

## Some Perceptions of Fathers and Mothers of the School's Peaceful-Coexistence: An Exploratory Study in Querétaro, México

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**Abstract:** They are enacting laws to address violent situations concerning schools. To optimize its applications, this article incorporates some conclusions from our previous research on this subject. But, here we place systemically in the theoretical context of school life. Within this article we try to account for the sense of participation of students' parents. From the above, we ask questions to guide our research in this Mexican area. For run it, we research under the model  $n = 1$  institution, combining qualitative with the quantitative methodology. To address this, we conducted an exploratory study concerning Queretaro's city fathers and mothers (México), with the aim of knowing their observations and the causes they attribute those. This information shall be organised in three parts: (1) concerning teachers, (2) related the school organisation, and (3) about families. Founds show parents recognize some problems, but most of them think there is an inadequate treatment. It is significant they distinguish only individual factors. A positive discovery is that parents perceive themselves as a key to improving the educational institution.

**Key words:** peaceful-coexistence, school-related parents, community education, school's violence

### 1. Introduction

In the recent years the impersonal dynamic of the conflicts into classrooms was increasing. Thus, the studies concerning those issues have prompted (Peiró, 2001), events about this theme was developed (Peiró, 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; Ochoa y Peiró, 2010; 2011; 2012); and research programs was stated to understand it (Peiró, 1985; 2012). Many of these studies have focused on bullying, taking it as a focus of analysis and prevention (Olweus from 1970's on the *Bullying Prevention Program*), or describing the reality by observatories (Worl –Debarbieux-, French –Blaya-, Spanish, Regionals –Queretaro, Valencia-, etc.). Peiró has demonstrated in the ECER 2007 there are factors concerning teachers' performance, and many others are derived from families. But, these latest are most significant and fundamental than those before. Respect other concerning the milieu could be responsibility of parents. So, the family is decisive. On this way, it was issued laws in order to prevent the schools' violence, like the case of México (2010, p. 535), which stated the implication of the families in the Council of the Social Participation, that guaranties its introduction into the schools.

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## 2. Peaceful-coexistence and Ways of Taking Responsibilities

There is unanimity on the natural responsibility of parents regarding the education of their children, playing the role of the school as a supplement, relating both instances from subsidiarity (Peiró, 2007). But relations between the school's actors, generating a dynamic specific forms of cohabitation, but these dynamics may be disrupted at times so that generates a coexistence with elements that foster a climate deteriorated in the teaching-learning. The countless exchanges that are established within spaces of schools, are framed in different types of interactions, with particular rules and codes that are essential and necessary legal mechanisms to work together (Rivas, 2007, p. 559). These interconnections generate contexts and systems which are interrelated and influence each other.

But, before the crisis of peaceful-coexistence manifested informs of invasion of competences, intrusion into protected spaces, etc.; likewise the clashes between equals, or the insubordination of students against teachers, and fighting parents regarding teachers, and so on, then, the relationships between the family and the schools till often valued as an unresolved issue (Garreta, 2008, p. 15).

The peaceful-coexistence can't be limited to a mere juxtaposition of few others individuals (this is only coexistence). The object of this research implies and involves interaction of rules, depending respect values that are guiding interpersonal deeds. Mérida (2002) exemplifies the previous assertion teacher centered, attributing a performance of his task so individualistic and isolationist, saying like "excuse" that they have a lot of work, or that they are feeling a bit threatened...for not participating (quoted by Garreta, 2008, p. 27).

