Assessment of School Image

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∼ There seems to be a gap in the literature on educational management that focuses on school image and its assessment. This paper addresses this issue by reviewing the state of the art regarding school image and communication with the public.School image can be defined as the overall impression and mosaic synthesised from numerous impressions of individuals of school publics (pupils/students, teachers and deputies of school management, parents, and other stakeholders). School image is not what the headteachers understand it to be, but the feelings and beliefs about the school and its educational programme that exist in the minds of the school publics. The present study contributes to the literature by providing an overview of school image and by providing a practical application of a useful tool for assessing the content of corporate image. Semantic differential scales are used for marketing purposes and as a useful technique for measuring and assessing school image. Communication with publics and the development and sustainability of a positive school image influence not only the marketing of the school but also the educational process in the school. Today, shaping and maintaining a school image is even more important because of the curriculum reform, focusing on higher study process outputs, quality assessments, and accountability. The findings of this study have important implications for school marketing experts and researchers, headteachers, education policymakers, as well as teachers at schools.

Keywords: public relations, school image, school management, self-assessment, semantic differential

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Ocena šolske podobe

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〜   Zdi se, da obstaja vrzel v strokovni literaturi s področja edukacijskega menedžmenta, ki se osredinja na šolsko podobo in njeno ocenjevanje. Prispevek naslavlja to problematiko s pregledovanjem najsodobnejše literature glede na šolsko podobo in komunikacijo z javnostjo. Šolsko podobo lahko definiramo kot splošni vtis in mozaik, sintetiziran s strani številnih vtisov posameznikov šolske javnosti (učenci/študenti, učitelji in namestniki šolskega menedžmenta, starši in drugi akterji). Šolska podoba ni tisto kot kar jo razumejo ravnatelji, ampak občutenja in prepričanja o šoli in njenem izobraževalnem programu, ki obstaja v glavah šolske javnosti. Ta študija prispeva k pregledu literature s tem, da zagotavlja pregled šolske podobe in da zagotavlja praktične aplikacije uporabnih orodij za oceno vsebine korporativne podobe. Semantične diferencialne lestvice so uporabljene v marketinške namene in so lahko uporabna tehnika za merjenje in oceno šolske podobe. Komunikacija z javnostmi in razvoj ter trajnost pozitivne šolske podobe vpliva ne le na marketing šole ampak tudi na izobraževalni proces v šoli. Danes je oblikovanje in ohranjanje šolske podobe še bolj pomembno zaradi kurikularnih reform, osredinjajoč se na višje rezultate študijskega procesa, ocenjevanje kakovosti in odgovornosti. Ugotovitve te študije imajo pomembne implikacije za strokovnjake s področja šolskega marketinga in raziskovalce, ravnatelje, politične odločevalce s šolskega področja kot tudi za učitelje na šolah.

Ključne besede: odnosi z javnostmi, šolska podoba, šolski menedžment, samo-ocena, semantični diferencial

Introduction

The past two decades have been a period of reform for school systems, including the changing role of both headteachers and school boards. The successful implementation of educational reforms requires effective leaders and managers. Headteachers as school leaders need to develop new professional knowledge and skills required for new developments and responsibilities. New concepts of educational leadership and management have begun to emerge in many EU countries.

A statement by the Teacher Training Agency in England (1998) documented how requirements for the headteacher's role and his/her responsibilities have changed:

> […] the headteacher is responsible for continuous improvements in the quality of education […] The headteacher also secures the commitment of the wider community to the school, by developing and maintaining effective networks with, for example, other local schools, the LEA (local education authority), higher education institutions, employers, careers services and others. (p. 4)

The new integrated management and leadership concept (Everard, Morris, & Wilson, 2004) called 'Excellence in Management and Leadership' contains important parts that focus on strategic thinking, on leading direction and developing an appropriate school culture, on managing resources as well as managing projects and information, on managing quality in the new context and with new global, national and regional demands, on managing teaching and learning and other activities, and of course on managing and leading people (Eger, Pisoňová, & Tomczyk, 2016; Jacobson & Cypres, 2012; Schratz et al., 2009). Since the end of the last millennium, there has been a gradual shift from management towards leadership (Bush, 2008, 2013). One of the new key competences of the school leader is leading his/her school's improvement strategy. To achieve this task, headteachers need knowledge and skills from school or educational marketing.

