

## **The Messages about School as Elements of Parental Curriculum. The Beliefs of Future Pre and Primary School Teachers**

Cristian PETRE, Laura SIMION

"Ovidius" University, Constanta, Romania

**Abstract:** *Often, the teachers face a not very transparent reality: the micro-culture that parents create at home; one that is not always supportive for the child to create a positive image of the school. Although the literature recognizes the role of the teacher as the key to the relationship with the family, studies about parents' representations about school life or about school messages they communicate to children are rare. The research hypothesis: Future teachers of kindergarten and primary school have a mental image associated with the specific micro-culture that parents configure, inside their family curriculum, through messages communicated and received by the child. Implicitly, the purpose of the investigation is to capture the beliefs that future primary school teachers and teachers have about the school messages that parents pass on to their child. Data for this study were collected using questionnaires administered to a total of 82 students, speciality: Preschool and Primary school Pedagogy.*

**Keywords:** "parental curriculum", "school", "teachers'beliefs", "family culture", "habit of mind."

### **Introduction**

As a source of intimate cultural identity, the family codifies its own ideological resources and attitudinal patterns in mechanisms that prescribe behavioral scenarios for the child. The highly enclosed setting of the family environment can only be superficially penetrated by the influences of the societal and school-institutional curricula, for the strength of the beliefs rooted in the parents' own histories is indubitable. Parents invest value in their personal beliefs, in their doxa; thinking that, in many cases, they can substitute the teachers' expertise. A family ecology resistant to the alternative school messages seems to grow firm. Here are some of the ideas received in a focus group composed of 25 elementary school teachers. Synthetically, teachers think that parents have configured a family curriculum where ideas about school life were often placed in a para-school, sometimes even an anti-school culture.

The study is based on the assumption that future elementary school teachers build, on their personal level, an internalized picture associated with messages that parents communicate to their children about various aspects of school life. The importance of the study is primarily theoretical. Naturally, a certain heterogeneity in respondents' answers is a source of curiosity and, implicitly, an invitation to reflectivity. The results obtained can also be invested with the function of reference points for personal adjustments in professional approaches of decoding pupils' and parents' behaviors. As well as in self-regulatory approaches.

### **Paper theoretical foundation and related literature**

Even a truism, a substantial volume of research has accumulated on parental involvement in education, covering various domains of related parenting

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practices<sup>1</sup> Although the literature recognizes the role of the teacher as the key to the relationship with the family, studies about parents' representations about school life or about school messages they communicate to children are rare. In a previous study<sup>2</sup>, we proposed the idea that school failure is a trans-generational effect of certain habitual inculcated in the family. Parents' own lived history ensures the heredity of the child's attitude towards the school.<sup>3</sup>

Through their own system of values, the family provides the child with an axiological curriculum capable of shaping attitudes in relation to significant life experiences. The family builds a skeleton of behavioral landmarks (considered as significant) that it transmits both verbally and nonverbally, both intentionally and unintentionally, both transparently and insinuated.

Walberg suggested the syntagma "Curriculum at home" that predicts academic learning twice as well as the socioeconomic status of families. It includes informed parent/child conversation about everyday events, encouragement and discussion of leisure reading, monitoring and joint analysis of tele-viewing, deferral of immediate gratifications to accomplish long-term goals, expressions of affection and interest in children's academic and personal growth."<sup>4</sup> The existing literature in this domain focuses on teacher attitudes about and outreach to families, and their influence on family involvement practices.<sup>5</sup>

Policies to implement for motivate the parents to involve in school's life, for building relationship between teachers and parents, for building partnership. The essence of parent involvement policies depends on the quality and depth of teacher-parent interaction. Teachers are evaluated more on the basis of parental complaints than on their positive and proactive efforts to work with families.<sup>6</sup>

The interactions between early career teachers, children, and families in another dimension of studies. Early career teachers described as shaping the knowledge they draw on in their interactions with families. Numerous multiperspectival narrative inquiries alongside teachers, children, youth, and families shaped the further conceptualization of not only school curriculum-making worlds, but also familial (home and community) curriculum-making worlds.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V.C. Tam, R.M. Chan, Parental Involvement in Primary Children's Homework in Hong Kong, in *The School Community Journal*, XIX (2009), no. 2, p. 81-100.

