

# School-House Relationships on Different Stages of Children and Teenagers (Youth) Development

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**Annotation.** The school-house relationships have great impact on the quality of the educational process. This article is to draw an attention to those relationships, taking into consideration particularly different relations between the teacher and the parent regarding the stage of development of the student, who is the subject of this issue. It seems that the awareness of parents and teachers of the subject matter of this relationship, on what they should focus, especially what tasks they should perform for the child's sake and his well being, can significantly improve not only school-house relationships, but above all things, it can generally improve the situation of the child at school which he or she attends.

**Keywords:** *school, home, teacher, parent, student, child, relationship, cooperation, contacts, allies.*

## Introduction

The problem of the cooperation between teachers and parents has been mentioned for a long time mainly in pedagogical papers. As the times pass by the depiction of the issue undergoes many changes, new plots are being added that have not been touched upon so far. One can say that we became aware of the importance of the problem. On the other hand many articles on school or family house do not mention, or mention not enough school-house relationships. I personally think, that in everyday life the importance of the meaning of those relationships is even less essential, which unfortunately can be found in many cases.

In past pedagogical literature one could find reflections on “cooperation” or “collaboration” of “teachers and parents”, or “active participation of the parents in children’s school education”. Nowadays it is more often called “pedagogical relationship between school and family”, “partnership in school-house relationship”, or “parents and teachers as allies” (Łobocki, 2009, p. 176). Dealing with this issue, I consciously use the term “teacher-parent / parent-teacher contacts”. “Contacts” seem to have broader meaning from “cooperation”, closer to “relationship”, “connection”. Yet, broadening the problem on all school and family environment appears to be more adequate, than aiming at all actions on the teacher or child’s parent. The order is still left to be discussed whether it is school-house, or house-school relationship. In my opinion, since the school is responsible for initiating and supporting the communication with the child’s family and being the host in those contacts, the school should be mentioned in the first place while talking about the order. But it is still a relation between two subjects, so the parents should not be put in the second place. Therefore both versions are in the title of this paper.

## **School-house or teacher–parent...**

Limiting contacts concerning a child to the teacher or the parent only, or even presumption that it can be limited, impoverishes this relationship.

Let’s start from the teacher. The student as well as the parent, who comes to the school / kindergarten deals not only with the teacher. The school is mainly represented by teachers, but also the headmaster, the secretary, the school psychologist / pedagogue, the librarian, the nurse, the cleaning staff, the handy man, the cook, the security staff etc. The fact is that only teachers (headmaster including) and psychologists / pedagogue are somehow professionally prepared (pedagogically, psychologically) to work with pupils, less prepared to work with their parents (Bednarska, 2007, p. 58) But all the school workers deal with the parents. To improve the functioning of the school it would be advised to introduce compulsory trainings for the whole school staff, whether or not the person will intentionally have contact with the student/ parent. I strongly suggest that people with no pedagogical-psychological training of any kind, should not be hired by the school, especially in our times with threats such as pedophilia, children oriented violence, dealing or other actions that could do any harm to children. There are cases that people with sentences, or pedophile tendencies have no problems in contacts with students (face to face, too) as employees, co-workers, voluntary workers of schools, day rooms and other institutions. Regarding those facts, talking about the school not about the teacher only, does not present the matter clearly.

On the other hand, there are other people involved as far as the pupil is concerned. Not only parents. Very seldom we are dealing with single parents, or still married couples where only a mother or a father is contacting the educational institution. Except

from the parents we can mention siblings, grandparents, aunts and other members of the family, especially nowadays, when parents immigrate for work (euro orphans), when parents can not cope with rising their offspring because of the loss or limited custody, or finally we can not eliminate chance events such as death or parent illness. Because of all those reasons other members of the family or legal guardians from outside the family can contact school in all the matters regarding the child. In reality, better situation is when more than one person from the family contacts the school, rather than limiting the communication to one person. One of the psychoanalysts from Maroco during the International Conference which is held every year during Days of the Institute of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Warsaw when asked whether the family should be present in the process of patient's treatment, answered that when he sees more than one member of the family of the patient (in an African country it is not rare) he does not worry, on the contrary, he is pleased. He can see that the family is interested in the patient's fate, and he can see the chance to support his (therapist's) treatment and opportunity of cooperation with him when needed. Similarly, the school should accept the interest in student's fate of many different relatives. Anyway, it can be noticed that the number of people contacting the school in the matter of a child varies from one to several because of the quality of this cooperation – school's hospitality and better attitude, attracts more concerned and willing to help parents, not only during school events.

