Benefits Deriving From the Parent-Teacher Cooperation—The Parents' Point of View

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The aim of this study was to investigate parents' views regarding the benefits they gain from their cooperation with elementary education teachers. Content analysis was used for this research, while data was collected from spontaneous written text production. The parents participating in this study indicated that the parent-teacher cooperation helps both parents and teachers. Parents form a better idea about the character of their children and their behavior at school while teachers solve more easily problems which arise in class. Additionally, this cooperation contributes to pupil's progress and social adaptation. Therefore, the results have shown that the benefits deriving from such a cooperation are numerous and those who fail to cooperate are "losing."

Keywords: benefits, cooperation, teachers, parents

Introduction

An important issue, which requires cooperation between teachers and parents, is informing the parents about their children's progress as well as the children's presence at school in general. The Ministry of Education in Greece provides for the regular briefing meetings between parents/guardians and tutors. Obviously it is the parents' "duty" to act accordingly.

"Cooperation" suggests the presence of two individuals at least who interact. These individuals are either interested in working together towards making a decision in order to achieve a goal (Cook & Friend, 1991), or they have been appointed as experts necessary to carry out a certain "assignment" (project). Therefore, the educators and the parents compose the required "pair," that is, they fulfill the basic requirement of "cooperation." Which are the benefits deriving from the issue at hand concerning the parent-teacher cooperation?

The importance of the parent-teacher cooperation is confirmed also by the increased number of published studies by contemporary researchers with manifold approaches. We have chosen to present recent papers, of the last decade.

According to the existing modern bibliography, in one study it has been shown that the briefing of parents on the part of the teachers regards only issues of performance and conduct, and that the parents prefer their meetings to take place inside the classroom on a one to one level (Poulou & Matsagouras, 2007). In another study, it is also indicated that in order for the parent-teacher cooperation to be effective, there has to be trust in their relationship (Angelides et al., 2006).

According to Bonia, Brouzos, and Kossivaki (2008), teachers tend to cooperate more with parents whose financial status is higher than their own. However, parents prefer to cooperate with teachers who reside near the

school where they work. The findings of the research by Pnevmatikos, Papakanakis, and Gaki (2008) have shown that a large number of parents consider that their involvement in the school life helps very little in the pupils' performance, whereas it is more helpful if they get involved in learning and the communication with the tutors.

Symeou (2008) argued that "qualified" teachers are those who can find ways to cooperate with parents and can give parents such information that parents may utilize to support their children's performance at school. The same findings were procured from the research by Fakidou (2013), that is, the fact that the parent-teacher cooperation is limited only to issues of performance in school subjects.

In a research by Taratori-Tsalkatidou (2003), there has come to light the decisive role of the family's contribution to the pupil's performance—and not that alone—when the family cooperates with teachers. One more aspect which the teacher-family cooperation positively affects is the pupils' personalities (Olmsted, 1991).

Giovazolias (2011), in a research presented interesting elements, which indicate that the parent-teacher cooperation is influenced by their financial and social status. In specific, he mentioned that parents coming from a low financial status cannot comprehend the value of such cooperation. He also pointed out that there does not exist any official technique of communication-cooperation between school and family.

Starting Point, Aim, and Method of Research

As a result of studying the aforementioned research papers as well as various other researches, we have concluded that it is crucial to have a two-way information flow between parents and teachers. It has been observed, though, that there are no researches which will deal mainly with the benefits deriving from the parent-teacher cooperation—although there are some indirect references on the issue. This realization has become the starting point of our research aimed at having the parents answer this question "What are the benefits parents gain from their cooperation with the teachers?"

The sample of the research was 57 parents of pupils attending 6th grade in two primary schools in Alexandroupolis; these parents were given a written letter regarding the aforementioned issue. To achieve the goal of this research, content analysis was used. This is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the obvious content of oral and written communication (Berelson, 1952, p. 18).

Quantitative Analysis

The analysis of our study data referring to the personal details of the subjects who took part in our study, presents in Table 1 as below: The parents who took part in our study were 57; "women" were the majority, accounting for 68.42%; and the rest (31.58%) were "men." Male parents were 36-47 years old, while female parents were 29-41 years old.

Table 1

The Identity of the Sample

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	18	31.58
Female	39	68.42
Total	57	100.00

The references resulting from the study and the processing of the written texts regarding parents' visits at school showed that almost half of the parents participating in our research visit school every month (see Table 2).

Table 2

Frequency Rate of Parents' Visits to School

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Every three months	13	22.81
Every two months	11	19.30
Every month	27	47.37
Once or twice a week	4	7.02
When they call me at school	2	3.51
Total	57	100.00

Qualitative Analysis

On the benefits of the relationship with teacher, parents mention that these are: "...forming a better idea about their child;" "...solving problems;" "...better cooperation;" "...pupil's progress;" "...forming a better teacher-student relationship;" and "the pupil is happy... positive effect on the pupil."

