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Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Cooperation between Early Education Teachers and the Family Environment

Teoretyczne i praktyczne aspekty współpracy nauczycieli wczesnej edukacji dziecka ze środowiskiem rodzinnym

ABSTRACT

One of the basic factors that influence a child's correct development is the environment where the process of education takes place. The environment is made of the family home and the school zone. Both these elements have to cooperate correctly to make the didactic message consistent and effective. However, educational practice shows that in a number of cases the flow of information between the teachers and the parents is insufficient; joint activities are often lacking, along with mutual determination of objectives and tasks implemented in the didactic process. In the article, the authors try to show the problems related to the possibilities of cooperation among teachers of early school education and the environment of parents in various contexts. In the first part of the paper, legal aspects pertaining to the cooperation are described in detail, taking the historical perspective into account, along with legal provisions applicable in Poland and

KEYWORDS

teachers, parents, co-operation with parents, partnership, ICT tools

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

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regulating the principles and the range of information provision by the school to the parents. The second part makes references to school practice, presents interesting and untypical examples of activities and solutions conducive to increased level of the parents' involvement in the educational process. In the final part of the paper, ICT tools which may be used to build the online space of mutual communication and cooperation are described.

ABSTRAKT

Jednym z podstawowych czynników, które mają wpływ na prawidłowy rozwój dziecka jest środowisko, w którym przebiega proces edukacji. Środowisko to współtworzy zarówno dom rodzinny, jak również sfera szkolna. Oba te elementy muszą poprawnie współdziałać, aby przekaz dydaktyczny był spójny i skuteczny. Praktyka edukacyjna pokazuje jednak, że w wielu przypadkach przepływ informacji pomiędzy nauczycielami i rodzicami jest niewystarczający, często brakuje podejmowania wspólnych działań, uzgadniania celów i zadań realizowanych w procesie dydaktycznym. W artykule autorki starają się ukazać problematykę związaną z możliwościami współpracy pomiędzy nauczycielami edukacji wczesnoszkolnej a środowiskiem rodziców w różnych kontekstach. W pierwszej części szczegółowo zostały omówione aspekty prawne dotyczące współpracy, z uwzględnieniem perspektywy historycznej, przedstawiono również obowiązujące w Polsce przepisy prawne regulujące zasady i zakres przekazywania przez szkołę informacji rodzicom. Druga część nawiązuje do praktyki szkolnej, prezentuje ciekawe i nietypowe przykłady działań i rozwiązań sprzyjających zwiększeniu stopnia zaangażowania rodziców w proces edukacyjny. W końcowej części omówione z kolei zostały przykłady narzędzi ICT, które można wykorzystać budując przestrzeń wzajemnej komunikacji i współpracy w sieci.

Introduction

The researchers dealing with the efficiency of educational process have been emphasising the significance of cooperation among its entities for a long time. The level and the range of such cooperation often tends to be critically assessed, e.g. when reading an interview of

“Polityka” journalists with Professor Janusz Czapiński, we encounter bitter opinions concerning the operation of Polish educational units. After years of individual development of human capital, Poland is going to reach a development barrier, notices Czapiński, related to the lack of social capital.

The assets that are inherent in people, i.e. education, health, individual efficiency, will no longer be of vital importance; what exists among people will gain priority. The weakness of social ties, lack of trust, corruption, nepotism, absence of informal contacts, and life within tiny individual worlds will become the obstacles with a unique capacity to hinder [...]. Today, the Polish school functions in a manner solidifying our pathological individualism. Pupils perform all tasks individually. This is how pathological individualists, incapable of cooperation, are bred.¹

To stop the catastrophic vision of raising individuals acting separately and independently, Polish schools should become a place where cooperation skills are intensely developed. This slogan is nowadays very fashionable, as testified by multiple publications devoted to this issue, as well as the number of conferences in the course of which speakers discuss the quality of understanding between parents and teachers. Nevertheless, as shown by studies and statements of teachers², in spite of the existence of numerous legal acts (as discussed below) requiring the school to create conditions for cooperation, parents, as well as pupils, are still not fully aware of the rights with which they are vested and the activities of the school on which they can have real impact. The provisions concerning cooperation between teachers and parents have the form of documents that are used occasionally and manipulatively in problematic situations. Parents, as well as teachers frequently see themselves in the role of viewers and not actors in the process of creating a cooperating relationship. In this situation, the following questions can be formulated: can pupils learn cooperation? If yes, which conditions should be fulfilled to make it happen?

