



## PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICE, A STABILITY FACTOR IN SCHOOLS

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### **Abstract:**

*"Education is experienced by teachers, students and their parents as a daily school environment, while in the perspective of national politics, "education" are a long term investment, therefore, the careful definition of priorities in the broader range of needs takes a particular importance."*

It is a study conducted over a four month period, achieved in three high schools, and one secondary school in the city of Elbasan. "Dhaskal Todri", "Qemal Stafa", and "Kostandin Kristoforidhi" high schools and "Naim Frasheri" secondary school have as a primary intention the awareness of teachers and students towards the increasing of cooperation between them and the involvement of students' family members in the programs and initiatives undertaken by the schools in the context of the education process, increasing the active role of social workers. Quantitative method has been used to complete this study, exploiting different materials from pedagogical journals, publications of some of the greatest psychologists, materials from seminars organized by MES (Ministry of Education and Sport), records from a questionnaire distributed to some high schools in the city, study case at a mental health center. The results of the study show the multidimensional problems faced by Albanian schools during these years, difficulty that is based on the teacher-student relationship and the school's cooperation with the students' family. Today these relationships and this cooperation are in a transitional phase between conservatism, authoritarianism and democracy.

**Keywords:** adolescence, academic achievement, school attendance, family functioning, teacher-parent relationship, teacher-parent cooperation, teacher-parent communication, psychosocial development of adolescents, social worker

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## 1. Introduction

The long communist dictatorship, combined with a full isolation from the other part of the world, has caused some grave consequences on the human psychology, organizational structures and on all the types of infrastructure in Albania. The history of the Albanian education these last years is still under the dominative influence of Hoxha's regime. After the winter of 90-91, the request for stability in an unstable political and economic context has been a concern for the local and international community. During those troubled years, the skill of the government to lead the country has been questioned, but now, a careful optimism is being shown.

Nowadays, education does not seem like a decisive contributor for the overall development of the country. There is a huge gap between the theory and the practice of the democracy. As an experienced teacher has said: *"The cultural heritage of five decades of authoritarianism and passivity continues to define the everyday life in its education and management"*.

Opposite these needs, the social service workers must have an active engagement as important actors in the educational process, to ease the difficulties that our schools are facing nowadays. The democratic society is the reflection of the Western civilization virtues, the society that guarantees freedom and human rights. By following this way, there are a lot of things that should be done. This can be noticed in any interpersonal or institutional relationship. The school is also part of this reality because it is the most important place for the education of the next generation.

This paper unfolds and makes efforts to explore the multidimensional problems that the Albanian schools are facing these years, problems that consist on teacher-student relationship and on the cooperation between the school and family. Nowadays, these relationships are in a transitional phase between conservatism, authoritarianism and democracy.

The improvement of these relationships is conditioned, apart from other reasons, by the recognition and acknowledges of the characteristics of the adolescent's personality who is experiencing the crisis of identity, fights to be considered and treated as an adult, doubts all the moral norms and values, supports the new trends etc. Educational work with an adolescent will never be successful without knowing and supporting him/her on his/her positive aspects, without forgetting that his social sense constitutes the "barometer of normality".

Our teaching and learning system will not only be reduced to the preservation and development of scholars' intellectual curiosity but also to their ability to learn independently, to think in an ecliptic way, to understand the complexity of the social world, to recognize and accept the individuals of other countries, to develop the

individuality and the perception of common European and world values. The achievement of these high goals becomes a reality when at the educator are synchronized enthusiasm, dedication and work with certain goals to select, undertake and implement (under real class conditions) theoretical thinking and advanced educational experience of the most developed countries. The internet cannot coexist with the didascalism of teachers and neither can coexist with students who do not know how to learn.

It is obvious that the recidivism of this philosophy of education is still alive in our school today. Data collected from a survey conducted with adolescents testify the lack of co-operation between teachers and students, teachers are not interested regarding their problems, are conflicting and cold, often behaving harsh, their methodical progress in classroom, in most cases, does not make the subject interesting, are judgmental, impose on the students and do not create cooperative bridges with the family. Regardless of the age, there are many teachers who are led by the "education banker concept" who present themselves to the scholars as the necessary opposite who by trumpeting adolescents' ignorance justify their own existence. The presence of such relationships in secondary schools is accompanied by negative consequences on the psychological development of adolescents.

The chaotic conditions that our country is facing, many adolescents are involved in risky behaviors such as alcohol, cigarette and drug use, alcohol abuse, the use of weapons, the depressions that are present as a result of the interaction of many factors such as lack of family harmony, divorce of the parents, major economic problems, low popularity among peers, low school achievement, suicide attempts etc. This is the drama that some adolescents in Albania are facing. In order to prevent and attenuate these problems, teachers and parents must play a very important role. This may be possible only if there is constructive communication between them. Another significant role which helps these occurrences to attenuate is played by the social workers as change agents.

