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Beata Adrjan**TEACHERS' WAYS OF PERCEPTION
OF PARENTS AT SCHOOL**

The article is devoted to the school reality and culture, understanding of participation of parents in the school life, it is connected with the understanding of mental, physical space that school appoints for a parent, and shows cognitive processes and their conceptions that are used at school, social, organizational and public processes that take place at school.

Key words: school reality and culture, parents in the school life, mental, physical space, cognitive processes, social, organizational and public processes at school.

Стаття присвячена висвітленню шкільної реальності і культури, розумінню участі батьків у шкільному житті, розумінню психічного, фізичного простору, який школа призначає для батьків, а також висвітлює когнітивні, соціальні, організаційні та громадські процеси, які відбуваються в школі.

Ключові слова: школа, реальність і культура, батьки в шкільному житті, психічний, фізичний простір, когнітивні процеси, соціальні, організаційні і громадські процеси в школі.

Статья посвящена освещению школьной реальности и культуры, пониманию участия родителей в школьной жизни, пониманию психического, физического пространства, которое школа назначает для родителей, а также освещает, когнитивные, социальные, организационные и общественные процессы, которые происходят в школе.

Ключевые слова: школа, реальность и культура, родители в школьной жизни, психическое, физическое пространство, когнитивные процессы, социальные, организационные и общественные процессы в школе.

The main research problem. School is a wide experience field for pedagogics and psychology. At school, as in a living organism, that connects in itself many vital processes, incentive spaces are open for

researchers. It is connected with the identically cognitive processes and their conceptions that are used at school [7, 14], social processes, that take place at school [5, 16], organizational and public processes [19, 6, 1], etc.

The sphere that I investigate is connected to the school reality and culture. That is a topic that initially I deepened the representative offices of school from a side totality, investigating differentiations of culture [1]. Now the sphere that I am working with, touches the fragment of a school culture and is related to the parents. Being inspired with the understanding of participation of parents in the life of school, that was investigated by Maria Mendel, who in conclusion draws a statement, that a paternal culture at Polish school is «strung under a surface, out of official flow of school life» [12; 185], I started to do a research that touch the place of parents in the culture of school [1]. The topicality is connected with investigation material, that touches the understanding of space (in a wide value, the space not only physical, but foremost spaces to the action, mental space, that has a place for a parent) that school appoints for a parent, to his arrangement. From such understanding of an experience sphere I started the search of teaching methods of perception of parents at school.

Review of the publications and recent discoveries in the field.

Perception, insight, awareness is commonly understood as a way of seeing, the reception of phenomena or processes. Polish Language Dictionary says that perception, in addition to the view, still contains a ranking factor: see, it's «see and judge someone in a certain way» (Dictionary PWN). Of course, dictionary definitions are not the only exponent of science understanding of the concept. The issue of perception, or rather insight or awareness is a fundamental process described in cognitive psychology: «perception – image of the subject – the image of all available features recorded on the basis of different senses» [9; 33]. Theories of perception and awareness are focused on two planes phenomenon: the physiological processes associated with vision, and mental processes of encoding information that construct human cognition. Jerome Bruner distinguishes perceptual phenomena:

1) **material observations**, which refers to «visual field», it is the world of the features of senses one experiences;

2) **the effect of observations**, which refers to «the visual world», it is the world of objects, objects and events which shaped observation [3; 40].

Bruner's concept separates the perception into two phases: what enters the mind through the senses (vision) and what is in the mind, thanks to the stimulus, shaped (the effect of view). Understanding this in terms of human perception, we may come to the conclusion that many people have the same field of view (watch the same thing), but there are different effects of this view (watch the same thing, but they see not the same). Bruner refers to the qualities of perception even more bluntly, saying that «the characteristic of perception is its variable correspondence to reality» [3; 44].

Looking for the reasons of the differences (variable correspondence to the reality) in the perception of the same thing, Tomasz Maruszewski indicates not only the properties of perception, but also the meaning of what the person perceives. «Processing of the information does not have the exclusively cognitive character, and the effect of perception – is a complex structure, containing not only the perceptual properties, but also properties that specify the meaning of the subject matter for the individual» [9; 35].

