EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED COMMUNITY

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Abstract. The presented article focuses on the climate prevalent among teachers. It indicates the consequences of destructive relations among teachers as having a negative influence on the qualitative development of school. The focus has been placed on the primary importance of constructive leadership in the qualitative development of school as it provides the chance to transform disintegrated groups of teachers into a community oriented towards qualitative development.
Keywords: school climate, educational leadership, teacher community

Places influence people who spend time there. They provide a number of sensual experiences and allow them to develop their potential. They shape their perception of the world, of themselves, and their identity. According to J. Bruner, places 'allow' something, they 'take place', thus providing room for activity (Bruner, 1990: 12-16). Places can be viewed directly as a life space, an autobiography, but also – as M. Mendel points out – they can be considered in terms of a 'life story', from which we can learn (Mendel, 2005: 30).

The place of work, with its equipment, decor (material conditions), and climate, the prevailing atmosphere (immaterial conditions) have a considerable impact on the quality and effectiveness of actions undertaken by the employees of a given institution. This is true also of the place of work of teachers, namely school. For them, as it is for students, school is a place in which they live. Man and his place are co-dependent. Teachers' emotions related to work depend on what they face in their work, both in a positive and negative sense. On the other hand, the things that one contributes to his work – personality, engagement, knowledge and experience – translate into the quality of work and the quality of the institution for which he works. If work adversely affects his well-being, health, and overall functioning, its negative consequences will have a secondary impact on the quality of his work and the operation of the institution employing him. Similar, yet positive, mechanisms are at play whenever work provides teachers with sufficient material and immaterial gratification and constitutes an important source of meaning in their lives. Teachers who are able to experience this usually work more

effectively towards their own development and the development of their students, and more efficiently cooperate with other teachers or students' parents, which in turn contributes to the qualitative development of the school that employs them.

Therefore, the climate of harmony and mutual complementarity is a guarantee of success of all entities engaged in the educational process (Rutkowiakq 1982: 29, TALIS 2009, 2013, Michalak, 2012). A bad atmosphere, in turn, demotivates and discourages from work, rendering work meaningless, and often leading to a sense of professional burnout (Poplucz, 1973; Kwiatkowska, 1997; Day, 2008; Pyżalski, 2010; Łukasik, 2009, 2010, 2012, Pikuła, 2013).

It is obvious that the development of the quality of school is based upon a combination of individual aspirations of teachers and the aspirations of school as an organization. As Augustyniak emphasizes, it seems in fact to be one of the key tasks as "the interiorization of the values selected by a given school is not an automatic process and has to be continuous so that the unification of organization and its employees is not interrupted" (Augustyniak, 2010: 148). Moreover, it is also worth bearing in mind that the qualitative development of school is a never-ending process as the external and internal conditions are subject to continuous change and therefore they require constant readiness. Thus allowing for the aspirations of individuals and institutions alike enriches knowledge and skills and ensures their utility in further improvement and development of school, which ultimately leads to its success.

The presented article addresses an issue of the atmosphere prevalent amongst teachers, with a focus placed upon a staff room. A particular attention will be paid to communication processes and relations among teachers as they are the factors largely determining the existence of educational community oriented towards the qualitative development of school.

Educational community oriented towards the qualitative development of school

Community – to follow Tönnies (1998) – exists when we are dealing with the co-existence of people that is based on friendship, brotherhood and fellowship, in the spirit of intimacy and privacy. This places a particular focus on the type of social relations within a group as it is assumed that all realistically existing groups of people, as a result of the formation of proper ties/bonds, are based on community. Community is therefore a type of a social group characterized by the following features:

– Its members have a strong sense of psychological bonds;
– It is based on objectively conditioned relations (e.g. kinship, shared convictions and feelings, accepted values);
– Being part of community fulfills various needs of its members;
– Social relations within community are based upon friendship, neighborhood, kinship (Olechnicki, Załęcki 1997: 249).