¹ J. Żakowski, “Polska smutna, interview with Prof. J. Czapiński,” *Polityka* 2009, no. 16(2701), pp. 18–20.

² Cf. A. Jurewicz, “Szkoła współpracy to szkoła dialogu,” *Meritum* 2015, no. 2(37), pp. 78–86. Cf. also: B. Śliwerski, “Mity o współpracy szkoły z rodziną, part 1,” *Dyrektor Szkoły* 2014, no. 2(242), pp. 10–14; part 2: *Dyrektor Szkoły* 2014, no. 3(243), pp. 23–28.

Selected legal aspects regulating the cooperation between family home and school

Relations between teachers and parents are not a modern-day phenomenon; their roots go back to an old tradition. Most often, they referred to the specification of advice and guidelines that were addressed by the headmasters and teachers to parents and concerned the manners of control of school duties performed by children.³ In the course of time, the cooperation was limited to material assistance for the school (this situation is frequently observed in the modern times), as well as occasional protective stance of parents, e.g. during outings outside of the school grounds or in the course of ceremonies and meetings. In relations with parents, a teacher was a person vested with authority and a professional whom it was hard to oppose. In such a situation, it is difficult to consider the contacts of parents and teachers “cooperation”; these were mostly formal meetings in the course of which exchange of information took place, yet not in the form of a discussion, but rather a monologue, a unilateral message. The history of mutual connections between a school and the family home also features moments when the two institutions were hostile and the educational authorities of the annexing countries were additionally intensifying such state of affairs.⁴

The political transformation in Poland initiated in the 1980s contributed to the intense work of the government with respect to changes in the educational system. Such work was not only meant to relieve the Polish school system of the communist burden, but it primarily focused on putting an end to the backwardness of the educational units and adjusting them to operation in a new reality. However, before the Polish Sejm adopted the updated educational law, releasing it from the authoritarian approach, permission was granted to establish social school councils. They were the harbinger of schools which were going to be socialised and where civic participation was going to become the foundation of democracy, also present in educational units.⁵ In relation to the above, the “Solidarity” generation,

³ M. Banasiak, “Postawy rodziców i nauczycieli a jakość współpracy,” *Wychowawca* 2013, no. 12(251), p. 26.

⁴ M. Lityński, “Wychowawcze zadania szkoły,” *Rodzina i Szkoła* 1902, no. 1, p. 9.

⁵ B. Śliwerski, “Mity o współpracy szkoły z rodziną, part I,” op. cit., p. 12.

during the 1st General Convention which took place in September 1981, postulated:

In line with the idea of “self-governing Poland”—the school practice should be the resultant of decisions of an Educational Council selected in a democratic manner, local governments, teachers’, parents’ and pupils’ self-governments which mutually influence the final curriculum and financial decisions, and have mutual control over one another. Schools should operate in line with the internal self-governing principle, i.e. decisions should be made both by the teachers and by the pupils.⁶

The statement above shows that when setting the grounds for the reform, attention was drawn to the building of relations between two basic educational environments, i.e. the school and the family home. In the course of several dozen years, numerous legal acts were prepared that referred both to headmasters and teachers, as well as informed about obligations with respect to parents. The same documents feature information concerning rights and obligations of parents towards the school. In general, it may be concluded that the reformed system of education is aiming to increase the rank of parents, expanding their activity in the school and offering them a possibility of making joint decisions with respect to almost all aspects of children’s education. The basis for drawing such a conclusion are the provisions contained in the Education System Act, which stipulates that “parents and guardians cooperate with the schools and authorities supervising the schools in the organisation of education and the teaching of children and youth.”

