

## PERSONAL ELEMENTS OF A CULTURE OF TRUST IN ICT-ASSISTED EDUCATIONAL INTERACTIONS

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**Abstract:** The article presents the results of the research on one of the manifestations of trust - the personal elements of trust in educational interactions. The research was conducted in June 2013. This paper presents a broader part of the research that has been conducted within the research project SIT - *Stimulators and Inhibitors of Culture of Trust in Educational Interactions Assisted by Modern Information and Communication Technology* under the grant in the 7th Framework Programme, Marie Curie, Actions, People, No. 318759, carried out in the period between 01.02.2013 and 02.01.2016 with partners from Russia, Italy, Norway and India.

**Key words:** culture, trust, interactions, education

### Introduction

Culture arises and develops as a result of communication of people, who desire to transfer information. As a result of this exchange, we have interactions in which people learn about themselves, each other and from each other. They learn about the typical behaviour of interaction participants (Szacka, 2003, p. 70). Educational interaction occurs when participants learn, deepen their knowledge, broaden their skills and change their attitudes. Every single person can make a significant contribution to the cultural heritage of the school, but only when the other members of the community accept it and integrate it in their community. Teachers participating in this research understand the need for the introduction of ICT into schools and they are convinced of the positive impact of ICT on the learning process of pupils. However, it should be remembered that the ability to create media education culture is conditioned by internalized approach to digital media, which is reflected in trust to this type of media. Not all teachers present a common understanding of the need for digital media in education. Some people behave according to what they declare, which is

the need for the use of ICT in their classroom, but there are also people, whose declarations differ from their behaviour. This article presents and discusses the image of the chosen personal elements of a culture of trust in interactions.

### Theoretical considerations of research

As every culture, a culture of trust has its own structure. Operationalization of this variable enables the separation of the following components: personal, normative and content-based (Sztompka, 2007, pp. 69-70). In this paper we discuss the first of them, which applies to participants of educational interactions, both direct (face to face) and indirect ones, through the media. These are the learners and teachers.

Culture of trust in educational interactions is the most complex and important phenomenon in education. It can be seen in at least two dimensions, namely:

a) formal, which consists of norms and rules governing social relations at school, in the classroom, formal positioning of the status and content of educational messages that can be easily observed,

b) informal, consisting of the behaviour of participants in educational interaction with their roots in other sources and circumstances of experience.

Although these two dimensions are complementary, it must be remembered that each of them has its own characteristics, mainly due to the content and structure of the elements constituting its nature, which will be demonstrated in this article.

### Research methodology

The cognitive objective of SIT project is to describe, interpret and explain the characteristics of a culture of trust in educational interactions with examples taken from schools in the countries participating in the project. In the first stage of the project, the research was conducted in educational institutions in Poland. The place of research included schools and universities, which use ICT. These were primary schools (according to ISCED classification (dated 10/01/2014) and EQF (dated 01/10/2014): the first and second level of education), lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools (third and fourth level of education) and universities (fifth - eighth level of education). The research, the results of which are presented in this report, was carried out in six primary schools, four lower secondary schools, four upper secondary schools and three universities in Poland. The research participants included students and teachers - 18 teachers and 175 pupils in primary schools, 12 teachers and 100 pupils in lower secondary schools, 12 teachers and 100 pupils in upper secondary schools, and 15 teachers and 210 students in universities.

Understanding the use of ICT in educational interactions due to its participation (stimulating/facilitating or hindering) in shaping the culture of trust in the process of learning, personal development and social change, is interesting in the context of the scale of its use in everyday life and in the perspective of the concept of the learning society. As written in the report *Survey of Schools: ICT In Education. Benchmarking Access and Use and Attitudes to technology in Europe's Schools* (2013 p 16): "the use of ICT by students during the lesson is still much smaller than the use of it

outside of school" (2013 p 16). It provokes students to experience life in parallel worlds: the world of everyday life in a natural environment, where they can stay in relationships with certain aspects, people, places and issues, and abstracted one, detached from the natural world of school learning, in artificial reality, which is dominated by the principle of learning not for the life but for the school.

