

Values present in state requirements in the Polish Educational System and their perception by teachers. A report from research

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Abstract

The author's article takes up the subject of values in the Polish educational system. State requirements relating to the Polish education system include all kinds of values. Reviewing and analyzing these values, the authors asked teachers how they themselves understood them, whether they were implemented, and to what extent they were internalized, and did these values affect professional development? The research was conducted using the survey method developed by the authors. It was conducted among primary school teachers. Answers to these questions were provided on the basis of preliminary research. The results provided the basis for reflection and discussion on the values present in state requirements and their perception and realization by teachers. The authors also considered the importance of the research results for the (already) developed model of educational leadership in Poland.

Keywords: values, development, teachers, educational system.

1. Introduction

The requirements of the state for educational institutions in the Polish educational system were included for the first time the Regulation of the Ministry of Education of 2009 (Regulation, 2009), in connection with the modernization of pedagogical supervision. According to introduced supervisory model, the state requirements indicate the most important directions for the development of schools and educational institutions, setting priorities in the planning and organization of their work, by pursuing specific objectives and tasks. At the core of the requirements was the idea of introducing clear, understandable and accepted standards leading to the continuous development of the school, aimed at the challenges of modern society (Mazurkiewicz, 2012). The requirements are devoted to different types of educational institutions (eg. schools, kindergartens, pedagogical libraries) and are implemented on a basic or high level. Since 2009, two requirements have been modified (Regulation, 2013, 2015) and finally 12 requirements for schools have been identified. This was due to the research and analysis carried out in the project "Program for Strengthening the Efficiency of the Pedagogical Supervision System and the School Quality Assessment" (Regulation, 2013; Regulation, 2015). Requirements are challenging and relate, for example, to development, eg "A school or educational institution that realizes a concept oriented on student development," or to collaboration eg "Teachers collaborate in planning and implementing educational processes" or to promote learning and organizing educational processes in the context of meeting specific requirements, such as assessment, knowledge of learning objectives, etc. (Regulation, 2015).

Due to the current requirements, although not always explicit, various educational values emerge, creating a model of the Polish school. These values should therefore be reflected in the school's reality, in the activities of the principals, teachers and people responsible for the development of the school so

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that educational goals can be achieved. From this perspective, it seems interesting to the authors to look at the values that emerge from the requirements. By analyzing all the requirements of the state in terms of value, we especially questioned whether teachers know and understand these requirements and how do they perceive the values which are included in these requirements. Are values realized and how? Last but not least, the question of how the values resulting from the requirements affect the professional development of teachers.

During the research and analysis run by the author, due to the change of the ruling political formation and the introduction by the new government the new school reform, just before the beginning of the 2017 school year, there were some modifications made to the existing state requirements for schools and institutions (Regulation, 2017). The number of requirements was limited to 9, and the division of the level of characteristics of the requirements was eliminated.

In the new Regulation, the following three requirements are missing: Requirement 1: The school or institution realizes a work-oriented approach to student development; Requirement 2: The value of education is promoted, Requirement 7: Teachers collaborate in planning and implementing educational processes. Implementation of the requirements is still subject to evaluation in pedagogical supervision. The results of this study refer to the state requirements in force until September 2017.

2. Values present in state requirements - *theoretical framework*

Values are at the root of all thoughts (Tischner, 1982), norms and attitudes (Halstead, Taylor, 2000), and actions by writing in into them and giving the tasks the right aim and direction (Fullan, Haydon, 2007). In the definition of a value its motivational factor, which promotes development, is also essential (Fullan, Haydon, 2007, Ulatowska, 2015). It is noteworthy that Schwarz's latest approach (Schwarz et al., 2012), which sees values as a cognitive representation usually revealed in the pursue to the desirable aim. In Schwarz model the values form a continuum or a circle. Taking value as a continuum allows you to see values as more or less specific individuals. Such a system recognizes values as motivationally similar, which means that one action may result from a variety of closely related values (Schwarz, et al., 2012, Ciecuch, 2013). Paradoxically, the continuum of values places them at the same time in a circular system where the previously mentioned principle is preserved, but at the same time it introduces the belief that the opposing values are incompatible. This makes it impossible to realize opposite values in one action (Figure 1).

