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COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS WITH PARENTS IN SOME KINDERGARTENS OF PHU THO TOWN

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Abstract

Communication of pre-school teachers with parents is an activity that occurs regularly and creates a bond between the families and the schools in terms of coordination of children care and education. In this article, we would like to mention some theoretical issues related to the communication skills of preschool teachers with parents. Simultaneously, we would find out the status of communication activities between these two objects. On that basis, some solutions would be proposed to improve the communication efficiency of preschool teachers with parents, to promote communication and coordination of educational forces participating in the improvement of the quality of children care and education in the current period.

Keywords: *Communication, preschool teachers, parents.*

1. Introduction

The coordination between families and schools in pre-school children care and education of preschool is specified in several guiding documents of the Ministry of Education and Training [1, 2]. It also clearly stipulates that preschool teachers (PSTs) not only have a duty to care for the children and educate them, but also have to perform well the task of propagating scientific knowledge of educating children to their parents (Ps). Therefore, in the educational cooperation relationship between schools and families, the PSTs and the Ps need to be focused on. The PSTs are the people who regularly interact, work directly with the children and the Ps. Therefore, communication of PSTs with Ps is extremely important and necessary. PSTs' communication with Ps brings many benefits which are understanding, cooperation, sharing, and sympathy. It helps build a sustainable

relationship between the PSTs and the Ps, which sets up the basis for all other forms of families' involvement in education. At the same time, developing a positive relationship with the Ps is an important condition for exchanging information, propagating the best care and education for their children. Through communication with the Ps, PSTs can easily understand the unique features of each child's habits, interests, personalities, and psycho-physiological characteristics; understand the Ps' thoughts, expectations, and wishes when sending their children to school; quickly convey the school's information and activities for children to Ps, unify children care and education at school and at home. As a result, PSTs easily attract the participation of parents in caring for and educating children along with the schools. Creating and organizing teaching plans of the PSTs will also achieve better results when the Ps join hands to contribute.

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2. Methods

2.1. Theoretical research methods

Learn, read, analyze, consolidate, and systematize documents to clarify the theoretical basis related to the communication of PSTs with Ps.

2.2. Practical research methods

* Survey method by questionnaire: Using a survey questionnaire for PSTs who are in class at some kindergartens in Phu Tho town to explore and survey the need and communication content of PSTs with Ps. Using the questionnaire to survey the Ps' opinions living and working in Phu Tho town to find out the status of communication between the PSTs and the Ps.

* Observation method: Observe and record the communication activities of PSTs with Ps through several activities: Daily (pick-up and drop-off time), meetings (Ps meetings, ceremonies, festivals, etc... organized by classes or schools) to collect some information related to the communication status of PSTs with Ps to as a supplement to other methods and clarify the research problem.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Some theoretical issues about the communication of pre-school teachers with parents

3.1.1. Definition of communication of pre-school teachers with parents

Communication between PSTs and Ps is the process of establishing and operating a cooperative relationship in children care and education through the process of exchanging and sharing information; awareness; mutual influence and interaction among people in charge of nurturing, caring for and educating children in schools, kindergartens, children's groups, independent kindergartens from representative of the families which are in charge of educating pre-school children in

relation to the school to meet the demands of cooperation in caring for and educating children to achieve the goals of educating pre-school children.

3.1.2. Communication factors of pre-school teachers with parents

* Subjects of communication: In the communication of the PSTs with the Ps, both are positive and proactive interacting subjects. It means, when the PSTs or the Ps are the subjects of influence, they also receive back the influence from the subjects who are in the same communication. Therefore, communication between the PSTs and the Ps is understood as a bilateral and multi-dimensional interaction with orientation between the PSTs and the Ps [5].

* The content of communication between the PSTs and the Ps: The content of communication between the PSTs and the Ps encompasses: Information about the children's development to their parents; notifications about children's health and learning during a day at the kindergartens; propaganda on how to raise children scientifically (objectives, tasks, contents, methods of educating and evaluating children...); expectations and concerns of the PSTs-Ps related to the children's development interests; invitation to Ps to visit the classroom to observe how the PSTs teach and how the children learn... [4].

