Shared Leadership of Teachers through their Interpersonal Communication Competence

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Abstract. This paper examines how the interpersonal communication competences of teachers can predict their shared leadership. The empirical research for this paper was undertaken with teachers working at lower and upper secondary schools in Lithuania. The conducted regression analysis revealed that interpersonal communication skills have a significant predictive power for the shared leadership behavior of teachers. Specifically, the study uncovered that the dimensions of interpersonal communication competence, such as clarity, credibility, and familiarity, have an important positive relationship with shared leadership. The results emphasize a need to focus on the development of teachers' interpersonal communication, stimulating shared leadership in teacher communities. The theoretical and practical implications of teacher leadership and their communication are discussed in this paper.
Keywords: teacher, shared leadership, interpersonal communication, competence.

Mokytojų pasidalytoji lyderystė ir tarpasmeninė komunikacinė kompetencija

Santrauka. Šio straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti, kaip mokytojų turima tarpasmeninė komunikacinė kompetencija gali lemti jų pasidalytąją lyderystę. Empirinis tyrimas atliktas Lietuvos bendrojo ugdymo mokyklose. Tiesinė regresinė analizė atskleidė, kad mokytojų turima tarpasmeninė komunikacinė kompetencija turi teigiamą prognostinę galią mokytojų veikimui remiantis pasidalytąja lyderyste. Nustatyta, kad tarpasmeninės komunikacijos dimensijos, tokios kaip *aiškumas ir patikimumas* (tai gebėjimai: aiškiai perteikti informaciją; pasitikėti žmonėmis ir jų žiniomis; dalijimasis savo patirtimi; ir kt.) bei *artimumas* (tai gebėjimas gerai pažinti kolegas; domėjimasis kolegų veikla; įsitraukimas į neformalias veiklas kartu su kolegomis; ir kt.) yra pozityviai teigiamai susijusios su mokytojų pasidalytąja lyderyste. O tokios tarpasmeninės komunikacijos dimensijos kaip rišlumas, keitimasis informacija, asmeninė komunikacija, pasitikėjimas neturi teigiamos prognostinės galios mokytojų pasidalytajai lyderystei. Nors tyrimo imtis nereprezentatyvi (N=154) daryti išvadas Lietuvos mastu, tačiau atlikto tyrimo rezultatai išryškina tam tikras tendencijas, kurios priverčia kreipti dėmesį į mokytojų tarpasmeninės komunikacijos gebėjimų stiprinimą, kaip būtinybę, siekiant, kad mokytojų bendruomenėse vyrautų pasidalytoji lyderystė. Straipsnyje yra teikiamos tiek teorinės, tiek praktinės įžvalgos apie mokytojų pasidalytosios lyderystės ir ją lemiančios tarpasmeninės kompetencijos svarbą.
Pagrindiniai žodžiai: mokytojas, pasidalytoji lyderystė, tarpasmeninė komunikacija, kompetencija

Introduction

Several researchers (Aitken 2008; Bond 2011; Niemi 2012; Bond, Sterrett 2014) emphasize that changes emerging in all spheres of life primarily rest on the school and the teacher and require a set of new and broader competences from the latter. Over the last years, European educational strategies (*Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth*, 2010), communications (*Supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes*, 2012), and conclusions (*European Council Conclusions on Effective Teacher Education*, 2014) underline that a teacher of the 21st century needs broader and more varied competences. A document published by the European Commission and titled *Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for Better Socio-economic Outcomes* (2012) states that a need for reconsidering a set of competences for teachers, teacher educators, and educational leaders has emerged in the changing world. The *European Council Conclusions on Effective Leadership in Education* (2013) lay emphasis on the ability to motivate and inspire, as well as on sound managerial, pedagogical, and communication skills, which are essential skills in educational leadership. As it has been mentioned above, the European Commission Communication document *Supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes* (2012) draws attention to the development of teacher skills: to inspire the surrounding people, to enhance teaching/learning environments and culture, to improve learners' academic achievements, to solve problems, to possess communicative skills, critical thinking, a holistic attitude, to obtain profound knowledge of the educational system, etc.

