

# MAPPING THE CONCEPT OF GOOD SCHOOL WITH TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS IN THE CONTEXT OF A GOOD SCHOOL CONCEPT

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** The concept of Good School was formed in 2015, however, the implementation of it has been rather slow. Therefore, the research aim of this article is to identify the educational experts' viewpoints on the concept. The following questions have been raised to specify the aim: if the concept of the school of general education, presented as Good School, is adequately understood, what features should a teacher have in order to implement the concept of Good School?

**Methods.** To answer the research questions a qualitative research by using structured interviews was carried out, i.e. experts' written surveys were analyzed. The study revealed three positions that are discussed in this article: the concept of Good School, the mission and teachers' features, which are interpreted in the context of the concept of Good School, albeit in a particular way.

**Results.** The analysis of the empirical research data revealed that insufficient emphasis is placed on the value aspect, modelling of community-based school activities and their reflection. The research findings also showed that there has been a considerable lack of attention paid to some of the teacher's competences – there has been a lack of experts' focus on the personalization of the educational content, its construction in the interaction with the elements of the pedagogical system, the reflection of pedagogical activities, and others.

**Conclusions.** The concept of Good School is understood by the experts as a map, a conceptual idea, a guideline unfolding the schools' specificity. The implementation of

the concept of Good School should be based on the ideas of constructionism that open the pathways of common development, realization, and improvement of Good School.

**Key words:** good school, its concept and mission, teachers' traits

## INTRODUCTION

Changes are taking place in various fields of education in Lithuania, and also in schools of general education: the concept of Good School was passed in 2015, on the basis of which the establishment of schools of general education is encouraged. The purpose of the concept is to "be a universal point of reference for the development of a modern school, indicating what school features are considered valuable and desirable in the country, to stimulate the creativity of school communities and long-term initiatives for various types of school improvement. It is aimed at all stakeholder groups: schoolchildren, teachers, parents, school principals and school authorities, owner institutions, attendees' meetings, educational management entities and the general public" (*Good School Concept*, 2015, p. 1). However, the processes are not sufficiently smooth (Targamadzè, 2017), therefore the aim of the current article is to identify the educational experts' viewpoints on the implementation process of the concept of Good School. The following research question was raised to specify the aim of the research: if the concept of a general education school is adequately understood, which is specified as Good School, what features should a teacher have in order to implement the concept of Good School? This question is important as every person constructs the concept of a general education school in his/her own way. Therefore, the underlying reason of the research was to find out the viewpoints of the people who have been actively involved in the educational processes and who have impact on the implementation of the idea of the Good School.

The research methodology was built on the ideas of constructionism, as its starting position assumes treating any school of general education as Good School that responds to the concept of Good School (2015) from a different perspective. A person constructs his/her mental model not only by reading certain texts but also by observing the environment and relying on his/her personal experience, which means that, to a large extent, one's perception of different things and phenomena is based on one's perception of the environment and one's interaction with it, as well as on one's experience, the reflection of which leads to the interpretation of certain texts, and concepts within them. In most cases, in Lithuania, the focus has been mainly concentrated on the implementation of formal documents without substantially reflecting on the understanding of those who are implementing them. In agreement with Beaumie Kim (2001, p. 6), the key point of constructionism is that "There is no meaning in the world until we construct it. We do not find meaning, we make it. The meaning we make is affected by our social interpretation of the thing. The meaning we derive for objects arises in and out of the interactive." Considering the fact

that constructionism is “not an epistemology” but “a theory of learning and a strategy for education” (Kafai, & Resnick, 1996, p. 1) and bearing in mind that “As constructionist ideas have entered increasingly into various educational communities, new and far-reaching developments have occurred” (Dragonas, Gergen, McNamee, & Tseliou, 2015, xiv, p. 17), in 2016-2017 a qualitative study was designed to find out how experts understand Good School, what features of the teacher they highlight, and compare their views with the understanding of Good School presented in the concept of Good School. The subject of the research is the presentation of the concept of Good School and teachers’ features from the point of view of experts’ as one of the conceptual implementers of the concept of Good School.

