



Characteristics of the Communication Between Parents and Students of the Preparatory Class. Barriers, Positive Factors, and Responsibilities of Teachers

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Abstract

Keywords:

parent-children communication;
school-family partnership;
positive learning environment;
positive pedagogy;
student-centred paradigm;
efficient communication.

This article aims to investigate the factors that influence the quality of communication between parents and children. At the same time, we were interested in establishing and highlighting the teacher's responsibilities in order to optimize parent-children communication, during the preparatory grade. The conducted survey reveals the important role of teachers in optimizing parent-children communication and the beneficial role of promoting children's qualities and their positive behaviors. The study reveals the importance of the positive pedagogy practices that encourage teacher-parent-children communication and a positive learning environment at school and at home, the key to success in the student-centered paradigm. According to the discussions with the parents, preparatory graders don't offer parents complete information about what happens at school and often they give them short and sometimes irrelevant information. Teachers have an important role in creating and maintaining a good cooperation with parents during the primary education level. Their role becomes more important when they can help parents communicate better with their children and create a positive climate for communicating and learning together.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

N Eltern-Kinder Kommunikation;
Schule-Familie Partnerschaft; positives Lernumfeld;
positive Pädagogik, studierendenzentriertes Paradigma; effiziente Kommunikation.

Dieser Artikel hat zum Ziel die Untersuchung der Faktoren die die Qualität der Kommunikation zwischen Eltern und Kindern beeinflussen. Gleichzeitig waren wir interessiert, die Verantwortungen des Lehrers zu bestimmen und hervorzuheben, um die Kommunikation zwischen Eltern und Kindern während der Vorbereitungsklasse zu optimieren. Die durchgeführte Umfrage zeigt die wichtige Rolle des Lehrers in der Optimierung der Kommunikation zwischen Eltern und Kindern und die positive Rolle der Förderung der Qualitäten der Kinder und des positiven Verhaltens. Die Studie zeigt die Wichtigkeit der positiven pädagogischen Praktiken, die die Kommunikation Lehrer-Eltern-Kinder sowie auch ein positives Lernumfeld in der Schule und zu Hause, der entscheidende Erfolgsfaktor im studierendenzentriertes Paradigma, fördern. Entsprechend den Diskussionen mit den Eltern, bieten Vorbereitungsklassen den Eltern keine umfassenden Informationen über das was in der Schule passiert und sie erhalten oft kurze und manchmal nicht relevante Informationen. Die Lehrer haben eine wichtige Rolle im Aufbau und in der Aufrechterhaltung einer guten Zusammenarbeit mit den Eltern während der Grundschulbildung. Ihre Rolle wird umso wichtiger, wenn sie den Eltern helfen können, besser mit den Kindern zu kommunizieren, und ein positives Umfeld für Kommunikation und gemeinsames Lernen, zu schaffen.

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1. Introduction

The way that parents communicate with their children is decisively influencing their process of development. According

to C. Cuciş (2002, p. 49) family is the "first factor which forms the person in a multidirectional perspective". The education given within the family is very important if we take into account the large period of time that children spend with their families. We consider that the systematic education from school should be

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realized with a strong cooperation between family and school. The start of the elementary school is an important moment for all the educational participants. The preparatory grade is part of the Romanian educational system and could be defined as a year of accommodation and transition from kindergarten to school activities, which are more complex, more serious and more diverse. The majority of children enrolled in the preparatory grade are 6 or 7 years of age. It is the time when parents and teachers meet each other, understand their expectations, their objectives and their action plans regarding children's education. Family and school should always act together considering their common goals. (Răduț-Taciu, M.-D. Bocoș & O. Chiș, coord., 2015, p. 324). At the beginning and during preparatory grade, family should be actively involved in the children's education.

A good family involvement and a consistent partnership between teachers, parents, and the community should be realized at all educational levels. Parents are interested to know information about what children learn at school, about their school results and performances, about their learning preferences. A good cooperation between school and family is advantageous for children, parents and for teachers. (R. Răduț-Taciu, M.-D. Bocoș, O. Chiș (coord.), 2015, p. 324). Preparatory graders are generally participating with enthusiasm at school activities, but sometimes they refuse to share this with their parents. These observations were noted during the discussion with 20 parents that were interested in children's school evolution and school behavior. A good occasion of communication about the child's positive abilities and their authentic learning experiences is common workshops for parents and children. Workshops for parents and preparatory graders could be considered as a good form of learning, cooperating and acting together in an atmosphere based on trust, respect, positive interactions, appreciation and liberty of expression. (M.-D. Bocoș, coord., 2016). The child would be happy to interact with his family and with the teacher and will understand that everyone's efforts are concentrated on his education and well-being.

Interactive activities and student-centered learning activities are considered efficient and should be realized during the parent-children workshops. We consider that when we cooperate well and treat parents as real partners involved in the educational process we can obtain better learning results, we can improve children's motivation and we can teach according to children's individual needs and particularities. The teacher should be the person who strengthens the relation between the child and the parent, by suggesting activities that they can make together, talking about child's preferences and desires that he shared with the teacher and his classmates. He also should talk about the child's positive learning experiences, about his strengths and his qualities.

2. Methodology and research results

This quantitative research used as the main data collection instrument a questionnaire composed of 6 questions. The questionnaire was applied on a sample of 90 parents of the children enrolled in the school year 2015-2016 into the preparatory grade. Questions were opened or semi-opened. The survey conducted was realized in the online environment. The purpose of the study is to establish the efficiency of communication between the parents and the students and the strategies that teachers could apply in order to support parents in communicating and cooperating better with their children.

