



ORIGINAL PAPER

State and Education Policies in the Context of the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Abstract:

Due to the present context which is marked by the pandemic, the education system was forced to become more adaptable to digital environments. Teachers, students, homework and the various educational resources that were used, along with the way in which communication was done, became essential tools in the educational process. The new social context brought with itself significant changes both in the management of school and classrooms. The same thing can be said about scheduling and the manner in which one can effectively carry out activities, knowing that each child and family has their own peculiarities. The family and the school need pragmatic and dynamic solutions for the new school year, adapted to local realities, with full compliance with the regulations established by the Ministry of Health. Under these conditions, the absence of a real and coherent plan regarding education during the pandemic risks condemning a significant number of students to an uncertain future.

Keywords: *pandemic, online education, public policies, COVID 19, information technology.*

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Introduction

Starting from March 11, 2020, as a result of the decision of the Ministry of Education and Research to cancel face-to-face courses, the education system had to turn to new ways of communication and cooperation to ensure the continuity of learning. The consequences of this crisis will greatly affect children and adolescents, both now and in the future. The closing of schools have particularly affected vulnerable children, deepening the effects of their unequal socio-economic circumstances. In this context, the actions that governments take to protect their citizens' right to education are crucial to reducing or exacerbating inequality in the long run. Medical research suggests that, strictly speaking, Covid-19 is not a "children's disease" because, so far, there are few confirmed cases of the coronavirus in young people, and even among children who do get the disease, the death rate has been very low. However, when we consider all aspects of young children's development, the profound implications of this global pandemic are evident.

International organisations (UNICEF, UNESCO, EU) and representatives of other people involved in education, in one way or another, play a critical and important role in the development of the legislative framework of the school-family educational partnership. According to UNESCO, the school and the family are becoming increasingly organised and vocal, presenting coherent educational partnerships of collaboration and systematic relations with international agencies, national governments, with international/national/local authorities and institutions. This is very evident at all levels. Planning the legislative framework, the development and implementation of the partnership is necessary and important. Often, the parties opt for informal collaborations rather than investing efforts to develop and agree applicable rules and norms and explicit guidelines for interaction. (Cara, A., 2018: 106-115)

International legal framework

In the United States, France, the United Kingdom and several Nordic countries, a special legal framework has been developed which regulates the creating and implementing partnership activities. The European Union encourages activities carried out in partnership; considers the partnership a fundamental institution in terms of social, regional, economic and cultural cohesion between the member states. (Velea, 2006:59).

In a European context, the educational phenomenon paints the school-family partnership as a necessary and beneficial solution in the child's development. A study carried out by Paola Dusil (2012), highlights the major shortcomings of school-family collaboration recorded in most European countries: limited parental participation, lack of appropriate family-school communication forms, minimal investment in the formation of collaborative skills at the family level and teachers. (Manea, 2019:1).

In the majority of European countries there are formal structures organized for the participation of parents in the educational system. The legislations and educational reform projects of the 90s created in most countries new laws regarding parental participation in educational systems. The autonomy of schools and the participation of parents in their management are at the centre of current debates and legislation. (Agabrian, 2005:7).

The issue of the school-family partnership concerns the governments of the European Union, including the Government of Romania. We owe the overview of the

school-family relationship and the strategy of approaching parents' education to UNESCO, which in the Education for All program three actions are outlined, and designated resources that can be used, the priorities and objectives of this endeavour (educational partnership). UNESCO's message is very clear and decisive: the objectives of the educational partnership can only be achieved with the active participation of the school and the family.

The involvement of this organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank, in supporting/implementing global strategies to achieve education for all has materialised in a concern for the school-family relationship, for school attendance and preventing and lowering dropout rates. (Frunză, 2013:32).

UNICEF considers the school-family partnership one of the key elements of a child-friendly school. According to UNICEF, being itself an educational community, the school must promote the idea of strong social cohesion. The school does not exist separately and does not carry out processes by itself. For these reasons, the school-family relationship is imminent.

In the same vein, UNESCO proposes a list of possible options for involving the family and building effective and qualitative partnership relationships (Cara, 2018:16): families as activists; schools and families as partners; families support other families; family involvement in school governance and management. (Andries, 2019:33).

The document issued by the European Union launches a new perspective on the development of the educational partnership. According to it, within the school's collaboration with the family, the focus must be on a clearly established mutual commitment between parents and teachers. This involves setting up a team of teachers and parents in order to combine educational influences. Such a partnership ensures the establishment and operation of a system of mutual obligations and requires the collaboration of parents not only from a financial point of view, but also from an educational-cultural point of view, through concrete actions to achieve the educational goals. (Bezede, 2009:31).