While analyzing the experts’ answers that were received via the structured interview method, Kenneth J. Gergen’s ideas stressing the common construction of knowledge, its adjustment to rapid societal changes and demands for innovation were also taken into consideration as a methodological basis for the research: “I am advocating here a fundamental shift in our conception of knowledge, its utility, and its acquisition. It is a shift from knowledge as carried by fixed representations of the world to knowledge as embedded in ongoing, relational practice. Knowledge in this sense is not located in any place – in individual minds, books, or computer files – or in any temporal location. Knowledge is continuously realized in the active process of making, or what I am calling here, relational praxis.” (2015, p. 59).

It should be noted that the research into the comparison of the understanding of Good School and the concept of Good School (2015) has not been substantially investigated in Lithuania. It should be admitted, however, that some attempts have been made to that end. Vilija Targamadžė (2016) wrote about the metamorphosis or mimicry of Good School, highlighting both its conception and factors of its implementation, but it was not viewed from the point of view of constructionism. Moreover, the current analysis of the experts’ attitudes towards the concept of Good School is significant not only from the theoretical, but from the practical point of view as well. This research is conducted to help construct a common concept of Good School and, on the basis of it, to model the possible ways of creating such a school.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

The study was organized in 2016-2017. The structured interview was designed to find out whether informants’ concept of Good School was adequate (it was compared with the concept of Good School, presented in the Concept) and the characteristics of the teacher needed to identify Good School. The subject of the research - the experts’ view of the concept of Good School and its implementation. The qualitative method was used, i.e. a survey among experts

was carried out, asking them to answer the questions in a written form. 10 experts were selected: two representatives of the existing parent organizations in Lithuania (the Lithuanian Parents' Forum and the National Association of Families and Parents), two representatives of institutions implementing national education policy, two representatives of national general education schools and two representatives from general education schools with the Lithuanian language of instruction and two representatives from Catholic schools. Each group included experts in the following fields: one developer of the Concept of Good School (2015), one scholar in the field of education, with the exception of schools (managers who worked for at least three years have written the concept of their school). All experts were familiar with the concept of Good School (2015). The experts were asked to comment on 12 questions as well as to express their opinion by justifying their answers. The following questions were asked:

1. What do you think should be the keywords of Good School (list 5-7 and provide arguments);
2. How do you define the mission of Good School? (Justify your answer);
3. What philosophy should Good School be based on? (Justify your answer);
4. Should Good School have its education policy? If yes, what kind of policy should it be? (Justify your answer);
5. What are the essential qualities of Good School Principal and why?
6. What are the essential qualities of Good School teacher and why?
7. What school community model would you recommend and why?
8. What model of school performance evaluation and self-assessment would you suggest and why?
9. How would you propose to evaluate and assess the school principal's performance, teachers' and specialists' work and why?
10. What are the obstacles of the creation of Good School and why?
11. Are the diagnostic and standardized tests developed and prepared by the NEC (National Examination Centre) compatible with the concept of Good School? (Justify your answer);
12. What school regulation documents should be changed and why?

The respondents were also requested to provide *Any other comment* as well.

## GOOD SCHOOL CONCEPT AND GOOD SCHOOL TEACHER'S CHARACTERISTICS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EXPERTS

Having analyzed all the experts' answers, they were divided into categories and subcategories. The article will present the analysis of the following three questions:

1. What do you think should be *the keywords of Good School* (list 5-7 and provide arguments);
2. How do you define the mission of Good School? (Justify your answer);
6. What are the essential qualities of a teacher of Good School and why?

These are the questions that are closely related to the issues addressed in the article. Only the most characteristic answers provided by experts will be presented in the analysis.

It is possible to distinguish the following two subcategories in the category of a "Good School": the keywords are highlighted by focusing on "the school as an organization" and, secondly, the keywords are presented as being associated more with the "educational activity and/or its results": The first subcategory that emerged from the experts' answers is "Education for Everyone." This reflects the turning point that should take place changing the idea of "Education for All" that highlighted the 20th century global concern for education, when in order to have more qualified industrial workers education was organized to serve this purpose, i.e. providing "Education for All." However, in today's globalised world this "Education for All" should consequently turn into "Education for Everyone" with an apparent focus on a more personalized education that takes into account the needs and opportunities and career plans of each student.

