Lidia Pietruszka*

The integration of the educational influences of parents and teachers - on mutual expectations and observed difficulties

Properly managed cooperation between parents and teachers constitutes one of the pillars of a pupil's educational successes. It is the parents who are the best source of information about children, their needs, interests, as well as their strong and weak sides. Having obtained this information, the teacher is given the opportunity to see the pupil from a different perspective and to create a complete picture of him or her. One of the fundamental conditions of good and effective cooperation between the school and the family is the principle of the unity of influences[1], which consists in the necessity of pursuing the same goals at school and in the family. Any contradictions in this respect undermine the expected benefits ensuing from this cooperation. Apart from compatibility of objectives, this principle also calls for agreeing on the methods and forms of achieving them - so that they enable pupils to develop both mentally and socially, as well as to deepen the emotional bonds with these environments, thus triggering the mechanism of positive identification of parents with teachers.

The article[2] was an attempt to present the current state of cooperation between the two basic educational environments, as well as to answer the following

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[1] M. Łobocki, *Współdziałanie nauczycieli i rodziców w procesie wychowania*, Nasza Księgarnia, Warsaw 1985, p. 32 – 35.

[2] The article includes selected analyses of research studies, published in: L. Pietruszka, *Rodzina i szkoła. O współpracy nauczycieli-wychowawców z rodzicami w procesie edukacji wczesnoszkolnej"*, Wyd. KUL, Lublin 2017.

questions: what are the mutual expectations of parents and teachers? How do parents and teachers evaluate mutual cooperation? What difficulties do they observe in mutual cooperation? Moreover, general conclusions and suggestions were put forward concerning the possibilities of optimising the cooperation between parents and teachers. To achieve this goal, available studies were reviewed and analysed; moreover, the author conducted her own research consisting in an analysis of statements made by parents and teachers.

1. Collaborative action, cooperation, integration - as the fundamental types of links between educational environments

In pedagogical literature concerning the links between the family and other environments (above all else, with the school), certain differences can be observed in the approach to basic conceptual categories, such as collaborative action and cooperation. Basing on this, it needs to be assumed that these terms are not identical. "Collaborative action in the area of social pedagogy is characterised by the fact that it manifests itself in a concerted and voluntary action of a number of subjects (individuals, social groups, institutions) within a local environment; such an action is oriented towards achieving common, identical objectives in the field of education, upbringing and care. It essentially amounts to concerted (harmonious) activity of subjects in accomplishing subtasks, taking into account the commonly adopted objectives; it takes place under the conditions of complete egalitarianism and parity of the participating subjects[3]." In turn, cooperation stands for, in general terms, common, simultaneous, united action, organised according to the pattern of social division of work, of at least two subjects - these may be individuals, social groups, organisations and associations, institutions and agencies, or local environments. A pedagogical dictionary states that "cooperation is the collaborative action of individuals or groups of people who perform their subtasks in order to achieve a common objective; cooperation is based on mutual trust and loyalty as well as on complying with the objective which all the individuals or groups are duly aware of[4]."

Therefore, collaborative action is understood as support, an action expressed through facilitating and enabling the performance of certain actions, aimed at achieving (common) objectives. It can assume the form of one-way or two-way influences[5]. On the other hand, the term "cooperation" refers to a higher form of

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[3] D. Lalak, T. Pilch (eds.), *Elementarne pojęcia pedagogiki społecznej i pracy socjalnej*, GWP, Warsaw 1999, p. 345-346.

[4] W. Okoń, *Słownik pedagogiczny*, PWN, Warsaw 1987, p. 346.

[5] More on the subject: M. Łobocki, *W trosce o wychowanie w szkole*, Wydawnictwo Impuls, Cracow 2007.

a relationship, as it requires "communication between the cooperating subjects and their agreeing on the programme concerning joint action[6]." The constitutive feature, therefore, is determining the objectives and action programme together, and lending support to each other in achieving these objectives. Analysing this question, then, one needs to assume that not every collaborative action is cooperation[7], though the interpretation presented above situates them on the same continuum. In pedagogical literature[8], these terms are often used interchangeably; thus, it is acceptable to use them as synonyms.

Therefore, another key term in the above-mentioned context is integration. It consists in structural elements (individuals, groups) which form a given system showing a tendency to merge/become integrated, thus becoming a harmonious, compact, uniform and functional unity. In a special and obvious way it is related, for instance, with accepting common systems, values and norms, which signifies the emergence of intragroup cohesion[9]. This process can be described as a certain transformation of individuals, groups and institutions situated in the same territory and functioning within it as an integrated society. However, attention needs to be drawn to the fact that although social integration is related to merging certain structures into a coherent whole, it does not signify ultimate uniformisation. Integration "does not stand for unity in the sense of uniformity; it stands for uniformity in variety[10]." In an integrated society understood in this way, a fundamental role should always be played by the rights and obligations of its every member. It signifies having respect for otherness, regardless of the observed cultural, economic or religious differences, and at the same time undertaking activities aimed at preventing the marginalisation of individuals, groups and environments. Undoubtedly, social integration is an extremely difficult process due to the fact that it is related to harmonious and concerted functioning of more than a single group or social institution, which often differ from one another in numerous respects. In spite of objective and observed differences, they have to accept the conditions created in the course of direct interpersonal contacts which will allow them to function without conflicts. Integration mainly takes place through founding common institutions, and, above all, through creating common values, activity patterns, views and

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[6] Z. Frączek, B. Lulek, *Wybrane problemy pedagogiki rodziny*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2010, p. 97.

[7] B. Karolczuk-Biernacka, *Współzawodnictwo i współpraca w szkole*, WSiP, Warsaw 1987, p. 40.

[8] M. Łobocki, *W trosce o wychowanie*…, op. cit..; id., *Współdziałanie nauczycieli i rodziców w procesie wychowania*, Nasza Księgarnia, Warsaw 1985.

[9] A. Radziewicz-Winnicki, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warsaw 2008, p. 606.