* Communication means of PSTs with Ps: including linguistic elements (spoken - written), non-linguistic (facial expressions, gestures, body diagrams, costumes, communication distance...)

3.1.3. Manifestations of communication skills of pre-school teachers with parents

* Speaking and listening skills

In communicating with the Ps, listening would bring many benefits to the PSTs, such as: helping the PSTs show their respect to the Ps; creating opportunities for Ps to express and respond to PSTs with respect. Ps would

feel their needs are met because they feel free to share their thoughts, points of view, ideas with the PSTs which may form a great relationship. They would also certainly listen to the PSTs to share their information about the schools, the children, difficulties, and concerns when taking care of the children. Both Ps and PSTs feel satisfied and have a good impression of each other, have opportunities to understand each other better, empathize, share, and cooperate better.

Simultaneously, PSTs must know how to talk and should have the following manifestations: to understand the personalities, psychological characteristics, interests as well as living circumstances of children and their parents; to know how to choose the best time, place to meet and the matters to be talked about in the meeting; During the conversation, always give the Ps opportunities to express their points of view; to know how to express emotions through eyes, smiles and gestures, posture in a proper and dignified manner; to know how to say funny sentences to make it lively and fun; to respect Ps' opinions but still defend PSTs' points of view.

** Means of communication using skills*

PSTs need to pay attention to the basic requirements of languages in communication in terms of voice, how to choose words and pronounce, how to express sympathy in every situation when communicating. When talking to children or their parents, when praising and criticizing the children, PSTs must be very skillful, know how to use the euphemism, or choose appropriate time and place so that the Ps do not feel shy or embarrassed, irritated which may form negative emotions; If written language is used, the words used in written documents or similar (criticizing children's profile, writing notices, newsletters, commenting, assessing children...) need to be used in a correct grammar that shows the seriousness, sincerity and pays attention to feelings and expectations of the Ps in communication [5]. If communicating with the Ps using the

phone, PSTs need to adjust their pitch and voice to be moderate and easy to hear; speak coherently, not too fast, or too slow; know how to listen and should not interrupt parents. When hearing the information unclearly, PSTs may ask the Ps to speak louder, more clearly, or to slow down and confirm with the Ps what they have heard; end the talk with a greeting, good and friendly wishes.

When communicating with Ps, PSTs should have friendly facial expressions and gentle eyes glint as well as an intimate look directly into Ps eyes accompanied by a friendly smile, that are easy ways to approach when interacting to start conversations, show welcome, care, or say goodbye... When communicating with Ps, PSTs need to pay attention to their appearance such as attire, walking posture which shows civilized lifestyle, politeness, seriousness, and respect to Ps.

3.2. The status of pre-school teachers' communication with parents

We conducted a survey on 181 pre-school teachers and 76 parents at 8 kindergartens in Phu Tho town. The results obtained are as the followings:

3.2.1. Survey results on the awareness of pre-school teachers about communication with parents in cooperation with the parents to care for and educate children.

** Awareness of PSTs about the importance of communication with Ps*

PSTs are greatly aware of the importance of communication with Ps in cooperation to care for and educate children. Survey results show that 98% of PSTs think that communication of PSTs with Ps plays an important and very important role, only 2% of PSTs rated the importance of communication with Ps at a normal level. None of the surveyed PSTs thinks that communication with Ps is less important or not important.

** Awareness of PSTs about the content of communication with Ps*

Understanding the awareness of the two communicative subjects (PSTs and Ps) about the contents of the PSTs’ communication with Ps, we obtained the following results:

Table 1. Level of importance assessment of communication contents between PSTs and Ps