Analysing the recent documents issued within the European Union, a new approach regarding the development of this partnership is noted. According to these documents, within the school's collaboration with the family, the emphasis is on a clear mutual commitment established between parents and teachers, based on an educational contract. (Enache, 2012:38).

In the UK, schools are required by law to have a parent contract. All parents are asked to sign the agreement, showing that they understand and agree to it, and students are often asked to sign it as well. (Godfrey, 2007:37).

National legal framework

The current legislative framework in our country promotes the application of the rights of all children, facilitates the participation of parents in the educational process and encourages the creation of authentic partnerships between school and family based on an agreement. (Pancu, 2018:7).

The school-family agreement is an idea that many schools find effective. School-family agreements can form the basis of effective parent meetings because they establish the starting point between the school, student and parents regarding the obligations of all three parties in an effort to maximize the quality of the student's school experience. They are a healthy basis for effective meetings with parents because they

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provide a point of reference for both parties in the educational partnership. An agreement between the school and the family should state: the goals and values of the school; school and parent responsibilities; what the school expects from its students.

The agreements outline the school's policies regarding: the standard education that students and parents have a right to expect; the ethos of the school; attendance expectations; communication channels between school and parents. (Godfrey, 2007:37).

On the other hand, direct beneficiaries of the educational partnership: students; indirect beneficiaries: parents secondary beneficiaries: the primary education teacher, must fulfill the following duties: the teacher - ensures collaboration and respect with the family, developing partnerships; communicate regularly with family members about the activity and progress of educational subjects; train family members in making the educational process more efficient; facilitates the involvement of students in volunteering; the family – gets involved in the governing bodies of the school; gets involved in decision-making at the school level; the student - participates in the composition of school self-management bodies at the institution, municipality and national level (Andries, 2019:8), whose activity is regulated in MECTS Order no. 4742/10.08.2016, regarding the approval of the Statute of the student.

The main relevant legislative documents regarding the operation of the school-family partnership are the National Education Law n.1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions; MECTS Order no. 5079/31.08.2016, annex from the framework Regulation on the organization and operation of pre-university education units; MECTS order no. 4742/10.08.2016, annex regarding the approval of the student status.

In Romania, according to LEN no. 1/2011, parents are considered the main partners and beneficiaries of the educational process. Article 80 stipulates that all major decisions in pre-university education must be taken by consulting the representative associative structures of the parents. LEN gives parents the right to participate actively in the management of educational units, by the presence of two or three parents' representatives in the school's administrative board, depending on the size of the school (Article 96). (Muscă, 2014:7).

LEN no. 1/2011 took over the provisions regarding parents' obligations to ensure children's schooling during compulsory education, contained in previous versions of the legislation in the field of national education, and highlights the decisive role of high-quality family involvement in children's education. (Pancu,2018:7).

Parents are involved in the elaboration of the educational offer of the educational unit, by participating in the organization (Muscă and his collaborators, 2014:7) of the School after School programs. Therefore, it is mentioned both in the MECTS Order no. 5079/31.08.2016 regarding the Framework Regulation for the organization and operation of educational units and in the MECTS Order no. 4742/10.08.2016 regarding the Student Status relevant aspects in the design and implementation of a school-family partnership, as follows:

The partnership with the school (local public administration authorities) aims to carry out school/extracurricular activities, educational programs in order to achieve the educational objectives set by the school. Extracurricular educational activities within an educational partnership between school and family can adapt and be organized in extracurricular cultural, civic, artistic, sports, tourist and volunteer educational activities; consist of competitions, celebrations, debates, training sessions, study visits, visits, open workshops.

The educational partners that are involved in the educational partnership are: the parents, guardians or legal supporters of the student; they have access to all the information related to the education system regarding children's education; they have the right to be supported by the education system, to educate themselves and improve their skills as partners in the family-school relationship. All the legislative instruments consulted by us set out the rights and responsibilities of parents regarding the care, protection and education of children. (Pancu, 2018:7).

Parents are involved in the design of the educational offer of school, by participating in the organization of the School after School programs (referred to in art. 58, paragraph (1), (3) in the educational partnership with the school: the local public authorities and with the family: the parents' associations, through the School after school program, educational, recreational, free time activities are offered to consolidate acquired skills or to accelerate learning, as well as remedial learning activities; the School programs after school is organized based on a methodology approved by order of MECTS. that induced and a series of dysfunctions, related either to the educational policy that reduced the number of hours allocated to him every year, or to the decision of the school itself, when the consultation process was formally carried out, the optional curriculum hours became safety nets for the norms, and the optional programs repeated the common core. (Florea, et al., 2007:115).