[10] W. Jacher, *Zagadnienie integracji systemu społecznego – studium z zakresu teorii socjologii*, PWN, Warsaw 1976, p. 6.

interests. Such a society is characterised by cohesion, internal harmony and the ability to persist, to function normally and to develop[11]. Therefore, social integration as a state or a process would consist in the elements which form a given structure revealing the tendency to merge, thus forming a coherent whole, which always requires the acceptance of common systems, norms, assessments and values, and as a result leads to creating intragroup cohesion[12]. The factors which are decisive for a given society's attractiveness and therefore affect integration include: a common objective, collective actions which are a means leading to the pursued objective; affiliation with the group; interpersonal connections between particular persons, which occur when the relation with a given group ensues from the liking for its members[13]. The integration process is supported by all sorts of actions which make it possible to build social relations (meetings, planning and setting objectives together, as well as undertaking specific activities with a view to the common good)[14].

However, the actual educational activity is often characterised by a greater or lesser degree of disintegration. It is functional disintegration which consists in a lack of collaborative action between the particular educational institutions which exert influence on the pupil. This aspect of the integration of educational influences concerns agreeing on the methods, manners and means, as well as styles of functioning of particular groups or institutions which undertake educational activities towards specific groups (children, adolescents, adults). Sometimes, it may also be that even though educational institutions have adopted the same objectives and values, they function independently of one another instead of supporting one another. Moreover, there is the case of substantive disintegration, reflected in particular institutions and social groups adopting various, at times contradictory, educational patterns, ideals, values and principles. This aspect of disintegration takes place much more often, e.g. in terms of instilling educational patterns by the family and school or the family and peer groups[15]. To make matters clear, it needs to be added that education is not only about full integration, unification of objectives, or even of methods and means of influence, by particular institutions. What is important, on the other hand,

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[11] M. Winiarski, entry: "Integracja," in: D. Lalak, T. Pilch (eds.), *Elementarne pojęcia pedagogiki społecznej i pracy socjalnej*, GWP, Warsaw 1999, p. 108-109.

[12] A. Radziewicz-Winnicki, *Pedagogika społeczna w obliczu realiów codzienności*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warsaw 2008, p. 606.

[13] W. Jacher, *Zagadnienie integracji…*, op. cit., p. 28.

[14] B. Bąbska, M. Rymsza, *Organizowanie społeczności lokalnej – metodyka pracy środowiskowej*, Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wspierania Aktywności Lokalnej CAL, Warsaw 2014, p. 141.

[15] See: S. Kawula, "Zagadnienie integracji oddziaływań wychowawczych w środowisku," in: id. (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna. Dokonania – aktualność – perspektywy*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009, p. 361-362.

is accepting the specificity of their functioning and their complementarity in the educational process. Both types of disintegration, however, usually have a negative influence on the uniformity of the formation of people's personalities. Therefore, the fundamental social task is the question of integrating the functioning of the institutions of intentional education (the school) with the institutions of natural and indirect education (the family and the media). It is important that these institutions constitute a single whole, harmonised in terms of its educational functioning[16]. In this context, a need is expressed for a uniform educational system in the whole society, as well as within a specific social environment in which a given individual functions.

2. The current state of cooperation between the family and the school

Both social changes and new legal conditions open up schools to the parents, encouraging them to undertake collaborative actions and to lend their support. Within the last 15 years, as follows from e.g. the CBOS research from 2014[17], the opinions about the cooperation between schools and parents systematically improve. However, these data are still unsatisfactory, as only 7 in 10 surveyed parents have a positive view of this cooperation. Few parents (3 or 4 in 10) interviewed in this research expressed a positive opinion about their children's preparedness for coping with the problems of the modern world and for an active participation in the life of the local society as well as in social life in general. The data and the conclusions from external evaluations from the years 2013-2014 do not inspire optimism either: in spite of the fact that the vast majority of parents of students from all types of school declare that they know how to become involved in the work of the school, their actual participation is not particularly high.

The research conducted in this area demonstrates[18] that teachers and other members of school staff are open to the parents' opinions concerning the work of the school and the didactic process. The parents share their opinions and they are provided opportunities to do so. The same research also indicates that over half of the studied teachers (55%) believe that parents have little or very little influence on the didactic activities teachers undertake, or that they have no such influence whatsoever. Therefore, it can be concluded that the voice of the

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[16] Ibid., p. 362.

[17] Report from research by CBOS, Polska szkoła AD 2014, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM. POL/2014/K_093_14.PDF; (accessed on: 23.03.2017).

[18] J. Kołodziejczyk, H. Cieślak, "Analiza wyników ewaluacji zewnętrznych w odniesieniu do wymagania 'Rodzice są partnerami szkoły,'" in: G. Mazurkiewicz (ed.), *Ewaluacja w nadzorze pedagogicznym. Refleksje*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Cracow 2011, p. 239-240.

parents is not taken into consideration in planning the activities of the school in this area. This influence is recognised more clearly by teachers and school principals in relation to organisational matters and moral education. When it comes to the parents' stand on the matter, more than a half of them (58%) assess their influence on the life of the school as small or very small, or claim that they have no influence whatsoever. Moreover, schools state that parents offer various forms of support, which is partially confirmed by parents.

