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School Culture as an Object of Research¹

Abstract

Though it is laborious to examine the culture of the school, researchers have been endeavouring to empirically apprehend it since the 1960's. A variety of research jobs have been carried out, of various starting points, ways of materialisation, and conclusions. The present text indicates a way of classifying these studies according to the purposes they had been assigned. Though the list of examples is not entirely complete nor is the classification definite, a conclusion is clear and evident: in most cases, the culture of the school is not examined in order to grasp this culture itself. Much more often, the culture of the school is examined as a starting point, a pre-condition, or a tool to explore another object of the researcher's interest outside the culture itself, such as the quality and evaluation of the school's overall performance, the quality of the learning process, or the school's developmental potential.

Key words: *school culture; purposes of research; methods of research; culture of individual school; areas of school culture; features of a successful school; features of culture of school culture(s); individual, collective, and organisational learning; perception of school culture*

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Introduction

The curious and almost ephemeral, though influential phenomenon which is nowadays called *school culture*, has been contemplated in education science and schooling for long². As Walter wrote in 1932: “Schools have a culture that is definitely their own. There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them. There are games, which are sublimated wars, teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning them. There are traditions and traditionalists waging their world-old battle against innovators” (after Deal, Peterson, 1999, p. 2). Nevertheless, school culture had long remained neglected by researchers in education, some systematic exploration having only started in the last decades.

Today, school culture is examined from miscellaneous viewpoints, using diverse methods, and following various intentions. The educational research of school culture is inspired by many disciplines. For example, management is a field in which many relevant questions are analysed, such as how the culture unites people within an institution, how a head-teacher can influence the culture, and which tools he/she owns to do so. Anthropologists use culture concepts accentuating linguistic codes and the implementation of school culture elements within particular ethnic groups, in the context of a wider society. Sociologists explore the social structure of culture, the variety of culture forms, and the role of culture in conflicts. The educational research of school culture points out the values which uphold individual and collective (organisational) behaviour (Berg, 2000; Deal, Peterson, 1990; and others).

The variety of options of school culture exploration makes the topic nearly inexhaustible. The following review can therefore hardly be complete. The criterion of our classification has been the purpose for which the studies were prepared and performed. Such purposes, it seems, may be classified in six categories, as listed below. Though before this classification is presented, a brief history of the examination of school culture should be mentioned, and the limits of the empirical approach to this phenomenon indicated.

² The definition of the term *school culture*, including some connotations, is analysed more thoroughly in *Hledání pojmu kultura školy* (Pol et al., 2002)

On the history of school culture exploration

School culture in the proper sense of the word has only recently attracted the attention of researchers. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, some influential (and often provocative) theories said that the social background of students was more important for the academic prosperity than the educational role of schools (e.g. Averch, 1971; Coleman, 1966; Plowden, 1967). A number of consequent studies dealt with specific subjects, such as the evaluation of the curriculum, pupils' personal problems, etc. Analyses comprehensively examining the school as a whole appeared a little later, occasionally in the 60's and more evidently in the 70's. Helpful for the exploration of school culture were especially the studies coining the terms of *school climate* and *school ethos* and pinpointing the importance of the school milieu. A strong American inspiration was, for instance, the *Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire – OCQD* by Halpin & Crofts (1963). Finlayson, a British author, employed the *OCQD* to design his *School Climate Index (SCI)*, (1970, 1973), as part of the *Comprehensive Schools Feasibility Study*, meant to devise tools of measuring the cognitive, affective, and social characteristics of schools. These tools were intended to examine the then originating type of secondary schools (*comprehensive schools*) in the UK.

During the 70's and 80's, noticeable emancipation of studies in educational management could be witnessed. An important event was the appearance of school effectiveness studies in the US. Brookover et al. (1978) and Edmonds (1979) were among the first to prove that – though schools cannot rectify the squeeze of the society – the influence of the school is strong, changeable, and perfectible. The research of school effectiveness soon gained importance. Among the first European results of this stream of exploration was the work of Rutter et al. (1979) in which *ethos* is coined, the necessity of the school effectiveness research is stressed and, mainly, the evident relation between school ethos and the effectiveness of secondary schools is indicated. Attention to school culture exploration was on the increase.