So, parents mention that establishing a good relationship with the teacher assists equally the parent, the teacher, and the child itself. In particular, the parent is able to form a complete picture of his child and cooperate constructively with the teacher:

Parent (S-35): The benefits are manifold. I get informed by the teacher about the total picture that my child projects, I discuss without hesitation problems in connection to my child and I seek solutions alongside the teacher.

Parent (S-35): Generally, an excellent parent-teacher relationship usually leads to an equally good relationship between teacher and pupil.

Parent (S-56): When a child receives proper treatment from the teacher, I believe that it matures better, understands certain things better, and may face certain situations better. What is more, I believe that the child becomes more sociable, because looking at society, the school classes, and generally the whole environment. It is aided in maturing and socially adjusting.

Parent (S-17): It helps me form a more global opinion of the teacher as a whole, inside and outside the class, and to cooperate with him/her more constructively to my children's benefit».

Parent (S-20): The teacher helps me get to know my child better, because he/she may be aware of situations about which I'm not informed. The bottom line is, the teacher when he is a good judge is an invaluable assistant for the parents.

Parent (S-21): If the relationship is good you can keep up with things as the child normally grows into puberty, as long as we take an active interest in it. This way his/her performance will be positively affected. Our relationship with the teachers is like a chain link, it is collective effort. If the chain breaks there's something wrong. Each one of us offers help from his side.

Parent (S-22): Numerous plentiful and on many levels. They concern both parent and teacher and of course the main recipient is the child. When there is a good relationship and cooperation the parent will know what he/she ought to do and the way to help the child. Both cognitively and personality-wise. Furthermore, the teacher can rest assured that he/she has "an assistant-ally" in his work and finally the pupil will yield the fruit of a healthy and constructive cooperation.

Parent (S-23): I will become acquainted with the kind of person the teacher is, I will have a positive idea of the person primarily and secondarily of the teacher. My child associates with a good person. What is important is that my child is gaining a lot from a good person and a teacher.

Parent (S-24): It helps the child in behavioral issues and in becoming incorporated in society. The truth is that you help and are helped at the same time.

Parent (S-10): If something happens to my child I will be immediately notified and maybe the teacher can spend more time on my child if he/she discovers any learning disability.

Parent (S-11): There are no problems created, there is no friction, there is cooperation, understanding and trust.

Parent (S-55): ...we "profit" greatly from such cooperation, because in any case the pupils benefits. We get informed about the child's progress. Both the teacher and the pupil work better. Without this cooperation nothing can be done.

Parent (S-25): The benefits are mainly for the child. On a parallel level this cooperation helps me with regard to how I

should behave to my child. One thing which is of immediate interest to me is that I receive information from the teacher as to whether my child is sociable, who it keeps company with, etc., so that I can determine my attitude, because I think that the development of social skills is crucial.

Parent (S-26): You can help your child in relation to its performance, its character. On the whole, the cooperation between a parent and a teacher is the best aspect of school. A lot of problems may be solved and many benefits can be derived on many levels. It is the only way, I believe, and that the school may move forward.

Parent (S-51): I think that the benefits are so many. Those parents who do not seek out cooperation with teacher are "at a loss," because it is cooperation that helps you understand where your child stands, what progress it is making, what problems it is facing, where he/she needs to guide you, because we are not fully aware of the teaching process, therefore a teacher who is really interested in fulfilling his/her role can provide us with useful advice, thus aiding the child.

Conclusions

From this research we conclude the following:

If parents cooperate with their children's teacher, they form a better idea of how children behave at school.

A lot of parents try to get to know the character of their children: How they behave inside the class, which is an important parameter. They believe that the teacher is the most suitable person to speak on this matter.

The parent-teacher cooperation helps in solving problems which arise in class, when the teacher discusses and asks for the parents' opinion on how to deal with them (there are pupils who need different treatment in the handling certain crises which may come up in class).

Most parents are interested in a healthy cooperation with their children's teacher and place great importance on it. However, they believe that there should be limits to their interrelationship and that it would be good to restrict this cooperation/relationship within the school premises.

Many parents place great emphasis on cooperating with the teacher as they try to hold frequently such meetings and consider the benefits that arise from this cooperation to be plenty and mainly aimed at their child.

Most of the parents who participated in this research regard this cooperation as being essential for their child's progress, and the role of the teacher as being irreplaceable.

The benefits derived from the cooperation between parents and teachers are numerous and contribute both to the pupil's progress and his/her maturing and social adaptation.

To sum up, there can be only benefits from a good relationship and communication between parents and teachers, because they can pinpoint the vulnerable sides of a child and make combined efforts to "treat" them, while at the same time they emphasize and increase the child's positive elements. Thus, the good relationship assists the pupil, who is the significant person, to enjoy the benefits of the parent-teacher cooperation.

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