## **The importance of school / house, house / school relationship**

The importance of the relationship between school and student's house is obvious and justified by many researchers, who deal with pedeutological issues. M. Łobocki points out for example that "the relationship between teachers and parents constitutes one of the factors of proper functioning of the school, and also in some sense of a family" (Łobocki, 2009, p. 178). The author pays particular attention to opportunity of development of educational skills of teachers and parents, thanks to this kind of cooperation. Teachers have the chance to get to know and better understand their students, obtain the support from parents when needed and seek common solutions in case of educational problems. Parents on the other hand, thanks to the cooperation with school can help their children solve some problems, have opportunity to know about child's difficulties early and contribute to the effective adjustment of any backlogs.

Such relationship helps parents and teachers set clear and not contradictory requirements and provides mutual assistance. B. Śliwerski underlines the possibility of parents being teachers' advisors, experts from whom one can learn and use knowledge from. Parents' participation in school life, on the other hand, can become for them the possibility of constant learning and development (Omylanowska-Kuglarz, 2009, p. 66). We can also mention the importance of the exchange of information between school and house.

The proper communication can contribute to relevant pedagogical diagnostics, which is emphasized by R. Więckowski (Mendel, 2007, p. 58) This kind of exchange of information can help prevent and combat the effects of different threats and negative social phenomena (smoking, alcohol drinking, drug abuse, aggression and violence), it can also limit students' absence (Mendel, 2007, p. 59). But first of all, M. Łobocki and others highlight the influence of school-house contacts on the student's development. M. Mendel accentuates that the consistent impact of those two environments is important for student's optimal development and B. Śliwerski points to a relationship between child's development and the quality of cooperation between teachers and parents. M. Łobocki mentions even the possibility of speeding up the intellectual, social and moral development of the students. The theory of ecological systems describes it as follows: the proper development of a child is strongly dependent on close cooperation of at least two microsystems, eg family and school (Dudel, 2000, p. 99). C. Christopher even shows that children whose parents take part in school life, are most likely to succeed (Christopher, 2004, p. 13).

## **The importance (the meaning) of school-house / house-school contacts nowadays**

It seems that contemporary times are special as far as the importance of the contacts between the school and the family house is concerned. In the past the family life was richer, at least it existed at all, and school was the less important one.

In recent years family relations have undergone changes. The speed of present everyday life, the necessity of adults' commitment to work, mass media (particularly television, internet) and other technical inventions (telephones, computers) – all this limited to minimum close relations between members of the so called family. Gathering in one room, usually in the kitchen, because of the economic reasons (heating, lighting one room), the family used to spend time, either on household duties, or finding pleasures in everyday conversations or singing. Nowadays, people spend time in different parts of the house / apartment – eating, working or entertaining themselves. It happens that there is no table at home, which they can sit at, have meals, because their schedules do not allow them to eat at the same time. We like different forms of entertainment and even if they are the same, our choices vary – e.g. different TV programs. So today, one can see members of one family working on many laptops, or in front of different TV sets instead of sitting at one table. Direct conversations are replaced by text messages, phone or internet calls, even in one place of dwelling (apartment, house).

Modern companies offer monitoring a child by means of a chip, set in his belongings (e.g. mobile phone), detective shops advertise equipment for spying a spouse. Family expert Stanisław Kawula claims that an average Polish citizen spends only 15 minutes on conversations with his family (Kawula, 2005, p. 6).

