

RELATIONSHIPS SCHOOL – FAMILY: THE ADOLESCENTS’ PERSPECTIVE

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The case study of Alba County describes, conceptualizes and tries to explain the actual status of the school-family relationships from the adolescents’ perspective. Our purpose was to find out what perceptions, representations and behavior patterns the adolescents have towards their parents’ involvement in education and towards the relationships between school and family in the political and socio-economical context of Romania during the transition period to a democratic society.

The research theoretical support includes the social network paradigm (Blau, 1964; Barnes, 1972; Leinhart, 1977), J. Coleman’s concept of social capital (1987) and J. Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influence (1990). The specificity of the proposed theme employs mainly interpretative research principles, the research design clearly showing details from the participants’ perspective. We used the focus group technique, recommended for obtaining substantial data from teenagers. Participants were selected so that we obtain as many different opinions as possible. The collected data were analyzed using the techniques and procedures of Grounded Theory and the software ATLAS.ti 5.0.

The research confirms that teenagers have a different perspective on the family’s style of education, on the attitudes and behaviors in school-family-community relations as compared to that of their parents’; all these influence his/her reactions and ultimately, his/her psycho-social development. In the light of the overlapping spheres of influence theory, the representations that the student has acquired in high school overlap with the representations of his/her family experience, thus providing him/her with a new and broader horizon of understanding the family micro-cosmos in relation to the school and community environment.

The theoretical and empirical support of the research

Theoretical development and recent research demonstrate that the organizations based on communities, such as schools, serve the social strategy of the organization and mobilization of the groups of people to achieve actions with specific objectives. They embody their members’ ideals and they give value to the public debate and to the decisions of social politics. These kinds of organizations represent *democracy in action to solve the local problems.*

Schools are the key of the communities’ welfare and the future prosperity of nations. Their health is a barometer of the democratic way of life and, that is why, one of the important problems during the transition period is represented by the *school transformation into centers of the community life.* This social change is being built on the people’s desire to make the schools become better and better for all the children. We state that for the Romanian society, trapped into a too long and difficult transition, *the partnerships centered on schools represent an important dimension of the civil society’s construction.*