Important marketing activities are connected with managing school development and help to fulfil the school mission and vision. Fidler (2002, p. 1) argued:

> In many countries education is a high priority and there is great pressure for the school system to produce better results. The form of the pressure and its emphasis may vary from country to country but there are some common features.

There are pressures to improve (modified by Fidler, 2002):

- pupils/students' results,
- participation rates,
- inclusion and results for previously disadvantaged groups,
- parental satisfaction with schooling,
- employers' and other stakeholders' satisfaction with educational results,
- cost-effectiveness of schooling.

The schools need to take a long-term approach to their priorities and put them in their development plan. Crucial decisions must consider the fact that major changes in education cannot be accomplished quickly and usually need national or local government support. School autonomy and the responsibility of headteachers are different in different countries (Schleicher, 2012) but all schools are responsible for their own future and success.

As mentioned above, continuous improvements and the quality of teaching and learning process are the main issues of the school mission and tasks for school development. Mission and vision should be key parts of the strategic marketing and management decision at all schools.

In relation to school quality Murgatroyd and Morgan (1994) argued, 'There are three basic definitions of quality – quality assurance, contract conformance and customer driven.' Quality assurance aims to prevent failure by setting in advance clear standards and performance in the planning process. Quality assurance refers to the determination of standards and evaluation examines the extent to which practice meets these standards. Contract conformance occurs in a number of ways in school. Murgatroyd and Morgan (1994) presented the following three examples: students with special needs and agreement between school and parents, homework assignments and teaching assignments (teacher's specific duties and tasks). Customer-driven quality refers to a notion in which those who are to receive educational service make explicit their expectation for this service (cf. Everard, Morris, & Wilson, 2004; Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1994; Nezvalová, 2002; Oldroyd, Elsner, & Poster, 1996). Customer-driven quality is defined in terms of meeting or exceeding the expectation of internal and external customers. The school image (see definition in the next part of the paper) reflects the customer point of view on the school and its quality.

A new marketing approach – customer-oriented marketing – is focused on customers of the school and its stakeholders. The marketing mix is also a tool appropriate for school management and leadership. Not only the 'four Ps' (product, price, place and promotion) but also another 'P': people. The concept of the 'four Cs' also find its applications in schools, it means customer solution,

customer cost, convenience and communication (cf. Kotler & Keller, 2006). For school improvement and the necessary quality assurance process, the concepts of 'school culture' and 'school image', which are usually part of marketing applications for non-profit organisations including school management, are relevant (Eger, 2006; Elsner, 1999; Evans, 1995; Fidler, 2002). The improvement and the maintenance of positive communication between the school and its customers and stakeholders is usually an essential aim in school development plans. From this point of view, the maintenance and development of a positive school image is considered the main task for Public Relations (PR is an important part of Promotion).

Although school culture has received much attention in school marketing literature over the last two decades (e.g., Barth, 2006; Bush, 1995; Everard, Morris, & Wilson, 2004; Fallon, O'Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012; Gruenert, 2008), the concept of school image has received little research attention (e.g., Eger, Egerová, & Jakubíková, 2002; Wilkins & Huisman, 2013).

Concerning school management and marketing, the following questions must be dealt with:

- What are we talking about when we talk about school image?
- What do we know about the appropriateness, relevance and marketing usefulness of our initiatives and activities in communication with the public?
- How can we maintain the good image of our school within the current societal environment?

The following part of this paper provides a theoretical background to the concept of school image and introduces the methodology of assessing school image. Next, a case study is presented with an example of how to use the concept for school development.

School Image

Kotler (2003) combines the issue of image with the issue of developing effective communication. 'Image is the set of beliefs, ideas and impressions a person holds regarding an object. People's attitudes and actions toward an object are highly conditioned by that object's image' (Kotler, 2003, p. 566).

From this point of view, the main tasks of Promotion and of its special tool, Public Relations, is caring for corporate (school) image. Image is the outcome or aggregate effect or the holistic picture of the school (Eger & Egerová, 2002; Němec, 1996). Figure 1 presents a model of a concept of school image.

