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## **The parent – a difficult partner for the teacher From the research on an innovative project at an Ursynów school**

**ABSTRACT:** A primary school in Warsaw's Ursynów district is one of the first schools in Poland to adopt a program to promote the best practices and discoveries in the field of education. When implementing the innovative project "Waking School" ("Budząca się szkoła"), the teachers made it one of their priorities not to do homework. In the beginning, the project aroused great interest among both teachers and parents. It was seen as a great potential for educational change. The project had its supporters and opponents. On the one hand, there were words of support and recognition for the idea, the innovation. On the other hand, contradictory aspirations, dissatisfaction and tensions among the various groups involved in the project were increasingly evident. In this situation, the school management turned to the Maria Grzegorzewska University – with which it has long been bound by a cooperation agreement – with a proposal to diagnose the situation and to build a network of negotiations and partnerships between the school and its parents. This task was undertaken by a group of doctoral students from the Maria Grzegorzewska University within the framework of classes on the methodology of qualitative research. It was assumed that it would ultimately be a several-year research and operation project, the first stage of which was the diagnosis of the situation<sup>1</sup>. This article focuses on this first stage of research.

**KEYWORDS:** Innovation, research project, school, parent-teacher relationship, school empowerment, teacher-parent cooperation, parental involvement, change.

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<sup>1</sup> The group worked under the guidance of prof. Barbara Smolinska-Theiss, Dr Jacek Gralewski and Dr Anna Górka-Strzałkowska. It was created by the doctoral students: Alfred Tuci, Magdalena Roszak, Paulina Kamińska-Diduszko, Katarzyna Szolc, Jolanta Jancewicz, Jolanta Rybińska, Zuzanna Narkun, Konrad Pasikowski, Jolanta Bożyk.

## **Innovative school, innovative program**

The school in Ursynów is a public primary school, which, like many others in Warsaw, undertakes a variety of innovative activities aimed at improving the quality of work. What sets it apart, however, is above all the fact that in these activities the school is looking for wider, more sustainable mechanisms and forces of development. It recognizes the importance of cooperation with the environment and seeks to build positive relationships based on partnership, building up and developing the forces and social capital needed to shape and develop the school learning community. Behind this is a specific concept of the school and its development, reaching both to traditional pedagogical positions as well as to new initiatives and innovations aimed at the development of the school and the building of a broad learning environment within it. The basis for this development in the traditional sense are human and social forces. Helena Radlińska stressed that these forces are a fundamental resource, as well as a mechanism of change and development. They are an asset of the school, a positive capital generated by years of work. They constitute the efforts of children, parents, teachers, management and the community as a whole. They are enhanced by local tradition, special values of the environment, as well as a privileged social structure, or exceptional institutions and organizations operating in the school environment (Radlińska 1935). For many years, social pedagogy research has included not only school resources, but also a specific model of a school linked to the environment (see Kowalski 1969; Modrzewski 1989; Radlińska 1935; Radziejewicz-Winnicki 1996; Trempała 1976; Winiarski 1975). Like a boomerang, the matter of the social and human forces at school, as well as the modern, diverse and multifold mechanisms of school and education development in broader and narrower social perspectives, keeps coming up again and again.

In the traditional sense, we focus on the question of what strengths the school has, what resources it has, and what is its asset. Helena Radlińska often said that “social pedagogy is primarily concerned with the interaction of environmental influences and the transformative powers of individuals” (Radlińska 1935, p. 5). The first element of this definition, i.e. the “environmental influences”, are the phenomena and processes that in a certain way, directly or indirectly, affect people and cause specific relationships in the environment. It is a difficult relationship of mutual, social connections, interdependencies occurring in different types of environments. The second element is the “forces of the individuals” (social forces, human forces), intentional aspirations based

on a specific system of values, which, fixed in attitudes, affect an individual or a social group. They are able to connect people with other people and the common good. The formation and development of these forces is influenced by the broadly understood upbringing. Social pedagogy with the help of human forces wants to build a “human world” in which human rights are respected (Theiss 2018, p. 14).

The notion of human forces means dynamics, the possibility of change, both critical and constructive attitude in a real-life situation, they derive from developed values, ideas, traditions and customs. They are prospective in nature, which means that they transform the present and build the future. Thanks to them, education goes beyond the framework, creates bonds between individuals and groups and develops a sense of community (Smolinska-Theiss, Theiss 2019, pp. 340–341).

So what human resources does the school in Warsaw’s Ursynów have at its disposal? How does the school build a network of support, negotiation and partnership with the parents? How do parents and teachers perceive their school? What social, cultural and political solutions make it possible to achieve success? Are such actions possible? Thanks to which forces does the school have the willingness to act, to cooperate or to be in partnership? How is the school-parent relationship established? Such questions were at the heart of the research undertaken.