*Case study* method applied in the project allowed for the purposeful selection of schools, where it was possible to carry out the research on the structure of the culture of trust in educational interactions. The research has been conducted in schools that are highly equipped with digital devices, which means that students and teachers have access to the equipment and multimedia tools (computer, interactive whiteboards), there is a broadband connection and a virtual social environment (web page, electronic log, network communication with parents, etc.). The research included the cumulative quantity and quality approach. The collection of quantitative data included the use of questionnaires, the content of which has been developed with the participation of all partners in the SIT project. The survey participants included pupils, students and teachers from schools and universities. Qualitative research has been conducted by partner teams - participants in SIT project and with the use of observation techniques according to the previously settled schedule.

### Using ICT to communicate with the participants of educational interactions

Extensive possibilities of mobile phones and similar devices in various situations and for various purposes affect the nature of social relations, participation in social life and interpersonal contacts. Constantly, we can observe the emergence of new patterns of communication and new types of relationships. In this research we check the use of digital media in contacting subjects of education. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of using digital media to communicate with peers outside of school/university.

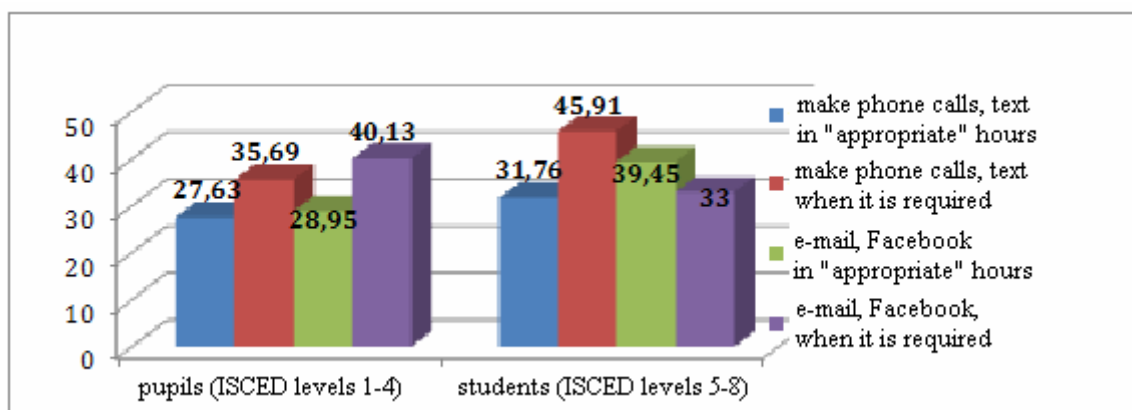


Fig. 1. Communicating with the use of digital media (source: own study)

What is characteristic is the communication at any time by both mobile phones and by e-mail, Facebook and other social networking sites. This phenomenon can be viewed from several perspectives. One of them is the netiquette, which includes the standards governing social relationships through digital media. Ease of access to means of communication leads to the situation, in which people not always wonder whether the recipient is able to make this contact. They follow their, often *ad hoc*, interest. The incidence of such behaviour indicates the need for integration of netiquette to the educational role. If we look at this phenomenon from the perspective of a culture of trust, the advantage of communicating at any time, if it is required by the situation, can be seen as an expression of trust in peers. Turning to someone immediately when it is necessary is just an indicator of trust in that person, believing that this contact will be beneficial. This applies to sharing the difficulties and seeking for help, as well as to sharing joy and success.

### Trust in people in problematic situations of ICT use

The richness and diversity of relationships in which people learn and develop their dispositions varies exponentially. It results in widening of contacts, sources of information

and knowledge. A critical attitude towards them and the assessment of their value is the condition for the use of their effectiveness in learning and human development. Searching for the development of a culture of trust characterized by criticality becomes of particular importance because of the nature of the relationship in an open, post-industrial society, where formal mechanisms of surveillance and social control are limited, and opportunities of beyond-personal informing through new media are widespread.

