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Managing Education and Teaching Team During the COVID-19 Pandemic. A Systematic Review

ABSTRACT

Circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many challenges for all entities constituting the education system in Poland. The article aims to present the specific character of managing education and the teaching team in this demanding unusual reality. Contemporary principals and managers of various levels of education, often burdened with a multitude and diversity of tasks and requirements imposed on their role and the organisation of work of the managed entity, regardless of the circumstances of management, require and expect adequate support. The article reviews current empirical research on the problem of the functioning of schools in the pandemic, including such aspects as the situation of teachers, principals, students and their parents. The results are set within the practical, day-to-day management of education, focusing on the implementation of statutory tasks and the circumstances of cooperation between the principal and the staff team (e.g., concerning communication, fulfilment of needs, conflict resolution). Reference has also been made to own empirical research dedicated to managerial talent in education and the specific character of conflict management in an educational institution.

Keywords:
teachers, conflict, education management, principal, education in COVID-19

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INTRODUCTION

Effective management of an educational facility is a kind of foundation for the effective functioning of any educational institution. The crucial role in this process is played by the principal-manager, whose task is not only to lead, control and monitor the effectiveness of the activities carried out by school entities but also to face the dynamic changes on an ongoing basis and to preventively assess the trends for the future.

It is worth emphasising that educational leadership is interdisciplinary. Social expectations connected with the person of a principal are changing and crystallising. Therefore, an effective and modern principal should make the foundation of her/his authority, her/his competencies, and those resources that are valued by her/his colleagues (effective communication, targeting goals, fostering certain attitudes and productivity, building cooperation, etc.). At the same time, he/she should, as far as possible, minimise the use of formal sanctions and powers (Banaszak, 2013, pp. 65–74; 2015, pp. 85–99; Mazurkiewicz, 2013; Fazlagić, 2008, pp. 17–20; Stoner & Wankel, 1992, pp. 383–403; Madalińska-Michalak, 2019, pp. 59–77).

Despite changes concerning the organisation, awareness, and education expectations, Polish schools still require an innovative and effective transformation. The subject of these changes should become primarily the ways of thinking and perceiving both the structure and specificity of the school, as well as many circumstances related to everyday educational life: role of a teacher, organisation of teaching process, a student's subjectivity and individualisation of pedagogical approach, social and psychological support for all individuals making up the school community. Modern educational leadership also remains one of the prioritised and socially expected changes.

MANAGING SCHOOL IN THE PANDEMIC REALITY

March 2020 marked the beginning of a series of dynamic changes in the lives of a great number of people. These changes entailed a revolution in educational settings, the foundation of which became remote learning implemented at virtually all levels of education. The rapidity of this colossal change has exposed many organisational and mental difficulties. In a flash, teachers had to transfer the teaching and educational process online, and the substitute of contact with a student became an image from a webcam. An accelerated "course" in digital and communicative competences took place. Crucially, these experiences became

a huge source of stress and emotional strain for many teachers. In the context of management, principals also faced many changes. One important exemplification is the dynamics of the modification of educational law and management dispositions. From March to September 2020 alone, the legislator, i.e., the Ministry of Education and Science, issued as many as 23 regulations regarding the operation of educational institutions during the preventing, counteracting, and combating COVID-19 (*Prawo.pl*, 2021). The legal dispositions clearly emphasised the centralisation of the principal's authority, as well as his/her one-person responsibility. Eventually, the situation was somewhat clarified, significantly reducing the number of mandatory documents, but, as one can easily assume, the day-to-day management of the school was, at that specific time, marked by uncertainty, confusion and emotional tension.

The entire 2020/2021 school year presented enormous organisational challenges. First of all, no one could predict the complexity and dynamics of the changes from the beginning of its start. The possibility of on-site vs remote learning remained in question. Time has shown that due to a significant epidemic threat, students have completed most of the learning process online[2]. Since the beginning of the school year, principals have faced many challenges. Uncertainty about the possibilities to organise and conduct classes required that the school work plan be prepared in an extremely flexible manner and, what is more, that the activities be continuously adjusted to the current epidemic situation. On the one hand, it was particularly important to ensure effective methods of organising the educational and pedagogic process. On the other hand, it was necessary to take great care of hygienic and safe conditions for possible stationary learning (*Monitor Szkoły*, 2021). At times, each new week brought dynamic and significant changes. Principals made great efforts to organise students' learning and teachers' work as efficiently and effectively as possible. In the circumstances of such a strong focus on this specific organisation of the teaching process, was there still enough strength and attention for interpersonal relations with staff? Did teachers feel such needs or signal them at all? Finally, was it possible to transfer the substitute of direct contact and cooperation to remote staff meetings?

