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Traces of Internal Evaluation in Art Schools —Experiences Worth Continuing

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ABSTRACT

Internal evaluation, introduced into the Polish educational system in 2009 as a component of pedagogical supervision, played a significant role in improving the quality of education and school management. Despite its formal removal in 2021, this article examines its lasting impact and developmental potential, particularly within the specific context of artistic schools. A pilot study conducted in 2022 with 148 artistic school directors revealed ambivalent attitudes toward evaluation but also highlighted its significant value in fostering organizational culture and supporting educational innovation.

Directors, as key stakeholders in the evaluation process, identified its positive effects in areas such as improving educational processes, providing psychological support for students, fostering teachers' professional development, and reorganizing school spaces.

The findings indicate the need to continue evaluation practices in artistic schools, emphasizing the development of an evaluation culture and competency support for educators. Internal evaluation, conducted cyclically and tailored to local needs, can serve as an effective mechanism for school development and enhancing the quality of education. The presented research results encourage further analyses and actions to fully utilize the potential of evaluation in the context of artistic education.

KEYWORDS: school evaluation, internal evaluation, art schools

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Introduction

Evaluation has appeared in Polish schools as a result of the modernization of pedagogical supervision structures in 2009 (No. 168, item 1324). Its introduction into the educational space was in line with European trends emphasizing the usefulness of evaluation and the possibilities of exploiting the results of its outcomes to improve both the work of schools and the quality of education. Until that point, the methods deployed to examine school reality proposed as part of evaluation were poorly known in Poland and implemented on a small scale (Mizerek, 2017). On the other hand, placing evaluation in pedagogical supervision next to monitoring, control and support made it a common and mandatory practice. It is worth emphasizing that it was a completely new challenge for most employees of educational institutions. In addition, huge funds were invested in the process of its introduction to the Polish education system, but above all, many years of effort were put into preparing educators to conduct evaluation. Principals and teachers were successively convinced to appreciate the value of conducted studies, perform internal evaluations responding to the immediate needs of the school and conduct a broad dialogue on the directions of its development. Unfortunately, in 2021, evaluation was removed from pedagogical supervision (2021, item 161). This means closing the formally defined path of evaluation functioning in Polish schools. However, a question remains whether this decision completely erases evaluation from the map of Polish education?

As a researcher convinced of the effectiveness of evaluation research in education, I have closely followed the processes of its “entering” into Polish schools (e.g., Maciejewska, 2011, 2014, 2018, 2023; Kasprzak & Mizerek 2011; Elsner & Bednarek 2012; Raport z badań IBE 2014; Borek & Siejewicz 2014; Mizerek, 2017. Nowotniak, 2019. Sury, 2020; Smoter, Sury, & Kołodziejczyk, 2022). I, of course, notice the errors and negative opinions that have been accumulating over these 12 years in respect to evaluation practice in Polish schools, especially regarding external evaluation. But I also notice and appreciate the potential that remained after the actions taken at that time. I am, therefore, looking for traces of evaluation in schools, hoping that my search will show educators the sense of continuing the experience of conducting evaluation research and participating in discussions on the needs and changes of the institutions with which they feel connected.

The presented study focuses on searching for traces of internal evaluation, which can be perceived as a special “invitation to development” (Simos, 1987) both for the entire school as an organization and for individual members of this community. It is seen as an important mechanism supporting the internal development of the school in its learning process as an organization (Senge, 1998; Fazgalic, 2002). Using conclu-

sions from evaluation studies can help in making rational decisions regarding school development and create it in a way that is most adequate to the needs of a given institution and its environment.

I am looking for traces of evaluation in a rather unusual place—among art schools. Issues of art education rarely appear in general discussions about education, while it deserves due attention at least because of its diversity and didactic solutions. Art school is a kind of educational enclave, supervised by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, and constituting a separate education system (compared to the general one) (<https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/szkolnictwo-artystyczne-w-polsce>). However, it falls under state requirements addressed to all educational institutions, including regulations introducing evaluation into pedagogical supervision. My interest in the fate of evaluation in these schools stems from the fact that I was one of the persons accompanying teachers and principals of art schools in the process of its implementation.

The article attempts to take an exploratory look at the traces left by internal evaluation in art schools, and particularly in the minds of the principals of these educational institutions, as they were both the implementers and the main stakeholders of the outcomes of these activities. Their opinions on the importance of evaluation in art schools and the areas in which it brought benefits were presented based on a pilot study conducted in January 2022.