While using the digital media, the so-called "novices" most often seek for help from competent people. The research shows that it is not only the competence that forms the criterion of selection of the person that teachers and pupils turn for help to. Often this criterion is the belief that the person will not take advantage of our lack of knowledge, inability to solve certain issue, that this person will not laugh at us or put us in a predicament. In other words, asking for help in a difficult situation a specified person is an indicator of trust. Hence, in the presented research report it was assumed that the indication of a teacher and/or a friend is an indicator of the personal element of a culture of trust. Therefore, from the point of view of the research it is essential, who the participants of interaction trust in problematic situations, while using digital devices. The research results are presented in Figure 2.

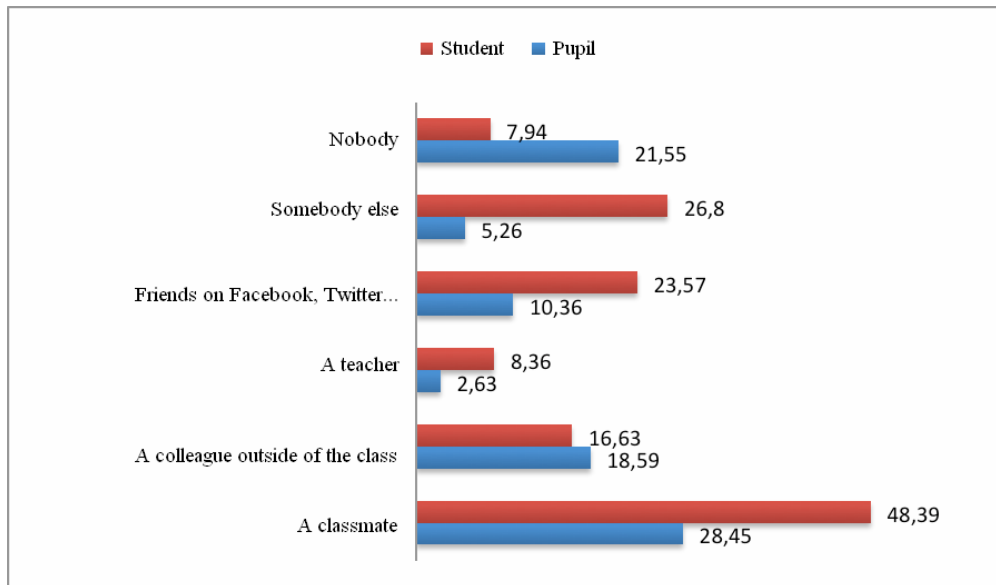


Fig. 2. People that pupils/students ask for help when they have problems with the computer, cell phone, tablet or mp3 (source: own study)

The largest group of pupils, more than half of the participants, indicated classmates and colleagues as those who they trust in relation to the experienced difficulty, including problems with using the computer. When the school teachers face a problem with using the equipment, every fourth asks the pupils for help. We realize how difficult it is to reverse the traditional roles in educational interactions. However, due to the fact that the experience of pupils in using computers is mainly formed at

home and exceeds school's needs in this area, it can be assumed that they could help teachers in solving certain problems.

Attention should be paid to a group of pupils, who do not turn to anyone for help. It is hard to point out the reason, whether it is the willingness to solve the problem by themselves, or the fear that their incompetence will be revealed. Teachers were asked the same question and their answers are presented in Figure 3.