Therefore, a teacher needs to possess and be distinguished for their leadership skills alongside their pedagogical competence. The effect of teacher leadership is indisputable when discussing its quality and its improvement in school activity (Harris 2008; Lethwood, Day, et al., 2006) as well as the establishment of a professional communication of constantly learning teachers (Ross, Gray 2006). Moreover, the research emphasizes that teacher leadership has a direct effect on pupils' achievements (Leithwood, Jantzi 2006; Sun, Leithwood 2012).

Another important element of teacher competences, underlined by scientists (Nedzinskaitė, Barkauskaitė 2017) and creators of education policy (OECD TALIS, 2013), is the ability to communicate and cooperate as well as creativity and innovativeness. The research conducted with teachers-practitioners by Nedzinskaitė and Barkauskaitė (2017) reveals that teachers' ability to communicate and cooperate with each other is among the skills that are highly significant in a contemporary school, and which young teachers having less experience lack the most. The meta-analysis performed by Hattie in 2017 shows that the collective efficacy of teachers, which itself is based on their belief that their teaching has some positive effects on a child's achievements, has the biggest impact on pupils' results. It means that the key in this process is the ability of teachers to discuss together as a group how to help a child attain better results.

Various scientific studies reveal the interconnection between leadership and communication: communication competence is a necessity for effective leadership (Luthans, Lockwood 1984, cited in Lamm, Carter, Lamm 2016), communication is a predictor of success

within established or assigned leadership (Bass, Bass 2008), positive results come out of an open leader-follower communication (Hackman, Johnson 2013), etc. The leadership phenomenon itself is a process of social influence that is very much "informed by and shaped by communication" (Ruben, Gigliotti 2017). However, the relationship between a teacher's shared leadership and their level of competence regarding interpersonal communication has not been extensively explored yet. Therefore, this study aims at providing evidence on whether the interpersonal communication competence of teachers plays a role in this equation. Hence, the research question of the study is: how can the interpersonal communication competence of teachers predict their shared leadership?

First, we provide a review of the recent perspectives on shared leadership and the construction of interpersonal communication competence. Next, we focus on the current research on shared leadership and interpersonal communication competence. Finally, we highlight the future research directions concerning shared leadership and interpersonal communication competence in teacher communities.

Literature Review

Shared Leadership

The notion of team members sharing leadership functions is not a novel one. However, there has been a recent revitalization of the topic, specifically in the educational sector (Senge et al. 2012; Harris 2008).

Pearce and Coger (2003) describe shared leadership as a "dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both" (p. 1). Furthermore, on the basis of the collected literature review, Kocolowski (2010) defines shared leadership as a "relational, collaborative leadership process or phenomenon involving teams or groups that mutually influence one another and collectively share duties and responsibilities otherwise relegated to a single, central leader" (p. 24). It is most important to note that shared leadership in an organization changes its hierarchical structure into a team-based structure (Avolio, Walumbwa, Weber 2009). For this reason, shared leadership is distributed among group members or teams (Pearce, Conger 2003). The notions regarding shared leadership and distributed leadership are not discussed in this article in that sense.

Shared leadership is highly valuable in the educational sector. Researchers (Day, Sammons 2006; Leithwood, Harris, Hopkins 2008) argue that the influence of leadership on school effectiveness is greater when it is widely shared. Therefore, the implementation of such shared leadership in educational institutions is often a complex process, which demands work, time, and control from all community members (Harris 2008). The results of Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson's (2010) research demonstrate that when school "principals and teachers share leadership, teachers' working relationships are stronger and student achievement is higher" (p. 37).

