

Methodological Aspects of Effective Teacher-Parent Cooperation

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Abstract: *The aim of the research; paper is addressed to the cooperation between teachers and parents. It aims to provide a methodical approach on the structuring of this cooperation, in order to increase the effectiveness of the parental role towards the success of students in school. Also, to underline some characteristics associated with each phase of this cooperation, knowledge of which would affect the school's effective cooperation with parents. Methods: The paper is based on interviews with teachers and parents involved in the primary cycle of compulsory education. Results: Teachers appreciate the necessity of cooperation with parents, but not always results that they are success factors in the learning process. Teachers note that they are not welcomed and understood by parents about their educational action. Cooperation process is handled by teachers based on the individual experiences of teachers and not supported in a professional methodology. This means that parents do not realize their potential on the quality of cooperation in general and in particular the education service. Parents appreciate the cooperation with the school as a restricted report in terms of information exchange. The two sides emphasize that 'trust' between the parties is the most important point of the process. Conclusion: Knowledge of the stages through which the process of establishing cooperation and recognition of the characteristics of each of the stages of this process, will help teachers to turn the relationship and cooperation with parents, in a relationship that promotes the quality and effectiveness of the process teaching and learning.*

Keyword: *effective collaboration, cooperation phases.*

Paper addresses to the cooperation of teachers and parents of first grade students. Relationship or cooperation between these actors is one of the aspects of management of educational institutions rightly regarded as among the most important, not only for quality management and school management, but for its service as a whole.

The two subjects, the schools and parents are interested to have a more effective cooperation. In all educational documents, both at central as well as at school, to address service planning and improvement of education, highlighted the importance of effective cooperation of the school with its parental community. In building this cooperation, all members of teaching staff and school leaders, although in different roles, not only included, but can and should be protagonists in this process. Thus, while school principals are involved mainly in management's view of this aspect, teachers typically are those who realize this relationship, as are those who realize the meeting and / or cooperation with parents.

The cooperation of parents with school is required in some service indicators, such as management and administration of the school, the school care for students and of course learning and student's results. The results of children are the strongest motives of the parents to cooperate with the school.

Referring to the fact that cooperation of the school with parents is requested and addressed in some areas and indicators of quality of the service, can rightly consider the cooperation as a process while structuring and effective development of which must be supported by a methodology as professional in terms of both procedural and substantive. The goal, in this context, this paper has as its general purpose, not just to submit previous experiences that schools and teachers are implementing up to now in this direction, but to provide a methodical approach to identify the phases through which passes the structuring of cooperation school / parent in terms of one of the aspects of this collaboration, the learning, or academic achievement of students.

However, as specific goals will be the evidence of characteristics that represent each of the stages of cooperation. Recognition of the respective phases and characteristics, will help the teachers and leaders in an organization, planning and support effective collaboration between them and parents.

Methods

The paper relies on interviews with principals, teachers and parents involved in the primary cycle of compulsory education. Leaders and teachers were interviewed in total 8 schools, all public schools, 4 of which in Tirana, 2 in Fier and 2 in the city of Durres. Total school leaders have been 8, of which 5 and 3 vice principals, and 15 teachers and 25

parents. Interviews, in their structure were directed to gather information from each of the groups interviewed, according to their position and report with /to school.

Interviews aimed to evident

- The experience in implementing the management plan and performance indicators that they use in monitoring and evaluating the school's cooperation with parents.
- The experience gained by teachers in the development of cooperation with parents, the support that they have from school administrations to develop this aspect.
- How sustainable and effective do the parents appreciate the cooperation and what are some of the causes that limit this cooperation?
- Does the teacher know the familiar learning conditions of the student?
- How much do the teachers recognize assessments, needs and concerns of parents for their children?
- How much do the parents know the curriculum that children develop in schools?
- How do the parents receive school observations, support and suggestions for educative action to develop in home?
- How many parents recognize their right to seek help from school?
- Are parents and teachers unified in academic expectations of students?

Results

School leaders consider very important the role and influence of parents on the quality of student achievement, this achievement for students with high achievements and for those that present special needs to be improved.

Managers argue that cooperation with parents in view of the achievements of students have part of their annual work planning of teaching. However, it turns out that this aspect is not supported with concrete indication of the realization of cooperation and collaboration activity is typical of periodic reporting and informing parents about the progress of achievement and child behavior. This is accomplished in scheduled meetings and / or required by parents.

