

# THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION INFLUENCING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATION

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## **Abstract**

The article addresses one of the most important factors of teachers' professional motivation, communication and collaboration, in the context of the education process understood as a system of interaction of all members of the education process. The main idea of the empirical research introduced in this article is to reveal and generalise aspects of communication and collaboration in Lithuanian non-formal music education (in music schools), while thoroughly analysing the aspect of relationships between an educator and students, an educator and parents, an educator and an educator, an educator and a school principal. The research shows that the relation between teacher and student in the process of music education is clearly characteristic of manifestations of authoritarianism in education. When evaluating manifestation of the relationship between a teacher and parents, a teachers' positive attitudes towards mutual collaboration have been found out; nevertheless, interrelations among teachers in school are based on competitiveness. The relationship between a school principal and teachers is ambiguously evaluated by teachers themselves: in some cases, it is characterised as positive, whereas in other cases it is perceived as negative; nevertheless, in all cases it is considered as making an impact on the entire education process.

**Keywords:** *teachers' professional motivation, communication and collaboration, music school.*

## **Introduction**

**Relevance and problem of the research.** In the context of lifelong learning, it is relevant to discuss and analyse in depth the professional motivation of teachers as a significant predictor of pedagogical activities (usually determining certain pedagogical attitudes towards performed professional activities). Professional motivation is defined as a driving force inspiring maturity of a personality and professional growth determined by micro-environment, social, psychological, ethnical factors. Motivation is as like an "engine", energy capable of directing pedagogical conduct to a certain direction or making a diverse impact on the process of pedagogical performance (Myers, 2000). Professional motivation can be treated as a multi-factorial construct. Teacher's thoughts, actions, behaviour are determined by

several motivational factors: satisfaction with profession, material reward, work conditions, recognition, power, what allows perceiving and interpreting motivation as a complex structure.

The present article focuses on one of the most important factors of professional motivation, i.e. communication and collaboration, giving sense to social and professional relationships of a teacher. According to Anzenbacher (1992), the process of and need for the communication and collaboration process can be attributed to essential factors for meeting individual's needs or the whole of motives stimulating general practical performance of a person. Such interpretation enables observing a connection between collaboration and professional motivation: when communicating and collaborating, the demand for high-quality performance of a particular professional task may be either stimulated or, on the contrary, obstructed. Successful collaboration is nothing less than mere physical presence in the same group or collective. Working or learning people must be linked by a common goal or group striving for victory. As Harrison et al. hold it, there is no doubt that favourable working atmosphere and proper contact with peers will always stimulate for better work performance (Harrison, McKinnon, Wu, & Chow, 2000).

Communication is the art of sharing ideas, the act of rendering, accepting or exchanging them, uniting the components of mutual trust, understanding, flexibility etc. (Miltenienė & Venclovaite, 2012). Proper communication usually forms fundamentals of collaboration, determines quality of collaboration and is one of the components of collaboration. In the context of the education process, communication and collaboration are perceived as the system of mutual interaction of all groups of participants of the education process or as pedagogical collaboration. However, the results of the research suggest that the process of collaboration of participants of the education process sometimes faces certain obstacles or collaboration errors: the lack of empathy and educators' too low interest in the lives of students, narrow understanding of involvement and participation of parents in school activities, frequent conflicts of interests, tension, collisions of attitudes or values among educators themselves, also between educators and school principals aiming to establish a personal professional profile or when creating the culture of school as an educational organisation (Redding, 2000; Petty, 2007 etc.).

It may be that the above-mentioned problems exist in various education-related areas. Likely, they are present in music education, too. Therefore, **the object of the article** focuses on communication and collaboration in the context of non-formal music education, in Lithuanian music schools<sup>1</sup> in particular. Selection of the mentioned context allows stating **the novelty of the object**: manifestation of communication and collaboration of participants of the education process in non-formal education in Lithuania has not been investigated so far. **Relevance of analysis of the object** is grounded on the provisions of the European Union documents regulating education and holding that non-formal education of children presently is a relevant, significant area enabling deepening and enrichment of activities of non-formal education (Council of Europe, 2003; Council of the European Union, 2006). Also, it is substantiated by conclusions of scientific research already establishing non-formal education as equal to multi-cultural awareness based on development of student's intellectual abilities, stimulation of sensual nature, formation of the relation with the self and surrounding world (Samama, 2013; Philpott, 2012; Westerlund, 2012). Thus, currently all processes taking place in the non-formal education are highly relevant, and investigation of them is important and timely.