In contrast with the social-schooling situations, the peaceful-coexistence, that must be to live in the school, has the distinction of institutionalizing relationships, this is relationships that unfold between the various members of the school community are regulated by the institution's norms. In this sense, school life means to stake value frame works and rules governing the common good, but those sometimes generate conflicts. In these circumstances, school life also presents a symmetries and discontinuities (Coronado, 2008); or an experience of dynamic, spirals, positive or negative, that characterize the communication between the school and families (Chauveau, 2000, p. 86, cit. Garreta, 2008, p. 21). Studies carried out in Mexico, as in most of the countries that have inquired about school life, have focused on school violence and bullying (Olweus, 1978; Rugby y Slee, 1991; Dodge et al., 1992; Hirano, 1992; Peiró, 1993; Whitney y Smith, 1993; Debarbieux, 1997; Funk, 1997; Prieto, 2005; Velásquez, 2005; Chagas, 2005; Aguilera, Muñoz y Orozco, 2007; Muñoz, 2008; Castillo y Pacheco, 2008; Silva y Corona, 2010).

However, we have to state funds from other researches (Peiró, 2005), that states the issue of school life is not just only violence or bullying, more than anything is indiscipline and disruption. Therefore, we support the idea that it is necessary to place the phenomenon of "school violence" with a broader perspective. However, we should analyze the problem from within the educational center, but contextualizing conflicts from each of the families (Peiró, 1993). This results in the need to overcome the analysis family-school relations as the basis of performance problems, or thinking only to exchange information, but to qualify the possible relation as endeavoring communications' interaction.

Considering that in the institution specifically are interfering a number of variables, which develops the peaceful-coexistence, and this is not limited to violent relationships; from our point of view, the way that relates the school develops occurs simultaneously in various contexts, which function is an interrelated way; they should be taken into an account in order to improve relationships and achieve educational goals. Then, it could apply the

approach to TGS (Peiró, 1986) to integrate coherently the various sources of information, and, returning to the ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner (1997) to understand human development, natural framed indifferent contexts. So, we propose two dimensions for the study of peaceful-coexistence: the personal and the institutional. The latter built in turn by three subsystems: macro-social(context), meso-social (institution) and micro-social(classroom), as it is shown in the following Figure 1. This figure shows a network of relationships and influences between such environments where education is embodied (Bronfenbrenner, 2002, cit. Rivas, 2007, p. 559).

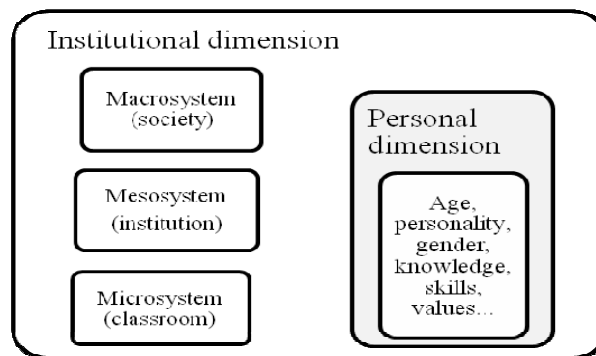


Figure 1 School Peaceful-Coexistence: An Ecological Model

It reaffirms that human development is the result of the human action on their environment. However, for that transformation is necessary to establish relations between the subject and its context, which involves modification and human influence on the contexts and vice versa<sup>1</sup>. Already, Ortega y Gasset said (*Meditations on the Quixote*, 1914) that everyone is his self and his circumstance (not in plural), and if I do not save it, I could save his/her, denouncing the dualistic proceeding. We get the relevance of the family (circumstance) and, as a result the schools' moral climate.

### 3. Specificity of the Family Participation in Formal Education

The relevance of the family in the school is checked by consulting sources, research reports, and so on. Even running the twentieth century, the role was only a representative participation by a college's counselors. Currently, telling the school is no longer the monopoly of learning resources, and the only institution to solve the problems, because the protagonists of learning (girls and boys) show differences with previous generations, the peaceful-coexistence of the sectors involved must take an active part also in schools. Therefore, it requires more commitment, which requires certain skills and procedures defining role in school projects<sup>2</sup>.

It supposes the centrality of parents in the education of their children and home as fundamental learning space, especially in the case of smaller children, now are widely recognized this. And it is admitted the necessary coordination and complementarity between families and educational institutions. The first educators of children are mothers and fathers, therefore, the school can't leave marriages regarding the conflicting problems (Peiró,

<sup>1</sup>A detailed description of the ecological model of school life, proposed by the authors, is available in Gomes A., Ferreira G. and Ferreira S. (2012-organizes). *Culturas de violencias, culturas de paz. De la reflexión a la acción de los educadores, abogados y defensores de los derechos humanos*, Brasil: CRV.

