

# Ideal School of the Future from the Parents' View: Quantitative Research of Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové

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**Abstract**—The topic of possible forms of future schools according to rapid changes of life in the 21st century has become to reach several economic and social prognoses. In our research, we have tried to find out what the future school form is according to pupils' parent's view. School is a part of life of each person and based on own experience there is a certain individual picture created about a possible look of future education. The aim of our quantitative research was to find out how parents of first grade primary school pupils see the ideal school of the future. The quantitative research realized at the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové (Czech Republic). By statistical analysis of gained data from 120 respondents, there have been several views of schools of future identified in terms of mission and also the way of education. But a common indicator according to addressed parents would be more focused on the overall personality development rather than the field practice which is related to a realistic idea that school of the future is not and will not be the only source of education.

**Keywords**—Parents' approach, school of the future, survey, ways of education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL as an educational institution is one of the pillars of society and must therefore respond to the rapid changes of life in the 21st century. In this century, the concept of lifelong learning and the knowledge society is a tool for the development of human resources and human capital. School encroaches into the life of every generation and education is an essential part of society. The concept of education for the 21st century is presented by an open education system that is able to flexibly respond to changing educational needs. A school copes with changes in the content as well as the objectives of education, and instead of accumulating knowledge, the school leads to the acquisition of competences [7].

Creativity, innovation, communication skills, cooperation, adaptation, ability and willingness to learn – the human potential - have become the key competencies in the knowledge society. These skills cannot be ordered or studied from books because they are tightly connected to (work) experience and human behaviour. The Strategy for Educational Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 [4] is a document defining the priorities of the Czech education system in the near future. The strategy sets out three main

objectives: Reducing inequality in education; supporting high-quality teaching and teachers as a prerequisite for such teaching; governing the system in a responsible and efficient manner. It is clear that educational policy has become a social priority in developed countries.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Schools are expected and will certainly be expected to ensure quality teaching leading to the improvement in the efficiency of education and to the maximum development of children. Improving the quality of education can occur if all participants in the educational process are motivated and if they understand the goals and needs of education. The experience of successful education systems shows the need to formulate a picture of a quality school and what parameters it should have. A quality school can be viewed from two perspectives. Firstly, the quality of schools is judged based on achieved learning outcomes (resultative approach) and secondly, based on the characteristics of schools functioning (process approach). Both approaches take complementary roles [9], because the results are influenced by the internal conditions of schools. We believe that in terms of the external evaluation of schools in the Czech Republic, the emphasis is more on compliance with rules than on indicators that can improve schools' performance.

It is expected that school will be more open not only to pupils but also to the wider society and will become the cultural centre of the community. The term community is generally understood in two ways: community as a group of people with common origin, ethnicity and spiritual ties, such as religion or shared values; and community understood in a geographical sense where people live in one area. From this perspective, community schools serve as public institutions which have become important centres of towns. The second way of understanding community is mostly used in connection with the community dimension of school [8]. All generations will have the opportunity to take part in cultural activities, which would require both internal and external adjustments of schools, and also the willingness of all the people concerned to work together to create conditions for the development of each member of the community. School would come closer to the ancient notion: *scholé* - time for tranquillity and emptiness [3].

Based on a generalization of the principles of successful schools, Hopkins [2] presents a general framework for overall school improvement:

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1. Focus on success in learning, i.e. not only on test results.
2. Reinforcing the common aspirations and expectations in an atmosphere of mutual trust of a school community.
3. Research foundation and a theory enrichment leading to the development of knowledge (the school as a learning organization, action research).
4. Reflecting the school context and specifics (reflecting the unique characteristics of the school).
5. Building an organizational base for the permanent improvement.
6. Reflecting activities as a part of the sustainability of changes.
7. Focus on the implementation of programs and the quality of work in classrooms.
8. Intervention strategy focused on a systemic improvement of the situation in the school, medium-term planning, setting goals and priorities.
9. External support and network building of support organizations around the school.
10. Being systematic and reflecting external changes and their creative use for the internal change [2].

According to Hopkins [2] those ten points could serve to research purposes which would examine the potential and quality of changes in a real school. Vašutová and Urbánek [12] talk about dynamic school stability which means a certain internal stability within a system but which also has a sufficient operating space for changes.

In 2001, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [6] presented six basic scenarios for the future of schooling (Table I). The purpose of these scenarios is to expand the knowledge of how schools can develop in the future, but it is difficult to say when, how and whether the scenarios will be implemented. These schooling scenarios have been constructed in a time frame of approximately 15 to 20 years. Two of the scenarios are posited on the continued unfolding of existing models, two describe the substantial strengthening of schools with new dynamism, while the two final scenarios portray future worlds that witness a significant decline in the position of schools [6].