## **School Development Theory – Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of the initiated research is the theory of school development (Nowosad, 2003; Dalin, 1985; Tillmann, 1987). The school is a specific, complex social organization in a broader historical, political, religious and cultural context. Its operation is determined by two time vectors. On the one hand, the functioning of the school, in accordance with current political doctrines, serves to reproduce the present or to preserve the past. On the other hand, school is a very important element and mechanism of social change and social development. Hence the fundamental and recurring question of the driving forces behind this development. These are questions about controlling the school, about having power over the school, about the school model. In the modern society, school is a social institution embedded in the democratic system, reflecting and reinforcing this system. Democracy and socialization are inalienable features of school. In Polish conditions, they become particularly important. Social and political changes after 1989, sanctioned by the new Constitution, gave the school a democratic character, they socialized

the school, linked it with the local community and family, broke the monopoly of the state. Relations between the state and the school are to reflect a democratic social order based on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. This means that the school is at the service of the child, the family, the local community, the nation and the state. It is connected with society, politics, culture, economy, religion. It has a social and legal framework. This model of school adopted in Poland after 1989 raises more and more questions and doubts. (Pilch 1995; Śliwerski 2008; Mendel 1999; Czerepaniak-Walczak 2010). They concern mainly the macro perspective and focus on the relations between the state and the school. Without rejecting this perspective, social pedagogy focuses its interests on a narrower perspective. It asks questions not so much about the system as about specific schools. How is it that in a unified system in which common core curricula and equal standards of education, work and teachers' pay are in force, some schools achieve excellent results, while others are far off? What does it mean for a particular school, what does it mean for its development? Such questions refer to an important, resounding theory of grassroots school development. It is not new. It developed especially in Germany in the mid-1980s. It became a theoretical and practical response to the questionable effects and failed educational reforms carried out in many countries at that time. School development means the development of a school from within, through the influence of human forces, through its extensive capital and resources. According to the theory of grassroots development, the school, like other organizations, has to cope with both external and internal pressure of influence. Thanks to parental involvement, cooperation with parents, it builds its strength and position in the community. It looks for partners, brings together various social groups and organizations, attracts local leaders. It undertakes various grassroots initiatives and projects that strengthen the school and consolidate the local community.

According to Klaus Tillmann (1987), Wilhelm Dilthey was the forerunner of school theory. The area of interest was the school as an institution in the historical, political, social and cultural context. Tillmann believes that "the relationship between the school as an institution and the social system is a fundamental area of school theory". The key moment is to get to know the changes taking place between the state-social and local determinants of school functioning. In this sense, school development theories are linked to the theories of social change (Tillmann 1987, p. 8).

In Poland, the theory of school development was developed by Inetta Nowosad (2003). In her opinion, change takes place thanks to new knowledge, but often knowledge alone is not enough. Society must recognize that

change is necessary and what novelties it will bring is important (Nowosad, 2003, p. 60). In the definition of social change, as Andrzej Radziewicz-Winicki states, “there are both random and minor transformations, seemingly insignificant, occurring in the attitudes of individuals, less important for the existence of a group in many areas of its collective life, as well as permanent changes, particularly significant ones, radically transforming the existing functions of individuals and social groups in a given structure” (Radziewicz-Winicki 1996, pp. 117–118).

The potential for change in everyday school life is directed towards the teacher, who is the promoter of activities that bring the school closer to the real needs of the contemporary world. Participation in change does not end with its introduction, because the school is constantly evolving, interacting with others, provoking change. The idea of change became the message of the reformed school and a challenge for the teacher-educator, who set its pace and direction. The new idea of change brings with it the concept of innovation. Initiating a process of change gives rise to new social roles, new needs, expectations and aspirations. There are people who want to get involved in something new, broaden their horizons, explore new areas, encourage their co-workers to create communities of supporters of pedagogical innovations (Nowosad 2003).

Michael Fullan points to four groups of factors that influence the implementation of pedagogical innovations. The first group of factors focuses on the characteristics of innovation. Is there a need for this innovation? What is its practical use? The second group concerns the characteristics of the school district. Have there been any previous attempts to undertake this innovation? Is there support from the school board and commitment to innovation? Are the teachers adequately trained in this field? What is the message? The third group are the properties of the school. What are the managerial, personal and professional predispositions of the principal? What is the attitude of teachers towards innovation? What are the expectations and needs of the students of the school? The last group of factors focuses on the properties of external factors. What role do government agencies play in the implementation of innovations? Does the school raise funds from outside for the introduction and implementation of an innovative project? (Fullan 1991).

