SCHOOL FAMILY, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AS PERCEIVED BY JEWISH AND ARAB PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN ISRAEL

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The School, Family and Community Partnership (SFCP) program links researchers from the Faculty of Education and the School of Social Work at the University of Haifa with two Jewish and two Arab elementary schools in the multicultural city of Haifa. The goal of the program is to empower the social and educational development of families, schools and children from diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

The project began in 2009, under the auspices of the University of Haifa's Jewish-Arab Center. Collaboration between the families and the schools has been cultivated by long-term themes chosen by each of the participant's schools to advance the ecology and well-being of the schools and the communities.

The following article presents the viewpoints of the participating parents and the teachers regarding the concept of school-family partnership, the areas of their potential involvement in the schools, as well as the factors that facilitate or obstruct the promotion the partnership.

An action research was designed for the first year, with data collected from focus groups, individual in-depth interviews, and field notes compiled by Jewish and Arab graduate students under the guidance of the authors to attain reliability and agreement about categories, patterns and themes. Interviews were conducted with the four principals, 24 teachers and 17 parents, representing a cross-section of the schools and their communities. In addition, the research team conducted observations of school activities during teacher-parent workshops, school events and celebrations, and PTA meetings, all of which were recorded for in-depth content analysis.

This study expands the understanding of factors and styles of leaderships within each school and across schools, as well as the perceptions of the parents and teachers of different social and economic status and diverse cultural and religious affiliations. The factors and themes which emerged can be of benefit to academic and practical knowledge and could aid policy makers and practitioners in planning more effective action plans.
In the article we will elaborate on each of the factors identified by members of the social and cultural groups and discuss similarities and differences in their motivations and perceptions to actively become involved in the schools.

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**Keywords:**
School family and community partnership, Parental and staff perceptions of partnership in Jewish and Arab schools.

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