

FAMILY PEDAGOGY – RESEARCH DIRECTION AND SOCIAL AND PEDAGOGIC ACTION

Mihaela Gabriela NEACȘU, Georgiana DUMITRU
University of Pitesti, Romania

Abstract: *Considering the continuous amplification of the unit between psychocentrism and sociocentrism generated by the psychological and sociological curriculum substantiation, the current social pedagogy paradigm defines and analyzes education from the perspective of social requirements, having as its general function the optimization of the relationships between school and community, with consistent applications at the family level (family pedagogy). Family pedagogy as a research direction and social pedagogic action answers parents' need to be helped in educating their children as better as possible. The quality of a "good parent" requires effort and specialty training, continuous improvement and self-improvement, and is based on science, on competence and skill, supposing even a certain vocation. This study valorizes the perceptions, representations, motivations and attitudes of experts with a rich experience and serious concerns in supporting the educative function of family, interested in making parents responsible and involving them in their own shaping to change family practices and optimize parental behaviors in favor of the harmonious development of children's personality.*

Keywords: family pedagogy, parent education, socio-educational intervention

1. Argument

The globalization process, which is more and more visible at the contemporaneous life level, causes essential changes in the structure and functionality of social institutions, including at the school and family level.

Today, family is requested pertinent answers to the challenges of contemporaneous world in terms of adaptability, cohesion, creativity, efficiency, competence as to the organization of family life and especially as regards children's education.

Family is the first school of the child, the first educational environment. Italian pedagogue Fausto Telleri considers family as "a persistent and structural reality which creates and stabilizes human personality from a psycho-social point of view" (Telleri F., 2003, p. 23). The socialization process starts in the family through the values promoted therein, through the manifested attitudes and the expressed opinions, through the parents' behavioral modes. All these constitute for the child accessible concrete models, which are "good to assimilate". A reputed Romanian pedagogue considers that parental behavioral models are a "synthetic and generative construction, defining the articulated set of purposes, actions, practices, results and values, which are constant, specific, of the conduct of a family with children, oriented either to determine or to

condition or influence the nascent and/or resulting conduct from the perspective of their personality and the personality of their children.”(Neacșu I., 2010, pg.117)

The daily moral exercise of the child in the family is a preamble for its own family life but also for the social life. The parental care, the psychological atmosphere, the family’s values system constitute the main coordinates influencing the child’s development and creating for it the premises favorable to its social integration. The educational parental model, the family climate, the internal cohesion transfer to the children social values such as: self esteem, respect to the other, altruism, moral conscience, prosocial conduct, will. Such values shall help the young to integrate socially and shall contribute to its subsequent development both personally and professionally.

This study underlines the role and the importance of family pedagogy as a research direction and socio-educational action of family, a multidimensional ensemble of socio-educational interventions in favor of family mainly aiming at finalities of the type of changes at the level of parents’ conduct based on restructuring parental attitudes and competences through learning.

2. Methodology

This study is of exploratory qualitative type and is based on the focused interview (the interview guide -annex). Please find below the main stages in the performance of the focus group:

- *Establishment of the discussion theme*: the main discussion axes were presented, which allowed the identification and delimitation of the social and educational intervention area of pedagogues (form teachers) from the intervention area of psychologists in their work with parents (psychological counseling offered to family);

- *Establishment of the group structure* was made according to the following criteria: establishment of a medium homogenous group, considering that all those involved have the optimization of the activities with parents as their common point;

- The attraction in debates of certain representatives for all the professional categories interested in working with parents (teachers, school counselors, psychologists, social assistant, family doctor)

- The high recognition of the professional competences held by those involved in the debates

- *The drafting of the guide for the organization of the focused interview*:

- The establishment of questions (funnel questions, from general questions to specific questions; the preparation of open questions allowing the issuance of as many value judgments for this study as possible)

- The establishment of the team registering the debate results (1 observer and 1 assistant moderator)

- *The establishment of the meeting place and of the duration of the interview*: methodical cabinet within the Pitești University, 2 hours.

- *The performance of specific procedures*:

- Before starting the focus-group, the moderator introduced itself and mentioned its role in this group activity;

- The moderator presented the purpose of the focus-group and explained the rules of its performance (the fact that there are no correct or wrong answers, that the participants should speak loudly and in turns, all of them intervening with opinions, ideas; the fact that it is not consensus that is pursued but the exchange of relevant ideas and experiences).

- The moderator explained the necessity to record the discussion and ensured the participants of the confidentiality of discussions.

- *focus –group composition:*

- one moderator, university teacher, education sciences Phd;
- 6 form teachers with a rich practical experience in the field of educative activities from 6 school units of Pitești

- 2 school counselors from 2 Pitești high schools;

- 2 psychologists from the County Argeș Center of Resources and Educational Assistance

- 1 social assistant from the Argeș General Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection

- 1 doctor from the Arges Public Health Department

- *Objectives pursued in performing the focus group:*

- Identification of perceptions, representations, motivations, attitudes of experts with a rich experience in parental education and in social and medical services offered to family;

- Identification of the specific framework for the research and analysis of family from a double perspective: social-educational and psychological.

