

UNITY OF PURPOSE IS NOT ENOUGH? THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS COLLABORATION IN SCHOOL: SOME REFLECTIONS BASED ON A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The plague of present schools is to promote competition through various tasks and activities. The entire school system is based on comparisons and competitions. Schools, teachers and students are unfairly judged and graded through the results of various tests. Based on the results of external tests school rankings are developed. Interestingly, what is the culture in good schools occupies a high position in the ranking – is it collaborative or not? Is unity of purpose – which is education at the highest professional level – a sufficient condition for cooperation? Or in this case, cooperation between members of school community is unnecessary?

The author in this paper presents some reflections taking into account above mentioned issues based on the case study. Research was carried out in one of the best middle school in one of the major city in Poland. The main aim of the study was a multi-faceted exploration of school culture. Quantitative analysis were complemented with qualitative analysis. Results indicate that (1) school presented

in this study is characterized by an emphasis on professional development and goal orientation, (2) school is dominated by a culture of individualism and competition, (3) teachers recognize the need to improve interpersonal relationships among school staff, (4) in teachers' opinions the school management and the introduction of electronic registration system are the reason of poor interpersonal relationships.

KEYWORDS: *school culture, collaboration, cooperation, competition, teachers, school principal, case study*

INTRODUCTION

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

Hellen Keller

The paper is structured around the school culture area, aimed at stimulating the discussion of the importance of authentic teachers collaboration. I would like to present some reflections based on the case study conducted in one of the best middle school in one of the major city in Poland. The starting point for the analysis will be to draw attention to the problems of today's education and the essence and the role of school culture.

The 21st century schools are facing numerous challenges and difficulties. The globalization of economy, technological development, modernization, demographic changes and the transformation of the labor market make everyone in school life will have to put repeatedly to face new challenges. This in turn creates the need for learning throughout lives, developing and upgrading skills, complementing knowledge, acquiring new competencies. These changes require a new approach to school organization.

Taking all kinds of transformations in the environment in which the school functions, especially political and social changes, everything influences on what is happening in school, or speaking more broadly – “in” and “with” the education system. The need of adaptation to the environment and the need of development, make the school system is changing and the school is trying to respond somehow to the challenges posed by this change (Madalińska-Michalak, 2013, p. 39). Nowadays, schools are developing in the direction of taking more responsibility for their own development and the quality of the school (Behrnd-Wenzel & Wenzel, 2013, p. 201). They take responsibility for achieving good results. We are “stuck” in a world where success is the basic

measure of the quality of life. From the pedagogical point of view, it can be said that the measure of teachers' sense of success is high academic performance of students. The success of the school may be when it occupies a high place in the school rankings. It implies plague of the today's schools which is to promote competition through various tasks and activities. The entire school system is based on comparisons and competition between schools which are unequal in quality, students intake and resources. Schools, teachers and students are then unfairly judged and graded through the results of various tests. Life and school work are subordinated to efficiency and performance, students are stressed by ambitious teachers, parents' expectations, working habits, discipline and school achievements. It stimulates egoistic behaviors and causes tension between members of school community. Aleksander W. Nocuń and H. Ochocka-Nocuń (2012, p. 137) conclude that in schools hierarchical system based on the injunctions, commands and prohibitions, still dominates. Such situation may result in excluding human beings because everyone is focused on oneself and one's successes. Małgorzata Kamińska (2014, p. 193) states that Polish schools and teachers are rather inclined to competition with each other than working together or cooperate. Ubiquitous rankings and systems of test examination are contributed to this.

Moreover, the system of teachers' promotion and professional development supports rather individuals than the school development as a community. Teachers and schools compete with each other because this approach gives them more tangible benefits than mutual aid, cooperation, learning from each other and the transfer of experience. The issue rises – whether this is for sure? Nevertheless, the common achievements are greater than the sum of their components. An effect of synergy appears in collaboration. According to J.S. Coleman (1988), the group whose members show that they are worthy of the confidence and trust each other, are able to achieve much more than a comparable group in which the lack of such trust is. Foundation of trust is credibility. In such conditions, the agreement becomes easy, and the relationships are characterized by empathy, synergy and fruitful interdependence. Synergy is a desirable phenomenon and is an example of cooperation profitability. Cooperation enables mutual knowledge, understanding intentions of others' actions, as well as allows for mutual inspiration. Therefore, the results of

cooperation is a knowledge of oneself and others, and this in turn allows for the verification someone's views and assessments. Hence, this is a measurable effect, valuable experience that we could not get acting alone (Biedroń, 2012, p. 291). Per Dalin, H.G. Rolff and B. Kleekamp (1997) describe the vision of a good school and stress the importance of internal relations. They place them at the center of effort to improve the quality of schools.

COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Organizational culture of institution is a basic concept in modern management theory. In contemporary literature, in the field of management it is assumed that organizational culture includes assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, rituals, traditions, knowledge, language, norms and values shared by all members of the organization (Schein, 1985). Every organization except that is a formal place of work with a fixed structure, creates a specific culture and climate and has an impact on its participants. 'The variance and invariance of human behaviors and mental processes under diverse cultural conditions are both objects of cultural studies and they form the collective property of a group' (Zhu, Devos & Li, 2011, p. 320). Angus J. Macneil, D.L. Prater and S. Busch (2009) emphasize that culture is complex because it has unique and idiosyncratic ways of working. Organizational culture of school is being created for a long time. However, patterns of culture have a fairly significant durability as important components of school. It does not mean that they are immutable and resistant to environmental influences or internal factors but change of the culture takes time.

Among many concepts developed under the cultural approach to an organization, particularly interesting from the point of view of management seems to be concepts that describe the types of organizational cultures. Czesław Sikorski (2002) presents a typology of organizational cultures and distinguishes four types: the culture of domination, competition, collaboration and coexistence (adaptation). Culture of domination and competition focuses on the role played by the people, while the culture of coexistence and adaptation pay attention to the quality of relationship and dialogue between people. Using terms proposed by P. Bate (1990), it can be said that these first cultures are cultures of the "community", and the two

following are cultures of “networks”. In relation to the domination culture and competition culture, the essential is isolation from the environment, through strong internal integration. The ideal community culture is characterized by strong hierarchy, limited channels of interaction and communication, clearly definition of place and specified role of each member of the community. In contrast to this, the culture of network is much more open, spontaneous and voluntary. The most important is the exchange of ideas between people and forms of negotiation. In network structures the principle of commanding are replaced by horizontal relationships between individuals. Hierarchy is replaced by heterarchy (Sikorski, 2006, p. 153). Andrzej Balasiewicz (2013) notes that in this type of culture we can see new ways of achieving group efficiency, hence, the emphasis is on the strengthening the interdependence and collaboration. In this way, the personalistic culture is created.

This is an organizational point of view, however, these findings and analysis may be related to education, because school is a kind of organization. School culture is a system of shared orientations that holds a unit together and gives it a distinctive identity (Hoy, 1997). Taking into consideration that the main “asset” of school are students, teachers and parents, respectively, the basic operations are carried out within interpersonal relationships, thus social skills are particularly important. School principle as a person who supervises a team of teachers, takes care of students and wants to cooperate with the parents must ensure a harmonious relationship between these groups. If school principle wants to manage a team of teachers, take care of the students and want to cooperate with parents, must ensure a harmonious relationship between these groups. This is the specificity of school work management (Tołwińska, 2011, p. 25). Teaching effectiveness is conditioned not only by pedagogical factors, environmental or material school, but also an important factor is the social atmosphere which is shaped by interpersonal relationships prevailing in school. From this point of view culture of collaboration and coexistence are gaining importance. An educational researcher A. Hargreaves (1994) refers to collaboration as an ‘articulating and integrating principle’ (p. 245) for school improvement, which provides a way for teachers to learn from each other, gain moral support, coordinate action, and reflect on their classroom practices, their values, and the meaning of their work.

Michael G. Fullan and A. Hargreaves (1991, p. 49; after: Gumuseli and Eryilmaz, 2011, p. 16) mention six characteristics to describe the school as a place dominated by the collaborative culture, namely: (1) more complex problem-solving and comprehensive sharing of craft knowledge, (2) functioning of strong social networks allowing flows of professional knowledge and skills, (3) searching for new solutions to teaching, experimenting and taking risks associated with these operations, while mutual support and supplying each other with feedback, (4) richer teachers' language enabling tangible agreement and an efficient transfer of professional knowledge, (5) a higher sense of professional satisfaction and a higher level of teachers identification with school, (6) more conscious and stable approach to improve the functioning of schools, better realization of its mission, through the enhancement of school personnel. Teachers at school operate within a specific context, forming at the same time an overview of the broader background whereas there are part of these activities and their underlying values and assumptions.