In Polish schools at all stages of education, an emphasis is mainly placed on one-way communication with the parents - informing them instead of exchanging information and maintaining a dialogue which contributes to the partnership of both these environments. The higher the stage of education, the lesser is the degree to which parents are offered the opportunity to voice their opinions about the school[19]. Moreover, it is alarming that teachers mostly contact parents in problem situations, when a student has bad marks or behavioural problems at school[20]. In a qualitative study concerning newly qualified teachers[21], the persons who were beginning the work in their profession stated that their training process lacked classes preparing them to communicate with the student's parents. At the beginning of their professional activities, they had difficulty coping with this area of work. Moreover, in their stories about parents, they often referred to the stereotype of a "parent with a claiming attitude[22]," which makes developing partnership with parents definitely more difficult. Relationships between teachers and parents quite often become asymmetrical in nature (deformation of the relationship), that is, parents are more dependent on teachers than teachers on parents. Such supremacy is manifested in e.g. the fact that it is the teacher who "points out [the parent] is wrong," "notifies" them of something, "reprimands" the parent[23]. Meanwhile, research indicates that pro-community-oriented schools (open to multilateral cooperation) have significantly higher achievements in the educational sphere than schools which place less weight on the relationship between the parent and the teacher. This superiority is mainly manifested in the fact that they better develop in students the ability to cooperate with others and to adapt; curio-

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[19] I. Starypan, *Szkoła widziana oczami rodziców. Analiza realizacji wymagań na podstawie danych ewaluacji zewnętrznej zebranych od rodziców*, p 30, http://www.npseo.pl/data/various/files/Szko%C5%82a%20w%20oczach%20rodzic%C3%B3w_5_09_2012.pdf (accessed on: 27.03.2017).

[20] M. Polak, *O komunikacji nauczycieli z rodzicami*, retrieved from: http://www.edunews.pl/edytoriale/1936-o-komunikacji-nauczycieli-z-rodzicami (accessed on: 27.03.2017).

[21] D. Walczak, *Początkujący nauczyciele. Raport z badania jakościowego*, Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warsaw 2012, p. 42 -43.

[22] Ibid., p. 85.

[23] M. Winiarski, "Współpraca rodziców i nauczycieli, jej implikacje edukacyjne i determinanty," in: S. Kawula (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna...*, op. cit., p. 442.

sity and creative skills; a positive attitude towards the school; independence, ingenuity[24].

When it comes to mutual expectations, research shows[25] that what parents most often expect from the teachers is fair and reliable assessment of children's and adolescents' educational achievements, as well as conducting classes in an interesting and understandable way. Expectations expressed in this manner do not show the school in a good light, as they inform about certain shortcomings probably related to a lack of reliability and validity of the given marks, a lack of diversification of didactic contents of classes, or using incomprehensible language. However, this situation can be explained in two ways. Firstly, with the parents' claiming attitude towards the school, expressed in the conviction that their children are the most talented and should be given the best marks. It can also attest to teachers' lack of objectivity and a schematic manner of conducting classes. The same research also indicates teachers' expectations of parents. They expect, above all, consistency and firmness in dealing with their children. This problem is revealed by helplessness of some teachers and parents in the face of educational difficulties related to young people's lack of discipline (resulting from parents' consent to dress frivolously, relativism of values). In the second place, there is the expectation that parents will take systematic interest in the educational achievements of their children, and, as a result, maintain regular contacts with the teachers and use their guidance about dealing with their children.

In the parents' consciousness, it is more and more often that such a pattern of views and attitudes is formed which is orientated towards accommodation, or adaptation[26] in the contacts with the school. Research[27] also confirms that the phenomenon of inertia (passivity[28]) as a type of relationship between the functioning of the family and the school is still quite frequent. On the other

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[24] Ibid., p. 448.

[25] B. Lulek, *Współpraca szkoły, rodziny i środowiska*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2008, p. 180-186.

[26] This link between the activities of the family and the school occupies a lower position in the hierarchy. It means that it describes a lower quality of the links between both these elements. They consist in parents' positive attitude towards the school's requirements, but at the same time they are limited to such behaviour exclusively. A distinguishing feature of this type of relationships is their one-way nature - from the school to the parents (e.g. complying with the directions of the school authorities).

[27] S. Kawula, "Zagadnienie integracji oddziaływań wychowawczych w środowisku," in: id. (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna...*, op. cit., p. 368.

[28] In this case, educational initiatives also follow one direction, i.e. from the school to the family, but are not accepted. They are in a way ignored or overlooked by parents and do not produce any positive response. For instance, parents often act indifferently when the school invites them to additional meetings.

hand, the most favourable type of bonds - that is, participation[29], which is quite the ideal, occurs rarely and usually in exceptional, experimental conditions, including only a small proportion of parents of school-aged children. The attitudes of opposition[30] are similarly rare.

3. Author's research

The research which was carried out for the purposes of the article was conducted on parents (160 persons) and teachers (154) from 16 primary schools (years I-III) in Lublin Voivoideship. The interviewed parents are aged from 23 to 58 years, the vast majority of them (80%) are women. In turn, teachers are aged from 21 to 60 years. The vast majority of them (87%) are women. Research results allowed the author to answer the following questions: what are the mutual expectations of parents and teachers? How do parents and teachers evaluate mutual cooperation? What difficulties do they observe in mutual cooperation?

a. Mutual expectations of parents and teachers

Effective educational work requires close cooperation between the parent and the teacher. Both sides can work together only when they are convinced that the undertaken cooperation makes sense. It is worth posing a question whether teachers and parents see sense in undertaking joint activities. The answers given by the respondents indicate that they see cooperation with parents as an important factor of the educational process.

Both teachers and parents were asked in the research whether they think that parents should actively participate in the life of the school and the initiatives it undertakes. Only 2% of parents believe that becoming involved in the matters of the school attended by their child is pointless and unnecessary. In turn, only 1% of teachers share this belief. Both teachers and parents are convinced of the need to participate in the life of the school their child attends and to become involved in the matters regarding it.

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[29] Participation in activities is the most favourable, in educational terms, type of links between the elements of the environmental educational system and stands for (in the case of the family and the school) the parents' attitude of partnership and inspiration towards the tasks of the school.