A new movement aiming at the improvement of schools came up in the 1980's (*school improvement movement*). Its protagonists underlined the importance of school culture and the system of values within a school as change-enabling factors (e.g. Fullan, 1982). Simultaneously, another wave of interest in management and theories of organisation was raised in the US. The cynosure of school culture studies was then to be found in the organisational culture, leadership, and the relation between them. Beside the organisational culture (Schein, 1985), these studies focused on efficient management (Torrington, Weightman, Johns, 1989), educational leadership, accentuating the educational job of the school (Weick, 1988;

Nias, 1989), and the explanation of the relation between school culture and change (Sarason, 1985).

Currently, the exploration of school culture is performed at the level of a specific school (cultural analysis of a specific school), rather than at the level of a certain system of schools. The 1990's also witnessed a shift of the researchers' attention from the school as a whole towards individual sub-cultures (teachers, pupils, teaching, decision-making, etc.) or towards partial elements or processes which are perceived as relevant for, manifested through, or influenced by the school culture. This is explained as due to varied developments: theoretical progress, increasing focus on individual functioning within a social context, or new educational policies in many countries (underlining such educational aspects as leadership, curriculum, learning and teaching processes, improvement, academic outputs). Many consider these issues as important dimensions of school culture (Prosser, 1999). Studies deal with teachers (Acker, 1990; Berg, 2000; Hargreaves 1994), pupils (Rudduck, 1996), racism in schools (Gillborn, 1995), discipline (Johnstone, Munn, 1992), and other subjects. Frequently, such subjects get another dimension if associated with a wider cultural issue (e.g. the needs of a special education in relation to cultural innovations).

While the earliest studies dealt with the recognition of the phenomenon of school culture, later efforts focused on possible changes in schools and, thus, on the process of managing the culture. One of the basic theoretical models, enabling schools to map the process of change, was presented by Hargreaves (1995). His conviction is that the "mapping" schools have better chances to grasp and cultivate school culture.

On the options and limits of school culture exploration

Researchers always face the difficult task to grasp the complex and unsettled phenomenon of school culture³. Typically, it is characterised as a hard-to-define but omnipresent and relatively stable factor, consisting of convictions, values, understanding, views, meanings, norms, symbols, rituals, ceremonies, and preferred behaviour. It is manifested in the behaviour of people within the school. In other words, school culture consists of an empirical base and of change and quality potentials. Its crux is usually values. Divided into levels, school culture is usually

³ The attitudes to the definition of *school culture* are more thoroughly examined in another study, to be published soon in *Pedagogika*. The present text gives a limited summary of characteristics of, apparently, very typical relation to school culture.

identified – in both its static and dynamic versions – in its trans-rational stratum (values are perceived as metaphysical, based on convictions, ethic codes, or moral insights), in its rational stratum (values are based on the social context, norms, habits, and expectations, depending on collective consideration), and in its sub-rational stratum (values are understood as personal preferences and feelings of behavioural nature, rooted in emotions). School culture is related to outer and inner school environments, it has much in common with operational and educational processes, and is important for the development of the school. It is formed in its principles and manifestations by the history of a certain educational institution. However, the history and traditions of schools in general are of great influence. School culture has its formal and informal aspects. Usually, there is co-existence of a dominating culture and some sub-cultures (those of pupils, specific groups within the staff, and so on). School culture is sometimes described as the “social cement”, holding the school together, or as a universal term for all interconnected sub-cultures, or as the recognition of “what-there-is and what-there-should-be”. Research procedures are selected accordingly (e.g. Sheil, 1985; Dalin, Rolff, 1993; Martin, 1985; Prosser, 1999).