The objective of the cooperation referred to in § 1 of the Education System Act is:

- (1) consistent impact on children and youth by the family and the school in the process of teaching, educating and guiding, in line with the children’s development and health needs;
- (2) improving the organisation of teaching, education and guidance at schools, in the family and in the environment;
- (3) making parents acquainted with the programme of teaching, education and guidance, organisation of teaching and tasks for the school and parents resulting from them;

⁶ Ibidem, p. 11.

- (4) dissemination, among the parents, of knowledge about education and guidance and educational functions of the family;
- (5) ensuring parents' active participation in implementation of the core curriculum, education and guidance, as well as provision of assistance to schools in this respect;
- (6) fostering proper social climate and material conditions for the school's functioning.⁷

Obviously, this is not the only legal act regulating the contacts between school employees and parents. Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 21 May 2001 thoroughly determines which subsequent documents should contain information concerning the home/educational facility cooperation. In relation to the above, in § 2.1 of the Regulation, it is stipulated that: "A school charter determines, in particular: organisation and forms of cooperation between the school and parents (legal guardians) with respect to teaching, education and prophylaxis."⁸ Charters of individual schools are very diverse with respect to the number and the types of guidelines concerning the cooperation between the family and the school. However, a majority of them contain principles of mutual cooperation, indicate benefits which the parents may receive thanks to active participation in the school's activities. These include, *inter alia*, familiarity with the objectives and the tasks of the school and current plans of the class attended by the child, procurement of current information concerning the child or the possibility of receiving advice and consultations.⁹ The document also contains information about the Parents' Council, in particular the scope of its competences. Apart from general issues related to the functions of the Parents' Council, the document presents important provisions concerning the cooperation between the school authorities, teachers and parents, taking its types, areas and forms into account.

In 1992, the European Parents' Association prepared the European Parents' Rights Charter. Due to the fact that a year later Poland

⁷ Education System Act of 7 September 1991, *Journal of Laws* [Dziennik Ustaw] 1991, no. 95, item 425 as amended.

⁸ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 21 May 2001 on the framework charters of public kindergartens and public schools, *Journal of Laws* [Dziennik Ustaw] no. 61, item 624, p. 4253.

⁹ M. Banasiak, *Współpraca rodziców ze szkołą w kontekście reformy edukacji w Polsce*, Toruń 2013, p. 29.

became a member of this association (on account of joining the European Union), it also joined the mission of supporting the participation of parents in the education of children and representing their voice at the European level. The Charter clearly emphasises the place of parents in the process of children's education and the most important notes concerning the subject matter of the school and cooperation are contained in points 5, 6, 7 and 10. In these points, we can read that:

(5) Parents have the duty to give to their children's schools all information relevant for the attainment of the educational goals on which they work together.

Parents have the right to make a choice for the education which is closest to their convictions and to the values they hold dear in raising their children and the freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles.

Parents have the duty to make well-informed and conscientious choices about the education their children should receive.

(6) Parents have the right to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions. The formal education system shall respect the spiritual and cultural background of the children.

(7) Parents have the right to exert influence on the policy which their children's school implements.

[...]

(10) Parents have the right to high quality educational provision from the responsible public authorities. Parents have the duty to help each other to improve their skills as prime educators and partners in the home-school relationship.¹⁰

In line with this document, parents also have a right of full access to the information about educational institutions which may pertain to their children and to material assistance from public authorities in order to eliminate barriers preventing pupils from receiving education. Apart from numerous rights, the Charter also contains parents' duties. The most important of them include the duty of raising children in a responsible way.

¹⁰ H. Czerwińska, "Nauczyciele i rodzice w służbie dzieciom," *Hejnal Oświatowy* 2014, no. 11(137), p. 10.

The parents' role in the process of children's education and teaching is also specified in the most important national legal act. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 specifies in Art. 48.1 that

Parents shall have the right to rear their children in accordance with their own convictions. Such upbringing shall respect the degree of maturity of a child as well as his freedom of conscience and belief and also his convictions.¹¹

On the other hand, Art. 53.3 emphasises that "Parents shall have the right to ensure their children a moral and religious upbringing and teaching in accordance with their convictions."¹²

The above-listed provisions stipulate that the cooperation between the school and the family home should not be an incidental act or an act of good will of parents or teachers. It has an in-depth theoretical justification; furthermore, it was confirmed by numerous legal provisions that specify its scope in detail. Therefore, the cooperation cannot be used for manipulation or be limited to areas convenient for the school authorities or the teachers. Living in a democratic country, parents have the right to participate in the processes that refer to the care, education and the teaching of their children.