In practice, the process of introducing pedagogical innovations is dictated by socio-economic and political changes that introduce information chaos, tension and overload. An example is the new legislation developed after 1 September 2017, which gives the school relative autonomy of operation. The pedagogical innovations do not have to be approved by the leading body, i.e. the school board. The legislator provides the possibility for the school principal

to undertake innovations that respond to the current needs and expectations of students. From this perspective, school innovation, school development is a grassroots activity, led by the school and its various partners. The principal of the school takes care of this activity and is legally responsible for the school.

Inetta Nowosad clearly emphasizes that school development builds a special type of school community and creates a model of school as an organization that is learning (2003). What does that mean? Roman Schulz draws attention to three components of the school as an organization. The first concerns the professional and social roles played by members of the school community. They are legally, socially and culturally sanctioned. Teachers or students know, or should know, what it means to be a student, what it means to be a teacher, how to play these roles. The second organizational component of the school combines functionally different but complementary elements of the school, e.g. curricula, grading rules, professional preparation of teachers, etc. The third institutional component of the school refers to a broader layout (Schulz 1992, p. 32) and regulates the programmatic, legal, social, and school framework of functioning within the educational system.

In order to understand the functioning of a school as an organization, attention should also be paid to its structure. Like other organizations, the school has to cope with both external and internal pressures from environmental impacts. The school as an organization that is learning has five important dimensions: environment, values, structure, human relations and strategies. In this dimension, the environment is understood as the closest surroundings of the school as well as the society in general. This applies to all institutions with which the school maintains contact in order to achieve its objectives. It includes administrative links with the authorities, the school superiors (school board, city hall, ministry of education), cooperation with institutions responsible for children and youth, as well as informal contacts with the family, business and local community (Nowosad 2003, pp. 76–77). If the school tries to meet the expectations of parents, is open to suggestions from the community, cooperates with local units — it has a lot of room for action and building its culture, but if it violates the norms, traditions that go beyond the norms of proper functioning – it encounters resistance. There is a communication barrier between the school and its parents, the local community and the educational authorities.

School values are expressed in ideologies, learning and upbringing theory, rules and standards. They refer to the goals formulated in the mission of the school, its curriculum, the school's statute. They also refer to standards set by the school principal, teachers, students and other members of the school

community. They are not always consistent. Some of them are in conflict with each other, others are hidden. The task of the school is to develop common value areas and to create binding standards of functioning in the school environment on their basis. Another element mentioned concerns the structure of the school. It shows how the school is organized, how tasks are allocated and how formal decision-making structures and communication structures look like (Nowosad 2003, p. 78). The decision structure determines who decides and on what. The structure of tasks includes the division of duties and work among teachers and students. The communication structure, on the other hand, exposes people and groups who are interrelated due to their area of responsibility and the tasks they have to perform. Relationships relate to the interpersonal relations prevailing at school, to their essence, frequency and quality. They are included in an informal organization (authority, influence, cooperation and norms of individuals or groups), as well as taking into account the factors that determine the school climate (motivation, satisfaction, trust, help, cooperation). Also important is the emotional attachment to school and the quality of interpersonal relationships understood as the ability to resolve conflicts. The strategies concern the type and manner of school leadership, decision making and quality control. It is important whether the school rewards creativity and learns through new experiences because this is what determines the quality of education (Nowosad 2003, p. 80). Schulz's concept emphasizes above all the formal framework of functioning of the school. It can be seen as an attempt to rationalize school management. It is also close to modern positions of developing school management.

### **The partnership between the family and school – a difficult social and research programme**

School development theory does not reject these visible attempts, present especially in America, to commercialize education. However, it draws attention to other elements. The development of the school is a result of grass-roots initiatives undertaken in the school. This is achieved through the support and involvement of various social actors, especially parents.

In today's world, the involvement of parents in the education of their children is treated as an individual right of parents as well as a social necessity. Schools cannot carry out their educational tasks without the cooperation of parents. Involvement of parents is understood as any activity aimed at supporting the emotional and the social development of a child. Activity understood in this way consists of the broadly understood parental activities