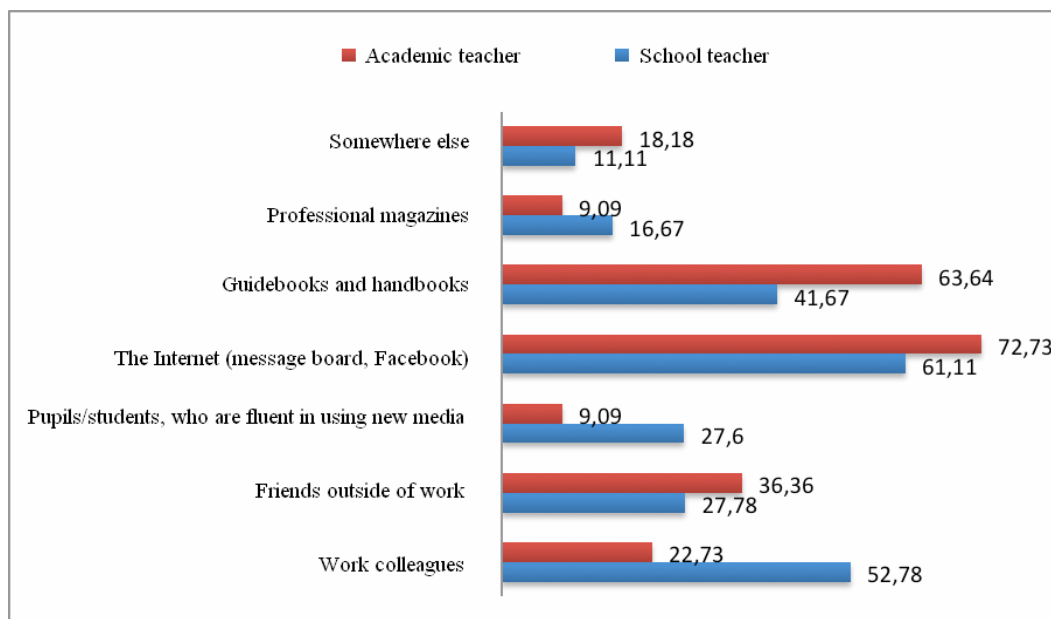


Fig. 3. People and places, where teachers look for help when they have problems with the computer, cell phone, tablet or mp3 (source: own study)

Just like their pupils and students, teachers indicate Internet community (especially discussion boards, Facebook, etc.) as a group of people, which they trust mostly. More than half of the academic teachers seek assistance in guides and handbooks. In the second place the teachers of primary schools, lower secondary schools and high schools indicated friends and colleagues as people, who are trustworthy when they need help in the use of digital media. The least trusted are newspapers and pupils/students. It is surprising, especially from the perspective of an academic teacher, since they refer their students to books and magazines calling them as a primary source of information. Teachers have more trust to "strangers" in the network, than pupils/students in the real world. Trust, which is put by teachers in personal Internet resources, indicates the enlargement of "participants" of

the network society. As pointed out by M.Castells (2003, p 313), a school, its pupils and teachers, solve their problems with the use of the Internet and other digital media and thanks to the Internet they trust personal sources in the Internet Galaxy.

### Trust in personal digital resources

The difficulty that pupils encounter while using digital media is an assessment of the reliability of the available information, in particular by estimating their educational usefulness. When assessing their competence, teachers do not take this issue into consideration. When asked if they check students' assignments for reliability, teachers replied that they trust the students. Figure 4 presents detailed distribution of responses.