TABLE I  
SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING [6]

A. The "status quo extrapolated"	1. Robust bureaucratic school systems
	2. Extending the market model
B. The "re-schooling" scenarios	3. Schools as core social centres
	4. Schools as focused learning organizations
C. The "de-schooling" scenarios	5. Learning networks and the network society
	6. Teacher exodus – the meltdown scenario

### III. RESEARCH SURVEY

Gradual improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education is a process where the opinions and attitudes of parents of children have to be taken into consideration. For this reason, parents of first grade primary school pupils were our respondents. The research survey is part of a specific research study conducted at the Faculty of Education of University Hradec Králové, 2016.

#### A. Research Aim

The aim of our research was to find out how parents of first grade primary school pupils see the ideal school of the future. The research began in April 2016 in cooperation with the students of Teaching for the first grade of primary school at the Institute of Primary and Pre-primary Education of the Faculty of Education in Hradec Králové. We capture parents' opinions on the form of the school of the future in which their attitudes to learning, to teacher's personality and their expectations are reflected.

#### B. Methodology

We conducted a quantitative research survey for which we compiled a questionnaire consisting of 12 questions to get information about two main areas: school (main goals and purpose of school and school's approach to pupils according to parents) and teacher (teacher's personality according to parents). The anonymous questionnaire was introduced by a short text addressing the respondent, motivating him to take part in the survey and explaining its purpose. The average length of completion of the questionnaire was estimated at 15 minutes based on a pilot test. Collected data was processed using the program SPSS version 19. The statistical analysis of the data identified different views on the school of the future regarding its purpose and methods of education. In this paper we present the basic findings of the main topic areas examined.

#### C. Research Sample

There were 120 respondents from among the parents of first grade primary school pupils who participated in the survey. It was a deliberate choice. 100 printed questionnaires were distributed to primary schools in various places in the Czech Republic and 150 questionnaires were distributed online. 48% of the questionnaires returned, which accounts for 120 respondents. As assumed, most respondents were women; 89 women and 31 men. The questionnaire item concerning the age of respondents was divided into five age groups, while we used the division of human life span by Čáp and Mareš [1]: 1. group 21-28 years of age, 2. group 29-35 years of age, 3. group 36-42 years of age, 4. group 43-49 years of age and the 5. group 50 years of age and more. Table III shows the age distribution of respondents. Most respondents (50%) were in the second age group of 29-35 years of age, which corresponds with the average age of mothers giving birth (Table II).

TABLE II  
AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Age	Frequency	Percent
1	7	5,8
2	60	50,0
3	45	37,5
4	8	6,7
Total	120	100,0

Table III shows the highest level of education the respondents reached. Of the 120 respondents, 50.8% have

secondary education, 23.3% have a university degree (master's degree or higher), 9.2% have a bachelor's degree, 7.5% have vocational or higher professional education and 1.7% attended only primary school. It follows that most respondents pertain to the middle class.

TABLE III  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION REACHED

Education	Frequency	Percent
1	2	1,7
2	9	7,5
3	61	50,8
4	9	7,5
5	11	9,2
6	28	23,3
Total	120	100,0

#### D. Results

The following questionnaire item presented here inquired about the views of parents on how the ideal school of the future should look like and offered a range of possible responses and also a space for self-expression. The question was: "What do you think should be among the main tasks of the ideal school of the future?" Respondents were asked to tick the 4 most important things (activities, skills) that, in their opinion, a pupil should learn at school.

Table IV shows the percentage share of each school's task based on its importance for parents. The four main tasks of an ideal school according to parents are: 1. learn how to study - search and use information (66.7%) 2. learn to cooperate and get along with others (65.8%), 3. rouse an interest in learning (58.3%), 4. learn to solve problems independently (56.7%) 5. impart maximum knowledge and skills to pupils (53.3%). Only about 17% of parents believe that the purpose of school is to learn to respect authority and to gain self-confidence.

TABLE IV  
MAIN TASKS OF AN IDEAL SCHOOL

Tasks	0	1	Percent
teach pupils to behave	88	32	26,7
impart maximum amount of knowledge and skills	56	64	53,3
learn how to study (search and use information)	40	80	66,7
learn to respect rules	82	38	31,7
learn to respect authority	100	20	16,7
learn to cooperate and get along with others	41	79	65,8
be well prepared for further education	83	37	30,8
learn to solve problems independently	52	68	56,7
rouse interest in learning	50	70	58,3
gain self-confidence	100	20	16,7
learn to defend one's own opinion	68	52	43,3
learn to lead discussion	92	28	23,3
other...	120	0	0,0

Responses indicate that parents put emphasis on achieving important goals in education (learn to study, impart maximum knowledge), but they also realize the importance of mutual cooperation, motivation (rouse interest in learning) and independence (solve problems independently).