A similar model with the '6Cs' is used by Balmer and Greyser (2006) for the corporate marketing mix. Their star model contains these parts: character (Corporate Identity), communication (Corporate Communication), constituencies (Marketing and Stakeholder Management), covenant (Corporate Brand Management), conceptualisations (Corporate reputation), culture (Corporate Culture). Our concept contains only five parts or elements. The difference is in brand management, and it is necessary to note that brand management in education exists and is very important, mainly for private schools.
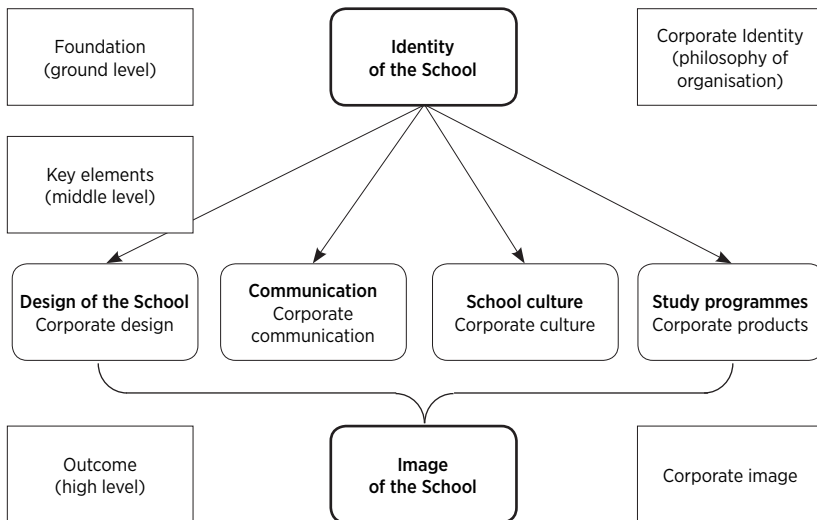

Figure 1: Concept of school image.
Note. Source: Eger, Egerová, & Jakubíková, 2002; Němec, 1996.

Corporate identity is the reality and uniqueness of an organisation, which is integrally related to its external and internal image and reputation through corporate communication (Gray & Balmer, 1998). The corporate identity of a school is the manner in which an organisation presents itself to the public, such as parents, other schools, school inspection bodies as well as to pupils or students and teachers and other non-teaching staff at the school.

Corporate design is an element of corporate image. The design of the school includes the logo, letterheads, envelopes, school flyers or brochures, website, school dress code, as well as the cleanliness and design of classes and of school buildings, playgrounds, etc.

Corporate communications relate to the various communication channels (all internal and external communications aimed at creating a positive

image of the school) used by organisations to communicate with customers and other stakeholders. This means not only communication outside, but also inside the organisation. The main task of communication is building identity and creating – communicating the image of the school. Communication also manifests in design and school culture.

School culture (corporate culture) includes the shared values, norms, beliefs, priorities, expectations as well as the traditions, ceremonies, rituals and myths that serve to inform the way in which an organisation manifest itself both to externally and internally. The culture of an organisation is expressed in tangible and intangible forms. The basic idea of organisational culture, including school culture, is that it consists of shared meanings and common understanding, and that this culture is variable from school to school (Eger, 2006). 'The culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act.' (Barth, 2006, p. 160)

Programme of study (curriculum) is the prescribed syllabus (application of national curriculum on the school level) that pupils/students must be taught at each key stage of the curriculum. It is often defined as the courses offered by the school. However, in this context of school image, the syllabus is not important, but the actual teaching and learning process at the school and its outputs are. Furthermore, extracurricular activities and pupil or student behaviour, etc., take people into account when they are thinking about the study programmes. Some parts of corporate design and the study programme create a learning environment with an influence on students' satisfaction of the course (Radovan & Makovec, 2015). It is evident that the environmental context is influenced by other factors, e.g., by place-identity in a school setting (Marcouyeux & Fleuri-Bahi, 2010). Different groups of the public and stakeholders often have different ideas about study programme outputs.

School image is the picture of the organisation that predominates in various publics. Bernstein (1984) argues that corporate image comprises countless details; it is an overall impression, a mosaic synthesised from numerous impressions formed as a direct or indirect result of a variety of formal or informal signals emanating from the company. School image, or the reputation of the school, represents or describes the manner in which the school activities and its study programme are perceived by the publics. It is feelings and beliefs about the school and its programme in the minds of the publics. It is an aggregate psychological impression that is based on the past and present, true and false experiences and information related to the school. It should be noted that large schools have not just one common corporate image. Each study programme should have its own image different from the overall image of the organisation.

