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Partnerships of Educational with Local Community and Their Benefits

Mihaela Stet*

* Corresponding author: Mihaela Stet, miha9s@yahoo.com

“Vasile Goldis” Western University of Arad, Romania, miha9s@yahoo.com

Abstract

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The paper deals with the role of the relations of educational institutions with the local community, with its social actors. These relations are determined by the characteristics of the community, but also by the competence of the institution to initiate and develop partnerships with it. There have been highlighted the problems of educational institution that can be solved by setting up partnerships, potential partners who can contribute to solve them, and as well as the roles that can be assigned to such demarches. In particular, it treated the issue of partnerships of medical schools with existing organizations at local community level.

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1. Introduction

Schools are institutions that develop educational activities in local communities that bring together several entities with major influences on the educational process: the family, local authorities, church, police, libraries, government bodies and NGOs, hospitals, social assistance, cultural entities, economic agents, sports clubs, theaters, museums, media. Influences are in both directions but the two parties, school and community, influencing each other.

Therefore, it is necessary for schools to identify the problems of the community that can be resolved by setting up partnerships, the potential partners who can contribute to solve them, as well as the roles that can be assigned to these efforts.

Problems relations school - community were studied over time in many countries, the subject of partnerships initiated by schools not being a new one. A number of studies have been conducted on the triangle school - family - local community (Beznea, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Epstein & al., 1997; Gogfrey, 2007; Kirschenbaum, 1999; Salinas & al., 1999; Shields, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). They are also analyzed arrangements for involving the community in the existence and activity of the school (Băran-Pescaru, 2004; Nettles, 1991; Popescu, M., 2000).

2. Relations of the schools with local community

School, first of all, has to know the community needs and then, to become a visible presence as possible in it. In this sense, those who run such an institution must understand that each community is different and therefore it is important to identify the path to be able to relate and develop partnerships. They must take into account the environment and the local context, which both have a significant influence on the possibilities to obtain financial human, material and information resources, required in achieving the targets.

It is necessary to improve communication with the local community so that potential partners might know the activities in which schools are involved and the value of partnerships for the local community. Schools can use various means to this respect: various publications, radio, TV, internet, conferences, brochures, meetings.

It is also important to point out, to clearly illustrate the ways in which the community can help to reach the objectives of the school. In order to increase the visibility of the school on will initiate and maintain an open dialogue with the community through public meetings, articles, informal communication in the community, a number of other cultural, sports, etc.

Schools need to be more receptive to the community needs by replying through education to these requirements. Since the early twentieth century, in the US has circulated the idea that schools can provide services for community residents in various areas: cultural, social, recreational and workforce training, health etc. Over time, the activities of schools in the community became more diversified: training courses, festivals, conferences, club, concerts, competitions and sports activities, volunteering and involvement in activities at community level, advisory activities, volunteer centers, clubs, and childcare activities after school.

On the other hand, no community can remain indifferent to school requirements. Firstly, especially in public schools, support can come in various forms of financing. It is necessary to find ways of raising awareness of the business environment about the need for action for financial support of schools in a community based on that safety, quality and stability of life of a community are influenced by how schools are able to perform, the education of the younger generation. Moreover, schools are becoming increasingly more active, creative request for material and financial support from businessmen.

Partnerships generally are done on the basis of formal cooperation agreements in which various clauses are presented and detailed procedures to carry out these responsibilities parties, their expectations, persons responsible for the planning of meetings, monitoring of activities scheduled.

To maintain and develop cooperative relations with business environment, with people from business who support the school in various forms, it is recommended that schools not to overlook any opportunity to express public gratitude for these contributions. No less important is that there must be at least one person responsible for the relationship of the school with community.

It is beneficial for maintaining and expanding relations with the community, that the decisions related to the allocation, use funds received to be taken responsibly. The allocation of funds will be made in accordance with the objectives set by the school in their attempt to obtain funding and development plans made by the school. By decision made in accordance with some coherent plans, the school may have the chance to attract new partnerships.

