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A Few Aspects Regarding Cooperation in School

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By its structure, human being is a social one, which means that, theoretically, he needs permanently to establish interpersonal relationship with others and tries to solve different problems working together with them. But in practice, things are more complex, because many people prefer to work individually or in competition. In such circumstances, it can be create 3 types of interdependent relationship among peoples: null one (when they work individually), negative one *when they promote competition) and positive one (when they collaborate to one other). According to its mission, education and, particularly, school – as a main formal educational institution – should promote a positive interdependence among its educational agents, developing a collaborative personality for pupils. Therefore, in the present study, we are planning to evaluate how well prepared are schools to encourage cooperation among the educational agents (especially, professors and pupils). The sample of research was composed from 223 teachers from 6 pre-academic schools of Bihor county, Romania and the instrument was a questionnaire from 27 ended-close items. The results prove that, at least in a declarative way, many professors encourage cooperation in their schools, promoting cooperative learning in didactic activities or helping their colleagues when they need. We can appreciate that many schools could be considered as a model for cooperative life with positive effect upon their pupils' personality development.

The problem

By its structure, human being is a social one, who lives and develops only in relation to his fellows who establish contacts in deeper or superficial way. Group-play, school-class, team from workplace, group of friends, associations, sports-teams, Internet discussion group are just a few examples which can demonstrate that in personal and professional life, man needs the support and cooperation with others. Basically, in any activity would involve, coexisted at least one moment when a person should take contact with other individuals. Human development is an

individual process involving, both, biological and mental evolution and social one, targeting its progress by reference to the group of belonging and / or reference. The education aims socialization of person and his preparation for successful integration into the community to which he belongs. From this point of view, education contributes to the formation of individuals as members able to cope with the dynamics of social groups. Moreover, by modeling human behaviors using different sets of values, equip these individuals to cope with the demands of everyday life (Dumitru, 2008:157).

According to its largest sense, *social group* can be defined as a community made up of a variable number of people, among which are established relationship status and role, who are animated by the same values and have made a number of tasks to fulfill common objectives. So, relevant for a group are the values underlying the behavior of its members, namely common activities that they must undertake. Moreover, sometimes, the group substantially changes behavior of its members in certain situations when they would act on their own. Group life require and highlight their members' needs of expression, skills, creativity, other physical and psychological, promotes joint work, interpersonal relations of collaboration and cooperation, encouragement and social responsibility etc. It means from the above that its strength is much higher than that of the individual and also, by merging of these two entities, the effects can be much deeper and long-term (Mărioara Luduşan, 2009:58).

Among other characteristics of group-work, the author cited states: involving the whole personality of the individual, both in terms of intellectual and emotional, contributing to its development; emphasizing the moral dimension of education; promoting cooperation and solidarity between people; widening the range of activities that may involve a person; facilitating optimization of school results, increasing the effectiveness of teaching, developing the spirit of initiative and emulation, verification of acquiring theoretical knowledge by applying them to real life situations and so on. All these characteristics (that is advantages of group activities) can explain higher yield and argues the preference of many people for such type of activity. On the other hand, a few limits identification of Mărioara Luduşan (2009:64) assigned that group activities are an insufficient compliance of the goals, interests and habits of group members, difficulties in communication and coordination between them (especially when the group is large) dependence which could create between group members and so on. All these limits may, however, be countered by proper management of group activities where the objectives are clearly stated and voluntarily undertaken by all those involved, and tasks to accomplish activities are rationally distributed to all participants (Gerrard and Billington, 2013).

One of the best examples of social group is the classroom. This can be defined as a community among whose members are established both horizontal relationships (students with social status equal) and vertical (teachers and students with social status different), relations that are influenced by the norms and values that govern the collectivity. For any

student, school class is the main group of belongings, and reference, since it belongs to this social formation and at the same time, selects patterns here, either among teachers or other classmates. Such a thing is possible in the classroom, where the members are "face to face", influenced by their status and role of each person, while the activities are geared towards achieving a common goal. The main functions it should fulfill class as a school group related to the task and fulfill goals, personal security, communication intra-group and inter-group, establishing relationships / reject / indifference. All these contribute to students becoming personality, they are developing both as an individual and as caretakers of the school group, and more generally, social (Dumitru, 2008).