Based on the Schwarz model, it is worth trying to use some of the ideas to understand educational values. In order not to limit the understanding of values only to moral views, which happens in the reflections on values in education (Ulatowska, 2012), it is worth emphasizing the necessity of diversity in their meaning. The Schwarz model also helps to understand the discrepancies between declared and realized values, which are revealed in the thinking and behavior of those responsible for the education system (Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2014). If we look again at the value circle, we can see that the value of openness to change may be in opposition to conservatism, although it is generally reasonably so. The implementation of openness to change should not undermine the value of security, but on the other hand the implementation of value Openness to change is subject to limitation, as exemplified by the previously mentioned ideologies. It is worth emphasizing that values in a given community are present in a wider context (Fullan, 2007). This may mean that in schools there may be both clear and hidden value systems. Elimination of some of them disables to use the broader context.

Due to the fact that values anchor our actions in the past, they make sense for the present, and we must also see their impact for the future, so that they will be the source of energy for goals, decisions and actions. In order to avoid a disagreement between declared and realized values, it is especially important to engage in ongoing discussion about values in an educational community and to seek similar understanding of these values within the group. As Halstead points out (Halstead, Taylor, 1996), this interaction of the whole educational community allows for the interdependence of these

values. The reflections presented by the authors have become the basis for preliminary research on the understanding of requirements and values, their implementation, interventions and their impact on professional development.

3. Method

The authors analyzed and interpreted the state requirements for schools as set out in the annex to the August 2015 Ordinance on the values they present in the education model. The analysis allowed to isolate 9 values. (Figure 2).

After identifying 9 values in the state requirements for educational institutions, the authors prepared a questionnaire to examine the group of teachers. The questionnaire contained 24 questions related to the assessment of knowledge of state requirements, the level of their understanding, the assessment of the performance of 9 values resulting from state requirements, indication of with whom and how these values are realized and to what extent each value supports the professional development of the respondents. The study was conducted using CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviews) technique on a group of 35 primary school teachers.

4. Results

Due to the small group, the results of the study have not been subjected to extensive statistical analysis, and some conclusions are based on qualitative considerations. The analysis of the results indicates that the vast majority of the surveyed teachers (32 out of 35) declare that they are highly knowledgeable of the state's requirements for schools and institutions. However, the results show that teachers, although they know the requirements they have a little understanding - on the range of points up to 8 the average was only 4.59 points. Analysis of qualitative data suggests that teachers implement all values but in different configurations and in different ways. Listed below are the people to whom they are most commonly implemented, and the actions in which individual values are disclosed.

4.1 Respect

Regarding the value of Respect, the respondents said that it is implemented in three groups: students, parents and teachers. In case of students Respect usually means undertaking individual conversations, teaching respect to others, taking care of relationships, personal needs, and personal culture. Respect for parents is, in the teachers' view, keeping contact, transferring information, joint response to emerging problems; however for teachers, Respect is primarily about building relationships, common contact, tolerance.

4.2 Development

The value is realized by the teachers primarily in relation to themselves, mostly through participation in courses, workshops and training programs. This appears to be of prime importance. Only after this the value is realized also in relation to the students. Teachers make it happen by undertaking pedagogical innovations, educational activities, organizing interesting training, workshops, activating, but also taking care of the needs of the students, for the development of each of them in the classroom. Rarely is development in relation to the whole school - and if so it is mainly through the introduction of innovations.

4.3 Collaboration

The value Collaboration is most often realized with students, mainly through teaching them using various forms of activity in the classroom. Collaboration means also sharing and solving problems together with parents or other teachers, sharing knowledge, exchanging views, and undertaking joint activities. The implementation of this value in relation to other teachers is also participating in lesson observations, sharing knowledge and work.

4.4 Safety

This value mostly applies to students and all school community members, and means in specific activities - respecting health and safety at school and beyond, taking care of physical and emotional safety.

4.5 Responsibility

The realization of this value is primarily addressed to students, parents and the whole institution. It is usually understood as the fulfillment of obligations towards the school and the students, such as the implementation of program requirements, timeliness, caring for student's development. It is mainly done by promoting the attitude of responsibility, teaching others about it, but also demanding it from students, parents, other teachers or supervisors.

4.6 Commitment

The surveyed teachers carry out Commitment when it comes to students and themselves. Parents and other subjects were indicated only 3 times. Most often the value manifests itself through the individual choice of the program for the student, the development of students by participation in competitions, festivals, praising attitudes of being involved, initiating tasks that are attractive to students, strengthening proper attitudes. It is also engaging teachers in a variety of tasks or functions.