Companies that possess computers, technical or medical equipment can donate to schools such items when they replace with new ones. The advantages are for both parties. Schools get equipment, furniture, laboratory facilities, cabinets, repairs of buildings and equipments, without making large investments, while organizations can benefit from tax deductions and a good reputation in the community. Also, the organization of competitions, by the schools, with prizes awarded through sponsorships of the events made by companies from community, are among commonly encountered forms of cooperation in local communities. Private organizations can support scholarships to students or teachers to driving for internships, professional seminars and conferences.

Some companies encourage social involvement of their employees through financial contributions to social programs, such as material assistance for socially disadvantaged students, scholarships for children with poor financial situation, sponsoring activities of schools.

There are a number of partnerships that do not require financing that could be carried out without special financial resources. Generally, they are short-lived and with immediate effect.

A number of recreational activities, but with educational role, such as visits to museums, exhibitions, themed tours, theatre, opera, operetta, concerts, broaden the horizons of students and allow better integration of the school into the community.

The school can arrange contacts with specialists in various fields, both in the form of visits of the students to different organizations and the form of meetings at school or in the classroom or while conducting more extensive whole school. Among young people there are attractive the internship periods in organizations, mentoring and career counseling offered by specialists.

Partnerships with economic actors can lead to a better correlation between demand and supply in the labor market by tailoring educational offer of schools in response to requests from local economic environment.

Schools also maintain partnerships with police, hospitals, church and non-governmental bodies.

In the educational field, the roles of police is manifested through preventive actions and intervention in special circumstances, for the purpose of road education, juvenile crime prevention, crime, street violence, ensuring the personal safety of students and teachers, maintaining public order in schools and their perimeter, promoting a civilized society.

Partnerships with schools aim at preventing health units in the educational programs and intervention in special cases such as accidents, cases of abuse, disease, beneficiaries being the students, teachers and healthcare professionals.

Partnerships with church are on organization of joint cultural and artistic events during Christian holidays, of pilgrimages to monasteries, participation of church representatives in events organized by schools: opening and end of the school year, realization of meetings between representatives of the church with the students, and student participation in events organized by the church.

Partnerships with NGOs are realized as part of programs, projects or for the achievement of specific activities, which can be preventive or interventionist actions. There can be information activities, volunteering, counseling, training, competitions, exhibitions, research, scholarships, fundraising events, activities to support children's rights, for equality of educational opportunities, as well as preventing discrimination and social reintegration of disadvantaged categories of people.

Partnerships in the field of family assistance involve a number of actions: family support, counselling, information, organization of services for single parents or for busy parents. Partnership programs for assistance and protection aimed at supporting people with disabilities to integrate children with disabilities in school, guidance and information for parents and teachers.

An important role is played, in many communities, by the alumni associations of schools. The ways in which they can help to support schools that have graduated are varied: financial, material, promoting school activities, tutoring and mentoring for students performing internships.

In their turn, students can be engaged in a series of volunteering activities in the community and promoting the image of the school. Through these forms of relationship with the community they can develop their socio-cultural skills, knowledge and quality of services.

In Romania, the forms of partnership are quite varied, but most are materialized in specific activities. This result was obtained through a study (table 1), considering 20 counties (AR, AB, AG, BR, BZ, BH, BC, BR, CL, CJ, CS, DJ, IS, MM, DB, HD, SM, IF, SJ, BN).

