

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS - AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES AT SCHOOL

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Abstract

Communication is the process through which information is exchanged and understood between two or more people to motivate or influence their behaviors or attitudes. As a synonym for communication, in everyday language the word conversation is used, however, communication is more than just a simple conversation. We could define communication as a process of making mutual contact by which meaning is transmitted, as a process of mutual influence using symbolic means, and as a process of exchanging information, meanings, and feelings between people, through the verbal and non-verbal exchange of the message. The most important factors when communicating with children in the first place are: family, social circle, and education. In this project, we focused on children aged 6–7 years old, respectively first graders of primary school. Communicating with students, especially those in first grade, it's very difficult to work. Helping the child in communication is one of the most important efforts, not only for parents and teachers but for everyone. The family and society must encourage students to be intelligent, tolerant, creative in their development. The survey sample included 132 first-grade primary school teachers in the Gostivar region of North Macedonia. For this research was used an instrument, respectively a structured questionnaire for teachers. The data were processed, compared, and presented with IBM SPSS v.19.0 software packages. In our research we tried to address the problem of communication between teachers and parents, respectively parents' interest in communicating with teachers and the level of freedom of parent-teacher communication and the data showed that there is a statistical difference between the two variables, moreover, parents of this area show interest in their child's school being. For this matter, we suggest that the school create a more motivational environment for parents to be involved.

Keywords: communication, parents, teachers, students, classrooms.

Introduction

An important feature of education, viewed in the interactive-communicative aspect, is that it relies on collaboration, it depends on the quality of interaction and communication in the teacher-student relationship and with this, the personality of the teacher and the student is perfected (Kadriu, L.L., 2016, p.14). Parents, as important factors in the process of the upbringing and education of children, have a multifaceted role. On the one hand, they directly monitor and control the work and development of children, taking care to create the best possible working conditions and, on the other hand, their role is reflected in the successful work of students in the classroom (Zylfiu, N., 2004, p.96). "Parents are obliged from the first grade until children are still in their hands, to lay a sound foundation in all forms of education" (Mitrović, D., 1976, p. 262). Based on the conclusion that the educational work in school has a social character, "The education of the child in the family, in the context of the development and formation of the new generation in society, it is not and cannot be a private matter of the parent. The parent exercises this valuable social task, which, like any other activity, should be planned and programmed and not disorganized or incidental or contrary to the action of other social factors" (Prodanović, 1975, p.17). School as an educational institution in which the younger generation learns about the real world and life, in addition to its role in transmitting

knowledge skills and habits it also has an important function which has to do with the social educational function, which means that the schools are a service company. The parent as a part of society has a great connection with the school which connection is strengthened through the communication process (Vidanović, 2006, p. 246). Usually, a great role is played by the attitude of the parents towards the child, towards the achievements in general and school success. The children's personality itself and the way they interact with all environmental factors will affect readiness, adaptation, and response to the situations at school. Parents should attend daily activities that make the child/student, to be partners in decision-making on issues related to students-their children, if they belong to education, to participate in planning and decision-making, but also in monitoring and controlling schoolwork (Dardha, D., 2014, p.47). In developed countries, parents have an important role to play in improving school with their opportunities for cooperation with the school as well as participation in the organization of life and activities of children in school. For this purpose, their communication and cooperation start in first grade in parent meetings with the class teacher. The parents along with the teacher discuss the extended activities of the children in the school, can present their observations in relation to the teaching, assessment, or behavior of students and teachers, as well as a range of other questions. There are also certain days for conversation in schools with parents. If necessary, parents can come to the school and talk directly with the teacher about the child's success and make a plan on how to help them. So, teachers and parents communicate and collaborate, and this process is created in school practice. (Murati, Xh., Ceka-Tahiri, A., 2017, p. 167). Harmonized communication and collaboration have a positive impact on the performance of students (in learning/achievement) and can have a significant impact on school quality. The school communicates with parents for at least four reasons:

- Information - for parents about student attendance, academic progress, and personal development;
- Cognition - for the school to understand any development that may affect student's learning;
- Counseling - for parents on how to help students in specific curricular subjects;
- Consultation - with parents about the specific difficulties of the child in school. In their study, Epstein and Douber (1989, according to Epstein, 2001) found that teachers have more positive views on parental involvement, they pay more attention to the other's practices such as organizing meetings with the parents of all students about the school programs and exchange with parents both negative and positive results of their students. Strengthening positive attitudes of teachers also correlates with the growth of success in involving "hard to reach" parents. The family and the school aim for an education strategy or are very close to the goals regarding the formation of the child's/student's personality. Even when these education concepts may be different, depending on the function of social environments, again it's intended towards communication and cooperation. The school environment is an asset, a new experience for the child, without displacing the family or social environment. This does not preclude attitudes of parent's differences in their children's learning and education. It is therefore useful and necessary for the parent to receive accurate information from the school regarding the harmonization of their activity as an institution and for special individual aspects (Kasapi, GJ., 2013, page.169).

