



SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF EPISODES OF ABUSE IN THE CLASSROOM: ANALYSIS FROM A PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Inmaculada Fernández Antelo e Isabel Cuadrado Gordillo

University of Extremadura

iferant@unex.es

cuadrado@unex.es

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ABSTRACT

Family and school are the main institutions responsible for education of children and youth. Respect, shared accountability and the desire to train competent people to develop in a democratic society and contribute to their development and transformation are some principles that have traditionally characterized the relationship. Today, this balance and consensus for years has favored the continuity between family and school contexts seems to be broken. Now see, more often of the expected and permissible, a real confrontation which is common to observe how both blame each other for the failure, not just academics, but primarily of living and lack of values of children and adolescents. And as this happens, new fractures in the education of students pushing and further aggravate relations between family and school. In this situation the question arises about the causes that have led to this lack of understanding about the conditions requiring each party to reach a new consensus and the principles that should underpin this new alliance. All this in order to enable joint action, accountable and coordinated between the two institutions to enable them to achieve educational leadership, be an example of coexistence and mutual understanding, and assist in the search for new and more creative solutions to conflicts live at school. The present paper provides some of the key factors that promote the alliance of the family and school contexts.

Key words: Family, coexistence, bullying, citizenship education.

INTRODUCTION

In a world where the challenges of globalization is placing an ever-changing participation structure, the immigration that we face every day by a cruel reality, a situation that excludes some people and brings others to the technology information and communication networks leading to approach or isolation between people, all are conditions that determine many changes in society. This globalization and new knowledge society provoke a situation increasingly complex education that determines the need to redefine the role of family and school. All societies have delegated the



education and transmission of values in people or institutions. In our society the school, as a basic social institution, is accepted that performance. Thus attended, despite the complexity, a higher valuation of education of the individual as citizen, which can lead delegate to the school and teachers throughout the educational responsibility, going to cause a sensation of overflow of teachers are not prepared, as they themselves reported, dealing with this complex situation, or understand that this task is not part of their professional skills.

The problems and difficulties they may face school and family requires a great effort and often involve wear deteriorating interpersonal relationships among individuals within the same context and limit contact with people from different backgrounds. The school and the family are not exempt from these problems, changes and difficulties they must overcome themselves to first be willing to help and collaborate with each other (Díaz-Aguado, 2007; Díaz-Aguado & de Vicente, 2007).

Changes and difficulties facing the family

The family is an educational and socializing agent should educate the children on respect, solidarity, tolerance, reflection, appreciation of how different and all this without abandoning basic principles of order and discipline. However, families recognize that the task of educating them is becoming increasingly complex and difficult for multiple adverse circumstances among which may be noted, by way of example, the following (Cuadrado, 2010):

Difficulty in reconciling work and family life. The incorporation of women into the workforce led to a division of educational functions between the father and mother. Previously, these functions are performed primarily the mother. This raises a new structure and organization family. At present, it is likely that parents are not home when the children leave school and, in some cases, the period of daily living look drastically reduced. In these situations the family delegated some of their educational responsibilities in school or other educational agents.

Family disintegration caused by the deterioration of relations between the parents. Divorces and legal separations from parents are preceded, in some instances, hostility and anger situations in which the love and the lack of respect left to be present much earlier. On the other hand, it is a mistake to think that this damage only occurs in situations of legal parental breakup. Couples can be together legally separated but can have emotional and emotionally for years. In either situation, parents are an example of peaceful coexistence, prosocial conflict resolution, respect, and tolerance and will hardly be able to transmit these values to their children. It is expected, or desired by the parents, the school cover these deficiencies.

Adoption of educational models overly protective or permissive. Some parents who spend little time to family life do not feel morally able to require their children about rules, discipline or specific behavior, opting for the adoption of a permissive educational model. In other cases, social alarms created by the media, sometimes overly exaggerated and unrealistic, or the lack of skills and responsibilities that children are assuming with age, prompting parents to practice educational models protectionist limit children's exposure to everyday situations they must learn to overcome and, consequently, limit the learning of skills and conflict resolution strategies that are usually spontaneously acquire and facilitate coexistence.