Also claim that in many cases, the cooperation of parents is not in the school's expectations, it is because teachers and parents fail to establish a stable communication and cooperation between them. The reasons and responsibilities in these cases are few and also addressed to teachers and to parents as well.

Some of the reasons outlined are that the parents and teachers do not share the same opinion regarding the needs of students and do not share the same appreciation for the quality of educational action that these two actors realize.

Executives say they lack the experience of a joint action plan with parents for correction or improvement of any index or achievements and behavior. This is mostly due to parents, because most of them / parents do not share the same opinion with the school, connected with the needs identified by the school.

Teachers evaluate as necessary the cooperation with parents, but not always results that they are success factors in the learning process. Teachers note that they are not welcomed and understood by parents about their educational action. The process of cooperation of teacher and parent is treated by teachers based on experience and individual access to teachers and does not results to be a process that is organized in a structured and supported in a professional methodology. This means that parents do not realize their potential on the quality of cooperation in general and in particular of the education service. Teachers also have limited knowledge and in many cases unrealistic about the quality of learning environment that parents create in family. In this regard, it is claimed that the parents do not provide necessary information regarding methodological and substantive nature of their pedagogical action. In all cases the teachers interviewed, shows that parents always expect the teacher assessments and findings and the needs of the student for improvement, but they do not ask them how to support or to organize their pedagogical intervention.

Parents appreciate the cooperation with the school as a restricted report regarding information sharing. Both parties stress that faith (in a professional context) between the parties, is the most important point of the process. Parents admit that they are informed by the school for the quality of achievements, but not supported and advised that "How" should organize their family educational action.

Parents do not perceive as their right, the right to seek help and support from school to organize and conduct their educational action. For cases when they are offered this support they consider as a special service that the school offers. At most, it turns out that parents do not have or have very limited knowledge of the subject programs, with their objectives and goals. It results that they have a more knowledge on textbooks. In all cases surveyed, results that they were never recognized by the school with school subjects and also, they have no support in identifying the success or lack thereof.

Also, even when the teacher / school filed a deficiency or need to be improved, they claim that lacks common plan of action between them and teachers in order to improve certain skills and competencies of the child. Parents claim that during their communication with the school there has not been a subject of discussion between them and teachers knowing their family environment.

Discussion

By highlighting the fact that managers, teachers and parents have the same attitude and appreciation for the importance of cooperation between school and parents in improving academic achievement and overall student success in school, it is concluded that the restriction or lack of recognition of teachers for parents. Aspects such as the experience of parents, their needs for support in the educational process resulting not considered and treated by teaching staff. I appreciate that this aspect should be supported by a particular methodology, which can be structured into the following phases. (see anex 1)

1. Contact and knowledge of partners: This stage is typical for parents of first grade students of elementary education. The importance of this stage consists in the fact that not only marks the beginning of the school's relationship with the parent, but is also the stage of the first 'impact' that the partners create, as parents and teachers. Deadlines of this phase can be elusive. The role of teachers is very important at this stage, because through communication he should get as much information regarding the nature, disposition, needs, interests and different features of character and personality of the subject. Also, he must transmit to the parents his professional profile and willingness to support and cooperate with them. To achieve this information, the teacher should take care to structure such topics with the parent that are associated with the cognitive dimension of individuality of students. Also, part of the recognition should be the parents' own individuality, interests, attitudes, experiences and particular needs that they have in this activity.

The teacher must have the proper professionalism to perceive, store, respect and treat items that are identified as vulnerable or sensitive to the student. This relationship becomes more complicated to establish contacts with parents, teachers and students of lower classes of elementary education, and specifically with students with special needs in education. The importance of this stage is underlined because it represents an important moment for the establishment of trust among parents that their child will be supported professionally in the educational process.

What teachers have to consider at this stage? Parents can display uncertainty and doubts about the quality of choice they made. For this, teachers need to provide a consistent communication with parents, give them the opportunity and time to express their opinions and demands about the quality of teaching.

