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School organisational culture and social integration of disabled schoolchildren

Introduction

In pedagogy there can be felt a shortage of theoretical background which one could apply to analyse this multidimensional phenomenon known as social integration. This paper looks at the integrated school through the prism of the culture of organisation. Culture context is used to understand better the way people behave in various group systems. There are few publications on school culture as related to the concept of social integration, which, as a research area, stems from the theory of organisation and management¹.

Conducting a research proved difficult. Many teachers did not agree to participate because of the fear of the consequences of the answers they would have given. Some thought it was enough to get familiar with the official documents, such as: mission, statute, education plans, etc., in order to understand the school's culture. Researching only the official documents will inevitably end in failure. The trouble with school culture can be likened to an iceberg: the overt and official information (school's mission, statute, plans) is the tip and the submerged part is made up of all kinds of classified, unofficial aspects of school's life which include values shared by teachers, assumptions made and attitudes adopted towards objects, other people, etc.

This paper's purpose is to join in the discussion on the culture of integrated school. Thus, it belongs to the class of qualitative studies, including phenomenology. The research involved dealt with teachers' free statements thanks to which one can get familiar with and comprehend the phenomena of organisation culture. The paper presents contrastive organisation cultures of two schools.

Selected aspects of school's organisation culture

Culture is said to be something which man cannot have but rather something in which man belongs. The notion of organisation culture is used to analyse people's functioning in various organisations, such as firms and schools. According to J. Stoner and others, organisation

¹ Zob. Elsner D., *Kierowanie placówką oświatową*, Chorzów 1999, 87-94.

culture comprises a “set of important concepts, such as norms, values, attitudes and beliefs, which are shared by the organisation’s members”². Those elements of culture constitute a system of fundamental principles acquired by school staff, who, due to organisation culture, are able to live up to the expectations, get the feeling of belonging to a professional group, solve educational problems, evaluate their thinking and actions in terms of good/bad, and convey their ways to new members of the group.

Studying school culture, one ought to consider Edgar H. Scheine’s concept: to get to know a school’s culture means to identify its creations, values and objectives³. It is not easy to decode and understand school culture. Apart from visible creations, such as classrooms’ decoration, ways of communication between teachers and pupils, work methods, regular events, there are certain hidden dimensions. On the one hand, they result from a school’s mission, statute, programme and function – generally speaking, official sources. On the other hand, they derive from the teachers’ views on the education of the disabled, teacher-pupil relationships, as well as from what is important in the process of education of young generation. Objectives are made up of widespread views on education, people’s original views on education or ones adopted intuitively⁴.

In this paper it is assumed that the three tiers of culture – creations, values, and objectives – are closely connected with each other and, thus, one of them can be used to describe the other two. D. Tuohy⁵ believes that values and creations of school culture are derived from the staff’s objectives. Data on the creations of school organisation culture are here arranged in such a way that one can infer about relative objectives (Tab. 1). The tiers of organisation culture were analysed according to the concept of building a community of the participants in the process of education. Such analysis allows one to establish whether educators’ work is conformable to the objectives.

Aspect of culture	School A	School B
Type of school	School’s mission focused on social integration	School’s mission focused on social integration
School’s reputation	High-scoring pupils, professional staff	Opinions on the school vary, attempts at creating a false image of the school

² Stoner J., Freeman R., Gilbert D., *Kierowanie*, Warszawa 1999, s. 186.

³ Scheine E. H., za: Tuohy D., *Dusza szkoły*, Warszawa 2002, s. 25-26.

⁴ Por. Meighan R., *Socjologia edukacji*, Toruń, 1993, s. 207; Bąbka J., *Prywatne teorie edukacyjne nauczycieli*, [w:] *Świadomość i samoświadomość nauczyciela a jego zachowania zawodowe*, red. E. Koziół, E. Pasterniak-Kobyłecka, Zielona Góra 2005, s. 369-376; Stoner i in., op. cit. s. 192.

⁵ Tuohy D., op. cit. s. 25-26. Tuohy D., op. cit. s. 25-26.

Public relations	The establishment can be seen in the media, cares about its own image, a marketing department has been set up	The school's ambition is to be seen as creative, orientated on disabled pupils
Working relationships	Democratic model of interdependence, multi-directional communication, incorporating difference of opinion	Hierarchy of authority, one-way communication
Staff integration	Integration orientated more on the pupils, attempts at integrating the staff	Staff divided, conflicts
Working atmosphere	Friendly atmosphere is nourished	Atmosphere of fear
Management style	There are problem-solving teams, which induces co-operation	Headmaster is the central person, staff have to solve problems themselves
Rivalry between teachers	Can be seen in connection with getting promoted: working for the degree of 'senior educator'	Can be seen in connection with promotion, continuing education, divisions between teachers
Methods promoting pupil integration	Greater emphasis on teaching co-operation in forms 1-3, in higher forms teachers are rather short of ideas for teaching co-operation	Domination of methods based on acquisition, mostly individual and frontal work methods
Working with disabled pupils	Focus on one-to-one working with disabled pupils	Focus on mass activities, lack of 'customised' approach to disabled pupils
Rivalry between pupils	Contests, competitions, there is more rivalry than co-operation (because of grades, for instance), brighter pupils prefer working on their own	Contests, competitions; rivalry, even if realised, is not talked about
Pupil co-operation	Regular events in the school's calendar (fortune-telling and other lay customs on St. Andrew's Day, integration days, other)	Regular events in the school's calendar (fortune-telling and other lay customs on St. Andrew's Day, Christmas pageants) that don't always come off
Co-operation with disabled pupils' parents	Support for parents; if there are problems with parents they are solved with all parties participating	Parent-centred approach, school fulfils parents' expectations, lack of co-operation