Changes and difficulties facing the school

At present, there is a concern, legally and officially recognized, to address a parcel that we cannot ignore. The increase in conflicts in schools has become one of the concerns has been addressed, sometimes, more reactive than preventive. The fact is that all the diversity of problems that occur in a school about coexistence, has been violence and, specifically, abuse among students, the phenomenon that has influenced the development of education programs prevention and successful



school life. In Extremadura, the GRIE research group has spent several years analyzing the situations of bullying within schools of secondary education. The results at the end of 2009, establishing differences described below depending on the role played: victims, witnesses and bullies (Cuadrado, 2010).

Table 1: Modalities and intensity of abuse according to witnesses (%)

	Never	Often	Sometimes	Always
Insults	17,5	44,1	27,1	11,4
Nicknames	19,0	38,1	25,3	17,5
Spreading false rumours	26,2	43,4	21,7	8,7
Social isolation	26,9	53,6	15,2	4,3
Hiding things	39,1	42,0	14,3	4,7
Not letting the other participate in class	46,9	39,1	10,9	3,1
Threatening to make scared	52,2	34,3	10,0	3,6
Direct physical aggression	58,1	32,2	7,2	2,4
Stealing things	73,7	20,7	3,8	1,8
Breaking things	75,1	20,1	3,1	1,7
Forcing threats	88,6	8,6	2,1	0,8
Sexually harassing	92,9	5,0	1,1	1,0

Table 2: Modalities and intensity of abuse as victims (%)

	Never	Often	Sometimes	Always
Insults	73,2	22,6	3,0	1,2
Nicknames	74,6	19,5	3,9	2,0
Spreading false rumours	76,1	21,0	2,2	0,7
Hiding things	81,3	17,0	1,2	0,4
Social isolation	88,3	11,2	0,4	0,2
Not letting the other participate in class	88,6	7,3	1,3	2,8
Stealing things	92,3	6,5	0,9	0,3
Threatening to make scared	94,6	4,7	0,6	0,1
Breaking things	94,9	4,4	0,5	0,2
Direct physical aggression	95,1	4,3	0,3	0,2
Sexually harassing	97,6	1,7	0,2	0,5
Forcing threats	98,7	1,0	0,1	0,1
Threats with weapons	99,0	0,8	0,1	0,1



Table 3: Modalities and intensity of abuse by bullies (%)

	Never	Often	Sometimes	Always
Insults	63,9	29,8	1,3	1,9
Social isolation	64,8	27,4	3,7	4,1
Spreading false rumours	68,6	26,9	2,7	1,8
Nicknames	72,6	22,6	2,4	2,5
Not letting the other participate in class	86,8	9,1	2,0	4,3
Hiding things	87,9	10,4	1,2	0,5
Direct physical aggression	92,3	1,0	1,0	0,9
Threatening to make scared	93,5	5,2	0,5	0,8
Stealing things	96,7	2,2	0,4	0,7
Breaking things	97,1	1,9	0,6	0,4
Sexually harassing	98,2	0,9	0,2	0,6
Forcing threats	98,7	0,6	0,1	0,5
Threats with weapons	98,7	0,7	0,1	0,5

Therefore, we are increasingly aware that the task of education and teachers' work is aimed not only to education for coexistence, but also in the construction of coexistence.

By the other hand, the extension of compulsory education to 16 years causes that those students who want to drop out are forced to remain in class causing, in many cases, major discipline problems. Problems that sometimes teachers do not know how to cope due to the loss of authority that have been experiencing. The situation is further compounded when instead of indiscipline are cases of school violence.

The increase of multiculturalism in schools is another of the changes facing the school. Cultural homogenization that has characterized the school in previous decades has given way to an increasing degree of heterogeneity. In the classroom students are from different countries with different cultures and the teacher must promote coexistence among them and promote the construction of identity, the latter task is very complex case presents a multicultural context. Hence the demand for intercultural education based on respect for human rights and the different cultures. And it is during adolescence, critical developmental stage where the development of the personality and morality experience the most advanced, when it has to ensure intercultural education to prevent situations of exclusion, violence and xenophobia.

Finally, we note that another of the difficulties facing the school is related to the historical moment that is, which is characterized by an absence of absolute certainties and growing uncertainty. The teacher does not have the truth and cannot guarantee certainty, rather it has to educate and train students in uncertainty and adapting to constant change. Hence the interest no longer focuses primarily on the excessive specialization, but in the achievement of skills and strategies to encourage adaptation to change and ensure, as far as possible, a successful social inclusion.

