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THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT SUCCESS INVOLVED BY THE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Abstract: *The rigorous social organization of modern society ensures its maximum efficiency. Institutions and organizations structure people's daily life, regulate individual and collective behaviors, set rules for social and human interaction, regulate performances and establish rewards. Institutions are relatively stable structures of statuses and roles, which help individuals meet some of their or accomplish certain social functions. From these inter-relations we should obtain a maximum of efficiency as follows.*

Keyword:

JEL Classification:

1. ASPECTS REGARDING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

1.1 School as a Social Organization

Organizations are systems which coordinate individuals' activities so that they meet common objectives, characterized by the following features: the division of tasks, role distribution, an authority system and a system for communication between members.

Organizations are thus rational instruments, built in line with the objectives of those who have developed it. They generate cooperation, exchange and conflict reports. There is an obvious similarity between institutions and organizations: “they both provide frameworks for the initiation and development of human interactions.” [1]

Analysts of the educational system have come to the conclusion that school - as an institution – possesses all features necessary for it to be labeled “an organization”.

Thus, the institutional foundation of the organization of school provide a well-structured framework, involving and stimulating social actors (teachers, students) in the quest for performance and personal satisfaction. In their turn, social actors, who aim to meet their objectives, propose institutional changes, and thus support organizational evolution.

Therefore, school may be analyzed as an autonomous social organization, focusing on the socialization function, the function of transmitting values promoted by society.

According to A. Neculau, the characteristics of school as a social organization are:

- A precise formal structure, in line with its purposes set by society – to transmit social values and models -: school grades, teaching staff, competence hierarchy;
- The structure operation and update process is a complex process involving relations between the members of school community (students, teachers, instructors, principal);

The psychosocial characteristics of the “school system” are:

- it maintains relations with the social and economic environment, especially with the specialized elements of the environment: the family institution, mass-media, cultural and political institutions;
- it develops to functions: a primary one, as it supplies “services” (to students) and “products” (to society); and a secondary one, as it supplies the population with attitudinal, behavioral models, moral norms;
- it is an open system
- sometimes the initial purposes (instruction and education) are replaced with actions meant to preserve the system. These actions materialize in complicated codes, norms, internal regulations etc., which turn organizational members into mere agents who perform actions in order to meet internal requirements;
- within the organization, the individuals are characterized by a twofold tendency: on the one hand, they want to meet their personal aspirations, and on the other hand, they must answer organizational requests, to fit into the hierarchical pyramid. The student who meets the school requirements has the chance to be perceived by the school community as a student who is adapted to the requirements and a participant in the development of the organization. [2]

In conclusion, school is an organization which *teaches and produces learning (a learning organization)*. Its particularity derives essentially, as stated by Professor E. Păun, from the fact that it performs this function – i.e. it produces learning – and all its organizational and structural aspects are focused on this. The entire “organizational architecture” of school is subjected to the logic of pedagogical (learning) processes. [3]

1.2 The axiological value of the school

School is an axiological space par excellence, a field of value negotiation and validation. The actors involved in the educational process display their attitudes, preferences, interests, propose desirable behavioral models, discuss and identify the “input” and “output” values of this space.

The “input” values are those of the main protagonists – students and teachers, but also other (direct and indirect) participants, the administrative-managerial staff, the students' families and other collaborators. The “output” values are behavioral acquisitions, incorporation of “knowledge and consciousness”, detectable at the level of the “product” (pupils, students) but also at that of “producers” (because the agents who determine change – the teachers – adjust their value inclinations and propensities). [4]

School is an institution designated by the community to transmit a set of values. Axiologically, the pedagogical act is not limited to a simple reproduction of moral, scientific, artistic values in the corpus of pedagogical expectancies and norms or in the contents transmitted: they operate a selection, a decantation, a hierarchic division according to certain criteria focused on the pedagogical relevance of the set of educational values.

Education is not a simple conformism; it must encourage free manifestation of individual will, even if it is not always coextensive with the social flow.

The daily (and especially forcible!) constraints which the individual has to face, beyond any temporary comfort that might be achieved, contribute to the erosion of axiology, of the critical sense and responsibility. Unfortunately, our society does not focus enough on the education of the individual in the spirit of authentic values and on providing the individual with a axiological foundation. Man has to relate to a higher values, to a stable and coherent higher dimension of existence.