Therefore, it is mentioned both in the MECTS Order no. 5079/31.08.2016 regarding the Framework Regulation for the organization and operation of educational units and in the MECTS Order no. 4742/10.08.2016 regarding the Student Status relevant aspects in the design and implementation of a school-family partnership, as follows:

The quality of students is exercised by attending classes and by participating in the existing activities in the program of each educational unit. Student quality is proven with the student card, endorsed at the beginning of each school year by the educational unit where the student is enrolled.

The partnership with the school (local public administration authorities) aims to carry out school/extracurricular activities, educational programs in order to achieve the educational objectives set by the school. The activities carried out in partnership cannot be contrary to the morals or laws of the state. 5079/31.08.2016, art. 101, par. 1, 2:77).

The representatives of the parents, guardians or legal supporters will be directly involved in the smooth running of the activities (educational extracurricular) within the partnerships that take place in the school.

Extracurricular educational activities within an educational partnership between school and family can adapt and be organized in extracurricular cultural, civic, artistic, sports, tourist and volunteer educational activities; consist of competitions, celebrations, debates, training sessions, study visits, visits, open workshops; extracurricular educational activities are established in accordance with the options of students and parents, as well as with the resources available to the school.

The educational partners of the educational partnership are: the parents, guardians or legal supporters of the student; they have access to all the information related to the education system regarding children's education. They have the right to be supported by the education system, to educate themselves and improve their skills as partners in the family-school relationship; the parent, guardian, legal guardian of the student has the right to be periodically informed about the school situation and the

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behaviour of their own child; has the right to acquire information related only to the situation of his own child. All the legislative instruments consulted by us set out the rights and responsibilities of parents regarding the care, protection and education of children. (Pancu, 2018:7).

Models and theories related to the functioning of the educational partnership school-family

Educational models and theories related to the issue of school-family educational partnerships highlight effective action strategies to optimise the collaboration between parents and teaching staff. These models and theories start from the premise that the joint efforts of the school and the family are necessary for students to register a positive school development. (Pancu, 2018:8).

The theory of spheres of influence

Epstein's theory of intersecting spheres of influence emphasises the importance of the joint action of schools and families to ensure the needs of children. The theory integrates educational, sociological and psychological perspectives on social organizations, as well as research on the effects of the family, school environment on educational outcomes. The recognition that the central principle of this theory of the history of the close ties between the major institutions that socialize and educate children, determines that certain objectives, such as school success, constitute a mutual interest for the people of each institution, objectives that are achieved through their cooperative action and support . (Agabrian, 2005:13). The spheres of influence theory (Epstein, 1987:67) states that students learn more when parents and teachers share goals and responsibilities for student learning and work together, not individually. (Muscă, 2014:25).

The model of overlapping spheres of influence - Epstein

The validity of the model is demonstrated through analyzes at the international level, but a series of challenges and implications for the actions of the school counselor in partnerships and the differences between schools with good performances and those with poor performances or the role of teachers are also presented (Muscă, 2014: 25). The model places the student at the center. Partnership activities must be designed in such a way as to engage, guide, determine and motivate students to become involved in achieving their own success. (Agabrian, 2005:15).

Thematic networks model - Attride-Stirling

According to this model, parental involvement is composed of three elements: interaction with the child, availability and responsibility for the child. The major elements of parental involvement are: the importance of being a positive role model; involvement with children in outdoor activities; education as a means for children's development from a socio-economic point of view. (Muscă, 2014:27, apud Lamb, 1985, apud Ho et al., 2011).

The theory of school commitment

This theory claims that adaptation to the educational environment and school performance depend on the degree to which students are connected to what is happening in the classroom. Many parents do not know what is expected of them in the new

educational space. They face difficulties, extended working hours, lack of child care services or transport, fear or discomfort with the new school environment, sometimes perceived as unwelcoming, threatening or even disrespectful towards them (Suárez-Orozco, 2010). Commitment is approached from a cognitive, relational and behavioural/family perspective. (Muscă, 2014:20).

The theory of pedagogical/school functional links

He claims that the successful interaction between parents and school greatly influences children's development and enriches the daily school routine. (Muscă, 2014:22). There are two types of connections: the dyadic connection teacher-student, teacher-class; the triadic bond-teacher-student/parent class.