"Experience" and "Results" were the other prominent words that were identified in the experts' answers. Educationally, it is important that there was a place for students' "life" at school, which has a long-term meaning and ensures the students' desire to learn in the future. At the same time, the results of the students' achievements are also not underestimated, particularly their personal growth and progress, which reveal not only their academic achievements but also 'learning to learn' competences. The next keywords under the analysis are "Open Educational Environment" in which education is perceived as a process taking place everywhere and in different ways, beyond the class boundaries. "Model as a map" emerged as the other keyword identified by the experts. The concept of Good School is not a normative document but a set of guidelines that should help to "educate" (the 10th expert) the school, improving it and adapting it to every person's needs (the 3rd expert). The fourth expert presented his view in a laconic way, indicating the features of the school: "An agreement, community, vocation, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, personal progress." In the second subcategory the emphasis was on education and/or its outcomes. For example: "It is good where a student, a teacher, a school employee or father/mother feels safe and accepted, are encouraged to "grow"; "learning community - it is especially important to reflect on what I know, what I am capable of and in what area I need to improve. Continuous learning is one of the essential needs of today's global society"; "maturity of a personality, his/her achievements and progress - the center of education is the personal growth" (the 1st expert).

Other answers that were identified were: "education based on fundamental humanistic values"; "a school seeking meaning, discovery and personal development"; "school performance results - the maturity of the child's personality, educational achievement corresponding to the individual powers and continuous education and autonomous learning"; "personalized and self-education"; "school as a learning organization"; "agreements-based solutions"; "empowe-

ring leadership and management" (the 8th expert). The fifth expert emphasized the process of education/learning and its results: "personality development - the main part of school mission, as it seems to me"; "searching for meaning - life in school itself is meaningful and valuable, pupils already live in school, and are not yet preparing (or being prepared!) for life"; "life experience at school is one of the important parts of the curriculum, in some cases the most important"; "the equilibrium between results and their achievement is equivalent: the focus on processes and the results of the process itself is oriented towards life, on the person himself, and not as a means to justify the results, later as a means for the expansion of the economy, or production. The school of general education is not a "blacksmith mint" to meet the market demand."

The Concept of Good School (2015, p. 2) presents the definition of Good School: "Good School is a school that is based on fundamental humanistic values, a school that aspires to meaning, discovery and personal educational success, which follows school community's agreements and its learning. This concept of Good School defines the basic values and defines the direction for improving the school's activities." The experts' answers demonstrated that, in essence, the value aspect was not emphasized. As it can be seen, only the eighth expert highlighted this aspect and generally his/her answer is consistent with the factors presented in the Concept of Good School (2015, p. 2) that have an impact on school: "Factors of activity of a school as an organization are - educational and learning environment, education/teaching, school staff, school community and its learning, leadership and management - these are factors that determine the school's mission." It implies the idea that perhaps the expert generates his/her concept through the presentation of factors influencing the school or simply replicates the text. In general, each expert (except the 8th one), while presenting the concept of Good School directly or indirectly paid attention to the process of education and its results, and constructed the concept from his/her experience, which is not bad, however, neither of them focused on the value aspect essentially. It should be admitted, however, that the value aspect was highlighted in responses about the school philosophy, for example: "Humanistic values, because essentially the person is the most important" (the 5th expert), "humanistic values", etc.

In this context, attention should be drawn to one answer: "There is not one Good School recipe. Everyone has a different need, each one at a different level. We should agree on the goals of a particular community, depending on the ideology prevailing in that community" (the 6th expert). And this is understandable because schools have to agree on essential values.

Indeed, the concept of Good School (2015, p. 1) claims: "Good School is a school that is based on fundamental humanistic values, a school that aspires to meaning, discovery and personal educational success, which follows school community's agreements and its learning. This Concept of Good School defines the basic values of the Concept and defines the direction for improving the school's activities." Thus, the community must agree and construct its activities on the basis of humanistic values. According to the authors of the article,

this position should be the cornerstone, because Good School is being developed, it is not a given entity, and its design depends on the school concept, on the basis of which the construction routes are taken and choices are made. It is interesting to note that the experts pointed out the purpose of Good School in a unique way, although they were all familiar with the concept of Good School.