[30] It refers to the clearly detrimental educational attitudes of some parents, sometimes even bordering on the phenomena of care and educational dysfunctions. Such an attitude of opposition towards the tasks of the school on the part of the parents generally constitutes a serious obstacle which makes it impossible to establish a dialogue between the school and home. This type of links is being observed less and less frequently in our reality, but the fact of its existence constitutes a serious threat to care and educational influences.
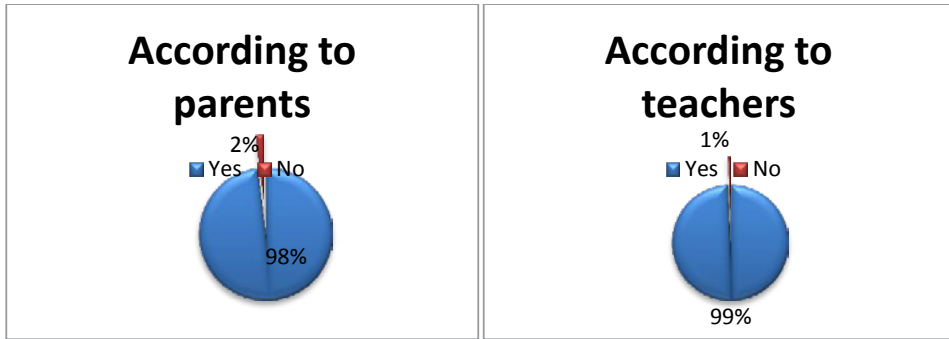
Chart no. 1. Parents' participation in the life of the school
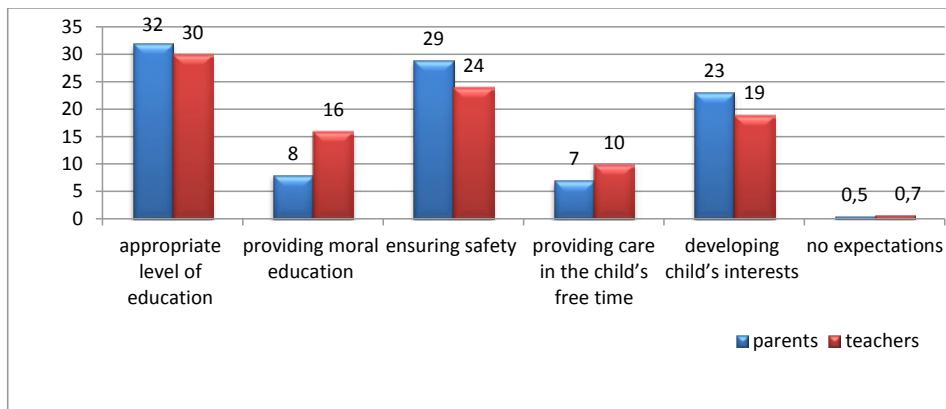
Source: author's research.

Chart no. 2. Parents' expectations regarding mutual cooperation

Source: author's research.

The data in chart no. 2 indicates that what parents most expect from teachers is an appropriate level of education (32%), ensuring the safety of their child (29%), developing his or her interests (23%), providing moral education (8%), providing care of the child in the child's free time (7%). Only two parents (that is 0.5%) acknowledged that they had no specific expectations of teachers and the school. Information collected from teachers is to a large extent identical to what parents expect from their mutual cooperation. Namely, the largest group of studied teachers (30%) state that parents usually expect from them an appropriate level of education, ensuring the safety of their child (24%), developing his or her interests (19%), providing moral education (16%), providing care of the

child in the child's free time (10%). Three respondents (0.7%) state that parents have no expectations of teachers and the school. Therefore, significant differences can be observed in the issue of providing moral education to children. According to teachers, parents (twice) more often expect it from them than voice this need themselves.

Table no. 1. The school's ways of encouraging parents to cooperate

Activities undertaken by the school	According to parents		According to teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Informing parents about the life of the class/school	65	28	84	27
Informing parents systematically about children's progress and difficulties	63	27	69	22
Encouraging parents and enabling them to become involved in the matters of the school	47	20	77	24.5
Asking for parents' opinions on the school and taking them into consideration in school activities	17	7	51	16
Supporting parents' educational activities	33	14	33	10.5
No activities in this area	7	3	0	0
Total	232	100	314	100

Source: author's research.

The data in the table demonstrates most of all that according to teachers, parents are often - and in a number of ways - encouraged to actively participate in all that is taking place at school, as attested by a bigger number of teachers indicating various forms of such encouragement. At the same time, it should be emphasised that none of the teachers stated that school does not undertake any activities aimed at encouraging parents to participate in its functioning. Among parents, as many as 7 persons (3% of the respondents) expressed this opinion. Both groups expressed almost an identical evaluation of the activities related to informing parents about the life of the school (28% - parents, 27% - teachers), providing systematic and thorough information about children's difficulties and progress (27% - parents, 22% - teachers), enabling parents to participate in the life of the school (20% - parents, slightly more teachers - 24.5%), supporting parents' educational activities (14% - parents, 10.5% - teachers). A clear difference is observed when it comes to taking into consideration parents' opinions in school activities. Only 17 parents (7%) claim that school employees and authorities take into consideration their suggestions concerning the functioning of the school, while twice as many teachers - 51 persons, or 16% - express the same opinion.

It is easy to notice that the presented image of the forms of cooperation which teachers offer to parents crumbles when confronted with parents' opinions. In case of each of the analysed forms, the percentage of teachers who claim that they use a given form of encouraging parents to cooperate is much higher than the percentage of parents who confirm that such a suggestion was made to them. The only exception concerns support for parents' educational activities, in the case of which the group of teachers who confirm using such a form is identical to the group of parents. There is a certain discrepancy concerning the statement that the school does not undertake any activities in order to encourage parents' cooperation. 3% parents and none of the studied teachers expressed this opinion. However, the largest discrepancy concerns the statement that the school collects parents' opinions about it and takes them into consideration in its activities. It is difficult not to have the impression that parents may feel that their opinions are overlooked by the school which only allows for their apparent influence on its everyday functioning.

b. Evaluation of mutual cooperation

Getting to know one another's opinions about the quality of mutual cooperation is a factor which offers a chance of modifying and improving it. Below, you will find the data showing how both groups evaluate this area.
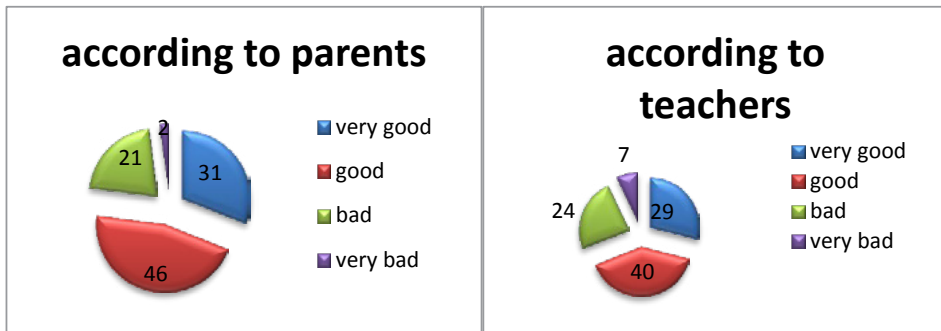

Chart no. 3. Evaluation of mutual cooperation according to parents and teachers

Source: author's research.