The above-listed documents do not form a final collection of all legal acts regarding cooperation between the family and the school; the ones that were mentioned above should be examined in detail. However, they were treated selectively for the purpose of this study. A careful reader is going to find numerous provisions in the education law concerning the issues in question; however, the ones that were discussed here are focused on the value of parents as equal partners in the school–family home relations. To be efficiently involved in their children's education, parents should be aware of their rights and use them skilfully. Simultaneously, they cannot forget about their obligations.

¹¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, *Journal of Laws* [Dziennik Ustaw] 1997, no. 78, item 483 as amended.

¹² *Ibidem*.

Improving cooperation with parents: Examples of good practice

Parents and teachers should act as allies who aim for creating best conditions possible for the development of children. Cooperation between parents and teachers should rely on the mutual trust and awareness of their roles. Both sides have to treat each other with trust and kindness. Currently, “parents do not constitute an educational problem; they are the solution.”¹³ As a result of good cooperation with parents, schools can implement numerous projects which, on the one hand, make the didactic and educational process attractive and, on the other, contribute to the acquisition of new experiences and skills by children.

For parents, a child’s school results are of vital importance; they are interested how the school excites the hunger for knowledge, develops interests or talents. This is yet another area where various activities solidifying the bond between the school and the family home may be undertaken. Thanks to an open stance, projects enabling joint evaluation of pupils’ difficulties and successes and adopting mutually developed forms of assistance are undertaken. Examples of good practice derived from several selected schools are presented below.

Conclusion of contracts

Many schools signal problems with finding a manner to make parents systematically involved in the education of their children. One way to deal with this issue is to introduce parental contracts which contain a set of obligations/duties of parents which are binding in the period when the child attends a specific school. Such contracts may become a valuable and fundamental tool in the process of cooperation with parents, provided they are treated like a document that remains valid throughout the entire period of the child’s stay at school. Schools that use this formula usually adopt the following premises:

- the contract contains dual provisions: standard, universal obligations of the teacher and the parent during the child’s education

¹³ M. Kędra, “Włączanie rodziców w edukację dzieci,” <https://www.ore.edu.pl/wp-content/plugins/download-attachments/includes/download.php?id=6695> [access: 06.12.2016].

at school, concerning every parent as well as specific tasks for the teacher and the parent concerning the course of education of a given child;

- the contract becomes a starting point for meeting and talking with the parents during the school year. At least two meetings with every “contracted” parent are planned;
- the object of talks are not mutual clearing of accounts, but a discussion on the progress of tasks—accomplishments and difficulties in this respect. Sometimes, new solutions are undertaken to ensure a child’s efficient education;
- after each talk, it is good to make a note recapitulating hitherto activities and determinations for the future;
- the contract is signed every year. Subsequent approaches offer an opportunity for discussing changes with respect to the tasks, depending on the pupil’s current situation.

Progress book

The progress book shows the level of knowledge and skills of every pupil and the range of curriculum requirements for a given year, as well as presents information and skills that the pupils should acquire. The child’s parents receive it at the beginning of the school year. In this way, the parents are well acquainted with the progress of their children; furthermore, if they want, they can help them at home. Well-informed parents can motivate children to work.

Correspondence notebook or individual chart for contacts with parents

A special notebook where pupils and parents freely exchange information related to the child’s life at school and at home. Parents may write that a child has independently completed some important work at home, etc.

Logbook

All pupils in a class summarise their daily work and describe the effects and difficulties in a logbook. The logbook is used to recapitulate

and solidify important information and skills, as well as determine a plan and the rhythm of further work. It is a very important element of internal evaluation; even though it is an additional burden for the teachers it is used as by them as it offers good results. The objective of the logbook is also to make children exercise concise presentation of the content of work and build clear and succinct sentences containing the necessary information.