(Szumski, Karwowski 2015). Engagement always refers to someone or something. Its external manifestation is a specific action that acknowledges the legitimacy of a given question. Involvement indicates identification with a given area, its inclusion in the sphere of interest. It is a proof of a strong and lasting motivation to continue activity and focus on it. The area of engagement represents the individual's values and ideals. Involvement in parenthood is an acquired tendency to focus long-term activity and related experiences on the role of the mother/father, which includes focusing adult activity in the intellectual, emotional, behavioral and evaluative dimensions. The expression of full commitment is the defined way of thinking, experiencing, evaluating and acting towards the child, including the willingness of parents to change their activity according to the developmental phase of the offspring. According to research, parents declare the intention to engage, but do not always do so (Bakiera 2013, pp. 21–22). Maria Fishel and Lucila Ramirez (2005) assume that parental involvement relates to the participation of parents in the education of their children and is aimed at supporting their school and social success. According to Nancy Hill and Diana Tyson (2009), engagement is about parents interacting with the school and with their children to increase their children's chances of learning success. Joyce Epstein (1995) believes that engagement should be seen from three interlinked perspectives: school, home and community. She identified six types of involvement: parenthood as a commitment by the parents to create favorable conditions for learning at home; communication as interlocution between the parents and the school on curriculum and student progress; volunteering as *ex gratia* participation by parents in school activities; home learning as a communication between the parents and the school on learning at home; co-determination as the involvement of the parents in school management and decision-making processes; cooperation between the parents and the local community to create conditions for better learning of children. When Epstein speaks of involvement, he means the partnership nature of the family-school-community relationship. Educational partnership refers to the relationship between the child-pupil, involving their family, the school and the local environment. It is focused on cooperation, mutual trust and a sense of common good. A partnership between the family and the school means a symmetrical relationship between the two partners. However, it can be analyzed from two different perspectives. For many years, the school perspective dominated. Teachers cooperating with the family came to the fore. In today's educational research, the parental position is becoming more and more clear. International networks and research groups on parenthood in the perspective of educational change (ERNAPE) are emerg-



ing. Parents are seen as an important partner for the school, as counterparties and as a significant social pressure force influencing political educational decisions. The academic forum emphasizes questions about educational ideologies, theories and methodology of research on family-school relations. The scientific community is looking for indicators allowing to analyze family and school partnerships. They include: behavioral indicators – concerning partnership activities; indicators related to cognitive-emotional relations with the school, including: with interest in the school, willingness to cooperate with it. The last group consists of indicators showing normative patterns of children's upbringing, school functioning, the place of education in the society.

The partnership should focus on school problems, provide satisfaction to non-engaged people and create a structure for creating grassroots initiatives and ideas (Mendel 2002, p. 53). An example of such an initiative is the pedagogical innovation introduced by the Ursynów school, known in the community as the limitation of homework assignments. In fact, the innovative program of the Ursynów school was much richer and included: introduction, general assumptions, innovation objectives, methods and forms, anticipated achievements, subject matter of the classes, evaluation, expected results and a summary. The main assumptions of innovative work, and the general and specific objectives were defined. Methods and forms of work with students and parents were established. Benefits from the implementation of a given innovative project are anticipated. The results expected to be achieved by the school in order to improve the quality of work and promotion of the school in the local and even nationwide environment were determined. The idea behind the innovative program was to bring about a positive change for institutions, stimulate school development, involve parents, teachers and students in joint activities. It has also become a great challenge and hope for the teachers, the parents, the pupils and the school. However, during its implementation there were problems, contradictory expectations and inadequate evaluations submitted by various participants of the project.

### **Research programme – community of thought, readiness to act together**

The school management turned to the Maria Grzegorzewska University – with which it has long been bound by a cooperation agreement – with a proposal to diagnose the situation. Questions arose about the school learning community, about the social capital allowing to build innovative programs, about the readiness, the sense of agency and co-responsibility of the

teachers, the parents, as well as the pupils for the success and results of the program.

It has been assumed that these will be several years of practical research of the action research type. The first stage was the diagnosis of the situation prepared by the PhD students of the Maria Grzegorzewska University within the framework of classes on the methodology of social research. This article focuses on this first stage of research. It was a quantitative measurement focusing on the questions of to what extent the teachers and the parents present convergent and divergent models of school education and school functioning, to what extent both sides are interested in an innovative programme and ready to cooperate in its implementation.

Such research was carried out by means of two extensive questionnaires addressed to the teachers and the parents. They contained the same or similar questions. The answers to these questions were placed on a 5 or 7-degree scale. The results of the research presented below are limited to one of the 12 questions containing 40 possible scaled answers. They show teachers' and parents' models and positions related to education and functioning of the school. They reflect the types of thinking, as well as professional and life experiences related to the school. Most importantly, they allow for building the premises for partnership and a possible community of thinking and action aimed at school development.

In total 82 teachers employed in the Ursynów school took part in the research, 41.5% ( $n = 34$ ) were teachers from grades 1–3 and 58.5% ( $n = 48$ ) were teachers from grades 4–8. The majority were women, which constituted 85.4%. Nearly 40% of the respondents were employed as contract teachers and one in five teachers was nominated. Trainee teachers constituted 27.2% of the respondents, 13.6% of the respondents had the status of a certified teacher. It is a professional structure that differs from the general state of Polish teaching. It reveals a phenomenon characteristic of the capital and big cities. It shows how many people enter and leave the teaching profession quickly. The average number of years teachers worked in the examined school is 5.74 years, but every second one has been working in it for two years and every third one for a year. The largest group of respondents were early school education teachers (26.1%), followed by foreign language teachers and Polish teachers (27.5% in total), followed by physical education teachers and day care supervisors.