Internal evaluation and its potential

When evaluation (alongside monitoring, control and support) had been introduced into the pedagogical supervision of schools and educational institutions it was defined as “a practical evaluation study conducted at a school or institution”, carried out in two forms: external and internal (cf. Regulations of the Minister of National Education, Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 168, item 1324). Although the internal evaluation was “brought into being” by a ministerial regulation, the main emphasis was placed on defining the boundary conditions and principles of implementing the external evaluation, which was expected to determine the extent of schools’ compliance with the state requirements for educational institutions. Unfortunately, the dominant feature of this form of evaluation was the assessment score expressed on a scale from A to E, which significantly influenced the way it was implemented and ultimately resulted in an unfavorable attitude of practitioners (principals, teachers, parents) towards the evaluation itself (Maciejewska, 2018). In 2015, another regulation introduced changes in the understanding and final settlement of evaluation (cf. Regulation of the Minister of National Education, Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1270), defining it as “the process of

collecting, analyzing and communicating information on the value of activities undertaken by a school or institution; the results of evaluation are used in the decision-making process aimed at ensuring high quality of the organization of education, upbringing and care processes and their effects in the school or institution". The assessment of schools using the scale was also abandoned, and a new provision was introduced referring to the basic and high level of compliance with requirements by the school. Unfortunately, this failed to bring about any clear changes in the approach to these studies, as evidenced by the removal of evaluation from pedagogical supervision in 2021 (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science, Journal of Laws of 2021, item 161).

The aforementioned regulations only outlined the general picture of internal evaluation, indicating primarily the role of the school principal as the one responsible for planning and conducting it. This meant a great deal of autonomy for the principal and teaching staff in conducting evaluation studies in individual schools. They could freely use the most appropriate and effective solutions for their institution developed during global research on evaluation, as many theoretical and practical paths have emerged over nearly one hundred years of history of evaluation studies showing different ways of explaining and conducting evaluation (Simons, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; House, 1997). The problem among pedagogues in this case was an almost complete lack of knowledge about evaluation and competences related to its planning and implementation. The Center for Art Education (CEA), which exercises pedagogical supervision over art schools, organized training and workshops based on fourth-generation evaluation models (Guba & Lincoln 1989) as part of its support. These models, considered to be the most advanced forms of evaluation, were developed based on the assumptions of the constructivist paradigm of social sciences, which allowed emphasizing their novel, developmental values. Evaluation is defined in these models as "reflective recognition of the value of a specific action or object based on the adopted method and criteria, as a result of a socialized process aimed at its recognition, understanding and development." (Korporowicz, 2010). An interesting feature of the description of research conducted in this regard is its presentation from three perspectives: responsibility, cognition and development (Mizerek, 2010). When designing evaluation, the perspective of responsibility/accountability takes into account the aspirations, goals and expectations of stakeholders related to educational processes in the school, informing them about the way in which the goals of school education are achieved and collecting data enabling the debate on the quality of the institution's work or the entire education system. The cognitive perspective, in turn, enables in-depth analysis and understanding of what is happening at school and searching for factors that may affect the outcomes of the school's work and are often overlooked in its daily functioning. It enables the discovery of the school's atmosphere, taking

a closer look at its culture. The developmental perspective, on the other hand, enables determining the innovative potential of the school and the need to reinforce it, directly provides knowledge which allows introducing changes. The first of the perspectives—responsibility/accountability—primarily includes the external evaluation introduced to pedagogical supervision. In turn, the internal evaluation performed by the institution's employees in accordance with its needs and for their own use should draw from the possibilities of developing cognitive and developmental perspectives. Developmental evaluation has a special potential enabling the introduction of real changes in school functioning.

The term “developmental evaluation” was introduced by Michael Q. Patton (in: Korporowicz, 2010) as a description of a type of evaluation that focuses on the accurate identification of information needs and securing the actual use of the achieved results in social practice as a basis for introducing changes. In his basic assumptions, the evaluator intends to improve and enhance the quality of the action being examined, to participate in the development of knowledge that has practical application for specific persons and communities. The task of evaluation in this case is to provide feedback which is then expected to initiate learning in the person/organization and to support or change the adopted direction of actions. Evaluation is undertaken during the implementation of the action being examined and focuses on the experiences of persons who participate in a given action/program, their expectations, possibilities or problems. It seeks answers to questions about obstacles that appear in the implementation of the action being examined, possibilities of removing them or finally the needs and methods of modifying these actions (Jaskuła 2012). A distinguishing feature of this research model is the preservation of the flexibility of the evaluation project, i.e., the possibility of introducing changes in it during the course of the evaluation study. This allows for searching for interactive dependencies in the phenomena studied, supporting learning processes and re-evaluations. Peculiar sensitivity to the local and organizational context of the study and the internal dynamics of transformations of the institution or program within which the evaluation is conducted is also maintained. Experiences arising from the developmental evaluation support the processes of opening up to reality and engaging in the development of innovative solutions. The main value of the study in this case is the “liberated social, cultural and human potentials constituting an integral consequence of the entire action” (Korporowicz, 2010, p. 31). Such embedding of research primarily exposes its basic social goals, which drive the actions of evaluators. They refer to: recognizing the social nature of the actions being evaluated; animation of communication processes of all participants of the evaluation process, with particular reference to the basic values related to their involvement; increasing awareness of the mutual connection and quality of cooperation between individual and social entities; and reflection on the key dimensions of

valuing the subject of evaluation and inspiring educational aspects of the evaluation process (Korporowicz, 2013).