A widely shared form of leadership at school is often perceived in terms of functions or features that are shared among all community members at all levels. In a shared

leadership process, community members share one aim and unanimous voice, which is strengthened through social activity and includes mutual responsibility, trust, cooperation, and interpersonal competences. In their works, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) emphasize the main idea that a teacher-leader has a great potential among peers, since the real leadership of a teacher is revealed through the dissemination of good experience as well as sharing ideas and thoughts in meetings and school management activities. Harris (2008) notes that a teacher's leadership is shared in its essence and stands out with creativity, interaction, and dynamics. When shared leadership is practiced at a school by all the community's members, particularly managers and teachers, attention is mostly focused on teaching and its improvement (Harris 2008; Hattie 2012). According to Harris and Muijs (2003), the concept of teacher leadership differs from the traditional leadership concept in a way that leadership becomes its main component. In shared leadership, interaction between a leader and their followers rather than their relationship is emphasized; hence, their cooperation or activity as a team is stressed. As Harris (2008) states, interaction among formal and non-formal leaders, not the activity itself, is the key factor when it comes to shared leadership. Teachers who share leadership have to constantly renew their knowledge, be flexible and creative, since students' success in attaining their results, as well as the quality and success of school activity, depend on this (Schratz, Petzold 2007). Consequently, any separation between formal and non-formal leadership fades out, a manager's role at a school changes, and teachers take over more responsibility in community activity whenever a need for effective communication arises. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2014) claim that shared leadership occurs when leadership tasks unite leaders, followers, and situations, where teaching and learning constantly change. Interaction between participants and situations, as well as mutual dependence, are the basis for knowledge and professional competence, which contribute to successful leadership. This interaction may be a different form of common leadership, including collective and coordinated sharing based on cooperation, where everyone stands for a specific sharing form suitable for specific tasks and activities. It is noteworthy that leaders and followers exchange roles depending on a specific situation. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2011) maintain that there are three possible ways of sharing (responsibility, activities) in shared leadership: first, joint sharing (when leaders act separately and voluntarily but for the same one aim); second, coordinated sharing (when different people do one task after another); and third, sharing while cooperating (once one leader's actions are based on the other leader's actions). Regardless which shared leadership is applied among teachers, the ability to communicate with each other is the key.

Interpersonal Communication Competence

Senge et al. (2012) describe the school of today as a learning organization, where the key elements of daily life are personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, team learning, and systematic thinking. In other words, in an effective school, all its members are

competent, share responsibilities for a common purpose, usually learn together, and have collective thinking. That kind of a school sees the emergence of the personal communication skills of its members. Communication competence is one of the key factors for effective work and well-being of employees. Hence, modern researchers (Wood 2010; Purhonen 2012; Purhonen, Valkonen 2013; Kokkonen, Almonkari 2015) underline the importance of human interpersonal communication competence.

Interpersonal communication is a social interaction among humans. Valkonen (2003) describes interpersonal communication as "knowledge about effective and appropriate interpersonal communication, motivation to engage in social interaction, meta-cognitive communication skills, as well as the interpersonal communication skills needed to act in a way that the inter-actants perceive to be both effective and appropriate" (Purhonen 2012). Purhnonen and Valkonen (2012) expand the notion of interpersonal communication competence by including an extra component of emotion. The authors note that there are two groups of emotional factors: the ones encouraging communication (persistence, domination, shyness, social anxiety) and the ones that maintain communication (intimacy, confidence, interpersonal sensitivity, altruism, foreseeing perspective). Interpersonal communication differs from classical communication models in a way that the information sender, as well as the information receiver, are treated as equal communication subjects and both participate in the communication process at the same time. It means that a person can transmit a message to the receiver, hold the conversation, use gestures, accept the message, and interpret another person's message at the same time (Rothwell 2004). Therefore, interpersonal communication includes ethic norms, since both verbal and non-verbal behavior may increase or decrease the significance of communication. Wood (2003) explains that communication is a process/ continuum from personal to interpersonal communication and distinguishes three levels of communication:

