.71$) in the control group before the experiment and the mean ($M = 3.71$) after the experiment, $U = 143.500$, $z = -0.036$, $p = 0.973$.

A comparison of the means from the experimental and control groups of parents regarding their satisfaction with their child's motivation to do schoolwork showed that after the experiment, the satisfaction of the former group of parents increased by 0.86, while the satisfaction of the control group parents remained unchanged. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test revealed statistically significant differences in the experimental group.

A calculation of differences between the experimental group parents and control group parents showed no statistically significant differences before the experiment, $U = 118.500$, $z = -0.021$, $p = 0.984$, it did, however, show statistically significant differences after the experiment, $U = 69.000$, $z = -2.117$, $p = 0.048$.

In addition to the questionnaires, the difference in the students' motivation to do schoolwork before and after the experiment was identified by means of interviews conducted with the students, parents, and teachers.

All the interviewed parents reported that their children had made progress in terms of motivation to do schoolwork. Some parents highlighted that their children were now more independent when it came to doing school work at home, for example:

Parent 1: "My son has made progress in that he knows he has homework to do when he gets home, and he actually gets down to it. And he starts studying without me telling him to do so."

Parent 2: "My daughter has become more responsible. For example, she gets her school backpack ready herself."

Parent 3: "My son has always been very motivated and responsible when it comes to schoolwork. During this past school year, however, he has become more independent; he does more assignments on his own."

Parent 4: "My son started reading more and he did his homework as soon as he came home from school; he didn't wait until the evening to do it. And now he also gets his school backpack ready on his own."

Parent 5: "My son has become more independent. He needs very little help with his schoolwork."

Parent 6: "My daughter has become more mature this year. She did her schoolwork on her own."

Parent 7: "My son has become more independent and started doing homework on his own. He is done with all his schoolwork more quickly than before."

Parent 8: "My daughter has made real progress in all areas. She does more studying on her own; actually, she did all of it on her own this year."

Other parents pointed out that their children had shown greater interest in doing schoolwork at home, for example:

Parent 9: "My daughter still needs encouragement to study because she doesn't like doing it. That being said, she was more motivated to do schoolwork this year and needed less encouragement than during previous school years."

Parent 10: "My son is now keener to do schoolwork."

Parent 11: "My son has made progress in activities that are not his strong suit, e.g., reading and writing. He is also more motivated to do schoolwork."

Parent 12: "This year, my daughter was keener to learn."

Parent 13: "I've noticed a big change for the better – my daughter has become more motivated to do schoolwork. She remembers that she has to study herself; she reads on her own. She's also become more self-confident."

Parent 14: "My son has made progress in terms of his responsibility for schoolwork."

We came to the same findings as Pihlgren [48], and Borba and Olvera [8] in their studies. According to a study conducted by Pihlgren [48], students feel more responsible for their learning and for achieving goals when they are involved in three-way conferences. The study by Borba and Olvera [8] notes that three-way conferences help students take more responsibility for their own learning.

All the experimental group parents (N = 16) attributed their child's improved motivation to do schoolwork to the three-way conferences and, even more so, to the contracts in which the students set the goals they wanted to achieve. Clearly, the parents found the students' involvement in parent-teacher collaboration to be positive and believed it affected the students' motivation to do schoolwork. This also suggests that parental opinion on these conferences and on parent-teacher collaboration in general is favourable; after all, student progress is what everyone strives for. Even more importantly, students themselves are proud of their progress. Student progress can give the teacher validation that their educational work has been done in line with the students' goals. Moreover, the parents are likewise satisfied with the teacher's work, recognising that the teacher strives for their child's progress. However, the most important thing is that the students make more effort to achieve their goals if they are involved in the goal-setting process. If this is the case, they are more likely to achieve their goals. Achieving goals can in turn increase the students' motivation to do schoolwork and their satisfaction with being involved in the parent-teacher collaboration.

During the interviews, the parents also listed the following as merits of three-way conferences:

"A chance to solve problems."

"The children were able to express their opinions. It was the first time that the teacher asked my child for their opinion in my presence."

"The children had the opportunity to say what they needed help with."

"My child signed the contract and set his goals by himself. Therefore, he was more motivated to achieve the goals."

"My child could see that all of us, the form teacher, and the parents, cared for his development. This motivated him to achieve the goals we set."

