

PROMOTING THE IMAGE OF SCHOOL IN THE RURAL SPACE

Oana-Miruna OPREA

Al. I. Cuza University of Iași, Romania

Oana_miruna2001@yahoo.com

Abstract

The concept of promoting belongs to the marketing field. Marketing is a particularly old activity, who took different forms over time. Today, however, in the educational field in particular, the emphasis is on quality, while the educational offer is very diversified and adapted to the most complex of tastes.

In our paper, we will focus on the strategies of promoting school in the rural areas – particularly the Secondary School in Oniceni, Suceava County. In our approach, we will focus on a series of considerations that belong to the social and family context, when choosing school.

Key words: *School, promotion, family, needs, educational marketing.*

JEL Classification: *M51, M59*

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the time, children in the rural areas are associated with children who don't have enough financial resources to attend school in the urban area. In our country, these traditional concepts are found both in children, and adults. Often, the school the kid will be attending the next study cycle is not parents' choice, since the social and family context requires adapting to certain requirements.

From an early age, children are placed in the care of grandparents or relatives, while parents go to work abroad. These children usually comply to the will of relatives, and not their parents, since they can't decide over their future because they are thousands of miles away. Choosing school is, therefore, the choice of the relatives, whom are taking into account the distance between home and school, access to transportation, emotional and psychological factors, etc.

Promoting rural school is more difficult than in the urban environment because of such considerations, among many others. Schools in the rural area are rather associated with school close to home, than school where performance is made. We chose to analyse a few aspects concerning the promotion of schools in the rural area, outlining a series of aspects that could improve the image of school

II. CHOOSING THE SCHOOL

Choosing the school where the child will be studying for the next couple of years is extremely difficult, involving social, psychological and family considerations. Most of the times, the focus is on the connections the school has with the means of transportation, but also family-wise, the financial resources, the parents' active presence in the child's life, the parents migrating to other countries, etc. Usually, schools in the rural area are accessible to children coming from families with limited financial resources, not being a choice for families in the urban area who consider the teachers there are better prepared and are willing to train children for competitions and national and international Olympiads. If this is the perception of schools in the urban area, we consider it to be a negative opinion, since the teachers in both areas are as well prepared, and the option of training children for Olympiads are strictly subjective.

Another aspect influencing the choice of school is given by the fact that most of the time, both parents are working abroad, the children being left with grandparents or relatives. The relatives looking after children are less preoccupied with their school situation, than the natural parents (Apostu, 2012; Apostu, 2013). The context of parents going abroad is mostly connected to the financial status and the family's limited resources. Children who are left in the custody of relatives are rather limited, since usually, the emphasis is on the connection the school has, namely the closeness to home.

III. THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY VERSUS THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD

When talking about the needs of the child, we must consider, besides the basic needs, also those in the top of Maslow's pyramid. The need for acknowledgment and for self-esteem are two extremely important aspects when considering children's education, because the future teenager and further adult will have to

integrate into the society with a sufficiently large stock of knowledge, in order to be able to face society's challenges. In general, families in the rural area are strictly traditional, characterized by conservatism and stagnation. The family's supreme values are inwarded, being considered reluctant to change (Apostu, 2016a, Apostu, 2016b, Apostu, 2016c, Apostu, 2016d, Apostu, 2017). The rural areas still keep a series of characteristics of the traditional family, especially when referring to children being left under the supervision of children or relatives. As the sociologist Iulian Apostu describes, the hierarchy is clear in the relationship with children, each knowing exactly what he has to do and who must listen to. Children acknowledge the father or grandfather's authority (in the case of children with parent left to work abroad), the receptivity towards the children's needs and emotions being rather limited (Apostu, I., 2016b, Apostu, 2017). However, families who lived abroad for many years see things completely different, being rather considered as postmodern. The postmodern couple's particularities are individualism, considering that the new conjugal mentalities invert the order of priorities over the benefits conjugality involves. One of these consequences is the small number of children, but also the fact that the individuals are more concerned of their personal budget.