As mentioned above, for public relations, communication with different groups of publics is essential. Internal publics of the school are represented by pupils or students, teachers and other staff. External publics of the school usually include parents, employers, local community, the school office (in some countries), the Ministry of Education, other schools, inspectorates, etc.

It is evident that to maintain and understand school image; it is necessary for schools to know what its current image is and how it is perceived by both internal and external stakeholders. To do so, schools should assess their image from the viewpoints of students, teachers and other external interest groups. As Dzierzgowska (2000, p. 141) stated '[…] it is important to use this knowledge to manage and to develop the image of the school.'

Assessment of school image

Although school image can be assessed, and many different ways and different methods can be used (Eger, 2006; Světlík, 1996), schools need to put into practice an appropriate method (one must consider time, resources, main groups of publics for communication, etc.). For example, multiple factor analysis analyses observations described by a set of variables (factors of school image) but the method is more suitable for the comparison of several schools. Furthermore, its implementation into practice is not easy, and one must consider the validity and reliability of such a survey. In contrast, the 'analysis of knowledge and attitude towards school' method (interviewer asks only two questions to respondents) is easy to use but, the results do not help headteachers assess the content of school image and to prepare development plans.

The semantic differential is an appropriate method (Abratt, 1989; Clevenger et al., 1965; Eger & Egerová, 2002; Klement, Chráska, & Chrásková, 2015; Kotler, 2003; Youngman, 1994) that is a useful tool for assessing the content of corporate image. The semantic differential is a list of opposite adjective scales (the method was invented by Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Initially, the semantic differential was developed for measuring the connotative meaning of terms. Currently, semantic differential scales are used in a variety of social science research and are also used for marketing purposes. It is a very general technique of measurement that must be adapted to each research context, depending on the goals and aims of the study (Verhagen & Meents, 2007). The semantic differential is a type of measurement in which the conclusions of publics about attitudes are deduced from statements about their opinions, views, feelings, behaviour, etc., to the object or category of object. It is especially suitable for measuring the emotional and behavioural aspects of the attitude. Its

great advantage is easy administration and relatively fast evaluation (Klement, Chráska, & Chrásková, 2015).

In their original research, Osgood, Suci, and Tennenbaum (1957) used three factors (components): evaluation, potency and, activity.

Each component is described by a pair of opposite adjectives. Respondents evaluate each item on a bipolar scale and can vary the position of the positive or negative adjectives. The respondents indicate their level of support for a construct (Youngman, 1994) of school image. Rating items (questions) are combined to measure a wide variety of components of image. Respondents are usually parents, students, and teachers, who represent the main publics of the school. Then there are computed average ratings for all respondents. For each concept of an image, the resultant measure or scale is represented by combining the scores for each of the rating items (Saunder, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The findings of the survey make up very important information for management of the school and teaching staff. They also provide an opportunity for discussion among the main groups of respondents about their views on partial criteria and resulting findings. Thus, this activity becomes part of the collaborative and reflective process of the school review as an important part of school self-evaluation.

Semantic differential as research tool

Data are gathered through a specially designed questionnaire. It is recommended to use from 15 to 20 factors (items) of image. Each factor (item) is represented by a bipolar scale. Examples: (evaluation) good – bad, pleasant – unpleasant, friendly – unfriendly, modern – old, clean – dirty, (potency) large – small, hard – soft, strong – weak, high quality – low quality, (activity) fast – slow, passive – active, difficult – easy, heavy – light. Each scale should measure only one factor.

Rather than develop one's own scales, it is more suitable to use or to adapt existing scales for school image (Eger, Egerová, & Jakubíková, 2002). Five- or seven-point scales are usually used to present the public image factors of the school.

Some authors recommend changing the orientation of several scales to keep respondents' attention. Conversely, based on our experience, to avoid mistakes, we do not recommend changing the orientation scales in the questionnaire. Furthermore, nowadays, respondents usually read very quickly and 'nobody has time to fill in a questionnaire'. In particular, young people only 'scan the screen'. To maximise responses, the survey should be user-friendly.