The findings of our study show the following advantages of three-way conferences: students can express their opinions, students are more motivated for academic work, and school problems are easier to solve. Similarly, several Slovenian and foreign studies have confirmed the benefits of students being present at parent-teacher conferences. For instance, in a study conducted by Ažman [1], teachers and parents reported the following advantages of this kind collaboration: better results when it came to solving learning- and education-related problems, the chance to find solutions together, and student being provided with the opportunity to present their work to parents and teachers and explain their point of view. Moreover, positive changes in terms of student motivation to do schoolwork were also reported by the form teacher of the experimental group.

According to her, a considerable increase in motivation to do schoolwork was noticeable in all the students except one, whose increase in motivation was small. The form teacher attributed the increase in motivation, among other factors, to the three-way conferences, as the students took them very seriously. During the conference preparations, they already showed interest in the three-way conferences and prepared for both the first and second conference. When they attended the second conference, the students brought along a contract that had been used to set goals during the first conference. The students' parents likewise prepared for the conference; in fact, all but one of them brought along the questionnaire, which they had used to prepare for the conference at home. This points to the fact that the parents and the children had discussed the conference and school at home, as reported in the interviews.

Similarly, other studies have revealed that discussions and conversations that children and their parents have about school encourage children to learn, increase their motivation to learn, and contribute to the internalisation of educational values [24].

The form teacher attributed the students' improved motivation to do schoolwork in large measure to the three-way conferences, as during these conferences the students set their own goal(s) and chose the means to achieve them, as a result of which they also expressed stronger motivation to achieve said goals. Moreover, the form teacher pointed out that the three-way conferences had provided her with new insights about her students, which proved useful for lesson planning, and she was thus able to contribute to the students' motivation to do schoolwork. For example, she learnt about individual students' new areas of interest and found out how students expected her to help them. The teacher reported that she had progressed both personally and professionally, which is consistent with the findings of the study by Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Doan Holbein [24]. Furthermore, she believed that the fact that during the three-way conferences both parents and students could see how important the students' overall progress was to her as their form teacher also contributed to the students' improved motivation. She felt that this encouraged the parents to give their child more support when doing schoolwork at home and consequently contributed to students' improved motivation to do schoolwork.

This is consistent with the findings of the studies conducted by Derfler, Kiemayer, and Leitner [12], Eder [14], Pihlgren [48], Bull, Brooking, and Campbell [9], and Windbichler and Lotz [61].

These studies revealed that three-way conferences provide teachers with more satisfaction, validation and understanding of their students, more time to talk, a better understanding of the students, better collaboration with parents, and better student achievement. Moreover, Foster-King [21] also reported that several studies had revealed various benefits of three-way conferences, including improved student achievement and increased motivation to do schoolwork. The study by Minke and Anderson [43] found the following benefits of three-way conferences: increased communication and trust between teachers and parents, a more positive opinion of one another, better understanding of one another, an increased sense of shared responsibility, parents and teachers acquainting themselves with the students' interests and skills, teachers forming a more positive view of families, and students dedicating more time to learning.

It is important to note that, according to the teachers involved in the study, before the three-way conferences were held at their school, the parent-teacher conferences (which can in a way be compared to three-way conferences) had never been attended by all the parents. Both the first and second three-way conferences in the experimental group were attended by all the parents ($N = 16$). In contrast to this, the first parent-teacher conferences in the control group during the same period were attended by 9 out of 17 parents and the second parent-teacher conferences by 8 out of 17 parents. The parents' high attendance at the three-way conferences can in part be attributed to the fact that the purpose of these conferences had previously been presented to the parents at the first parent-teacher conference and that they were interested in this form of cooperation. The fact that the students themselves invited the parents to the three-way conferences may also have contributed to the large turnout. In part, one may also conclude that the parents' high attendance at the three-way conferences contributed further to students' motivation to do schoolwork, as all the students had the opportunity to see that both the teachers and the parents wanted them to make progress and achieve their learning goals.

Parent-teacher collaboration contributes to the development of students' motivation, as it provides parents with several different sources of motivation, which increase the children's motivation to do schoolwork. If parents become involved in their child's schoolwork, this signals to the child how much education means to the parents, which in turn motivates the child to work towards good learning outcomes [49]. Sliwka, Klopsch, and Yee [56] emphasised that the level of parents' interest in their child's education determines the child's engagement and motivation to do schoolwork.

If parents have a positive attitude towards school, e.g., they attend three-way conferences, this results in the children having a stronger sense of belonging to the school and showing greater motivation and willingness to do schoolwork [54]. In fact, student motivation for learning is closely associated with the parent-teacher relationship [5].