Steve Gruenert (1998) determines six dimensions to described the collaborative school culture: (1) collaborative leadership, which points out the degree to which school leaders establish and maintain collaborative relationships with school staff, (2) teacher collaboration, which concerns working together and shares pedagogical information, (3) unity of purpose refers to the school mission and its influence on teaching, (4) professional development – dimension which encompasses all types of teachers learning to maintain current knowledge about educational practices, (5) collegial support, which includes teachers willingness to help out each other when there is a problem and (6) learning partnership refers to cooperation between teachers and parents based on common expectations towards students achievements. Each factor portrays a unique aspect of collaboration at school. Steve Gruenert (1998), on the basis of his own research, established a significant relationship between collaborative school culture and students achievements. He notices that positive relationships between instructional leadership and school culture results in teacher collaboration, which in turn increases student learning.

Małgorzata Kamińska (2013) conducted a study on the social potential of teachers (N = 307). She appoints four dimensions (resources) of social

potential, namely: participation and interaction, relationships and interpersonal communication, trust and credibility, reciprocity and loyalty. She assumes that the social potential of teachers in a professional environment is immaterial resource that enables collaboration and knowledge sharing. Results of this study suggest that teachers have a problem with mutual trust. Teachers are willing to cooperate only in achieving the goals of professional tasks. On the one hand, teachers seek acceptance and understanding, on the other hand – they do not declare activities that could develop and strengthen those personal contacts.

Therefore, author concludes that collective actions are apparent (Kamińska, 2013, p. 105). Mateja Psunder (2009) summarizes conclusions of some researchers about the characteristics of teacher collaboration in schools and establishes that teacher collaboration occurs rather rarely and usually it takes place in informal context. She emphasizes that one of the fundamental aim of today's and future schools 'is to stimulate cooperation that provides each individual with the strength to come to know him or herself and to behave in accordance with his or her tradition and beliefs, while at the same time staying open to other and different people' (Psunder, 2009, p. 85). Culture of good interpersonal relationships highlights the foregrounding close cooperation, acceptance, assistance and tolerance.

CHANGING AND STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF SCHOOL

Angus J. Macneil, D.L. Prater and S. Busch (2009) state that relationships that shape the school culture are strongly determined by the school principal. Furthermore, successful school principals comprehend the critical role that the organizational culture plays in developing a successful school.

Christopher Day (2004, p. 131–133) points out that the main task of the school principle today is to support individual and collaborative learning of teachers. Would it be possible principle needs to have appropriate social skills. The way school principle builds daily relationships becomes important, as well as what and how communicate to teachers, likewise responding to emerging conflicts and disagreements. The relationships between the school principal and teachers are a model for all relationships in school.

The school principal has a special role when it comes to changes in the organizational culture. This role is more difficult to face, the more stronger organizational culture is. The more pronounced the prevailing cultural patterns in school are, the more disseminated and deeply rooted they are, the harder it is to change (Madalińska-Michalak, 2013, p. 39–40). Strong organizational culture is, however, an expression of identity of the school and this distinguishes it from other schools.

Changes in school culture can occur both under the influence of external and internal factors. To internal sources of cultural change we can include social interaction, which can give rise to a spontaneous process of culture change. Changes in formal organizational solutions that depend on the school principal may also result in a change of culture (Schein, 1985; Madalińska-Michalak, 2013). The school principle as the creator of school culture (change) is responsible for building the “social infrastructure” of institution (Madalińska-Michalak, 2013, p. 42). Through the term of “social infrastructure” we can understand the arrangement and interaction of social elements constituting an entire school institution. This type of ‘groundwork’ gives the possibility of cooperation based on trust and leads to changes in habits and attitudes, as well as strengthens social skills. This may be the result of the experience and may be formed in everyday school life practice.

ABOUT RESEARCH

The main aim of the study was a multi-faceted exploration of school culture in selected school – one of the best middle school in one of the major city in Poland¹. According to E. Schein (1985) concept of organizational culture, only a small part of what makes up the school life and the school itself is visible outside. What the most important in school is, remains the most hidden. From this point of view, an attempt to know the culture of particular school is extremely interesting, but it is also a kind of challenge. Meeting this challenge has been taken in the presented study. The case study approach allows in-depth, quantitative and qualitative explorations of issues of school culture and climate in their real-life settings. To triangulate the data, important school documents that illustrated the make-up and foundational structure of the school programs have been also collected.