<sup>1</sup> A music school in Lithuania is a specialised institution which delivers programmes of music education, holds a status of the *music* or *art school*, is attributed to the type of a *non-formal children's education school* and a *school of supplementing education to formal education*.

The raised **research aim** reflects the major idea of empirical research: to investigate and generalise the characteristics of communication and collaboration in Lithuanian music schools in the aspects of relationships between teacher and parents, teacher and student, teacher and teacher. Exceptional focus of the researchers is laid on communication and collaboration between educator and school principal, hypothetically stating that a negative confrontation between teachers and school principals possibly manifests in the educational area, what makes influence on teachers' professional motivation. To implement the raised aim of the research the following **research objectives** have been formulated:

1. To theoretically generalise the system of communication and collaboration as mutual interaction among the four groups of participants of the education process.
2. To investigate the characteristics of communication and collaboration in Lithuanian music schools in the aspect of relationships between student and teacher, teacher and parents, teacher and teacher, principal and teacher.
3. To present the results of the empirical research and the conclusions generalising them.

### **Theoretical Substantiation of the Research**

Communication and collaboration proceeding between **student and teacher** are outstanding and receiving perhaps most attention of present-day teachers. The problem of interrelation of these participants of the pedagogical process has been discussed for several decades, emphasising a positive mutual interaction between teacher and student as one of the major components when aiming at success in teaching and learning. According to Petty (2007), it is not enough for a contemporary teacher to hold subject-related competences. Elements of pedagogical conduct illustrating pedagogical interaction, such as concern about student's feelings, interests; application of the methods involving a student in the learning; ability to maintain respect and tolerance, increase. Long-term pedagogical experience of research authors as well as pedagogical observation enabled drawing a hypothetical assumption stating that the relationship between teacher and student based on direct rendering of knowledge still prevails in a contemporary music school; in this relation, likely, there are some manifestations of educational authoritarianism, too. Therefore, when designing diagnostic scales of the research<sup>2</sup>, the Scale of Manifestation of Educational Authoritarianism in Communication with Students has been constructed to enable detailed investigation of the prevailing manifestation of relationship between student and teacher.

The relationship between **teacher and student's parents** is another relevant aspect of communication and collaboration in school. As Lithuanian author Merfeldaitė (2009) has it, communication between parents and educators is perceived as coherence of mutual interaction, communication, cooperation, coordination and is one of the most significant areas perhaps holding the largest potential for educational development. Epstein (2010) names the relation between parents and teachers as significant; however, it is defined as highly complex,

<sup>2</sup> The present research employed the factorial scale aiming to make the primary variables denser and design diagnostic scales. The statements were selected after evaluation of their correlations, striving to achieve higher inner compatibility. When forming diagnostic scales, the values expressing one factor were summed up. Also, the parameters reflecting quality of the scale have been calculated: average correlation between questions and scale, KMO coefficient, Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient. On the ground of the obtained values, 20 statements proper for construction of the diagnostic questionnaire have been selected. The processing of obtained survey results was carried out by applying factorial analysis, and this enabled merging the statements to the 4 scales.

its success is determined by individuality and uniqueness of every family. Loughran (2008) considers that successful collaboration between teachers and parents is determined by many factors, including creation of child-friendly environment ensuring student's safety, opportunity to express one's own opinion, to take part in various activities. By using the diagnostic scale of the Attitude towards Participation of Parents in the Education Process, the authors of the current research presented in the article aimed to find the extent of importance of interaction between teachers and parents in terms of unfolding teacher's professional motivation and how this interaction manifests in reality of music education.

