

Chapter 11

Characteristics of Parent–Teacher Communication in Romanian Primary Education During the COVID–19 Pandemic: An Analysis of the Parent and Teacher Opinions

Muşata-Dacia Bocoş

Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

Diana-Crina Marin

Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the manner in which school activities are organized and the way that interactions occur between all educational actors. According to both teacher and parent opinion, the quality of cooperation and communication between the school and the families has not been affected. The use of modern means of communication is considered by both parents and primary school teachers as an optimal strategy for strengthening the school-family partnership. This study presents several types of activities that parents have enjoyed and which could be organized in the online environment. The authors of the study have discovered that for some parents it was very comfortable to interact with the teacher in the online environment. For these parents, the main advantage of using communication platforms or applications refers to economy of time; thus, travel from their home or job to the school was avoided.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8247-3.ch011

INTRODUCTION

This pandemic has generated severe changes in the life of each community. In this context, teachers became very interested in improving the quality of communication and cooperation with the families of their pupils. Parents' participation in school life, home visits, collective meetings, and individual meetings with teachers were not organized during the pandemic context. This fact could generate changes regarding the quality of the cooperation between parents and teachers. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings and educational activities were made through face-to-face interactions. At the same time, meetings with parents, educational workshops, and lectureships with parents were usually organized in the school environment. Recent studies have established that in the present, teachers and parents are using more diverse ways of communication. Now, the discussions between parents and teachers take place more frequently in the online environment. During the pandemic, the purpose of the communication with teachers remains the same: the wellbeing of the children and their academic achievements.

This chapter highlights the most important characteristic of the communication between the primary school teachers and parents during the pandemic. In order to determine how effective communication between parents and teachers is, but also to find ways to optimize the school-family partnership, the authors designed two research tools annexed at the end of this chapter, that were administered in a survey conducted in the school year 2020-2021. Thus, the main objectives of this chapter are:

- highlighting the main features of communication between school and the families, during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- identifying parents' and teachers' opinions on the most effective means of communication between parents and teachers;
- establishing effective strategies that can optimize communication between parents and teachers, applicable after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- creating an inventory of the activities with parents carried out in the online environment, which generated positive interactions between parents and teachers.

BACKGROUND

Communication is an important element of the parent-teacher relationship (Vasarik Staub, Stebler, & Reusser, 2018; Lau & Ng, 2019; Gârțu, 2017). Frequently communication with parents has positive effects on their involvement in children's education. "Among the topics usually proposed by parents for communication with teachers, the most frequent are the matter of children's results concerning learning and discipline, children's progress" (Hobjilă, 2014, p. 688). The obstacles that can occur in maintaining a strong and efficient relationship with the parents are more diverse, during the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the most important factors are the lack of time of the parents and their low involvement in the educational process (Marin & Bocoș, 2016; Marin & Bocoș, 2019). Recent studies have revealed that the school-family partnership is based on qualitative interpersonal relationships. In the process of strengthening the school-family partnership, the role of teachers has become extremely important (Jónsdóttir, Björnsdóttir, & Bæck, 2017; Alvarez Blanco, 2019). At the same time, the school counselors have an important role in building a strong and authentic partnership between schools and families (Bryan, Young, Griffin, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2018). To adequately inform parents, teachers

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