Child's individual notebook

All educational aids used in a given week at school and at home are put in a binder. This information refers to reading exercises, as well as contains other materials, e.g. copied texts, texts of songs, texts that are to be dictated by the parents, etc. Some teachers also write a week's evaluation, and after copying it, every child takes it home and shows to parents. In higher grades, reports are written independently by the children with the teacher's assistance. This is also an efficient form of internal evaluation.

Active evaluation

The teacher uses an "information book" whose objective is to inform about the manner in which he/she is going to assess the pupil's knowledge and skills. The book also contains children's traits which are difficult to express via traditional school grades. A pupil and a parent have a right to take it home to see the grades and opinions of all teachers. Grades are rarely the object of the school/family home talk. Much more frequently, the character of the school work, the accomplishments and the child's progress are discussed.

Meetings with a masterpiece

In the first semester, the pupils of individual grades meet with parents to present their work completed in the last five months. On the other hand, at the end of the school year, the so-called "grand gala" takes place in the course of which all children present their accomplishments.



Creative meetings

The repertoire of the school's educational activities should include tasks involving the parents and encouraging them to do something together with the children or even learn together. Some ideas are presented below:

Parent conducts the school meeting

It is worth suggesting that a parent who is a representative of the school council prepares and runs a school meeting. The parent's tasks may consist in determining—together with other parents and the teacher—the theme of the meeting, hosting the discussion and formulating conclusions. In this manner, the parents have actual impact on the course of work in the class and its recapitulation, whereas the teacher gets an opportunity to listen to the opinions and proposals of parents with respect to teaching or education.

Parents: "aficionados" and experts

It is a good idea to treat parents who are not involved in the school's life out of their own initiative as experts. It is possible that they might not offer their help, yet it is much more difficult to say "no" if the headmaster asks them to devote two hours for the pupils. Making use of professional competences of parents, children become acquainted with their professions, work and passions. Professional parents can talk about their adventures, organise classes in an interesting place or run an interesting course, e.g. first aid, etc.

Joint classes of children and parents

Preparing decorations at school during art classes or as part of extracurricular activities, baking a cake at school for a class ceremony, theatre or literature classes, etc. If the communication between the teacher and the parents is open and partner-like, ideas for joint classes will be abundant.

Classes for parents organised by pupils

Pupils, under the teacher/teachers' supervision, plan several one-hour workshop meetings attended by the parents. Classes conducted

by the pupils take place, e.g., on the day of semester meetings and refer to the information and skills that the pupils have recently acquired. These may be workshops devoted to a selected issue; the parents may also perform tasks related to specific areas of education. The classes may be conducted for the parents of pupils from one class or representing the entire community. In the second case, it is necessary to plan them for several groups and diversify the subjects.

Other interesting ideas with respect to improving cooperation include:

Time bank

The principle is easy: the same amount of time devoted by a given parent to the school and to other pupils, e.g. when painting a classroom or doing math exercises with a pupil, is going to be devoted by somebody else to his/her child e.g. teaching him/her play guitar or having foreign language conversations. It turns out that parents who usually have very little time to do anything may easily find it if they see benefits for their children.

Wish list

In cooperation with the parents it is necessary to name the specific needs and to estimate the time that is going to be devoted to task implementation. A list of all, even tiniest tasks, may be presented on a school notice board, printed in the form of a letter to every parent or posted on the school's Internet site.

Task groups

Sometimes, it is easier to make the parents involved in specific tasks rather than all-year participation in the Parents' Council. Therefore, it is worth establishing several task groups, so that everybody can do the things that they are good at and cooperate with people whom they like. There may be a team for procuring funds for the school, a renovation team, a safety team, a healthy food team or a school tourist club. It is important not to waste the potential of any of the parents willing to help.

Parent's association

Engaging the parents by allowing them to participate in the life of a class/school may also assume an organisational form of an association. The necessity for establishing an association has to be voiced by the parents and such initiative should originate from them. Therefore, imposing such form of activity is not a good idea, because the association will cease to be active soon. The association may help in providing the school with didactic aids, which will streamline the work of children and teachers; it may also organise various forms of recreation for children, parents and teachers, e.g. bicycle trips, hikes, sports competitions.