The potentials of internal evaluation presented above can be particularly effective when they are properly implemented and become part of the school culture. Evaluation as a one-time act or a rarely implemented practice fails to trigger the expected changes. In contrast, cyclically planned evaluations, providing valuable feedback and stimulating reflection on the institution's operation, can support a school that can effectively respond to the changing needs of its pupils and community.

Artistic education and its specific nature

"Artistic education in Poland encompasses almost 1,000 art schools and art institutions, employing a total of ca. 15,000 teachers and educating almost 95,000 pupils". Such general data is provided on the website of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage on artistic education, showing that its structure is relatively complicated. Within this system, there are both public and non-public schools (with the rights of public art schools or without such rights). They are run by the ministry, local government units, legal entities, and individuals. They also differ in the profile of education, as they can provide education only in the field of artistic subjects but also together with general education. Artistic education is conducted at three levels—primary, secondary and higher. At the primary and secondary levels, there are different types of art schools, in which pupils can study professions of musicians, visual artists, dancers, musical actors, or circus actors.

The specific nature of education in art schools is due to their principal goal, namely, educating new professional staff for culture and art. This system is built around the specific artistic potential of young people and requires taking into account the varied pace and intensity of teaching. Meeting such challenges is possible by deploying individual methods and forms of work based on the master-pupil relationship and taking care to enable young artists to verify their skills within various forms of promotion. As Katarzyna Jagodzińska (2013) claims, the Polish education system is, however, quite conservative, emphasizing the leading role of the teacher and his demanding and decisive attitude towards pupils as the main motivation for work. "Such a model of teaching is in contradiction with contemporary trends in education, which emphasize the role of the teacher in developing the pupil's creativity: independence and cognitive curiosity, and also his creative abilities." (Jagodzińska, 2013, p. 168). Art schools in Poland, music schools in particular, enjoy unwavering social interest. In this case, the introduction of external and internal evaluation to pedagogical supervision could have become a contribution to the discussion on improving the quality and level of

education in art schools. Moreover, these schools are invariably perceived as the environmental cradles of cultivating high culture, not only developing the basic knowledge and skills of talented young people but also passing on the values of love for art and sensitivity to culture (Nogaj, 2017).

The category of improvements in school administration and management includes activities focused on improving organizational efficiency and communication in school. Principals pointed out that the internal evaluation contributed to “the systematic updating of internal documents in accordance with changing regulations” and the introduction of “changes in internal school regulations”. Attention was also drawn to the importance of “discussions regarding the choice of an electronic grade-book” undertaken in school evaluations and its quick implementation. Thanks to this tool, parents gained easy access to grades, attendance and current information about their children’s progress. It also influenced the “improvement of information transfer between teachers, parents and pupils”. The conclusions from the evaluation also translated into the adjustment of the schedule of classes and the school year to the specific character of the artistic institution in many schools. These included, among others: “adding events that develop pupils’ interests to the school calendar: competitions, thematic concerts, workshops expanding knowledge”, “changes in the organization of mid-year and technical broadcasts and adapting them to the calendar of concert events” or “establishing rules for organizing concerts and school events and better selection of repertoire”. In some schools, this took the form of “changes in school priorities, e.g., more group music-making”.

The picture of changes in art schools resulting from the above analyses, which were related to the outcomes of internal evaluations, covers all the most important areas of their activity and is very diverse. It clearly indicates the meaning of the evaluation studies conducted and the multi-faceted possibilities of their application. Principals of art schools also emphasized that designing internal evaluation allows for “evaluation areas to be selected based on the needs and problems noticed by teachers”. Conducting evaluation “tailored” to needs seems to be the key to achieving real effects and collecting positive experiences related to it.

Methodological note

The conducted pilot study was based on the survey method (Babbie, 2003). It was carried out in January 2022 on a sample of 148 male and female principals of state art schools. Its aim was to identify the opinions of persons managing art schools on the effectiveness of internal evaluation. The study took into account statements about the beliefs of the respondents regarding the usefulness of data acquired in the process

and general opinions on internal evaluation. The following research question was formulated: What is the attitude of principals towards internal evaluation and its usefulness in various areas of the work of an art school?

The study was conducted using an original survey questionnaire prepared in the Forms application, which allowed for remote participation of respondents. The survey used both closed and open-ended questions, which will be further discussed in this work. All principals of public art schools indicated by the Center for Artistic Education (CEA) were invited to participate in the study. Information about the study, along with a link to the survey questionnaire, were sent to all schools by email.