4.7 Learning

The value of learning is most often carried towards the students, much less regarding teachers themselves. Our surveyed teachers introduce this value by giving specific guidance to help students to perform their tasks independently, to encourage home-based exercises, to organize peer-to-peer activities, to take care of and ensure the right lifelong learning process. A few people pointed to this value in relation to other teachers, mainly through peer tutorials, subject teams or consultations.

4.8 Trust

Confidence is shared across multiple groups - both students, parents, other teachers, and the whole school community. It is worth emphasizing, however, that only two respondents indicated that they were realizing this value in relation to all groups at the same time. The value manifests itself above all by being honest with oneself and others and building trust-based relationships with others, as well as teaching confidence to others. Strengthening and realizing this value means helping others, having conversations, providing support, which is based on discretion, and belief in good intentions. This is a resource that can be considered as a social resource associated with a sense of belonging because it reinforces relationship building, structural support, the belief in having friends and a reference group.

4.9 Equality

Most often the value is realized in relation to students and teachers. Only three people have indicated parents as a group to which the egalitarian actions are undertaken.

Equality manifests itself in organizing equality classes, class meetings for class integration, the language.

Equality is the realization of justice, the well-being of the students, the provision of the same treatment, the awareness of its importance. Parents were given the right to ask questions and the right to contact teachers.

5. The importance of values and their realization in professional development

Teachers were also asked about to what extent all the above values are implemented and their importance to professional development. They have declared that professional development is very important to them - 34 of the 35 subjects identified this value.

For the professional development of the respondents the values of *Safety*, *Commitment*, *Respect* and *Responsibility* are of the utmost importance. At the same time the weight of these values deviates from the declared degree of their realization. Teachers declare that, among all values, the highest degree of fulfillment is *Commitment*, followed by *Learning* and *Collaboration*. It is worth emphasizing that for the value of *Collaboration* there are no differences between the declared validity of this value and the degree of its implementation at school.

The least important in professional development turned out to be *Trust* and *Equality*.

Interestingly, in the case of *Respect*, there was the greatest difference between the degree of realization of this value and the importance for professional development. (Figure 4). It seems surprising that this value is so little important for professional development.

6. Conclusions

Teachers declare that they are familiar with the requirements of the state. The results, however, reveal differences between knowledge and understanding. Therefore teachers know better than they understand these requirements. In the context of the functioning of schools, it seems particularly important to deepen the understanding of the state requirements by teachers. This will allow to understand better the requirements and values associated with them. As a result the values could be creatively interpreted and implemented in school community. This will also be beneficial for students who learn these values and intervene them into their world view.

These values are most often implemented by teachers towards students, parents, and themselves. Actions in accordance with these values take the form of discussions, workshops, learning in action, mutual learning, sharing of knowledge and practice. For most teachers, professional development is very important, but it is worth pointing out that only two teachers out of all the respondents indicated that they also implement the value towards the school, for example by introducing innovation.

When analyzing the results of the preliminary research, it is worth paying attention to those groups that have been omitted or listed as very few. The values indicated by the surveyed teachers are often carried out with respect only to the selected group, most often pupils. An example of such value is safety. Teachers realize this value by taking care of a safe and healthy stay and working in school.

The value *Security* has been developed very narrowly. Teachers from the study group limited themselves in this regard to the observance of safety and security and to the emotional safety of the students. None of the respondents mentioned safety as to provide hygienic working and learning conditions that are often not followed. In this context, the changes introduced in the reform of education in 2017 have deeply affected the seventh-graders of current primary schools who have to

cover the curriculum in two years, which has so far been covered in three years in junior high school. The introduction of a new educational law has led to a wave of criticism and parental intervention at the child rights spokesman, who wrote a letter to the current Minister of Education, writing, among other things, that: "school after the educational reform is not a child friendly place" (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2017).

The researched teachers also did not mention anything about organizing trainings, thematic sessions or meetings with specialists. For most teachers, *Development* is very important, but only two teachers out of all the respondents indicated that they also value the school, for example for introducing innovations. Most often, this realization of values is limited only to introducing innovations. Respondents in the context of development have omitted development understood as international cooperation - exchange of staff and students, participation in competitions, cooperation with universities, with experts and non-governmental organizations. This is a contradiction in the understanding of the idea of development, which is generally very important for the investigators, however understanding is limited to self-development.