The questionnaires were filled in by 262 parents or legal guardians, the majority (78.25%) were mothers. This group was quite homogeneous in age, the average age for all parents was 41.23, the median was slightly less (41.0). Over 90% of parents had higher education, 60.7% raised one child, 37% two.

These were most often students of junior classes. Such a structure of family, age and education of parents is far from the statistical picture of a Polish school. It reveals a typical picture of metropolitan housing estates inhabited by the middle class. These simple sociographic data show that it is difficult to study the Polish school en block. The environmental diversity is enormous and once again confirms the validity of research in the micro or mezo perspective.

The basis for the analysis were the assessments of parents and teachers expressed on a 7-degree scale concerning the teaching and upbringing of children, the functioning of the school and the innovative programme of the school, and more precisely its most effective element, i.e. the lack of homework.

In the first step of the analysis, average assessments of the parents' and the teachers' views were compared. The comparisons were made in pairs, using the t-test for dependent samples. Then the strength of the effect (Cohen's  $d$ ) was measured and interpreted as follows:

$d < 0.20$  – very weak effect,

$d > 0.20$  – weak effect,

$d > 0.5$  – average effect,

$d > 0.8$  – strong effect.

Research has shown that the positions and assessments of the parents and the teachers are not so distant from each other. Both the teachers and the parents agree with many of them. Statistical analyses allowed to identify three groups of data. The most numerous group turned out to be opinions and assessments convergent for the parents and the teachers. As the research has shown, there are no statistically significant differences in them.

Table 1. Common positions for parents and teachers

Statement	A: Parents		B: Teachers		Comparison of averages		
	M	SD	M	SD	$F(1; 334)$	Effect strength $d$	Relation A-B
1. Parents and teachers are partners in bringing up children.	4.27	0.76	4.26	0.72	0.005 (ni)	0.01	
2. Without discipline, there is no learning in class.	3.87	1.13	3.88	1.15	0.003 (ni)	0.01	
3. You don't argue with the authority of a teacher.	3.01	1.23	3.00	1.24	0.003 (ni)	0.01	
4. The school is for learning, not for fun.	2.66	1.16	2.65	1.27	0.002 (ni)	0.01	
5. The principal is the leader and is responsible for everything that happens at school.	3.96	0.92	3.98	1.07	0.01 (ni)	0.01	

Statement	A: Parents		B: Teachers		Comparison of averages		
	M	SD	M	SD	$F(1; 334)$	Effect strength $d$	Relation A–B
6. A school is an institution that teaches order and hierarchy.	3.56	1.04	3.57	1.16	0.01 (ni)	0.01	
7. The parents are afraid of the teachers, the teachers are afraid of the parents.	2.15	1.14	2.14	1.22	0.02 (ni)	0.02	
8. The school teaches — the family raises.	3.68	1.28	3.73	1.32	0.10 (ni)	0.04	
9. It is the duty of the parent to help the child with their homework.	3.26	1.23	3.31	1.17	0.08 (ni)	0.04	
10. The student should comply with the teacher's expectations.	3.46	1.02	3.42	1.04	0.08 (ni)	0.04	
11. First and foremost, the school should teach.	3.68	1.17	3.54	1.29	0.75 (ni)	0.06	
12. When I was at school, discipline and order prevailed, so why change it?	2.76	1.24	2.65	1.32	0.49 (ni)	0.09	
13. The school should respect the rights of the pupil.	4.61	0.69	4.69	0.58	0.83 (ni)	0.12	
14. There is no good school without good relations between teachers.	4.43	0.68	4.54	0.76	1.64 (ni)	0.16	
15. The school is not able to fulfill all its tasks.	3.49	0.98	3.67	1.10	1.80 (ni)	0.17	
16. Parents should contribute to the school curriculum.	3.48	0.92	3.30	1.12	1.97 (ni)	0.18	
17. The pupil cannot discuss the teacher's views.	2.69	1.20	2.46	1.28	2.18 (ni)	0.19	
18. The school should first of all follow the curriculum and not distract itself with additional tasks.	2.82	1.25	2.58	1.41	2.20 (ni)	0.19	
19. Nothing happens at school without the principal's permission.	3.62	0.98	3.84	1.13	2.85 (ni)	0.21	
20. Parents and teachers are partners in the process of teaching children.	4.30	0.84	4.48	0.76	2.95 (ni)	0.22	
21. Pupils learn for themselves not for grades.	4.14	0.97	4.36	0.95	3.19 (ni)	0.23	
22. It's the parent who decides on their child.	4.17	0.90	3.96	0.94	3.20 (ni)	0.23	
23. The school is an institution in the service of the family.	3.63	1.07	3.37	1.23	3.23 (ni)	0.23	
24. If the pupil has not understood the lesson, homework will not help them.	3.31	1.40	3.63	1.23	3.32 (ni)	0.23	
25. The pupil learns not only from the teacher but also from his colleagues.	4.07	1.00	4.51	0.74	13.33***	0.46	