<sup>2</sup> Abelló L. La participación de las madres, padres y tutores en la escuela del siglo XXI, *Aula de innovación educativa*, n° 160; consulta: 2013/01/20, available online at: <http://aula.grao.com/revistas/aula/160-reflexiones-en-torno-a-la-integracion-del-educador-social-en-el-centro-escolar-la-participacion-de-las-madres-padres-y-tutores-en-la-escuela-del-siglo-xxi/la-participacion-de-las-madres-padres-y-tutores-en-la-escuela-del-siglo-xxi>.

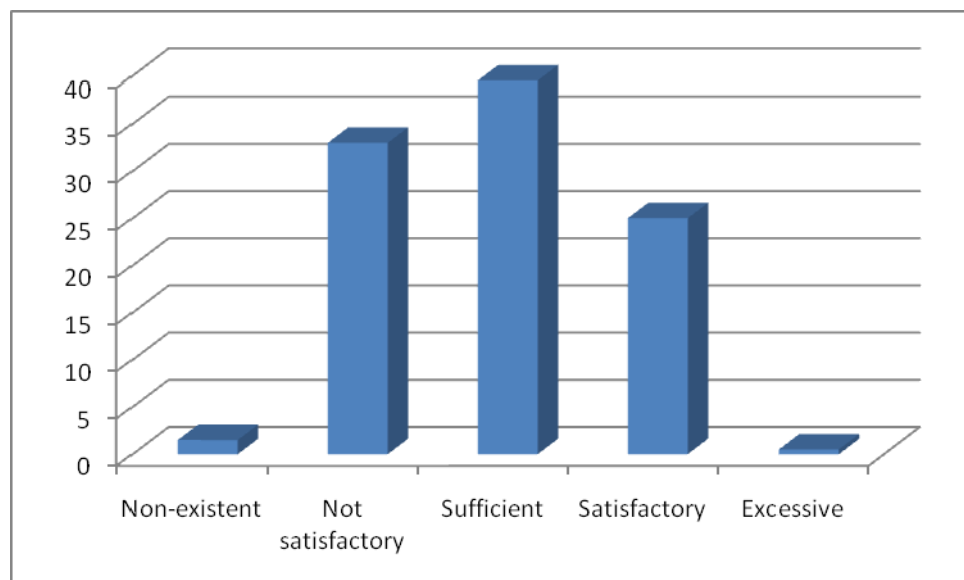
1997). The most important learning's space is home, the neighborhood, the district, the city. The Kindergarten, School & College are a continuation and strengthen the expertise with what the family has started and continues to make (Blanco & Umayahara, 2004, p. 23).

However, the incorporation of parents to work with school is not an easy task, the same authors mentioned among other things, these next: (1) it is believed that the mere inclusion in policy or regulations easily could be translated into concrete actions to participate in schools, gardens, or other form, (2) it is hoped that the inclusion of families quickly could improve the quality of learning of children, (3) without prior reflection, the families' inclusion takes a deep confusion of roles and responsibilities.

In addition to collecting the necessary participation of parents in the definition and dynamics of the institution, to solve the difficulty, Davies (1987) notes the following guidelines to optimize the situation: to institute ways of communication between families and schools, to vitalize associations, to strengthen relationships between families, to configure an educational community by establishing networks of mutual support, to ride refinement activities of fatherhood (parent club, workshops ...), to do a marriages' train para-educator function, to prevent referrals of families who live at risk...For this, it requires changing the attitudes of teachers, training them to learn to work with families, all of these is possible to implement, and it has been done (Peiro, 2001, pp. 293–342).