Whether school functions as a community or not is determined by relations between people in that school and principles which, if they are accepted as natural, form and deep-

en the ties between those people. The above mentioned principles include: respect, kindness, integration, trust, voicing one's opinions and showing emotions, engagement in the activities "like in family" (Day, 2008: 169 – 170). E.H. Schine (Day, 2008: 170) adds that shared experiences and contacts between organization members allow to create a good atmosphere of work, and consequently to focus on the realization of a common mission.

For community to come into existence the following conditions need to be fulfilled:
– a common goal
– responsibility for success
– cooperation
– continuous development
– lifelong learning
– risk taking
– support
– mutual respect
– openness (L. Stoll following: Day 2008: 164).

Research on the quality of school operation, conduced e.g. in the Anglo-Saxon area, allows to indicate the factors that contribute to the good quality schoolwork. These include:
– well functioning organizational structures
– clear-cut goals
– consistently planned and used lessons
– student-oriented lessons
– interesting school life
– teachers and students identifying with their school
– pedagogical engagement of teachers
– school administrators as a source of pedagogical inspirations
– teachers' willingness to introduce innovation
– teachers' communication skills
– regular in-house trainings
– cooperation with school environment (Wlazło, 2002: 34).

The quality school is a school in which both teachers and other educational entities create the best possible climate for educational, professional, and personal development and success based on dialogue and tailored to the needs and possibilities of all entities concerned. It is a school in which qualitative development is possible thanks to constructive relations between entities, their constant engagement in self-improvement and shared education focused on common goals and a vision.

The potential of school oriented towards qualitative development comprises the following elements:
– Knowledge, experience, skills, teachers' motivation in terms of development and changes, flexibility in acting and thinking, quick learning;
– School learning community, within which teachers can cooperate and learn together;

– The consistency of the action plan and the means serving to carry out this plan (Michalak, 2012: 126 – 127).

The development of school is perceived as a process that should take place within the framework of three interconnected areas, or dimensions: personal, inter-personal, and organizational.

The climate of a staff room and the qualitative development of school

The emergence of constructive factors conditioning the formation of community depends mainly on people forming this community, their identification with their profession, their sense of satisfaction related to their job, their professional well-being, successes and failures, as well as the morality, norms and principles they fol-low in their lives. Of primary importance in creating quality-oriented educational community, by which we also understand a staff room community, are relations among teachers. They affect not only the implementation of educational goals, but also, and perhaps most importantly, the well-being and motivation, the willingness to engage in educational activities, and professional and personal development.

The climate of a staff room can be viewed in four dimensions: educational, physi-cal, social and emotional. This paper refers only to its social and emotional dimen-sion. The former is concerned with communication processes and relations among teachers (it affects their engagement in work and creation of bonds); the latter refers to feelings and values (which have implications for the behavior and identification with the place of work). Thus narrowed approach towards the atmosphere of a staff room is, first and foremost, a psychological reflection of experiences of a person in a certain work environment, that is, the environment in which he receives these experi-ences, which has a bearing on the quality of school education and upbringing.

Literature on the subject provides different typologies of factors determin-ing a friendly climate of a staff room. One of them is the proposal submitted by M. Dudzikowa, who indicates the following factors affecting this climate:

– A sense of group support (support given and received within a group and from people);

– A sense of acceptance in a group;

– A sense of trust in a group;

– A sense of group cohesion (group cohesion being one of the main conditions of its existence. It is a force of positive bonds based on trust and attraction);

– A sense of willingness to spontaneous activity in a group;

– A group atmosphere (as a result of everyday life relations between particular members; we can distinguish five types of atmosphere: cooperation, competition, indifference, showing off and politicking);

– A group ethos (i.e. the values, norms and behavior patterns that make up the style and character of a given group) (Dudzikowa, 2013: 46 et seq.).