Studying image-processing engine, psychologists create concepts responding to the question, what mechanisms create such different perceptions of the same effects. One of the mechanisms of «proception» of the image in different way is memory. Tomasz Maruszewski says that «the process of perception is the process of creating a representation of an object on the basis of information received from the senses and in some cases the information contained in the memory» [9; 32]. The author also shows the broader mental contexts associated with this phenomenon of sensory: «perception is not a process exclusively sensual, but it may include processes of reasoning, refer to the individual system of meaning of a person» [9; 40].

Bruner, in turn, calls this process of «processing» as mental categorization «the process of perception includes an act of categorization» [3; 36]. It is defined as the mental operation of ordering information «on the input»: «if any operation assigns some information at the entrance to a subset, it is an act of categorization [3; 39]. Categorization determines the operations which are included in other mental processes: «in the theory of perception, just as in the theory of knowledge the concept of the mechanism of inference and categorization is needed» [3; 37]. Hence, the effect of perception are some mental categories, which then, as says the Bruner's concept, form mental representations. «Any perception is categorical, in the sense, that whatever we perceive,

we include it to a class of perceptive pictures that give importance to a certain observation» [3; 38]. To sum up: «Perception is the process of categorizing, in which there is an inference transition from clues to the categorical identity» [3; 48].

The starting point in my research was the question of the mental categories through which teachers perceive their parents in the school, what parents representations are created by them. I do not look for the «objective truth», but by discovering subjective acts of categorization of teachers, I am looking for the image (s) of parent, that is created in these representations.

The relationships between teachers and parents are not going well. Described in the literature and tested fail to match expectations [11]. Increasingly, in the school it can be heard (and even is written giving such titles to the teachers' advisers) about so-called «demanding» parents [4]. Difficult relations are marked by reluctance and fear, «polls show that approximately 25% of the teachers are afraid of the parents of their students» [21; 81]. Research conducted by family teachers indicate a growing asymmetry in between the family and school; limiting contact to the interview, lack of space for parents in the school, limiting their participation in decisions regarding school, coercion of financial support for school facilities or divergent mutual expectations [25, 10, 11]. All that means that the relationship between teachers and parents are often full of tensions and mutual accusations. The list of reasons for this can be signaled at this point only:

1. A change in the system, which led to greater democratization of society and to the change in the role of the parent in the school. The parent of the slave «power» became a citizen who knew their rights. (It is manifested, among other things, in the social movements, the authors of which are parents).

2. Stagnation of Polish school, which, despite ongoing changes (reforms, laws and regulations), called by Klus – Stańska, «epidermal» does not change in the issues of redesign their role in the development of student (and thus parent, as an ally of development) [7; 4]. Maria Mendel writes «parents and their feasibility desire to participate in the education of children do not fit at all, or almost poorly to the proposals school settled in distant perception of their partners» [12; 301].

3. Lack of extracurricular systems of support of the student and the family. School is often helpless in the face of family problems, or health care experienced by the child and there is no possibility of effective action in this range.

With such a context of work touches every teacher. The teacher becomes a tragic hero by the function of the environment of structural and functional constraints at the same time in a specific change of school order [8; 181]. Dorota Klus – Stańska presented the tragic position of teacher in the image of the *Chief Commander*, who is the only person that keeps contact with the parent, «the primary source of information, the minister of the decision, the judge» and at the same time *whipping boy*, «the object of grievances and complaints.» According to the author, this picture is «extremely comfortable for educational administration, because if we need someone to blame, then the teacher is always at hand» [7; 44]. As a soldier on the battlefield. Those who frequently meet with him at the front are the parents – enemies.

Purpose of research.

Seeking the ways to explore the reality we must choose how to conduct research and the methodology. «Contemporary methodology is characterized by a multiplicity of positions, both in terms of ways of creating scientific knowledge and the criteria for their evaluation» [23; 255]. This fact, on the one hand, facilitates the selection procedure of the research through many possibilities, while hurdles – the choice of method may be loaded with methodological flaws.

Materials and methodology of research.

The research material were four meetings (actually their transcripts) with teachers about their relationship with their parents. Two interviews were conducted in Poland and two in Ukraine. Teachers, who participated in the talks were teachers of early childhood education (one from Ukraine and one from Poland) and teachers of higher classes of primary school (one from Ukraine and one from Poland). The talks were held in the school during the study visits. Every interview lasted no longer than half an hour. Transcripts of the interviews were not longer than three typewritten pages.

«In all the studies, also in qualitative research, the most important place takes an interesting question – a question that helps to see what has been omitted, allowing to combine the details in an unconventional way, so that occurs a new picture of the phenomenon [23; 255].