Without such relation to the world of values, man's activity and existence lose much of their substance. [5]

The world of values strengthen the spirit and guides the individual towards his conquering an authentic world, founded on moral autonomy. "If any ethical system requires a transition towards something which is beyond man, this 'superhuman' is the most profound axiological foundation of man himself. Once this has disappeared, any possibility to understand ethics as an oppressing yoke or stereotype structure will disappear, too. Our activity should be guided by inner impulses, but individuals are part of dynamic structures and urged to act by means of normative systems. These normative systems are not always founded on values." [6]

Then, spiritual communion accomplished through education is not only intellectual or pragmatic, but also affective, for man discovers the beauty of things or relations only when he himself possesses beauty inside, beauty which he projects outside his being.

2.ROLE OF THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY

2.1 The Family – The Basic Cell of Society

Sociologists have tried to redefine the word "family". Kari Moxnes defines family as institution and ideology:

"Families are sets of relations between people, e.g. parents, parents and children and relations between siblings. The family is an institution and an ideology - ideologies about relations between the sexes, maternal love and family privacy. Families live in households, and are thus responsible for production, reproduction and consumption, all organised in different ways." [7]

Arnlaug Leira has another definition for family: "Usually, the term 'family' refers to at least two persons, either two adults who share bed and table, as a Norwegian expression goes, or one or more adults who take parental responsibility for one or more children. It may also refer to one or more adult child(ren) who share(s) a household with his/her parent(s)." [8]

In spite of the many reports that have been published this century and which try to explain that the institution of family is obsolete, it continues to exist. Social critics deplore the disintegration of family and use as evidence the rate of divorce, juvenile delinquency, wife, child abuse, as well as isolation of old people. However, most families manage to resist most of the time, even if life is not that easy.

Many sociologists maintain that in order to understand how family works, one must explore all the areas it covers. All families are similar due to their organization, ideological systems, beliefs and structure. The way in which each family situates itself on one of the coordinates above makes it unique. Families do not live in isolation. They are intertwined with other significant social systems. Some of these have a major impact upon the family and family, in its turn, influences them. These social systems are: the enlarged family, friends, fields of activities, educational context, guiding values (the Church), spare time and community, as well as our leaders. Family can only be related in relation to the above.

Understood as a social nucleus, the family is the first which influences the development of man, and his whole personality. Family is the first school, it is the foundation of personality. The features of an institution and those of a group harmonize within family. The unity of the group is strengthened by inner and external phenomena and the dynamic of the group is influenced by material, cultural and psychological factors. The essential element of family development is the involvement of economic, material etc. factors; nevertheless, family is not a derivative of the economic factor because it finds resources in other categories such as moral factors.

Family, as a basic unit of society an natural environment for all its members, especially children, must be an environment governed by happiness, love, and understanding. Children must be educated in the spirit of peace, dignity, freedom, tolerance, equality, and solidarity, in the spirit of protecting traditions and cultural values of all peoples.

The family is the first environment in which the child is loved and learns to love the others, to give love. That is why, the family is a “true school of *feelings*; *this is how family shapes personality in its fundamental dimensions.*” [9]

2.2 The Church – A Major Institution within the Community

The educational value of religion is due to the fact that it meets the main requirement of the true educational system: one finds the *truth* through its teachings. Christian ethics, although it is generally supernatural, its foundations are rational and its truths are true. [10]

Religious values are an absolutely necessary horizon of ideality. The need of transcendence is amplifying. Without God, man could reach to dangerous paradoxes, could disintegrate in ephemeral pragmatic aspirations, and remain trapped in a temporal continuum, without any

higher purpose such as that supplied by religious belief, some people would lack reference points, their existence would become void of meaning and their gesture pointless. [11]

Religious values, once they have been fully accepted inside, attract new values, amplify and originate new hopes, new quests. They do not trap individuals and the humankind in transient worlds, but project them into the future, into eternity. Malraux's prediction regarding the religiousness of the following century may be extended to the scale of the entire history. The following centuries must accept spirituality, creation, freedom, for otherwise they will be meaningless. It is almost sure that they will be, chronological existence having no special value. It is important that centuries have a meaning, a direction, a value for individuals and communities.

The issue of religiosity is related to the deep problem of meaning. Human beings confer this meaning, but starting from elements which are beyond our understanding and which must be acknowledged and accepted through education.[12]

First and foremost, religion is a system of norms which regulate our conduct; it answers a supreme and fundamental requirement: the acknowledgment of the existence of one absolute being, the obedience to transcendence.

The religious man is a reality who relates to the reference system of instituted religion. We cannot refer to the religious man in general, but to the one who adheres to a certain religion, who builds a space of value, certain requirements, norms, expectancies.