<sup>2</sup> C. Petre, L. Simion., M. A Marica, "La culture familiale de l' échec scolaire," in *Penséepurielle*, IIII (2017), no. 3, p. 19-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> H.J. Walberg, "Families as partners in Education, Productivity", in *Phi Delta Kappan* LXV (1984), vol. 2, no. 1, p. 62-69.

<sup>5</sup> M.S Caspe, "How Teachers Come to Understand Families", in *The School Community Journal*, XIII (2003), no. 1, p. 115-131.

<sup>6</sup> J.H. Chrispels, "Evaluating Teachers Relationships with Families: A Case study of one District", in *The Elementary School Journal*, IIII (1996), no. 2, p. 179-200.

<sup>7</sup> J. Huber Farmer, N. Reid, C. Desrochers, S. McKenzie-Roblee, "The Potential of Familial and School Curriculum-Making Worlds in Teacher Education", in *Journal of Education*, LI (2016), no. 3, p. 1037-1059.

Parents update their own stories, their own stories. These are the tools that facilitate not only the immediate solution of the various problems that arise every day, but also some that have a pedagogical model function. As a person's story is a portal through which their experience of the world enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.<sup>8</sup>

Teachers are key to family involvement. The missing link: how teachers understand families, the importance of fostering teachers' skills and capacity to connect home and school.

### **Methodology**

The research hypothesis: Future teachers of elementary school have a mental image associated with the specific micro-culture that parents configure, inside their family curriculum, through messages communicated and received by the child. Data for this study were collected using questionnaires administered to a total of 82 students (Speciality: Preschool and Primary school Pedagogy) with a response rate of 100%. The distribution, depend the year of study: 36 students in first year, 31 students in second year and 15 students in the last year. Half of them have gimnazial studies in rural areas, and 15.9% have highschool studies in rural areas. The tool used to obtain the data was the questionnaire. In order to check the internal consistency of this instrument it was used the Alfa-Krombach test, taking into account the type of grading of the subjects' answers. The analysis of the alpha coefficient resulted in an internal consistency of 0.731, which validated its functionality for the research. Compositely, the questionnaire was designed to emphasize:

- school issues that parents communicate to the child as a priority (Appreciative messages regarding the importance of school for the child's future, Appreciative messages regarding the level of professional training of the teacher, Appreciative messages regarding the importance of learning for all the disciplines of study)
- school issues in relation to which parents communicate appreciative messages to the child (Material endowment of the school, Prestige of the school, Prestige of the class teacher, Self-acquired auxiliary learning materials (such as workbooks), Increased amounts of home learning tasks (homework), Participation in school competitions)
- school issues in relation to which parents communicate inappreciative messages to the child (Getting good grades, even though they do not reflect the actual school-level of the child, Getting good grades, only if they reflect the actual school-level of the child, Communication with teachers for the benefit of the child, Communication with teachers for the benefit of the parent, The difference between the school results and the child's real educational level (as assessed by the

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<sup>8</sup> F. M. Connelly, D. J. Clandinin, "Narrative inquiry," in J. Green, G. Camili, & P. Elmore (eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006, p. 477–487.

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parents), Too much loading of school learning tasks, Requests to engage in school organised activities, Ensuring a safe environment, Negative discrimination that the child receives from the teacher, Negative discrimination that the child receives from the classmates)

- school issues in relation to which parents communicate their concerns and worries to the child (Grades level, Presence/ Absence at school activities, Presence / Absence at extracurricular activities, Encouragement regarding the involvement in learning, Support in learning activities, requests to engage in activities organised by the school, the child's positive behavior towards classmates, the child's positive behavior towards teachers).

Responses were distributed on a Lickert scale with five alternatives: strongly disagree; rather disagree; neither agree nor disagree; rather agree; strongly agree. The data obtained were processed with the help of the SPSS software (version 21), thereby obtaining statistical details (mean, standard deviations, correlations).