What is the place of parents in school? With that question I did not want to suggest relationships or tasks appointed to parents by the school. Asking for a place, I had in mind a mental space in which teachers see their parents. By giving the answer to that question, they showed their perception of the parents in the school. The question of the place,

does not make concrete their view of parents. Asking about the relationship they could answer, the good, or the bad. Asking about the task of parents I would define the area of duties in which there could have been parents. The question of the place gave me, as I think, more ability to explore the meanings of the parent at the school from the perspective of a particular teacher.

Following this path, I asked each teacher a question: what is your opinion about the place of parents at school. I tried not to interfere in the answer, but only ask questions that support conversation. The important for me was that the subjects they have chosen content on their perception of the parents at the school, to speak about what they seem to be important in this picture. My goal was to show the category in which teachers perceive their parents in the school.

Transcripts of interviews were analyzed by objective hermeneutics that «compared with a history of narrative is more interested in interaction and rules forming social order» [23; 257]. This method, called by its creators, Oevermann and the team, the methodology, is the opposition to the positivist model of empirical research, and opposition to the classical hermeneutics [23; 169]. The creators looked for a way to analyze and interpret the material, which would allow the restoration of the social process of creating the entity. A particular area of interest of objective hermeneutics is a process of interaction regarded as the elementary unit of human action [23; 174]. The subject examined by me were teachers in the process of formation of social interaction with their parents.

I analyzed the dynamics of conversation: what the teacher is saying, what the wording dominate the spoken text. The attention was paid to the contents presented at the beginning of the speech (dominant content). I noted repetitions of expression, recognizing that what teachers might want to accentuate. I tried, in line with the adopted method to search the meaning that a person really expressed while speaking (as opposed to what you intended to express) [23; 175].

Results of research. Analysis of interviews are as follows:

Analysis 1. Statement of the teacher of higher classes – Poland

The man, math teacher with four years of experience, now educator for the first time. He speaks with great commitment, in places as if he was uncertain, slightly shy.

In speech, the expression «*contact with parents*» that dominates, is repeatedly stressed by the adjective «*large*». This contact, primarily

in the teacher's opinion are talks, mainly phone calls: «*I call, I write, please*». Sequentially, teacher presenting the relationship with the parents is talking about the «*difficulties and problems*» associated with one of the students. It is significant that in a statement the teacher called the problem, saying about «*the lack of interest of the child*». Continuing statement reveals that the problem is «*the lack of student focus on the lesson*». The teacher asks the parent to ask for a conversation with a student in this matter and, «*at first it is right, but then again no interest in the child, and again call to parent, that it translates to assess parent and talk again is right*». Clearly the teacher puts high hopes in contact with their parents, in some sense, constructs a picture of a parent, as a **higher authority**, who may affect the student's behavior in class. It is significant that the teacher in conversation (both between teacher and parent, and between the parent and the student) sees a panacea for the problems in the classroom during the learning process. Not thinking that talking with their parents can only help diagnose the problem, he says that a parent can solve the problems of student behavior in class through the conversation. It must be noted, that according to the research, the conversation at school is based on the dominance of the teacher, on the advantage of speaking over the conversation. It is asymmetric, the broadcaster can be only a teacher, and above all, is embedded in the autocratic style and creates submissive, passive and subordinate unit [2; 180]. Is conversation understood in that way can become a real tool for change?

Analysis 2. Statement of the teacher of early childhood education – Poland

A woman with years of experience, confident, categorical statements spoken with great conviction about their validity.

The teacher starts the response by emphasizing that «*there are no problems in relations between teacher and parent*». It is interesting that later in the speech she states that the mother came and said that the problem exists (implicitly, that is her child, or there is a problem with her child). However, the problem arises, but the teacher did not see that, just the mother.