Specifying the issue, we shall consider the case of Mexican schools. The involvement of families is limited to attending meetings where teachers report of achievements, on the economic contribution to various social and cultural activities, and the formalization of the parents' association. This is a paradox in front of the mutual demands made by both institutions, thereby showing a serious deficiency of communication between these institutions as they have shown several studies (Valdes et al., 2009; Urias et al., 2009; Cerezo, 2011).

In Spain, according Garreta (2008, p. 28), the percentages of family involvement in school, reflected by the Figure 2 below, we noted a degree of insufficiency, noting teachers that the parents are who bears the work of improve the situation.



**Figure 2 Parental Involvement in Schools (Garreta, 2003)**

Among the activities that the study, mentioned above, families rush the following responsibilities: to attend meetings of parents (56%), interesting about its children (43.5%) and to visit the school (19%), to attend extracurricular activities (23%), being members of the their association (22.5%), attending tutorials (8%) and support the learning-work at home (3.5%). This list is complemented by the Rivas' analysis (2007, p. 564) that found that follow: (1) if the initiative is taken by the teachers, the task takes place in the educational institution, and (2) if is families who have the initiative, then could be the family home the environment where functions are performed.

*Heuristics questions.* Mexican situation is analogous to the Spanish? If so, it could use models applied there. Do it confirm previous research in this school community aspect? That is: Are parents aware of conflicts that happen in schools? And, if so, do they understand its causes? How far families grasp their causation of such factors? And does each family give additional information that pedagogists doesn't know?

#### **4. School Case Study in Santiago de Querétaro (México)**

From a global perspective, as heuristic method, the case study ( $N = 1$ ) has a long history and variety of procedures. In 1995, Lopez-Barajas has led a seminar on educational research methodology specific on this subject, which summarizes general information given before. Quintana (1995, Lopez-Barajas) enrolls it in a scientific induction (p. 43). Lopez-Barajas (p. 11), quoting Cohen (1990, p. 164) defines it as an individual unit of observation in order to assess or investigate, this being (p. 13) descriptive, hypothetical, conjectural, personal, or processive (Lombard, 1969). He ends trying to reconcile the views of different types of people and researchers through triangulation (p. 19SS). But what has to find? Vazquez (Lopez-Barajas, 1995, p. 33) mentions that this reality must be detailed in their variables and the interaction that occurs between them and with respect to the environment (the author mentions González-Álvarez, 1947 and De la Orden-Hoz, 1985). Peiró (Lopez-Barajas, 1995, 99ss) systematized and classified works, including the state of the question from the ERIC and Social Science Citation Index, Books in Print, Eudisec, British National Library. From this work we get the following: (1) The longitudinal and transverse views were pretty balanced, (2) being the majority case-group, (3) and many more offering quantitative results; (4) apply more formal education than for other modalities, (5) overflowing the surveys using other techniques, although the rest of the sum exceeds this first.

*Population.* Based on the above ideas, an exploratory study was conducted with 25 fathers and mothers of a primary school, which 23 were women and 2 men.

*The tool.* As part of an assessment of school life in the school, parents were asked to answer a written instrument (see below annex) where were describes peaceful-coexistence's conflicts they observed within the school, and their causes. The instrument has two sections: one related to school organization and other related with families. As this was an open instrument, once you had the answers, they tried to see which group they were the most concentrated.

*Qualitative blended quantitative way.* Quantitative methods express the assumptions of a positivist paradigm, which holds that behavior can be explained through objective facts. Design and instrumentation persuade by showing how bias and error are eliminated. Qualitative methods express the assumptions of a phenomenological paradigm, which presupposes that there are multiple realities that are socially defined. Rich description persuades by showing that the researcher was immersed in the setting and giving the reader enough detail to make sense of the situation. Then, the connection is not so much logical as rhetorical (Firestone, 1986). To avoid the reduction

from only one of both methods, we should use multiple research approaches and theoretical constructs (Peiró, 1994; Kincheloe, 2004) using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

In our research this phenomenon is referred to as triangulation (Gorard & Taylor, 2004). Substantial qualitative material consisting cognitive information, provided by respondents, it can be analyzed by using digital Cmap Tools, Excel and SPSS, by transforming qualitative data into quantitative data to facilitate discoveries of patterns in the data (Scherp, 2013). We know two types of combined methods: The action-research (Peiró, 1992, 1992, 1993; Lodigo et al., 2010) and the program evaluation (Lodigo et al., 2010; Anderson & Arsenault, 1998), using interviews in-depth.