See the **example of questionnaire items**:

The possible factors are:

The school is	large – small
Visual aspects and physical location of the school are	good – bad
Equipment of the school is	modern – old
Study programme is	difficult – easy
Innovation of the study programme is	fast – slow
Range of extracurricular activities is	large – poor
School climate is	friendly – unfriendly
Children's behaviour is	appropriate – inappropriate
Success of graduates is	high – low
Quality of the teaching staff is	high – low
Management of the school is	efficient – inefficient
Parental involvement is	active – passive
Co-operation with the local community and employers is	strong – weak
Partners' relations and international relations are	powerful – weak
Promotion of the school is	well known – unknown

To interpret and report the survey, creating a graphic presentation of the results of the questionnaire, in which each group of respondents is represented by its own line, is recommended. Results can be presented as a picture in which the average scores of each group of respondents are connected into one line. Each school image (view of a selected group of respondents) is represented by a vertical 'line of means' that summarises the average perception of the school. The result of each item depends not only on the means; it is necessary to analyse the frequency of the respondent's answers in each item of the partial scale. The frequency distribution is very important. 'Because each image profile is a line of means, it does not reveal how variable the image is' (Kotler, 2003, p. 567) Extreme values may mean that the image is highly specific or highly diffused.

The use of the semantic differential requires groups of respondents with not only knowledge or experience of the surveyed phenomenon but also with a good knowledge of language. It is not appropriate to use the semantic differential with small children. We recommend using this tool with groups of students from secondary schools and higher. It is necessary to give them initial information about the purpose of the survey and about the image of an organisation.

Case study: Image of upper-secondary school

The purpose of this case study is to describe how the management of the school can apply an assessment of school image as part of school self-evaluation. The case study analyses a real-life situation. The questionnaire survey is used to gather information about school image and about views of groups of respondents of the school. The purpose is also to give an understanding of a) how it is possible to prepare and organise an assessment of school image, b) how to analyse the survey results, and c) what could be taken into account in managing further communication between the school and public.

The object of the case study: Upper Secondary School in the Czech Republic.

This secondary vocational-technical school prepares students mostly to enter the workforce. Some study programmes are three-year vocational programmes (vocational education and training) and some four-year programmes that are focused on IT, technical education, and business. Four-year study programmes finish with the state leaving exam, which is also a prerequisite for entrance to university.

The school is ranked as the best of the schools focused on technical education in the Moravian region. The school has modern, well-equipped classrooms and other specialised workplaces and laboratories (also a school library, computer rooms, school canteen, sports hall, fitness centre, etc.). This school does not have a problem with the currently discussed unattractiveness of vocational and technical education (cf. Lovšin, 2014). The school has about 100 teachers, 1,300 students and 40 non-teaching staff. The school offers the following study programmes (3-year): metal shaper, gunsmith, electrician (4 years): business, computing (IT), mechanical engineering, machinery mechanic, electrician.

The school image assessment process

Initially, the headteacher briefly introduces to the school management the concept of school image and the purpose of the planned survey, which was to increase communication to the school and further to use findings to improve the school. The main objective of the survey was to determine the attitudes, preferences and opinions of the school and the offered study programmes.

Consequently, the appointed team, with cooperation from a university expert, prepared interviews at the school. The team decided to adapt the

existing scales of school image (Eger, Egerová, & Jakubíková, 2002) and selected three main groups of respondents: students (two deputies of each class (usually members of the student council) and each study programme), teaching and non-teaching staff of the school and parents. The parents were divided into two groups according to the head teacher's decision. The first group includes parents of first- and second-year students, because it is obvious that these parents have less knowledge and experience of the school. The second group include parents of students in other years. Unfortunately, the staff was not divided into two groups, which means into teaching and non-teaching staff.

All respondents received information about the purpose of the survey. The data collection was anonymous. The questionnaire was distributed in printed form. Only fully completed questionnaires were processed. The sample consists of 86 students, 110 staff, 301 parents of the first- and second-year students and 147 parents of students from the third and fourth years.

The assumption that parents of first-year students do not have enough information on the school, as mentioned above, was confirmed by the fact that 84 questionnaires received from this group were incomplete. The response rate was high for staff and sufficient for parents.