## **2. The purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is:

1. To define the strength of the connection and the influence that has the teacher-parent and vice versa relationship.
2. To define the influence of the democratic teacher-student relationship has in relation to the psychosocial development of the student.
3. To define the influence that the school-family cooperation has regarding the academic achievements and the school attendance.

4. To define the influence that the social worker has in the school in relation to the academic achievements and the school attendance.
5. To identify the differences of the actual level of the relationship between teachers and parents; (two dimensions: the cooperation and communication related to the academic achievements and the school attendance)
6. Parental involvement, as: parent-child discussion, familiar environment in supporting studying, parental involvement in the home-work process, parental expectations towards education, beliefs and attitude of their children.

### **3. Based on the reviewed literature, there were created these research questions and hypothesis**

Which are the reasons of the low percentage of school attendance? What is the influence that the teacher-parent relationship has in school attendance for adolescents? Is there a democratization of the relationship between teachers and students and which are the social consequences of the absence of these democratizations on adolescents? What is the influence that the absence of the authority has on this psychosocial development of the adolescents? Is there a cooperation between the school and the parents that prevents social problems of adolescents in schools from happening? What is the relationship between *academic achievements*, *adolescent school attendance* and *teacher-parent relationship* (two dimensions of cooperation and communication) based on the reporting of math's and native language's teachers?

Which is the role of social workers in our schools nowadays? Is the work between teachers, parents and social workers coordinated nowadays? Which is the influence of the social workers in school attendance and academic achievements?

**H<sub>1</sub>.** The level of academic achievements in school has to do with the cooperation between school and family

**H<sub>2</sub>.** The absence of democratization of the relationships between the teachers and the students leads to social consequences for adolescents.

**H<sub>3</sub>.** The institutionalized authority of the teacher in class has an influence on the psychosocial development of adolescents.

**H<sub>4</sub>.** The social worker influences the academic achievement and school attendance.

**H<sub>5</sub>.** The collaboration school-family prevents adolescent's social problems.

**H<sub>5</sub>.** The academic performance in school is related positively to the *teacher-parent relationship* (collaboration and communication) and negatively with their participation.

#### **4. Methodology**

The population of this study was 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from one secondary school and three high schools in Elbasan and the sample selection were done randomly.

In order to achieve the main goals of this survey, there were handed out 100 questionnaires, in the respective schools. The questionnaire had 10 questions. There were different materials from pedagogical journals, publications of some of the greatest psychologists, materials from seminars organized by MES (Ministry of Education and Sport), study case at a mental health center.

The progress of this survey includes some main steps:

1. Recognizing, finding, reading and filing of the literature
2. The use of the questionnaires
3. Field work to know closer the problem, practice done at "Qemal Stafa" high school in Elbasan and in some schools of the municipalities of the region, like Shushice, Gjinaretj.
4. Collecting and analyzing the information.

#### **5. Two words about Adolescence**

By knowing the main characteristics of this age and the psychological development of adolescents, we become more clear about the relationship that they build with their teachers or their peers, the presentations of themselves in interpersonal relationships, especially at school and the consequences that may be caused as a result of not having the needed attention and the care of the social actors that are closer to them.

Adolescence is a new stage of the social, emotional and intellectual development that helps young people grow adults. The researchers have define the age of 11-12 as the beginning of this stage of life (even though it is still debatable) and think that the ending limit corresponds on the period between 20 and 21 years old. It is the period that is defined as a short one but also a period which consists on a lot of changes that include a lot of biological, psychological, social and mental aspects. The human bio-psychological world during this age gets restructured, formed and reformed with unusual rhythms which are often inconceivable by the adults and not fully explainable by the intellectual capacity of the adolescent.

The developments in adolescence are strongly connected to the social and psychological part and they are mainly reflected to the reports that the adolescents create with the adults or their peers, the way that they behave, their moral virtues that they determine in a small group with their friends, their difficulties and problems

related to their education and the way they put themselves in a companionship with people older than them.

The age of adolescence is a definitive period of the psychological shaping of the child. During this phase evolves the need to look inside of you, to compare yourself to the others, to explain different feelings and to appreciate your opportunities. This is the peak of the consciousness' shaping, which will be reflected in all the other social developments.

Adolescents have the ability to get into situations that oppose facts, which affects on the communication between parents and children. This is one of the reasons that adolescence is seen as the age of "crisis", "conflicts" and "frustration".

Adolescents start to compare their real parents to the perfect parents in their imagination. They are often critical towards all the social situations, including parents and their families. Fights start to be more usual during early adolescence. According to the researchers, these fights have a positive role, because they allow adolescents to test their independency in safe conditions of the family life.

