PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT AS AN INFLUENCING ELEMENT ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

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Rezumat: Articolul *Impactul părinţilor asupra dezvoltării motivaţiei elevilor claselor primare* tratează problema formării motivaţiei, în general, analizează relaţia şcoală-părinţi şi rolul părinţilor în dezvoltarea motivaţiei la elevii claselor primare, în particular. În acest context sunt cercetate câteva modele de relaţionare a părinţilor cu şcoala.

The word motivation comes from the word motive and describes motives. The motivation theories pretend to explain processes that motivate a person in a certain way. It is a theoretical structure that we use to explain why people do what they do. It is also a process that explains how a person responds to a need or a general will and starts a chain of effective actions in order to have his will. Besides, motivation is the desire to invest time and effort in a certain activity even if it is difficult, takes a high cost and failures.

In the research literature there is a wide agreement about the parents' importance and their contribution to their children motivation (Klein and Blain 2008). If in the past we could relate to the cooperation between teachers and parent as a desirable target, as an appropriate option, as the "cream" of education, today this cooperation is vital and essential and without it the teachers and the parents will not be able to function apart but only together to realize their educational responsibility to the students (Amit 1997). The socialist perception of education emphasizes the parent's duty to assist the continuation of the existence of the society in its relationship with education. The parents' right to be involved in their children's education is fixed in the principals of the democratic regime (Friedman and Fisher 2004, 2006).

Parents play an important part in education. Their roles are: to support teachers, to discuss educational issues, to encourage educational partnership, to help school in its connections with other elements.

In my school, which is a community school, I ran into conflicts between parents and the school staff because of a difference in the perception of involvement issue. From one side, the parents see in their involvement an improvement in their children's achievements, and, from the other side, the teachers feel occasionally the "interference" in their work and in matters that do not concern them.

There are several models of collaboration between parents and school:

Parents as viewers' model. The school's role and the home's role are defined and known by this model, and there is a distinct border between parents and teachers. Every determined period, the teachers present the results of the schools' educational work to the parents, tell them their children's praise or report about the children's negative behaviors. School is expecting the parents to take the responsibility to bring the children back to the behavioral or academic norm.

Parents as a resource model. Schools, in which the teachers understand the help the parent may give them, there is more parents' involvement, and the teachers expect the parent to support them. School that acts by this model refers to the parents as a resource that, in the right connection, might be helpful, promote the school and expend its resources. The parents are asked to donate material and spiritual resources

to school in order to expend the possibilities of action and the educational variety to the students. By this model school offers the parents a possibility to improve their educational understanding and learn to be better parents. By this perception school expends its duty and sees in parents its educational target population too.

The parents as learners model is cooperation with school. Learning in this course is based on parenthood knowledge acquisition and skills, reinforcing their ability to handle the problems of raising children and improving their communication with their children's educators. These programs usually include learning about parenthood itself and not learning parents' action with school.

Committee model. Committee model is the only formal model from all the models. In many schools the connection between parents and school is made by parents' committees. This representative model acknowledges the parents' legal rights and the school's duty to share the parents in certain areas and more. The parents' committee in school usually has cooperative relationship with school management, and is the parents' representative in schools conducting.

Communicational - dialog model. In some educational institutions the parents are considered as dialog partners. Their contribution and influence on school content and processes is assessed as contribution of partners whose power is equal to the educational staff. You may call it "Open door policy".

Struggle model. When school does not succeed to make understandings and agreements with the parents or to solve educational problems in the ways and tools it is familiar with, and when parents resists the powerless place school is putting them in, there starts a struggle. The parents' interests collides the educational philosophy of school.

Students' motivation can be developed by different means by both parents and teachers.

Encouragement as food is a condition to the child's physical growth and health**.** It is a necessary condition to mental health. In our daily parental behavior we have the ability to give the best mental food to our children and encourage their inner motivation. If parents don't learn to encourage, they will not have the results they expect. These parents often will have the opposite results. Before encouragement, it is essential to accept the child as he is and not harm his sense of **belonging**. Encouragement is focusing on the positive sides, the advantages and abilities. Parents that know how to encourage respect their child even if they are not satisfied with his functioning. The basic of encouragement refers to the act and not to how does it. Thus, if he made something we did not want him to do, we shoul tell him: ""what you did was wrong" instead of "you are a bad boy". Referring to the act makes his behavior easier without making him feel guilty, and inefficient, thus respecting his sense of **belonging**. Its purpose is to make a positive change in the position of the one who gets the encouragement, to enforce his belief in his ability and his self confidence and bring him to understand that he is good the way he is. Encouragement gives us the courage to be imperfect, to accept ourselves the way we are and live without fear of humiliation, disrespect and without being worried about what the other will say when they reveal our weaknesses.

Students' achievements are not the only thing we want, and we can not get into conclusion about motivating students based on the results of achievement tests. When we refer motivation as a product we deal with "motivation to learn".

According to my personal experience, you should always refer to the act and not to who did the act. To encourage someone who failed you need to encourage his inner power. To show the initiative, the courage, the investment, the planning and more always look for the positive of everything. When you find the positive side, you find the power source. For instance when a child gets 70 on a test, tell "well done", you know 70% of the study material, I am sure that if you wanted you would find the way to get a higher grade, if you need my help, I am here for you. A child that gets a grade of 60 - if he is pleased with this grade, he has confidence. This way he will have the confidence to keep on investing even more. When you encourage someone, do not use the word "but". If you, for example, you give hundred compliments and suddenly you say the word "but", that is a negative word, you actually took all your compliments back, everything you have said does not matter, and you have canceled every thing you said first. In the same way, do not use the words: if / if not.