## Results

Future preschool and primary school teachers believe that parents communicate at home messages that value the importance of school for the future of the child (81.71%), as well as the quality of professional training of the teachers (60.97%).

Future preschool and primary school teachers consider that parents communicate to the child appreciative messages about the importance of all study disciplines (53.66%). On the variable „Appreciative messages regarding the importance of learning for all the disciplines of study", it can be noticed the difference between answers based on the "year of study" criterion. Thus, first-year students consider that parents appreciate to a greater extent the quality of teacher training, unlike second and third-year students. This difference is visible at the level of means obtained: 4.19 (first year students), 3.18 (second year students), 2.73 (last year students):

Figure 1. The importance of learning for all the disciplines of study. Means/ year of study

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**Appreciative messages regarding the importance of learning for all the disciplines of study**

year of study	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
first year	4.1944	36	.85589
second year	3.1935	31	1.07763
third year	2.7333	15	1.22280
Total	3.5488	82	1.16696

Moreover, there is a statistical correlation between the two variables "year of study" and statement "Appreciative messages regarding the level of professional training of the teacher": -0.244, at a significance level of 0.05. Though not very

intense, correlation means that lower-year students are more likely to agree that parents appreciate the level of professional training of the teacher:

Figure 2. The level of professional training of the teacher. Correlation with year of study

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Appreciative messages regarding the level of professional training of the teacher	year of study
Appreciative messages regarding the level of professional training of the teacher	Pearson Correlation	1	-.244*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	82	82
year of study	Pearson Correlation	-.244*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	82	82

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Nearly half of respondents (45.12%) believe that parents are convinced that school only favours good students; 21.95% of respondents disagree. There is no different response profile depending on the year of study.

One third of the future preschool and primary school teachers (33.14%) agree that for parents, school is only useful for those who want to apply for university studies; 47.56% of the future preschool and primary school teachers disagree.

One third of the future preschool and primary school teachers (32.92%) agree that parents deliver the message that school does not prepare for real life. One observation: First-year students express greater agreement than higher-year students: 3.11 (first-year students), 2.64 (second-year students) and 2.33 (last year students).

A quarter of the answers (25.15%) express the agreement that children receive from their parents the belief that, in order to succeed in life, a long learning path is not necessary. Students who have had a teaching career in a rural environment have provided answers that, at the level of statistical averages, are at a point below those of students who have an urban school history. Whether they have only completed secondary or high school studies in the urban environment, the answers of these students correlate statistically. The level of correlation is higher in the case of high school studies:

Figure 3. The succes in life without much school. Correlation with year of study

<b>Correlations</b>			
		You can succeed in life without much schooling	The high school survey was carried out in
You can succeed in life without much schooling	Pearson Correlation	1	-.296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	82	82
The high school survey was carried out in	Pearson Correlation	-.296**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	82	82

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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A possible explanation: they were exposed to family messages in which school was valued as a resource of self-realization.

Regarding the school issues in relation to which parents communicate to their children positive (appreciative) or negative (inappreciative) evaluations, the following observations can be made:

the material basis of the school is a source of dissatisfaction expressed by parents: 39.03%

the prestige of the school is a frequent aspect in the appreciative messages of the parents: 69.71%

the prestige of the teacher frequently appears in the messages expressed by parents: 72.17%

self-acquiring study resources is not appreciated by parents: 62.19%

the increased density of homework is not appreciated by parents: 53.66%

children's participation in various school competitions is appreciated by parents: 76.61%.

Also, there have been followed some school issues that are a priority to the attention of parents: Getting good grades, even if they do not reflect the actual school-level of the child, Communication with teachers for the benefit of the child, Communication with teachers for the benefit of the parent, The safety of the school environment.

Future preschool and primary school teachers agree that parents communicate to their children the urge to get higher grades, even if they do not reflect the real level of training. Only a quarter of the respondents voiced their disagreement.

Relative to the "year of study" criterion, responses generate a statistically significant correlation indicator: 0.394, at a level of 0.01. Students in the first year of study are more likely to express disagreement over the reality under analysis, compared to senior students.

