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Cooperation of the School With the Family and the Local
Community – Selected Aspects
Współpraca szkoły z rodziną i środowiskiem lokalnym –
wybrane aspekty

ABSTRACT		

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The article describes the conditions, assumptions and benefits regarding the process of cooperation of the school with the family and the local community in the context of selected educational aspects.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: The research questions were as follows: for what purpose should the school cooperate with the family and the local community, and what are the conditions for and the benefits of this cooperation? Analysis of scientific literature and analysis of existing data was used.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: Referring to scientific studies, the key concepts for the analysis were defined descriptively and the meaning and conditions of multi-stakeholder school cooperation were characterized in view of contemporary human needs in the context of lifelong education.

RESEARCH RESULTS: The analysis shows that school is one of the most important social institutions to promote the ideas of continuous learning and the value of education. It provides education for knowledge society. The quality of education depends on the school's openness to the family and community. Building a culture of cooperation requires partnership and involvement of everyone, an activity based on dialogue, shared goals and values and mutual benefits.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPLICABLE VALUE OF RESEARCH: Education is not an individual activity, but a collective endeavor, and the changes in civilization generate new challenges in this area, so multi-stakeholder cooperation of the school, family and local community is necessary, based on the identification of resources, needs and social capital of the

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actors, in order to meet the intellectual and moral challenges. Educational leaders – the school principal and teachers – play a key role here.

→ KEYWORDS: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COOPERATION, FAMILY – STUDENT'S HOME ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING, MODELS OF COOPERATION

STRESZCZENIE	

CEL NAUKOWY: W artykule dokonano opisu uwarunkowań, założeń i korzyści dotyczących procesu współpracy szkoły z rodziną i środowiskiem lokalnym w kontekście wybranych aspektów edukacyjnych.

PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE: Postawiono następujące problemy badawcze: w jakim celu szkoła powinna współpracować z rodziną i ze środowiskiem lokalnym oraz jakie są warunki tej współpracy i korzyści. Zastosowano metodę analizy literatury naukowej i analizę danych zastanych.

PROCES WYWODU: Odwołując się do naukowych opracowań, zdefiniowano w sposób opisowy kluczowe dla analizy pojęcia oraz scharakteryzowano znaczenie i warunki współpracy wielopodmiotowej szkoły ze względu na współczesne potrzeby człowieka w kontekście edukacji całożyciowej.

WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ: Z przeprowadzonych analiz wynika, że szkoła to jedna z najważniejszych instytucji społecznych, która ma promować idee ustawicznego uczenia się i wartość edukacji. Chodzi o edukację na miarę społeczeństwa wiedzy. Jakość edukacji zależy od otwarcia się szkoły na rodzinę i społeczność lokalną. Budowanie kultury współpracy wymaga partnerstwa i zaangażowania wszystkich, działalności opartej na dialogu, wspólnych celach i wartościach oraz obopólnych korzyściach.

WNIOSKI, REKOMENDACJE I APLIKACYJNE ZNACZENIE WPŁYWU BADAŃ: Edukacja nie jest działalnością indywidualną, lecz przedsięwzięciem zbiorowym, a zmiany cywilizacyjne generują nowe wyzwania w tym zakresie, dlatego konieczna jest współpraca wielopodmiotowa szkoły, rodziny i środowiska lokalnego, oparta na identyfikacji zasobów, potrzeb i kapitału społecznego podmiotów, by móc sprostać intelektualnym i moralnym wyzwaniom. Kluczową rolę odgrywają tutaj przywódcy edukacyjni – dyrektor szkoły i nauczyciele.

→ SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: WSPÓŁPRACA WIELOPODMIOTOWA, RODZINA – ŚRODOWISKO DOMOWE UCZNIA, EDUKACJA, UCZENIE SIĘ PRZEZ CAŁE ŻYCIE, MODELE WSPÓŁPRACY

Introduction

"There is a strong and well-founded belief today that education determines the future of countries and societies" (Mazurkiewicz, 2016, p. 18). This is due to the fact that education can change social structures and improve social processes, as well as foster social progress. Therefore, education is faced with the task of lifelong learning and coping with constant changes and crises. With this being said, education is not an individual activity, but a collective endeavor. Consequently, most governments consider the steady improvement of the quality of education as one of the most important goals of educational policy (Mazurkiewicz, 2016). Promoting lifelong learning, which ties in with promoting the merits of education, is the task of schools. The goal is to raise awareness that learning lasts a lifetime and can be an interesting experience, enabling one to understand the world, help solve problems and promote one's growth. Given all this, we need a message about "how to learn." The school, as one of the most important social institutions, is also there to promote the idea of lifelong learning in the community, by creating programs and offering educational activities that will advance the potential of the local community. The point is to provide education for knowledge society, which will facilitate the development of individual talents and abilities and make individuals more sensitive to the community (Kołodziejczyk & Starypan, 2012).