2. Identification of specific aspects of cooperation: This stage is verified after the recognition that the teacher has created for students in terms of cognitive, affective and motor. For the students of elementary grades is normal to display different needs, have certain difficulties in different abilities, etc.. These difficulties may arise in the power of reading, of writing, of listening, the ability of performing mathematical operations, etc.. Teachers should accurately evident specific need for improvement. For example; the teacher should not inform parents only with generalizations such as, - "student / child must work harder at math" or, "has difficulty in spotting", "has difficulty with speed of reading". He must determine exactly in which mathematical operations determines the difficulty, that in what letter (vowel or consonant) difficulty appears etc.. Needs that are identified at this stage should be discussed and intended to be accepted by parents. Teachers and parents should be unified in their findings and the importance of these findings. It may happen that parents do not share the same assessment with the teacher about the importance of the observed needs.

3. Determination of the action plan and expectations: represents the implementation phase of cooperation. The teacher should encourage the parents to not only "What kind of" must do, but also "HOW" to realize their pedagogical action, in order to improve the identified needs. Time interval, the methodology and the types of activities that will follow the parents in organizing their own educational action should also be clear to the teacher / parent and rely on pedagogical principles, aiming at building an environment that ensures effective participation of the students. Draft action plan should build upon the recognition and full consideration as educational experiences that parents may have. The rationality of expectations should also be another identified aspect accepted by the teacher as well as the parent.

4. Monitoring of the process; relies heavily on information that the parents will provide with regard to activities that they have realized in the family. The information should be structured so as to conduct quantitative and qualitative. Teachers should have all the information regarding the family environment, with tools, equipment and literature that support the

student and by the time the student devotes to learning at home. The capacity of parents to identify the nature of the difficulties showing by students learning at home, their ability to overcome these difficulties, the interests that the students develop in learning and the abilities to distinct the progress, should be another indication of this analysis .

5. *Evaluation of cooperation*, appears as the last stage of this process. This stage should continue to develop between teachers and parents. This requires that parents to be supported by teachers who recognize and respect the indicators of the success of their activities and to be trained in more objective assessment of the progress. Parents should be considered as *co-evaluator* of the process, for this must be created to him the opportunity to create his assessment on the progress achieved or not.

Conclusions

The managers and teachers in school should support with organization methodology, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the cooperation of the school with parents. Knowing the stages through which the process of establishing cooperation and recognition of the characteristics of each of the stages of this process will help the teachers that the relationship and cooperation with parents to turn it in a relationship that promotes the quality and effectiveness of teaching and education.

Quality and performance of teachers in developing their cooperation with the parents must be perceived by school administrators as a quality indicator of their performance in service.

Through communication with parents, teachers, schools should have the information or the necessary knowledge for the educational capacity and needs of parents in this regard.

Schools must return to the main partner in supporting parents to improve and organize the action with their professional education at home.

School must do all efforts for parents to have full knowledge for the curriculum. Action plan that must be developed between teachers and parents to support the students, should be structured in concrete and observable indicators.

Annex 1

Phases of Cooperation Activities and		Indicators of Success features
1	Contact and recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish direct contact teacher-parent • Communication / focused interview to collect information about the educational potential of the family (interests, access to education, training, quality of family environment ... etc.) to parents. • Evidence of the expectations of parents for their child's education. • Evidence of needs and demands of parents, to be supported in their action • Evidence of perception and trust that the parent has for the school. • The willingness of the parents to cooperate. • The clarity of the expectations of the parents. • The level of the trust that appears.
2	Identification of specific aspects of cooperation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students of elementary grades is normal to display different needs. • Teachers should accurately evident specific need for improvement. • Needs that are identified at this stage should be discussed and intended to be accepted by parents. • Teachers and parents should be unified in their findings and the importance of these findings. • It may happen that parents do not share the same assessment with the teacher about the importance of the observed needs.
3	Determination of the action plan and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft action plan should build upon the recognition and full consideration as educational experiences that parents may have. • The teacher should encourage the parents to not only "What kind of" must do, but also "HOW" to realize their pedagogical action. • The rationality of expectations should also be another identified aspect accepted by the teacher as well as the parent. • Time interval, the methodology and the types of activities that will follow

		the parents in organizing their own educational action
4	Monitoring of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers should have all the information regarding the family environment, with tools, equipment and literature that support the student and by the time the student devotes to learning at home. • The capacity of parents to identify the nature of the difficulties showing by students learning at home, • The ability to distinct the progress achieved by student.
5	Evaluation of cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents should be considered as <i>co-evaluator</i> of the process, • How accepted is the progress relating to the expectations.

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