According to the studies, adolescence is the stage where parents and children should negotiate. The adolescent should be more independent; parents should start looking at them as not very equal to themselves, as an individual who has the right to share different opinions. When conflicts happen, their liberal concepts start to change and they gradually start to conform.

What characterizes the most the adolescent is the ego, the tendency that the adolescent has to exaggerate his/her importance, singularity and the seriousness of their social and emotional feelings. Their love is bigger than the one that has been experienced by their parents. Their suffer is much more painful than all the others.

Elkind sees two components of the egocentrism. *The tendency to create an imaginary audience.* Adolescents feel like they are in the center of the stage, meanwhile the other part of the world is constantly watching their attitude and their physical appearance. They think that the others are as fascinated with them as they are with themselves. They are not able to notice the difference between their concerns and the concerns of the others. Adolescents think that they are being constantly watched and judged by the others. This is the reason that explains some mood swings in adolescence.

*The personal fable* is related to the tendency that adolescents have to think about themselves with historical or mythical terms, the feeling that they are so special that they have to be excluded from the usual laws of the society that nothing bad can really happen to them that they will be forever there. As a result, they start to exaggerate their skills, the concept of being undefeatable or immortal. This idea of feeling immortal may be the basis of actions that may lead to risks, such as drugs, fast driving, the negligence

towards risks that may come from sex etc. They just can't accept the fact that something bad may happen in the end.

Also, related to the personal fable, may also be the fantasy of being an orphan. Adolescents have the tendency to always think about their parents' weaknesses. Consequently, it's hard for them to perceive the fact that ordinary people like their parents have brought to life such special people as adolescents. As long as this cannot be possible, they start thinking that maybe they are orphans. Luckily, this ego starts to get vanished by the age of 15 or 16, when adolescents start to understand that they are not the center of attention, and, as a result, they are subjects of the laws of nature and society.

## **6. Results of the study**

### **6.1 Adolescents and the school**

The schools are places where the adolescents spend an important part of their time, which means that the effectivity and the benefit from schools should be very considerable. It is the place where adolescents create different social relations with teachers and their peers. The adolescents' communication at school has an importance in the building of the personality, because schools have a straight influence on students' attitudes. The new relations that adolescents build with teachers or their peers have double characteristics, work and personal relations. They get interlaced with each other and get into subordinate dependence. Adolescents' relations with teachers are mainly concentrated on work, accompanied by the warmth and the familiarity that make this bond more stable.

The attitude without any tact of the teacher, not having the right level of psycho-pedagogic qualification, not having the required acknowledge about individual characteristics of each student, not having the ability to get closer to the student, the tendency of not losing the "authority", the professional incapacity, not having the right dedication towards the spiritual world of the student himself, the formal didascalism etc, push the adolescent to create some distance from the teacher. This distance, not only doesn't help the teacher save his authority, but it also makes him lose it completely. To the student, the authority is the example with which he wants to identify himself, the ideal he wants to follow and gets dedicated to. The teacher's authority is mainly based on the professional and psychosocial superiority towards the student. As a result, a student from high school, that has requests related to the virtues of the authority, starts having doubts about the teacher's authority that may make him not accept the teacher when he acts formally and doesn't accomplish the requests of the adolescent. As long as the purposes are the same ones, the distance created from the

communication of the teacher cannot be justified. The more a student learns, the smaller is the difference between him and the teacher, the more he starts being like the teacher and starts accepting his authority.

Another important thing about teacher-students relationship is the ability that a teacher has to know, fit or understand the student. The internal position of a student is the position he decides to have towards the contrast between the current and the wished position he has or wants to have in life.

The contradiction between the reality and the wish, between the current and the desired position, makes the adolescent have another attitude towards himself and towards the others. The teacher's request gets accepted from the adolescent only if it is an internal request towards him. This can be accomplished when the adolescent achieves to take the position that he wants, fits in with his internal position and solves the problem between the reality and his wishes. This way, the teacher, by knowing the real position and the goals of the student, can affect him in a positive way and can also improve the virtues of his authority.

It is up to the teacher to rebuild the student's internal position and way of thinking, making him get closer to the reality. In the communication between adolescents and teachers, the teacher's qualities of his personality have a great impact, especially when these requirements start coming from the adolescents.

## **6.2 School-family cooperation**

One of the main weaknesses during the character-building of the adolescent is the absence of communication and cooperation between the two main social institutions which are school and family. Because, after all, the two main teachers are the parents and the school.

At school, more than everywhere else are seen different attitudes and different ways of thinking, which, among the other thing, are an immediate; reflect of the relationship between the parents. The teachers are the first witnesses of the family dramas, because each one of them gets immediately reflected to the adolescent.