The school and the family - partners in education

In the specialised literature, the school-family partnership is given by the collaborative relationships between school staff and families to implement programs and activities that help students succeed. The school-family partnership is a pedagogical formula, a relatively new notion inserted in the field of education. (Bârlădeanu, 2006:16). The school-family partnership is given by the collaborative relationships between school staff and families, to implement programs and activities that help students succeed. (Muscă, 2014:16).

Through the school-family partnership, the aim is to achieve an effective communication between the two factors and the mutual agreement of the value systems and the requirements from the child. (Bârlădeanu et al., 2006:16). The family and the school are the two pillars of resistance of education between which the child - its main actor - oscillates. The family is the first factor and the natural environment that exerts a huge influence in the formation of the personality in a multidirectional perspective, and the school is the most important factor of systematic and continuous education. (Bezede, 2009:31, apud, Cucuș, 2006:48).

If it is true that school is the factor on which the development of the human personality overwhelmingly depends, it is equally true that coherent education cannot ignore the role of the family. School and family are two institutions that need each other. The family and the school can be considered as networks of interdependence structured in specific forms of social relations, school failure and success being understood as the results of a smaller or larger contradiction, a smaller or larger degree of dissonance or consonance of the forms of social relations that characterise the two networks of interdependence. (Bârlădeanu, 2006:7).

As partners, both the school and the family have certain requirements towards each other. Therefore, teachers want parents to: provide their children with optimal conditions for them to develop; to provide them with a safe, quiet and conducive environment to learn; to suggest to children the importance of education for life; to guide children to achieve a balance between school and domestic activities; to communicate often and openly with teachers; to teach children self-discipline and respect for others; to teach children how to resist evil influences; to accept his responsibility as a parent by being a good example; to support the actions of the school. Likewise, parents also have expectations regarding the activity of teaching staff: to be responsive to children's needs, interests and abilities; to communicate often and openly with parents; to establish unbiased school requirements for all students; to show dedication in educating children; treat all students fairly; to intensify the positive

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discipline of children; to provide guidance on how parents can help children. (Bărlădeanu, 2006: 16-17).

The school represents a pillar of the community, one of the basic institutions for the existence and development of a community. The school creates a new community around itself, which includes, first of all, its direct beneficiaries: students, teachers, parents. The school is a public institution and occupies a central place in the community. The mission of the school is to train future citizens, in accordance with the principles and values of democracy.

The school is a connecting element between the student and society, contributing to the development of a conception of the world and a civic identity consistent with the perennial values of humanity. (Velea, L.S., 2006, p.72). In conclusion, the school and the family mutually develop their powers and strengthen each other. The partnership relationship between school and family takes place in the exchange of skills and involvements that ultimately lead to the effects of making the actions of both actors more efficient. (Brachiș, 2010:161).

Perspectives of a practical approach to the school-family relationship

Through the partnership approach, the school can contribute to stimulating the active and responsible participation of students in school and family life, through association and direct participation in identifying and solving school and family problems. (Velea et al., 2006:76). As a relationship, the educational partnership implies: optimal communication between the educational actors participating in the education, the collaboration of the educational actors in various forms and modalities, the orientation towards the formation of the child's personality. (Andries, 2019:70).

From specialized literature, we conclude that in its evolution the school-family relationship goes through three main stages: the self-sufficient school stage; stage of professional uncertainty; the stage of development of mutual trust between teachers and parents. (Bunescu, 1997:21). Studies about the school-family partnership of students typically approach family involvement activities in the following four components: parental academic aspirations and expectations towards children; communication with children about school.

In order to increase the quality of the school-parent relationship and ensure a viable educational partnership, we propose the following recommendations to the teachers and the school in general: to extend the collaboration with the family to all aspects that can contribute to the achievement of the unity of requirements and pedagogical action; to take into account the opinion of the parents in the process of planning the theme of the meetings with the parents; to ensure opportunities for parents' participation and involvement; to organize counseling activities for parents; to involve parents in administrative activities; to involve parents in the didactic process; to create conditions and diversify the forms of communication with parents; to initiate education programs for parents, as a result of identifying their expectations towards the school and their training needs. (Bezede, 2009:33).

An essential element in the approach to education is building a partnership relationship between the school (teachers, teachers) and the family (parents) who come into contact with the child. Together, through a coordinated educational partnership, all partners will aim to obtain the maximum possible independence/autonomy for the child, a normal and active life in society. Everyone must have their role in educating, guiding and supporting the child of class zero. It is important that between partners there is

respect, consistency, coherence and collaboration in decisions. (Chiriacescu, 2015:308). The real collaboration between the school and the family, especially in the case of weak students, can be a favourable factor for the student to overcome his school difficulties. Collaboration between school and family is an essential factor in the process of educating schoolchildren.