Another important aspect is the type of interdependence which is assessed on a group-class. Fitzgerald (2015) also identified three forms of interdependence among students. First, as interdependence made void when promoting an individualized learning, where each person is responsible only for their academic achievement. A second type would be negative interdependence encountered when they promote a learning style based on competition among students, where the best wins. Finally, the third form is positive interdependence based on cooperative learning, where student work results depend on the success of his other colleagues. Traditionally, the Romanian education - and not only - promotes favorite, the first two styles of teaching / learning, encouraging the idea that generates competitiveness performance. The argument is perfectly plausible, given that the school prepares graduates for the labor market and the market economy encourages precisely this kind of behavior. On the other hand, competition could be generated at the individual level, feelings of frustration and anxiety, given that only one person wins and the others lose. On the contrary, encourage solidarity among people cooperation, support and mutual respect, trust, communication, responsibility for oneself but also for others. In these circumstances, the long-term effects could be more important, both for individuals and for the society in which he lives (Popa, 2010).

The issue of cooperation is explained by school in various aspects. Most often, pedagogical literature (Dumitru, 2008; Popa, 2011; Blandul et al., 2015) presents collaboration between pupils in group work. However, cooperation can be achieved between other education stakeholders, with reference to relations between professors, teachers and students, teachers and parents or teachers and the community. To fulfill successfully its mission, the school must work as a team, each player has a role and a well-defined status. So for example, the educational process requires cooperation among students (through teaching strategies that promote group work) between pupils and parents and teachers (by designing teaching activities mutually agreed or developing teaching materials necessary in classroom) and between teachers (by identifying innovative teaching strategies or by joint management of various educational crisis). It also involves designing successful extra-curricular activities, most often, building positive interdependence among all involved educators. That means that school should be an example of good

practice in terms of cooperation between its members, whose model subsequently be replicated throughout the community. It is, indeed, prepared school to be a model of cooperation in behalf of community? The reality is more complex and demonstrates that school, as a part of society, are facing the same challenges on individualism and competition with more or less harmful. Therefore, in this study, we aim to find out how deep interdependencies are inside the school and courses of action that would be bound to them.

The objectives

Summarizing the above mentioned in the previous paragraphs, it can be seen that cooperation in school is a social phenomenon and education with strong effects in terms of school performance of students, designing various teaching and extracurricular, crisis management education, solving different administrative issues, so on. Based on these theoretical findings, the aim of this research was to identify the extent to which teachers realize the importance of promoting genuine cooperation in school, namely that the way they are prepared to engage in this kind of relationship. Specifically, the objectives of this research were (1) weighting the cooperative learning strategies are used in current teaching; (2) analysis of collaborative relationships between teachers and the directions in which they occur, and (3) assess the extent to which parents are required to cooperate with the school to design its specific activities. We believe that by involving all these 3 categories of education stakeholders (students, parents, teachers), we can have an overview of the functioning of institutional collaboration within the school.

The sample

The sample of research consisted in 223 teachers from 6 secondary schools from Bihor County, Romania. Of these, 57% come from urban and 43% rural, 72% are women and 28% men, 35% achieved academic degree completed, 14% second degree and 51% first didactic degree, while 65% are masters of a class of students.

Instrument and Procedure

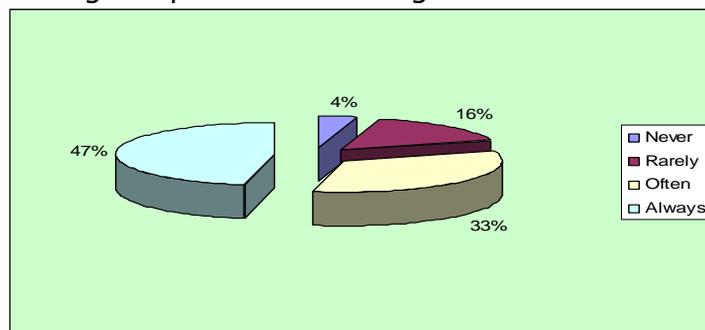
The instrument used in this research was represented by a questionnaire consisting in 46 items (38 multiple choice ones and 8 open-response ones). Depending on the theme, these items can be grouped into the following categories: direction where is heading the Romanian education, communication in education and ways of different conflict are solved, involvement of educational agents in the life of school, or the school in the

community to which it belongs. The questionnaire was printed and completed by each respondent between February to April 2016 and quantitative interpretation was done by calculating the statistical frequencies of responses.