According to the data in chart no. 3, parents mostly (73 persons, that is 46%), give a positive evaluation of their cooperation with teachers. Every third parent (31%) claims it is very good, 21% - that it is bad, and 3 persons (2%) - very bad. Similarly, teachers mostly (62 persons, 40%) assess their cooperation with parents as good, 29% as very good, 24% as bad, and 7% as very bad.

Moreover, parents were asked how they evaluate their cooperation with teachers. A vast majority of them (69%) describes their cooperation as adaptation consisting in parents adopting a positive attitude towards the requirements imposed by the school, but at the same time it is strictly limited to these behaviours. Every fourth parent (24%) claims that they cooperate and co-participate in everything that happens at the school, which demonstrates parents' attitude of partnership and inspiration towards the school's tasks. 5% parents acknowledge that they are indifferent to activities undertaken at the school. In turn, 2% indicate that they oppose the school's tasks.

The teachers were asked the same question. Almost half of them (47%) describe the cooperation between parents and teachers as adaptation, while 27.2% - as participation. A large group - every fourth teacher - characterise it as passivity and indifference. Only one teacher (0.6%) sees it as opposition. This tendency has also been confirmed in other studies[31].

c. Difficulties observed by parents and teachers in mutual cooperation

The family and the school, as the basic educational environments which undoubtedly have the greatest influence on children's development, should cooperate with one another. Therefore, it is worth asking the question: what is it that hinders carrying out this task for both sides?
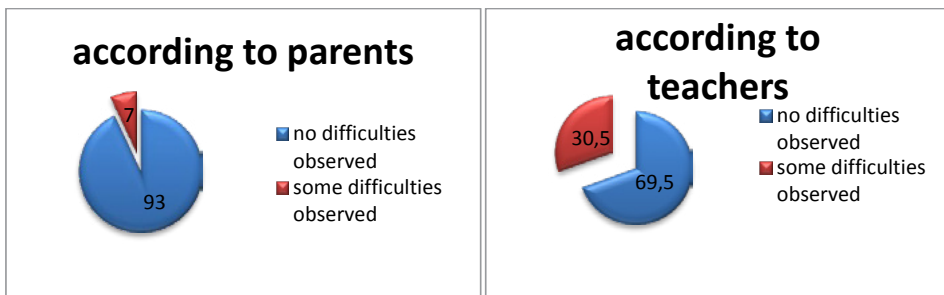

Chart no. 4. Difficulties in the cooperation between parents and teachers

Source: author's research.

According to chart no. 4, a vast majority of parents - 149 persons (93%) do not see any difficulties in their cooperation with teachers. Only 11 persons (7%) state

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[31] S. Kawula, "Zagadnienie integracji oddziaływań wychowawczych w środowisku," in: id. (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna...*, op. cit., p. 368.

that they occur. Teachers' opinions are quite different. As many as one third of them (47 persons - 30.5%) observe difficulties in their cooperation with parents.

Therefore, the respondents were asked what it was that these difficulties concerned.

The problem which was most often observed by parents was "too little time teachers have for parents" (46%). Subsequently, "lack of teachers' openness to parents' suggestions" (15%), "a negative attitude towards students" (15%) and "teachers focusing on problems and conflicts exclusively instead of on children's capabilities and talents" (15%). Moreover, 8% indicate "too long and badly organised parent-teacher meetings." When this question was asked, it turned out that parents were willing to talk and to supplement their statements with additional information about parent-teacher meetings. They indicated a few important aspects. Most of all, they highlight "the lack of information concerning the progress and difficulties of gifted children;" the meetings "are limited to marks and problems, and our children's potential and capabilities are overlooked."

These are the fundamental reasons which could indirectly point to the sources - on the side of the school - of parents' dissatisfaction with their cooperation with the school. Parents' conviction that they have no actual influence on the life of the school emphasises the disadvantageous state of this cooperation.

On the other hand, what teachers describe to be the fundamental difficulty is the parents' lack of time and interest (40%). Subsequently, difficulties in communication with parents (14%) are mentioned, very low attendance rates of parents at meetings with teachers (12%), discrepancy between the parents' and the teachers' educational methods (10%), parents' helplessness in situations of parenting problems (8%), as well as parents' overprotection of children (4%), inability to accept criticism (4%), unwillingness to work with the child at home (4%) and difficulties in evaluating the actual capabilities of the child (4%). Analysing the obtained data, one can observe that studied teachers mostly seek the reasons for unsatisfactory cooperation between the school and the family home in the behaviours and opinions of their students' parents. Partial justification for the obtained data can be found in the results of numerous studies[32]. On their basis, we can conclude that it is the lack of time that is the basic reason behind parents' limited activity at school.

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[32] Cf.: „Szkoła współpracy". Uczniowie i rodzice kapitałem społecznym nowoczesnej szkoły – ogólnopolski projekt systemowy Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej realizowany w partnerstwie z Fundacją Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej od marca 2013 do czerwca 2015 roku ("The school of cooperation." Students and parents as the social capital of the modern school - a system project for Poland of the Ministry of National Education implemented in partnership with the Foundation for the Development of Local Democracy from March 2013 to June 2015), http://www.szkolawspolpracy.pl (accessed on 13.12.2016).