Christian religion proposes a normative-spiritual framework which is different from the one of other religions. Belief has many a dimension, and the ways towards divinity are many more. However, the religious feeling requires the presence of a relation, a connection. The term itself, "religion", seems to derive from "religare" (Latin), which refers to the above-mentioned relation. That particular relation takes place between two terms which are rather asymmetrical: man – a limited being, and God – superhuman, infinite entity. This asymmetry proper is the one which makes the relation strong and durable.

3. THE EFFICIENT PARTNERSHIPS: SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY

When we speak about partnerships we refer to *building relationships between individuals or groups of individuals characterized*

by mutual responsibilities and cooperation in order to meet certain objectives. The school-family-community partnerships are collaboration relationships between family, school, and community in order to obtain positive educational and social results for children and teenagers, with mutual benefits. Partnerships involve mutual responsibility and respect. Partners acknowledge the potential importance and influence of all the members with which they cooperate and make investments in children's education, whose future will influence the life of the entire community.[13]

3.1. Efficient Partnerships with Families

In some schools there are still teachers who say that they will do their duty if families do their own. On the other hand, there are families who say that they have done their part in raising their children and school's job is to educate them. Such opinions lead to the idea of a clear-cut distinction between the influence spheres of school and family. Other teachers maintain that, in order to do their job, they need the support of children's families and that of the community. Some parents say that they need to know what goes on in schools if they are to help their children. These approaches illustrate the fact that there is a connection between school and family in terms of education.

Partnerships give teachers and the school management the opportunity to create schools which resemble much to families. These schools must acknowledge the individuality of their students and create a climate in which students feel integrated and valued. Schools must approach all families not only those who are easily reachable.

Parents must create families which are very similar to schools. These families must become aware of the fact that every child is also a student. Families must emphasize the importance of education, of homework assignments and activities which contribute to the development of students' skills and aspirations.

Partnership work must mean mutual confidence and respect, a continuous exchange of information, sharing the same purposes and strategies, rights and responsibilities. Of great importance in the development of the partnership is the attitude of the school's management regarding the involvement of families and community members, which is, in most cases, the key element in such activities. The school managers must be able to create a working environment in which both the teaching and the support staff perceive parents as partners.

Thus, we will emphasize below some of the most important aspects of a good school-family partnership:

a. *Creating a Positive Educational Environment.* Parents, the other members of the families and the members of the community have a certain previous experience with school, experience which would have a positive or negative impact upon their way and degree of involvement in such partnerships. This should not be overlooked when developing and implementing partnership programs in schools. Research suggests that there is a significant relation between school climate and parents' involvement in the education of their children; family members seem to accept involvement only when the school climate – from an educational and social point of view – makes them feel welcome, respected, trustworthy, and necessary. Regarding family involvement, schools which enjoy a positive environment:

- support family members in their participation in and development of relations with school staff and members of other families;
- contribute to the personal development of family members, concerning the knowledge on child care, educational skills and self-esteem;
- encourage family members to participate in the decision-making process.

b. *Respect for Different Cultures and Family Traditions.* Good schools and programs must take into account the diversity of the population segments that include the family and student. Family traditions of different cultures must be respected but this is possible only through acknowledging and accepting the differences between them.

Teachers must find methods to determine parents to value and share distinct features, cultural traditions, celebrations and folklore elements which may help them develop their identity and affiliation to community and school.

c. *Parent and Family Support Centers.* Parents and family members are offered their own space within the school and the community. This center must meet the needs of the school and participating members. The role of this center may vary from providing an assembly room where parents could share information or have access to community services. Parents may be granted access to a wide range of materials, video tapes, brochures and other publications. Some centers may extend and provide parent education, library access or courses for parents.

d. Family Partnership Benefits. Simple strategies may influence students' school performance and behavior and may encourage parents to become more interested and involved in community. Parent involvement in the education of their children leads to better performance in school and may lower school-dropout rates and juvenile delinquency rates. Childrens' whose parents listen to their problems, support them in doing their homework, transforming the child's daily experience in learning opportunities or guide them according to their teachers' advice perform extremely well in school.

e. The Family-School Connection. Teachers, facilitators and other experts, i.e. people who have worked with families and schools recommend several concrete actions which parents, schools and communities could perform in order to support students' educational activity:

To develop a daily homework schedule. Parents should develop a daily homework schedule for their children. Thus, they provide their children with a quiet and illuminated room. They make sure that the radio and television set are turned off. They discourage their children to use the phone when doing their homework. They encourage their children and answer their questions. They discuss with them the topics of their homework.