The complex and challenging realities of education in pandemic circumstances spurred many empirical studies, but relatively few recognised the specific situation of school principals. In this context, a report on *Distance learning through the eyes of principals, teachers, students and parents* requires particular attention.

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2   Gradual return of students to schools in the stationary form was planned for the beginning of May 2021; see https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/harmonogram-powrotu-uczniow-do-stacjonarnej-nauki-w-szkolach-i-placowkach [access 12.05.2021].

(Dynowska-Chmielewska et al. 2020; see also: Gurba, 2020, pp. 151-179). This study included the following groups of respondents: principals, teachers, students and parents. Forty-three principals decided to participate in the study. Among the results, we can find information that the vast majority of the principals (about 93%), when asked about the attitudes that prevail among teachers towards distance learning in their school, declared that teachers are looking for new solutions in their teaching work. When asked about other methods of motivating teachers to work in a teaching environment, principals indicated: encouragement, expressing the belief that teachers are up to the task, helping and referring to the welfare of students. According to their declarations, they used directive messages to the least extent (e.g., ordering activities). The main source of self-development indicated by the directors was the internet (85.7%), as well as personal contacts with other principals (64.3%) and teachers from their own institution (57.1%). Most of the principals surveyed (64.3%) also stated that after the end of obligatory remote learning, they would still like to use its elements in their schools (Gurba, 2020).

The analysis of the obtained data also shows that the realisation of particular school tasks was not entirely possible in the opinion of principals. Even in the case of the basic school objectives, i.e., teaching activities, only 12% of the surveyed principals believed that they could be fully realised during distance learning, while approximately 72% of the respondents indicated that it was possible only partially. According to the respondents, the most difficult tasks during distance education were those of a caring nature, followed by educational tasks and the organisation of ongoing psychological and pedagogical assistance and implementation of recommendations contained in the documents of psychological and pedagogical counselling centres.

From the perspective of strengths related to the specific nature of e-learning, most of the surveyed principals stressed the teachers' involvement and cooperation, development of their competences and integration of the school environment. As opportunities resulting from the introduction of e-learning, the principals most often indicated the development of digital competences (of teachers and students), learning new tools and expanding the educational base, and increasing the commitment and creativity of teachers. On the other hand, the weaknesses mentioned by principals included lack of adequate equipment or Internet access (teachers, students) and teachers' inadequate preparation and unwillingness to implement e-learning. The surveyed principals also indicated that teachers were overloaded and identified further threats related to the social sphere (Gurba, 2020, pp. 166–168).

Many studies conducted during the pandemic, whose issues were related to the psychological context of the studied phenomena, clearly show that this specific

time significantly negatively affected the emotional and social sphere, sense of well-being or empowerment of various social groups, including people associated with education. In the context of the results obtained in the cited research on the situation of principals, we can also see some tendencies associated with negative feelings (even though many respondents declare that remote teaching has not significantly affected their emotional state). However, almost ⅔ of the respondents felt upset "slightly more often" or "definitely more often" than during the traditional teaching process (64.3%), and most respondents observed greater difficulty in relaxing and resting during this time than during traditional teaching (about 58%). The results suggest that the introduction and implementation of distance learning have become significant psychological challenges for a significant group of principals (Gurba, 2020, pp. 173–176).

Considering the issue of educational management in the pandemic circumstances in a slightly broader context, it is also worth presenting some conclusions from selected studies related to school in the pandemic. They provide an important background for the specifics of the current management of an educational facility and the implementation of statutory tasks.

SCHOOL IN THE PANDEMIC FROM A METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE – A REVIEW OF SELECTED STUDIES

The dynamic and revolutionary change of the entire social reality during the pandemic, including the educational level, resulted in many interesting projects and empirical studies. The need for a reliable, accurate and adequate analysis of the phenomena occurring in the pandemic circumstances, their thorough evaluation and identification of practical implications has involved many entities dealing with the situation of Polish education: scientists, practitioners, non-governmental institutions and other broadly understood education enthusiasts.