The study was conducted in compliance with the principle of anonymity and voluntary participation. Principals were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from it at any stage, without providing reasons. Sending the completed version of the survey questionnaire was tantamount to the consent to participate in the study. SPSS ver. 28 was used to analyze and interpret the collected data.

The responses to the open-ended question were subjected to qualitative content analysis, which involved thematic coding. After coding the data, a list of categories was created, which will be discussed later in this work and presented using a word cloud.

The study involved 148 persons managing various art schools. They were mostly principals of music schools—82.3%, but also representatives of art schools—12.2%, ballet schools—1.4% and other institutions related to art education, such as circus schools and school dormitories—4.1%. Almost half of the schools—48.3%—were located in medium-sized cities (from 20 to 100 thousand inhabitants), 28.6% were big-city schools (in cities with more than 100 thousand inhabitants), and 23.1% represented institutions from small towns (up to 20 thousand inhabitants).

Opinions of principals on the internal evaluation in art schools

Evaluation in schools had both its supporters and opponents. It stirred up many discussions and emotions. Therefore, a question arises as to how these years of experience were recorded in the minds of school principals. This is important because observations made both during training for school teachers and principals (Borek & Siejewicz 2014) and self-evaluation studies of the Education Evaluation System project (Kasprzak & Mizerek, 2011) have indicated that the principal's voice is the strongest determinant of the effectiveness of undertaking evaluation in the institution. "The principal builds a certain atmosphere around evaluation (and around all other issues important to the school). If the principal is convinced of the value of evaluation, then teachers also start noticing it (if they have not noticed it before). If the principal discredits evaluation or

does not understand its value for the school/institution, chances are low that evaluation will become a positive learning experience for teachers and the rest of the school community.” (Borek & Siejewicz, 2014, p. 195)

In the case of art schools, the procedures of both external and internal evaluation were coordinated by the Art Education Center as the supervising institution. They were equipped with a separate package of evaluation tools tailored to the offered type of education. Separate training courses were also conducted for teachers and principals based on the previously described assumptions of dialogical and developmental evaluation. The methodology of the evaluation examination and related training courses was adapted to the specific nature of art schools—a peculiar social world created by extraordinary participants: artist-teachers, talented youth, engaged parents and persons providing organizational support, often gifted with special sensitivity and passion. This context is worth considering when analyzing the collected empirical data.

Below presented is an analysis of the research results illustrating the attitudes of art school principals towards external and internal evaluation.

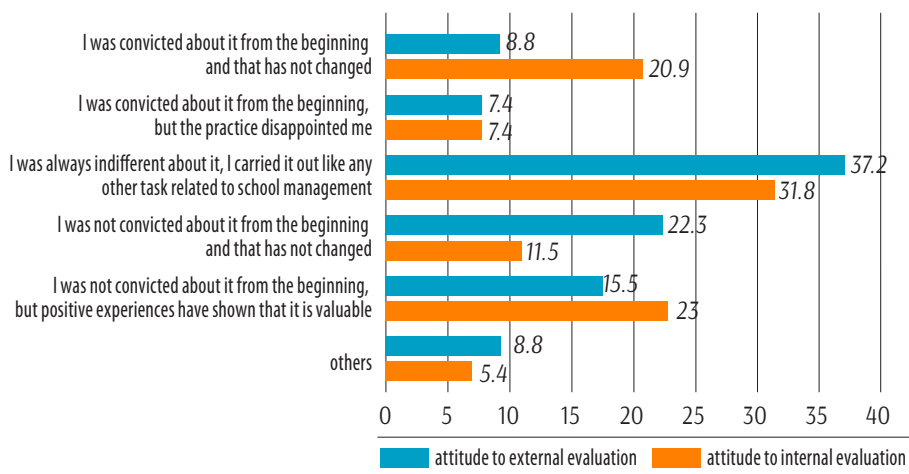


Figure 1. Attitude of principals towards external and internal evaluation (data in %)

Source: own research

The data presented in Figure 1 indicate that a significant percentage of art school principals treated evaluation as one of many tasks to be performed, which did not arouse any particular emotions or tensions. This applied to both external evaluation—such an opinion was expressed by 37.2% of the respondents, and internal evaluation—31.8% of the respondents. On average, every third principal had a neutral attitude towards