It is inconceivable today to envisage the daily functioning of a school in isolation from the various organizations active in its local community. This has to do with the status of the school as an educational institution, shaping certain attitudes (including democratic relations) and the world of values of the youngest generation, as well as the need to implement requirements related to teaching supervision. Hence, the school is expected to be active in the local community and aware of social expectations, and to spearhead certain activities for the benefit of learners and the local community. Cooperation with the local community is a long-term activity that improves the quality of life of individuals and social groups. The institutions for cooperation are selected depending on where the school is located. The criteria for selection should be based on a conscientious analysis of the correspondence and differences in goals and modes of action from the point of view of the educational processes implemented at the school.

The ability to open up to the surrounding world and build such organized forms of cooperation is a key characteristic that defines a "good school" today. This skill is especially important for the role that the school should play in the process of building a democratic society (Dorczak, 2012, p. 312).

Accordingly, one important task of the school is to open up to local problems, support the development of the residents in the area, collaborate with other educational institutions and organizations or individuals, as well as actively and consistently interact with the community to promote education in order to develop the potential of the local community in accordance with the needs of knowledge society and democratic ideas.



This approach calls for education that is continuous, i.e. lifelong learning; multidimensional, i.e. encompassing various aspects of reality; interactive, where individual human development is integrated with the development of society; and that carries out specific functions: pro-democratic, civic, multicultural, training for critical analysis and screening of information, for coping in the labor market and actively participating in the creation of reality (Kołodziejczyk & Starypan, 2012).

The objective of the article is a theoretical reflection on the conditions, principles and benefits of implementing the process of school collaboration with the family and the local community in the context of selected educational aspects and new challenges of the changing world.

The research questions are as follows: for what purpose should the school work together with the family and the local community, what are the conditions of this collaboration today and what benefits can ensue from it? We used the method of analysis of scholarly literature in the area and an analysis of existing data.

Parents as "Equal Members of the School Community"

Education, in the broadest sense, begins in the family, and then, once the child reaches the appropriate age, proceeds simultaneously in two settings: the natural one – the family – and the institutional one – the school. Both settings bear (co)responsibility for education. However, in order for the child to develop in a wholesome way and acquire knowledge, the school and family must work closely and regularly together in a spirit of dialogue. In this way, the student's parents become important partners of the school (Błasiak, 2017).

Collaboration between the school and the family is mainly due to official and legal regulations of a global and national nature (e.g., the Education System Act of 1991 and the legal acts introducing the 1999 education reform, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child), where parents are included as "equal members of school collaboration" and "partners of the school."

This entails the interaction of both actors towards common goals, consistent decision-making and tangible actions. Such collaboration, which should be based on mutual trust and loyalty, is contingent on the creation of a community in action (Musiał, 2019).

Parents are essential for achieving educational goals. Maria Mendel (1998, 2004) pointed out that we can talk about collaboration between school and parents when both parties perceive and accept the common goal of (co)action, namely the best possible education of children and adolescents, which should be conducive to their all-round and full development. The researcher stresses that education is the main way to overcome current problems. Therefore, it is important for parents to take part in this area in order that educational goals can be achieved. The family home, in which a student grows up, shapes him or her to the greatest extent and has the greatest impact on their achievements at school and in life. Mendel puts forward the claim that a teacher oriented to the

educational progress of his or her students must open up to the community from which the student comes.

There is a link between the effects of children's education and their parents' cooperation with the school. This cooperation

[...] fosters a good atmosphere in the classroom; the development of positive attitudes of students towards school, willingness to attend classes and their approval of the school – it contributes to a sense of being listened to and children paying attention to each other, as well as showing better focus of attention in lessons (Zalewska-Bujak, 2020, p. 155).