Mutual communication and collaboration of teachers or **teacher–teacher** relationship is more seldom analysed in education-related literature. Hargreaves (2019) emphasises mutual collaboration of teachers, since it influences the results of common educational activities, behaviour, also the student's learning to communicate. The ability to get on well, communicate and collaborate with peers is a particular part of the individual's common culture facilitating the situation of being heard, understood and also being able to listen to and hear a conversationalist. The authors of the research reported in this article drew a hypothetical assumption that the factor of competitiveness was strongly manifested in mutual relationships of teachers working in institutions related to education. Competitive environment may make an impact on the entire education process, including a teacher and his/her professional motivation. Therefore, the applied diagnostic scale of the Competitive Environment facilitated investigation dealing with whether such environment existed in the area of contemporary music education and how it could impact the teachers working in school.

The relationship between **principal and teacher** forming professional motivation has been investigated in education science quite little, especially in the field of music education science. Hopkins, Ainscow, West (1998) relate good management, interrelations among school community members to manifestation of teachers' positive feelings: a teacher should feel like being an important part of an efficiently working group, to enjoy his/her work, to be aware of the meaning of his/her work, to observe the benefit. When investigating the manifestation of relationship between teacher and school principal, an assumption was drawn that a principal was usually an "obstacle" on the way to achieve positive changes in education and school performance. Therefore, by employing the diagnostic scale of the Influence of the School Principal on the Education Process, the researchers aimed to approve or reject this hypothesis.

Aiming to reveal characteristics of communication and collaboration as a significant factor of teachers' professional motivation in Lithuanian music schools, the empirical research has been conducted; the survey involved teachers of various music instruments from different regions of the country. In total, 367 respondents were surveyed. The majority of research participants consisted of teachers having work experience of 21-30 years. The respondents were given semi-closed type questionnaires, statements reflecting certain attitudes were formulated in them; a respondent had to evaluate each statement by a category reflecting his/her attitude (the questionnaire employed the methods of Likert scale). The questionnaire also presented an open-ended question.

### **Substantiation of Statistical and Qualitative Research Methods**

The processing of the research data was carried out by employing the *Chi-Square criterion* which facilitated assessment of statistical significance of correlation among respondents' demographic data, professional factors and teachers' attitudes. The research involved the regression analysis which aimed at estimation of the value of the dependent variable on

the basis of the independent variable. The obtained empirical research results have been processed using the SPSS software. Obtained questionnaire-based survey data also have been processed by applying methods of qualitative research. The analysis of the content of answers to open-ended questions of the questionnaire employed the strategy of contextualisation and categorisation (Maxwell, 1996). The constructivism-based research approach was employed: construction of categories, on the ground of obtained data: when elements of obtained data are compared and the categories are given titles based on generalised content of the data (Charmaz, 2006). The applied strategy partially reflects the features of post-modern grounded theory, too: when certain social situations become a unit of analysis, also when the situational and social context is regarded while analysing data (Creswell, 2003).

### Research Results

The factor of educational authoritarianism in teacher's communication with students has been investigated as likely making an impact on professional motivation, hypothetically supposing that features of educational authoritarianism likely manifest in interaction between educator and student. It has been found out that this factor manifests quite clearly in the area of contemporary music education: manifestations of educational authoritarianism in communication with student have been recorded in professional practice of 74.4% of teachers. We can state that the following teachers' attitude towards relationship between student and teacher, as typical to the classical paradigm of education, still exists: a teacher remains a major object of education rendering directive instructions and teaching to this day. A teacher is a central figure in education, performing the roles of a manager, strategist, and organiser of education. When exploring the phenomenon of educational authoritarianism in detail, the factors assumingly making the largest impact on this phenomenon have been found out. The hypothesis stating that the phenomenon under discussion is evoked by the competitive environment prevailing in school, negative influence of the school principal on the education process, application of conservative methods in education has been raised. Statistically significant influences of all mentioned factors on the formation of manifestations of educational authoritarianism have been found out (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Influence of the factors on manifestation of educational authoritarianism. Regression analysis (N=367)

Factors forming manifestations of educational authoritarianism in communication with students	Standardised coefficient beta	t	Sig (p)
Competitive environment	0.228	4.604	0.000
Negative influence of a school principal on the education process	0.108	2.221	0.027
Conservative methods	0.105	2.062	0.040
Importance of the deepening of student's professional competences	0.108	2.006	0.046

**R<sup>2</sup>=0.225**

**Explanation:** **beta** – strength of influence, **t** – significance of influence, **Sig (p)** – statistical significance.