It has been noted that all the aforementioned benefits of three-way conferences, listed by the parents, students and teachers, as well as the desire of both the parents and the students to maintain this form of collaboration in the coming school years, have contributed to the experimental group students' improved motivation to do schoolwork. Our study confirmed the results of the study conducted by Geppert, Bauer-Hofmann, and Werkl [23] and the study by Eder [14], where parents, students and teachers welcomed three-way conferences and considered them worthwhile to continue and develop.

7. Conclusion

Scholars involved in the study pointed out that when it comes to parent-teacher collaboration, active student involvement is often neglected. Students should be involved in parent-teacher collaboration, because they are the very reason this collaboration exists in the first place. The results of our study showed that involving students in collaboration through three-way conferences improved the students' motivation to do schoolwork. The results revealed that in the experimental group, the mean of the students' motivation to do schoolwork increased, which was not the case in the control group. In the experimental group, both the students' mean and the parents' mean regarding student motivation to do schoolwork increased. The parents' mean even showed that there were statistically significant differences, unlike the students' mean, which did not show any differences. In the control group, the students' mean revealed a decrease in their motivation, while the parents' mean remained unchanged. The form teacher also reported an increase in student motivation in the experimental group. It is important to note that the students, parents, and the form teacher in the experimental group hoped the three-way conferences would be continued in the coming school years, as they noticed a number of benefits, and the three-way conferences had a positive effect on the students' motivation to do schoolwork. All of this suggests that three-way conferences are a positive addition to parent-teacher collaboration and that they contribute to student motivation to do schoolwork.

A major limitation that needs to be considered when interpreting the results and inferring practical applications is that the study was conducted on a small sample.

Thus, the results cannot be generalised to the entire population. Moreover, the changes that occurred after the experiment cannot be attributed solely to the experimental variable, since the changes may have been caused by other factors, such as, varying methods used by the teachers, their personality traits, their general willingness to work with parents, differences in the teachers' communication skills, etc. However, the research results represent an important basis that can be used for planning student involvement in parent-teacher collaboration in the future. In order to further assess whether systematic introduction of three-way conferences into the school system is worthwhile and advisable, it would be sensible to conduct a study on a larger sample that would allow for more general conclusions.

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Annex 1 - tables

Table 1: Questionnaire answers regarding the students' motivation for schoolwork given by the experimental group students before and after the experiment.

	Pre-experiment						Post-experiment					
	Very untrue	Somewhat untrue	Neutral	Somewhat true	Very true		Very untrue	Somewhat untrue	Neutral	Somewhat true	Very true	
	f	f	f	f	f	M	f	f	f	f	f	M
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)
I am motivated to do schoolwork.	0	1	1	10	4	4,06	0	0	2	8	6	4,25
	(0)	(6.3)	(6.3)	(62.5)	(25.0)	(0.772)	(0)	(0)	(12.5)	(50.0)	(37.5)	(0.683)

N=16

Table 2 Questionnaire answers regarding the students' motivation for schoolwork given by the control group students before and after the experiment.

	Pre-experiment						Post-experiment					
	Very untrue	Somewhat untrue	Neutral	Somewhat true	Very true		Very untrue	Somewhat untrue	Neutral	Somewhat true	Very true	
	f	f	f	f	f	M	f	f	f	f	f	M
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)
I am motivated to do schoolwork.	0	0	3	7	7	4.24	0	2	5	5	5	3.76
	(0)	(0)	(17.6)	(41.2)	(41.2)	(0.752)	(0)	(11.8)	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)	(1.033)

N=17

Table 3 Questionnaire answers regarding the parents' satisfaction with their child's motivation for schoolwork given by the experimental group parents before and after the experiment.

	Pre-experiment						Post-experiment					
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied		Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied	
	f	f	f	f	f	M	f	f	f	f	f	M
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)
Level of satisfaction	0	1	5	5	3	3.71	0	0	0	6	8	4.57
	(0)	(7.1)	(35.7)	(35.7)	(21.4)	(0.914)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(42.9)	(57.1)	(0.514)

N=14

Table 4. Questionnaire answers regarding the parents' satisfaction with their child's motivation for schoolwork given by the control group parents before and after the experiment.

	Pre-experiment						Post-experiment					
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied		Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied	
	f	f	f	f	f	M	f	f	f	f	f	M
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(SD)
Level of satisfaction	0	2	5	6	4	3.71	0	3	5	3	6	3.71
	(0)	(11.8)	(29.4)	(35.3)	(23.5)	(0.985)	(0)	(17.6)	(29.4)	(17.6)	(35.3)	(1.160)

N=17