Overcoming the difficulties faced by these two institutions begins with the acceptance of the changes that are occurring in society in general and its particular context and the need to establish good communication and collaboration between them that promote understanding and mutual aid. But to achieve this latter purpose is appropriate to examine what are the strengths and weaknesses that characterize the current relationship between family and school. Among the weaknesses should be highlighted the following:

Discontinuity between family and school. In recent times the lack of communication and consensus between these contexts is increasingly larger. This causes a very large distance makes it



impossible to undertake joint actions or collaborate in the agreed or initiated by any of these sectors. This situation explains that actions initiated by the school to improve academic performance, for example, can be undermined if its scope is reduced to the school environment, if you do not have family support, or face further action the family agreed that conflict with those activated in the school. Or on the contrary, family activities oriented to promote coexistence, for example, may have limited effectiveness if not supported by the school.

Confusing or misleading definition of the responsibilities that are unique to each institution and those to be undertaken jointly, essentially in relation to the transmission of values, the climate of cooperation, prevention of violence or emotional development of students. Communicative exchanges that teachers and parents do sometimes seem to be laden with mutual reproaches and accusations which seek to hold the other for the loss of values of adolescents and their lack of school motivation, the increase in violent behavior etc. Facing this situation, more than two thirds of teachers and parents believe that these two institutions should share equally the responsibilities related to the education of adolescents. The family-school collaboration is considered one of the key elements in preventing and solving the problems of coexistence and school violence.

Contradictions between the attributions that the teachers granted to family and the school authority allows or provides for the family to develop. On the one hand, the teacher calls the family a greater involvement and participation in school life and decisions taken. But on the other hand, is missing collaborative initiatives, relegating many cases the involvement of parents to a mere representation on the School Council.

Quality of relationships between teachers and parents. Only 58.8% of teachers believe there is a climate of positive coexistence with the families of the students (Jares, 2006). The indifference, suspicion or passivity, among other acts, foment unrest and promote the rift between family and school. To address these situations and improve the climate of coexistence both sides should discuss and agree, instead of blaming each other. There is no one responsible for the good or bad relations between teachers and parents, but there is a biggest loser: the student.

Among the strengths is pointing out the following:

Excellent willingness of parents and teachers to re-establish communication and cooperation between them. Family and school create a need for the involvement of parents in school life and decision-making should increase and be more active than it is today. Participation in collegiate bodies such as the School Board is nice but not at all sufficient and will reflect about half of the families of teenage pupils (Marchesi & Perez, 2005). And if the approximate formulas that have been using are not effective, new ones must to look for in line with the interests and needs of both parties. This new partnership between parents and teachers requires a strong commitment that involves taking a series of duties and responsibilities that must be clearly defined to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, and implies also have some rights.

Interest in restoring the authority of the teacher. One of the most common complaints of teachers in recent times is the devaluation and even contempt shown towards the figure of the teacher. Sometimes, the family contributes to the social devaluation; oppose unfairly the decisions of the teacher in front of their children when they do not occur more derogatory comments to others to hold the 'messenger' of communicating news. Despite that, 83.7% of families welcomes teachers recognizing that their work is very difficult and that basically satisfied with the work performed (Marchesi & Perez, 2005).

Facing this predisposition is observed that both teachers and parents often put in place educational measures, far from promoting coexistence at home or at school, muddy and are a source of conflict. While none of them wants this result, ignorance about the possible consequences of their actions may have on family and school climate can lead them toward educational measures unwise. These measures include, for example, the non-compliance (Jares, 2006).



In any social organization, and family and school are two of them, a set of rules that ensure compliance with the rights and duties established and by the creation and maintenance of a positive emotional climate that promotes balance and emotional well-being of all its members. However, it was observed both in family and school that this system of rules or discipline is violated frequently. One possible reason that causes teenage break these rules is to follow authoritarian models. In these cases, the rules are not agreed between the parties but are the adults who enforce them teenagers waiting to undergo them without question. In many cases the imposition itself which reveals the adolescent rather than the content of these standards. At other cases, young people feel that the discipline system restricts their freedom continued to exert excessive control. They are treated as children run by other people according to criteria of morality do not always meet those who impose them.

On the opposite side are permissive disciplinary models in which anything goes, everything is permitted. When it escapes from authoritarianism sometimes falls in pure anarchism hoping the system works thanks to the goodwill of its members. However, regardless of the type of will that manifests the lack of discipline, it fosters the tyranny and insecurity of the weakest and therefore can be considered a source of conflict. Train people outside any rule difficult their integration into society, governed by rules, among which included the penalty or punishment to whom the violation.

