


# Chapter 10

## Voices of Bilingual Families:

### Investigating Parental Aspirations, Involvement Practices, and Relationship With Teachers in Primary Education

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*Parents' involvement in children's schooling is of particular importance for children's academic success and school effectiveness. Collaboration with families constitutes a sociopedagogical mission for the schools. Teachers are expected to communicate, interact with parents and build positive relationships. Minority and immigrant parents' voices are rarely heard while most frameworks regarding family-school collaboration may not fully address their cultural repertoires. The study focuses on bilingual parents' aspirations, parental involvement practices and perceptions of their relationships with teachers to describe how they perceive their role in children's education. Ten parents, mothers and fathers of primary school children, participated in the semi-structured interviews. Content analysis revealed their high aspirations for their children and their engagement in school-based and*

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*home-based activities with different roles. Findings reflect a co-existence of individualistic and collectivistic cultural strategies and show the need for more culture sensitive approaches by teachers.*

## INTRODUCTION

The key role of families in children's development and learning has long been established in theory and research. Parents, an umbrella term that refers to biological parents or/and guardians, or primary caregivers, are key stakeholders in children's education influencing their school adjustment and progress (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). The way parents respond to children's formal education is described with the term parental involvement, a multidimensional and multilevel construct that delineates their attitudes, behaviors and relationships as they interact with children, the school and teachers for issues related, more or less directly, to schooling. Parental involvement in children's education, often encompassing engagement of other members of the family, plays a pivotal role not only in their learning and development but also in enhancing school functioning and effectiveness. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, strong connections and positive relationships between key microsystems, particularly the family and the school, form a robust mesosystem that supports child development by ensuring quality, cohesion, and continuity in their everyday learning experiences and transmitting cultural values (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein et al., 2025) denotes the importance of parents and teachers' beliefs, experiences, practices and shared activities to pull the spheres together, when they form positive relationships, shared goals and understanding. Epstein's typology of parental involvement practices (Epstein, 1995) is a prominent and widely used framework (Ihmeideh et al., 2018) that captures in a comprehensive and concise way the diverse approaches parents employ to promote children's education and learning. The six types of parental involvement practices cover diverse parenting roles, contexts of implementation and interconnection and practices of engagement:

- *Parenting*: aims to enhance parenting capacity to fulfil responsibilities regarding their parenting role, such as knowledge on children's development, provision of a home environment conducive to learning, positive aspirations and realistic expectations for children and shared goals with teachers.
- *Communicating*: refers to the development of systematic two-way communication with schools and teachers using diverse media.
- *Volunteering*: describes parents' presence at school and their engagement in a variety of activities, as an audience in school events, as volunteers in school

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