- The first level: "I–It." A type of communication when the physical existence of other people is not acknowledged, when one regards others as objects, not humans; for example, waiters or other specialists who are treated as instruments following our orders. This way, we acknowledge people; however, we communicate with them considering only their social roles, not personalities.
- The second level: "I–You." This level is most commonly found in practice. Other people are treated slightly more than just mere objects; however, they are still not accepted as unique people; for example, we speak to a waiter about what they enjoy the most from the menu or what they could recommend us.
- The third level: "I–Thou." This is the highest level of people's dialogue, when people are accepted as unique and irreplaceable. At this level, the social role of a given individual is not important, since we accept others as unique. However, at the same time, we fully open ourselves to others, not disguising our weaknesses or strengths, expectations and hopes.

It is important that teachers' interpersonal communication takes place at the third level, since only then we are able to ensure the quality of education based on successful

communication. A child's higher achievements, which are the top aim of a teacher, can also be ensured at this level.

Some scholars (Wood 2010; Purhonen 2012) argue that interpersonal communication depends on the context or a particular situation, people's ability to communicate and their motivation, listening skills, cultural literacy, language, as well as skills marked by Wood (2010), namely "developing a range of communication skills; adapting communication appropriately; engaging in dual perspective; monitoring communication; and committing to effective and ethical interpersonal communication" (p. 32). As Purhonen's (2012) research shows, interpersonal communication competence is crucial in the process of *information sharing* among organization members, *managing diversity*, *adaptation and adjustment* processes, *integrating negotiation*, *creating and maintaining the relationship*, and *managing network resources*. Doppenberg et al. (2013), together with the other authors who look at primary school teachers' results when working alone and when cooperating with colleagues, have found out that communication and cooperation among teachers have a positive effect on pupils' learning results at school. According to Katz (2011), when teachers communicate among themselves, they can achieve more efficient results, as interpersonal communication is a highly intense interaction that encourages teachers to reveal their beliefs and experiences. Assessing it all together, it makes teachers improve their interpersonal communication competence, which helps ensure quality in their work.

Methodology

In order to answer the research question, namely how the interpersonal communication competence of teachers can predict their shared leadership, a quantitative study was implemented. In trying to answer the main question of this study, the following hypothesis is formulated in the form of a question:

> H1: Do interpersonal communication dimensions predict the shared leadership of teachers? If yes, then which dimensions have the strongest predictive power?

Sample and Procedure

The research sample consisted of 154 teachers, of whom 9.7% were males and 90.3% were females. The biggest part of the participants ranged between 40–49 (35.7%), and between 50–59 (27.3%) years of age. The pedagogical qualification of the participants was split as follows: 14.3% teachers, 46.1% senior teachers, 37.7% teachers methodologists, and 1.9% teachers experts. Similarly, the participants' teaching experience varied: 9.1% had less than 5 years of experience, 7.1% had between 6 and 10 years of experience, 29.9% had between 11 and 20 years of experience, 34.4% had between 21 and 30 years of experience, and 19.5% had 31 or more years of experience. Around 43% of the participants worked at a lower secondary school, and around 46% at upper secondary schools. The respondents were asked to fill out a paper-based questionnaire.

Measures

Using 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), two focal concepts in this study, such as shared leadership and interpersonal communication, were measured. The measure of shared leadership was adapted from the Shared Leadership Survey of Brussow, Noonan, and Gaumer Erickson (2013), whereas the instruments of Purhonen and Valkonen (2012) were used to measure interpersonal communication competence. Both instruments were translated into the Lithuanian language and adapted for the Lithuanian context. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for both measures.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	M	SD	Min.	Max.	Skew	Kurtosis	N
Interpersonal Communication	3.98	0.39	2.78	5.00	0.06	0.07	154
Shared Leadership	3.99	0.41	2.77	5.00	-0.20	-0.05	154