evaluation in the school. However, clear differences can be observed in the negative approach to external and internal evaluation. Principals are much more likely to declare a lack of conviction in the external evaluation. On average, every fifth respondent was not convinced of this type of evaluation from the beginning and the experiences related to it did not change this approach (22.3% of answers). Such strong dissatisfaction with the internal evaluation was expressed only by every tenth respondent (11.5% of the respondents, on average). In turn, a small number of principals declared that the practice of evaluation disappointed them to such an extent that they changed their initial positive attitude to reluctance towards it. In the case of both forms of evaluation, this answer was made by 7.4% of the respondents. It is worth noting, however, that for a larger group of respondents, the implementation of evaluation in practice turned out to be a positive experience. The fact that practicing evaluation allowed them to understand its value was indicated by 15.5% of the principals in the case of external evaluation and 23% of the principals in the case of internal evaluation. Although strong supporters of the external evaluation remained in the minority—8.8%; in the case of the internal evaluation, every fifth principal (20.9%) noticed its beneficial outcomes from the very beginning. The data, therefore, reveal a much more positive attitude of school principals towards the internal evaluation—such an approach to this form of evaluation was declared by 43.9% of the respondents (20.9% of those convinced from the beginning and 23% of those convinced as a result of positive experiences). In the case of the external evaluation, 24.3% of the respondents considered it valuable (8.8% of those convinced from the beginning and 15.5% of those convinced as a result of positive experiences).

The effectiveness of exploiting the conclusions from the evaluation may depend on the experience related to it. A list of frequently appearing statements was made based on recent analyses regarding the implementation of internal evaluation, and art school principals were asked to respond to them on a five-point scale, where 1 meant “I completely disagree”, and 5 meant “I completely agree”. The mean scores calculated for each of the statements are presented in Figure 2 .

Many discussions on the implementation of internal evaluation in educational institutions have been held around the basic question: How to do it? Evaluation was a completely new activity that everyone had to become familiar with. A practical approach often implemented in schools was to establish and train an evaluation team that would be able to plan and conduct the evaluation, as well as convince the school community to accept it. As it turned out, the principals of art schools strongly agree with the statement that a good evaluation team is a prerequisite for successful internal evaluation—the mean percentage of answers regarding this statement was the highest in the entire study and reached 4.29, and the highest value on the scale was the most frequently chosen value (mode 5).

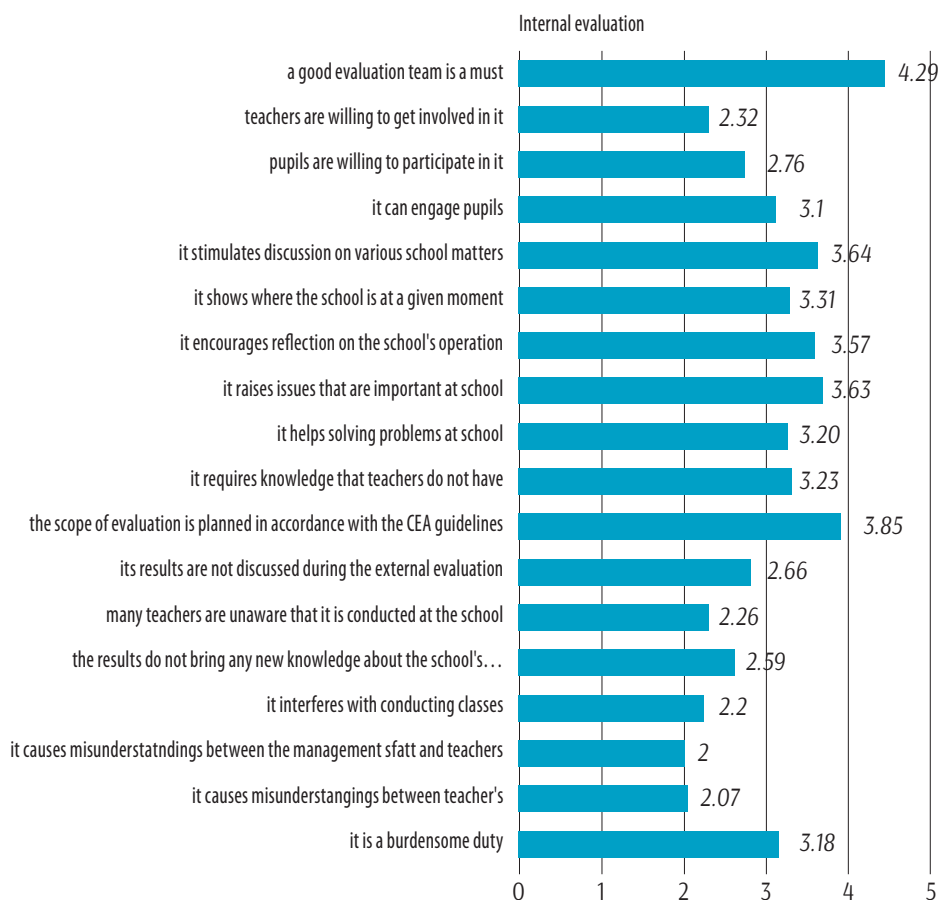


Figure 2. Opinions of principals on the internal evaluation (data in %)