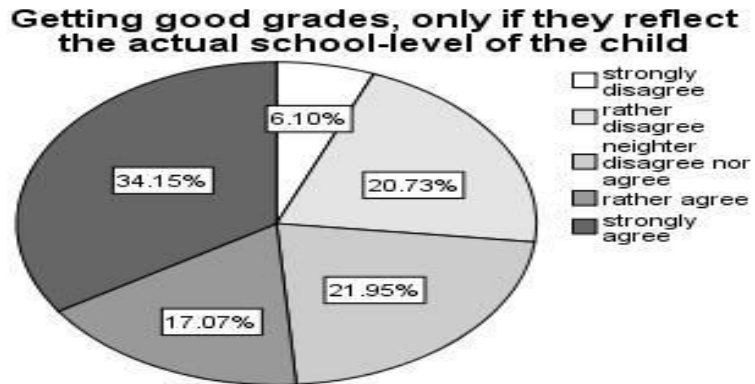
Figure 4. Good grades, even they do not reflect the reality. Correlation with year of study

		Getting good grades, even though they do not reflect the actual school-level of the child	year of study
Getting good grades, even though they do not reflect the actual school-level of the child	Pearson Correlation	1	.394**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	82	82
year of study	Pearson Correlation	.394**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	82	82

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the future preschool and primary school teachers, half of the parents (51.22%) communicate to the children the importance of high grades, but only when they capture the real level of school training:

Figure 5. Good grades, if they reflect the reality. Distribution of answers. Percentages



Relative to the "year of study" criterion, responses generate a statistically significant correlation indicator: - 0.462, at a level of 0.01. Students in the first year of study express to a greater extent the agreement on the analyzed reality, compared to the students in the senior years.

Figure 6. Good grades, if they reflect the reality. Correlation with year of study

**Correlations**

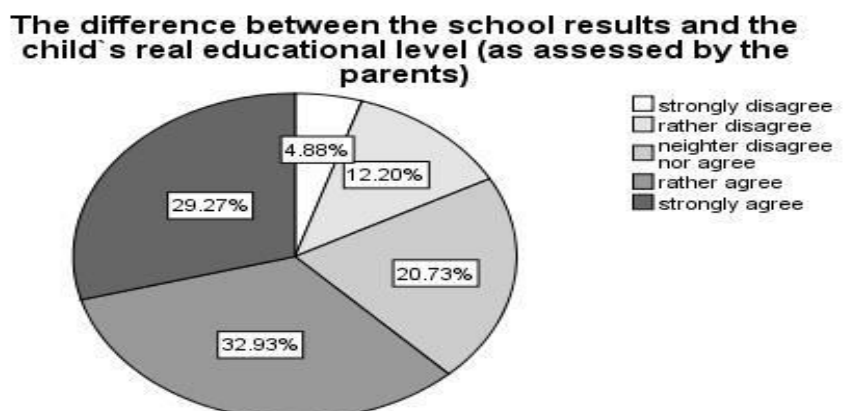
		year of study	Getting good grades, only if they reflect the actual school-level of the child
year of study	Pearson Correlation	1	-.462**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	82	82
Getting good grades, only if they reflect the actual school-level of the child	Pearson Correlation	-.462**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	82	82

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

48.56% of the answers provided express agreement on the belief that parents interact with teachers without prioritizing the needs of children.

Disadvantageous school assessment is one of the most significant sources of dissatisfaction that parents communicate to the child; 63.30% of the answers confirm this idea:

Figure 7.  
The difference school results-real level as



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 source of parents' dissatisfaction. Percentages

An interesting connection is found between the given answers and the variable "The high school survey was carried out in ..". Thus, students who have attended high school in rural areas have a lower response average by one point, given that the homogeneity of answers is equivalent to that of the answers given by students who studied high school in the urban environment:

Figure 8. The difference school results-real level as source of parents' dissatisfaction. Means/ high school survey