Statement	A: Parents		B: Teachers		Comparison of averages		
	M	SD	M	SD	$F(1; 334)$	Effect strength $d$	Relation A-B
26. Homework is a permanent element of learning, why should it disappear?	3.05	1.28	2.29	1.14	22.53***	0.60	

Legend: ni –  $p > 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Source: own development.

The second group consists of statements in which the strength of the dependency is determined by the teachers. These are sentences expressing the didactic principles of school education and functioning. They refer to the pupil, to teaching work, indicate the need for individualization of the education and learning process, as well as teamwork. It is characteristic that the teachers — similarly to what is shown above — play it safe. They say the parents do not need to know everything about the school. The greatest strength of effect in expressing the relationship between teachers' and parents' assessments was the opinion that a good school climate was more important than learning outcomes. This stereotypical stance shows that, of course, school is primarily a workplace for teachers. The strength of the effect of teachers' and parents' statements is shown in Table no. 2.

Table 2. Positions with greater significance for teachers

Statement	A: Parents		B: Teachers		Comparison of averages		
	M	SD	M	SD	$F(1; 334)$	Effect strength $d$	Relation A-B
1. A school class is a collection of individuals.	4.49	0.74	4.68	0.59	4.46*	0.27	B > A
2. Not all pupils need to learn at the same pace and at the same time.	4.30	0.87	4.54	0.87	4.97*	0.28	B > A
3. Pointing out a pupil's strengths is better than focusing on their mistakes.	4.33	0.84	4.60	0.65	7.18**	0.34	B > A
4. Parents don't need to know everything about the school.	2.92	1.25	3.75	1.19	27.67***	0.67	B > A
5. Homework should be given only to volunteers and should not affect pupils' grades.	2.38	1.22	3.49	1.23	51.02***	0.91	B > A
6. A good school atmosphere is more important than pupils' learning outcomes.	3.24	1.20	3.67	1.06	8.39**	0.97	B > A

Legend: ni –  $p > 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Source: own development.

The third group included positions and assessments submitted mainly by the parents. They show that parents project the expectations and responsibility for the education and learning of their child onto the school. It is the school, and more specifically the competent teachers, who are primarily responsible for the pupils' learning outcomes. The declaration shows that the parents are not necessarily willing to build partnerships with the teachers. Of significance is the opinion that the school does not need to know everything about the family, but the family needs to know everything about the school. It is a position consistent with the principles of functioning of the Polish school, but it shows a lack of symmetry between the family and the school. The strength of this link is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Positions with greater significance for Barents

Statement	A: Parents		B: Teachers		Comparison of averages		
	M	SD	M	SD	$F(1; 334)$	Effect strength $d$	Relation A-B
1. It doesn't matter what the school is, it's important who the teachers are.	3.98	1.07	3.70	1.22	3.96*	0.25	A > B
2. It is the teacher who decides how the pupil should learn.	3.04	1.10	2.73	1.31	4.42*	0.27	A > B
3. The role of the teacher is to show he pupils the mistakes they make.	3.79	1.10	3.31	1.20	11.40***	0.43	A > B
4. The school is responsible for the pupils' learning outcomes.	3.67	0.99	3.22	1.13	11.89***	0.44	A > B
5. Without homework, there's no good learning.	3.32	1.30	2.49	1.32	24.67***	0.63	A > B
6. The school does not need to know everything about the family, but the parent should know as much as possible about the school.	3.27	1.10	2.43	1.19	33.98***	0.74	A > B!!!
7. Homework is a part of the lessons.	3.56	1.28	2.53	1.34	38.42***	0.79	A > B
8. It is not possible to complete the entire curriculum during lessons, you need homework to do this.	3.29	1.25	2.41	1.17	31.46***	0.79	A > B

