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The importance of the school-family relationship in the child’s intellectual and social development

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Abstract

Family is the frame in which the future adult child’s personality is formed, built. Children’s basic education is given here and school only gives it the final shape.

In order to emphasize the importance the school-family relationship has in the pupils’ intellectual and social-emotional development, we have conducted a study in which III, rd grade children’ parents from the educational alternative Step by step were involved.

In order to improve these situations we have run a program called Together for our children’s success, during the experimental phase, in which we approached 8 topics.

We also saw the need to organize certain programs of parent education, not only at the level of a single educational institution, but at a national level.

The parents’ interest for this type of program is motivated by the pupils’ growth of school performance, their development and social integration as well as by the development of social-emotional skills.

Keywords: family; school; intellectual and socio-emotional development; school performance

1. Delimitation of the research theme

The environment in which the child is born, develops and forms for life is family. Family has a central role in ensuring the necessary conditions of passing through the stages of individual training, that is why the affective

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climate and the social-cultural model offered by it are important in the social integration. A very important role has later the relation between the teachers and the family for the success of the teaching process.

But contemporary approaches of the education phenomenon discuss on the reduction of family functions and especially of the socialization function, in this regard, education is attributed mainly to school.

At the same time, family as a social institution faces certain social-economic challenges which led to the appearance of certain social phenomena with direct impact on the child’s education in the family, like: increased rate of divorce and therefore, increase of the number of single parent families or parents leaving to work abroad. Taking into account these social realities, knowing all the education tendencies and making an authentic reform in this field, with beneficial consequences for the whole society cannot be achieved without having an efficient school-family relation.

A regression was noticed with regards to maintaining a relation between family and school. Thus, at the level of primary school, teachers enjoy a close relation with their pupils’ families. This has positive implications on ensuring the children’s intellectual and moral development. Even so, sometimes, due to the lack of physical time, this relation can deteriorate.

2. Research objectives

- Determining the parents’ interest given to the school-family relation;
- Quantifying and measuring the parents’ degree of participation and involvement in the activities organized;
- Identifying the modifications appeared in the behaviour of the parties involved as well as in the pupil-school-family relation, following the application of the strategies promoted inside the parenting course.

3. Sampling

Content sampling

The content sampling is represented by different information materials from the bibliography sources which refer to family education.

Subject sampling

The subject sampling covered 26 parents of III grade, Step by step, from Andrei Mureșanu National College, Bistrița, Romania.

4. Research methodology

The research methods and instruments that we used for this research were: the observation, the psychopedagogical experiment, the analysis of the activity products method,

While conducting the research, we used the pre-experimental, experimental and post-experimental phase.

5. Conducting the research. Results and their analysis

5.1. The pre-experimental phase

Inside this phase, we used the questionnaire as a research instrument, through which we targeted to collect certain data on the parents’ opinion on the relation school-family, as well as the needs and problems met in family education.

The questionnaire from the initial phase of the research was applied to the experimental sample made up of the 26 parents of IIC grade, Step by step, from Andrei Mureșanu National College, Bistrița,

It was structured in two parts, thus:
- The first part of the questionnaire covered factual questions (the biographical data demanded): age, education level, number of children in the family.
- The second part, which is in fact the questionnaire itself, contains 12 questions from different categories:
Initial questionnaire

Dear parents,

We are conducting a study on *The relation between school and family.*

Please help us by filling in this questionnaire with your opinions expressed freely and as sincerely as possible. When filling in the questionnaire, please circle the version corresponding to your opinion, and, in the case of the answers which contain dots, please express your opinion by trying to fit into that space.

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is *totally unsatisfied*, and 5 is *very satisfied*, mention your opinion regarding the relation you have with school (direct or indirect communication with the mistress, organized activities, etc.). Give arguments.

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<tr>
<th>totally unsatisfied</th>
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1. List several ways through which you can improve or keep an optimal relation between school and family.
2. Which do you think are the reasons for which we don’t always manage to maintain an efficient relation?
3. Do you think that a permanent relation between school and family is needed?
   YES
   NO
4. Do you think parents should involve in the school activity?
   YES
   NO
5. In your opinion, how could parents be involved in the school activity?
6. Note positive effects of the parents’ active involvement in the school or extraschool activity.
7. Analyze the following statements, circling the version appropriate for your opinion.
   a. *I ask for the teachers’ help in solving my child’s problems related to his personal development.*
      a) frequently, b) most of the time, c) rarely, d) never.
   b. *I am informed on the school progress made by my child.*
      a) frequently, b) most of the time, c) rarely, d) never.
   c. *I am informed when my child has learning and behaviour problems.*
      a) frequently, b) most of the time, c) rarely, d) never.
8. Which should be the most important school factor in educating your child?
   a) school curricula, b) mistress/teachers, c) school equipment, d) the education environment created, e) something else.
9. How do you appreciate the teachers’ involvement in educating your child?
   a) very good, b) good, c) satisfying, d) insufficient.
10. If at the level of the group of parents of the class there were a program of parent School, which runs weekly, after the pupils’ classes, would you like to participate?
    YES
    NO
11. State the most important subjects for you, which should be approached inside this program.