Source: own research

The work of a permanent evaluation team can minimize problems stemming from the fact that teachers have no knowledge, especially in the field of social research methodology, which is necessary to prepare and conduct evaluation, and that they express their willingness to get involved in internal school evaluation activities to varying degrees. In their statements, the principals confirm the lack of evaluation knowledge among teachers—mean 3.2. They also note their reluctance to engage in the ongoing evaluation process, indicating that they rather disagree with the thesis that teachers are eager to engage in the internal evaluation—mean 2.32, mode 2. Although, it is rather uncommon that teachers do not know about the evaluation conducted at school (mean percentage of answers agreeing with such a statement—2.26), but anyway it is often considered to be a burdensome duty (mean percentage of answers

confirming such a statement—3.18). However, principals strongly disagree with the theses that the internal evaluation causes misunderstandings between teachers (mean 2.07, mode 2), or between the management and teachers (mean 2, mode 1). They also do not support the statement that the internal evaluation interferes with conducting classes (mean 2.2, mode 2). Pupils are also important subjects of school evaluation. Principals often agree with the possibility of their involvement in the evaluation process—mean 3.1, but they deny the statement that young people do it willingly—mean 2.76. The analysis of statements referring to the outcomes of the internal evaluation in school reveals, in turn, that principals see primarily the dialogical potential of these activities. In their opinion, the internal evaluation stimulates discussion on various school matters (mean 3.64, mode 4), raises issues that are important at school (mean 3.63, mode 4) and encourages reflection on the school's operation (mean 3.57, mode 4). However, this does not always translate into the final solution of problems, which is expressed in the lower number of respondents confirming the statements: internal evaluation helps solving problems at school (mean 3.2, mode 3) and internal evaluation shows teachers and principals where the school is at a given moment and what path to choose to further develop (mean 3.31, mode 3).

Although the effectiveness of the internal evaluation in schools is not obvious in the opinions of principals, many of them pinpointed changes that occurred in the school due to its outcomes. Most of the respondents took advantage of the opportunity to respond to the open question in the survey questionnaire related to the effects of evaluation observed in school life. As a result of the analysis of the statements shared by the principals, a graphical representation was created containing the words most frequently used to indicate the effects of internal evaluation noticeable in school functioning (Figure 3). The words of the largest size appeared in the text most often, while those that appeared less frequently in the respondents' statements took on smaller sizes in the word cloud.

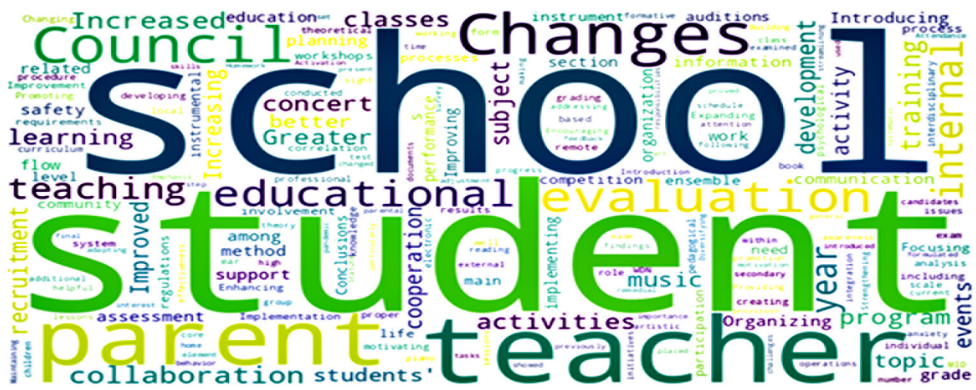


Figure 3. A word cloud representing the words most frequently occurring in the respondents' statements

As one of the principals stated, "Depending on the area examined, internal evaluations every year provide surprising but also interesting results, even to the teachers themselves being members of the evaluation team, which are worth in-depth consideration". The analysis of 126 statements enabled distinguishing ten areas of changes triggered in art schools as an effect of drawing from internal evaluation results. These are: cooperation with parents and the local community, improvement of the educational process, motivation and development of pupils, changes in recruitment, psychological and pedagogical support, safety and organization of the school space, development of teachers and cooperation within the teaching staff, improvement of school administration and management, development of the artistic and educational offer, internal evaluation and quality improvement.

The issues of increasing parents' involvement in school life by intensifying their participation in various activities were clearly outlined in the area of cooperation with parents and the community. "The significance of the Parents' Council" was emphasized, which was reinforced as a result of the evaluation and "involved in decision-making processes and educational and upbringing activities". A significant part of this thematic area encompasses changes in communication with parents, and particularly "improving information transfer between the school and families of pupils". The principals also wrote about "workshops for parents conducted by specialists in the field of pedagogy", which allowed them to better understand the needs of children and develop skills to support their education. Parents were also "involved in the process of motivating pupils", which increased "parents' involvement and their trust in the school's activities". The discussion triggered by the internal evaluation in some schools also resulted in closer relations with the environment. "The activities strengthened the image of the school", but also built a sense of community among pupils, parents and residents.