A friendly atmosphere among teachers contributes to increased satisfaction with work, their engagement, the effectiveness of educational process and a lower burnout level

among teachers (Pyżalski, 2010, p. 43). However, research indicates that teacher teams are seldom cohesive and the atmosphere among them rarely friendly. Unfortunately, in most cases the climate of a staff room and the relations among teachers and between teachers and headmasters are described as toxic, even hostile. The studies conducted by J. Pyżalski indicate that 63% teachers describe their work environment as hostile, having experienced hostile behaviors at their place of work. Most frequently, the hostility came from their colleagues (52%), with superiors being a source of the hostility in 44% cases (Pyżalski, 2010: 84). As J. Mastalski believes, these relations, sadly being "closed, devoid of dialogue and filled with distrust, create the school climate that is hardly conducive to effective education. In addition, staff rooms, closed from the inside, divide schools into several camps of people who tolerate each other, yet may 'strike' at any time" (Mastalski, 2005: 8). The causes of negative, often destructive relations between teachers can be found in more or less unconscious syndromes which affect teachers. These include: burnout syndrome, forced aggression syndrome, educational dogmatism syndrome, and axiological confusion syndrome (Mastalski, 2005: 14-26).

Furthermore, improper interactions between teachers in a staff room are formed by various factors. R. J. Edelmann (Mastalski, 2005, ibidem) distinguishes the following factors:

Table 1. Groups of factors determining the irregularities in relations among teacher

Factors	Symptoms
characteristic of a group in which we work	the formation of cliques, group pressure, stereotypes
resulting from relations	communication patterns, breaking the rules underlying the relation
resulting from individual differences	personality clashes and differences in age and gender
resulting from assessments and treatment by others	assumptions about others, overusing one's authority, power play, manipulation
resulting from the evaluation of a situation	general expectations and convictions, lack of understanding or unjustified views and assumptions

Source: own materials

Taking the above factors into consideration, J. Mastalski (2005, 27-39) distinguishes several types of informal groups emerging in staff rooms, including:

– *Mutual admiration society* – i.e. a group of people not interested in dialogue with other teachers or sub-groups. Being part of this group eliminates one's sense of loneliness and at the same time is sufficient to function in school. The more consolidated the group, the more hermetic it is in terms of allowing others in. Any support or consultations take place within the group. The discussions and evaluations usually concern people not belonging to the 'society'.

– *Competing groups* – frequently fighting due to their desire to influence the activities of school board or their antipathy towards other groups or particular members of other groups. The strategies of the functioning of such groups are

based on overt threats, reporting, psychological intimidation, indiscretion, lack of solidarity, keeping up appearances, etc.

– *Age groups* – i.e. groups based on an age differential, e.g. groups of young and old teachers, failing to forge proper relations (mutual antipathy) due to age prejudices (complexes).

– *Worldview groups* – belonging to such a group is determined by one's ideology (value system, membership in professional associations, attitude towards work); groups of 'enemies' present divergent ideological approaches and therefore there is no room for agreement.

Among factors compromising the effectiveness of teachers' work, their activity and motivation we can distinguish interpersonal and organizational factors.

Table 2. Factors compromising the effectiveness of teachers' work

	Interpersonal factors		**Organizational factors**
Social dimension	- rivalry - low work commitment - unkind attitude towards others - no possibility to speak up during discussions and to voice one's opinions - malicious remarks and jokes - reporting one's colleagues to the headmaster - conflicts between teachers' groups - quarrels and jibes - gossiping, commenting, making teachers' life situations or problems public - taking advantage of power, age, or 'experience'		- low salary in relation to work input - overloaded teaching programs and plans - little influence over what is carried out in the institution - unsatisfactory social rooms - too many students with whom teachers work
Emotional dimension	- gossiping - jealousy and envy of professional successes and awards - lack of support and help from colleagues - lack of trust - appropriation of others' successes - obstructing active peoples' work, e.g. by making fun of them - plotting - making private life public, lack of tolerance and respect for colleagues' privacy - reluctance to come to a staff room - lack of support from the headmaster		

Source: own materials on the basis of the studies conducted by M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz 2001, K. Schaefer 2005, Ch. Day 2008, J. Pyżalski & team 2010, J.M. Łukasik 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, D. Chętkowski 2010.