The obtained results suggest that the most statistically significant influence on educational authoritarianism in present-day music school is made by competitive environment. The research results prove the drawn assumption on supposed influence of school principals made on the formation of educational authoritarianism. Statistically significant values have been recorded after testing the hypotheses concerning the influences of conservatism of

methods and deepening of student's professional competences on formation of manifestations of educational authoritarianism. It was hypothetically postulated that contemporary music education still limits itself with and focuses only on student's professional competences, and they are being deepened by applying old teaching methods. On the ground of the obtained results, such hypothetical model of present-day educational practice may be treated as one of the preconditions for manifestation of educational authoritarianism.

Another component of professional motivation, i.e. collaboration between teacher and parents, has been investigated. It was explored in terms of what was the prevailing teachers' attitude towards participation of parents in the education process. Optimistic results proving assumptions related to this collaboration have been obtained: collaboration between parents and teachers seemed to teachers as important. It was attempted to find out what makes the biggest impact or partially influences such manifestation of teachers' attitudes. The results of the regression analysis reveal that those teachers who support and are concerned about the social and general competences of a student to be deepened besides professional ones in school have the need for collaboration with parents ( $p=0.003$ ). Thus, besides the rendering of the elements of music education content to a student, a teacher must focus on other important matters to be developed. Likely, teachers who positively evaluate collaboration between parents and teachers do not limit their work performance with pedagogical activities only and actually communicate with parents of the students.

The next research stage aimed at finding out the manifestation of communication and collaboration among teachers in music schools. It was hypothetically postulated that mutual relationships of teachers were usually based on unsound competition, and competitive environment could have made impact on the entire education process, including a teacher and his/her professional motivation. Therefore, it was explored if such environment existed in present-day music education, if it could motivate/demotivate the teachers working in music school. When analysing the obtained results, characteristic factors inspiring the formation of such environment and statistically significant values were sought for to prove dependency of fixed opinion of the respondents on demographic data. As it was noticed, features of competitive environment were observed in their schools by 5.7% of the surveyed. 53.1% of the respondents called the surrounding environment partly competitive, the rest stated that competitiveness was not characteristic of the environment where they were working. Such distribution of respondents' opinions in terms of competitive environment reflects a heterogeneous image of music education. On the one hand, in the contemporary education area the environment which is not characteristic of competitiveness dominates. Likely, this allows a teacher to enjoy the performed activities more; therefore, he/she feels professionally more motivated, too. In the educational environment where competitiveness is not characteristic, it is easier to listen to student's needs and to focus on his/her individual interests. On the other hand, as it has already been proven, competitiveness still exists in contemporary music school, and this inspires competitiveness-based education of a student and competition among teachers usually evokes hostility among teachers. To sum up, even though educational environment in some music schools is not competitive, nevertheless, competition still manifests itself in a bigger number of schools. The research results reveal that competition is more strongly pronounced among teachers of music schools in cities, whereas in schools of smaller towns competition is less obvious. Statistically significant correlation has been found between competitive environment and influence of a school principal on the education process (see Table 2). Having analysed the obtained results, we can state that the more negative influence of a principal manifests itself in

educational area, the more competitiveness thrives. Also, a statistically significant correlation between competitive environment and attitudes to development of teacher's competences should be mentioned ( $p=0.001$ ). An interesting fact has been revealed: the most favourable conditions for the formation of competitive environment are observed where development of teacher's competences is disapproved.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of causal links of competitive environment. Chi square test ( $N=367$ )

Factors forming the competitive environment	Value	df	Sig (p)
Influence of a school principal on the education process	15.368 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.004
Development of teacher's competences	18.646 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.001