Attention is also paid to the wide context of school culture – the relation between the general situation of society and the educational and organisational operation of the school (e.g. Holtappels, 1995). Culture is often mentioned along with other terms, sometimes confusingly so.⁴ These adjacent terms, such *school climate*, have been much more intensely explored than school culture. The expression *school culture* is heavily affected by the manner in which culture is defined outside education, thus impeding the process of “operationalisation” for its empirical research.

As it is, school culture can mainly be judged through:

- the practice, i.e. the way people in the school conduct themselves (internal symptoms)
- the values people in the school profess

⁴ School culture stands close to other terms with which it is often combined, sometimes as their part or as a superior category (*climate*, compare Walterová [2001] in the former case and Grecmanová [1997] in the latter), sometimes as quasi-synonymous. (Here we share Berg’s [2000] opinion, saying that terms like *ethos*, [Lortie, 1975], *behavioural irregularities* [Sarason, 1971], *school code*, *micro-politics* [Hoyle, 1986; Ball, 1987] may suggest that their authors focus on a common phenomenon. In fact, though, they deal with various phenomena, for such terms are based on varied viewpoints.) It seems, however, that these efforts and terms are usually linked by a relation to a system of values of a certain institution. A clarification of the relation among these terms is another goal of our next, above mentioned study.

- the artefacts, images, associations or metaphors people in the school use to comment on the culture

Methods

The above-mentioned options correspond closely with the methods researchers prefer. It seems that, basically, there are three ways of empirical approach to school culture:

- Case studies, in German literature also presented as *school portraits* (Helsper et al., 1998). Obviously, what these studies describe is rather strategies than research methods. Some case studies ignore some methods (e.g. Walterová, 2001); others underscore the descriptive-and-narrative procedures (e.g. Deal Peterson, 1999). Semi-structured or structured interviews and observations belong here, too. A case study is what helps best to grasp the culture of each school, individually (for every school does have one, no matter what kind).
- Questionnaires, of qualitative and quantitative types. Questionnaires usually tend to generalize and compare (methodologically, they usually use more sophisticated procedures).
- Associative studies, aimed at the metaphorical perception of culture, studies of visual materials, images, spatial layout of workplaces, etc.

Contents

What seems to be decisive for the approach to school culture exploration is the attitude to whether school culture can be measured. Supporters of the “non-measurability” are numerous, rather inclining to qualitative methods of school culture exploration. If some measurability is admitted, then in a limited number of sub-areas. These sub-areas become the basis of measuring the cultural dimensions of the school. The examples below show that the dimensions under observation can be defined in a varied way. Anyhow, the structured forms of culture exploration focus on three measurable aspects, as mentioned by Maslowski (1998):

1. Culture preferences – the basic and most frequent alternative, considering the contents of the culture: which behaviour and values are shared by people in the school, or how much conformity there is in such behaviour and values
2. Culture homogeneity – i.e. to which extent a certain kind of culture is shared by people in the school
3. Culture force – how much pressure can culture exert on people in the school

Purposes

School culture exploration is rarely done for its own sake (“only” to recognize the culture). An incentive context of such exploration can usually be found, such as the effectiveness and productivity of the school, the communication potential, problems within the school, change management, experiencing, satisfaction, motivation, or identification of people within or close to the school, the purposefulness of people’s conduct in regard to what is essential in/for the school, etc. (e.g. Deal, Peterson, 1999; Prosser, 1999; Purkey, Smith, 1983; Schein, 1985).

Though some typology of such purposes has been outlined (e.g. Broadfoot, Ashkanasy, 1994, after Maslowski 1998), hereunder we give our classification, detecting six categories, or options, of purpose. Examples of performed studies are added.