In the *Good School Mission* category, two subcategories can be distinguished: the mission of the school is linked to educational outcomes and the school mission does not emphasize the educational outcomes. The first subcategory can be illustrated by the following examples: "taking into account the needs of the particular school type and the community to pursue educational goals in order to achieve the development and cooperation of each member. The most important goal is the outcomes of the individual progress and education and self-education of each student that would be meaningful for the learner himself/herself, his parents (careers), and that will help to continue his/her studies, gain a foothold in life and society" (the 3rd expert) or "creating conditions for learning and gaining life experience and knowledge for each learner in school, in collaboration with teachers and other participants of education who, together with the entire school community, "discover" the school. This would be Good School's (as an educational institution) mission. As for the concept itself, as a document, I see its mission as a "map" for the creation of a school. The word "map" seems to me very important here because the concept allows you to choose a path, perhaps shorter or longer, but personal" (the 7th expert); "An agreement based on the community activity that helps everyone to improve personally" (the 8th expert).

The second subcategory includes the mission statements that do not mention the educational outcomes explicitly: "The mission of a school is the formation of conditions where the learner learns to become, it is the place of becoming" (the 5th expert). "The mission of Good School is to create a space for meaning, discovery and learning" (the 2nd expert). Therefore, each expert interpreted the mission differently, although it is defined in the concept of Good School (2015, p. 1): "9. The concept considers the implementation of a school mission to be a successful school performance indicator, i.e. good (desirable, acceptable) educational outcomes and rich, memorable, meaningful, enjoyable experiences of life in school. At present, when a school is evaluated by society, usually formal academic tests - exams, tests - are considered to be the main indicators of their quality of performance. The concept takes into consideration many educational outcomes (maturity of a personality, achievement and progress). It is also important to take into account the way in which the results are achieved: they should not be aimed at by painful or distressing experiences. Both aspects - the outcomes and the process of achieving them - are equivalent." The interpretation of the proposed mission of the school draws an undoubtedly obvious orientation of the school's performance to the educational outcomes that are perceived in a unique way, and not in the way most people understand them - these are not just only academic achievements, but one's personal maturity, progress, and growth. None of the experts named

them in this way, they mentioned "learner's progress", "educational outcomes", etc. It should be admitted though, that the experts did not concentrate solely on the academic progress of students.

Undoubtedly, the creation of Good School is impossible without members of the community, since its creation must be based on the community's agreements. These agreements should be the starting point for developing Good School construct. Bearing in mind that teachers should be actively involved in the creation of Good School, experts were also asked about teachers, i.e. more precisely, what characteristics teachers should have to be able to implement the idea of Good School.

The category of *Good School Teachers' characteristics* can be divided into three subcategories:

- Firstly, the experts agree with characteristics of teachers as presented in the concept of Good School ("I would agree with the diversity of personalities of the school staff as presented in the concept of Good School. Both managers and teachers need positive attitudes, professionalism, goals of personal development. It is only with such qualities that it is possible to cooperate equally with students and parents" (the 9th expert), "teacher's traits are reflected in the Concept" (10th expert), "I would agree with the concept of the diversity of staff mentioned in the concept of Good School. Both managers and teachers need positive attitudes, professional and personal development goals. It is only with such qualities that it is possible to cooperate equally with students and parents." (the 1st expert), "Essential features are listed in the concept of Good School" (the 3rd expert).
- Secondly, the experts extended the features of Good School concept: "Good School teacher is primarily a professional, who is self-confident, loves and is responsible for his/her work. A good teacher is capable of having a knowledgeable individual approach to every learner, is able to engage students in the educational process in such a way that students themselves experience success and the meaning of learning. Therefore most importantly, the teacher should always think about the student and his/her learning, which helps the learner to extend his/her knowledge, discover and accumulate learning experience, strive for self-confidence, succeed in coping with difficulties and enjoy learning. The teacher must be empathetic and able to comprehensively understand the personality of the student and his/her powers, build confidence and provide timely assistance as a facilitator when there is a need, stimulate and objectively evaluate and help students to self-valuate themselves. It is important for the teacher to be open with himself and others not to be afraid to make mistakes, but also to be able to communicate with and co-operate with other teachers, have firm value attitudes." "Assessment and self-assessment of the teacher as a professional must be related to the results of the teacher's practical performance and educational outcomes at school" (5th expert). "While agreeing with the teacher's characteristics mentioned in the concept of Good School, I want to draw attention to two very impor-