The review of selected studies should mention an interesting, multidimensional project involving the Faculty of *Psychology of Warsaw University entitled Psychological aspects of COVID-19 pandemic* (Pol. *Raporty Wydziału Psychologii UW, 2020 WU Psychology Department Reports*). As many as 24 research teams were involved in implementing this complex empirical investigation, each of which was analysing a different issue in the context of circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research reports include information on the functioning of different age and social groups (e.g., adolescents, young children, teach-

ers, 60+ people, autistic people, minority and immigrant health professionals) as well as on topics such as specific difficulties in the context of distance learning, pre-traumatic stress, neuropsychological functions, depression and anxiety, and conspiracy theory issues.

From the perspective of educational management, particularly interesting seems to be the project entitled *Teachers and return to schools during the pandemic*, carried out by a team led by Ewa Pisula et al. (2020), whose aim was to identify the situation of teachers working in kindergartens and schools of different types at the beginning of the school year 2020/2021 (that is, during the return to stationary work in educational facilities during the pandemic and after the period of remote work in the previous school year). The size of the group of surveyed teachers was 1,455. The survey results indicated, among other things, that half of the teachers surveyed approved of the decision to return to full-time teaching at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year while expecting to have appropriate procedures in place to ensure safety and reduce the risk of infection. The rest of the respondents favoured remote working, hybrid working (a combination of the two) or said it was up to the organisation and parents to decide. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that the surveyed teachers indicated many concerns about returning to stationary work. These concerns were primarily related to the health situation and the risk of infection (their own and their loved ones'), and the sense of threat to the health of students and their families.

Continuing the theme related to the teachers' perspective, it is also worth mentioning the two-stage empirical study *Remote education in the times of pandemic* carried out by Centrum Cyfrowe (Digital Centre) in May 2020 (1st edition) and November 2020 (2nd edition) (Centrum Cyfrowe, 2020a; 2020b). The research aimed to diagnose how schools found themselves in pandemic circumstances. They wanted to verify how teachers cope with the sudden remote teaching necessity; what experiences, feelings, and difficulties. It also examined what tools, methods, and support have proven effective in the new school reality and what type of assistance was missing. As shown in the first report, published in May 2020, most of the respondents had no previous experience with distance teaching (about 85.4%). Respondents indicated such difficulties as a time-consuming new form of work, lack of equipment, or conflicting parents' expectations. The surveyed teachers also pointed out the need to adapt the core curriculum to the realities of remote education and new challenges and difficulties resulting from the specificity of this situation. There were many new and distinctive situations and stressful factors, such as a completely different teaching methodology typical for remote learning (and the related limitations) or legal aspects, i.e., online safety or image sharing during online lessons. Attention

was drawn to the need for psychological support for teachers and students, as for many of them, learning under pandemic circumstances has become a very stressful experience. Approximately 1,000 teachers participated in the first edition of the survey (Centrum Cyfrowe, 2020a).

The second edition of the survey was conducted from August to early October 2020 (the partners of this edition were the Centre for Citizenship Education and *Szkoła z klasą* Foundation), and more than 700 respondents included elementary school teachers, secondary schools, and vocational schools. Among the conclusions resulting from this part of the survey, it is worth mentioning that the respondents (already from the perspective of several months of remote work) clearly emphasised the informational chaos, lack of clear guidelines and support from the Ministry. As can be seen from the data obtained, only 5% of the surveyed teachers feel that they have received substantive support from the Ministry of Education and Science during the mandatory remote education. The studied category of "disappearing students" during remote education also deserves special attention, as many as 48% of teachers of elementary schools, secondary schools and secondary occupational schools assessed that at least one of their students disappeared, while the teachers of vocational schools indicated that this percentage was as high as 58% (Centrum Cyfrowe, 2020b).

Teachers' attitudes towards distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic were also the subject of research conducted by Sylwia Jaskulska and Barbara Jankowiak (2020). The empirical investigation aimed to diagnose and describe attitudes towards remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic in three aspects (cognitive, behavioural, and emotional) and explore the relationship between selected aspects of professional functioning and attitudes towards remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 800 respondents took part in the study. Based on the results obtained, it was found, among other things, that according to the surveyed teachers, the biggest weaknesses of distance education have been the lack of fulfilment of educational (and especially caring) function of school, the deepening of differences between students and the teachers' feeling of insufficient support from the principal. At the same time, the opportunities and resources of the circumstances of remote education were also indicated. They included, for example, increasing the competence of teachers, their willingness to use the acquired skills in the future and positive emotions in their relationships (especially with students).

