

Everything that happens at school is communication

prof Sylwia Jaskulska

I am glad that during the conference panel on relationships we were able to hear a true statement that everything that happens at school is communication.

Communication covers space, bench layout, the availability of different members of school personnel working for students, as well as the system of assessment and education law. The last two are of particular interest to me as a researcher of school reality, but also as a person working with teachers and soon-to-be educators.

It is vital that we keep asking questions about whether relationships based on trust can be built at school when the rules of assessing students' behaviour are dotted with provisions that violate relationships? And what about the fear of making a mistake and rivalry associated with school grades? I am not a utopian by my standards. I am not saying that school grades and the related regulations should be struck out overnight. However, they should be carefully thought out and used in the name of well-understood development of students and the entire school community.

Education law is not bad. For example, according to the Law on Education System, "the assessment of students' educational attainment and behaviour shall be performed as part of in-school assessment which aims to:

- inform the student about the level of their educational attainment and conduct and about any progress made in these areas,
- help the student to learn by informing them what they have done well and how they should continue to learn,
- provide guidance on how to plan self-development,
- motivate the student to do progress in learning and conduct,
- provide parents and teachers with information about the student's progress and difficulties in learning and conduct and about the student's special aptitudes,
- enable teachers to improve the organization and methods of teaching."

This text names really positive and pro-development objectives.

So, do teachers do a bad job because they put good law into bad practices? No! Schools offer teachers conditions to work; teacher training takes place; there are tools available to use at school. Are they good enough? Are they bad? This is not the point. Relationship-building and communication requires more application from all of us. We can change school through sober reflection and taking small steps and not by an all-out war and fault-finding. Our school is as is. Here and now, in our country.

Every day I hear “the parents’ council intend to revise the binding school statute;” “the school management have noticed that this provision should be changed.” One school gives up on a point-based method of assessing students’ behaviour; another one abandons weighted averages. Such initiatives communicate the desire for a less behaviour-driven or more modern methods of school organization, surely taking into account the needs of students, pupils, parents, and the entire school community.

As an example of best practice in communication – understood more broadly than mere communication among people at school on the daily basis – I recommend the publication, “Undead Statutes. Model School Statutes with a Commentary.” It is available at: <https://statut.umarlestatuty.pl/>. The Association of Dead Statutes (<https://umarlestatuty.pl/>) intervenes in schools where students’ rights are violated; it also takes part in public debates. Łukasz Korzeniowski (presidents), Gabriela Olszowska, Anna Szulc, and me have drawn up model school statutes that can inspire and provoke thinking on new school regulations. Please, have a look at this document and see how you can alter the language of school law to be more up-to-date; what points should be stressed to communicate the need to build a community that is safe and filled with trust and not ridden with suspicion, control, and fear.

Let me also recommend a few other texts with me as the author/co-author. All of them encourage the reader to re-consider education law and school assessment:

Dopierała A., Jaskulska S., Racinowska R., Staszczuk A. Autorski model oceniania zachowania w klasach 1-3 szkoły podstawowej, <https://portal.librus.pl/szkola/artykuly/autorski-model-oceniania-zachowania-w-klasach-1-3-sp>.

Dopierała A., Jaskulska S., Racinowska R., Staszczuk A. Ocenianie zachowania służące rozwojowi uczniów i uczennic, <https://portal.librus.pl/szkola/artykuly/ocenianie-zachowania-sluzace-rozwojowi-uczniow-i-uczennic>.

Dopierała A., Jaskulska S., Racinowska R., Staszczuk A. Ocenianie zachowania – szkolne praktyki, <https://portal.librus.pl/szkola/artykuly/ocenianie-zachowania-szkolne-praktyki>.

Dopierała A., Jaskulska S., Racinowska R., Staszczuk A. Ocenianie zachowania w świetle prawa oświatowego, <https://portal.librus.pl/szkola/artykuly/ocenianie-zachowania-w-swietle-prawa-oswiatowego>.

Dopierała A., Jaskulska S., Racinowska R., Staszczuk A., Wzorowe z oceniania – dlaczego zmieniamy sposób oceniania zachowania uczniów w naszej szkole? Publikacja Rok Relacji, 2021.

Jaskulska S. Dobry z zachowania, Przegląd Pedagogiczny 2020, 2.

Jaskulska S. Do tablicy! Ocenianie szkolne jako komunikacja nauczyciela z uczniem, [in:] Uczłowieczyć komunikację. Nauczyciel wobec ucznia w przestrzeni szkolnej, ed. H. Kwiatkowska, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, Kraków 2015.

Jaskulska S., Korzeniowski Ł., Olszowska G., Szulc A. Statut nieumarły – wzór statutu szkoły z komentarzem, <https://statut.umarlestatuty.pl/>.

Jaskulska S. Ocenianie uczniowskiego zachowania na stopień jako wskaźnik kultury szkoły, [w:] Kultura organizacyjna szkoły rozwijającej się, ed. E. Augustyniak, Kraków 2011.

Jaskulska S. Ocenianie zachowania uczniów na stopień jako manewry wojskowe, [in]: Twierdza. Szkoła w metaforze militarnej. Co w zamian? ed. M. Dudzikowa, S. Jaskulska, Warszawa 2016.

Jaskulska S. Ocenianie zachowania uczniów na stopień. Szkolna obsesja porządku w świetle matematycznej teorii chaosu, Podstawy Edukacji 2015, 8.