Convinced of the need for some kind of discipline and analyzed previous models, it is clear that the model to adopt should be based on tolerance and mutual respect, and therefore should be adopted democratic discipline. The rules included in this model should emerge from dialogue, negotiation and consensus of all parties, because only then can feel the responsibilities and assumed to be shared. But this model should not be applied exclusively to students or children. Parents and teachers are still models and examples for young people and their behavior should enjoy the highest possible degree of consistency with the values and discipline required of others.

A new problem arises when the disciplinary models adopted into the family and school do not agree. If this lack of continuity has been occurring since childhood, children may interpret that morality is subjective and depends on whom you interact, the behaviors can be classified in different ways and each person can react to them differently. For example, before an attack on another partner, the messages that reach the child may be to hit you stronger, that is reprehensible conduct and to troubleshoot the course of action must be dialogue, that of 'That is childish things' and nothing happens, or may receive a punitive punishment without explanation. This multiplicity of messages, many of them contradictory, difficult to anticipate the consequences of their actions, knowing what is right or wrong and the development of prosocial strategies of dispute resolution.

Other educational measures may negatively affect both family and school coexistence relates to the excessive attention paid to academic performance at the expense of the development of affective and emotional aspects. Although the family is the stronghold par excellence that ensures the emotional wellbeing of all its members, when dealing with issues related to the school context is sometimes preceded by an interest in academic achievement and seem to take second or third level issues such as kind of relationship children develop with their peers and teachers, the way than if they do, the difficulties of coexistence relationship and they face every day, or how they solve their problems or conflicts in which they are involved, among others.

On the other axis we place the teacher, whose functions are not only enhance students' cognitive development, but their overall development, including both moral, and social and emotional. In the early stages of childhood and primary education seems to assume these functions without any problem. In contrast, the secondary stage teachers seemed to focus more on cognitive aspects such as whether the teen and did not need any kind of love and affection, as if these variables was not affected student learning and school life. However, the teenager is in a developmental stage in which it is exposed to continuous changes and demands the teacher to be aware of and sensitive to the



needs that arise at any time, including emotional nature. For example, if we find that a student is being excluded or marginalized by their peers we have to work in certain social skills class to help you fit into the group. And not only so that students feel better in class, which is fundamental, but also as a strategy for conflict prevention. Group membership and friendship are two elements of first order in adolescence contribute positively to the prevention of school violence.

A third educational measure has to do with individualism. Although each person is unique, we must take into consideration that takes place in a world where the need of others to meet many needs. However, perhaps by over-protection or carelessness, some parents and teachers forget to develop in boys and girls a sense of reciprocity. Others give us comfort, security, trust, love, respect us, help us, but if we want the system to work there must be reciprocity, it has to be bidirectional or multidirectional. We benefit from each other, but we must also benefit others. Failure to follow this maxim, we are encouraging the emergence of selfish behavior and serious problems of coexistence. The student or son are not the only ones who want to feel or care, parents and teachers also expect some of that love and understanding. And if we move to the context of the brothers or friends, if any of them just waiting to receive and does not practice the giving will soon be excluded from this chain. The problem is compounded when the child has not developed a sense of reciprocity and use other means, probably the force or violence to continue to keep the preferential treatment.

ACTIONS DIRECTED TOWARD IMPROVING FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

The common and specific problems faced by parents and teachers, and educational goals you both want to reach their teenage, children or students, demonstrates once again the need to restore the relationship between family and school. But the union of both contexts should not be governed by the principles and regulations that have so far been used. Society has changed, family structure has changed, other needs and interests are different from those before. These and other phenomena have led to misunderstanding and even rupture between family and school and would be a mistake to try to establish formulas for participation and cooperation that have proved unsuccessful. Instead you should opt for the design of new ones through dialogue and consensus of all concerned. We can highlight the following:

Acquisition of social and communication skills.

To favor the union of both contexts is necessary to work with them in advance a set of strategies or social skills to help them overcome their differences and facilitate their approach (Díaz Aguado, 2006). First, must be worked *active listening*. Sometimes this ability is absent from the conversations that keep parents and teachers. Before hearing the description of the facts to make any of the parties, before sufficient time to explain his point of view, both groups try to blame themselves for what happened even resorting to threats. Active listening involves give time to the other person to do their analysis of the situation and expose the opening arguments as you like. It also implies a willingness to try to understand what is said and not simply wait until the time for the next take the floor. If not given this condition can hardly take joint action.