Methods

The goal of the research in this paper was to address the problem of communication between teachers and parents, on two views and attitudes that teachers have expressed about their communication with the parents of first graders, **parents' interest in communicating with teachers, and the level of freedom of parent-teacher communication**. Respectively, the communication process between the subjects is analyzed by looking at the specifics of

communication between teacher and parent as a factor of educational work in school. The hypothesis that aroused during the literature review was as follows: 1. Hypothesis: ***Parents do not show interest in communicating about student's difficulties at school***, and it is a quantitative type of research. The instrument used in this survey was a structured questionnaire with open and closed questions which depict attitudes and views of the most common problem of communication between teachers and parents. For this reason, the sample consisted of 132 primary school teachers and first graders at elementary schools in the municipality of Gostivar and the surrounding area. The research data were processed according to descriptive statistics, by frequency (f) and percentage (%). The obtained results are presented in tables and graphs with the help of Microsoft Office Excel 2007 software. The statistical significance of the differences in the attitudes and opinions of the teachers was calculated with the help of the Hi square test (X²). This research has an empirical, individual, and descriptive character.

Results

Parents play an important role in supporting their children in learning, parents need to know what students are learning and what homework they have. Teachers need to keep parents informed of this. When the teachers include parental involvement in daily teaching practices, parents increase interaction with their children in homes, have a more positive sense of their ability to help their children, have a higher appreciation for teachers in general and students improve their attitude and achievements. In the question: How interested are parents in communicating with you, about activities that take place at school? we obtained the results which are presented in figure 1.

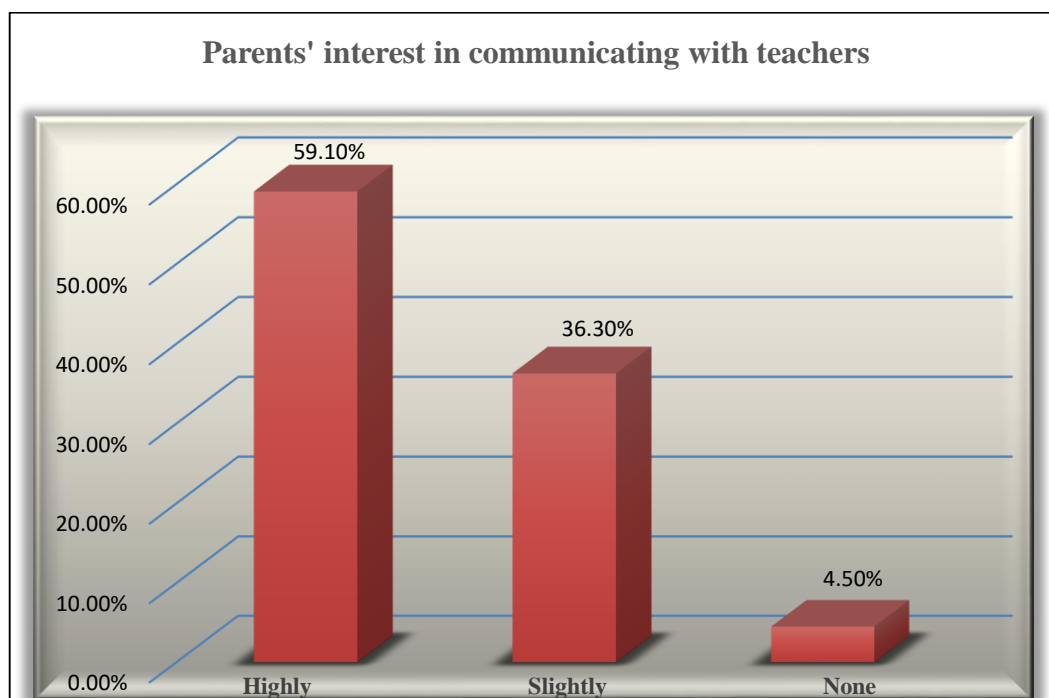


Figure 1. Parents' interest in communicating with teachers

On the question of how are interested parents in communicating with teachers regarding activities of their children, about 59.10% of respondents stated that they are parents that have a lot of interest, close to 36.3% that parents have little interest and 4.50% stated that parents have no interest in communicating with teachers about the activities that take place in school. Although a high percentage of parents communicate with teachers to a large extent, it is observed that one in three expresses little or no interest in communicating with teachers, which

may be an indication of low parental schooling and other factors that are not in the realm of teacher influence. The cooperation of the school with the family, respectively the teachers with the parents should be planned and part of the school program and the class tutor. Reasons for direct contact with parents can be numerous. Except for learning issues, requests may also arise for other reasons such as: bringing students in and out of school, health conditions, etc. The next question (figure 2) of this research is: How freely do parents communicate with you, for each problem of their child?