The second area of interest identified in the analysis was the improvement of the educational process. The changes described by the principals covered both organizational and substantive aspects. These included, among others, "optimization of assessment methods by introducing a formative grade", which enables the ongoing monitoring of pupils' progress and provides them with feedback on achievements and areas requiring improvement. Another important element was the "introduction of extra-curricular classes and recovery programs". The educational process was also enriched with new didactic approaches, such as "interdisciplinary correlation, in which greater emphasis was put on the connection between music theory and instrumental practice". An important element initiated by the evaluation was the diversification of teaching forms and increasing the attractiveness of classes. On the one hand, "more engaging didactic methods were introduced, e.g., methods for generating ideas in artistic classes"; and on the other hand, "pupils' needs were taken into account and

support was offered to them". Noteworthy are also the examples of "adapting the schedule of classes to artistic events, such as concerts" and "increasing the number of group performances and participation in instrumental groups and orchestras", which improve the effectiveness of learning. Additionally, as part of these activities, more opportunities were also provided for pupils to present themselves during broadcasts, concerts and competitions.

Another highlighted area included issues related to the motivation and development of pupils. Many principals indicated that the results of the internal evaluation pinpointed the importance of strengthening pupils' motivation and supporting their development through various didactic and artistic activities. A key element was to "engage pupils in competitions, concerts and auditions", which not only "develop their artistic skills but also help build their self-confidence". In particular, "attention was paid to stage anxiety". Interesting solutions in this case included "introduction of a new form of concerts during which pupils performed together with teachers" and "more frequent presentations in front of small audiences". As a result of post-evaluation discussions, one of the schools introduced "a protective week after intensive artistic projects—releasing pupils from assessment", which was aimed at minimizing stress and fatigue of pupils. The principals' statements also referred to systematic learning, including "developing special programs to support exercises related to, for example, playing scales at school and at home".

As part of internal evaluation, schools often dealt with problems related to recruitment. This has led to changes introduced in the recruitment procedure, including "in the initial examination of candidates" and "in musical aptitude tests". Another important issue was the "analysis of the reasons for pupils' withdrawal" and the resulting need to "introduce reliable information for parents of candidates to the school regarding their expected duties". Many schools also decided to "introduce promotional activities", including "presenting the school's successes", "making the school's educational offer more attractive" through new "opportunities for education in vocal studies, jazz bands or chamber ensembles" and "organizing various artistic events".

Internal evaluations also highlighted the issue of psychological and pedagogical support, which is often not a priority in art schools. The solutions introduced based on evaluation outcomes included, among others, "the possibility of individual consultations with a psychologist, available to pupils, parents and teachers" and "workshops on coping with pressure and developing interpersonal skills". Some schools decided to "employ a psychologist". Schools also implemented "compensatory classes, including recovery programs in selected subjects, such as piano or ear training" and tried to "improve the atmosphere at school". It is worth noting that this issue has appeared in many institutions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse impact on pupils' emotional lives. The need for support was also noted in groups of parents and

teachers, which has led to “organizing workshops for parents to help them support their children in learning and cope with their emotional difficulties”.

Safety and the organization of the school space also turned out to occupy an important area in school life. The statements of school principals included issues of pupils’ physical safety and the introduction of solutions such as “extension of the monitoring system”, “installation of additional lighting around the building” or “limiting access for people from outside” as a result of the evaluation. Schools also developed “detailed procedures for dealing with threats, such as evacuation in the event of fire”. Many schools also drew attention to the necessity of adapting the space to the needs of pupils, teachers and parents. Actions were taken to “organize a place for individual learning”, “space for rest” or “adapt the infrastructure to the needs of pupils with disabilities”. The safety of pupils during trips, competitions or concerts organized outside the school was also indicated in addition to safety-assuring activities on the school premises. In this respect, some schools “developed detailed procedures for organizing such events”.

Another important area of interest that has emerged due to internal evaluation outcomes encompassed the development of teachers and cooperation within the teaching staff. The most frequently raised issue was “enriching the offer of internal teacher training (ITT), in order to better support teachers in preparing pupils for auditions, competitions and exams”, “training of the pedagogical council focused on psychological and pedagogical support, including work with children with certain difficulties (Asperger’s syndrome, depression)” or “training in the use of remote learning platforms”. The organization of support for class tutors was also mentioned. One of the proposed solutions was “participation in support groups led by school specialists.” Emphasis was also put on the importance of “cooperation between teachers of various specializations, particularly between those teaching music theory and instrumental practice” and “strengthening teamwork among teachers” as well as on ways to “increase teachers’ engagement in school life”.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of the presented pilot study results provides arguments for the further use of internal evaluation in artistic education. Several important threads can be distinguished in the presented research results.