Subsequently, talking about the relationships with the parents states «*that a parent can win*», and that «*the mother is in hand*». She shows the situation by using the phrase: «*I have a mom, which I am struggling with*». Also interesting is the analysis of the phrase that is used «*I have (mother)*». The teacher does not only have a student, but still, somehow

«to complete» receives mom. Finally, acknowledges with satisfaction that «*I was able to (implicitly win, to beat the mother?)*». The consequence of this is that the teacher establish cooperation with the child «*otherwise that must be establish a cooperation with the baby when she (mother) began to be involved*». It can be said in conclusion, that the teacher does not have any problem (s), the only issue was seen by the mother. The teacher is struggling with the mother (not with the problem), and taking the mother in hand cooperates with the child, forcing the commitment of the mother. The stylistics of the statement worth a soldier front. Clearly, the teacher puts the confession of a child against the mother: «*if the child comes home and has to read at home and the mother tells him that «now I have no time for nonsense,» I believe the child that it was so*». Presumably, as a mother did not read with a child, it was known that a child could not read, and was justifies, that unprepared child is the fault of the mother. Antagonism of parent and child is a method that is taken by the teacher.

In the speech, teacher constructs a picture of a parent, as someone who must be overcome, as someone who must help the teacher in teaching a child: «*mom needs to exercise 10 minutes a day, for a holiday also got cards work and recommendations of what to do*». At the same time, a characteristic rite of view of a parent is a deep distrust; «*I believe the child, not the mother; struggling with his mother, I have her in hand*». In this statement it can be observed non-cohesive picture of the family on the one hand, **a problem** that must be overcome, while **the instance** to which it should be paid and by overcoming the skirmish forced to engage in schooling the child at home. Another picture of view of a parent is a picture of **a person to the development** of school activities, because the commitment, which is mentioned by the teacher is on her own terms, she says, what it is needed to be done at home, give cards for work on holidays, says to devote 10 minutes a day to exercise.

3. Analysis of the teacher of early childhood education (Ukraine)

The teacher conducts classes in Polish schools, as declared by using new methods. Indeed, in the hall tables unusually for this facility are permanently set to work in small groups. The teacher unwillingly speaks with the researcher; justifies his reluctance by loads of numerous professional responsibilities.

Asked about the place of parents in the school immediately enter into topics related to the tasks of the parent: «*parent takes the book, the child listens, then continues reading, then controls the reading by*

the child». The parent is almost automatically included in the teaching competence of the student in reading. As it is said by the teacher, the parent is also interested in what happens at school: *«every day mom asks the child what was interesting in school that day»*. The child is asked about it every day, and *«from time to time parents come to school when they have time, and I am ready for these talks that look like private conversation»*. Sequentially, teacher discusses meetings with parents, as a place where there can be an individual conversation about children: *«never move individual works of children»*. The time of the meeting is intended for interactive classes, which is prepared by the teacher, and enables parents to the work, which, every day teaches children: *«work is done in groups and obligatorily it must be presented in front of the class»*.

Image of a parent who emerges from this statement is related to the tasks that the school determines or is involved in teaching children (reading for a child, controlling the reading) or tasks are related to parental meetings, when again, the teacher sets tasks to perform and presents before the whole class. Parent is perceived by the teacher as a **person to the development of the school (Re-student)** – we set him the task of working with the child or a joint meeting.

Analysis 4. The teacher of early childhood education (Ukraine)

The teacher is very open, eagerly conversing with the researcher.

Asked about the place of parents in the school responds that *«parents can be present at a lesson to see how their children behave»*. Then she says about the forms of meetings with parents: *«once a month there are parental meetings, and if necessary, telephone contact, and there still are meeting with all parents and the school director»*. Speaking about the place of parents in the school the teacher focuses on their physical presence, presenting all forms of contact. A huge time she spends on discussing individual meetings with children, which is the only situation (of all described above), in which the child is also taking part in the meeting. The teacher talks about like this: *«we meet with parents and children, as the children tell a different information to parent and the teacher also may tell different information to parents»*. The teacher clearly indicates here conflict situations, in which the meeting takes place. Of course, the judge (also a judge in his\her case) is a teacher. These meetings are clearly provoked by a conflict; a teacher – the judge – presented this in the following optics: *«children are innocent in various conflicts; we talk with the parents gently»*. This declaration shows

that children, even participating in the talks are not a side. On the line of confrontation remains a teacher and a parent. The teacher is a side, and opposite is the parent with whom he must be handled gently. Very similar wording for parents can be found in studies of Lucina Telki, which cites a teacher's speech «relationships with their parents require great delicacy». The author justifies that «guards come into relationships with parents having an idea of the inequality of its location in this situation» [20; 142]. Many places in a speech of a teacher is a celebration with the participation of parents in the school; «*all the holidays we organize meetings and children organize a concert*». More on the meaning of relationships with parents writes Lucina Telka interpreting such behavior «*teachers' concern for the facade and attention to the effective, aesthetic and important ways of presenting themselves*» [20; 136]. Quite exotic for our culture is a way to celebrate with his parents, that presents the teacher: «*the teacher invites parents to come on holidays, parents are coming, but more often calls for the feast of the teacher*». You can see here that the teacher does not close his private space for parents, the holiday can sometimes open borders of a teacher privacy to parents, and at the same time an opportunity (forced?) to show respect. The teacher ends saying in conclusion: «*If we have relations with parents, we can build a strong class – it all depends on what climate parents create*».