The procedure is analogous to that used for Schmelkes (2001). The qualitative aspect of the study was developed by a few in-depth interviews with two fathers and two mothers. It was isolating interpret the stories most important independent variables: (1) causes of conflict, cleaning of excuses and stories, (2) school life variables, (3) aspects of values and family organization. With such items was constructed the instrument's survey. The quantitative aspect was the application of the questionnaire to the population referred to, in order to quantify the different variables, but interpreting the short answer-key concepts around. The survey was conducted through face to face interviews. So we adopted a research strategy that led to the complementarity of both approaches.

## 5. Findings

The responses were grouped according to aforementioned aspects, counting the frequencies according to semantic similarity. We must warn, as people could give more than one answer, the frequency is greater than the number of fathers and mothers was. The first field of variables concerns the frequency's response conflicts peaceful-coexistence related to school organization. The replies are: teaching practice, 9; discipline's management, 8; improper measures used by teacher respect the student, 4; poor relationship between teachers, 4; lack of financial support for schools, 4; communication problems, 3; lack of support from family, 2, and surveillance's lack, 2. Here below the Figure 3 shows the results of this first cluster of variables;

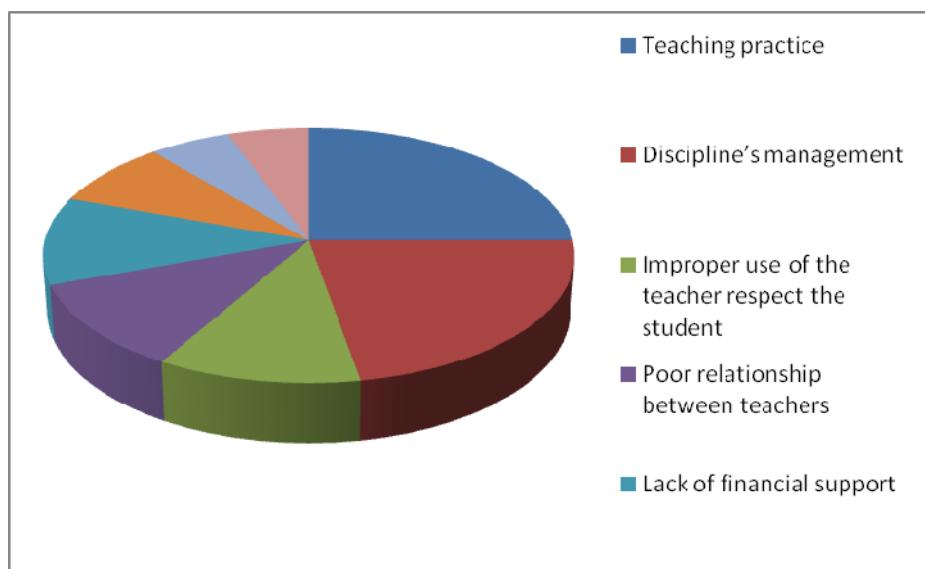


Figure 3 Frequency's Response Conflicts Related to School Organization

As we can interpret, the problems of coexistence, whose parents could distinguish, have links with the teaching and the discipline management. Is interesting to grasp these responses, as indicated that parents not focus their attention on the one-to-one about to explain the problems of peaceful-coexistence, but focus on issues that are fundamental and determinant. Examples of these responses: *teachers do not teach values, the classes are very boring, no quality in their methods...*

Regarding families, frequencies of responses on school conflicts concerning to the peaceful-coexistence related families, frequencies corresponding to each response are these: disintegration/bad relationship into families, 6; lack of values at home, 5; indifference/faulty of cooperation, 4; socioeconomic conditions, 3, and lack of communication, 2. Also these items are showed trough Figure 4.