The Shared Leadership measure consisted of 21 items. The exploratory factor analysis (KMO = .819) using a varimax (orthogonal) rotation revealed that 21 items of Shared Leadership loaded into five factors, which accounted for 58.3% of the variance. An exploratory factor analysis did not confirm this original four-dimensional (Collaboration, Vision, Delegation, and Culture) structure of the Shared Leadership measure (Brussow, Noonan, Gaumer Erickson, 2013). In this study, five factors and their reliabilities were distinguished as follows:

- Vision (alpha = .84) is a clear vision of an organization and its obligation to attain the goals of the organization;
- Collaboration (alpha = .72) is cooperation with colleagues, an ability to share activities/tasks with others, and an acknowledgement of the uniqueness of others;
- Delegation (alpha = .64) is an ability to delegate and/or share tasks that need to be completed and an ability to try on various roles and do different tasks;
- Culture (alpha = .56) is the acknowledgement of community members' strong and weak sides and their activity based on similar values;
- Trust (alpha = .58) is an acknowledgement that everyone can be a leader and the trust in other people's competences while completing tasks.

The total reliability of the measure in the present study was α = .87.

The measure of the competence of interpersonal communication was composed of 42 items. An exploratory factor analysis (KMO = .877) using a varimax (orthogonal) rotation revealed that 42 items of the interpersonal communication competence loaded into six factors, which accounted for 66% of the variance. An exploratory factor analysis did not confirm this original four-dimensional (Collaboration, Vision, Delegation, and Culture) structure of the Interpersonal Communication measure (Purhonen, Valkonen 2012).

In this study, the competence of interpersonal communication loaded into six factors, the reliabilities of which were as follows:

- Clarity & Credibility (alpha = .89) is an ability to use clear language, to understand others and respect their opinion, to discuss things when there are different opinions, etc.;
- Connectedness (alpha = .85) is an action directed toward cooperation with colleagues, an ability to express one's opinion with arguments, etc.;
- Information Sharing (alpha = .85) is an ability to openly admit and transmit present problems and difficulties, possible activity directions, and an ability to offer various cooperation solutions in order to attain a result;
- Personal Communication (alpha = .79) is an ability to listen to and hear another person, and to adapt to any situation;
- Familiarity (alpha = .71) is the acknowledgement of a community and participation in non-formal meetings:
- Trust & Respect (alpha = .69) is positive and trustworthy communication skills.

The total reliability of the measure in the present study was α = .95.

The data were collected using a data collection instrument consisting of personal data and scales of shared leadership as well as interpersonal communication competence.

Analysis

The data of the research were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS for Windows 22.0. Taking into account the results of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1, the following analyses were performed: an exploratory factor analysis and Spearman's correlation analysis. In order to test how interpersonal communication can predict teachers' shared leadership, a linear regression analysis was used. In addition, an exploratory factor analysis was employed to search for the items that were linked together in the perceptions of shared leadership and interpersonal communication in the Lithuanian context. The results of the research are presented below.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

In Table 2, the descriptive statistics of interpersonal communication and shared leadership scales are reported. As it can be seen in Table 2, the teachers attributed the highest scores to Clarity and Credibility (M = 4.29, SD = 0.43), Personal Communication (M = 4.10, SD = 0.49), and Trust and Respect (M = 4.09, SD = 0.52). By contrast, the teachers indicated the lowest skills as related to Connectedness ("I support my collaboration partner in going forward," "I am active in our network," M = 3.69, SD = 0.53).

The teachers from all the levels of lower and upper secondary schools had good collaboration skills (M = 4.38, SD = 0.48) and focused on team goals, which corresponded to their beliefs and values (M = 4.20, SD = 0.52). Meanwhile, the respondents were

ineffective while delegating leadership responsibilities to others or taking the role of an informal leader (M = 3.61, SD = 0.66) as they did not feel confident (M = 3.78, SD = 0.62) or trust others.