The results

The obtained results are very interesting and presented in following pictures:

Picture 1. Using Cooperative Learning in Current Didactic Activities



A first studied aspect of this research refers to the frequency which teachers encourage cooperation between students using strategies for teaching / learning suitable for this purpose. The results presented in Picture 1 demonstrate that almost half of respondents says that they do this always, and 33% of them - quite often. On the other hand, 20% of teachers admit that they never or rarely use cooperative learning strategies in didactic current. The obtained results follow the trend student-centered pedagogy specific for recent decades, which emphasizes the particularities and pedagogical needs of student, and he becomes a subject of educational action. We believe that rational and responsible use of cooperative learning will allow students to better acquire knowledge taught during the lessons, but also, to develop some social skills, absolutely mandatory in everyday life.

Picture 2. Teachers Working in a Team

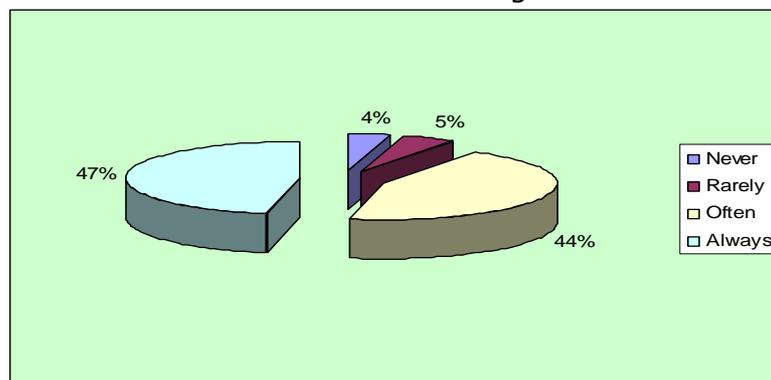
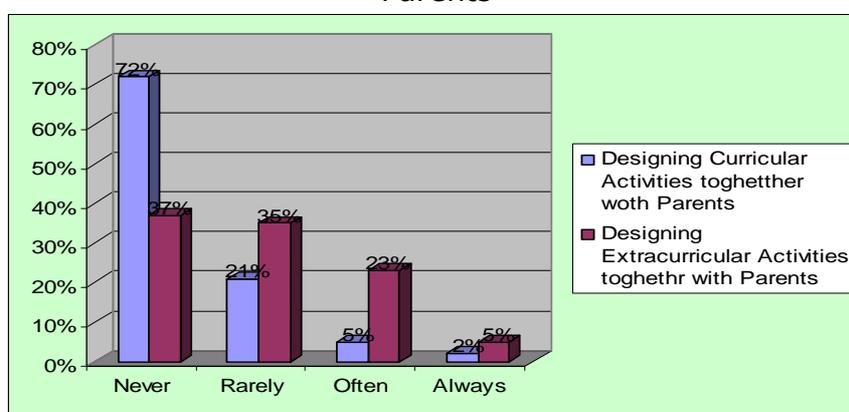


Table 1. Educational Situations when Teachers work in a Team

No	Item	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
1	Solving problem created by pupils' negative behavior	-	81	14	5
2	Solving problem created by pupils' learning difficulties	2	7	40	51
3	Obtaining sponsorship for school	12	53	25	10
4	Designing different didactic materials	4	10	51	35
5	Designing different didactic activities	6	14	44	36