A question: can a parent bring up his child, influence his behavior having good tools in 15–30 minutes or even within an hour a day? Let's remember that many parents do not have even those. Consciously or not a family make others, a state, institutions (schools, kindergartens) responsible for their child's upbringing. When a child is not grown up enough to stay at home alone, he spends 8–10 hours in a kindergarten, school + day room. When older he "replaces" his parents with the Internet, computer, television. Being with another man, or looking after a child is not an easy task at all. When those contacts are superficial, rare, neglected, one can expect additional problems. Children's adolescence does not make it easier, even makes it impossible to communicate with your child. Despite the fact that school / kindergarten / educational institutions should not take over the role of the only and the most important children / teenagers caretakers, unfortunately it happens very often. A child spends more time with adults at school than beyond it, school has its plan how to deal with a student and how to get through him. Sometimes, neither school nor home fulfill their role, but it rarely happens. Although studies show that teachers feel better prepared for teaching process, or organizational educational tasks, the contribution of the school in shaping students' personality, if only unintentional, is important.

All this makes you think, that especially today, when the family life is in decay, when interpersonal contact has changed for the worse, when children / teenagers slip out of the reality into vague virtual reality, the activity of the above mentioned surroundings is extremely important – house and school individually and together.

## **The condition of cooperation between school and house**

It is hard to determine the real condition of the cooperation between the school and the family house. And even the best carried out studies will not remedy this issue. It is not an easy relationship, not always properly organized, often avoided by both sides.

The school / kindergarten because of the duties it should perform, is obliged to care about the relationship with the parents. It is not knowledgeable well enough, can not cope with this matter, having proper methods at its disposal. The teachers are prepared for the didactic process with children, teenagers, less for interpersonal communication with students, not mentioning the relationships with (mostly) a group of several adults, often demanding, concerned or discouraged.

The facilities are not appropriate either (low chairs, tables, lack of coat hangers). The school wants to host the parent and only the parent (the problem of child / children care), in its convenient time, without determining subject of the meeting, and its length. It happens that the meeting is just a simple obligation, which has to be met and evidenced. The parents at this time of life, busy, running errands, burdened with different matters, can also approach this problem as a must, the less and shorter, the better. There is no

need to add, that it confronts them to fulfill, or not, proper parental obligation, expose to expenses, takes valuable time. They often do not see the importance, the need, or possible advantages emerging from it. It is not that the relationship between school and house/house and school can not be effective. A lot of teachers, headmasters do their best in recent years to care about the quality of those contacts with family houses. "Open days" became a rule, the places are prepared for warm reception of parents, many specialists are asked to help organizing meetings with parents (pedagogues, psychologists), parents are integrated, and involved in many actions, not necessarily for the school, or children, but their (parents') development or entertainment. Assemblies like those attract parents to school, make them get to know better with the teacher. The school gains potential help in school activity, but most of all ally in cooperation for child's sake. The thematic literature offers nowadays many ways of making attractive, making easier the relationship between school and family house. The truth is that regardless of the desire or lack of it on either part, the contact should be cherished for the child's sake, in view of his advancement in acquisition of knowledge, but also his general development. Despite his stage of development, and his education level. As C. R. Rogers said "Child needs adults, to get along without them" (Śliwerski, 2003, p.120).

## **Different age, different relationship**

Speaking generally, that parents should have contact with the school / kindergarten, or general description of what this contact should look like, is not real. A different attitude towards parents or teachers have a 3–4 year old, a different one 16–17 teenager, or a grown up student. Relationships between a parent of a small child with a teacher vary from those from a primary school, secondary or high school. Although, the contact between school and house on different stages is not unimportant, or less necessary. We can only say that it should change along with the child growing up, evolve, take different forms.

It would be hard to define exactly, infallible, how a teacher of a primary school or a kindergarten should behave towards parents. It depends on the teacher's personality, a type of institution and individual parents, group which parents create or the environment, in which the school is settled. We can yet take a closer look at some characteristics of this relation.

