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THE ROLE OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE AS A KEY FACTOR IN SCHOOL-PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

Social Science

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ABSTRACT

An important role in the quality improvement of education plays the development of good school-family cooperation. Parents as the main promoter in child education have a deep impact on how to adapt children to school and how skilled they will be to gain knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative for the school and the teachers to develop action plans for active involvement and the positive engagement of parents in school. We have to acknowledge that teacher performance is a key factor in creating successful partnerships mainly because teacher performance is reflected on student outcomes and their behaviors, the effectiveness of application of teaching methods and techniques, classroom management, communication and involvement of parents, school documentation, student assessment …etc. In addition, the methods and ways teachers use to collaborate with parents help the quality and performance of parenting at home with the learning of their children. In this study the author aims to highlight some of the factors that influence the establishment of the school-family partnership as well as its importance and the role of teacher's performance in creating sustainable school-family relationships.

KEYWORDS

performance, partnership, school, family.

INTRODUCTION

Today's society and the individual's needs for lifelong learning require a close relationship between the school, family and community. This relationship improves students' ability to learn, helps to connect more the family with school and creating a safer environment in school. Partnership is the essence of school achievements and the development of contemporary practices. The partnership between school, family and community besides assists teachers in their work, helps to improves school curricula and school climate, provides services and support to families, enhances parenting skills and their roles, creates links between parents in school and community. For the school, working in partnership can mean an improvement in 'school programs and school climate', for the families, it can 'increase parents skills and leadership', and from a community perspective it can 'connect people' (Epstein, 2001).

Teachers have a crucial role in involving parents in school, increasing teaching quality, high learning outcomes and student motivation. Nowadays, knowledge is the main asset of a country. A priority for each nation today is to increase the value of the potential that its citizens can engage in the global economy by increasing their knowledge and skills, as well as by advancing the ways in which the knowledge is associated with the global market (Reich, 1992).

Regular communication and reporting of children's learning performance to parents affects positively the motivation of childrens for education. In addition, it increases the expectations and enthusiasm of children towards school. It is a general belief that enthusiasm expresses the light, hope, joy and motivation that students need to move forward in school, and furthermore in life. Both children and adults are inspired by the enthusiasm of others.

Efficient communication between school and parents occurs when it is developed in a positive, warm environment and when it is mastered by mutual respect. Listening the opinions of the parents plays an important role in improving and developing the school, in the success of children, and in developing a culture of trust, communication, and cooperation. Family interaction among family members and parents' interaction with teachers facilitates or hampers the success of young people (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

The family environment represents the whole of the interaction of children with parents (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). Some other important aspects of family environment that positively influence the achievement of children in school are: family structure, parents behavior, family cohesion, child-parent relationships, parental education level and the economic status of the family (Masten, 2001).

When a healthy and powerful family-school partnership is established, the services and support that the school offers to the family increases. Furthermore, the psychological and counseling competences of the teacher, co-ownership and parent-teacher co-responsibility are strengthened.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Teachers activate parents at school through volunteer work, involvement on plans that enhance student performance, improve school conditions, or teacher, student and parent relationship. Parents as part of the school feel appreciated when they are activated and acquainted with school decisions and developments. Parents' knowledge about the school program, the functioning of the school system and how they can help their child learn are key elements of friendship and respect for parents. Parents' involvement in monitoring and counseling programs, their approach to school policy can improve not only the attendance of students in school but also their learning outcomes.

The parent's role as a key factor in child education, is transmitted by the child interest in the teaching process as well as the relationship he builds with his friends and teachers. Parents' participation has a positive impact on the social and behavioral performance of students, as the more involved and active parents are in support of their children, the more positive their social achievements are. This helps in managing the student's dangerous behaviors and enhances social interaction between them.

Setting up supportive teachers for children with special needs, recognizing their specific needs, treating them the same way as others in the classroom is a succesful method to enhance the school-family partnership. Furthermore, recognition of policies pursued by the education institute in the teaching process and close support to students in creating a safe and acceptable learning environmen, as well as conflict prevention and any kind of violence among students or teachers are some of the factors that play a key role in the successful formation of a school-family partnership (Rutter, 2000) 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

School-family partnership is very important mainly because it helps teachers to get familiar with the child's family environment, the interests and expectations that the family has toward the school. The family is the healthy nucleus in the cultural, social and education of the individual, its formation and adaptation to society. The school-family partnership creates tolerance, flexibility, trust, cooperation, respect, appreciation, communication and support to one another.