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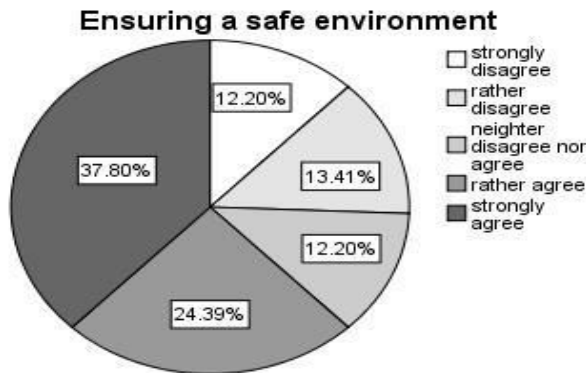
The difference between the school results and the child's real educational level (as assessed by the parents)

The high school surv...	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
urban	3.8551	69	1.07478
rural	2.8462	13	1.28103
Total	3.6951	82	1.16204

Another source of dissatisfaction expressed by parents is the perception of high density (viewed as a burden) of school tasks: 76.83%. Communication with teachers is an experience that is not associated with dissatisfaction.

School is not considered a secure environment. Over 60% of future preschool and primary school teachers say parents are dissatisfied with the safety offered of the school:

Figure 9. The safety of school environment as source for parents' dissatisfaction. Percentage



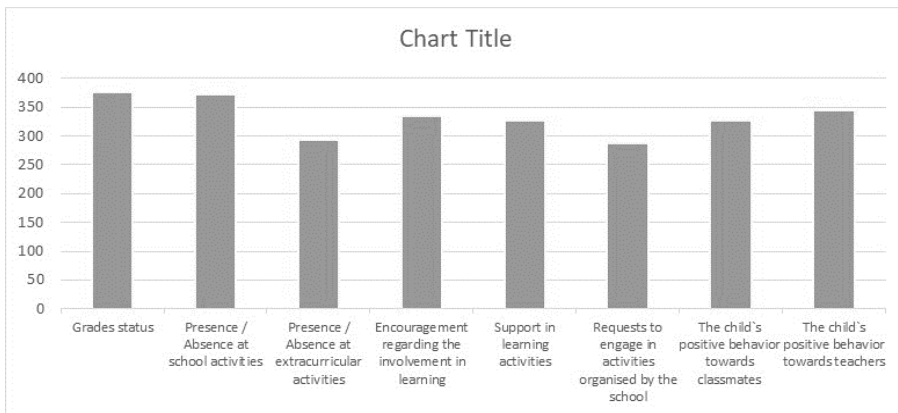
Many future preschool and primary school teachers agree that parents express dissatisfaction with teacher's negative discrimination of the child: 61.98%. Several future preschool and primary school teachers (76.83%) agree that parents also express dissatisfaction with the negative discrimination of the child by classmates or schoolmates.

Depending on the total scores (absolute frequencies), grades status (mean: 4.57) and presence / absence at school activities (mean: 4.53) are the most selected options. The child's positive behavior towards the teacher (position: 4.19) is



positioned in descending order. The "picture" of parents' most frequent messages is outlined as follows:

Figure 10. The absolute frequencies for the variables associated to parents' worry



## Discussions

Some investigated aspects deserve attention. For the future preschool and primary school teachers, parents communicate with child about school variables: the importance of school for the child's future, the level of inadequacy of school for real life, the importance of school and teacher prestige, the expectations about grades and school presence, the behaviour in classroom. The overall data analysis was doubled by a criterion one, based on the year of study and the environment in which secondary and lyceum studies were completed. Although the obtained answers only confirm the common knowledge, they gain the function of scientific arguments for the validation of the hypothesis. Moreover, differences in response according to the criteria mentioned confirm the following reality: even future teachers are investing fragments of their own history in the process of decoding the scenarios that take place in the student's family. Whether it is a more distant history (secondary school completion environment) or a more recent (secondary school completion environment), whether it is a current history (career professionalism), the answers are sometimes subjectively filtered.

## Conclusions

Based on their own lived and / or reflective experiences, parents configure at home a micro-culture that nourishes the child's ideas and beliefs. This mechanism is not always valid, but most of the time it does. The attitude of the child to the many aspects of school life is modeled by parental templates. Any initial teacher training program must include a component related to the family curriculum, at its sources, its effects at the level of pro or anti-school culture, its perpetuation mechanisms, optimizing intervention methods, its valorization.

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