Tab.1 Data on organisation culture of two schools pursuing the objective of social integration

Mariola Chomczyńska-Rubacha and Dawid Tuohy believe that objectives set up by educators condition schools' operation. One can infer about them on the basis of artefacts and values⁶. Several objective-areas have been distinguished for specifying the culture profiles of the two schools in question. They are: school's links with neighbourhood, relations between people, nature of the pupil and the concept of changing the pupil.

⁶ Chomczyńska-Rubacha M., *Szkolne środowisko uczenia się*, [w:] *Pedagogika*, red. Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski, Warszawa 2004, s. 240-249; Tuohy D., op. cit. s. 22-37.

1. Objectives relative to school's links with neighbourhood

Both schools have social integration mission in common and both take care to create a positive image of themselves. The differences between their organisation cultures are reflected in what their teachers say and the way the integration mission is carried out. In school A, a woman teacher says: *'Although not much is spoken about integration, we do know that our responsibilities result from the specificity of our establishment.'* In school B integration efforts are made in spite of everything and are expected to give immediate effects - *To the outside world we ought to be the best. It doesn't matter that this is achieved at the price of the disabled children and the teachers' health. We are to be the best as only this way keeping our jobs is guaranteed.*

2. Objectives relative to relations between people

Analysing teachers' opinions - with regard to the objectives relative to interpersonal relations – is justified by the following proposition: 'School's culture is built on the relations between people in the school.'⁷The differences in organisation culture between schools result from different objectives. In school B, the prevailing relations are based on the hierarchy of interdependence of one-way-communication character (headmaster and deputy headmasters – top, teachers – bottom), example: *'At the staff meeting we learnt our school had just become an integrated school and we were to prepare for the job. Those who were not satisfied with that could quit.'* School A is an example of a network-orientated organisation culture based on co-operation and shared responsibility. In school A an important role is played by teacher teams. In school B the headmaster is the key figure and it functions due to the forced loyalty on the part of the staff.

The co-operation between teachers in school A is far from being perfect, yet great importance is attached to the school's atmosphere and teacher integration, example: *'The directors are trying to integrate the staff. There are, however, smaller groups of friends.'* Social relations in school B are quite different: *The staff are divided into the outstanding ones, the ones who accept everything and the ones who have the courage to disagree. As a group, we're not one [...]. Each of us hears different things from the directors. We are never asked in group to the directors' office to explain things.*

The differences in school's culture can be seen the relations with parents. Both schools happen to have problems with parents of disabled pupils. In school A there is tendency to solve problems and settle disputes. In school B: *'any expectation of the disabled pupils'*

⁷ Tuohy D., op. cit. s. 35.

parents is met, as if the non-disabled children were a mere supplement to the disabled ones' as one woman teacher says.

3. Objectives relative to the concept of changing the pupil

Working with children, the teacher can be guided by an idea of change: he or she can focus on maintaining discipline in the classroom, conveying established knowledge or creating proper atmosphere for learning co-operation. These various education methods are a consequence of consciously or subconsciously teacher-adopted objectives concerning the nature of the pupil (man) and what education is aimed at⁸. Depending on the preferred values, one can distinguish four kinds of objectives: aimed at changing behaviour and attitudes (abilities and habits), building knowledge, creating conditions for pupils' self-reliance, changing the relationship between an individual and others (teaching co-operation). Although these concepts should be treated as mutually complementary, in real life one can often observe the domination of one of them over the other ones. This paper's author was interested in the aspect of building a community by the participants in an education process, which was connected with the mission of social integration. As the research shows, school A takes account of the need to teach children to co-operate during classes, though this aspect is a little neglected at higher stages of education. At school B, the dominating role is played by the educators' objectives focusing on the build-up of knowledge and change in attitudes in the pupils, which stems from the emphasis on the implementation of the programme objectives. The former school sees the importance of one-to-one working with disabled pupils, which does not promote teaching co-operation to them: *'One-to-one work excludes co-operation between children. Disabled pupils collaborate with the support teacher rather than with their peers.'* At the latter school, one can observe a tendency to level the pupils and focus on mass instruction, which makes it more difficult for the disabled children to function as pupils. There are certain indications for one to think that at school B the possibilities of moulding social relations through co-operation-based teaching methods are used decidedly too seldom. Both schools attach great importance to fixed school events which take place several times a year, according to the school calendar. The teachers' attitude to the contests and competitions as integration events deserves a separate treatment – for tournaments' inherent features are rivalry and competition (negative co-operation). An example of this is a school tournament that was meant to unify children, teachers and parents; instead it made the