The teacher sees parents as customers – the delicacy of their parents, partners to celebrate, side of conflicts, but also sees them in their category of agency – the parents create the atmosphere in the classroom. I define this category – a **parent, as a figure for adoration**.

From the above performed analysis I emerged the following perceptions of parents in school.

Categories of parents perception:	Category Description:
1. Parent – issue	The teacher sees the parent as an important element in the life of the school, but the teacher poses a problem. Such a method of constructing an image of the parent provide formulation: I have a problem with my parents, or I have no problem with parents, handling with a parent in the activities I have them in hand, a mother, which I am struggling with.

2. Parent – instance	The teacher treats a parent, as a force that must intervene, so that the child in something must be improved. When the child does not work out lessons parent is responsible for this, when the child is talking in class, has problems with concentration – parent must find a solution for all these problems. Most often, teachers suggest a conversation with a student, as a solution to the problems of the child. In the narration of teachers, there is the prevailing image of the parent. If there is a cooperation with a parent, the child works better. The teacher treats parents as omnipotent in matters of child – has to work at home during the holidays, because otherwise the school will not have the effect.
3. Parent – object of adoration	A picture of a parent, whose reasons should be sought; by handling gently, by furnishing festivals and celebrations involving children, through the exchange of wishes. This image is marginally presented in the perception of Polish teachers, while dominants in narratives of the Ukrainian teacher.
4. Parent – Re-student	It is the perception of the parent, in which treating a parent as a «person for development in the school» is dominated. They are invited to classes («activities» at school). For them meetings and workshops are organized. They have task, for example, to control reading, homework, etc. In this way, there is constructed a picture of a parent, as a re-learner, student, another person in the school, as if being in tandem with the student (parent has the role of the student). The person whose time needed to be developed.

Conclusions

The research shown above is, of course, a microscopic slice of school reality. Constructed on the basis of statements of teachers perceptions of parents probably after the enlargement of the number of respondents could be widened with the new categories. However, on such a small segment of school reality we can see patterns of perception of parents in the school. Perceptions of parents by teachers abound in the full range of conflict. Antagonisms in the ways of perception of parents by teachers can be represented by the scheme:

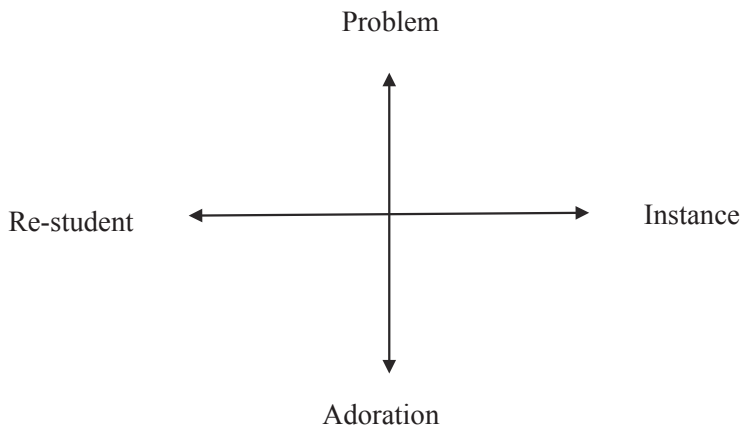


Figure 1. Diagram of opposites in perceptions of parents in the statements of teachers. Source: own research

Axis of opposing perceptions of the parent show them as a subordinate teachers who are assigned to perform the task, and on the other hand, are the highest instance, without their intervention of the learning process becomes impossible. The second axis shows the parent adored, and on the opposite side as a problem that must be overcome. Trying to see from this perspective what is the place of parents in the school, this place, metaphorically you would give a picture of the place at the door of the school. These doors wide open in front of a parent, automatically close when he/she wants to go to school. This metaphorical image shows only a small portion of school culture, which thanks to research was revealed.

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