To read together with their children. Parents should read together with their children and offer them the opportunity to see them and older children reading. Parents should accompany their children to the library, to help them find the books that fit their needs and interests. Research has shown that parents who read to their children and have them read on a regular basis contribute to the improvement of their children's performance in school. The fact that parents finds enough time to read with their children is the best way to make them read, and this is a key element in education.

To use the television intelligently. Parents should develop a schedule for watching television and should help their children select the programs they are supposed to watch. They select shows they will watch together and discuss. Parents themselves should use television in an intelligent manner, to limit the watching time and help their children choose educational shows. If they are subjected to a process of selection some TV shows may increase children's interest in their own education.

To keep in touch with school. Parents should not wait for the school to tell them what their children are doing there and how. They should

inform themselves on a regular basis on their children's performance in school. They should visit the school and talk to the teachers, or they should contact the teachers by phone.

To offer rewards and encouragement. Parent should encourage the child to make efforts, to spend time and work hard in order to meet the requirements. They should provide them with rewards for their success. They should provide their children with a warm and supportive atmosphere at home, but also set certain standards regarding their activity in school.

To communicate with teenagers. Parents should do their best to find out information about their children's friends. They should support their teenage son or daughter both in their educational and non-educational activities. Parents should state their values unequivocally in order to be able to help their teenage son or daughter make the right decisions.

f. The Importance of the Role Played by the School in the Partnership. Schools may take the first steps in creating strong collaboration relationships, by creating a good educational environment, regular dissemination of information, analysis of suggestions and recommendations and hard work with a view to building and maintaining positive relationships. Schools are the key element, and their work will create the prerequisites of successful partnerships. The degree in which schools encourage and facilitate the development of partnerships is one of the most important predictive factors of partnership involvement – the involvement is good in those schools which support and facilitate partnerships.

Schools must undertake the responsibility to prepare partners for active involvement and contribute to the training of parents and community members involved. There are few parents who really want to become involved in a partnership and schools must train them and community members and help them acquire partnership skills. In order to build an efficient team, schools must make efforts, spend time and work hard. These efforts are significant and thus they also require the support of local institutions. [14]

Successful partnerships must continue during high school education. Communication between family and school changes from secondary school to high school, but parents remain valuable allies for educators. Parents still have authority upon their children and their support is required outside school.

In order to make significant changes in our schools, family members must be involved in their children's education. However, in order to support such involvement they need the support of the school, of communities, of businesses and governmental institutions. As part of their effort to connect school and parents, school may:

Encourage parents and teachers to set the framework for the learning activities. They should set the objectives, expectations, and responsibilities of schools and parents, as partners involved in students' education. The framework should be drawn up in plain language.

Train the staff. Good schools value parent involvement and request their help. Some schools contact parents only when there are problems. Principals, teachers and other employees should be trained in order to be able to take part in partnerships and support them.

Make sure homework assignments also engage parents. For example, long-term projects which may involve parents in the learning process.

Assign parents decision-making issues. Parents must be involved in making decisions related to the education of their children. Schools must involve parents in making decisions regarding school standards and objectives.

Extend their working hours. If they are open in the afternoon, in the evening or on the weekend school will allow students and parents to participate in recreational or academic activities and will supply adult training programs and children instruction programs.

Create resource centers for parents. These spaces located within school premises invite parents to share their educational experience with other parents and become involved in educational activities. [15]

3.2 The Efficient Partnerships with the Community

Schools face many challenges and prejudice. They face daily unexpected requirements and issues, and they manage to deal with them providing the best educational options for every student, with the support of organizations and community members. Partnerships with the community provide solutions so that schools may contribute to the improvement of students' and their families' lives. The collaboration with the community may engage wide support systems. The resources outside schools and collaboration with families may contribute to both the improvement of learning skills and extracurricular abilities.

Schools must build partnerships with communities in a mutual effort to meet educational requirements. Many communities enjoy the presence of highly rated institutions such as museums, libraries, universities churches, theatres, and remarkable talents such as musicians, singers, writers and artists; these resources may be used to help students acquire knowledge and skills, which eventually would add value to their communities.

The relations built as part of school-community partnerships can be mutual and they may bring substantial benefits to both the community and students. The involvement of schools in such partnerships could increase the interest of community members in the public system of education.

Communities may support the connection between families and schools in many ways, such as:

Contributing voluntarily to the education of the new generation. Community members and businesses may support family involvement by extending the learning environment.

Playing a role in supporting the development of youth and families. Schools and families should be provided with community resources. Community organizations should provide services to families, such as child care, after school activities, parent education etc.

Supporting a flexible work schedule for parents. Employers should provide parents involved in school activities with flexible work hours, should provide them with training sessions during lunch breaks and also allow their children to visit them at work.

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