The last of the selected empirical studies that should be presented in a bit more detailed form at this point is the project entitled *Remote learning and social adaptation during the coronavirus epidemic.* The study's main objective was to identify the functioning of three groups: students, parents or guardians and teach-

ers, during the closure of schools caused by the pandemic. A total of almost 3000 respondents (1,284 students, 671 teachers, 979 parents) participated in the study. Regarding the surveyed group of teachers, the results obtained indicate, among other things, that the respondents rated their mental and physical well-being as worse compared to the time before the pandemic. In response to questions about digital hygiene, the surveyed teachers declared that they are often or very often ready to receive calls and notifications (86%), often/very often tired of sitting at the computer (85%) and also that they feel exhausted and overloaded with information (76%). A significant fraction of teachers experienced a deterioration in the quality of relationships important to the educational process during the pandemic (significant deterioration in relationships was reported, for example, in teachers' professional teams). As many as one-third of teachers reported a decline in the quality of their relationships with colleagues. What is also worth emphasising, only a very small group of the surveyed teachers (less than 2%) assessed that the quality of their professional relationships (with the principal and other teachers) increased during the pandemic. Remote education also negatively affected the home relationships of many respondents (Ptaszek et al., 2020).

It should also be mentioned at this point that the teaching of teams (as well as students and their parents) in the era of the pandemic was also addressed in the following research projects: *Concerns of parents and teachers about new forms of education during SARS-CoV-2 pandemic: A study of the Silesian Province – Pro Silesia Report* (Turska-Kawa, Stępień-Lampa, & Grzywna, 2020), *Remote education during COVID-19 pandemic – A research report* (Plebańska, Sieńczewska, & Szyller, 2020); or the report entitled *Remote education through the eyes of principals*, mentioned earlier in the context of the results concerning principals (Dynowska-Chmielewska et al., 2020).

An important addition to be made here, given the specificity of working in the pandemic circumstances and the challenges that teachers had to face, is the study's findings focused on diagnosing the situation of children and young people. These provide an important source of information about the range of challenges, difficulties, and support areas that pupils needed and expected in this unusual situation.

An interesting study that should be highlighted at this point is the report *Teenagers and the pandemic* compiled by the team of researchers led by Małgorzata Woźniak-Prus et al. (2020). The study group consisted of youth in late adolescence, aged 16–18 years (a total of 360 subjects), and the purpose of the study was to determine the severity of symptoms of generalised anxiety, depression and difficulties experienced by teenagers in late adolescence (16–18 years) during the pandemic. In the summary of the mentioned study, we find many interesting conclusions. These

include, among others, that in September, after the beginning of the school year and a return to full-time education, the level of generalised anxiety increased, while in November, after almost a month of distance learning, the increase in the intensity of depressive symptoms was noticeable. Importantly, in November, during the remote learning, the increase in anxiety and depressive symptoms in adolescents was primarily related to impaired relationships with loved ones at home.

Another project on the theme of difficulties accompanying young people during the pandemic, which deserves special attention, was the one entitled *Negative experiences of young people during the pandemic* carried out by *Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę* Foundation (FDDS, 2020). The study's aim was the following: to determine the magnitude of occurrence of various forms of youth abuse; to assess the psychological well-being and social support of the subjects; to provide data on which practical recommendations were formulated. The study was conducted in September 2020 using an online CAWI survey, and the study group consisted of 500 respondents aged 13–17. The survey questions focused on experiences from mid-March to the end of June (when remote education was first introduced in schools). It is also worth emphasising that during the study, adolescents were prohibited from leaving home without adult supervision for several weeks. The results summarising this empirical investigation are very disturbing. However, they constitute an important source of information for practitioners working in the field of everyday education and parents of teenagers. Among the findings included in the FDDS report is that one in four respondents (about 27%) ages 13–17 experienced at least one of the forms of abuse investigated in the study between mid-March and the end of June (15.8% of respondents experienced one, 6.2% experienced two, and 5.2% experienced at least three forms of abuse). One in seven respondents (15%) had experienced violence from peers, and one in nine (about 11%) from a close adult. One in three respondents (33.4%) rated their lives negatively, and a similar percentage of respondents also noted a decline in their overall well-being. Teenagers who experienced abuse during the first pandemic wave were also more likely than others to indicate that they did not have a trusted person in their community to whom they could turn in a difficult situation.