The studies with pedagogical and social characters have highlighted that schools improve the quality of family life (they allow adolescents to have a more colorful life and make the relationships between parents and students stronger). The thought that now, in a pluralist society, the communication school-family doesn't have the same importance as it used to have in the communist society, is completely wrong.

It's true that nowadays the teachers, the students and the parents have another political, economic and social status compared to the 90s. Their activity in the market economy conditions is freer. The contacts with the civilized world are more usual and there is enough information for every category. There are not pioneer or youth



organizations anymore, but the educational system of schools and the importance of the family cannot be reduced.

If there is a decrease, it is related to other economic, political, social or psychological factors, where main ones are:

- The individualism and indifferentism were shown after 90s from parents and teachers towards school problems related to the students.
- The fact of not having enough information regarding the rules of democracy and the positive experience of the western countries in this field.
- The mentality of parents who think that school must be able to solve everything.
- Inconsistency between the deep changes that the society, our family and the teacher-parent relations have nowadays gone through.

Communications between teachers and parents are expressions of the social and professional relationships that exist between them. They express the character of these relationships, but also have influence on those who communicate and can change these relations.

## 7. Conclusions

- The democratic society is the reflection of the western civilization's virtues, it's the society that guarantees freedom and the human rights. Following this path, there's a lot to do in Albania. This can be noticed in every interpersonal or institutional relationship. School is also part of this reality, because it provides the most important hearth for the next generations' education.
- This task unfolds and makes efforts to explore the multidimensional problems that the Albanian schools are facing these years, problems that consist on teacher-student relationship and on the cooperation between school and family. Nowadays, these relationships are in a transitional phase between conservatism, authoritarianism and democracy.
- The improvement of these relationships is conditioned, apart from other reasons, by the recognition and acknowledges of the characteristics of the adolescent's personality who is experiencing the crisis of identity, fights to be considered and treated as an adult, doubts all the moral norms and values, supports the new trends etc. Educational work with an adolescent will never be successful without knowing and supporting him on his positive aspects, without forgetting that his social sense constitutes the "barometer of normality".
- Our teaching and learning system will not only be reduced to the preservation and development of scholars' intellectual curiosity but also to their ability to learn independently, to think in an ecliptic way, to understand the complexity of

the social world, to recognize and accept the individuals of other places, to develop the individuality and the perception of common European and world values. Achieving these high goals becomes a reality when the educator synchronizes enthusiasm, dedication and work with certain goals to select, undertake and implement (under real classroom conditions) theoretical thinking and advanced educational experience of the most developed countries. The internet cannot coexist with the didascalism of teachers and neither can coexist with students who do not know how to learn.

- During 45 years of communism, our school achieved some high goals related to the massification and creation of all the links for a complete education system. But, unfortunately, by being in service of the communist party (PPSH), the democratic spirit got asphyxiated by the Marxist-Leninist ideology, an antihuman process that was legitimated after the revolutionary triangle teaching-productive work-military physical education, permeated by the Marxist-Leninist axis and the lessons of comrade Enver. Through this asphyxiated atmosphere, we build the connections between teachers and students. As a result, the initiative, the liberal way of thinking and the human rights were suppressed.
- It is obvious that the recidivism of this philosophy of education is still alive in our school today. Data collected from a survey conducted with adolescents testify to the lack of co-operation between teachers and students, teachers are not interested in their problems, are conflicting and cold, often behaving harsh, their methodical progress in classroom, in most cases, does not make the subject interesting, are judgmental, impose the students and do not create cooperative bridges with family. Regardless of the age, there are many teachers led by the "education banker concept" who present themselves to the scholars as the necessary opposite who by trumpeting adolescents' ignorance justify their own existence. The presence of such relationships in secondary schools is accompanied by negative consequences on the psychological development of adolescents.
- In the chaotic conditions in which our country is situated, many adolescents are involved in risky behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, alcohol abuse, the use of weapons, the depressions that are present as a result of the interaction of many factors such as lack of family harmony, divorce of the parents, major economic problems, low popularity among peers, low school achievement, suicide attempts etc. This is the drama that some adolescents in Albania are facing. In order to prevent and attenuate these problems, teachers

and parents must play a very important role. This may be possible if there's constructive communication between them.

- Another significant role which helps these occurrences to attenuate is played by the social workers as change agents. The psychosocial service at school is part of the school as an institution. It's also a good thing the fact that the Albanian legislation has supported this service to be part of the schools.
- The social worker is very important in high schools nowadays. He helps the students to take the maximum from the school years and help them to solve their problems. Social workers are catalysts in the democratization of the relationships between teachers and students, offer consultancies, show special care and help students solve their social problems in their families.

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