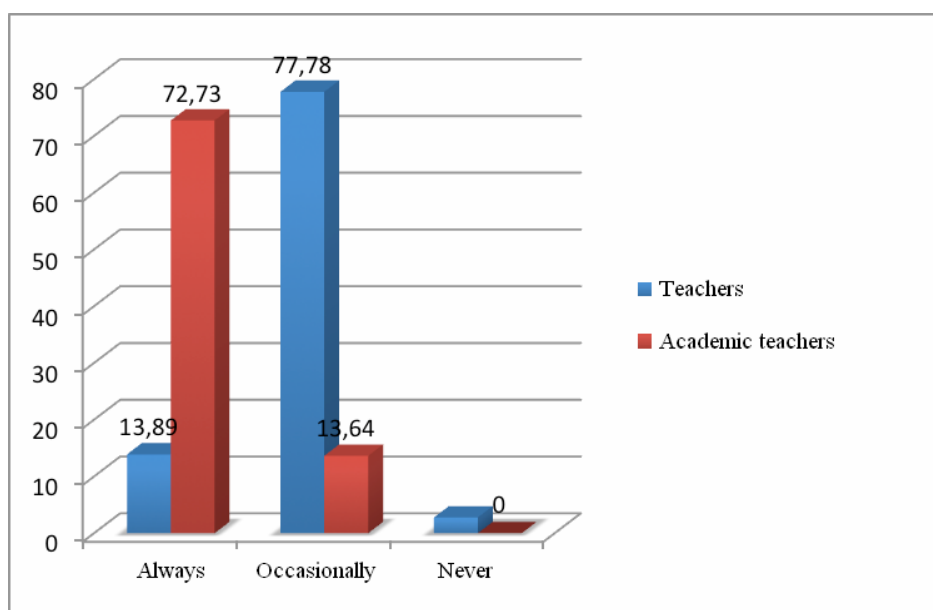


Fig. 4. The frequency of checking (using Google), if pupils/students did the assignments by themselves (source: own study)

Academic teachers do not trust their students in their lesson preparation with the use network resources. Greater trust is put in the pupils. Almost 78% of respondents indicated the occasional checking of assignments. Teachers do not trust the students but trust pupils. High level of academic teachers' trust in personal Internet resources (Figure 4) does not translate

itself into trust in the same sources used by students. Trust in the Internet - yes, outside of it - no.

The Internet is a place of information diverse in terms of its value. Full trust to the personal network resources should trigger anxiety, since only limited trust in the authors of messages in the Internet can arouse critical and reflexive

valuation of digital information. It is necessary to find information that is educationally useful. On the basis of the presentation and discussion of just a part of the empirical data collected in the field of trust in the personal digital media, it should be stated that it is necessary to improve information skills of teachers at every level of education. Full and uncritical trust to the people in the Internet and information they provide introduces its users to cognitive chaos.

Understanding the cultural context of the network environment helps to understand who is the person providing information, what this information means to me, why it is important or not, because *not all signals, signs or symbols, not any perceived or created image, not all heard statements or read sentences and not every knowledge acquired, is valuable in the same way* (Hetmański, 2013, p.7).

### Summary

The Report of the European Union called Survey of Schools: ICT in Education (dated 10.02.2014), claims that teachers who trust their skills and have a positive attitude to digital media, are much more productive at work and open to change in the school, than teachers with low competence and negative attitude. They conduct classes with the use of computers because they are “digitally confident”. But what does “digital confidence” mean in practice?

Teachers participating in the research more often plan activities in the computer lab than organize activities with the use of digital media in their classroom. According to them, planning work with the computer (one-to-one) is more

effective than planning lessons using interactive whiteboard. They claim that they individualize the learning process. Is it a major reason for such actions? Well, we dare to say that it is not. With respect to a selected group of teachers, we can talk about the basic form of trust relating more to the objects and information, rather than a person. In this case these are computers and the Internet. In the opinion of teachers, their trust in ICT increases proportionally to the increase in the level of skills of using ICT equipment. However, teachers do not transfer this type of trust on pupils. They do not put more trust in pupils, who have higher skills in the use of digital media. If it is assumed that the condition of trust between people – teachers-pupils – means entering into mutual relations, then on the one hand, we are dealing with the certainty that we are not threatened by anything in contact with the other person, and on the other hand, we are not threatened by that person. Since teachers do not trust pupils, who have higher technological competence than themselves, it means that they are afraid of them and do not enter into relationships with those pupils, while using digital media. They choose computer labs, where the pupil is alone with the computer. Thus, there is a strong relationship between trust to pupils and their ability to use digital media.

We realize how difficult it is to reverse the traditional roles in educational interactions. However, due to the fact that the experience of pupils in using computers is mainly formed at home and exceeds school’s needs in this area, it can be assumed that they could help teachers in solving certain problems.

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