3. Results, findings

The teachers, the form teachers participating in the focus group highlighted the main aspects of pupils' educational counseling in problems related to: self-knowledge, self image, adaptation and social integration, school success, development crises, crisis situations, solving and surpassing a conflict, appropriation of efficient learning techniques, career orientation, pupils' knowledge, understanding pupils' problems, support in their development, ensuring the balance between school requirements and pupils' possibilities, in identifying the causes of school non-adaptation, optimization of the school-pupil relation. Also, certain form teachers underlined that, in the opinion of most parents, school is the institution in which they continue to be most trustful for the education of their children. For this reason, as to the support that school grants to family, it was asserted that the services offered by it are rather few and do not fully answer the needs specific to families. Generally, the interaction with parents is limited to parent meetings and consultations, in which mostly information activities dominate, and less support and training activities. As to the collaboration of family with school, the lower and lower interest of parents in communicating with teachers, in participating in parents' meetings etc was underlined. The father's presence as a partner in family-school relationships is very low. Some parents mentioned that they can no longer provide support and control in doing children's homework (mostly, school tasks being

very complicated for them). Other parents claimed that they sanction their child depending on school results.

The recommendations of the participants in the focus group also regard the specific activities related to parents' educational counseling which could form the object of workshops with families for a better knowledge of their children, for a better understanding of their needs and behaviors, for identifying the risk factors in family, school, social integration, for the communication between parents and children on themes related to their daily life (the child's future, friendship, love, sexuality) etc.

Generally, the education of future parents materializes at the school level through homeroom classes and the orientation and counseling activities, where several themes related to family not sufficiently covering the parental education problem are approached (family types, the change of family roles, family care and support etc.). The classes are frequently held by teachers without a special training in this field.

School counselors and psychologists described the specific psychological counseling activities for parents and children and also underlined the complementarity of these interventions with the parental education and educational counseling actions. Some parents benefit from psychological counseling for:

- Surpassing difficult situations (divorce, loss of job, intra-family conflicts, chronic diseases, death of one of the spouses, etc.) endangering child's safety or generating risks related to the child's separation from its family environment;
- Optimization of the communication with the child, making the best decisions, negotiating solutions and creatively solving conflicts between generations;
- Development of parental skills and practices for children's education and care.
- Supporting the children with special educative necessities.

The social assistant stated the situations and the family cases in which interventions are usually made and in which specialized social support is offered, and the doctor insisted on the specific prevention and treatment actions for families. It was underlined that interventions and preventive models eliminate risks and the promotion of interventions develops positive functionality and is focused on the acquirement of competences and capacities.

Therefore, the optics of the interviewed experts led to the adoption of a holistic perspective, of social and systemic approach of proactive practices in the services offered to family and of the socio-educational interventions supporting and strengthening family functioning.

4. Conclusions

As a direction of research and social pedagogic action, family pedagogy dimensions and orients its research area at 2 levels:

L₁: *education of future parents* – as an educative action of preparing the young for the family life, for exercising their role as future parents. *Family education* supposes the special direction of the educational process to preparing the young for exercising their role as future parents. The education process for family life starts with the education *in and through* family. *Family education* regards the actions and the influences within family with an educative nature, which come from parents and are

oriented to shaping the child's personality. *Education through family* depends on the general culture of family and its life manner, both of them providing permanent feedback for the consolidation of family roles.

Four preparatory stages for family life are mainly delineated: the stage of forming the affective image about family life (of the habit to integrate in the parental family life), the stage of value orientations (of adhesion to value and cultural patterns of family and their internalization), the stage of consolidating personal independence and asserting full personality (pre-marital stage), the stage of option for family life, of formation of the new family (the marital stage).

L₂: *parents' education* – as action of modeling parents' personality for optimizing their relations with children. Considering the complexity of the society we live in, family pedagogy may offer consistent solutions of psycho-pedagogical nature for the satisfaction of parents' need of being helped in educating their children as better as possible. *Parents' education* has the purpose of encouraging the conscious and responsible assumption of the parent mandate. Such an intervention has as finality the optimization of the parent-child relationship, which is in a continuous transformation and continuous re-adaptations.

Family pedagogy cultivates the parents' spirit of responsibility for the education of their children. Its intervention is necessary in solving such problems as: the early education of children in the first years of life, the early formation of civilized behavioral habits, the child's preparation for school, the maintenance of a harmonious relationship of family with school, the manner of gaining parental authority, the manner of organizing the child's leisure time, the manner of counteracting the influence of a negative entourage in the child's group of friends, the settlement of intergenerational conflicts, etc. But the priority function of family pedagogy is however the transmission of social and cultural values and norms from one generation to another in view of a successful social integration.

References

Cuznețov L. (2008), *Tratat de educație pentru familie. Pedagogia familiei*, Chișinău, CEP USM.

Druta, Fl.(1998), *Psihologia familiei*, Didactica și Pedagogică Publishing House, Bucharest.

Durning, P. (1995), *Education familiale. Acteurs, processuss et enjeux*, PUF, Paris.

Mihailescu, I. (2004), *Rolul familiei în dezvoltarea copilului*, Cartea Universitara Publishing House, Bucharest.

Neașu I. (2010), *Pedagogie socială. Valori, comportamente, experiențe, strategii*, Universitară Publishing House, Bucharest.

Neașu M. (2011), *Pedagogie socială românească. Tradiție și modernitate*, Paralela 45 Publishing House, Pitești.

Telleri F. (2003), *Pedagogia familiei*, Didactica și Pedagogică Publishing House, Bucharest.

Vrasmaș, E. (2004), *Intervenția socio-educatională ca sprijin pentru părinți*, Aramis Publishing House, Bucharest.

Annex

Interview Guide

1. How long have you been a form teacher /school counselor /psychologist/doctor/social assistant?

2. How often do you have meetings with parents?

3. In what circumstances do you perform/did you perform educational/psychological/intervention counseling activities *for and in favor of pupils and their parents*? Briefly describe the work with parents!

4. What types of needs did parents express when you had relations with them in different contexts?

5. Do you consider that parental education can contribute to the increase of the quality of the children's education process and their wellbeing? Argue your answer briefly!

6. In your opinion, what types of activities could form the object of a special program of parental education circumscribed to family pedagogy?