Table 2. The Descriptive Statistics of Personal Shared Leadership and Interpersonal Communication domains.

Variable	Domain	M	SD	Min.	Max.	N
Interpersonal Communication (IC)	Clarity and Credibility (C1)	4.29	0.43	2.64	5.00	154
	Connectedness (C2)	3.69	0.53	2.14	5.00	154
	Information Sharing (C3)	3.82	0.54	2.13	5.00	154
	Personal Communication (C4)	4.10	0.49	2.60	5.00	154
	Familiarity (C5)	3.88	0.59	2.00	5.00	154
	Trust and Respect (C6)	4.09	0.52	3.00	5.00	154
Shared Leadership (SL)	Vision (L1)	4.20	0.52	2.67	5.00	154
	Collaboration (L2)	4.38	0.48	2.50	5.00	154
	Delegation (L3)	3.61	0.66	1.67	5.00	154
	Culture (L4)	3.97	0.54	2.67	5.00	154
	Trust (L5)	3.78	0.62	2.00	5.00	154

Shared Leadership and Interpersonal Communication Competence

Correlation between the variables was performed to test the hypothesis. Based on the correlations between shared leadership and interpersonal communication scales (Table 3), it can be stated that all shared leadership scales were positively related to interpersonal communication scales at the significance level $p < .01$.

Table 3. Spearman's Correlation Matrix.

	IC	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
SL	.716**	.691**	.583**	.607**	.455**	.506**	.477**
L1	.675**	.675**	.510**	.574**	.401**	.497**	.439**
L2	.536**	.638**	.382**	.405**	.370**	.409**	.375**
L3	.580**	.503**	.551**	.537**	.392**	.341**	.332**
L4	.446**	.394**	.367**	.396**	.241**	.400**	.274**
L5	.401**	.363**	.294**	.328**	.309**	.272**	.363**

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As it can be seen in Table 3, shared leadership and interpersonal communication have a very strong positive correlation ($r = .716$). According to different scales of shared

leadership, it must be noted that Clarity and Credibility have a crucial impact for sense of Vision ($r = .675$), Collaboration Skills ($r = .638$), and medium for Delegation ($r = .503$). Vision is one of the shared leadership scales, which has a strong or medium positive correlation with all interpersonal communication scales. It means that in order to understand, share, and commit with a team vision, one must firstly have good personal communication skills, trust and respect others, share information with others, etc. In addition, information sharing has influence on not only a person's sense of team/organization vision ($r = .574$) but also on their ability to collaborate with others ($r = .405$), delegate leadership, or take upon a role of a leader ($r = .537$). All interpersonal communication scales have the weakest correlation with the shared leadership trust (L5) scale.

Spearman's correlation showed that there was a positive significant correlation between shared leadership and interpersonal communication competence; therefore, a linear regression analysis was performed to test interpersonal communication and its dimensions of shared leadership (Table 4).

Table 4. *Results of the Linear Regression Analysis.*

IVs	ΔR^2	β	p	F
	DV: Shared Leadership			
Model 1	.596***			
Clarity and Credibility		.392***		
Connectedness		.123		
Information Sharing		.152	< .000	36,137
Personal Communication		.090		
Familiarity		.156*		
Trust & Respect		.039		

Note. IVs = independent variables; DV = dependent variable. Squaring the value of part is the percentage of variance each predictor uniquely explains.
*$p < .05$ (one-tailed test). **$p < .01$ (one-tailed test). ***$p < .001$ (one-tailed test).

Regression analysis indicates a significant relationship between interpersonal communication and shared leadership, with the six predictors explaining 59.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .596$, F=36.14, $p < .05$). The strongest predictor of shared leadership that was found pertains to Clarity and Credibility ($\beta = .392$, $p < .0001$). Another significant predictor, although significantly less strong, is Familiarity ($\beta = .156$, $p < .05$). However, predictors such as Connectedness (β = .123, p > .05), Information Sharing (β = .152, p > .05), Personal Communication (β = .090, p > .05) skills, and Trust & Respect (β = .039, p > .05) are not significant predictors of shared leadership. Therefore, the hypothesis of our research is supported by the data and is thus confirmed.