In order to draw a complete picture of the addressed problem issue, both groups of respondents were asked the same question: which of the initiatives undertaken in the area of cooperation between the school and the family do they consider to be particularly important? The results are presented in chart no. 5.
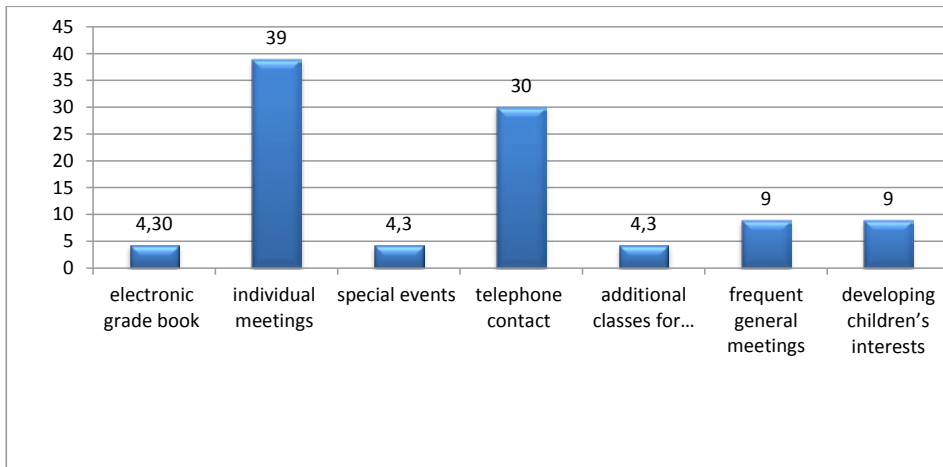

Chart no. 5. Initiatives which parents evaluated positively and considered important

Source: author's research.

The initiatives which the interviewed parents considered as particularly valuable include, above all, the possibility of making use of individual forms of contact - especially such as individual meetings with the teacher (39%) and permanent telephone contact (30%). What they also consider important are frequent general parent-teacher meetings (9%) and additional classes aimed at developing children's interests (9%). Activities evaluated positively by parents also include: the possibility of using an electronic grade book (4.3%); special events in which children, teachers and parents participate (4.3%); as well as additional classes organised for students with learning difficulties (4.3%).

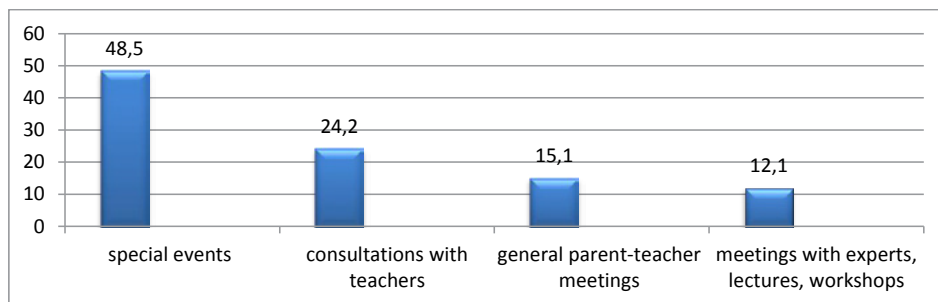Teachers were asked the same question.

Chart no. 6. Initiatives which teachers evaluated positively and considered important

Source: author's research.

Chart no. 6 indicates that what teachers consider particularly important are special events (48.5%) which provide an opportunity for children, parents and teachers to meet. Subsequently, individual cyclic teachers' consultations are mentioned (24.2%); general parent-teacher meetings (15.1%); as well as providing parents with information concerning the education of children through e.g. lectures, workshops, meetings with experts (12.1%).

The obtained research conclusions seem to indicate that relationships between the family and the school can be described as a form of cooperation. However, what is objectionable is the manner of implementation of the constructive quality of cooperation which consists in determining the objectives and action programme together and lending support to one another in achieving these objectives. As the presented analyses demonstrate, teachers keenly listen to parents and their suggestions, but parents often feel that school only creates an apparent possibility of influencing[33] its everyday functioning. And even though teachers are fully aware of the necessity of cooperation with parents, and they claim that they need their support in achieving the overarching objective of students' integral development, on the other hand, they consider the community of actions with parents to be significant only in the sphere of educational influences. They show far less interest in terms of other planes of cooperation; they find it difficult to acknowledge parents' right to co-decide about the matters of everyday life of the class and school and of their functioning.

Therefore, on the basis of the described study it is difficult to refer to the educational influences of parents and teachers as "integration." The factors which

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[33] This tendency can also be observed in other studies concerning this area: J. Kołodziejczyk, H. Cieślak, "Analiza wyników ewaluacji zewnętrznych w odniesieniu do wymagania 'Rodzice są partnerami szkoły,'" in: G. Mazurkiewicz (ed.), *Ewaluacja w nadzorze pedagogicznym. Refleksje*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Cracow 2011, p. 239.

affect full integration of particular environments include: a common objective, collective actions which are a means leading to the pursued objective; affiliation with the group; but also interpersonal connections between particular persons, which occur when the relation with a given group ensues from the liking for its members[34]. In spite of the observed deficiencies, all subjects should undoubtedly strive to create such a school in which every child and adolescent, but also every parent and teacher is invited to talk, work and play together. Parents and teachers should above all be united in a single educational front. In order to achieve it, three basic conditions have to be met: getting to know one another, communicating with and understanding one another skilfully, as well solving problems together.

4. In search for the way of optimising the cooperation between parents and teachers

The effectiveness of the cooperation between the family and the school is conditioned by a number of factors, whose implementation determines the quality of the undertaken actions. At the same time, researchers show that the effectiveness of a child's learning, especially in the first years of primary school, depends to a large extent on the level of parents' involvement. Therefore, it is worth developing such a model of cooperation which will produce the most comprehensive and best solutions to problems possible; another beneficial idea is to assume the position of an ally, a confederate. In order for that to happen, a few fundamental conditions have to be met; first of all, the parties involved have to get to know one another, be able to communicate, solve problems together and support one another in achieving the common objective.