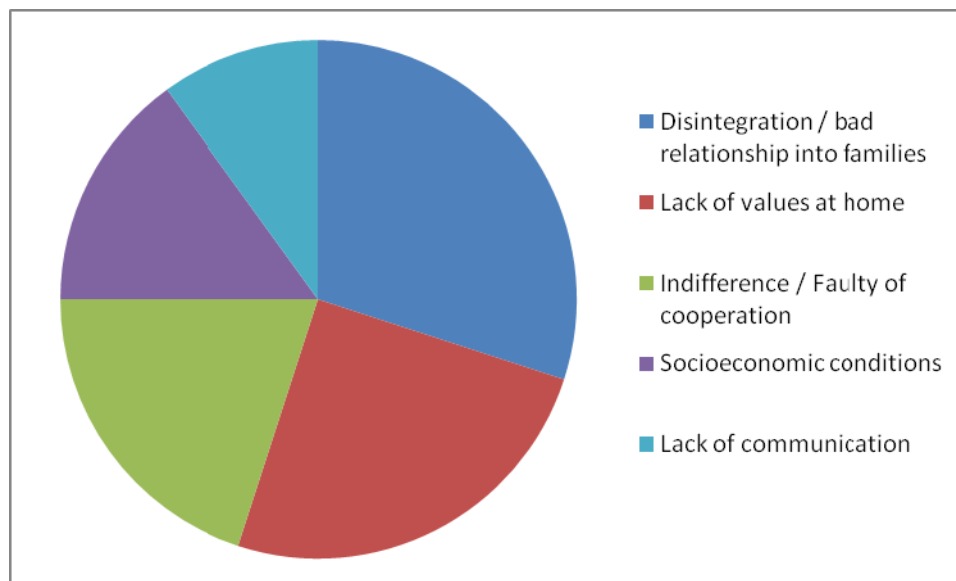


Figure 4 Frequencies of Responses on School Conflicts

As can be seen in the table, the highest number of responses focuses on family breakdown or poor relations within families. It seems that parents have a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon of coexistence in school as they take into account aspects of both the institution and the surrounding context. Examples of these responses: family breakdown, here people do not have time for to dialogue, all is resolved by blow or by bad words.

Concerning the relationship into the family's members, among the recognized causes of these troubles, as the source of its, parents distinguish the following descriptors and frequencies: parents' lack of interest, 9; miscommunication/misunderstanding, 8; conditions of staff teaching, 8; incoherence on the application of rules/favoritism, 7; poor organization, 6; cranky teacher/lack of patience, 5; insufficient funds, 4, and problems family. The pictogram shown below by the Figure 5.

Contrasting these responses with the previous block, we can grasp that, although parents report that peaceful-coexistence problems are linked to teaching practices, and to bad relationships between families, they also recognize that the main cause is the faulty of interest of the parents. From our point of view, one of the most interesting issue, is that parents recognize that one reason may be the working conditions of the teachers and the incoherence on applying the classroom rules.