Fostering a climate conducive to constructive cooperation with the parents is a long-term process. Experience shows that educational changes solidify as new practice after two or three years of regular application. It is necessary to take into account such factors as occurrence of resistance, anxiety, proper time for change in the stance and solidification of new behaviour and habits. Beginnings may be difficult, as they require people to change their thinking and routine, understand their separateness, plan activities and accept liability. It is worth adding that only parallel introduction of several planned elements will offer desired effects in the form of a beneficial change.¹⁴ However, in line with the modern model of education, it is necessary to socialise the school by reinforcing the actual role of parents and build partnership between parents and teachers.

Examples of ICT tools fostering an environment of cooperation

Internet tools and applications may be one of the manners of easing and facilitating daily communication between teachers, pupils and parents. Creating a virtual place that forms a meeting space integrating the parents does not pose a great problem and does not require any special IT skills. One of the basic tasks of Internet sites of schools and kindergartens is the information function (also including profiles at social networking sites). Such a site functions like

¹⁴ B. Jankowski, "Szkoła także dla rodziców," https://www.npseo.pl/data/various/files/rodzice_w_szkole_-_artykul.pdf [access: 06.12.2016].

a showcase and a virtual notice board where current notices concerning the life of the school or a kindergarten are posted, along with accounts from events that took place and additional information for the parents.

Nowadays, the function of traditional websites of schools is taken over—at least in a significant part—by dynamically developing social networking sites. The popularity and the ubiquity of Facebook makes it the most frequently used tool in contacts between kindergartens with parents. This is also related to the fact that many people have mobile Facebook apps installed on their phones, which basically allow for constant tracking of entries posted there. An additional element conducive to establishment of mutual relations is ease in procuring feedback in the form of comments to posts and a possibility of holding online discussions.

Nevertheless, when using social networking media to provide information to parents in the form of texts, films or photos from classes, teachers should be aware of binding legal regulations related to the protection of personal data and images of Internet users. Posting a child's photo on the profile of the class or kindergarten group requires approval of the child's legal guardians, preferably in a written form; therefore, before ICT tools are introduced to educational practice, it is necessary to procure the approval of parents.

The easiest form of electronic communication facilitating mutual contacts between a teacher and parents and, simultaneously, allowing for individual approach, is electronic mail. Its advantage is the simplicity of use and a possibility of having a fully private conversation. In assumption, only the interested parties may become acquainted with its content. It is particularly useful in situations when the child has learning difficulties or demonstrates problematic behaviour due to various reasons, requires a personal approach and ongoing contact between the child's parents and teachers. Telephone conversations or correspondence via e-mail help determine the tasks on every-day basis and allow for systematic exchange of information about the progress made by the child.

Another good solution—particularly valued by the parents in case of early stages of education—are notifications (sent, e.g., in the form of a collective e-mail or SMS) reminding about planned events, materials that are to be brought to classes, homework, dates of competitions, etc.

A very popular and frequently recommended (in particular by early education specialists) free-of-charge network tool that functions as an electronic class register is the ClassDojo site (Fig. 1). The main objective for designing the app was to establish a system supporting positive behaviour of children.

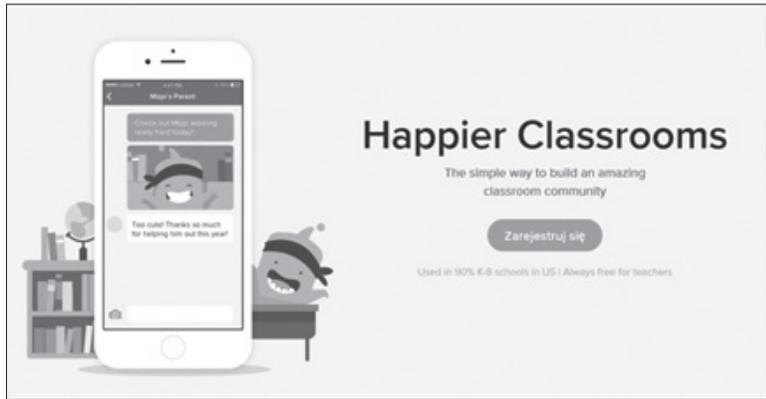


Fig. 1.
ClassDojo,
Source: <https://www.classdojo.com/pl-pl/>.