Getting to know one another is the basis for a better understanding of one another and for the effectiveness of the undertaken actions. It is only in cooperation with the parents, the nearest environment of the student, that the teacher can pursue - at an appropriate level - the objectives he or she is to accomplish. Parents should also be concerned with getting to know the teacher, as the former cannot shift the responsibility for their child onto the teacher, but they are also accountable for the sphere of his or her life related to school-based education. It should be assumed, therefore, that the teacher's task is to support the parents in performing their functions in relation to the child. Thus, both sides should be open to cooperation and willing to work together.

The second, equally important condition of maintaining an alliance is effective communication. Though communication between teachers and parents is

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[34] W. Jacher, *Zagadnienie integracji…*, op. cit., p. 28.

often understood as a not very complicated case of making contact in order to exchange information, it is not easy. Sometimes it even becomes a major problem, an obstacle effectively blocking various forms of cooperation. Indeed, it is quite frequent when a teacher, attempting to reach a parent, feels as if he or she was trying to break through a wall. That wall is created by, for example, the parents' lack of time (because of a demanding job), unsuitable meeting schedules, or often mere aversion to the school. In a number of cases, parents simply avoid showing up at school in order not to reveal their problems (caused by dysfunctions in the family, or even pathology within it). Incidentally, a parent seeking contact with a teacher often crashes against a yet another wall, built, for instance, of habits and stereotypes shaped years ago. Therefore, the parent perceives the teacher as an official working for the system, who cannot hold a conversation like a human being, but provides consultation, and the school - as an agenda of the state's control over the society. It should also be pointed out that the teacher is a person whom the parent often has difficulty understanding, as they both use different communication codes. It is of little significance, however, whether this code is developed or not - if it is not the same, the chance of the potential partners to cooperate diminishes. On the other hand, it should be emphasised that the teacher as a conscious initiator of cooperation[35] should never give up on attempting to communicate with the parent and establish contact with him or her. It is the teachers who are expected to create a friendly, peaceful atmosphere of dialogue; to involve all the parents in cooperation; to accept criticism and calmly analyse it; to make the first move and initiate good cooperation; to reject prejudice and be ready to make contact with any parent. It is essential that the dominating types of contact are: a. direct contact (as it integrates the persons involved, shapes trust, minimises distance which impedes contact and the exchange of information); b. contact at the school premises (which makes the school the main place and plane of cooperation); c. voluntary contact (which favours treating collaborative action as a right and privilege and not an unpleasant duty); d. contact which has the nature of an open dialogue, which causes an increase in the parents' sense of subjectivity.

The third, equally important condition for the parents and teachers to remain allies is solving problems together. It would be favourable, then, to employ well-known and effective methods during these activities. One of the suggested methods is a discussion, or the metaplan technique[36], facilitating decision-making.

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[35] To learn more about communication between parents and teachers, see e.g.: M. Babiuch, *Jak współpracować z rodzicami „trudnych" uczniów?,* WSP, Warsaw 2002; K. Koletyńska, H. Sitko, *Spotkania z rodzicami – inaczej, ciekawiej, skuteczniej,* WSP, Warsaw 2004.

[36] Collaborative problem solving follows the scheme of: 1. the teacher initiating the discussion, suggesting a topic which should be formulated as an easily comprehensible problem (e.g. What can we do so that our children are not afraid to attend school?); 2. the

It should be a sort of contribution to all analyses and talks. It is worth making sure that all the participants are involved in the discussion. As in this case we are dealing with groups with varied attitudes towards cooperation with the school, this explains the parents' passive approach. It is a well-known fact that decisions made by everybody involved, as well as finding solutions to problems together, lead to identification with the group and with the adopted resolutions. Cooperation between parents and teachers would require, then, parents' deeper involvement in the child's education and taking even greater responsibility for its course. Another interesting tool[37] which effectively facilitates establishing cooperation and overcoming the arising difficulties is formative assessment. It consists in, among others, providing the student and the parents with feedback about the student's progress, so that the parents become involved in the educational process to the greatest extent possible. This task is undoubtedly difficult to accomplish. It requires from the teacher to transfer a part of his or her authority, but also responsibility, to the parent, and from the parent - a decidedly active and open attitude. An interesting suggestion concerning this task is making a contract between the teacher and the parent. It is a sort of an agreement; a set of mutual commitments. When both parties accept its contents, the contract can play an important role in cooperation. Such an agreement[38] can be signed

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teacher first suggests discussing the questions of "how is it now?; how should it be?" in two groups; each group selects a representative who sticks pieces of paper below the questions and comments on statements; 3. the teacher poses another question: "why is the situation not the way it should be?" - and then the answer to this question is sought (this time, groups can be different - the idea is that people get to know one another and are able to try out various forms of communication) and pieces of paper are again stuck to the poster: on the one side, the statements concerning the work of the school, and on the other, those concerning the influences of the parents and other people; 4. the teacher writes down the title of the last part of the meeting at the bottom of the poster ("Conclusions") and encourages the participants to formulate a brief summary on the basis of their reflections. The conclusions following the formula of "What should be done to make the situation the way it should be?" will easily be made as answers to this question. These conclusions (formed as tasks) will be written down in the top part of the poster in a speech bubble and they conclude the poster. A very significant step is the automatic division of tasks between the participants of the discussion, agreeing on the deadline for completing them and on the date of the next meeting, which will boost the work.

(M. Mendel, *Rodzice i nauczyciele jako sprzymierzeńcy*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk 2007, p. 128.)

[37] B. Jankowski, "Rodzice – aktywni uczestnicy procesu edukacji," *Dyrektor Szkoły*, 2014, no. 5, p. 46-48.

[38] The document should comprise two parts: 1. basic commitments and tasks of the teacher and the parents throughout the period of the child's education at school; 2. the extent of tasks related to a specific child, closely connected with his or her educational needs and developmental conditions. The adopted commitments are implemented during the school year, and once a semester the parents and teachers meet in order to determine to what extent they succeeded in implementing them. What is decisive for the effectiveness of the contract is the assumption that the organisers of the meeting

with all the parents at a given school. Another option is to adopt certain criteria according to which the agreement will only concern selected students, e.g. those with special educational needs.