Classification of data:
Of the total of 26 parents of III C grade Step by step:
• 5 have graduated from highschool,
• 21 have graduated from college

Occupation
• 10 are directors and company managers
• 14 are public servants and budgetary
• 2 housewives

Number of children in the family
• 11 families have only one child in the family.
• 12 families have two children
• 3 families have 3 children

Item 1
The answers given by the parents were the following:
Very satisfied: 19 parents-73%
Satisfied: 4 parents-15,3%
Rather satisfied: 3 parents-11,5%

The arguments given by the parents who declared themselves very satisfied were:
• The mistresses’ capacity for empathy
• The mistresses’ capacity to identify the main aspects and difficulties from each pupil’s learning style
• The announcement by the mistress of important events in the child’s life: competitions, activities, evaluations, deviations from the class rules
• The interest given by the mistress in the children’s good development and their motivation for learning

Those who answered satisfied as well as rather satisfied offered the following arguments:
• Lack of time to come to school
• Communication by phone

Item 2
The ways through which one can improve or maintain an optimal relation between school and family were the following:
• Continuation of the parents counselling activities;
• Parents’ involvement in school activities;
• Discussions planned according to a timetable etc.

Item 3
The reasons for which one cannot maintain a permanent relation between school and family were the following:
• Lack of time;
• Tiredness;
• Alert life rhythm;
• Life’s difficulties;
• Daily stress.

Item 4, Item 5
All the parents considered the relation school-family as being very important, so all the answers were affirmative.

Item 6
The solutions proposed for the parents’ involvement in the school activity were:
• Projects that the children make together with the parents;
• Trips, hiking, visits to different institutions;
• Offer of material support;
• Initiative in outdoor education etc.

Item 7
The positive effects of the parents’ active involvement in the school or extraschool activity mentioned were:
- Development of the capacity to understand the daily activity;
- Cooperation in different situations;
- Better results in evaluations etc.

**Item 8**

The answers given by the parents were the following:

*a. I ask for the teachers’ help in solving my child’s problems related to his personal development.*
- Frequently – 8 parents-30,7%
- Most of the time – 12 parents-46,15%
- Rarely – 6 parents-23,07%
- Never – it is not the case

![Fig.2 (a)](image1)

*b. I am informed on the school progress made by my child.*
- Frequently – 16 parents-61,5%
- Most of the time – 9 parents-34,6%
- Rarely – 1 parent-3,84%
- Never – it is not the case

![Fig.2 (b)](image2)

*I am informed when my child has learning and behaviour problems*
- Frequently – 15 parents-57,69%
- Most of the time – 10 parents-38,46%
- Rarely – 1 parent-3,84%
- Never – it is not the case
**Item 9**

The most important school factor in the child’s education, in the parents’ opinion, is:
- School curricula: 2 parents (7.69%)
- Mistress: 22 parents (84.6%)
- The education environment created: 2 parents (7.69%)
should be discussed both at school and at home. Also, I think that the world the child lives in is a complicated one, in which we, the parents, but also school should try to teach them to be good, to mind.” Etc.

5.2. The experimental phase

The experimental phase covered both the program of parenting education and other types of activities in which parents were involved during the week Know more, be better. Also, in order to improve communication at the level mistress-parents, the Parents Council was set up, but also the class blog.

During the experimental phase, we introduced the dependent variable, represented by the parenting course. Its topics were selected from the ones stated by the parents in the initial questionnaire. Meetings shall be held weekly or once in two weeks, according to a program established together with the parents.

After having studied it, at the first meeting with the parents, the following ongoing program was set up:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic discussed</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 9/10 year old pupil in the class and at home</td>
<td>4 April 2013</td>
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<td>2. Parenting styles</td>
<td>9 April 2013</td>
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<td>3. Child’s free time spending</td>
<td>18 April 2013</td>
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<td>4. Self-esteem</td>
<td>25 April 2013</td>
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<td>5. Positive discipline</td>
<td>9 May 2013</td>
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<td>6. How do we stimulate pupils’ interest for learning? Homework</td>
<td>16 May 2013</td>
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<td>7. How do we prepare our children for an unpredictable future</td>
<td>23 May 2013</td>
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<td>8. 7 medals of the success</td>
<td>30 May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Course evaluation</td>
<td>10 June 2013</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.3. The post-experimental phase

In this phase the final questionnaire was given to all parents who participated at the program.

Dear parents,

Please fill in this questionnaire which targets the study of the impact of the activities run together inside the program „Together for our children’s success”, on the relation parent-child/pupil-school.

We suggest you circle the version corresponding to your opinion and for the answers which contain dots please express your opinion by fitting into that space.

1. Do you consider that the activities run inside the program „Together for our children’s success”, were useful for you?
   - Yes
   - No
   Give arguments for the choice made.