Collaboration between school and family requires effective and efficient communication, a unity of requirements and action. (Vrăşmaş,2008:38). The relationships are variously called parental involvement, partnership, school-family relationships, but they all represent the belief that if the adults in the two institutions communicate and collaborate, then the ones who will benefit are the children and only the children.

The relations between the school and the family that the child attends have an important weight in his educational progress. (Chiriacescu, 2015:308). The school-family relationship is justified by the change of content and the focus of education on skills, which requires the analysis of some less studied aspects of modern educational management. The relaxed interpersonal relationships, the calm and relaxed emotional and psycho-social atmosphere of the family and school environment leave their mark on the self-image, on the needs of the Ego, the desire for self-improvement of the student, which undoubtedly influences his school success.

The school-family relationship for individual benefit cannot replace the participation of parents in school management for several reasons: being legally responsible for their children's education, parents must have the opportunity to influence the nature of this education; participatory models can help to coordinate educational efforts and to guide school adaptation to the changes occurring in society; for this, it is necessary to influence at the local level in solving local problems and in making decisions at the lowest possible level; it is necessary to determine the removal of governmental indifference; those affected by a decision must be able to have an influence on it; imbalances in the balance of interest groups must be corrected by authorizing interested persons to be represented according to the importance of their involvement in the school; participation must involve local skills; participation can stimulate initiatives and innovations the school-family partnership takes on new values, going through seven steps: a) the parent learns - informs himself about the way of managing and organizing the instructional-educational process; b) the parent helps - supports the school in carrying out some projects and activities; c) the parent becomes a supporter of the positive image about the school - he understands the importance of the school in the formation of his child and has a positive attitude towards the school; d) the parent becomes a source of complementary information - provides the director or teacher with information about the child's behavior in the family, about his affective and health problems; e) the parent becomes an educational source - contributes to the education of his own child, helps and supports him in the daily activity of accumulating knowledge; f) the parent as an educator - provides frames of reference for the value reporting of his children; the parent - the initiator of the changes in the school - has the right and even the obligation to request the adaptation of the school to the requirements of the current society; g) the parent can propose some changes that contribute to the individual or collective development of the child (Bârlădeanu, 2006:14).

In order to achieve the educational partnership with parents, it is essential to respect certain conditions. These are: parents to be considered as active participants who can make a real and valuable contribution to the education of their children; parents to

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be part of the adoption of decisions regarding the education of their children; the school to recognize and appreciate the information given by parents regarding their children; teachers to complete their professional information, capitalizing on the information provided by parents; responsibility to be shared between school and family. (Brachiș, 2010:162).

An important aspect of the relationship is the involvement of the parents in the development and education of the children and in making decisions at the school level. (Andries,2019:5). Involvement in children's development and education has various positive effects: higher grades in mother tongue and mathematics, improved writing and reading skills, better school attendance rate, fewer behavioral problems. For this reason, the involvement of parents is a way to help children in their transition through adolescence, with significant positive effects.

Conclusions

The category most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is represented by children from families living in poverty, followed by those of Roma ethnicity, children whose parents are away working abroad and children with disabilities. Children from the mentioned categories are most often characterized, simultaneously, by multiple vulnerabilities: they live in multigenerational households or in single-parent families, at risk of poverty, in overcrowded housing. The measures adopted to limit the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to exacerbating the pre-existing risks in the case of these categories of vulnerable people: reducing access to educational, social, medical services, limiting the lucrative options of adults, increasing the incidence of cases of domestic violence. In the case of children whose parents are away working abroad, the grandparents in their care most likely do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to guide the children and support them in distance learning activities. For those whose parents have recently returned from abroad, this is most likely due to job losses. In the context of limiting travel and closing many businesses during this period, the chances of finding a job are extremely low, which accentuates the risks to which household members are exposed. The closure of schools disproportionately affects different categories of children, those from families living in poverty or children of Roma ethnicity, being to a greater extent unable to attend online courses due to the lack of necessary equipment, the low level of digital skills of the parents, which it allows them to support children in learning at home or to be more involved in household tasks, at the expense of participation in education. Children in these categories are all the more vulnerable as, under normal conditions, they were the target of various measures and the efforts of teachers to prevent school dropout, which in the current context can no longer be carried out.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Legislation

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