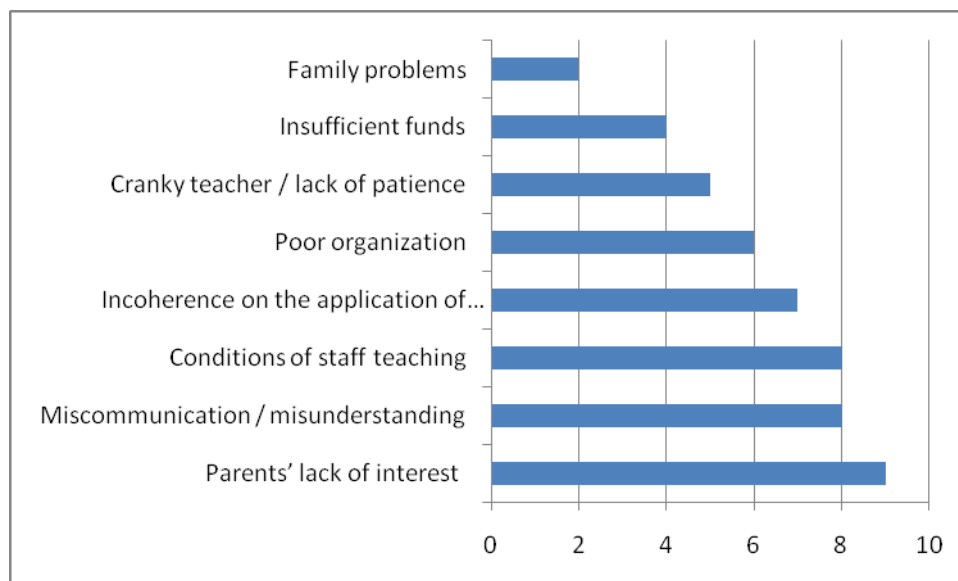


Figure 5 Relations Family & School Climate' Troubles

## 6. Discussion, Conclusions and Proposals

Given the findings and these results, we must reassert the previous researches on the survey data gives us from Queretaro. That is, the family means a set of factors as relevant as those of teachers.

Relating the findings by groups of issues, conflicts refer ways of teaching and disciplining, there is even lack of respect for students (this is a bad example that disproves the teacher), which are attached a poor relationship between teachers. All the above can be associated with a low or nonexistent communication. To this, it must add the funding problems.

Family problems may explain discrepancies that pupils are bringing at their classrooms: disintegration or poor relationships between family members and a lack of values in it. If we add to this the insufficient communication, we will have a live in indifference and lack of cooperation. Those are accompanied with socio-economic status

As for the relationship between school and family, parents lack of interest shown in it, there is an extensive isolation and family problems. But, we also have the staff lacks conditions for generating communication, and there are inconsistencies and favoritism. No wonder the emergence of teacher's crank.

The family breakdown and the little skills on social-teaching, as well as crisis are related to the lack of values lived into itself. Those troubles are introduced in the classroom. By other hand, school continues isolated concerning social groups. Teachers also expressed little communication with each other. This crisis is compounded by poor teaching conditions. What links these two groups of issues is the poor quality of teaching and the deficit in handling discipline.

Concerning the recommendations, we dare to formulate some guidelines, such as:

(1) We must encourage and train the parents of the students to participate in the organization and dynamics of the school, as well as in the educational process of their children.

(2) Parents should strengthen their own family with strong communication and implementing values. This is essential to achieve the above mentioned in (1).



(3) One possible means can be to organize in every school parents' club (see the movement "community education", i.e., ICEA) which, among other things, teach how to live the human and social values.

(4) Teachers should keep more and better levels of communication, encouraging interaction including the educational value of school's project.

(5) Educators must understand that without coherence and rationality, formal education as a system, will not work. Therefore, they should learn appropriate skills.

(6) Teacher's leaders and families should take the initiative on before written, because if they do not, the situation will remain the same.

How parents have perceived themselves as a key to improving the educational institution, authorities should exploit this potential to change the school situation. We have models to improve this. Although, programs concerning families have been developed, such "Experience of parents' education like trainers of students in risk" (Peiró & Ramos, 2013). Still are valid the program of Epstein (2001), that presents following principals: (1) The school must understands families. (2) The family could be to be trained to exercise the parenthood. (3) To promote mutual home-school communication. (4) Involve parents as volunteers on schoolwork, not just bureaucratic. (5) Reconciling schooling and homeschooling. (6) Families should participate in government advisory groups of school, taking effective decisions. (7) Parents must understand the socio-cultural facilities of their milieu, for to integrate it into schools.

## **7. Limitations**

Like all research  $n = 1$ , the findings are limited to the school in question. Therefore cannot be generalized. But, the work serves to relate the general theory (Popper). However: "Nihil est sub sole novum".

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