Findings

For an overview of the results presented in the tables, it is useful to use 'traffic lights'. In the present case, green indicates a favourable and excellent (full grey) rating, red and yellow are warnings and mean suggestions for further analysis of the results (dotted grey and full dotted grey). White colour is used for a neutral zone.

Students

Each item uses a bipolar 7-point scale. It is necessary to mention that young people, in particular, choose points 3 or 4 for the average rating. Students' points of view of factors of school image are shown in tables 1-5.

Table 1

Student assessment, 3-year study programmes: Metal shaper, Gunsmith, Electrician

Students / Items / point of scale 1	Metal shaper				Gunsmith				Electrician				opposit adjective
	OK1	OK2	OK3	Mean	PUZ1	PUZ2	PUZ3	Mean	MEZ1	MEZ2	MEZ3	Mean	point of scale 7
School is tidy	2	3	2	2,3	3	3	3	3,0	2	2	4	2,7	untidy
School is atractive	1	2	2	1,7	4	3	5	4,0	1	3	5	3,0	unattractive
The study is difficult	3	4	4	3,7	1	7	6	4,7	4	4	3	3,7	easy
Climate at school is friendly	1	2	3	2,0	4	1	6	3,7	2	3	2	2,3	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	1	4	1	2,0	3	5	4	4,0	2	4	3	3,0	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	1	6	5	4,0	5	6	6	5,7	3	5	3	3,7	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	1	3	3	2,3	3	4	4	3,7	1	2	4	2,3	low
School equipment is modern	3	1	1	1,7	6	2	5	4,3	1	2	3	2,0	old
Management of the school is powerful	2	2	1	1,7	1	4	5	3,3	1	3	2	2,0	powerless
School leavers get job fast	1	1	2	1,3	4	7	2	4,3	1	4	3	2,7	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	3	4	4	3,7	6	1	4	3,7	2	7	5	4,7	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	1	2	1	1,3	2	3	2	2,3	1	1	4	2,0	narrow
Parental involvement is active	2	6	1	3,0	1	4	3	2,7	1	2	3	2,0	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	1	4	2	2,3	2	5	4	3,7	2	1	4	2,3	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	1	2	3	2,0	7	3	3	4,3	3	1	4	2,7	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	1	2	1	1,3	3	5	3	3,7	1	2	3	2,0	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	2	1	2	1,7	2	2	4	2,7	2	3	3	2,7	bad

Note: OK, PUZ, MEZ = abbreviations of study programmes + number of grade. Full grey indicates a favourable and excellent, dotted grey = warning, dotted full grey = failing or problematic area, white = neutral zone.

Table 2

Student assessment, Business and Mechanical engineering 4-year study programmes

Students / Items / point of scale 1	Business					Mechanical ingeneering					opposit adjective
	EPO1	EPO2	EPO3	EPO4	Mean	PSP1	PSP2	PSP3	PSP4	Mean	point of scale 7
School is tidy	2	2	3	2	2,3	2	2	3	1	2,0	untidy
School is atractive	3	2	3	3	2,8	3	2	3	1	2,3	unattractive
The study is difficult	4	5	4	3	4,0	4	5	4	5	4,5	easy
Climate at school is friendly	1	1	4	2	2,0	2	4	4	2	3,0	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	5	2	2	4	3,3	4	6	2	6	4,5	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	4	3	3	4	3,5	3	4	5	5	4,3	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	1	4	3	2	2,5	2	4	3	5	3,5	low
School equipment is modern	2	2	2	1	1,8	1	2	2	1	1,5	old
Management of the school is powerful	4	1	3	2	2,5	2	5	3	1	2,8	powerless
School leavers get job fast	2	3	3	3	2,8	2	5	4	4	3,8	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	4	4	4	4	4,0	5	5	5	6	5,3	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	1	2	2	1	1,5	5	2	3	1	2,8	narrow
Parental involvement is active	5	2	2	2	2,8	1	2	4	2	2,3	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	3	3	3	2	2,8	1	2	3	1	1,8	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	1	2	3	4	2,5	3	1	2	1	1,8	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	2	2	3	2	2,3	2	2	4	1	2,3	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	2	1	1	1	1,3	2	1	3	2	2,0	bad

Note: EPO, PSP = abbreviations of study programmes + number of grade. Full grey indicates a favourable and excellent, dotted grey = warning, dotted full grey = failing or problematic area, white = neutral zone.