The views of parents on the personality of an ideal teacher,

his professional and personal skills, are presented in Table V. The questionnaire item was a scale item and offered 14 possible answers. Respondents were asked to attach to the degree of importance to individual statements using five response levels (1 - very important, 5 - unimportant). The results show that the highest number of parents (88.3%) believes that fair approach and natural authority of the teacher are very important personality traits (86.7%). The parents also think that the teacher's professional competences play an important role: the teacher can effectively apply various teaching techniques (81.7%), can plan and evaluate the progress of each child (76.7%) is able to teach a lot (76.7%), can organize class environment so it entices learning (75%) and caters to individual needs and abilities of each student.

As for personal competences, in addition to the already mentioned natural authority, parents give high importance to friendly approach of the teacher (78.3%) and to his serving as an example (66.7%). From the results it appears that the requirements, both professional and personal, placed on teachers by parents are considerable. The results show that the parents we addressed believe that teachers should be equipped with such personality and professional competencies that enable them to manage the demands of their job on a professional level.

TABLE V  
REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHERS (PERCENTAGE)

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Caters to needs and abilities of a pupil	73,3	23,3	3,3	0	0
Can organize class environment so it entices learning	75,0	20,0	5,0	0	0
Creates partnerships with parents	38,3	33,3	25	1,7	1,7
Is a professional in the given field	68,3	23,3	8,3	0	0
Can effectively apply various teaching techniques	81,7	13,3	5,0	0	0
Can plan and evaluate the progress of each pupil	76,7	20,0	1,7	1,7	0
Cooperates with colleagues to improve teaching	56,7	31,7	11,7	0	0
Serves as an example for pupils in terms of values, attitudes and behaviour	66,7	30,0	3,3	0	0
Is able to teach a lot	76,7	21,7	1,7	0	0
Has natural authority	86,7	11,7	1,7	0	0
Has friendly approach	78,3	21,7	0	0	0
Has fair approach	88,3	10,0	1,7	0	0
Has sense of humour	55,0	38,3	6,7	0	0
Stays on top of things and is an optimist	48,3	43,3	8,3	0	0

#### E. Summary

In our research, we did not deal primarily with the opinion of parents on contemporary school; however, it is possible that parent's expectations of improvement or change affected the resulting view of parents on the school of the future.

A large part of the respondents expect that the ideal school of the future will focus on learning and information processing, and passing on a maximum amount of information and knowledge, which corresponds with the traditional concept of school (according to the OECD scenario the continuation of present situation – status quo).

Other parents think that the inner functioning of school will change in order to teach pupils to cooperate and get along with

others, to enhance their independence and motivation for learning. For this purpose such a teacher is needed that has professional competencies like efficient way of teaching, planning and evaluation of progress; who has a fair approach, is a natural authority and behaves in a friendly way. As the Strategy for Educational Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 [4] states, a good teacher and high-quality teaching are the key preconditions for responsible and efficient education system.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

A research carried out by the NMS Market Research Agency in the Czech Republic in 2015 also inquired about the opinions of parents on the form of the school of the future [5]. 1035 men and women, who were parents of at least one child in the age between 2 and 11 years, responded via an on - line questionnaire. The results showed that thirty percent of parents considered the current education system to be bad and ready for change. One tenth of the parents had the opinion that contemporary school did not prepare children for their future. The respondents also expressed worries that teachers would not be able to estimate what children would need to know and what skill they would need to have in 20 years. For this reason, besides the essential skills like reading, writing, counting and speaking a foreign language, parents view the development of individual potential and talent in children as having the same importance as the basic skills. More than 60 % of respondents wished more individual approach for each pupil and 46 % of them preferred mixed classes, where pupils would not be placed according to age, but according to interests and abilities. An ideal school would motivate and inspire children to self - education. 58.3% of parents participating in our research think it is important to awaken an interest in learning in children.

Parents choose a school for their child according to their discretion and have specific expectations in regard to the school. Mutual communication between a school and family is hampered by the specific conditions of family and their socio-economic status, education and skills of parents, experiences and differences in the interpretation of school situations with a child. In contrast, the difficulty of teachers' work increases, they feel compelled to increasingly individualize the approach to students [7].

#### V. CONCLUSION

The mediation of educational content happens at school resulting in knowledge, skills and experience that one needs to acquire competences enabling him to do well in new conditions of the society of knowledge. On this account it is necessary to overcome conservatism that consists in mere transfer of information, and better focus on developing the ability to handle information and create a knowledge of it, which can then be used in practical life [11].

As L. F. Rakow [10] states that the curriculum of the future should be independent, integrated, inclusive and visionary, which lays down exacting demands on teacher like more

independent work, creativity, responsibility (for example in choosing schoolwork and teaching techniques), and also cooperation with colleagues, parents and the local community.

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