Purpose 1, *Diagnostics and evaluation of a particular school culture*

The culture of a specific school is explored either in order to “only” be recognized (not to be worked on or altered) or in order to identify its strong and weak points, or stimulate the processes leading towards alterations in the culture of such a school. Though this concept largely assumes that good school culture improves other aspects of school operation, the culture itself, and its quality, is essential. In these (self-) diagnostic or (self-) evaluating procedures, the quest for discrepancies, or gaps, between real and ideal situations, between reality and expectations, is prominent. So, such studies are more or less descriptive, oscillating between managerial and research techniques.

The presented examples of this purpose are to be pondered as tools of culture diagnostics and measurement. Interpretations and conclusions can be applied to particular schools. Questionnaires are apt as self-diagnostic tools of change, development, and culture.

- Eger (2001) set up a questionnaire for culture school evaluation. The questionnaire was administered to head-teachers and teachers, so that they could specify both the current and model situations, on a scale of 1 to 5. The presented factors were:
 - Common goals
 - Confidence in school management
 - Predominant style of leadership and relations to people
 - School regime and the organisational structure
 - Leaders’ focus on work issues
 - Check-up
 - Motivation of the staff

- Communication and informedness of the staff
- Communication with parents and the milieu
- Spirit of innovation
- Teachers' development
- Teaching conditions
- Aesthetic environment, tidiness
- Relations within the staff
- Relations between teachers and pupils
- Expectations of educational results
- Jakubíková (2000) recommends to self-diagnose school culture using the “Kilmann-Saxton's gap“, to be found between expectations and the reality of factors like “co-operation, decision-making, communication and informedness, predominant leadership style, check-up, motivation of the staff, spirit of innovation, personnel policy, work conditions, aesthetics, image” (p. 85). These factors are evaluated on a 1–5 scale (1 worst, 5 best).
- Another example of self-diagnostic tools, one describing the very crux of school culture, i.e. the norms, values, and convictions, is the School Culture Survey questionnaire, designed by Saphier & King (1985) for school culture development seminars. For instance, norms are represented by collegueship, experimenting, high expectations; values, by clearness of targets; convictions, by team responsibility (after Maslowski, 1998). This questionnaire is further mentioned in Purpose 2.

Purpose 2, *Identification of particular areas of culture and their actual state*

Here the research is related to schools in a rather general manner, some of the resulting tools being used for diagnostic purposes subsequently. For school culture to be explored, usually, some particular areas of school operation are selected. We deliberately call them *areas of school culture manifestation* while others use terms like *school culture determinants, factors, dimensions*, or even *characteristics or aspects* (Berg, 2000; Maslowski, 1998).

With this purpose, obviously, qualitative methods are prevailing. Using them, the selection of areas can be based on the reality of the school, as shown by the first example. Nevertheless, quantitative transformations and examinations are possible, as proved by the next case.

- Deal & Peterson (1999) presented case studies of three schools in which specific and strong cultures were created by leaders and other teachers. The cultures consisted of symbolic elements, identified by the researchers as: purposes and values; rites and ceremonies; history and stories; architecture and artefacts.

- To enumerate the key areas was also the goal of the pre-research of Pol et al. (2001). Culture areas were hereby classified by their importance for the development of the school. This exploration showed that key areas probably consist of shared principles and visions of the school.
- The above-mentioned School Culture Survey tool (Saphier, King, 1985) underwent a factor analysis and other adjustments, crossed the limits of self-diagnostics, and (though originally meant for development work) was transformed into a more or less universal measurement tool, by Edwards, Green & Lyons (1996).
- A research tool called School Culture Elements Questionnaire originated as a result of the efforts to explore important culture-related aspects of school operation (Cavanagh, Dellar, 1996; after Maslowski, 1998). A rather general view is used, making out six categories: teachers' confidence in their jobs; emphasis on teaching; collegueship; co-operation; shared planning; transformational leadership. The questionnaire differentiates between actual and preferred states.

