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SCHOOL AND FAMILY COLLABORATION

DIMITRIOS KYRIOPOULOS

Secondary Education Teacher, Ministry of Education, Greece

INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of school-family collaboration, which is related to the broader psychosocial health and functioning of the child and the family, the conditions are created to prevent the traditional exclusion of families of low socioeconomic and educational level from collaborating with the school (Georgiou, 2000 op. cit. by Kourkoutas and Eleftherakis, 2008). Regular contact and collaboration between parents and teachers is imperative in cases where the family is "different" from the other families in the area, and we are mainly referring to families belonging to different cultural groups (Psalti and Gavriilidou, 1995: 74).

However, the models and theories that have been proposed and applied for school-family relationships, theschool-centered models, ecosystemic and family-centered models either create a competitive relationship between the school and the family and exclude their substantial cooperation (school-centered and family-centered models) or refer to a typical relationship (ecosystemic models) between the school and the family, which is characterized by the inability of a large category of parents, mainly from lower social strata and foreigners, to utilize the possibilities of cooperation, resulting in class extensions in education.

Theories and models for the school-family relationship

Types of parental involvement

The degree of adoption of specific school-family collaboration practices varies depending on the school's perceptions of the role that parents should play in their collaboration with the school, that is, whether this role will aim at the "involvement" or participation of parents in the school (Symeou, 2003:105).

The concepts of "parental involvement" and "parental participation" are used to describe practices that aim to bring the school closer to parents. Georgiou (2009: 70) states that "parental involvement is the participation of the parent in the educational process of their child, both quantitatively and qualitatively, which is delimited by the relationship that develops between school and family". Parental involvement refers to processes related to the guided and delimited involvement of parents in school events according to the suggestions of teachers (Athanassoula - Reppa, 2008a:168).In this case, according to Davies & Johnson (1996, op. cit. from Symeou, 2003) the role of parentsis generally limited to the role of spectator of activities,who canbe described as "parental duties"or "volunteer work", and events that the school organizes for them.

The concept of "parental involvement" relates to a wide range of relationships and activities that develop within the school and the family both in terms of content and purpose, so that the two parties share responsibilities and authority on an ongoing basis (Athanassoula - Reppa, 2008a: 168). For this reason, it is necessary to define the rights and responsibilities of the two partners, clarify roles (Stapes & Morris, 1993; Soliman, 1995), procedures and shared accountabilities in a way that allows parents to take an active part in school governance and decision-making at all educational levels.(Symeou, 2003: 106).

In the relevant literature, specific typologies are proposed that describe the various forms of parental involvement in school. For example, we mention the typology proposed by Fullan (1982), the typology of Tomlinson (1991) and Epstein (1995), which could be categorized into the following types:

a) School-family communication, which according to Epstein (1995, op. cit. from Georgiou, 2009) is based oncreation of a two-way communication system with the help of which parents are informed about the school programs and the progress of their child, and the school is informed about the conditions prevailing within the family and related to the child's learning. According to Tomlinson (1991) theexchange of information between school and family is carried out through letters, notes, reports, visits and concerns the basic obligations of the school towards parents (Epstein, 1989), who function as links between school and home (Olmsted, 1991). These activities can form the basis for more active participation of parents in the school (Psalti&Gavriilidou, 1995: 72).

b) Personal involvement of parents in educational activities (homework/classroom work) according to Tomlinson (1991). According to Epstein (1995)This is voluntary help from parents at school,offering services - from the parents' side - during the school year, either on a permanent basis or occasionally (e.g. at specific school events).

c) School help at home.The family creates a supportive environment for learning at home. This can be done with the help of the school when the family is unable to do it alone (Epstein,1995 op. cit. in Georgiou, 2009).

d) The Parental involvement in home learning activities is the fourth type of involvement. Teachers provide ideas and instructions to parents regarding learning activities that are related to and complement what children are learning in the classroom. Thus, parents are able to monitor and assist their children in an appropriate manner at home (Epstein, 1995). Also at this level of collaboration (Olmsted, 1991) teachers can have frequent meetings with parents, where they will discuss and offer support for addressing behavioral and educational problems (Psalti&Gavriilidou, 1995: 72).

e) Formal involvement of parents in school administration, as elected members of the board of directors, such as the parents' association (Tomlinson, 1982)**.** It is for multi-level participation (Epstein, 1995) of families in decision-making processes concerning their children (Georgiou, 2009: 69).

Factors that influence the school-family relationship

Factors that influence the school-family relationship and are related to parents

Parents can be roughly placed into three categories: (a) parents who are emotionally close to the school and therefore have no problem either obtaining information on issues that concern

them or solving various problems that arise, (b) parents who are completely marginalizedand (c) parents who constitute the majority and are in the middle ground. The first group does not face problems in relations with the school. The second group encounters many problems but has neither the voice nor the strength to express them. The parents of the third group (Phtiaka, 1996) are those who conflict with the school because they demand more information and seek participation in decisions and involvement at various levels (Georgiou, 2009: 79).

The relationship of parents with school depends on: (a) the demographic characteristics of the parents, (b) the socio-economic level of the parents, (c) the educational level of the parents, and (d) the causal attribution of the parent's involvement. The involvement ofparentsin their child's school life can certainly be done independently of the attitude taken by the school and depends on the attitudes, personality and characteristics of the parent themselves (Georgiou, 2009: 70).

A) The demographic characteristics of the parents: gender and marital status.
One of the demographic characteristics that influence the degree of parental involvement in their child's life is gender. In particular, according to Georgiou (2009: 74) it appears that mothers are more involved than fathers in their child's school matters, not only because they choose to do so but perhaps because this role is assigned to them.