We were interested to find the answer to the following questions:

- How important is the teacher's role in optimizing the parent-child communication, considering the parent's opinion?
- What are the teacher responsibilities in order to cooperate well with the families and encourage positive relationships between parent and children?

All the respondents are females, aged 23 to 40 years, and their mean age is 30.9 years. Participants live in the following counties from Romania: Alba, Cluj, Constanța, Mureș, and Tulcea. According to their answers to the first question, we can conclude that the majority of respondents have one, two or three children. Just one of the respondents has four children and two of them have more than four children (see Table 1).

Table 1. The description of the participants considering the number of their children

| The number of children | Number of participants | Percentage |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1 child | 25 | 27.8% |
| 2 children | 46 | 51.1% |
| 3 children | 16 | 17.8% |
| 4 children | 1 | 1.1 % |
| 4 or more than four children | 2 | 2.2 % |

Analyzing the answers given by the parents to the question number 2, we can consider that the majority of respondents appreciate they have a good communication with their children, a small part of them consider communicating inefficiently with their child (see Table 2).

Table 2. Parents' opinion regarding the quality of communication with their children

| Quality of parent-child communication from parent's perspective | Number of participants | Percentage |
|---|------------------------|------------|
| Efficient | 85 | 94.4 % |
| Inefficient | 5 | 5.6% |

Question number 3 reveals the main factors that are influencing negatively the communication with children. The majority of respondents stated that their busy schedule and the lack of free time are the factors which negatively influence the communication with their children. A small part of participants considers children aren't interested and sometimes refuse to talk to adults about what happened at school, because of their increased interest in playing and talking with other children. The family's problems are a frequent cause of incomplete or inefficient communication between the parent and the child. One of the respondents appreciates that the children's increased interest for the computer or television has a huge influence on the quality of communication with them (see Table 3).

Table 3. Factors which influence the quality of communication between children and parents

| Parent's responses | Number of times that the option was selected | Percentage |
|---|--|------------|
| The lack of time or busy schedule | 51 | 47.2% |
| Low interest of the child for talking with the adults. | 24 | 22.2% |
| More frequent problems of the family | 32 | 26.9% |
| Computers, television and others devices used by the child for play and fun | 1 | 0.9% |

Question number 4 has the role of investigating the opinion of parents regarding the impact of organizing the parent-children workshop in the school environment. We were interested to find out if common activities realized at school can help them communicate better with their children. The majority of the respondents appreciate that these types of activities could offer them the chance to communicate more efficiently with the children. Their answers help us conclude that the simultaneous participation of children and parents to the educational

workshops is a factor that influences positively the communication between parents and children (see Table 4).

Table 4. Impact of organizing parent-children workshops from parent's perspective

| Parents' responses | Number of participants | Percentage |
|--|------------------------|------------|
| Yes, the participation within the workshop could help improve my communication with my children | 87 | 96.7% |
| No, the participation within the workshop couldn't help improve my communication with my children | 3 | 3.3% |
| I don't know if the participation within the workshop could help improve my communication with my children | 0 | 0% |

Answers given to the question number 5, revealed that all the parents are interested to find out information about the child abilities and preoccupations, more frequently. They consider the teacher should talk to them more often about their children's positive qualities, about their interests and about their abilities or talents.

The last question of the questionnaire has the purpose of investigating if an efficient cooperation with the teacher can help parents improve their communication with the children. All the respondents appreciate that an effective cooperation with the teacher has a positive effect on their communication with children (see Table 5).

Table 5. Parents' opinions regarding the role of the teacher in optimizing parent-child communication

| Parents' responses | Number of participants | Percentage |
|--|------------------------|------------|
| Yes, the teacher has an important role in optimizing parent-child communication | 99 | 98.9% |
| No, the teacher has no influence on the communication with the child | 1 | 1.1% |
| I don't know if the teacher has an important role in optimizing parent-child communication | 0 | 0% |

3. Conclusions and discussions

The factors that are influencing negatively the communication between parents and children are very diverse, one of the most frequently identified factors are the lack of time of the parents

and their busy schedule. At the same time, teachers could help parents communicate better with their children.

The main responsibilities of teachers are to:

- Observe and note every important aspect of the children's activity;
- Discuss with parents, in a different context, about their children's qualities and preoccupations;
- Organize parent-child workshop in the school environment;
- Talk to parents about the importance of good parent-child communication;
- Encourage the children to talk more often to adults about what happened at school;
- Create a positive learning atmosphere, student-centered learning experiences based on the children's interest and their age-specific particularities;
- Make parents aware of their huge role in the development process and the importance of establishing clear and common goals with school representatives;
- Ask parents for information about the period of time and the manner how they want to be involved in the educational process;
- Suggest activities that can be realized at home and can be beneficial for both the parent and the child;
- Invite parents to get involved into activities, make them aware of the children's progress, about performances in class and about the activities preferred by children;
- Create the context for various communication, adapted to each situation;
- Listen to the parents' opinion, ask them about child's preferred activities and games.

We consider the role of the teacher is very important in optimizing school and family communication, according to all participants. The educational workshops for parents and children could be a context for outlining the child's qualities. In order to offer objective and relevant information to the parent, he should cooperate well with the rest of the teachers that teach the class. At the same time, we can cooperate with the school counselor. Some of the limits of the study are the small number of participants and the fact that only the parents' opinions were

considered. For a good child development, a qualitative cooperation is necessary between the teacher, the parent, and the child. Future investigation directions are: to create and implement educational workshops for parents and children and to test their effects on the consistency of the school - family partnership, investigating teachers' opinions about the effective strategies they use with success, to actively involve families in children's education, and to investigate the child's opinion regarding the activities they would like to do with their parents in the school environment.

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