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Family-school partnership practices

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Our study focuses on means of showing the impact of effective family-school communication relationships through partnership agreements as crucial factors of parental educational involvement, having a positive print on the entire schooling process. Unlike in other countries, in Romania and The Republic of Moldova there is little research on the interinstitutional communication between families and schools, so we searched at a global scale. The article describes the findings of an exploratory research that involved different school-family organisational communication types and partnership practices striving to find the most efficient communication channels and the main encountered problems, which are more acute in middle and high school. We outline the ways in which family school involvement is patterned and we propose next steps for research, focusing on the importance of this relationship, the context in which mutual involvement takes place, and possibilities of enhancing involvement in diverse situations.

Keywords: *family-school communication, partnerships, educational management practices*

Practicile de parteneriat familie-şcoala

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Studiul nostru se concentrează pe mijloacele de a arăta impactul relațiilor eficiente de comunicare familie-şcoală prin acorduri de parteneriate ca factori cruciali ai implicării părinților în mediul educaționale, punând o amprentă pozitivă asupra întregului proces de şcolarizare. Spre deosebire de alte țări, în România şi Republica Moldova există puține cercetări privind comunicarea interinstituțională dintre familii şi şcoli, astfel că cercetarea e la nivel global. Articolul dezvăluie concluziile unei cercetări exploratorii care a implicat diverse tipuri de comunicare organizațională şcoală-familie şi practici de parteneriat menite să găsească cele mai eficiente canale de comunicare şi principalele probleme întâmpinate, care sunt mai acute la nivel gimnazial şi liceal. Conturăm modalitățile şi tiparele de implicare a familiei în şcoală şi propunem următorii paşi ai cercetării, concentrându-ne pe importanța acestei relații, contextul în care are loc implicarea reciprocă şi posibilitățile de creştere a acesteia în situații diverse.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicarea familie-şcoală, parteneriate, practici de management educațional*

Introduction

Any given school can function effectively as an educational providing organization only if effective communication management is provided, thus one of the topics of interest, especially in recent years has been that of family-school communication, and that is achieved in multiple ways.

Not minding the lack of scientific resources related to this topic, our scientific literature research brings some clarifications relating some basic questions, like What is the purpose school-family communication?, and how does this take place? Are there any established common practice models? Family-school communication and vice-versa reflect parental involvement in the education process.

Results and discussions

We found at Hill and Taylor (2004) a short definition of parental educational involvement described as ”communication of the family with the school and with their children to promote accademic success . ”[1, p. 161]

Another definition which completes the previous one is that ”Family-school communication is significant for school and family, and it is called a bridge to facilitate the better development of children ” [2, p. 242].

While in the past years, schools were regarded as experts in childcare and education, once with the changing of a new generation of parents, the authority of schools has been challenged and questioned. Nowadays parents pay more and more attention to education-related news and new policies, they also use the Internet and any sources to find the education model that is suitable for the family demands and selected background, and use it as a reference for their own educational style.

Our research into examining the role that families play in children’s education has inquired a range of activities and methods through which parents participate in their children’s learning process. We discovered that such programs are conceptualised as parent involvement models, and they are defined as the participation of significant caregivers to education.

It is believed that there are difficulties in family-school communication. This is because parents and teachers have contradictory opinions and positions on children’s education. Traditionally, parent involvement in education is mostly home based, but sometimes also school based,

like during parental meetings, conferences, projects, helping or volunteering. [3, p.4]

One result of our research was that parents' cultural background imposes boundaries sometimes, some of the reasons determining the conflicts being related to differences in professionalism, experience, educational philosophy and environment: " parents from different cultural background, such as minority ethnic communities seem to have differing views about the level of responsibility that the school should have. In some countries, the boundaries between the school and the home are much starker and the relationship is more formal" [3, p.11].

If the family confronts the school, the conflicts may appear more severe, as parents can construct their own expectations, which tend to exert pressure on family-school communication if projected into such an environment. Our interest consists in finding an appropriate family-school communication mode to eradicate the pressure on education caused by the difference between family expectations and school expectations.

Among family- teachers communication barriers, we found that" in family-school communication, immoderate and paradoxical requirements, and ambiguous and insufficient approval towards teachers can cause much pressure suffered by teachers " [4].

Krüger, J., & Michalek (2011) state that "the closer the relationship between family and school is, the easier it is for parents to understand the methods and strategies used by schools in the process of education" [5].

The same authors mention that "when communicating with parents, the school can seek some suggestions or comments from parents to gain the trust of the family and let parents know that the school, which is similar to how parents themselves will do its best to help children grow up healthily. In that case, the family's recognition of the school will also change from a very arrogant authority to a friend who can communicate friendly" [6].

We found at Zou (2017) some detailed strategies for enhancing family-school communication, and in summary, they include:

1. ***The school needs to be prepared for communication***.

It can summarize the forms of family involvement and student achievement, adding accessible information about it in teacher training and encouraging teachers to communicate actively with parents.

2. ***Leadership prepared for communication***.

Leadership should maintain a positive attitude toward parents' opinions. Leadership is supposed to demonstrate education policies with explanations to families in a timely manner and can supervise teacher interactions with parents.

3. ***Family-school communication needs teachers prepared for it***.

Teachers can find with parents the appropriate times and patterns of communication; on weekends, activity participation and emotional fluctuation. Teachers should provide all access to contact and the best time to reach them. [7, p.244]

Conclusions

An increasing number of young people are changing their roles from children to parents, and the education level of the new generation of parents is constantly improving. Through the analysis of the reference model, parents can construct their own expectations, which tend to exert pressure on family-school communication if projected into school education.

Based on the articles and reviews used during our examination, findings suggest that most of the school-family relationship based literature insists on family interventions, rather that collaborative protocols and agreements having the following characteristics: a general promotion of parental involvement in children's education through the use of structural intervention components, particularly planning and problem solving, even though in recent years the approach has changed.

An effective school is one that has good management standards, communicates transparently, is prone to do so responsibly. Even more, a collaborative partnership between schools and families increases trust, improves image, and motivates learners. Plus, the latest developments in science and technology change the traditional models of good family-school communication, which now has to be highly effective, and this means that information is conveyed bothways faster.

In short, the discussed collaborative school family partnerships help in supporting student learning, school units focusing on making themselves more welcoming, prepared, and equipped to facilitate family-school communication and family involvement in students' education.

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