Purpose 3, *Recognition of the characteristics of successful schools*

Such explorations are meant to find the characteristic features of successful schools. These features often coincide with the areas of school culture, some authors even mention here the *culture of a successful school*. Some of these procedures may nowadays be regarded as equal to classic work of general management (e.g. Peters, Waterman, 1982). In the educational environment, the studies of the "movement of effective schools" must be taken into consideration. They try to create models "to identify the factors increasing or decreasing the effectiveness". (Průcha, Mareš, Walterová, 2001, p. 55.)

- Eger & Čermák (1999) draw their conclusions from the idea that the quality of one's professional life (an interesting, worthwhile, and useful job, good superiors, good work conditions, good salary and social benefits) has a great impact on the values, ideas, and manners of the employees, i.e. the elements of company culture. The authors analysed the quality of work life through another 1-5 questionnaire. It was used as a pilot questionnaire in Slovakia, then adjusted and administered to 10 schools in the Czech Republic. The sectors of the questionnaire consisted of four blocks (work life quality, workplace communication, labour evaluation, and evaluation of approach to change). Respondents were supposed to express the level of their agreement or disagreement to particular statements.
- Another example of research aimed at the identification of the characteristics of a successful school is the School Values Inventory – Form 1 (Pang, 1996;

after Maslowski, 1998). This questionnaire distinguishes five culture components: 1. formalism and check-up; 2. bureaucratic rationality; 3. orientation to success; 4. participation and collaboration; 5. collegueship. It was used to identify parameters in which “excellent schools” differ from others.

- Representative research was carried out in Saxonia in 1995. 4,000 secondary school pupils were asked about the social and environmental conditions of their lives and schools. The evaluation of the questionnaire led to the creation of the *quality index* of those schools. Partial factors were taken into consideration as well, such as school climate. The authors say that in spite of having presented a quantitative analysis of school culture, their methods were various. The questionnaire being rather short and simple, schools may use and analyse it internally, too (Stenke, Melzer, 1998).

Purpose 4, *Detection of school culture and sub-culture characteristics supporting individual learning*

These research studies deal mainly with the influence of school culture on teachers’ and students’ performance. Learning process is pointed out as the key element of school operation. Culture is perceived as a determinant of the quality of the learning process, or as the context of individual learning processes. As for the motivation for learning, “the social context and the structure of interactions offer a more interesting explanation than an individualistic perspective.” (Pryor, Torrance, 1998, pp. 154–155.) Teachers and their learning are also mentioned, though rarely.

- Rutter and his colleagues (1979, quoted after Deal, Peterson, 1999, p. 5) proved that school ethos is the primary power of students’ academic success. They found out that the basic norms, values, and traditions of the school help achieve goals.
- Studies (Stolp, 1994; Deal, Peterson, 1999) show that a healthy and strong school culture, based on a shared vision and common goals, correlates with students’ intensified interest in learning, higher motivation, better results, as well as with teachers’ better performance and satisfaction. In school cultures supporting team co-operation, better climate for social and professional exchange of experience is created, as is the one for spreading new attitudes to work. Culture strengthens the energy, motivation, and vitality of employees, students, and the community. Culture supports the attention to everyday behaviour and to what is important and valuable (Deal, Peterson, 1999).
- A comparative study of public and private schools (Bryk, Lee, Holland, 1993, after Deal, Peterson 1999, p. 6) showed that the *sense of community* (which is very similar to school culture) was essential for the cultivation of the *sense of*

excellence in private schools. Teachers in these schools were more satisfied with their jobs, and students said their teachers liked teaching and were seldom absent. Students' behaviour in these schools was better (less absence, less disturbance in classes, etc.); they rarely failed and had better results at mathematics.

- In a longitudinal study, McLaughlin (1993) found huge differences among schools, say within the same ethnic environment. For instance, a school with 80 % Hispanic students and a school of 80 % Afro-American students had very different results even if attended by students of comparable backgrounds. McLaughlin says the difference was caused by the fact that one of these schools had struggled for a systematic development of organisational learning. The school was perceived as a place of integrity, enthusiasm, devotion, and remarkable co-operation among teachers. The school with better results had a positive, purposeful culture.