SCHOOL PROFILE

The school, analyzed in this study, is a public educational institution providing high quality educational services for students, parents and the local environment. This school is famous for its great achievements of students in various competitions, particularly in Maths and Physics. The school offers a wide range of extracurricular classes and activities to enable students to develop their skills and talents. Based on the analysis of the statute and the documentation of school we can learn that students' learning at the highest professional level is recognized as a basic task of this school. Furthermore, equipping them with the skills necessary to function in a rapidly developing world, in particular the ability to continue effective learning. Faculty attaches the great importance of providing education and educational content in an attractive, modern and easily digestible for a young people. High quality and professionalism of pedagogical work is the essential value of teaching staff. Quality control of classes and objective assessments of the teachers' work are important elements of quality management of educational process. The ambition of school community is to be a leader in the quality of education. Based on school performance and students achievements, we can say that this objective is achieved.

On the basis of the above description it can be concluded that the analyzed institution is the ideal place. Its culture seems to be strong and fascinating. Many schools would probably like to have such achievements. Therefore, closer understanding of its culture is supposed to be the basis for identifying those unique elements that make up its success. As a result of the research, some elements have been identified. However, I would like to focus on one aspect, which has revealed in this study, namely – relationships among school staff, specifically among teachers.

Different authors stress that traditional culture is still the most common culture in schools (i.e. Psunder, 2009; Kamińska, 2013; 2014). This kind of culture prefers high educational goals, high expectations and productivity. Under such circumstances, there is no place for cooperation and helping each other. Interestingly, the questions that rise – what type of culture is dominant in school occupying high positions in the school ranking – competitive or maybe collaborative because of common goal? Or in this case, cooperation

between members of school community is unnecessary, because their professionalism is more important? The presented study is expected to provide answers to these questions.

ABOUT OWN RESEARCH AGAIN

This article and analysis are focused, in particular, on the collaborative school culture in perception of teachers. Therefore only those methods which allows to answer the questions are set out. Collaborative school culture is one of the aspects analyzed in this study². In order to answer to the formulated research questions, anonymous surveys were used and interviews with teachers were conducted. To determined school culture the “School Culture Survey” developed by S. Gruenert and J. Valentine has been used. This questionnaire is designed to be administered to teachers in a school building to get a sense of how much their school culture is collaborative (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). The “School Culture Survey” consists of 35 items which are divided into six main categories: (1) collaborative leadership (11 items), (2) teacher collaboration (6 items), (3) professional development (5 items), (4) unity of purpose (5 items), (5) collegial support (4 items) and (6) learning partnership (4 items). Steve Gruenert and T. Whitaker (2015, s. 86) emphasize that it is important to think of the responses as those of the culture – a community voice – rather than of any one individual. Furthermore, the participants of research had opportunity at the end of the questionnaires to write some spontaneous statements about their school or things they think should be changed. The collected questionnaires were 31 (27 women, 3 men, 1 no data). The average length teachers’ of service in the analyzed school was 9.46 years. After analyzing data from quantitative parts voluntary interviews with teachers began to conduct. General, interviews were focused on issues related to the school mission and its implementation, as well as the weaknesses of the school as an organization. The interviews there are also contain the issue of cooperation between the school staff.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS ON VALUE OF TEACHERS’ COLLABORATION

First of all, the teachers’ perception of school culture were calculated. The aggregated score mean, average value and standard deviations of the dimensions of school culture in teacher perception are summarized in table 1.

Table 1.

Collaborative school culture in perception of teachers (N = 31)

Scale	Reliability (α -Cronbach)	Aggregate score			Mean values of scale	
		Max possible score	M (N = 31)	SD	M (N = 31)	SD
Collaborative leadership	0,88	55	36,97	6,57	3,36	0,60
Teacher collaboration	0,77	30	21,21	3,86	3,53	0,64
Professional development	0,81	25	19,35	3,24	3,87	0,65
Unity of purpose	0,91	25	19,17	3,07	3,83	0,61
Collegial support	0,87	20	13,40	2,97	3,35	0,74
Learning partnership	0,42	20	14,83	1,58	3,71	0,39

Source: own analysis

The results show that school presented in this study features rather emphasize on professional development and high goal orientation which is expressed in unity of purpose and moderate high learning partnership and teachers' collaboration and a relatively lower participation in decision making, leadership and supporting relationships among teachers.