Also, today, more and more children are being raised by one parent. Schools that try to work with these parents and guardians usually face many unusual problems due to the complex relationships in these families (Athanassoula - Reppa, 2008a: 173). Epstein (1992, op. cit. in Georgiou, 2009) argues that it is difficult for a school to ask a working, single or divorced mother to allocate hours for school participation. The lack of time due to work makes parents not welcome the invitation to work. Asking parents who work a lot, have shouldered various obligations and suffer from a lack of free time to take on yet another obligation is unrealistic and inappropriate (Psalti&Gavriilidou, 1995: 75).

B) The socio-economic level of the parents.
As has been shown (Gogou – Kritikou, 1994 op. cit. from Athanasoulas - Reppas, 2008a) the social and cultural background of parents creates differences in the frequency with which they come to school and in the way they approach it.

Socioeconomic level acts as a factor that prevents parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from demonstrating certain types of involvement.One category of parents is the one who views school as a state-owned and inaccessible bureaucratic mechanism that should be avoided. That is why they rarely go to school to discuss issues that concern their children.Typically, these parents come from low, underprivileged social and cultural strata, which also include economic refugees and many categories of immigrants.In particular, as specifically stated by Athanasoulas - Reppas (2008a: 173) "immigrant families are presented withespeciallycommunication problems for mutual understanding between school and family".

Parents in this category do not discuss family issues and usually feel inferior towards the school. Many of them relive on an emotional level negative memories of their own school life with the image of the school judging, grading and punishing (Athanassoula – Reppa, 2008a:171).

Contact with the school is not easy to maintain at good levels by these parents not only for psychological but also for practical reasons. For example, these parents cannot take leave from work as easily as parents belonging to higher socio-economic classes and, in addition, they may have obligations with other children at home, obligations that no one else can deal with (Georgiou, 2009: 75).

Helping children from poor families with homework is likely to be hindered by the limited academic knowledge of their parents. Low socio-economic status is not necessarily a barrier to other types of parental involvement. Research has shown (Lareau, 1987) that working-class families may be as involved as upper-class families in matters such as supervising their children's schoolwork at home (Georgiou, 2009: 75).

Parents of low socio-economic status face various practical and other problems in their attempt to maintain regular contact with the school. The prevailing tendency to invite parents of children who are experiencing performance or behavioral problems to school further worsens the situation, because every time such an invitation is sent to the parents, they feel fear and anxiety. Communication with these parents is quite difficult and often there is no connection between the values of the school and those of these strata. Many teachers, unable to interpret the behavior of parents of these strata, feel that they are being rejected (Athanassoula - Reppa, 2008a: 171).

A category of parents who consider school as a mechanism for social advancement are parents from middle social classes. These parents cooperate with the school as their interests and values more or less coincide with those of the teachers. These parents visit the school regularly and show special interest in their children. Teachers feel security and trust during their meetings with the parents (Gogou – Kritikou, 1994 op. cit. from Athanasoulas – Reppas, 2008a: 172).

A third category of parents is that which comes from privileged social and cultural backgrounds. Here too there seems to be no significant differentiation between the educational perceptions of families and those of the school. The presence of these parents is felt in the school, as they maintain a positive attitude towards it and, in parallel with promoting the interests and goals of their children, they are interested in improving the learning and living conditions at school through participation in collective bodies.

C) The educational level of the parents

A parent's own educational level plays a decisive role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors towards education as a value. A consequence of these attitudes is, to some extent, the parent's involvement in their child's educational process, both at home and at school (Georgiou, 2009: 134).

Baker and Stevenson (1986) report that in their own research, more educated mothers seemed to know more than less educated mothers about their child’s performance at school, maintained closer contact with teachers and tended to take action to handle possible problems of their child at school. This does not mean, however, according to Epstein (1992), that the low educational level of some families should be an excuse for their exclusion. This criterion could constitute one of those criteria that should be taken into account when designing intervention programs aimed at strengthening the presence of parents in schools (Georgiou, 2009: 135).

Less educated parents are likely to feel powerless and fearful in the face of their children's "intellectual" and culturally superior teachers. In terms of the school's relationship with families, especially the underprivileged, the power is clearly in the hands of the school. Cooperation between the two requires unilateral compromises on the part of one side – the parent – to the demands of the other side, the school (Lightfoot, 1978). Anyone can see this if they listen to recorded conversations between parents and teachers, which often turn into a monologue by the latter (Phtiaka, 1996). Brice-Health and McLaughlin (1987) note that "parents who feel inadequate and insecure, parents who see themselves as failing, as well as their children, in their efforts to be considered "pre-worthy" by the system, cannot develop close relationships with the school" (Georgiou, 2009:183).

D) The causal attribution of performance by the parent

One possible parameter of parental involvement in school is the causal attribution of performance by the parent himself. The theory of causal attribution has its roots in Heider's (1944) view that people are not content with just observing the events around them, but also seek to explain them (Georgiou 2009:135). Parents' attitudes and especially the way in which they explain their child's performance affect the type of involvement (Georgiou, 2009:76). Dix, Ruble, Grusec and Nixon (1986), report that, the parents' attribution of a child's action to a specific cause, affects the child's attitude and subsequently his behavior. As Stevenson and Lee (1990) note, "when parents attribute their child's academic success to their child's innate abilities rather than their effort, they are less willing to participate in activities that aim to improve this effort, because they naturally consider such a thing pointless" (Georgiou, 2009:140).

CONCLUSION

Building better collaboration between families and schools is a continuous process that requires effort, openness, and commitment from both sides. By fostering effective communication, engaging families in meaningful ways and creating a supportive environment, schools can enhance student success and create a strong, united community that prioritizes education.

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