Table 1. Types of partnerships developed by Romanian schools

Type of partnerships	Partners	Type of actions	Examples
Established in some programs or projects	- Local authorities	- prevention addiction and addictive behaviour	- Program “HelpNet – Reteaua Locala Antidrog”, Bacau
	Erasmus+	Identification of young people’s problems	2015 “Consiliul judetean al tinerilor – prin dialog structurat”, Bistrita
	Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway EEA Grants, 2009-2014	- Increase of access to quality education for children from vulnerable communities - Increase the active involvement of young people in public life of local communities	“Participare activa si deplina pentru educatie de calitate in comunitatile interetnice rurale”, Bihor “Initiativa pentru comunitatea mea”, Dambovita
	Grants program “School – Community”	Opening the school to the community	Pilot phase (Arad, Arges, Dolj, Galati, Iasi, Maramures si Sibiu)
	- Institute of Education Sciences, Educatia 2000+ Centre, Roma Civic Alliance	Actions against the abandonment of school	- 2010-2012 – a project in 70 communities from 30 Romanian counties initiated by UNICEF Romania
	UNICEF	Social inclusion	2016 “Social inclusion by integrated services at community level”, Bacau
	Foundations	Promoting community school concept	2016 “Scoli conectate la comunitate” Bacau
Within punctual activities	Partnership school-church	Civic education and solving some problems of youth	In almost all counties
	Cultural institutions (theatres, public libraries, museums)	To deepen knowledge, education	Bacau, Dambovita, Dolj, Maramures, Braila, Sibiu
	Local police	- road circulation - violence prevention - against consumption of drugs	Arad, Maramures, Satu Mare, Ilfov
	IMPACT Clubs	Prevention school abandon, support for people with disabilities, anti-violence campaigns	“Eu sunt de IMPACT!” Tulcea, Alba, Galati, Valcea, Cluj, Salaj, Satu Mare, Brasov, Caransebes, etc.
	Institutions and medical associations	Education for health, volunteering Ensuring health of students and teachers	Arad, Bacau, Bihor, Caras Severin, Maramures, Salaj
	Environmental protection agencies, foundations	Environmental education	Dolj, Maramures, Satu Mare, Sibiu
	Companies	Visits, open lessons, sponsorship by companies for various events, internships, coaching, mentoring	Into all analysed counties
	Foundations, NGO	Cultural artistic activities Volunteering	Buzau Sibiu
	Universities	Student teaching practice, tutoring for bacalaureat for high school students, various projects	Caras Severin, Arad, Maramures, Hunedoara, etc.

Relative to the activities and the ways of materialization of these partnerships most of them are made in the direction of prevention of school abandon, civic and ecological education. On several

occasions schools are able to attract funds for sponsorship of small scale events, especially through committees of parents.

3. Partnerships of medical schools with the local community

Medical education requires significant funding and, for this reason, post-secondary schools in the field of healthcare must set their strategies for attracting financial resources to support their work. In this respect, it is beneficial to their collaboration with foundations and private hospitals.

For example, in US, hospitals develop partnerships with medical schools to increase the number of students and to ensure in this way the needs for nurses, given that many hospitals are facing a shortage of qualified medical personnel. Doctors and nurses teach in medical schools free of charge within such partnerships.

To attract students in private medical education can be initiated partnerships with different institutions to find ways to finance them during the study programs. Obtain loans with lower interest rates for studies, scholarships may be some of the forms of support for students. Also, schools could benefit from partnerships with various organizations of equipment, facilities and supplies for providing various theoretical and practical training.

The state can also support medical education, given that, for example, the current situation of the Romanian when medical system is facing a significant migration of health professionals to other EU countries. It can subsidize the interest on loans for studies or offer tax incentives to institutions and organizations that make donations to schools or healthcare and social institutions that employ graduates of these schools.

4. Conclusions

The relationships of the schools with the local community, with social actors are determined by the peculiarities of the community, but also the competence of the school to initiate and to develop partnerships with them. School can guide, coordinate organizations in the community to work together to achieve the objectives of the school and of the community. Partnerships between schools and the community contribute to improve the social skills of students, providing support to teachers in educational activities and community service.

Collaboration with other organizations is not always easy, schools accounting for their role to convince organizations to engage in actions initiated by them. In this way, they can attract the necessary pedagogical resources in education: school premises, equipment therefore, financial and human resources and information.

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