This relationship affects the child's motivation as the child feels safer in school, engages more in the learning process, creates more friendly relationships with the teacher and classmates, increases self-esteem and creates a warmer atmosphere in the class. The teacher does not only influence the academic formation of the child but knows closely his spiritual world, desires, interests, attitudes and opinions about the school, or his classmates. By recognizing these qualities, the teacher uses them maximally for the benefit of the children by increasing the child's learning outcomes. The partnership between teacher, family and student is the key factor in the progress of the teaching process. Teaching will not be effective and fruitful if this communication is

lacking and the parent is no longer seen as a client at school but as a new energy source of ideas, counseling, and implementation. The school-family partnership engages and develops community in terms of creation, promotion of ideas, various social-educational activities and helps parents understand the new curricula in education and their assessment.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of this study consists of primary and lower secondary education teachers in the cities of Vlore and Gjirokastra. The sample consists of all teachers of the 9-years school of the city of Gjirokastra at both levels in all subjects. The aim of the study is to find out how the performance of the teacher affects the creation of the school-family partnership and the learning process. The data are collected through personal interviews.

To measure the performance index, 18 structured questionnaires were created with the Likert scale, questions 43-60 in the survey. Each statement of this part is composed of the following answers: 1 = fully disagree; 2 = almost disagree; 3 = neutral 4 = almost agree and 5 = fully agree. These questions were discussed and consulted with teachers and education specialists. After testing for the confidence level of this index, we found a good confidence coefficient, $\alpha = 0.7686$.

The results of the questionnaires are presented with the following graphs. To the question, When are you notified for school meetings?, we found that 40% of parents were notified four days before the meeting and 50% one day before. Only 10% of parents were notified one week before the meeting (see Fig.1).

Furthermore, when the parents are asked how many times do you contact with your children's teachers, 40% said every month, 40% only in meetings, 18% every week and 2% every day.

The pie charts (fig. 2) show parent's answer to the question: Are you satisfacted with the collaboration you have with teachers? It can be seen that 40% of the parents are very happy with the collaboration and 25% have a satisfactory collaboration with the teachers. However, 15% of the parents are not satisfied and an astonishing number of 20% said that they are not satisfied at all with the teacher-parent collaboration.

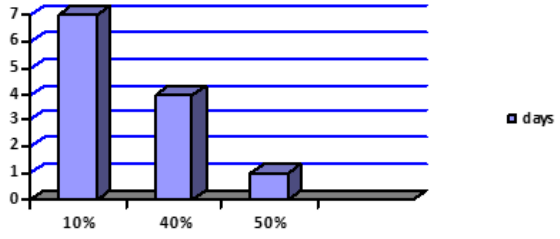

Fig.1 When are you notified for school meetings?

Furthermore, when the parents are asked how many times do you contact with your children's teachers, 40% said every month, 40% only in meetings, 18% every week and 2% every day.

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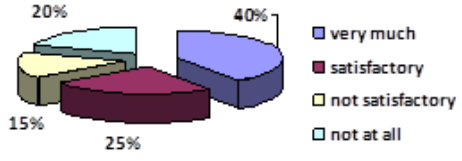
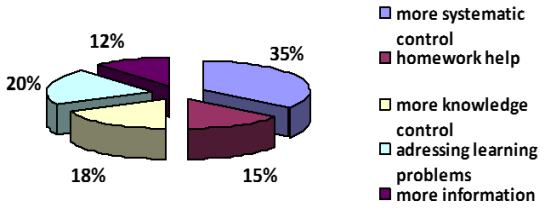


Fig.2 Question: Are you satisfacted with the collaboration you have with teachers?

In addition, 35% of the parents said that they were asked to decide together about school problems and activities and 25% were informed about such decisions. Around 35% of the parents said either they were not informed or were not asked at all about their opinions related to school problems and activities.

The pie chart below (Fig.3) shows the answers when the parents where asked about the requirements they have for teachers. 35% of the parents wanted a systematic control of childrens, 20% said they want teachers to adress problems with children's learning and 15% needed more help in homeworks. Interesting is the fact that 12% of the sample needed more information about the children achievements and progress from the teachers.

Fig.3 Parents where asked about the requirements they have for teachers.



Furthermore, when the parents were asked if the matters that really concerns parents are discussed in the meetings, over half of the parents, 55% said that these matters were part of the meeting and 45% of the parents said that the meetings adress different issues and maters and not what really concerns them.

CONCLUSIONS

The fact that some parents do not attend parental meetings comes as a result of the late announcement only a day before the meeting, therefore parents do not have time to plan. In addition, since most of the meetings fail to adress issues of interest for the parents, they have become monotonous and parents refuse to attend all of them. Teachers need to be more careful about parents' engagement in the teaching process and the development of school activities so that parents feel part of the school not only through monetary contributions but also during the development of activities of a social-educational nature.Parenting meetings should be intentionally developed and not just planned by the school's directorate because various issues and problems that arise during the learning activities cannot wait to be solved and should be adressed as soon as possible. It is evident from the study that teachers need to work harder to attract parents to school by making parenting meetings and the subject of discussion more appeling to parents. Only by adressing deficiencies and problems together can teachers and parents have a succesful and sustainable collaboration. Opinions on the decisions that have to be taken should be asked to all parents, not just parents who are part of the school council or school board. Parents feel more cooperative when teachers treat them with respect and this more intense collaboration is felt specially in the elementary classes.

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