**Explanation:** Value – chi square criterion, df – number of degrees of freedom, Sig (p) – statistical significance

Another factor forming teachers' professional motivation, i.e. communication and collaboration between teacher and school principal, should be noted. On the grounds of the exploratory research of school principals, the research authors made an assumption that it was impossible to avoid negative confrontation between teachers and principals in present-day environment; therefore, a negative influence of principals on school and general education process was unavoidable as well. Nevertheless, the obtained research results reveal the unexpected: 56.1% of the respondents evaluate the influence made by a school principal as positive, 34.1% describe it as neutral. Interestingly, the formation of such attitude is influenced by a place of residence: the influence made by school principals in smaller towns is evaluated as more positive; whereas in Lithuanian cities the influence of a principals is evaluated mostly in a negative way. The latter result not only strikingly illustrates the contrasts of attitudes of the teachers acting in different demographic contexts, but also reveals differences between communities acting in cities and small towns (in a small community the relationship between principal and teachers manifests significantly more positively).

Aiming to investigate manifestation of the relationship between teachers and school principal in detail and to identify the character of likely influence of principals on the education process, the questionnaire presented an open-ended question to the respondents: What would you personally change if holding a position of a school principal? Having acquainted with quite different formats of obtained answers and recorded content, 5 categories generalising opinions of the respondents have been singled out (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Personal teachers' attitude towards the changes in school from the principal's point of view (N=367)

Category	Content of the responses	Res- ponses
1. Atmosphere in school and interrelations of staff members.	<i>I would try to create a friendly atmosphere between school principals and teachers. / I would pay more attention to opinions, suggestions of school community.</i>	80
2. Teacher's personality and competences.	<i>I would encourage teachers to pursuit for higher qualification. / A top principal should stimulate teacher's creativity. / I would search for teachers- "personalities"</i>	57
3. Attractiveness and innovations of education.	<i>I would pay more attention to interests of students. / I would encourage teachers to be interested in innovations.</i>	36
4. Development of relations of the school and participation in projects.	<i>I would enhance implementation of projects. / I would organise more outgoing concerts, site visits not only in own country but also abroad. / I would establish a job position for an organiser of events and project manager.</i>	72
5. Internal regulations at school (establishment of work places, rotations of top managers).	<i>I would strive to diminish paperwork. / I would employ young people, better professionals of their speciality. / I would terminate contracts with retirement-age teachers</i>	79
<b><i>In total</i></b>		<b>367</b>

The categories displayed in the table suggest that the teachers are mostly concerned about the atmosphere in school and interrelations among staff members, which depend on certain actions and behaviour of principals, as the teachers have it. The demand to improve atmosphere in school, to search for opportunities for positive communication and collaboration felt by the teachers vividly displays the consequences of existing competitive environment which is present in today's music school. It is not rejected that when defining a problem issue of environment in school teachers also indirectly declare not always favourable influence of a principal, which partly models the named atmosphere. Today, teachers are concerned about internal regulations in school, too. The analysis of the content of the responses deals with the problem of school status, the need for rotation of school principals is emphasised; this proves vague turnover of top principals. The establishment of work places is listed as one of relevant aspects of the internal regulations at school which is more favourable to senior age staff members, as stated by the teachers. It was noticed that the average age of some teachers working in schools reached 40; thus, schools lack young teachers who are able to create and implement the vision of a future school. Responses of the surveyed openly display considerations on poor possibilities for young individuals to be employed in schools straight after graduation, whereas school principals do not rush to terminate job contracts with the retirement-age staff members. When analysing statements of the respondents concerning the policy of management to be changed, it is observed that some teachers are concerned about the issue of survival of a school as relevant. According to the respondents, a school should become more open to society, and its activities should be directed towards enlightenment. According to the teachers, the implementation of various partnership programmes, more intensive development of international relations, participation in projects and other activities evidencing public spirit and mobility of school would help the school to become communal. Teachers state that if they were principals, they would direct the performed activities towards



implementation and development of innovations. Another category deals with teacher's personality and competence. Insights of the teachers attributed to this category of responses reveal that a contemporary principal should create conditions for retention and fostering of teacher's personality. The respondents state of poor endeavours of a school principal to maintain authority of a teacher as well.