tant factors: the ability to formulate the goal of education and act in the goal paradigm as well as have good strategic managerial skills, necessary to create a working environment " (4<sup>th</sup> expert).

- Thirdly, the experts provide the characteristics of the teacher which are not presented in Good School concept or interpret it differently "the teacher must be free to accept members of the community as they are, not be afraid to show their strengths and weaknesses, and to ask for help in strengthening them. Openness strengthens mutual contact with both students and colleagues. Besides, at the same time, a common, better result is achieved. The teacher should enable each student to be open and more fully discover the true self, his vocation and seek improvement. The teacher must be open to contribute to other colleagues' initiatives and invite colleagues to joint activities that are oriented towards the goals set by the community" (the 6<sup>th</sup> expert); "Good School teacher should also be a strong person who understands the importance of his own learning, maintaining professionalism in a changing society, living in accordance with clear and firm humanistic principles. As a person (personality) the teacher is a kind of a "teaching tool," an everyday example. The teacher likes his work" (the 7<sup>th</sup> expert). The teacher's traits are enumerated on the basis of their own experience - each expert has not only conceptualized one or another concept of Good School, but also its vision and understanding of teachers who are capable of working in a school community, nurturing it and alongside that the teacher does not only have to construct Good School concept, but also to model the alternative possible paths of its implementation, be able to make choices and follow them in order to create Good School. It is worth noting that virtually none of the experts have diverged from the content of the concept of Good School, however, it should be mentioned that they lacked sufficient focus on the presentation of the concept of education: "education (learning): interactive and exploratory. It is characterized by the following features: interesting and stimulating growth (stunning, provocative, challenging, wide enough, deep and optimally complex); open and experiential (based on doubt, research, experimentation and creativity, the right to make mistakes, find one's own mistakes, and correct them); personalized (personal) and self-governed (based on personal needs and issues, the choice of learning objectives, pace, ways, sources and partners, introspection and self-assessment); interactive (based on interactions and partnerships, interactive, community-like, networked, going beyond school border (global); contextual, relevant (developing various competencies necessary for modern life, coupled with life experiences, preparing for solving real world problems, using sources and information technologies)" (*Good School Concept*, 2015, pp. 3-4). This description specifically calls for personalization of teacher education, contextualization, reflection of pedagogical activity and other competences, taking into account community agreements and educational philosophy.

The need for these competences, and the teacher's creativity in particular, is reinforced by the description of the content of education and its realization; "The curriculum is interesting, provocative, broad enough and deep, creating challenges. Life problems, are taught to be solved, competences relevant to contemporary life are developed. Learning by exploring, experimenting, discovering and rediscovering, developing, communicating. Education (learning) is based on a dialogue (students with students, students and teachers, students and the outside - the school learning partners), and generates information that consequently generates ideas and creates meanings. It moves beyond the school, transforming into one's way of life - continuing at home, in a group of friends, in non-formal educational institutions, as well as participating in social networks and using other opportunities offered by modern technology" (*Good School Concept*, 2015, p. 4).