Recommendations and advices to student's encouragement

➢ Accept each person the way he is, including us, without any terms. Not "if you do this, so...", but first of all accept and appreciate the person, because he is good enough the way he is.

➢ Mutual respect, that means do not harm, do not humiliate. Learn how to listen, accept the fact that every person has a right to have his opinions and attitude and the difference between people is the element that enriches our lives.

➢ Emphasize the positive, what we have and not what is missing. "I know that you can" and not "I know that you can, so why do?" refer the strengths and not the weaknesses, because knowing the strengths and reinforcing it is building on a solid foundation.

➢ Change the meaning of criticism. The function of criticism is not to denounce disadvantages and failures, it gives an opportunity to check new variables that earlier did not get attention, or were not assessed rightly. It is not criticism; it is recognition in a problem that needs to be solved. Refer to the act and not to who did the act.

➢ Do not demand too much, let us and the other get forward one step at a time.

➢ Assigning responsibility or accepting responsibility mean that we trust the ability of independent action. Accepting responsibility means: "I can". Assigning responsibility means: "I believe you can".

➢ Making connections that base on common things. It may be areas of common interest, common goals or common meanings. A bond like this means good partnership.

The relation and proximity between teacher and student give him encouragement and strengthen his abilities. If he feels self confident and starts to get closer to the teacher, asks and expresses freely his opinion, he progresses and improves his behavior.

Here are some sentences parents should tell the pupils to strengthen them:

1. **"You are a very responsible and diligent child"**

Pasting positive labels to a child is like giving a compliment to his personality. It will drive him to act by these labels. After he internalizes it, he will adopt the study meaning as an expression to his responsible diligent personality.

2. **"You learn very quickly / your handwriting is beautiful"**

Giving a concrete compliments to the child's functioning with an adjective like "quick" or "good" will encourage him to continue to impress the parent in order to win more positive feedback and go on learning.

3. **"Well done your reading effort "**

It is important to praise mainly the learning effort and less the result. Children that are aimed to result might give up if they do not succeed sometimes, and children that are aimed to effort will know better to persist and cope with failures. Who knows to persist, eventually succeeds more.

4. **"Your writing has improved"**

It is important to pass the message that every student is measured in relation to him and not compared to his brothers or his friends. Every child has his skills and progression and it is important to praise progression according to his personal scale in order to avoid unrealistic expectations and frustration.

5. **"I remember that you were afraid before the mathematics test and at the end you have succeeded well "**

It is important to remind children their former achievements, especially when they are in a situation of stress and insecurity. In those situations, children tend to forget their strength and skills, and the parents' duty is to remind them that they can.

4. **"I understand that you feel there is a lot of material to study to the test, lets dive it into parts"**

Children feel sometimes that the study material is "too much for them" and they need help in organizing. It is very important that the parents help them learn to plan the study in an effective way for the long term while setting priorities. You should help the child to find his right learning method, for example, summarize the study material, mark the highlights, and make a list of comments in the text. If the child is getting nervous due to the big amount of study material, you can offer him to divide it to small units and concentrate each time in one specific part.

5. **"Do you remember how did you feel when you had 90 in the Bible test?"**

It is important to remind them successes they had. Every child gets good grades sometimes. The experience is always good and pleasant and it is the direct, true reward that gives the child, who invested in his studies, a sense of success. When we remind this to our child we increase the odds he will want to go back to this place and feel again this sense.

6. **"Your auditory memory is very good; I think you should develop it. It helps in learning new language"**

One of our important duties as parents is to look and find in every child his unique skills and abilities. Some of those skills might help him in his studies. Illuminate it and tell it to your child. Connecting a child to his abilities strengthen him in confronting difficulties.

7. **"Well done for not quitting, I know how hard it is to you"**

It is a statement that is said honestly and authentically without embellishing reality and the child will listen to it: "I see and know it is hard for you". The praise here is accurate. Children appreciate a parent that sees them, with all the difficulties and the worse sides and still finds something good and true to say.

8. **"After you finish homework, you may watch television"**

Watching television is a privilege of who made his duties. There is no   punishment here of "you will not watch television until you finish your homework", but a reasonable consequence of making priorities.

Researchers that studied the motivation issue and referred to parents' intervention and attitude, Friedman and Fisher (2002), have identified five types of parental behavior with regard to their involvement in school:

1. Parents estranged to school

2. Very involved and identified with school parents - this group is the most desirable to the educational staff, by the researchers' opinion.

3. Very involved but not identified with school parents.

4. Parents that abstained but identify with school

5. Parents with moderated involvement - this is the biggest group and divided in two groups: very aware parents with medium or low solidarity. In the researchers opinion, this is a problematic group for the educational staff because it tends to be involved in school's work from disagreement of school's goals. This disagreement might bring to conflicts between parents and school's staff. Parents with high or medium solidarity are "positive" to the educational staff because they are basically "pro" school and its activities.

Parent's involvement in school may have direct influence on the teachers' function. Therefore, a deep understanding of parental involvement in school and its influence on teachers' function and the results of the educational action requires examining the issue from the teachers' perspective.

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