Therefore, the atmosphere among teachers is unfavorable, and the lack of constructive relations and of a focus on the common goal of improving quality makes it impossible for school to develop. Changes and modifications of relations among teachers (within teacher community) is therefore a starting point for the

transformation of school into a community oriented towards qualitative development. Such changes require a capable leader as lack thereof leads to a much more frequent emergence of the following motifs in a staff room: hostility, lack of trust, loneliness in the crowd (isolation and atomization of life), ossification (formalization and instrumentalization of human relations), anomie (disintegration of axionormative regulations), or alienation (estrangement from school organization structures) (Trusz, 2005: 226). Furthermore, there may occur moral loneliness related to one's views, (e.g. connected with supporting a given political party), or values (e.g. engaging in religious practices), with affected people failing to find acceptance among other teachers (Pikuła, 2013: 50). Hence the creation of conditions in which we could speak of becoming 'rooted' in school, openness to change and work quality is not an easy process, yet nowadays it seems necessary nonetheless.

The educational leader

Community does not arise spontaneously thanks to "an automatic duplication of relations, especially in complex and often internally conflicted institutions in which teachers work. In order to create communities that allow to conduct a pedagogical discourse we need leaders that would persuade others to their vision" (Palmer, cited Day 2008: 65).

According to S. Kawula, in order to transform a disintegrated group of teachers into a community oriented towards qualitative development, it is necessary for a leader to take actions aimed at:
– moving from rivalry towards cooperation
– from conflicts to syntony
– from emotional prejudices to a focus on tasks
– from instrumentalizm to partnership of all educational entities (Kawula, 1999: 32).

The transformation of a dispersed group of teachers into a community focused on professional and self-actualization goals can only be achieved through the effective leadership. P.J. Palmer and Jackson believe that "leadership in schools is not perceived as inextricably linked with status or experience. It is available to everyone" (Hadfield, 2006). Accordingly, any teacher from a community that has the right qualities accepted by a group, as well as – though not exclusively – a headmaster, can be a leader.

The leader must be accepted by teacher community and have required competencies. Klaus Doppler and Christoph Lauterburg distinguish three types of competences:
– Personal competences – related to such qualities as openness, belief in one's potential, courage, ability to motivate others, intrinsic motivation, ability to adapt to changes, optimism, confidence, innovative approach to problems, proactive attitude.
– Social competences – manifest themselves in an ability to make decisions, handle crises, and resolving conflicts.
– Strategic competences – connected with a holistic approach to the operation of an institution in a temporal perspective; they concern an ability to subordinate activities to specific goals (Michalak, 2012: 187; Łukasik, 2014; Pikuła, 2014).

The leader with such competences will consciously fulfill leadership functions of motivating employees, forming their patterns of thinking and behavior, and promoting organizational culture.

On a basis of the conducted research, Konger and Kanungo claim that a behavior pattern that is a basis of the leader building a community and positive relations within a group is quite ordinary and can be learned (Makin et al., 2000: 177). Consequently, every teacher can be a leader as long as he has required abilities and qualities that can be learned and then used in everyday practice. This translates into:

– A passion for achieving and maintaining excellence thanks to new knowledge and practices;

– A proactive approach and capability of anticipatory thinking and acting;

– Acknowledgment of the importance of innovation;

– Ability to recognize talents within an organization and develop them;

– Ability to coordinate work in terms of using strengths of teams and organizations as a whole (Williams, 2009: 43; Michalak, 2012: 38).