Table 3

Student assessment, Machinery mechanic 4-year study programme

Students	Mechanic of machinery									opposit adjective
Items / point of scale 1	MS1A	MS1B	MS2A	MS2B	MS3A	MS3B	MS3C	MS4B	Mean	point of scale 7
School is tidy	3	2	1	1	3	2	2	4	2,3	untidy
School is atractive	2	3	2	4	2	4	4	3	3,0	unattractive
The study is difficult	3	3	6	7	4	1	5	4	4,1	easy
Climate at school is friendly	3	2	5	4	4	2	3	2	3,1	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	2	2	2	4	5	3	5	4	3,4	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	3	3	2	3	5	4	6	5	3,9	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	3	3	3	6	4	2	4	4	3,6	low
School equipment is modern	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	1,6	old
Management of the school is powerful	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	2,0	powerless
School leavers get job fast	1	2	2	N	3	2	1	2	1,9	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	5	2	2	4	5	5	6	5	4,3	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	2	2	2	1	4	4	1	1	2,1	narrow
Parental involvement is active	4	1	2	3	3	4	5	4	3,3	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	2	2	3	3	4	3	3	2	2,8	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	1	3	2	N	2	3	1	2	2,0	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	1	2	3	1	5	3	3	2	2,5	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	4	1,8	bad

Table 4

Student assessment, Mechanic electrician 4-year study programme

Students	Mechanic eletrician												opposit adjective
Items / point of scale 1	ME1C	ME1A	ME1B	ME2A	ME2B	ME2C	ME3A	ME3B	ME3C	ME4A	ME4C	Mean	point of scale 7
School is tidy	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2,2	untidy
School is atractive	3	4	2	4	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	3,0	unattractive
The study is difficult	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	5	4	3	1	3,5	easy
Climate at school is friendly	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2,5	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	1	2	3	6	3	2	3	4	2	4	4	3,1	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	1	4	4	7	3	4	4	5	4	3	5	4,0	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	3	3	3	5	4	5	5	4	3	2	6	3,9	low
School equipment is modern	1	2	1	4	2	4	2	3	1	2	2	2,2	old
Management of the school is powerful	3	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3,1	powerless
School leavers get job fast	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	4	2	2	4	2,4	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	4	4	2	4	2	3	5	6	4	4	7	4,1	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	1	2	2,5	narrow
Parental involvement is active	3	2	2	4	5	5	3	2	3	4	3	3,3	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	2	3	3	3	3	3	5	6	4	2	3	3,4	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	3	1	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2,2	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	4	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	4	2,3	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	1	1	2	3	2	1	4	3	1	3	4	2,3	bad

Note: ME = abbreviation of study programme + number of grade. Full grey indicates a favourable and excellent, dotted grey = warning, dotted full grey = failing or problematic area, white = neutral zone.

Table 5

Student assessment, Computing (IT) 4-year study programme

Students	Computing (IT)								opposit adjective
Items / point of scale 1	IT1A	IT1B	IT2A	IT2B	IT3A	IT3B	IT4A		point of scale 7
School is tidy	2	1	3	3	2	1	2	2,0	untidy
School is atractive	4	3	4	2	2	3	2	2,9	unattractive
The study is difficult	2	2	2	4	3	4	3	2,9	easy
Climate at school is friendly	1	1	5	1	3	2	5	2,6	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	2	2	3	4	3	7	5	3,7	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	3	2	5	3	4	6	4	3,9	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	2	2	6	4	3	5	3	3,6	low
School equipment is modern	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	1,9	old
Management of the school is powerful	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2,7	powerless
School leavers get job fast	2	1	3	3	2	4	3	2,6	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	3	2	6	3	2	3	3	3,1	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	3	3	2	5	2	1	4	2,9	narrow
Parental involvement is active	4	2	5	2	2	2	3	2,9	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	1,9	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	4	2	4	1	2	1	1	2,1	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	3	1	2	2	3	6	3	2,9	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	2	1	3	2	2	3	1	2,0	bad

Note: IT = abbreviation of study programme + number of grade.Full   grey indicates a favourable and excellent, dotted grey = warning, dotted full grey = failing or problematic area, white = neutral zone.