Overall, we find that interpersonal communication is a strong predictor of teacher shared leadership. Following the hypothesis, it must be noted that Clarity and Credibility have the strongest predictive power for shared leadership.

Conclusion and Discussion

The research presented in this paper focuses on the dimensions of interpersonal communication competence as variables of shared leadership. Firstly, the results of this research provide evidence that interpersonal communication dimensions serve as predictors of shared leadership. The research reveals that Clarity and Credibility are the strongest predictors of shared leadership. These results are strongly related to the ones obtained by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), who analyze interpersonal communication in business organizations and conceptualize it through content awareness and the ability to clearly transmit it to others. Some scientists (Bradford, Allen, Beissen 2000) admit that clarity is a significant element when discussing intercultural communication, which is not so important in the context of this particular research.

The research is homogenous in its sense; more than 90 percent are female respondents, whose age and education are almost similar. It means that we can assume that even for a homogenous or quite culturally similar community, an ability to clearly communicate in their professional field is also important.

The research shows that Familiarity is the second predictor having an effect on shared leadership. Such results are confirmed by other scientists, who state that the establishment of interpersonal connection and taking interest in others as unique personalities helps to establish mutual cooperation connections and networks (Myers 2010; Purhonen, Valkonen 2013). Schein (2016) explains that professional relationships are "personal" in a way that we spend time on acquitting with the other person's interests and caring for others (colleagues), while the relationships themselves are based on credibility and openness. As some research (Purhonen, Valkonen 2013) shows, these connections are often not developed in organizations, although they would be handy in ensuring cooperation culture at work. It means that seeking for a more effective interpersonal communication of teachers, professional relations need to be established and based on getting to know each teacher's uniqueness, acceptance of one another, as well as searching for everyone's strong and weak sides that might help to achieve the goals at the same time.

Second, the obtained results are surprising in that such interpersonal communication dimensions as Connectedness, Information Sharing, Personal Communication skills, and Trust & Respect are not the predictors contributing to teachers' shared leadership. Our research results contradict with the results of Purhonen's (2008) research. When analyzing interpersonal communication and cooperation connection in business organizations, the author notes that one of the advantages in work groups is a possibility to rapidly obtain information and establish a network. It can be assumed that the results of the research are contradictory due to their specificity – the homogeneity of the teachers' community. Differently from a business organization, teacher communities have similar education and share similar competences. Therefore, more people having a greater variety of competences are needed to gain more exact information (Harris 2008). Another interesting fact is that Trust and Respect, as elements of interpersonal communication, are not elements in teachers' shared leadership, although leadership theorists consider

trust and positive communication as the key elements of leadership skills (Harris 2008; Lambert 2003).

The obtained results, which show that four interpersonal communication dimensions are not predictors, might occur due to the fact that teachers, who participated in this research, filled in only a self-assessment form and could have presented their current situation instead of an expected one. In other words, the obtained results can presuppose that Clarity, Credibility, and Familiarity are the elements that teacher communities lack; therefore, they stand out in the research as the ones that have the greatest effect. Therefore, it can be assumed that factors, based on regression analysis, have not been determined as predictors and, according to the respondents, are not the field of necessity. The self-assessment form that was filled in by teachers could be seen as one of the limitations of this research. Other limitations include the fact that female respondents dominated in the research, since the obtained results could vary due to gender differences. Leadership research (Northouse 2013) shows that women tend to choose leadership based on democratic relationships. Such a conclusion is confirmed by psychologists (Myers 2000), who state that specific gender differences are innate. For example, it was scientifically confirmed that women demonstrate higher levels of empathy, openness, sensitivity, are better at understanding emotional cues, and have better developed social connections than men.

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