The researchers realized *Collaboration* focusing mainly on activating cooperation between students. *Collaboration* with parents is understood only as a collaboration in solving educational problems. However, the possibility of building collaboration between teachers, students and parents has been omitted. This *Collaboration* could involve the implementation of projects where everyone would take part, organize lessons involving parents - experts in the field or, finally, volunteering. The proposed examples could combine the realization of several values - *Respect*, *Cooperation*, *Development* or *Responsibility*.

The value of Commitment is also not appreciated. This is a very powerful motivational value that can lead to a flow effect (Csikszentmihályi, Abuhamdeh, Nakamura, 2005, p. 600). Basically, any form of action that is skillfully organized can be associated with the feeling of doing something extraordinary (Peterson, Seligman, 2004). The value helps to deal with stressful situations that often occur in professional life and might lead to professional burnout (Gluschkoff, Elovainio, Kinnunen, Mullola, Hintsanen, Keltikangas-Järvinen, Hintsanen, 2016). Commitment is indicated as one of the components of the 4C model of overall mental immunity. Commitment as a pillar of this immunity, together with challenge, confidence and control/a sense of influence, effectively cope with stressors and pressure (Strycharczyk, Clough, 2015, p. 2).

The results of the research show that there is a large disproportion between the validity of the estimate of Respect and its implementation in the context of development. It therefore seems particularly important to take action to reduce this disparity. This is such an elementary value, not only in the context of development, that more emphasis should be placed on implementing it in the everyday activities of teachers. Strengthening this value seems necessary in the context of the current political and social situation. Without strengthening this value, it will not be possible to develop other values and to build a responsible, tolerant, and open society for diversity.

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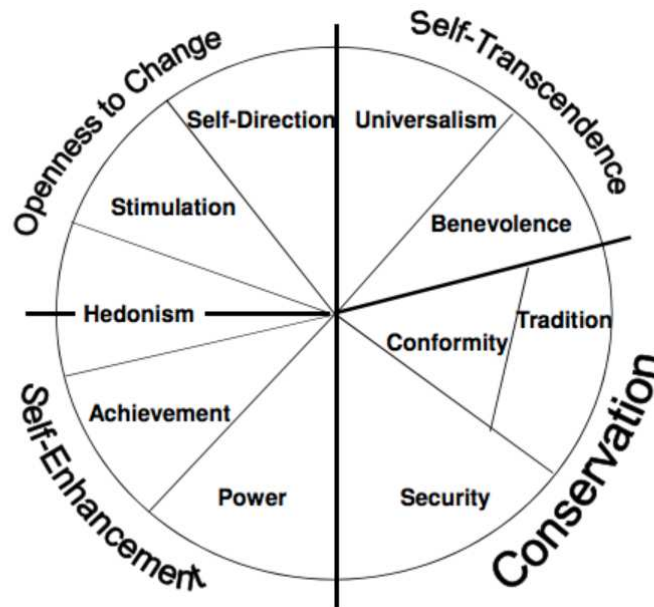
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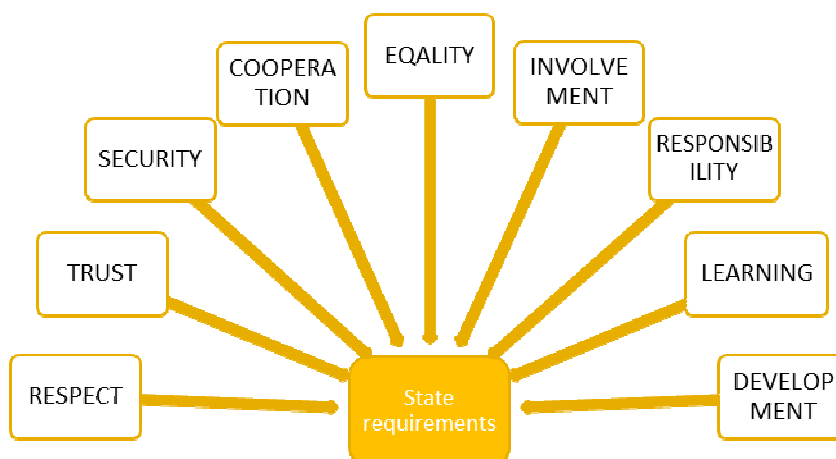
Appendices