2. Which of the topics approached were you most interested in? Why?

3. Do you think that something has changed/will change in your attitude and behaviour in the relation with your own child, by taking part in this program?
   - Yes
   - No
   If the answer is yes, please explain what.

4. Do you think that something has changed/will change in your attitude towards school, by taking part in this program?
   - Yes
   - No
   If the answer is yes, please explain what.

5. In your opinion, has the relation mistress - family improved or not?
   If the answer is affirmative, please give reasons.
6. Do you consider that such activities are beneficial? Why? On what dimensions?
7. What other topics would you like us to discuss?
8. Taking into consideration the above, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is totally unsatisfied, and 5 is very satisfied, mention your degree of satisfaction towards the activities run and their importance to you.

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5.4. Analysis and interpretation of data

Item 1 Of the total of 26 parents involved, all of them considered that the activities run inside the program were useful for them. The arguments which support this statement were:
- „The activity from the program was very interesting and useful both for the parents and the children”.
- „I have learned a lot of interesting things about our kids’ age.”
- „I had the opportunity to do something with other parents, I found out other opinions on our children’s behaviour”.
- „It helped us understand much better both our behaviour and attitude and our own child’s.” etc

Item 2 The answers given by the parents showed their interest for the following topics:
- „My style. My child’s style – the argument refers to the fact that each of the parents found themselves in one of the styles presented as well as the the style of their own child and they learned how to treat their child.”
- „Self-esteem is a topic that I have read a lot about and what was said was the perfect supplementing.”
- „The development of social-emotional skills, as some of us don’t show a lot of interest in this topic, thinking that only school learning is important.” etc

Item 3 To this question all the parents answered affirmatively and their explanations were:
- „I will no longer be so critical in the relation with my boy!”
- „Of all the information presented and the discussions I have learned that there must be an equilibrium, that is not to be too permissive, nor too authoritarian, just a little democratic.”
- „I have tried to control my attitude towards the child in order to transmit more correctly what I want of etc.

Item 4 The parents answered:
- By taking part in this program they felt included in the school community;
- „We managed to know each other better with the teacher and to better understand how important the teacher is in our children’s every day life.”
- „School is very important for our children’s education, that’s why a permanent relation, just like it was developed through this program is absolutely necessary.”

Item 5 The parents gave affirmative answers in this case, motivating the following:
- „Through this kind of meetings we get to know the needs we have: parents, teachers and pupils”
- „The relation mistress – family has become closer.” etc

Item 6 The parents considered such activities beneficial, because:
- „Such activities run monthly contribute to the parents’ information on different subjects related to our children.”
- „The activities were beneficial as theory combined with practice.”
- „The activities are necessary. I propose they continue to run twice a month, as they are really needed.” etc

Item 7 The topics they would have liked us to discuss were: „Let’s teach them to be more flexible, to adapt”, „Activities of personal development”, „Let’s teach the children not to forget about their childhood”

Item 8 All the parents chose the version very satisfied.

As for the degree of efficiency of the activities run, it was achieved by comparing the answers to some questions from the initial questionnaire with others from the final questionnaire.

Therefore, if at the first item the parents’ degree of satisfaction was satisfied or very satisfied, now, in the final questionnaire, all of them declared themselves very satisfied.

When it comes to the ways through which we can improve or maintain an optimal relation between school and family (item 2), the organization of the activities emphasized in these ways inside the program was taken into account: parents were involved in the school activities, there was a written communication with the parents and a
class blog was set up, but there also was a correspondence at an electronic level, by mail. Common parent-children activities were organized. Thus, Item 1 from the final questionnaire showed the fact that these activities were very efficient.

The reasons for which parents don’t manage to maintain an efficient relation with school, (item 3 of the initial questionnaire): lack of time and organization, the attention given by the parents to these aspects led to the organization of the activity of the program one hour a week or sometimes once in two weeks. Item 4 of the initial questionnaire showed the importance of a permanent relation school-family.

The most interesting subjects that the parents listed at the item 12 of the initial questionnaire were correlated, therefore all the subjects have been treated inside the program.

6. Conclusions of the research

We can say that we have identified benefits of this program both at the pupils’ level and at the parents’ and teachers’ level. Thus, we have considered the following:

Benefits on the pupils:
- The pupils saw a change of attitude at the parents’ level, claiming even that they don’t scold them as often as they used to, they have more trust in them and they are more relaxed;
- A modification of the children’s behaviour in class was noticed, the class became more united;
- There was little progress in learning of the pupils.

Benefits on the parents:
- The activities organized were a success;
- The parents involved in the program appreciated the topics discussed etc.

Benefits on the teachers:
- The objectives of the research were reached;
- The activities organized were a success;
- The parents involved in the program appreciated the topics discussed etc.

Following the research and the analysis of its results, we also identified limits of the research, like: the existence of some interesting topics for the parents which couldn’t be reached because of the lack of time as well as the small number of parents (only from a class) who participated at this program.

We consider that the data offered by this program can constitute arguments in order to set up a rigorous program of parenting education, at a legislative and institutional level and the development of human resources for programs of parenting education, by training trainers in this field.

References