Communication Contents	Level (%)				
	Very important	Important	Normal	Less important	Not important
Talking about children’s interests, habits... to better understand them when they are at home.	46.96	45.30	6.08	1.66	0.00
Informing the parents of children’s health, learning and progress.	51.93	43.65	3.87	0.55	0.00
Informing the parents of contents, teaching and learning activities of the PSTs and the children on/at/in days/weeks/topics...	30.39	53.59	13.26	2.76	0.00
Informing, propagating to the parents about the goals, tasks, contents, methods of educating and assessing the children.	20.99	56.91	17.13	2.21	2.21
Satisfying and adequately and promptly resolving the requests, wishes, expectations of the children and their families	43.09	43.65	11.60	1.66	0.00
PSTs and Ps give suggestions together and share concerns and difficulties in raising the children.	38.67	50.83	9.94	0.55	0.00
PSTs are aware of Ps’ assessments about themselves.	34.81	36.46	23.76	3.31	1.66
Attracting Ps to join the schools and classes’ activities and their support to improve the schools and classes.	20.78	39.14	36.02	2.38	1.68
Inviting Ps to visit the classes to observe how PSTs teach and the children learn.	16.68	27.86	48.38	4.87	2.21

Considering the number of comments of PSTs about the level of “important” and “very important”, the results in the above table show that the content of “Informing the parents of children’s health, learning and progress” is the first prioritized. After that, it is “Informing the parents of contents, teaching and learning activities of the PSTs and the children on/at/in days/weeks/topics” ... The next is “Talking about children’s interests, habits... to better understand them when they are at home”. On that basis, “Satisfying and adequately and promptly resolving the requests, wishes, expectations of the children and their families”. In addition, teachers also highly appreciated the importance of contents such as: Informing, propagating to the parents about the goals, tasks, contents, methods of educating and assessing the children; PSTs and Ps give suggestions together and share about concerns and

difficulties in raising the children; PSTs are aware of Ps’ assessments about themselves. However, the contents of “Attracting Ps to join the schools and classes’ activities and their support to improve the schools and classes”; “Inviting Ps to visit the classes to observe how PSTs teach and the children learn” are less interested. It is disregarding these communication contents that may be the cause of obstacles and restricting the effectiveness of the PSTs’ communication with the Ps in the coordination of children’s care-education.

3.2.2. Results of parents’ evaluation of pre-school teachers’ communication in the coordination of children care and education

We conducted a survey on Ps’ opinions to understand the status of skills of using verbal and non-verbal means of PSTs and obtained the following results:

Table 2. Level of applying verbal and non-verbal communication skills of PSTs

No.	PSTs' communication skills	Level of manifestations (%)				
		Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	My children's teachers dress in proper attire with appropriate costumes when going to the class.	58.75	35.54	5.71	0	0
2	The teachers welcome me with a friendly handshake when I visit the school, class or take my children to the school for its festivals...	0	0	2.82	7.14	90.04
3	The teachers behave politely, openly, and amicably (eyes, gestures, behavior, words used,...)	34.66	52.74	12.6	0	0
4	I am so satisfied asking the teachers about methods of raising the children.	27.25	29.36	30.08	10.44	2.15
5	My opinions, questions and concerns are adequately and promptly solved.	16.32	29.64	32.19	15.46	6.36

The results in Table 2 show that most of the PSTs "always" and "usually" dress in proper attire with appropriate costumes when going to class; and when communicating with Ps, PSTs "usually" behave politely, openly, and amicably (eyes, gestures, behavior, words used,...). But more than 95% of PSTs "rarely" or "never" have "a friendly handshake" when welcoming Ps to "visit the school, class or take my children to the school for its festivals". Through actual observations, some PSTs were not able to keep an appropriate distance in communicating with the Ps (the PSTs standing/sitting in class speak out loud, sitting in a chair talking to the Ps while the Ps standing talks to them...). Especially, there are still more than 10% of Ps who are uncomfortable when communicating with the PSTs because a number of their comments, questions, concerns of the Ps have not been answered and resolved adequately when communicating with the PSTs. Thus, along with the comparatively high evaluations of the Ps about the communication of the PSTs, there are still some problems that the PSTs need to solve to satisfy the Ps in the communication process.

3.4. Proposing some influential solutions to boost the communication efficiency of pre-school teachers with parents

3.4.1. Solution 1: Raise the awareness of pre-school teachers about some

communication problems of pre-school teachers with parents

a) Purpose:

To help PSTs correctly understand the role and importance of the communication contents of PSTs with Ps. On that basis, PSTs know how to choose the contents of communication which are suitable for the purpose of communication, and simultaneously know how to choose and coordinate flexibly the ways of organizing communication appropriately with the communication object, which is the Ps of the children.