Moreover, the parents' trust in their children increases as does children's motivation to learn and behave better. Properly implemented cooperation provides an opportunity for the teacher to get to know the child and his or her needs, potential and interests through the parents, to agree on a shared vision of home and school learning, to involve parents in the school's educational activities, and to get their support in overcoming students' difficulties (Zalewska-Bujak, 2020). School-parent cooperation can contribute to growing trust between parents and teachers and vice versa, as it is an opportunity to forge subjective relationships that facilitate resolving misunderstandings, and increases the sense of responsibility of all stakeholders towards the entire educational community. However, certain criteria must be met: the competence of parents and students must be recognized, parents must be seen as allies of the school, the school must be open to their expectations, the right to co-determination must be honored, and individualized forms of cooperation and knowledge sharing must be put in place.

Mendel (2000, 2004) notes that for the sake of cooperation and partnership in this area, it is important to build a culture of collaboration, based on dialogue, shared goals and values, beliefs and objectives, mutual space of interdependence and win-win benefits. This culture is underpinned by relationships between all actors: teachers and students, between teachers, between teachers and parents, school staff, and the local community. It is essential that everyone contributes to the positive atmosphere of relations between actors based on proper communication and principles that foster a climate of mutual kindness and respect, openness and mindfulness. One may mention here the principle of positive motivation, which encourages responsible behavior and volunteer involvement, since there are well-known advantages and gains from working together towards the educational benefit; the principle of partnership, which implies equality of rights and obligations; the principle of unity of influence of all actors, based on common goals; as well as the principle of active and regular cooperation (Musiał, 2019). Today, there is also an emphasis on the empowerment of parents in the education system due to the prospect of lifelong learning (lifelong education), and the integration of formal education with informal and non-formal education.

The system tasks in the field of education are, according to the intention of the law-makers, to be carried out under conditions of reciprocity, interconnection between stake-holders, goals and forms of action. Schools have parent boards, which, for example, have the right to co-create school curricula and influence school affairs. Such solutions,



which expand the scope of socialization at school, promote democratization of life and empowerment of parents in the educational system, according to Mendel (b.d.). Actions taken by the school to open up to parents and the community contribute to the merging of various forms of education. This involves educational offers involving parents: education for children on the one hand, and education for families and communities on the other, as well as education for parents themselves. The school then becomes a significant place for the life of the local community, which influences its development, through the formation of partnerships: school-family-community and other networks, where different types of education can intersect and integrate. This results in changes throughout society, which increase the quality of life and the development of community ties.

Importance of Educational Leadership of Teachers and School Principal for Collaboration

It is very difficult to imagine an authentic learning process without the involvement of all its participants. Education is a process in which a community of learners emerges, thanks to the involvement of the mind, emotions, previous experiences, sensitivity to the circumstances of action and to other people, with simultaneous reference to the values that are accepted by the community (Mazurkiewicz, 2012, p. 392).

This is where the issue of leadership, educational leadership is revealed. According to Grzegorz Mazurkiewicz (2012), an educational leader "is someone who has the power to externalize the potential of others" (p. 392). In this view, the leader, together with the group, creates situations that enable everyone to learn and solve problems. Interaction between people is key. In fact, the strength of cooperation depends on the potential of human capabilities and personality differences that all work together. Therefore, an authentic leader understands that their "greatest success is the people, co-workers who are responsible for their tasks, who creatively approach problems" (Mazurkiewicz, 2012, p. 394). In a modern school, an educational leader is a planner and facilitator who knows the community in which he or she works. It is a person who, through close, personal rapport, triggers in others the ability to perform tasks to the best of their ability, in a spirit of meaningfulness, dignity, respect and satisfaction (Mazurkiewicz, 2012).

When it comes to collaboration, teachers play a key role in initiating and sustaining educational partnerships, unleashing potential and inspiring development, or guiding change.

They can either foster these processes or impede them. Mendel (b.d.) identifies two kinds of obstacles in this regard. On the one hand, the teachers' professional code, which, combined with a sense of teacher ethos, mandates that they view their work as a mission to society and the world, rather than to the student and the community from which they originate. This complicates seeing the potential and importance of parents in their child's education. On the other hand, studies reveal some ignorance about the potential power of parents. A tendency has been observed for teachers to teach in isolation

from the students' family environment or to take little account of it. The school does not recognize that opening up to parents and the community is conducive to the goals of the school environment. Parents also do not help to bridge the gap that has formed between them and teachers. Parents are often resentful of school, which comes from their own or their child's bad experiences of school, various types of anxiety, unfavorable circumstances of collaboration and situational drawbacks in this regard, as well as lack of respect, or dysfunctional family life patterns as well as being influenced by stereotypes and prejudices.