For example when entrusting care of a small child to other people in the first place as E. Fromm said, we should be sensitive about the person whom we turn a child over to (Śliwerski, 2003, p. 227) It is a matter of child's safety, fulfilling his basic needs (feeding, toilet, calming), taking proper care of the child is priority case for parents of small children. And not only because small children need it, but also parents, especially mothers, need to be confident, that their child is safe. And it is difficult to be sure when the child is not able to speak up, complain, or defend himself. The recent cases of child abuse, es-

pecially in creches, kindergartens (tying children, physical violence, physical aggression) publicized by mass media speak for themselves. So the parent does not necessarily wait for the information on the advancement in education – drawing, speaking, or dancing although it would not hurt. It may be more important for him at this stage of parenthood, that his child is well taken care of, that someone is trying to replace a house, close ones, that someone wipes tears, puts on trousers, covers a blanket when sleeping. So little, yet so much information for the parent and work for the teacher. The child at this age feels better when he sees that adults in his surrounding get along well when a parent spends some time in the kindergarten, or creche, praises his child for a drawing, takes a look at the toys, plays with his child and a beloved teacher (because most of the time is still a woman) tells his mom or dad how he spent his day. When a child is a little older, at the beginning of the primary school, the relationship between parents and the teacher changes. Expectations and fears appear. The role of the teacher changes, too. They observe that they are no longer people who play with children, they become teachers in the eyes of the parents. The consultations on children's progress in education take place. First course books appear, serious tasks to fulfill, first difficulties and successes. Parents perceive the teacher as an educational expert, worries about his child's fate, needs the teacher's advice how to treat his child. The time when he was at his child's age, or his elder offspring (if there is one) started education, seem to be remote, different, easier. He has to go the same path once again so it is convenient to have a guard then. But a teacher also needs an ally in the parent – to support the child in his education, strengthen his motivation to learn, noticing child's strong points. The key point of the teacher / parent relation is no longer a stomachache or a hot forehead, which can worry a parent.

A 6–8 year-old still willingly invites his parent to school, to a school trip, or to a school play. And we should take advantage of those last moments, because they may not happen in adolescence. Later grades of primary school and secondary school is the time when a child is more independent and the teachers teach more rather than look after. The child goes home and comes to school on his own so the parent comes to school less frequently. And so is his contact with the teacher – less frequent. It is limited to scheduled meetings with the class teacher without even knowing other tutors, who are eventually met when a child has problems. At this stage, and in principle earlier it would be crucial to maintain the constant relationship between a parent and a teacher. Particularity at that time when a natural everyday contact seized to be a rule. It would be advisable to have a note book for communication or information exchange through internet. The internet register have given lately an illusion of contact. An illusion, because the parents not necessarily follow the entries everyday, and the teachers do not always keep them up to date. This is the time when upbringing problems appear, not only in school but also at home. The knowledge of characteristics of particular age, way of treating a child or fulfilling a role as a parent which was valuable then, now gains more importance. Children can go after drugs, have first sexual experience, go after the group. Parents can feel incompetent, even teachers

do not necessarily cope well with this time of growing up. Many reports from secondary schools show students' insubordination, attacks on teachers and other students. Important here is the aid of a specialist – psychologist, pedagogue, addiction therapist. And at last, the time of becoming an adult, the high school and after. On one hand we can expect, that a turbulent growing up is past behind us, that we are dealing with youth – reasonable, more mature, almost grown-up. On the other hand in our western culture of the XXI century young people become independent at their twenties or even thirties. From the 17–18 perspective it is not old. At this age the parent is not welcome at school by the child, if not accused of bringing shame on him. In case of school trips or school events, when supported by the teacher, the child is doing pretty well. False impression can arise that a parent is not needed at all at this stage. Particularly, in a moment a child stops being a child and becomes an adult, more and more resourceful. Apparently, then and for ever, the interest in child's destiny, although not a child any more, is very important. It may be the very fact of showing that the child's problems are important for the parent, that the parent stands by him when his future is being chosen – his choice of profession, his exams. Especially when the teenager thinks that he does not need his parents any more, the contact between the house and the school is essential. Obviously, on different terms than in the previous stages of education.

Even earlier the student can be involved in the relation school/house, but particularly at this stage it should be a three-subject relationship (Łobocki, 2009, p. 177), school-house-student (at random order). Nothing about the student without a student, but with his participation, using his potential, teaching him responsibility. Theoretically, this is the place where the relation between the school and the house should end. Yet, in our times only a few ones finish education on this level, when become adults. As a rule people in their twenties are financially supported by the parents, completing their education, being not able to support themselves. It happens, that he counts on parents' interest and they care about his everyday life, as far as his development is concern. Sometimes the health condition of a child does not allow parental care to end when he reaches maturity, or legal age. Cases occur when parents contact other people to help their children, for example a student. It may not necessary be a contact with a teacher, although it happens, but with school administration, psychotherapist, school representative or school authorities.