Legend: ni –  $p > 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

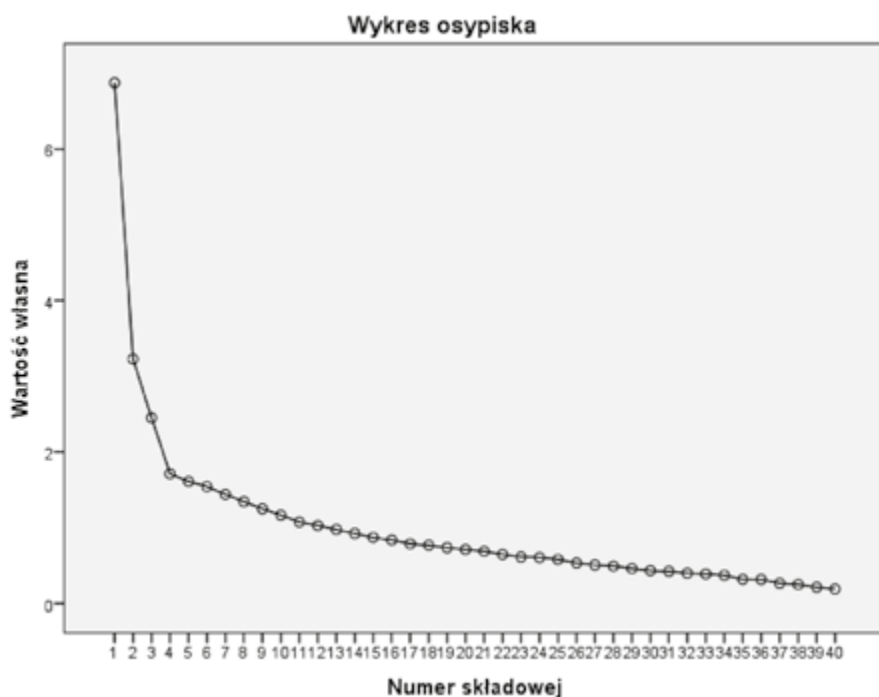
Source: own development.

In the next step, a factor analysis was carried out. The factor analysis is a whole family of techniques that allows us to present relations between variables belonging to the same set (Wieczorkowska, Wierzbński 2007, p. 317).

However, before the factor analysis was performed, it was necessary to make sure that the data entered into the analysis meet the assumptions allow-

ing for proper interpretation of factors and making further analyses (predictions) with their use. For this purpose, the following coefficients testing the properties of the correlation matrix were used: KMO and Bartlett's sphericity test to see if factor analysis can be carried out (Bedyńska, Brzezicka 2007, pp. 140–141).

The KMO (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) measure is a “ratio of the value of correlation of variables to the value of partial correlation of these variables”. The value of this indicator is in the range (0 to 1), where a value closer to 1 gives the possibility to carry out the factor analysis. The same information is provided by Bartlett's sphericity test (Wieczorkowska, Wierzbiński, 2007, pp. 321–323). Therefore, the data were perfectly suitable for analysis, as evidenced by the high value of the KMO = 0.799 and the Bartlett sphericity test 3862.98;  $df = 780$ ;  $p < 0.001$ . The analysis demonstrated the existence of three factors, which is clearly indicated by the scree plot (Chart 1).



Wykres osypiska – Scree plot; Wartość własna – Eigenvalue; Numer składowej – Component number

Chart 1. Scree plot

Source: own development.

The use of a scree plot to determine the number of factors is particularly beneficial if the survey contains many questions and there is a risk of a large number of factors that are however not too strong. The scree plot gives the possibility to limit the number of factors. Individual factors are marked on the plot in the form of circles. (their numbers are located on the horizontal axis in the form of circles the X axis) and their eigenvalues (on the vertical Y axis). Eigenvalues allow you to determine the number of factors. According to this criterion, as many factors are taken into account as there are on the “steep” side of the graph. In the point where the graph ceases to be steep, the number of factors is marked (S. Bedyńska, Brzezicka 2007, pp. 144–145).

The analysis showed a three-factor structure of the teachers’ and the parents’ views on teaching and upbringing. The first factor, conservative views on teaching and discipline in school, was formed by 15 statements. The second factor, views on partnership in school and respect for student individuality, was formed by 11 statements: The third factor, the views on the topic of giving homework, was formed by 6 statements. It should be noted that two of them were negatively correlated with the content of the factor and were reversed in the next step of the analyses.

In the next step, on the basis of the results of factor analysis using the averaging method, three scales were created, representing the three views on teaching and upbringing. The internal consistency of the scales thus created proved to be fully acceptable (table 9).

Table 4. Parents’ and teachers’ views on teaching and upbringing – descriptive characteristics

Factor		Descriptive statistics				Correlations		
		Min.	Max.	M	SD	A	B	C
A	Conservative views on teaching and discipline at school	1.73	5.00	3.38	0.62	$\alpha = 0.83$	-0.09 (ni)	0.41***
B	Views on partnership in school and respect for student individuality	3.00	5.00	4.21	0.44		$\alpha = 0.68$	-0.21***
C	Views on giving homework	1.00	5.00	3.05	0.97			$\alpha = 0.83$

Legend: ni –  $p > 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Source: own development.