At this point, it is worth pointing out the role and place of the school principal in the implementation of joint activities of the school and local communities, and in promoting and supporting these relations. By virtue of educational leadership, the principal's task is to create a culture of working together and steering these activities accordingly. As Joanna Madalińska-Michalak (2017) has pointed out, the principal, while moderating the interactions within the team of teachers, creates patterns of cooperation with parents and other entities, that include confronting problems together, helping each other, appreciating each other's competences, building relationships that allow for mutual learning from each other and continuous self-improvement, exchanging information using various channels, openness, engaging in joint projects, uniting around common values, shared experiences and seeking solutions to emerging difficulties. The quality of collaboration in a school "depends on the open and trusting attitude of the principal, as it is the principal's responsibility to build open relationships within the school and of the school with the local community" (Wójcik, 2016, p. 68).

Educational Interplay of School, Family and Local Community

The ongoing socio-cultural and economic changes make it increasingly difficult for the stakeholders of cooperation to act alone for the benefit of education, and the alienation of the school from the rest of the community is not conducive to the effectiveness of the school's goals. The first mentions of public involvement in the work of the school refer to the activities of the National Education Commission, which pointed to civic education as one of the forms of active participation of the community in the education and upbringing of the younger generation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a trend of involving the local community, especially the family, in the work of the school gained momentum (Lulek, 2011). The linking of the school with the local community was first studied academically by Znaniecki, Radlińska and Chałasiński, who introduced the principle of socialization of students into the school. To this day, the idea that school work should be tied to the community is still relevant and has been repeatedly addressed by researchers and practitioners (Hajduk, 2018). This is due, in part, to the task that a modern school faces: preparing a young person for life in a rapidly changing world, who, through education, should



by referring to the past, acquire the ability to recognize the present, the phenomena and processes taking place, the contingencies and entanglements that occur, analyze them, predict the course and consequences in order to prepare for them in advance (Zajac, 2013, p. 7).

Today there are various forms of inter-organizational cooperation. The "four C's model" is most common, with the main forms of cooperation identified according to goals and modes of action. The first is cooperation, when the objectives and methods of cooperating institutions are similar. The second form is confrontation, when the goals and modes of action are different. The third form is complementarity, when the goals of the organizations are similar, but their ways of operating differ. The last form is co-optation, and takes place when the goals are different and the ways of operating are similar. Another typology of forms of cooperation distinguishes a network of mutual relationships (multiple links with different organizations), coordination (common goals, corrective cooperation, complementing and support), co-optation (joint planning and organizing activities, joint transformation for change) and partnership cooperation (trust and familiarity between partners, openness to change, mutual support and learning of cooperating entities, sustainable change in organizational culture). At the same time, with regard to cooperation of schools with the local community, the most common models include the negative cooperation model (undertaking cooperation only for one's own benefit, aggressor-victim relationship), the "hot potato" model (handing over problems without solving them), the domination model (when one party imposes goals, rules and course of action), the parallel action model (cooperation based on momentary, occasional, and random patterns) and the cooperation/partnership model (equal and equally committed partners working towards a common goal, learning and developing together). Knowledge of models for entering into relations with other entities can be an important element in improving the effectiveness of schools and contributing to better organization of educational processes (Dorczak, 2012).

The list of partners that can cooperate with the school from both the public and business sectors and non-governmental organizations depends on the location and availability of a given partner in the local area, their needs, and willingness to cooperate, as well as on the school's needs, resources (material, human and social capital) and projects. The school can cooperate with local government bodies, institutions of the educational system, law enforcement agencies, social welfare institutions, schools and other educational institutions, including universities, cultural institutions, sports clubs and sports facilities, administrative units of the State Forests (e.g. nature parks), churches and religious associations, businesses, non-governmental organizations, volunteer fire departments and other emergency services, health care facilities, the media, parent councils and student government, and foreign partners (Hajduk, 2018).

Awareness of the benefits that joint action can bring to all players is important for cooperation. Hajduk (2018) points out that through cooperation the school multiplies its capital. Additionally, cooperation is educational, as it contributes to building a local community, and educational, as it gives access to new sources of knowledge and experience.