We consider it appropriate to bring into discussion a series of issues concerning the relationship the parents have, with the school. Therefore we consider that the success of the child could be, on one side, influenced by the parental and educational style of the family, and on the other side, on the report between family's and school's style (Stanciulescu, 1997). The success of the student depends on the relationship the child has with the other members of the family, while the parental style must combine affection and support – on one side -, with control and exigency on the other side, the cognitive development being influenced by the level of family's cohesion, the agreement/disagreement between the parents regarding the issues concerning the child (Ionescu & Negreanu, 2006). Besides the need for a relationship of collaboration between the parents and the school, there are a series of issues that should be considered. These consist of:

- the ration between sociolinguistic codes of family and school (Bernstein, 1978)
- the primary habitus and the symbolic violence in school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970)
- the domestic order (Lahire, 1997)
- the syndrome of achievement (Rosen, 1956)

There are a series of controversies over the needs of the family and the needs of the child, especially when considering children in the care of relatives or grandparents. Although the parents decide to immigrate in order to provide a better financial situation to the child, most of the times the children lack affection (Terec-Vlad, L., 2015). This matter entails a series of risks, such as school dropout, smaller grades, lack of implication in school activities or devious behavior. What we wish to highlight is the fact that not always the needs of the child coincide with those of the family, which is why we consider there should be a balance in the child's life, as a future adult who would have to fit in the society (Terec-Vlad, L., 2015, Trifu, A.&Terec-Vlad, 2015).

IV. PROMOTING IMAGE OF SCHOOL

There are a series of actions that should be considered when discussing the promoting of school's image. These consist of:

- periodically updating the website
- delivering actions for the community
- ensuring transparency
- developing evaluation reports regarding the school's image in the community
- educational marketing
- monitoring the extra-curricular activities
- organizing national exams according to the legal framework
- achieving operational plans that would target the relationship between the parents and the school
- the school magazine
- organizing events such as: The Open Gates Day or the Different School Program
- coverage in the local mass-media on the activities conducted
- students' participation in Erasmus programs
- establishing a managerial plan that would fit the needs of the community and the beneficiaries of the educational system
- initiating actions for attracting European funding
- building and maintaining certain modern facilities that would meet the existing requirements of the society
- establishing theatre, chorus, dance groups, etc.
- organizing leisure activities.

Of course, these are only some of the aspects we should consider when discussing about promoting school in the community. Besides these, the partnerships and the experience exchange with other school and teachers could be in the advantage of students.

We consider that the image of school should reflect the actions and activities of the members of the institution at the level of the community. Adapting to the society's needs is not only the responsibility of the school and the system, but also of the staff, because as we previously mentioned, school should help children integrate afterwards in the society. On the other hand, the actions the school should take in report to the community and other social institutions, should reflect the collaboration, since this is also a strategy of promoting the school's image.

V. THE POSSIBILITIES OF IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF SCHOOL IN THE RURAL AREA

Improving the image (Juravle, Sasu&Spătaru, 2016, Juravle, Sasu&Bubăscu, 2015, Spătaru, Sasu&Juravle, 2015) of school in the rural area is an action that not only involves the principals and the teachers in the institution, but also the students and their parents. Improving the school's image should be a constant action, achieved through specific measures that would be constantly update in the memory of the community. First of all, the activities in school should be visible on the school's website, so that the community the school belongs to would be aware of the children's activities. On the other hand, the active presence of teachers in the community, but also the students' presence would help develop a positive image of the school.

We consider it is much difficult to promote a product or service in closed societies, due to the fact that the members of such a society are usually reluctant to novelty. Promoting school in the rural area should first of all aim to decrease school dropout and devious behaviours through school or afterschool activities (Terec-Vlad & Cucu, 2016, Trifu, Juravle&Terec-Vlad, 2017, Terec-Vlad&Trifu, 2014)

VI. CONCLUSION

We consider that school's implication in the community is one of the best strategies of promotion(Nedelea, 2002 Nedelea, 2006), besides other actions specific for marketing. If today, the educational offer is extremely varied, the emphasis being on quality, we consider there are a series of actors that determine parents to choose between one school or the other, based on their family needs, but also based on the child's needs. Of course the schools' involvement in the community and its collaboration with other social institutions would help to better the image, but besides that, we consider there should also be a good collaboration between the school and the student's family.

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