An interesting point is that, at the end of the questionnaire, teachers raised up the question of atmosphere in school and interpersonal relations among pedagogical staff. Below there are examples of statements about this area:

” At one time it was “my school”. Now class is still “mine”, but the school is only a place of work. (...) I wish that school apart from “good” was also “cool”. But here my views and views of school principal are blurring.

A lot of work at a very fast pace. Great emphasis on the presented owns achievements at school forum. In my opinion, poor team integration, we all work a lot and have no time for integration.

I see – conscious or not – competing activities between teachers.

Too weak contact between teachers.

The above statements shows bluntly, what significance is attributed by teachers to the school as a place. If the school is not identified with a friendly

and “your” place, it cannot be expected that the teacher will be fully engaged. Attention should be paid to the possibility of exchanging with school principle information related not only to carry out basic tasks, but many other aspects of functioning in the workplace. This fact may reinforce the relationship, provides a sense of influence on the surrounding situation, thus increases the sense of responsibility for it. On the basis of teachers responses, we can say that the school is dominated by a fragmented culture of individualism and competition. This topic was also highlighted in interviews with teachers:

(...) I have a feeling that something had crept into the competition. Everyone wants to show – say, not everyone – but a lot of people, if there are such tendencies, to show that “I’m doing it so much, I have a success” (...) mmm, and it does not serve unless such cooperation. I think that we are burdened as if the less we want. (...) But generally speaking, this collaboration is probably not the best, yyy and no (...) now appeared such concepts, some team building, proposals would do something, mmm however somehow we do not get along (...).

Interestingly, teachers and a principal realize that cooperation is important. In this school it has already been observed that this area requires some changes:

We have a lot of training in this field, we have to integrate (...). Even ourselves discussing what we can do, what is on our side, but I think it was in the realm of theory, it seems to me that it was like to realize, but it is still all the same.

Teachers responses demonstrate that in their opinions the school management and introduction of on-line school register (book) are the reasons of poor interpersonal relationships:

I think that this cooperation very much is influenced by the management, which is far away from it. I mean, some things are y now since “LIBRUS”³ appeared and actually I feel like in a company, that over and over again I only read e-mails, (...). How may look a team cooperation, if we interact only via e-mail...

My diagnosis, but I always told the school principal about it. My diagnosis is that, since LIBRUS has been introduced, we together do not make contact verbally. We contact by the LIBRUS, it is just as young people contact only virtually. There is the social welfare of such y such

references, it means they are much smaller, and what it gives? Nothing, in my opinion. I thought about it many times. I think, it implies that we cease to be understood in the sense that as we met, even with the passing school register, or moving the school register, whether we were there somewhere exchanged and it is not just that we talked about what happened here, what is happening or what we want. (...) We cease to know each other.

A picture emerges a school where teachers recognize the need to improve interpersonal relationships among school staff. After all, we are social beings and the ability to communicate is one of the most important skills of each person and undoubtedly each teacher. Living together in the group depends on interpersonal communication and mutual understanding. Good communication is fundamental in the school work in all situations related to teaching and learning (Behrnd-Wenzel & Wenzel, 2013). Appropriate and good communication process is also required for the teaching staff if only because of communication in organizational matters, explaining the work purpose, solving possible problems, as well as collective planning of development processes in school. Moreover, it has significance in contacts between teachers and a school principal. But it turns out that it cannot be limited only to convey the messages. It comes to providing such communication, from which we can build relationships.

A worrying problem is that, there is awareness of the validity of close interpersonal relationships at work, but taken actions do not bring the proper effects. The school principal proposes the various of trainings, but this does not translate into practice. Perhaps because the school management here is not an example of good cooperation. It is said, that the model comes from the top. If management knows, but does not apply it, it creates only a "show off" that does not change anything. An attempt to ensure cooperation by decree that school staff must work together rather will be difficult to achieve/implement. From this point of view, the high task orientation and the subordination of its activities, is insufficient. Of course, it is undeniable that there are visible effects of hard working, because the school is highly ranked. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable lack of something. Furthermore, the impact on students of such functioning of teachers could be considered.

It will not be a good pattern of relationships. It will be rather the evidence by a low social capital and will demonstrate a lack of authentic and trusting relationships. This condition reflects very well the statement of one of the teacher: *'we call by name, but we are not in speaking terms'*. Thus, they do not function 'together', but rather 'side by side'.