The phenomenon of networking, or "being part of a network of contacts," is often mentioned in this regard. Entities then have access to people they would never reach without this network. However, it is worth noting that effective networking requires commitment and a focus on what can be offered, not on what is needed. The interaction of actors is synergistic (Błasiak, 2017), because the effect is always larger than the sum of individual actions. The school gains access to networks and contacts, transfer of technology and knowledge, a greater chance for innovation, inclusion of new partners, and expansion of offerings as a result of combining potential (Hajduk, 2018).

Possible Areas of Cooperation Between the School, Family and Local Community – the Example of Crisis Intervention and Counselling Centre in Myślenice

Nowadays people identify and experience many situations with the markings of a crisis, hence an effective system of crisis intervention is an important element, whose purpose

is to restore mental balance and the ability to cope on one's own, and thus prevent the crisis reaction from turning into a state of chronic psychosocial failure (Wojtanowicz at al., 2023, p. 7).

Crisis is viewed as a sudden disruption of the normal course of life by critical events and represents a temporary period of internal imbalance, requiring major changes and decisions, as it involves is a loss of the normal basis of a person's daily existence (Michalec-Jękot, 2023). Defined in this way, the crisis is part of the dynamics of intervention work that is carried out at the Crisis Intervention and Counselling Centre in Myślenice (OIKiP). The center serves all people experiencing crises in accordance with the recommendations of the legislature, as stipulated in the Law on Social Assistance.

The activities of the Myślenice center consist of a wide range of support services and are constantly being expanded. This includes building a network of support by coordinating in the Myślenice district the work on preventing domestic violence and helping people who are experiencing various types of crises, conducting in-patient crisis intervention and providing shelter, carrying out supportive therapy, running support groups and psychoeducation and specialized counseling.

With appropriately focused activities, OIKiP can effectively support everyone experiencing a crisis: individuals, families and entire communities. The facility provides social support to residents of the Myślenice district. Since April 1, 2017, OIKiP has been offering a 24-hour service. The most common problems that the center's staff face are addictions, including the ACA syndrome and codependency; domestic violence (those who experience violence and those who engage in violence); relationship difficulties; family crisis; bereavement; mental disorders; self-harm; parenting difficulties; adolescence crisis; legal problems; PTSD; work-related difficulties; violence outside the home;



illness-related crises; "autumn of life" crises; midlife crises; suicide attempts and others. OIKiP statistics show that mainly individuals and families experiencing an emergency difficult situation benefit from such support.

Helping a family requires the development of a support network for a particular individual case. One of the links in this network is working with educational institutions in the district in order to help effectively. The severity of the crisis in families today is due to the rapid changes in society. The family, which is the natural and most important environment for life, development and upbringing, is undergoing a series of changes, both positive and negative, as a result of global transformations. In the work of the center today, it is evident that psychological support and emergency action must be integrated with educational impact. And this form of interaction is being developed by OIKiP to respond to the current needs of the local community. Schools in the Myślenice district are keen to cooperate with the center. This is a corollary of building a network of social support: joint meetings, expert groups and conferences. These meetings lead to taking action on behalf of children and families experiencing crisis. Interventionists participate in meetings for parents, so parents are provided with information: a kind of road map of difficult situations in the family. Crisis interveners support students in various crisis situations: death, traffic accidents, and critical events. The map of these events becomes steadily filled over the years of collaboration. If a group of students is experiencing bereavement due to the death of a classmate or teammate, or a parent dies in a tragic way, the intervention team instantly supports the students and the teaching team. In 2023, about 50 people were helped on account of a distressing situation at the school. Support is also provided to children and adolescents from war-stricken Ukraine residing in Poland; in 2023, 7 children from Ukraine participated in the support group. OIKiP employees also frequently attend pedagogical councils, and introduce teachers to the issues of crisis intervention and the possibilities of assistance and social support for students, their parents and teachers experiencing a crisis. The center's staff makes efforts to develop various forms and areas of social support in accordance with community needs and resources.

Conclusion

"New times and new circumstances require an entirely new approach to emerging problems and new ways of doing things" (Mazurkiewicz, 2012, p. 389). This entails the need to look at education and the role of the school in a new, rational, future-oriented way. Therefore, an important task of the school reveals itself, which is to work together with the student's family and the local community to adapt education to the contemporary needs of individual organizational learning skills.

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