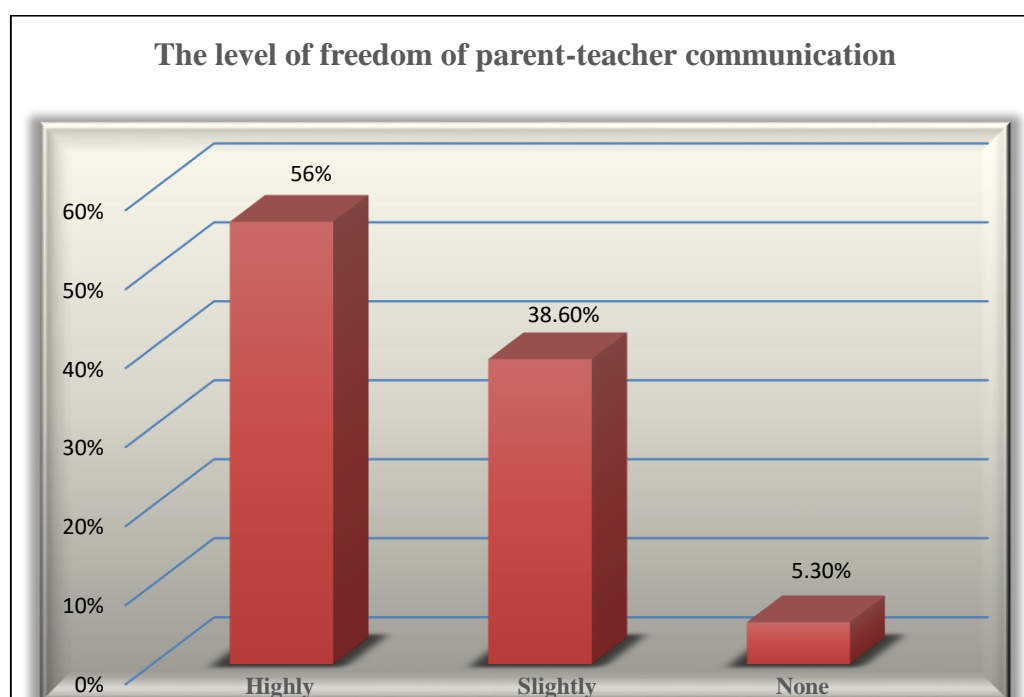


Figure 2. *The level of freedom of parent-teacher communication*

About 56% of respondents said that parents communicate very freely with them for every problem of their child. However, about 38.60% of respondents said that parents only slightly communicate freely with them about any of their child's problems while 5.30% of respondents said that parents do not communicate freely at all with teachers around problems of their children. From these results it is noticed that the parents are ready to communicate with the teachers, but a third of them do not want to communicate about every problem of their children. Parents play an important role in supporting their children in learning, parents need to know what students are learning and what homework they have. Teachers need to keep parents informed of this.

Table 1 presents the results from the statistical analysis of the data and makes a parallel comparison of the answers obtained for the hypothesis.

Table 1. χ^2 – Hypothesis: Parents do not show interest in communicating about student's difficulties at school.

The results of a contingency table X^2 statistical test			
data: contingency table			
	A	B	
1	78	74	152

2	48	51	99
3	6	7	13
	132	132	264
expected: contingency table			
	A	B	
1	76.0	76.0	
2	49.5	49.5	
3	6.50	6.50	
chi-square = 0.273 degrees of freedom = 2 probability = 0.872			

The input of the third auxiliary hypothesis test consists of the results from two related questions with two variables, interest and freedom of communication: How much interest do parents have to communicate with you about the activities that take place at school? How freely do parents communicate with you, for any problem of their child? As seen in Table 1, the test results $\chi^2 = 0.273$, $df = 2$, and $p = 0.872$ show that there is a statistically significant difference in distribution, there is a slight correlation between the two variables, and the hypothesis is not accepted. So, although not at a very high level, however parents show interest in communicating about student's difficulties at school.

Discussion and conclusions

Parents are the first teachers of the children they are the first guardians for each child. Therefore, the school should build bridges between teachers and parents and encourage bilateral and systematic communication for the provision of educational services. Effective communication between school and parents occurs when it takes place in an environment where respect is bilateral. Listening is often more important than speaking. The involvement of parents in school is more than just attending parent meetings when they are invited, or a situation when there is any difficulty or problem with the child. Parental involvement implies the participation of parents, through regular, reciprocal, and efficient communication, in the process of teaching and other school activities. The involvement of parents in activities that are in the interest of the school and for the students builds an opportunity for harmonization of attitudes and actions, which in turn creates opportunities for achieving the intended results.

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