Figure 1. Schwartz value circle in the classical model



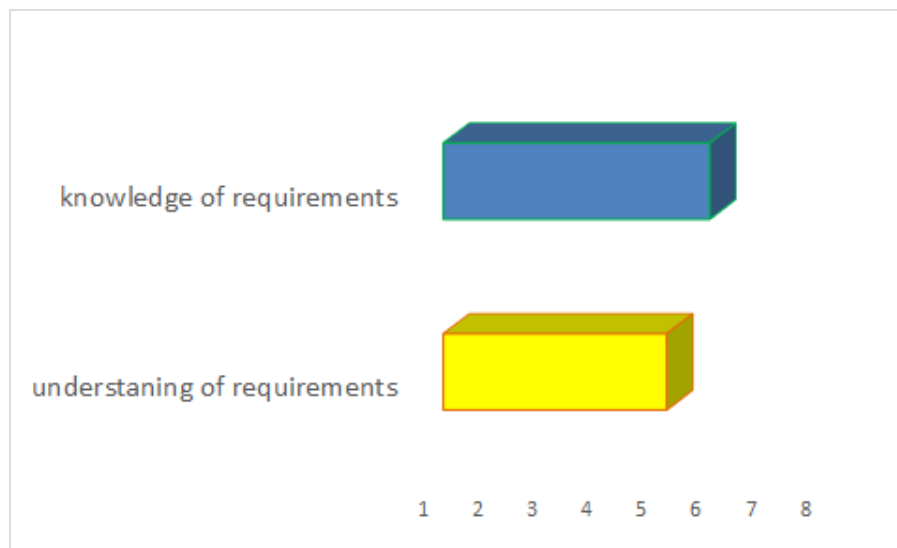
Source: Schwartz, 2012, s 11.

Figure 2. Values in the state requirements



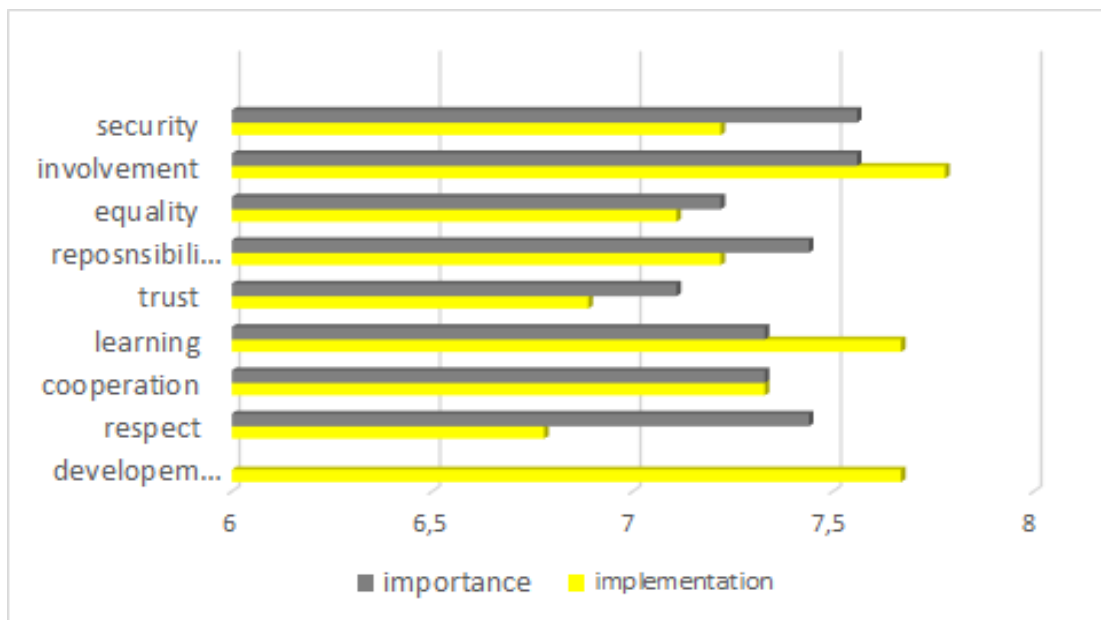
Source: Own research, 2017.

Figure 3. Knowledge vs understanding of requirements.



Source: Own elaboration, 2017.

Figure 4. Importance and implementation of values.



Source: Own elaboration, 2017.