It could be stated that despite the fact it is a goal to which teachers aim, their paths are without the collaboration. It proves that a common goal is an insufficient condition for cooperation. The truth is that teachers work together, but do not collaborate. The quality of school work is not the sum of activities of individual teachers. In this case, teachers are constructed in the direction of competition and rivalry struggling for their position. Ubiquitous encouraging competition in school can be devastating for good social relationships underpinning healthy society. Such solutions used longer will be not effective because it will lead to the rapid burn-out and stress. Competition rather destroys the opportunity to improve the quality of activities and education. They are driven by individual self-interests. This mass production style of education de-personalizes relationships and leads to increased isolation and conflict between teachers and students. Collaborative culture is designed to reduce competition between members of school community and deepen the relationships. Hence, individualized and bureaucratic school culture must give way to collaborative cultures focused on.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the end I should answer the key question – if the school occupies a high position in the ranking of the range, which means students' high achievements – is anything else needed? The answer is: yes. This answer comes from the presented case study. The lack of teachers' cooperation and good interpersonal relationships is a noticeable problem. One of the reasons that educational researchers promote collaboration among teachers is to combine efforts at school improvement through reduce levels of teacher isolation so that teachers can share professional practices and have occasion to observe each other practices in the classroom or discuss their work. Cooperation is the most desirable type of relationships from the point of view of the effectiveness of collaborative learning and school functioning. School is, however, a specific organization

whose main value is people and the activities are carried out in direct daily contact between them (see Dernowska, 2014). Therefore, relationships are an important part of teaching and educational work.

Based on the presented research we can say that it turns out that the quality of learning in today good school determines not only the implementation of the program at a high level, individuals' high achievement, but also cooperation, teamwork, mutual trust. Francis Fukuyama (2000) wrote that mutual trust is like a lubricant that enhances the functioning of all groups and institutions (p. 24). Continuing this comparison I would like to add, that without this lubricant the machine will go, but we don't know, how far. Therefore, there is a need to shape such a school environment in which relationships are more open and serve the exchange of views, revealing own feelings, providing some help in difficult situations. In order to ensure effective cooperation, it is necessary to take care of interpersonal communication. School leaders need to build up supportive relationships, likewise provide proper working conditions for teachers to enhance their professional performances. Among factors that determine it, we should include: mutual kindness, trust, openness, willingness to support and help, as well as focus on resolving conflicts. Beneficial relationships established by cooperation may in turn results that schools will become effective and well-organized places in which new ideas, methods and materials are worked out by common effort. Therefore, bearing in mind the fact that the school is often compared to an organization, it can be said, that the better the relationships between its employees is (as well as between teachers and pupils, parents and teachers, and other members of the school community), the greater its profits will be. Teachers location in school culture can promote an attitudes related to this culture among students. Grzegorz Mazurkiewicz (2012, p. 8) points out that the ability to cooperate or the sense of community should become a central element of today's schools, not just an additional product of education.

Stefan M. Kwiatkowski (2010) notes that contemporary Polish schools need principals who will help foster relationships and moral ties in school. This, in turn, conducive to the creation of social capital, an important element of which is cooperation and understanding in achieving common goals. Based on the presented research, I must totally agree with this

mindset. Bożena Tołwińska (2011) comes to similar conclusions. Results of her study suggest that teachers admit that they need meaningful discussions with school principle, during which they can present their ideas, explain misunderstandings and receive support and encouragement for further work. It is a basic competence, therefore there is a need to develop it. Cooperation increases creativity, teamwork, self-esteem and a sense of belonging. It promotes the development of a true learning community. However, learned communication behaviors are very difficult to change and requires a strong motivation to take it.

The main limitation of the presented study is the lack of representativeness, which was not however the purpose of the study. Therefore, the generalization of results cannot be made. Nevertheless, the presented study and its results are thought-provoking and may also provide an inspiration for further empirical verification of some theses.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Presented study is a part of a larger research project no. BSTP 21/15 – I WNP (the project has been led by dr U. Dernowska) where the main object is to compare the cultures of different schools selected in terms of students achievements. The text will present only one school and one aspect of the analyzes. Due to the ethics of research, data enabling identify the school will not be given in the text.
- ² Whole presentation of schools, mixed research methods, results and comparative case studies are presented in book which will be prepared after research project completion.
- ³ Kind of on-line school register (book).