According to J. Michalak, the leader steering formal organizations towards a breakthrough in the times of transformation:

– Is able to check if there happens something that should not happen as a rule;

– Works towards creating friendly work environment that fully engages people and encourages them to do their best;

– Encourages risk taking;

– Requires people to be innovative;

– Teaches how to learn from successes and failures;

– Sets the path which an organization should follow;

– Sets goals and indicates what is important and meaningful;

– Inspires to achieve goals that previously seemed unattainable;

– Believes that work satisfaction is a guarantee of the organization's success;

– Continuously poses the questions: 'why?' and 'why not?' (Michalak, 38-39)

Leaders do not achieve success alone. The image of leadership is complete only when it allows for the needs, possibilities and expectations of all teachers.

J. Michalak believes that of particular importance for teachers are those leaders who "in their work follow their values, focus on people, are achievement-oriented, and can handle stress and dilemmas. Proper support given by headmasters to teachers (including constructive criticism) fosters the increased quality of education offered to students and the achievement of satisfactory academic results" (Michalak, 2006: 183).

It is possible to build real communities oriented towards qualitative development (Danielewska, 2005; Michalak, 2012) as proved by the research report entitled "Hope for Education: A Study of Nine High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools" (Johnson, Asera, 1999). The schools covered by the research as part of the research project made efforts to ensure academic success through effective leadership. The initiated changes concerned the following areas:

– The change of school climate: enhancing relations between teachers and school headmaster and among teachers themselves.

Relations among teachers and their professional development were treated by studied headmasters as the most important educational issues that should be dealt with before the implementation of any changes leading to the improvement of students' chance s of academic achievements.

In the studied schools the improvement strategy focused on the creation of environment in which all teachers had a collective sense of responsibility for school improvement and the pursuit of set goals. A sense of teachers' responsibility was reinforced by engaging them in the planning of important events in the life of school (e.g. recognizing the needs of school, creating a vision of school development) and in decision making processes (solving problems together). School headmasters placed an emphasis on what each person can contribute to school, appreciating teachers' input in enhancing the landscape of school life. Headmasters dissuaded teachers from thinking that it is their task to solve all school problems.

Relations between teachers and their professional development. The efforts were made to support teachers in their development, not only through increasing their knowledge and skills and improving their professional qualifications, but also through their entering into various interpersonal relations in educational area.

– Changing relations with parents and community.

– Changing educational processes; enhancing teaching and learning processes.

– Changing school organization: organizational improvement of school structures, a better employment of school personnel, a better use of time (Michalak, 2012: 158).

It is not possible to build school as an organization oriented towards qualitative development without effective leadership and without the transformation of disintegrated groups of teachers into teacher community. Only a good leader can bring out the potential inherent in teachers (Kwiatkowski, Michalak, 2010; Kwiatkowski, Michalak, Nowosad, 2011; Piwowarski, Krawczyk, 2010, TALIS 2013). Modern leadership and management form complementary models of behaving, acting, knowledge and skills. Leader's effectiveness depends largely on how effectively he leads, integrates others around common goals and pursues a shared vision.

Conclusion

Community does not arise spontaneously thanks to an automatic duplication of relations, especially in the often conflicted institutions in which teachers work. In order to avoid the expressions of the kind: "Polish schools are ailing and the virus which has attacked them is called the teacher" (Morbitzer, 2012: 328), it is necessary to take steps to build communities. To that end we can use educational leaders who, in compliance with the established concepts of leadership, will steer teachers towards changes in relations, development, and the understanding of the idea of community focused on the quality of education. Day emphasizes that such steps are necessary since "the human factor – our willingness to develop, trust and

respect, knowledge and skills of teachers – is far more important for the development of professional community than structural conditions" (Day 2008, p. 178). Furthermore, "people can sense their place in community. In a safe, active and lively group they will be active and they will derive satisfaction from their activity. However, overwhelmed with the apathy of a badly functioning and passive group they will feel powerless and remain passive, which will not bring them any satisfaction. Without a sense of belonging to any group whatsoever will result in the worst feeling – that of being cut off, isolated, lonely and unhappy" (L.E. Sandelands and C.J. Boudens, Day 2008:.162; Łukasik 2009).

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