## Conclusion

One can say that the cooperation between the family house with the school does not finish with the ending of the compulsory education, but also it is hard to point out the moment when parents stop needing one for sure, and the school with parents. In a sense it comes about gradually and naturally, that teachers absorb parents less with children's affairs and parents feel less needed, interested and necessary in monitoring their child.



One can also say that excessive need to contact on the school or parents' side leads to lesser evil, than the feeble or none cooperation of two very important environments for the child in his growing up, education and social life.

As an example, the history of a 24 year old girl, who was a patient in my therapist practice.

*The girl told me about his tough childhood, difficult financial situation, parents not caring about their children's health (she almost lost her vision because of untreated sight defect), father's alcohol abuse, physical violence at home etc. When she was 18, she left the family house, started to work and study. She visited many specialists (mainly doctors), changed her major for better, started to learn enough money to help her mother and younger siblings (parents have divorced). She made an appointment with me, because of a simple need to grumble or boast about her achievements. If she had not spoken unsophisticated language, I would have never guessed what she had been through. As if she read my mind, she started encouraging me to read an article on the internet about her sister who shone in some kind of discipline and her family's history was written for this occasion.*

*The saddest moment of our meeting was when she got upset and told me how she brought herself to go to the school pedagogue for help/advise. She had told about her family's situation and had asked for advise. From the man who was the school pedagogue heard that she should not have made such a fuss about it and should not have told about it. He had advised her to hang on for another 2–3 years (she was 16 at that time), and then to move out. That exactly the way she did, but she was disappointed. Her dad in the meantime went to jail. The girl needed help so did her family, parents including. The school however did not live up to its task.*

And in contrast a different case, when a school's intervention on the child's request, rescued his dying brother's life because of their parents negligence. If the school had not helped, none help would have taken place. And in this way a human life was saved.

And at last, thirdly, in the times of underestimating humanistic studies, developing technology, changing of direct interpersonal relations to indirect or none, in the unfavorable time of human contacts, we have to care about the quality of human communication. (As E. Fromm said: "(A human being) creating new and better means to control nature, got in their trap and lost sight of his aim, which could give them a meaning – lost a human being himself".) (Fromm, p. 12) Those formal contacts, too. How formal they are depend on us. They can become a beginning of interesting, long-lasting acquaintances. Additionally, they are not contacts for just the contacts sake, but they serve a higher purpose, a child's well being.

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## Mokyklos ir namų santykis skirtingais vaikų ir paauglių (jaunimo) raidos etapais

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### Santrauka

Santykiai tarp mokytojų ir tėvų dažnai nepakankamai įvertinami ar naudojami vaiko gerovės kontekste. Dažnai nepastebimos efektyvios raidos, ypač ugdymo, galimybės. Nepaisant temos plėtojimo pedagoginėje literatūroje, praktikoje mažai kas pasikeitė į gerąją pusę. Be to, santykių pobūdis nėra diferencijuojamas pagal vaiko ugdymo etapus arba tikima, kad jie yra esminiai tik iki tam tikro amžiaus, pavyzdžiui, paauglystės, o po to jie nebeegzistuoja. Šis straipsnis aktualizuoja santykių diversifikacijos problemą tarp ugdymo institucijų (darželiai, mokyklos) ir namų, atsižvelgiant į vaiko / mokinio raidos etapus, jo poreikius, išskylančias problemas. Tinkamesnis mokytojų, taip pat ir tėvų ugdymas šioje srityje galėtų daryti teigiamą įtaką vaiko veiklai ne tik mokykloje, bet ir už jos ribų.

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**Esminiai žodžiai:** *mokykla, namai, mokytojas, tėvai, mokinys, vaikas, santykiai, bendradarbiavimas, ryšiai, pagalbininkai.*

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