A more detailed analysis of the teachers' traits provided by the experts suggests that the presentation of teachers' characteristics showed not only the experts' distinct understanding of Good School, but also revealed their angle of view - it is likely that the experts presented the teacher's characteristics by combining their theoretical knowledge with the existing school experience, focusing on their foreseeable school vision. However, there seems to be the lack of focus on a more detailed and a more thorough design of the educational content (curriculum) and its implementation, as well as the subtleties associated with the educators, and implementation contexts.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research into educational experts' viewpoints of the concept of Good School may lead to a number of conclusions. The concept of Good School is understood by the experts as a map, a conceptual idea, a guideline or a similar document, which outlines the basic ideas and creates prerequisites for unfolding the schools' specificity by constructing the concept of Good School in the contextual framework of the Concept. This understanding is in agreement with the Concept of Good School (2015, p. 3): "The Concept should be used as a conceptual basis and a guide for improving school performance. The Concept does not set one specific recipe for becoming Good School. Good School model should be read as a map helping to travel to a better, higher-quality school. Each school is given the opportunity to choose which aspects of the school's activities it wants to improve first, i.e. take a school-based improvement path based on self-assessment, the needs and agreement of the school community." Some of the most important actors of Good School are teachers, who need to have certain competencies and to keep developing them. Therefore, it was relevant to reveal the experts' views of the teachers' characteristics and competencies. In view of the fact that competences include value attitudes, knowledge and abilities, there seems to be some lack of experts' attention to the personalization of the content of education, its construction in the interaction

of the elements of the pedagogical system, reflection of pedagogical activity and others, which are important because “the school community is reflexive: it reflects on and discusses its activities and common life events, self-evaluates, is able to learn from experience and make reasonable plans. School members are able to jointly formulate goals, develop a vision, combine personal goals with school community goals” (*Good School Concept*, 2015, p. 5).

Understanding and implementing Good School is associated with leadership and management. “Empowering leadership is encouraged at school. The vision and strategy of the school are being developed by the whole school community, they are clear and inspirational. Leadership and management in school are shared: a large part of decision making is made by the school community, the activities of which are led by various school members, and personal initiative is encouraged. Diversity of opinions and discussions are an integral part of school life. At school, creativity and new ideas are valued, there is courage to take risks and make difficult choices. Such a management style supports the work and generally a common way of life of schools as a learning organisation” (*Good School Concept*, 2015, p. 5). In conclusion it could be stated that such an attitude and orientation implies that the implementation of the concept of Good School should be based on constructionism, as it opens up the possibility of constructing a common understanding of Good School, together develop its implementation tools and realize them, reflect and improve.

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## PECULIARITIES OF VARIOUS TYPES OF CIVIC IDENTITY

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim.** The aim of the research is to determine the psychological peculiarities of citizens with various types of civic identity.

**Methods.** 190 Ukrainian citizens were interviewed about their relations with their parents (or guardians) during their childhood, features of family upbringing, priority values of the parents' family, experience of interpersonal relationships with peers, participation in school/student activities, lifestyle, etc. The following psycho-diagnostic techniques were also used: a questionnaire "Level and Type of Civic Identity" (Petrovska, 2018); "World Assumptions Scale" (Janoff-Bulman, adapted by Padun & Kotelnikova, 2008); "Portrait Values Questionnaire" (Schwartz, adapted by Semkiv, 2013); "Interpersonal Trust Scale" (Rotter, adapted by Dostovalov, 2000); questionnaire "Level of Social Frustration" (Vasserman, Iovlev & Berebin, 2004); "Social Activity Scale" (Lewicka, adapted by Cholij, 2010).

**Results.** The typology of citizens ("devoted", "moderate", "disappointed", "indifferent" and "alienated") was created in accordance with the specificity of the formation of civic identity components (cognitive, value, affective, behavioral). Significance (value)/ insignificance, positive/negative attitude towards belonging to the state and community of citizens and forms of activity/inactivity in relation to the state and citizens made up the basis of the classification. Also, psychological peculiarities of citizens with foregoing types of civic identity were determined.

**Conclusions.** The main factors in the formation of a certain type of civic identity are basic beliefs (in particular, the justice of the world, the ability to control the events of one's life and self-value); civic behavioral patterns of reference persons (including civic attitudes of reference persons); social integration and social acceptance (experience of interpersonal relationships with peers); subjective activity (defending own position, wide range of interests, initiative, active participation in many events); value-semantic orientations (in particular, universalism, self-regulation, safety, tradition); prosocial focus (focus of activity on socially useful affairs); social trust; the fact of meeting the needs of physical and social existence in the state (level of social frustration); experience of interaction with the state in the form of its various agencies.