To help PSTs raise awareness, self-improve, enhance knowledge and communication skills, competence of organizing communication activities with Ps so that PSTs succeed in communication; contribute to promoting positivity, motivating PSTs to be more proactive and confident in communicating with Ps, create greatly their self-images in front of Ps.

b) Implementation:

- The Managing Officers should probe the learning needs, awareness levels of the PSTs in terms of communication knowledge, the PSTs' competence of organizing communication activities with the Ps: survey, observing communication activities... and base on that to select topics

and training contents to meet the practical needs of the PSTs.

- Organizing thematic reports and training sessions for PSTs, creating conditions for PSTs to approach theoretical and practical issues of communication between PSTs and Ps in terms of specific topics such as: Roles, functions of communication with Ps; The purposes of communication of PSTs with Ps; communication contents of PSTs with Ps; communication skills; how to organize communication activities with Ps...

- Inviting experienced and specialized experts in the field of preschool to attend, report, and train PSTs at their schools or any other appropriate locations.

- Encouraging PSTs to self-improve and improve communication skills with Ps, creating conditions for PSTs to have a learning environment.

- + Creating learning movements for PSTs: The schools should arrange and allocate time; arrange and assign suitable workload so that the PSTs have time to participate in learning knowledge about communication, improve communication skills.

- + The contents of knowledge about communication of PSTs with Ps need to be widely advertised on the educational websites of the Department, the local departments or in specialized magazines for the PSTs to attend and learn.

- Motivating, promoting the positivity of PSTs in communication with Ps.

- + The Managing Officers should disseminate The Code of Communication of PSTs and Ps in schools to PSTs and Ps [3].

- + The Managing Officers should regularly observe, monitor the time and the ways of organizing communication activities, the communication efficiency of the PSTs with Ps to promptly propose solutions to help the PSTs strengthen their advantages and improve their restrictions in communicating
- dealing with the Ps.

For example: To raise awareness and self-consciousness of PSTs about the communication and communication between PSTs and Ps through the topic “Effectively holding meetings of Ps”, which may be done as the followings:

Step 1: The Managing Officers probe needs of learning knowledge and skills about the content of “Holding meetings of Ps in kindergartens” and invite the PSTs to enroll with the School Administrators. Based on the registration results of the PSTs, the schools advise the Educational Department to integrate the contents to train the PSTs in the first professional training session of the year held by the Educational Department.

Step 2: Providing learning materials of the topic for PSTs: Equip PSTs with reference materials of communication and PSTs’ communication to help PSTs search for learning materials at the schools’ library.

Step 3: Inviting experts to train the skills of holding meetings of Ps for PSTs in the first professional training session of the year organized by the Educational Department.

Step 4: Procedures: Experts’ reports–presentations; Skills Guide; Exchanging experiences between PSTs - PSTs, PSTs -The Managing Officers, PSTs - experts.

3.4.2. Solution 2: Support the teachers to well propagate the family’s responsibilities in educating children

a) Purpose:

Support PSTs to well propagate to create conditions for Ps to access documents of the Party and the State of goals of educational development, regulations of majors, levels of education about the responsibilities of Ps, families in educating children. On that basis, raising awareness of Ps about the importance of preschool to the development of children’s personalities; raising awareness and responsibilities of families and society in coordination with schools and PSTs to care for and educate children.

b) Implementation:

Organizations, departments and social organizations should strengthen coordination with the schools to well propagate and widely promote the above contents with means of multimedia: the schools' propaganda boards, the classrooms' Parents-need-to-know board, posters, educational websites, newspapers, radio, etc...

PSTs positively and proactively integrate these propaganda contents into meetings of Ps in a gentle and appropriate manner in various forms: written reports, videos, pictures, discussions... with Ps.

PSTs can also communicate with Ps by sharing messages, talking to Ps through festivals and meetings: Opening ceremony of a new school year; Vietnamese Families' Day; International Children's Day on June 1, Vietnamese Teachers' Day on November 20; Closing ceremony of a school year, etc...