MANAGING OF TEACHERS' TEAM IN THE PANDEMIC – COMMUNICATION, CONFLICTS, AND NEEDS

The complexity of all circumstances related to the social, economic, and organisational environment during the COVID-19 pandemic is apparent in many empirical

studies conducted at this specific time and from the current subjective observation. Confusion, a significantly disturbed sense of security, lack of clear expectations and goals oriented towards the future, physical and mental fatigue without the possibility of relaxation in a free, preferred way, and finally, a high level of anxiety concerning the sphere of health, economics, education and development of children, etc. It is a demanding, complex and difficult time for educational institutions and all internal and external stakeholders of the school.

Education management, including management of a teaching team, has undoubtedly been a great challenge for school directors. The model of day-to-day cooperation, communication, conflict resolution, planning, the conceptualisation of new ideas, as well as verification of implemented teaching and caring tasks – all these aspects have undergone a dramatic and very dynamic change. On an ongoing basis, a principal, often with one-person responsibility, had to face many challenges related to the growing levels of frustration, anxiety, dissatisfaction, feelings of grief and injustice, uncertainty about their own skills and competencies in the workforce. In many circumstances, communication with employees, which used to take place in the form of face-to-face meetings, self-study teams, or staff assemblies, also took place online. Did it impact the effectiveness of cooperation, goal orientation and daily work? Did it adequately compensate for the needs resulting from impaired communication? Finally, did it provide an effective and friendly space for conflict resolution? After all, ongoing conflict management is one of the most important goals when managing staff teams, including teaching groups. This topic was one of the issues raised in the empirical research dedicated to the issue of managerial talent, conducted in 2015 among principals and teachers of state schools (Śmietańska, 2016; 2020). The results obtained on the issue of conflicts led to interesting conclusions.

In the part of the study related to the issue of conflict situations, in which the respondents were teachers, they were asked to give their opinion on the accuracy of the following terms related to conflict: "it is determined by human nature", "at a moderate level it is necessary for every organisation", "it should be resolved as soon as possible", "it only harms the organisation", "it allows to mark one's own subjective position on a given issue", "it can motivate to action", "it deepens prejudices and stereotypes", "it can increase efficiency", "it leads to deterioration of the atmosphere at work", "it distracts from the realised goals". As the obtained results indicate, two issues, in particular, are distinguished in the opinions of the surveyed teachers: more than 80% of the respondents considered that conflict "should be resolved as soon as possible" and that it "distracts attention from realised goals". For about 37% of respondents, a conflict situation "may increase effectiveness",

and for about 35% – "it lets you mark your own, subjective standpoint on a given issue". Only 17% of respondents categorically believed that conflict "only harms the organisation".

The obtained results show an interesting perspective on conflict within the group of surveyed teachers. Firstly, and this is optimistic, most of them notice the dichotomous character of a conflict situation, identifying its weaknesses or threats and its opportunities. The surveyed teachers believe that the consequence of conflict can also improve effectiveness. At the moderate level, that conflict sometimes is necessary for the organisation. The most frequent observations that conflict has to be resolved as soon as possible and that its difficulty diverts attention from the goals ahead are valid too. Indeed, the issue of conflict management clearly shows the benefits of resolving conflict situations quickly, because otherwise, it leads to escalation of disapproved behaviour, frustration and emotional tension, which significantly affects the effectiveness of the tasks performed and the morale of the staff team.

The surveyed teachers were also asked what they thought was the most effective way to resolve conflicts within a teaching team. The question contained a list of closed cafeterias and was constructed based on Thomas and Kilmann's model of conflict resolution styles (Rivalry, Cooperation, Compromise, Avoidance, Adaptation). As the obtained data show, according to teachers, the most effective way of solving conflicts in staff meetings is cooperation. Such an answer was declared by 63% of the respondents. The second most popular choice was a compromising style, with about 31% of respondents finding it reasonable. Given the context of conflict management theory, the collaborative style is rated high in effectiveness. However, it is worth mentioning that it is very difficult to apply in practice and requires a high emotional maturity (especially from a superior), self-control, and insight into oneself. However, if skilfully and reflectively used, it usually brings tangible, positive results.