⁸ Bąbka J., *Prywatne teorie*, op. cit. s. 375; Brzezińska A., *Refleksja w działalności nauczyciela*, [w:] *O nowe podejście w kształceniu nauczycieli*, red. A. Brzezińska, D. Klus-Stańska, A. Strzelecka, Warszawa 1999, s. 37-53.

participants experience fierce rivalry and intolerance. No wonder - nobody likes defeat. Unbelievably, the teachers substituted older pupils for the younger ones; the regular teacher-contestants were replaced by the school staff professionally dealing with sports, such as physiotherapists. Such situations give cause for concern and undermine the very idea of putting up events which bring about bitter divisions rather than a sense of unity.

The differences in organisation cultures result from the differences in the values present in particular school systems. Beside values, there are anti-values: good and evil, truth and lie, beauty and ugliness, tolerance and intolerance, sacrum and profanum⁹. Values determine what is precious, desirable and direct teachers and pupils' work at putting them into practice. The pressure to succeed and desire to win the contest brought out anti-educational attitudes in the teachers. Values can be treated at school as common or selective, central or peripheral. At integrated school, tolerance is seen as an overt value, but practically diligent learning is the common value. This is attested by school B's focus on implementing the programme and school A's concern for one-to-one instruction. Thus, tolerance is treated as a peripheral value in relation to learning. Teachers, concerned for their pupils' results in learning, may boost individualist, or competitive, attitudes in the pupils – which does not promote tolerance towards the pupils of lesser learning abilities.

Conclusion

Discovering a school's culture – while searching for the determinants of social integration – is a difficult but important task. One ought to analyse both overt and covert objectives of the school, its ways, habits and customs – often not fully realised by teachers and pupils. The above-described example of erroneous approach to teaching co-operative behaviour to pupils in the name of integration confirms the need to carry on with the research. As one pupil said: *It's cool when teachers make us work in groups: you know you'll spend half the lesson chatting about what to do in the afternoon and the last five minutes will be spent on the task - which is usually done by, say, two persons, who, as we say, really dig it. This way you won't work much and still you'll get some good grade put down in the teacher's diary.*

A comparative analysis of the two schools shows that the idea of social integration sets a high standard for the implementation of the idea of building a community and social relations based on trust, acceptance and co-operation. This issue concerns anybody entangled in the process of education – not just the relations between disabled and non-disabled pupils, which

⁹ Zob. Pasterniak W., *O dydaktycznej teorii wartości*, Goleniów 1991.

means that one cannot expect social integration of children when their teachers themselves are not unified, when pupils feel under pressure to succeed and teachers' assessment criteria – because of their pupils results in the so-called 'competence tests' and subject contests – support competitive attitudes. It is difficult, then, to build a community of pupils as well as teachers. The phenomenon in question could be graphically presented as a continuum, reflecting the two, contrasting schools: on one side there are attempts at building a community of pupils, parents, and teachers, based on the principle of loyalty, solidarity and moral values. On the opposite side there is a school in which the interpersonal relations are characterised by cynicism, rivalry, indifference, manipulation, crisis of trust¹⁰. Such a picture of school's organisation culture is at odds with the idea of social integration. But is it a marginal phenomenon in the educational practice? Let this question be left without an answer.

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¹⁰ Sztompka P., *Kulturowe imponderabilia szybkich zmian społecznych: zaufanie, lojalność, solidarność*, [w:] *Imponderabilia wielkiej zmiany: mentalność, wartości i więzi społeczne czasów transformacji*, Warszawa; Kraków 1999, s. 265-283.

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This paper joins the paradigm of qualitative research, including phenomenological one. Its main aim is an analysis of a school which implements the integrated education of disabled children by means of the objectives of its organisational culture. It has been assumed that three tiers of culture: creations, values and objectives are mutually intertwined. The research was directed towards discovering the educators' objectives concerning the relationships between the school and the neighbourhood, interpersonal relations, and the pupil's nature and the concept of the change of pupil. This way one can establish whether the educational work is coherent with the objectives resulting from the mission of social integration.

Społeczna integracja uczniów pełnosprawnych i niepełnosprawnych w kontekście kultury organizacyjnej szkoły

Opracowanie wpisuje się w paradygmat badań jakościowych, w tym fenomenologicznych. Podjęto w nim próbę spojrzenia na szkołę realizującą integracyjne kształcenie dzieci niepełnosprawnych przez pryzmat założeń kultury organizacyjnej. Przyjęto, że trzy poziomy kultury: wytwory, wartości i założenia są ze sobą powiązane. Badania ukierunkowano na odkrycie przyjmowanych przez pedagogów założeń dotyczących związku szkoły z otoczeniem, relacji między ludźmi oraz natury ucznia i koncepcji jego zmiany. Dzięki temu można ustalić, czy działania pedagogiczne są spójne z założeniami wynikającymi z misji społecznej integracji.