Table 5. Comparison of views on teaching and upbringing

View	A: Parents		B: Teachers		Comparison of averages		
	M	SD	M	SD	F (1; 334)	Effect strength d	Relation A-B
Conservative views on teaching and discipline at school.	3.40	0.59	3.31	0.69	1.42 (ni)	0.15	
Views on partnership in school and respect for student individuality.	4.17	0.44	4.34	0.40	9.64**	0.39	B > A
Views on giving homework.	3.25	0.92	2.44	0.87	49.42***	0.89	A > B

Legend: ni –  $p > 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Source: own development.

The analysis showed that the parents did not differ from the teachers in their views on teaching and discipline at school [ $F(1;334) = 1.42$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $d = 0.15$ ]. This position is equally valued by the parents and the teachers. The teachers value school partnerships and respect for student individuality more than the parents [ $F(1;334) = 9.64$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $d = 0.39$ ]. Differences between the averages remain at an average level. In-depth analyses have shown that the parents are more convinced of the need for giving homework than the teachers [ $F(1;334) = 49.42$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $d = 0.15$ ]. In this respect, the difference between the averages should be considered as large. It proved to be significant and particularly important for the success of the whole innovation project. For the schools and the teachers, the fact that they did not give homework was treated in the local community as a distinctive feature. According to some of the parents, it was also the foundation of the programme. And yet their assessment turned out to be different. As you can see, however, the voice of those who consistently opted for the traditional practice of doing homework prevailed.

## Conclusions

The results of the survey lead to the following conclusions. First of all, partial studies show that the dominant group keen on pedagogical innovation is primarily the teachers. It was them who submitted various initiatives and created research projects. They were first and foremost the originators and implementers of the project, under the name “Waking School”. Together with the school management, they showed initiative, a sense of responsibility and a mission aimed at developing and improving the quality of the school’s work. Research has shown that the teachers put the pupils at the center of attention. They first and foremost look for the pupils’ strengths. They have a sense

of responsibility for the education and upbringing of children. They see difficulties and obstacles in running an innovation programme, they see restraint and even reluctance on the part of some of the parents. However, they are inclined to see this program as an opportunity for pupil development. Individually, they argue that homework should be given, although only to those who wish to do it. According to the teachers, motivation and cognitive curiosity are more important than learning outcomes.

Secondly, the innovative project introduced by the school revealed a lack of visibility and strong willingness to cooperate, communication between the teachers and the parents, as well as joint responsibility for the success of the project. On the one hand, there was a clear area of common positions and evaluations related to teaching, school functioning, conducting innovative projects. The field of divergence was equally clear. Both the teachers and the parents have been quite clear and sometimes controversial in formulating their positions and opinions. Both sides presented rather conservative views on teaching and school discipline. However, the parents' position was more traditional and based on values such as social order, hierarchy and authority.

Research has shown that the parents have high expectations of the school, but are not very willing to engage in school improvement activities. They focus on learning outcomes, often omitting questions about the individual needs and abilities of their children. It is difficult to speak of a clear partnership between the parents and the teachers on the basis of research. However, this does not mean that this partnership is rejected and that there is a lack of readiness on both sides to build it. There were many ambiguities, misunderstandings, understatements and even contradictions between the parents and the teachers. However, this concerned selected elements, especially doing homework. The parents were not prepared, not convinced to give up homework. Paradoxically, they saw this as lowering of the school requirements, lowering of the level of education and, finally, lack of control over the learning of their own child. These various, sometimes surprising arguments, fortunately did not differentiate the parents' and the teachers' environment too much. Both the parents and the teachers have tried to maintain communication and dialog. They protected and respected the partnership space of the dialog and the compromise. The teachers responded by correcting the curriculum and building alternative solutions. Homework returned to school practice as a variety of individualized tasks tailored to individual pupils.

The research has shown that educated parents in big cities present a rather conservative model of education. They are more conservative than young educated teachers. It is the parents who disbelieve in school innova-

tions, distance themselves from them, hide behind the lack of knowledge of the curriculum and insufficiently articulated consent to the school's proposals. Their various judgments and assessments generally end up in the open space of school communication and dialog. It provides an opportunity to build a partnership based on a community of ideas, operations and responsibility. As the research showed, the initiative group of family/school partnerships is first and foremost the teachers. They are the ones who are more inclined to innovate, to introduce alternative educational solutions.

Further development of the project and its success require closer, open communication, extended operation and co-responsibility of both the parents and the teachers for the immediate and more distant effects of the work. Practical experience shows, however, that in Polish reality the voice of the third partner — the state — is more and more resounding. The question is, to what extent can this partner really build partnership relations between different actors in the school environment.

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