Purpose 5, *Detection of school culture characteristics supporting collective or organisational learning*

In these cases we explore the features supporting joined (organisational) learning at schools. Yet, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between individual and organisational levels of learning, especially in regard to adults in schools. That is why the following examples may often be relevant for purposes, 4 and 5.

- An example of relevant research is Berg's study (2000), exploring the relation between school culture and teachers' work ethos (*esprit de corps*), the latter being viewed as a determinant of the process of individual learning at school.
- Numerous studies of school culture have shown recently that culture is decisive for the improvement of teaching and learning (Fullan, 1998; Rossman, Corbett, Firestone, 1988, quoted after Deal, Peterson, 1999, p. 5). No such improvement was detected by studies in which culture had not supported and sustained a reform.
- A lot of research show changes in teachers' work conditions and teachers' professional development as pre-conditions (requisites, supporting factors) of pupils' individual learning. For instance, Bryk et al. (1994) clearly explain the relation between participatory decision-making and systematic changes in teaching and the curriculum.
- As examples of this category, studies of the "reflective practice" may be mentioned. In these procedures, (especially) teachers (individually or in collaboration with their colleagues) attempt to recognize their own jobs, look for improvements, and go for them, all through reflection. Elliot (1991) found two of such procedures in his study (conditions of individual learning, usable for

collective learning as well): 1. reflection initiates action; 2. action initiates reflection. A similarly oriented case study is by Stoll & Fink (1997) in which – as another pre-condition – the potential of teachers' job and the results of educational surveys are mentioned.

- A large study of school revitalization showed that a change of the structure of the school was not sufficient (Newman, 1996, after Deal, Peterson, 1999, p. 6). To be successful, both the structure and professional culture must be changed. The authors of this five-year-study discovered that schools were successful if their culture was primarily focused on students and their learning, high expectations, social support to innovation, dialogue, and quest for new ideas. The “ethos of caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff, and between staff and students, based on respect, trust, and shared power relations among staff” (ibid, p. 289) was also present.
- Canadian researchers (Leithwood, Jantzi, Steinbach, 2000, pp. 69-78) explored the organisational learning at schools. They led a semi-controlled interview with teachers and head-teachers in Canadian schools. The research tool consisted of 28 questions. The respondents had to enumerate the internal and external stimuli of individual and organisational learning. On average, culture was always mentioned as clearly related to collective learning. The authors labelled culture as part of the organisation structure having a dominant impact on learning. They listed several characteristics of school as a learning organisation. Within this concept, culture was characterized as:
 - Collaborative
 - Shared belief in the importance of continuous professional growth
 - Norms of mutual support
 - Belief in providing honest, candid feedback to one's colleagues
 - Informal sharing of ideas and materials
 - Respect for colleagues' ideas
 - Support for risk-taking
 - Encouragement for open discussion of difficulties
 - Shared celebration of success
 - All students valued regardless of their needs
 - Commitment to helping students (Leithwood, Jantzi, Steinbach, 2000, p. 77)
- For the purpose of the evaluation of the development potential of schools, a research tool was set up in Canada and later in the U.S., called School Work Culture Profile (Snyder, 1988). A questionnaire was distributed to teachers, examining four dimensions, through sixty items of Lickert's scale:
 - school planning: teachers', parents', students', and the community's partnership in targeting

- professional growth: the staff co-operates in planning, organisation, coaching, and problem-solving
- creation and materialization of programmes: the ability of the staff to provide for the student's success through teaching and the educational work of the school
- school evaluation: staff development system; how new knowledge and skills facilitate the unfolding of problems in the school (after Maslowski, 1998).

Purpose 6, *Recognition of the school culture image or of the manner the culture is perceived in*

A part of the studies in this section estimate how people understand school culture, in general, or where in the surrounding reality such culture can be seen. Some infrequent research procedures have their word here, based on associations and metaphors.