### Conclusions

1. The empirical research conducted in Lithuanian music schools revealed characteristics of interaction among groups of participants of the education process. Having explored manifestation of relationship between teacher and student, it can be stated that the relationship is obviously characteristic of manifestations of educational authoritarianism; and this was identified in work of majority of the teachers. Today manifestations of educational authoritarianism in communication with students are mostly impacted by the following factors: competitive environment, negative influence of a school principal on the education process. Such relationship between a teacher and a student based on educational authoritarianism is harmful for a student in all aspects; not rejected that it negatively influences teacher's professional motivation.
2. Analysis of the aspect forming professional motivation, i.e. collaboration between parents and teachers, reveals that the need for a teacher to collaborate with parents possibly occurs after becoming aware of the importance of the deepening of student's social and general competences. Teachers' attitude towards collaboration between parents and teachers can be identified as positive bearing in mind the support of majority of the respondents expressed towards active participation of parents in the education process.
3. When evaluating the characteristics of mutual collaboration of teachers in music school, manifestation of competitive environment likely negatively impacting professional environment in education practice was found out. According to the teachers, contemporary music schools are abundant in manifestations of such environment, especially in cities; however, competitiveness in smaller towns was not strongly expressed. As the research results show, the formation of competitive environment is mostly influenced by negative impact of a school principal made on the education process.
4. When exploring the characteristics of collaboration between school principals and teachers, it was found out that teachers identified collaboration in relation to the influence on the education process made by school principals. Responses of less than half of the respondents who filled in the open-ended question state that there are quite many fields to be corrected, if they were in the principal's position. The respondents mentioned the fields related to psychological atmosphere prevailing in school, school image, teacher's personality. Therefore, the results of analysis of the responses can be treated as insights which partly reveal not only manifestation of relationships between teachers and school principals but also the most problematic aspects of organisation of contemporary music education.
5. Summarising, communication and collaboration between the educational process members is significant not only in the context of general education but also in the non-formal context of music education. The results of empirical research have revealed that the professional motivation of music educators is formed in a very similar conditions and circumstances to other educators working in different fields of education.

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### *Summary*

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The article addresses one of the most important factors of teachers' professional motivation, communication and collaboration, in the context of the education process understood as a system of interaction of all members of the education process. The main idea of the empirical research introduced in this article is to reveal and generalise aspects of communication and collaboration in Lithuanian non-formal music education (in music schools), while thoroughly analysing the aspect of relationships between an educator and students, an educator and parents, an educator and an educator, an educator and a school principal.

The object of the article focuses on communication and collaboration in the context of non-formal music education, in Lithuanian music schools in particular. Selection of the mentioned context allows stating the novelty of the object: manifestation of communication and collaboration of participants of the education process in non-formal education in Lithuania has not been investigated so far. Relevance of analysis of the object is grounded on the provisions of the European Union documents regulating education and holding that non-formal education of children presently is a relevant, significant area enabling deepening and enrichment of activities of non-formal education (Council of Europe, 2003; Council of the European Union, 2006). Also, it is substantiated by conclusions of scientific research already establishing non-formal education as equal to multi-cultural awareness based on development of student's intellectual abilities, stimulation of sensual nature, formation of the relation with the self and surrounding world (Samama, 2013; Philpott, 2012; Westerlund, 2012). Thus, currently all processes taking place in the non-formal education are highly relevant, and investigation of them is important and timely. The raised research aim reflects the major idea of empirical research: to investigate and generalise the characteristics of communication and collaboration in Lithuanian music schools in the aspects of relationships between teacher and parents, teacher and student, teacher and teacher. Exceptional focus of the researchers is laid on communication and collaboration between educator and school principal, hypothetically stating that a negative confrontation between teachers and school principals possibly manifests in the educational area, what makes influence on teachers' professional motivation.

The research shows that the relation between teacher and student in the process of music education is clearly characteristic of manifestations of authoritarianism in education. When evaluating manifestation of the relationship between a teacher and parents, a teachers' positive attitudes towards mutual collaboration have been found out; nevertheless, interrelations among teachers in school are based on competitiveness. The relationship between a school principal and teachers is ambiguously evaluated by teachers themselves: in some cases, it is characterised as positive, whereas in other cases it is perceived as negative; nevertheless, in all cases it is considered as making an impact on the entire education process.

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