For example: To support PSTs to well propagate families' responsibilities in educating children, it is necessary to create conditions for parents to access documents of the Party and the State of goals of educational development, regulations of majors, levels of education about the responsibilities of Ps, families in educating children:

Step 1: Prepare propaganda contents of coordination: PSTs select topics, design a plan for meetings of Ps. The topic of propaganda and coordination between schools and families about the following contents: Propaganda and coordination to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival for the children, Propaganda of "Families' responsibilities in cooperation with schools"

Step 2: Disseminate propaganda contents to Ps: The schools well propagate and promote the above contents by means of multimedia: Posting on the schools' propaganda boards, the classrooms' Parents-need-to-know board, and sending informative sheets to Ps, etc...

3.4.3. Solution 3: Creating an appropriate and useful working environment so that

PSTs would have favorable opportunities to experience, practice and strengthen communication skills with Ps

a) Purpose:

- Based on the theoretical and practical knowledge about communication and PSTs' communication with Ps acquired, the PSTs are interested in and focused on applying positively them to communication activities, boost communication efficiency of PSTs with Ps to meet the demands and tasks in occupational activities of PSTs.

- Help PSTs have an appropriate and favorable environment for meeting and learning: exchanging and sharing knowledge and experience in solving problems; apply communication skills through dealing with specific and diverse situations to improve the acquired communication skills.

b) Implementation:

- May implement through festivals, meetings...; movements and contests of PSTs inside and outside the school, between PSTs- Ps.

- PSTs discuss with colleagues in regular meetings of the schools/specialized groups: PSTs present awkward situations with children's Ps that they or their colleagues have encountered - with or without a solution to the problem, then discuss together to find solutions.

- The schools, The Managing Boards of the majors organize different activities for PSTs to exchange and learn from each other inside and outside the school through competitions of training professional and pedagogical skills, exchange programs and activities outside the kindergartens: Competition "The Elegant Teacher", "Pedagogical Beauty"...

- Design sports and cultural activities to create conditions and opportunities for PSTs and Ps to have a chance to meet and discuss issues for the benefit of the children as meetings, festivals, seminars, class visits...: Sports Festival, Opening

Ceremony of a school year, Gratitude Ceremony to teachers on Vietnamese Teachers' Day, meetings of Ps...

4. Conclusions

Communication of PSTs with Ps is one of the activities that greatly contributes to mobilizing the cooperation of parents and other social forces to care for and educate children in kindergartens. This activity can only be highly effective when PSTs have good communication skills. PSTs' communication skills are affected by factors such as objects, topics, content, means and context of communication. The survey also showed the certain limitations of the communication skills of PSTs in some kindergartens in Phu Tho town. Kindergartens, however, can overcome the above limitations if they use effective measures such as: Raising awareness of PSTs about some communication problems of PSTs with Ps; Supporting PSTs to well propagate family's responsibilities in educating children; Creating a friendly and useful working environment for PSTs to have favorable opportunities to experience, practice and strengthen communication skills with Ps.

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KỸ NĂNG GIAO TIẾP CỦA GIÁO VIÊN MẦM NON VỚI PHỤ HUYNH TẠI MỘT SỐ TRƯỜNG MẦM NON TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN THỊ XÃ PHÚ THỌ

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Giao tiếp của giáo viên mầm non với phụ huynh là hoạt động được diễn ra thường xuyên và tạo sự gắn kết giữa gia đình và nhà trường trong công tác phối hợp chăm sóc giáo dục trẻ. Trong khuôn khổ bài viết này chúng tôi muốn đề cập đến một số vấn đề lý luận liên quan đến kỹ năng giao tiếp của giáo viên mầm non với phụ huynh. Đồng thời tìm hiểu thực trạng hoạt động giao tiếp giữa hai đối tượng này. Trên cơ sở đó, đề xuất một số biện pháp nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả giao tiếp của giáo viên mầm non với phụ huynh, nhằm đẩy mạnh công tác tuyên truyền, phối hợp các lực lượng giáo dục tham gia vào việc nâng cao chất lượng chăm sóc giáo dục trẻ trong giai đoạn hiện nay.

Từ khóa: *Giao tiếp, giáo viên mầm non, phụ huynh.*