- In a pilot case study, Hejj (1995) develops his own measurement tools for a qualitative approach to school culture. The scaling is explained on numerous examples (nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio-scale), as is a number of techniques of empirical data investigation. The study focuses on the meaning of school culture objectives, through free associations and a subsequent contents analysis. Prospective teachers, 148 female ones (85 %) and 27 (15%) male ones, were addressed in the University of Hessen. Every three minutes the students were to write down their associations to school culture and, especially, to its objectives. Altogether 2066 associations with school culture appeared and 1283 with its objectives, in contents categories. The following categories of associations were related to the term of school culture:

| Category | Occurrence in % |
|--|-----------------|
| Persons within the school | 12 |
| Special events..... | 11 |
| Continuous offer in school | 10 |
| Location and appearance | 9 |
| Planning and organisation..... | 9 |
| Professional contents of teaching..... | 7 |
| Ideal values | 6 |
| Relation stratum..... | 6 |
| Means of teaching | 5 |
| Forms of teaching | 5 |
| Mediation in social behaviour..... | 5 |
| Leadership stratum | 4 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Tradition and change..... | 3 |
| Related education concepts | 3 |
| Climate and atmosphere | 2 |
| Criticism on school culture | 2 |
| Multi-cultural factor | 1 |

The categories related to school culture objectives were as follows:

| Category | Occurrence in % |
|---|-----------------|
| Social and relation strata..... | 16 |
| Support to capabilities and skills | 13 |
| Learning of social behaviour | 9 |
| Education (general and professional)..... | 8 |
| Development of pro-social values | 6 |
| Personal development | 5 |
| Perfection of teaching and learning..... | 5 |
| Atmosphere and good health | 5 |
| Capacity of criticism, maturity..... | 5 |
| Joy and fun..... | 4 |
| Independence | 4 |
| Integration and school identification | 3 |
| Creativity..... | 3 |
| One's own initiative, involvement..... | 3 |
| Result, performance..... | 2 |
| Adaptation | 2 |
| Support to interests..... | 2 |
| Events beyond teaching..... | 2 |
| Reputation of the school | 1 |

The objectives of school culture are summarized in three categories: the inter-individual stratum, the intra-individual stratum, and the environmental stratum.

Another part of Purpose 6 is studies trying to investigate the visual perception of the culture of a certain school, or of schools in general. These studies use the visually-oriented methodology through which visual categories, patterns, and meanings are identified, to understand what school culture consists of. Basically, two procedures are possible. The researcher either uses images he/she has generated, or the images he/she finds elsewhere (photographs of the school or of places inside, films about the school, cartoons and comics, picture postcards, symbols, etc.).

- For example, Evans (1974) analyzed photographs of head-teachers' offices. According to his conclusions, at least five different grades of authoritarianism could be detected. The layouts of some parts of the offices also interesting are: they make us ask about the importance of specific artefacts therein. Evans asks, for instance, what a head-teacher means having six different editions of the Bible on his shelf, or a memorial certificate of the British Air Force on the wall. These and similar findings make it possible for us to judge the values, convictions, and attitudes of head-teachers, i.e. categories of importance for the culture of the school, as the author claims.
- Prosser & Warburton (1999) analyse cartoons and pictures related to schools, published regularly in British press. Through particular examples they detect, for instance, the cultural artefacts rooted in the communication of stereotypes.

Conclusion

It seems that, in most cases, school culture researchers do not regard as reasonable to explore school culture, or its parts, for its own sake. It is more important to realize that such exploration usually bears its context, and is done from a certain viewpoint, within which the proper term of school culture is operationalised. The above-mentioned sorting is certainly not the only possible attitude to the classification of the meanings of school culture. The classification of purposes of school culture exploration makes us contemplate other circumstances which deserve to be analysed, having been rather neglected so far. The point is mainly to find and identify some unifying and delimiting elements for particular purposes (or purpose categories) of school culture exploration, or, in other words, to find and identify the relation between these elements and the purposes of school culture exploration.

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