After logging-in, the teacher may set up an individual class (or classes), specify its name, and names and surnames of individual pupils. Every child is represented by a small avatar/monster. After logging-in, the child designs the avatar by selecting and combining elements available in the gallery. The system allows the teacher to monitor attendance and to award points in two category groups (*Positive* and *Needs work*). Individual grades may be edited, their names may be changed along with graphic representation and the number of awarded points; it is also possible to create own categories—default settings feature five examples from every group. An interesting idea is to suggest to the parents that they should take part in the process of defining and describing such grades.

In assumption, the site is meant to motivate the child to work systematically by engaging the family household—therefore, it allows the parents to see what is happening in the virtual class, to read entries in the class blog, to view the work, photos and recordings posted by the teacher, and to present their comments. Parents' accounts offer a possibility of viewing the grades that the child received and potential additional remarks and entries of the teacher.

However, less advanced tools also perform well in numerous didactic situations. An example of such universal and easy-to-use Internet tool, helpful in the teacher's work, may be, e.g., Padlet (<https://padlet.com>). It is a virtual board which may perform various functions. It may be used as a notice board, a discussion forum, a place to publish homework or art works prepared by pupils. Establishing such dashboard does not even require logging at the site.

Making daily use of new technologies in contacts with parents requires careful consideration and preparation of a consistent concept, taking into account specific social and local determinants, as well as the properties of digital media. Tamara Kaldor formulates a number of questions¹⁵ that a teacher should answer before deciding to choose a specific ICT tool. These questions refer to the necessity of determining specific objectives that are guiding the teacher's communication activities and the type of knowledge and information that are going to be supplied to the parents. A vital issue is also the parents' access to new technologies and the specific selected medium; depending on the situation, this may be an SMS, e-mail, communication posted on the website, blog or profile at a social networking channel. Mobile devices and common access to the Internet currently have a significant potential. Another important question is the frequency with which the teacher is planning to provide information to parents, e.g. daily short messages, weekly or monthly reports or occasional contacts. From the point of view of supporting cooperation and integration of the parents' environment, it is worth using such technological tools that are conducive to bilateral communication, encouraging the parents and the teachers to send feedback and to participate in group discussions. A frequent mistake in mutual relations is their domination by the teacher; this situation is, unfortunately, aggravated by the specific character of certain digital media and the manner of their operation. In the context of managing the educational process it is good for the teachers from a given didactic unit to discuss and to agree on joint activities within the scope of building a digital space of cooperation with the parents; in such case, it is easier to take care of

¹⁵ T. Kaldor, "Technology as a Tool to Strengthen the Home-School Connection," in: *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for Teaching and Learning*, ed. Ch. Donohue, New York 2015, p. 206.

the necessary technical infrastructure. This also facilitates organisation of activities integrating the entire community, not only a specific class or a kindergarten group.

Recapitulation

Mutual relations between teachers, parents and pupils are an area of daily experiments and attempts at building a better formula of contacts. The basis for good contacts of teachers, parents and pupils is positive attitude of the teacher towards the parents, the teacher's open and friendly stance, willingness to share his/her knowledge about the child, as well as the ability to listen to the ideas, expectations and thoughts of parents. It may be concluded that the conditions listed above are nothing extraordinary; simultaneously, they allow for the development of relations between parents and teachers. The sum total of such "ordinary" activities creates a good atmosphere for parents at school.

We hope that the presented examples of good practice contained in this publication will contribute to changes in schools, offer real effects and result in a change in thinking. A school can be a parent-friendly place: both for the parents who are willing to participate in its life actively, to act jointly for the benefit of the school and to make decisions concerning it, and those who prefer to limit themselves to contacts with the teacher concerning the situation of their child.

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