Although the internal evaluation was most often treated by art school principals as one of many tasks related to school management (31.8%), as many as 23% of the respondents stated that the implementation of the external evaluation in practice turned out to be a positive experience, which highlighted the valuable features of

this activity. Ultimately, on average, almost every second of the surveyed principals (43.9%) considered it valuable, which indicates that a large group of persons is already convinced of the effectiveness of conducting this type of evaluation research. The answers to the open-ended question of the survey allowed for a detailed recognition of the outcomes of evaluation, documented by examples of activities related to the implementation of the conclusions from the study. The experiences described by the principals showed a wide range of possibilities of exploiting evaluation in a multi-faceted look at school matters. Its positive effects were revealed in various areas of the school operation. On the one hand, it afforded possibilities to build the social world of the school by initiating discussions around supporting pupils, cooperating with parents or caring for the professional development of teachers. On the other hand, it created avenues for using the obtained data to make rational decisions in the field of school management: improving administration, modifying the recruitment procedure or organizing the school space.

Evaluation was certainly not an easy task for many practicing educators. In light of the data obtained, the approach of all members of the school community, especially teachers and pupils, to the implementation of the internal evaluation outcomes seems important. Principals indicated that both of these groups were not very involved in evaluation studies. Therefore, in the next research step it would be worth looking at the factors that can affect attitudes to the internal evaluation in school. The key to its further implementation seems to be establishing good evaluation teams that can plan, conduct and present its results in an interesting way. Only positive evaluation experiences can cause this activity to become a permanent part of the school culture.

It is worth emphasizing that the internal school evaluation is indicated in international studies of educational systems as an effective mechanism for school development. (Brown et al., 2021; Aderet-German, 2021; Oczkowicz & Myszewski, 2022; Nusche et al., 2011). For instance, in the Norwegian education system, the internal evaluation is presented as the foundation of activities aimed at improving quality and efficiency. At the same time, it promotes the autonomy and responsibility of schools. Its task is to support internal development processes, enabling schools to adapt activities to their needs and priorities, but its particularly important goal is to build an evaluation culture in individual institutions, which supports better planning and data-based decision-making (Nusche et al., 2011). Investigations discussing the introduction of the internal evaluation to schools emphasize that it is a long-term process that requires great care and follows a different course in different countries. A study conducted in four European countries: Ireland, Spain, Bulgaria and Greece, showed very different paths of implementing internal evaluation in the education system. Although principals and teachers usually perceive it positively as a process based on reflection and cooperation, leading to school improvement, they also point to many challenges, like e.g., lack

of time, bureaucratization, using evaluation for accountability purposes or difficulties in working with data. All the groups surveyed also emphasize that effective introduction of evaluation to schools requires creating an atmosphere of trust and openness, providing ongoing research support, e.g., in the form of training and implementing activities in a long-term perspective. An example supporting these guidelines is the case of Ireland, where internal evaluation has been developed for over two decades and although its implementation is very advanced, there are still gaps, especially in the area of data-based practices (Brown et al., 2021). In turn, the study of the Israeli experiences revealed mechanisms that support a sustainable and improvement-oriented process of introducing internal evaluation to schools. These are: the presence of a competent evaluator who supports and manages the evaluation process, the use of resources and support available within the school network, which enables better sharing of knowledge and experience, and the effective use of data from the evaluation process to make decisions and plan improvement-oriented actions (Aderet-German, 2021). It is also worth using the analysis of Polish experiences, in which the authors (Oczkowicz & Myszewski, 2022) identified five main barriers to the effectiveness of internal evaluation in schools, i.e., resource shortages (financial constraints, lack of access to tools and materials), lack of appropriate competences (insufficient knowledge and skills of teachers to effectively conduct evaluation), resistance to change (reluctance of teachers to engage in evaluation processes), inappropriate approach to evaluation (treating it as a formality or bureaucratic requirement), and lack of support from the management staff (insufficient involvement of the management staff). Moreover, the authors claim that overcoming these barriers requires strategic actions on the part of school principals.

The comparison of data obtained during the pilot study of the opinions of art school principals on the internal evaluation with the results from research on the implementation processes of this type of evaluation in various educational systems indicates the validity of the thesis put forward in the Introduction section about the need and advisability of continuing in-school evaluation studies. The introduction of evaluation to schools is everywhere seen as a long-term process, posing many challenges to the teaching staff, and especially to principals. It is emphasized, however, that the effects that the school achieves thanks to evaluation are worth the effort. Also important is the clearly tangible conviction that evaluation allows maintaining and even emphasizing the specific nature of individual institutions and developing them in a direction consistent with the needs of their communities. This seems particularly important given the diversity of the Polish artistic education. It is, therefore, worth continuing the evaluation experiences of art schools by providing them with appropriate support in this area.

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