The obtained results from second investigated issue - cooperation between teachers - demonstrate that over 90% of respondents say they used to working in teams with other colleagues (Picture 2). Deepening the subject, it can be seen that most often, teachers collaborate among themselves in solving problems in school pupils in the development of didactic materials or in the design of common didactic or extracurricular activities (Table 1). Interestingly, very few times, teachers are willing to seek the support of other colleagues in solving discipline problems in their classroom. It can bring this into question the self-esteem and positive image that most teachers want to and it develop in relation to their peers, in the sense that they collaborate predominantly in favoring circumstances, but hesitated to ask for support in negatively charged situations. We can talk about lack of trust between teachers, feeling caused, possibly, by competition between them to obtain professional advantages. It is important to create a climate of genuine cooperation between teachers, so they can build a model of good practice for their students and, generally, for the community.

Picture 3. Designing the Curricular and Extracurricular Activities Together with Parents



Teachers surveyed say that only 7% of parents involved in the design of curricular activities, while that 30% of them do the same regarding

extracurricular one (Picture 3). The results seem somewhat natural, since Core-curriculum (which includes compulsory school disciplines) is designed to national level by Ministry of Education from Romania and leaves little possibilities for parents or other educational agents' initiative. On the contrary, extracurricular activities are part of the School Based Curriculum (SBC) and it is developed in consultation between educational institutions and other interested educational agents. Unfortunately, still stands a parental involvement in designing SBC below expectations, a sign that either are not sufficiently prepared for such a task, or are not interested to engage in formal and non-formal education of their children.

Discussion and Conclusion

A first important aspect that should be discussed after the quantitative interpretation of results refers to content of cooperation in educational environment. The results show that, most often, educators cooperate with one other in solving school problems impacting positively or, possibly, neutral upon own image, avoiding those situations when self-esteem may have suffer. Detailing the subject, it can be seen that teachers encourage cooperative learning among students, primarily to transmit / deepening knowledge and only in the background, as a way of socializing. Collaboration between teachers dressed in turn, diverse, and focused on the specific of students' learning problems. The cooperation between teachers and parents materialize, especially, in the design of extracurricular activities. It can be seen that, when it comes to effective solving the educational crisis generated by the deviant behavior of pupils, many teachers prefer to fend for themselves. Also, they call to the same solution when designing the current didactic activities. The explanation for not collaborating in these situations could be given by the suspicion that student behavior problems or design of didactic activities is related to poor classroom management, look likely to tarnish the reputation and authority of teacher. We can infer that, in some schools, collaboration between educators takes place just fine, preferring to solve any difficult situations in an individual way, without sharing the responsibility with other colleagues (Evagoroum, 2011).

The second important issue that can be discussed relates to the effects that promoting cooperation in school could have on key educational agents. Literature (Hodzic et al., 2015) and common sense shows that schools dominated by relations of positive interdependence among its members creates a climate of constructive working with stimulant effects on academic performance, interpersonal relationships, confidence of involved educational actors in their own abilities etc. Conversely, lack of collaborative learning environment creates premises for individualization or competition, which can not necessarily reduce the quality of the educational process, but promotes other values, some as effective for academic success. We can mention here the spirit of competition and fair-

play, success or failure management, experience feelings associated with these two states etc. The obtained results in this research show that, in the investigated schools, collaboration is realized to the extent that it does not affect the partners image, regardless problems put in discussion. But it does not means that the academic results from these schools would be negative influenced in any way by this phenomenon. However, the benefits of cooperation known in school, recommended the promotion of positive interdependence between members of all educational groups, without neglecting individual approaches or competition, where appropriate (Kayıkçı, 2009).

In conclusion, we can say that cooperation in education has outstanding formative valences for students, teachers and parents, both academically and personally or socially. The results of this research show that teachers become aware regarding benefits of cooperation, encourage the use of cooperative learning strategies in didactic current activities, support their colleagues in difficulty in terms of professional and involves parents in designing and implementing extracurricular activities. However, cooperation is promoted in investigated schools only as far as the image of the two parties is not affected. It recommends promoting further cooperation in school, without neglecting or competitive or differentiated learning, each of these three systems being dispensed rationally for the benefit of the student.

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