The fourth condition favouring the integration of educational influences undertaken by the family and the school is constant mutual support in implementing this process. The term "support" is often identified with sustaining, preventing something from falling, leaning on or against something[39]. In social pedagogy[40], support is an interpersonal relation whose essence lies in reciprocity and an exchange of benefits; it is a peculiar manner in which the subjects of the relationship accompany one another; these may include persons, families, social groups, or even communities in difficult, stress-inducing, critical situations. The fundamental goal of support activities is overcoming crises, solving problems, improving the living conditions, and, above all, strengthening subjects through e.g. transferring information, emotions, means of action and service, values; showing recognition; as well as sustaining social bonds and undertaking collaborative action.

Summing up the conditions of the effective integration of the educational influences of the family and the school, the optimal model, it can be presumed, is the one which assumes authentic, three-subject, partnership cooperation[41] between the potential co-participants of the relationship, i.e. at least parents, children-students and teachers. This relationship should be based on multi-faceted community bonds: the will to be guided by universal human values (a community of acting); achieving the common and personal good at the same time (a community of values - including good) and on a sense of obligation to one another (a community of obligation).

At the same time, it should be emphasised that the relationships between the family and the school are changing and developing according to the will, aspirations and capabilities of their participants. This process is simultaneously stimulated from the outside by various factors of the nearer and farther social environment. In relation to the above, the implementation of the model outlined here is to a large extent hampered by crisis situations which the Polish society

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do not intend to hold the other side accountable for whether they have met their obligations. It is rather the need for diagnosing whether the adopted forms of support are effective, if they are being implemented at all and if they should perhaps be changed or modified.

[39] B. Dunaj (ed.), *Popularny słownik języka polskiego*, Wyd. Warsaw 2000, p. 796.

[40] E.g. S. Kawula, "Czynniki i sieć wsparcia społecznego w życiu człowieka," in: S. Kawula (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna. Dokonania - aktualność - perspektywy*, Wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009, p. 115-134; G. Gajewska, *Wsparcie dziecka w rozwoju. Konteksty opieki i edukacji*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Zielona Góra 2009.

[41] See: A.W. Janke A.W., Kawula S., "Stosunki rodziny i szkoły. Integracja i syntonia," in: S. Kawula, J. Brągiel, A.W. Janke (eds.*), Pedagogika rodziny. Obszary i panorama problematyki,* Toruń 2009, p. 243.

is dealing with and which are difficult to overcome. The most serious negative effects can be caused by the moral crisis reflected in the relaxation of norms, evaluations and principles of conduct, especially in people's distorted attitude to good and evil.

The presented situation gives an impression that a radical change of the model of cooperation between the school and the student's family home, based on the teacher's dominating position, is impossible as for now. The reasons for that can be sought in the school subjects' lack of readiness to introduce it. In spite of the noticed deficiencies, all subjects should undoubtedly strive to create such school in which every child and every young person, but also every parent and teacher will be invited to talk, play and work together, while the school will become a school of cooperation.

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Streszczenie

Zagadnienie współpracy między poszczególnymi osobami czy grupami jest jednym z trudniejszych zadań jakie jawią się na wielu płaszczyznach funkcjonowania człowieka. O tym, jak trudno znaleźć obszar porozumienia oraz prowadzić twórczy i rzeczowy dialog pokazują ostatnie wydarzenia zarówno w Polsce jak i na świecie. Niejednokrotnie przyczyną braku porozumienia jest tzw. czynnik ludzki, często jednak tą barierą jest sprzeczność interesów.

W procesie kształcenia i wychowania dziecka nadrzędnym celem jest jego wszechstronny rozwój. Środowisko rodzinne i szkoła są ważnymi nośnikami wartości. Przyjmowanie zaś zgodnej wizji rozwoju wydaje się filarem spójnego oddziaływania oraz głównym warunkiem osiągnięcia założonego wspólnie celu wychowania, jakim jest integralny rozwój wychowanka. Dlatego też, zarówno rodzice jak i nauczyciele, kierując się nade wszystko dobrem dziecka, powinni za wszelką cenę zabiegać o dobre relacje i integrację podejmowanych oddziaływań, nawet wtedy, gdy nie jest to łatwe i proste. Istotne jest, by werbalne deklaracje miały odzwierciedlenie w codziennym życiu i postępowaniu obu stron.

W niniejszym artykule starano się ukazać aktualny stan współpracy między dwoma podstawowymi środowiskami wychowawczymi oraz wskazać model optymalny. W tym celu m.in. dokonano przeglądu i analizy dostępnych badań oraz przeprowadzono badania własne, polegające na analizie wypowiedzi rodziców i nauczycieli - wychowawców.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzice, nauczyciele, współdziałanie, współpraca, integracja.

Summary

The question of cooperation between particular persons or groups is one of the more challenging tasks which appear on numerous planes of human functioning. The difficulty of finding an area of

understanding and establishing a creative and substantive dialogue is attested by the recent events both in Poland and abroad. Quite frequently, the reason behind the lack of understanding is the so-called human factor; it is a conflict of interest, however, that is often responsible for creating such a barrier.

In the process of teaching and educating children, the superior purpose is their comprehensive development. The family environment and the school are important carriers of values, while adopting a coherent vision of a child's development seems to be a pillar of consistent influence and the main condition for achieving the common goal, that is the child's integral development. For that reason, both parents and teachers, in the interest of the child's well-being, should seek good mutual relations and proper cooperation at all costs, even when it is not easy or simple. It is essential that verbal declarations are reflected in the everyday life and actions of both sides.

This article attempts to show the current state of cooperation between two basic educational environments and indicate the optimal model. For this purpose, among others the available studies were reviewed and analyzed, and own research was carried out based on the analysis of the statements of parents and teachers-educators.

Key words: parents, teachers, collaborative action, cooperation, integration.