In the area of conflicts, the principals surveyed were asked to assess what they thought was the most effective way of solving conflicts in the staff meeting (and between teachers and parents). First of all, the statements of the surveyed directors show that, in general, they are inclined to use similar ways in both situations. The analysis of the principals' statements showed that their overriding goal is to organise a space for dialogue between the conflicted parties. The principal's office often becomes a symbolic place where the conflicted parties may meet, confront their different views on the matter, and with somewhat weakened effect, talk about the factors generating the conflict. During the interviews, the principals also emphasised the importance of controlling strong emotions, staying calm, rethink-

ing the issues and gaining distance. It is particularly important, because, as shown by the achievements of cognitive psychology, strong emotions disturb the cognitive evaluation of the material and cause distortions in the functioning of cognitive processes (memory, attention, perception, thinking, etc.). As it results from the analysis of principals' statements, they favour organising space for dialogue and try to avoid situations that ignore a conflict (or at least they declare so). To some degree, it corresponds with the opinions of the surveyed teachers, who stated that the most effective way of solving conflicts in staff meetings is cooperation; this answer was declared by more than 63% of respondents (Śmietańska, 2016; Cieślińska, 2014, pp. 243–259).

In the circumstances of such a strong focus on this specific organisation of the teaching process, was there still enough strength and attention for interpersonal relations with staff? Did teachers feel such needs or signal them at all? Finally, was it possible to transfer the substitute of direct contact and cooperation to remote staff meetings? Was it possible to effectively resolve conflicts in such an unusual situation as the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying restrictions and limitations? Could principals' and teachers' growing frustration, anxiety, irritation, and fatigue have generated additional emotional tension, and could the limited opportunity for direct, safe communication have been another significant source of complex difficulties? Already the basic organisational issues, related to the lack of opportunities to meet directly, verify observations and exchange opinions face to face, are a severe barrier to the effectiveness of this process.

CONCLUSION

For many weeks, principals, teachers, students and parents did not have such an opportunity to sit down at a common table comfortably and safely and clarify contentious issues. Remote contact is specific, it has many limitations, and the issue related to the affective component of speech is also debatable. When interacting online, it is easier to use avoidance tactics, projection, excessive emotional distance, or many other defensive reactions. Additionally, for some people less experienced in these matters, the use of modern technologies and multimedia is often a source of additional stress and tension and generates a sense of shame and incompetence. Therefore, all these circumstances are a significant background for the deterioration of the quality of cooperation, communication, or the more widely mentioned conflict resolution.

Finally, the psychological condition of all those who make up the school community is also significant. As the research on pandemic circumstances clearly shows, teachers, students, parents, other school stakeholders, and ultimately, principals themselves, faced a range of circumstances unfavourable to a sense of well-being during their daily professional and educational lives, including high levels of anxiety, uncertainty, frustration; significant physical and mental fatigue; and deprivation of a wide range of needs. In conclusion, it is worth asking whether, in this unusual reality, it was possible to achieve understanding from the perspective of all parties involved, including groups that are particularly important from the perspective of current educational management, i.e., principals and teachers? Teachers' emotional and psychological condition is rather alarming, which appears both in the light of the mentioned studies and results from current observations. It is reasonable to assume that in many situations, teachers did not feel, at least to a significant degree, understood and supported by management. What about principals? Did they experience support and understanding from colleagues and stakeholders? As Peter F. Drucker (2017, p. 25) himself aptly and timelessly observed, "despite its central importance, despite the fact that it is in the spotlight, despite the fact that it is growing in sight, the management is the least known of institutions and the least understood…".

Contemporary principals of various levels of education, often burdened with a multitude and diversity of tasks and requirements imposed on their role and the organisation of work of the managed entity, regardless of the circumstances of management, require and expect adequate support. Indeed, having one person responsible for all the organisation's activities generates a sense of mental strain and feeling of being overwhelmed. The circumstances surrounding education in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, in turn, provided an additional and significant source of many challenges and difficulties that principals and staff teams had to face.

However, regardless of the pandemic circumstances, educational managers are still a very important source of information and inspiration for effective changes concerning education in Poland. Polish school still requires a constructive change, which is associated primarily with the flexibility of thinking and insight into the teaching and educational process and the current organisation of work and the specific nature of its management.

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