Second, is necessary to use *respectful language*. And such language does not mean exclusively a speech in which no insults, sneers, shouts or threats, but the use of set expressions in the first person preferably directed to present the ideas, feelings or beliefs without going into comparisons with others and less in blame or accuse others.

Third, we must learn to *distinguish the problem of the person*. If the problem is, for example, the inappropriate behavior of a student to a particular teacher, we must realize that the problem is not the student, neither the teacher nor the parents, but the bad behavior and will have to analyze what that causes it. The lack of management of this activity can lead to personal confrontations



between the parties to seriously harm relations between them and therefore compromise the formation of this alliance between family and school.

Fourthly, we should *focus on the problem* and not address issues outside of it. Sometimes, to reinforce our arguments turn to other things that happened in the past those have nothing to do with the current conflict. Bringing up other issues favors the appearance of reproaches and difficult to analyze the causes that provoked the conflict and the search for solutions. If there are other unresolved issues is best addressed at another time after passing the current conflict.

Fifth, we should *learn to express feelings* which generate the conflict. Discomfort, helplessness, anxiety, anger, disappointment, are just some of the feelings generated in the warring parties. Try to resolve it from a rational perspective not guarantee the prevention of similar problems. Nor guarantee their complete solution. It is need to be aware of the feelings generated by a situation, a fact, a comment, but it is also imperative to communicate to the warring parties to know the damage it is causing. Perhaps, if we omit such comments to avoid showing any 'weaknesses', the other party does not understand the scope of the problem and do not understand some of the solutions proposed.

Sixthly, it is essential *to know how to apologize*. Recognize that you are wrong and to express it verbally to the party concerned cannot be interpreted as a sign of weakness, but on the contrary, as a manifestation of self-confidence and a desire to maintain a relationship based on respect and trust mutual. Parents and teachers should recognize that they have committed or are committing mistakes, either in relation to adolescents or issues related to joint participation in improving the coexistence of the school.

Finding new ways of joint participation

Once the above skills worked, it's time to seal a new alliance between family and school and begin the search for new and more creative forms of joint participation to prevent school violence situations.

The creation of a *Commission for Coexistence* in secondary schools is an optimal setting for teachers, parents, students and other educational stakeholders to dialogue and debate about the model of coexistence that want to prevail in the center, of the means used to its implementation and monitoring of resource requirements, the responsibilities that each actor or sector should assume and to be shared among all, and so on. One limitation of this form of cooperation is that it is a committee where everyone cannot be part of it (will not be operational), but a representation of each sector. Experience has shown that there is a group of parents who have more direct contact with the school and that they themselves become a part of the school board and committees are formed, and another remains outside to most actions and decisions taken. It is, therefore, according to the Association of Parents of Pupils (APP) to inform, motivate, engage, energize and involve families in joint collaboration by teachers, for example, that the representations are rotating or creating sub-committees within the APP itself.

Another form of cooperation between school-family could be *the involvement of parents in mediation programs* and incorporate the same resolution of conflicts between parents and children motivated by issues related to education. In this way, parents would witness in the first person the difficulties of living there in the center of the reasons that cause or the consequences that may result from these. In the same sense, teachers could act as a mediator between parents and children in very specific conflicts to become aware of the difficulties faced by many families, if not overcome, could lead to negative effects on the academic performance of children and school life. Both options also promote the training of parents and teachers in conflict resolution and, presumably, would be a step in preventing school violence situations. In summary, this formula allows an approximation between family and school contexts from the weaknesses and needs presented by each of them,



which, become covered, contribute to the improvement of their relations, and enable the search for new ways cooperation.

A final proposal would be related to the formation of *learning communities* where participating teachers, students, families, social workers, members of associations and other social actors. It should be noted that when we speak of 'learning community' we do so from a much broader conception that that families and schools. We do it from the public context of a citizenry concerned about the education of their people. We refer in particular to all those social networks and people who can engage in educational planning, to all those groups and individuals engaged in formal education and informal spaces of education (city education projects, training programs environmental, civic collaboration plans, etc.). Working together throughout this network enables the school to improve education for students at the same time, which is co-responsible in the process of development and socialization.

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