The following provide a commentary on Tables 1-5:

- A positive result can be seen in the items (= assessment of factors of image): the school is tidy, the school is attractive, the school equipment is modern, communication of the school representatives is open, partnership and international affairs are strong, promotion of the school is excellent.

- It is obvious that students of the gunsmith programme highlight more problems. They are not satisfied with the educational programme and the teaching and learning process, and the results call for help.

- It can be seen that across the study programmes some deputies of different classes assess student behaviour as inappropriate (point 6 or 7). This feedback is very serious information for school management and calls for immediate solutions.

- For a vocational-technical school, the results in the item 'school leaver gets job' are also important. Unemployment was very low in the Czech Republic in 2016 and many firms were recruiting people with technical qualifications; the students were aware of this.

- It is obvious that there are differences in findings among the study programmes. This is typical for schools offering different study programmes.

- A big difference can be found in the same item of the same programme. See, for example, the mechanic electrician programme and the items quality of educational programme and teaching and learning. The deputies of the classes assessed these items across the range from 1 to 7.

Teachers' points of view on factors of school image are shown in Table 6. There are 110 completed questionnaires, and it is useful to use the distribution of responses (relative frequency) to analyse whether there are extreme values of image or not.

Table 6

Teachers' assessment of school image

Teaching and nonteaching staff	Relative frequency									opposit adjective
Items / point of scale 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	SD	point of scale 7
School is tidy	55,5	37,3	3,6	3,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,6	0,73	untidy
School is atractive	38,2	37,3	19,1	5,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,89	unattractive
The study is difficult	3,6	37,3	34,5	17,3	4,5	2,7	0,0	2,9	1,05	easy
Climate at school is friendly	16,4	31,8	30,0	17,3	4,5	0,0	0,0	2,6	1,09	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	25,5	53,6	15,5	5,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,79	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	12,7	55,5	23,6	7,3	0,9	0,0	0,0	2,3	0,81	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	27,3	38,2	26,4	7,3	0,9	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,94	low
School equipment is modern	66,4	21,8	9,1	1,8	0,9	0,0	0,0	1,5	0,81	old
Management of the school is powerful	45,5	39,1	9,1	6,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,8	0,86	powerless
School leavers get job fast	18,2	56,4	16,4	9,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,83	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	2,7	23,6	36,4	20,9	10,9	3,6	1,8	3,3	1,23	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	22,7	36,4	22,7	10,0	6,4	1,8	0,0	2,5	1,23	narrow
Parental involvement is active	20,9	40,9	23,6	9,1	4,5	0,9	0,0	2,4	1,10	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	32,7	46,4	12,7	6,4	0,9	0,9	0,0	2,0	0,97	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	31,8	45,5	15,5	6,4	0,0	0,9	0,0	2,0	0,93	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	22,7	52,7	18,2	4,5	0,0	1,8	0,0	2,1	0,93	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	64,5	25,5	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,5	0,67	bad

The following provide a commentary on Table 6:
- The overall score of the teachers' assessment is more positive than the assessment of factors by students.
- The findings show that several teachers have problems with student behaviour and this view corresponds with the assessment of the same item by students in several classes.
- The distribution of responses shifts to positive in the following items: the school is tidy, the school equipment is modern, promotion of the school is excellent, and management of the school is also assessed as positive.
- Teachers see (assess) problems only in the item student behaviour. The items parental involvement and extracurricular activities could be discussed in the school management team. Of course, opinions of teaching and learning are typical topics for discussion in the teaching staff team.

Parents are divided into two groups: the first comprises parents of students from the first and second years (Table 7), and the second parents of students from the third and fourth years (Table 8).

Table 7

Assessment of school image, parents of first and second grade students

Parents 1+2	Relative frequency									opposit adjective
Items / point of scale 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	SD	point of scale 7
School is tidy	53,8	39,2	5,6	0,7	0,7	0,0	0,0	1,6	0,7	untidy
School is atractive	29,9	48,2	16,9	4,0	0,7	0,3	0,0	2,0	0,9	unattractive
The study is difficult	10,3	27,9	38,5	19,6	2,0	1,3	0,3	2,8	1,0	easy
Climate at school is friendly	34,2	44,9	15,0	4,7	1,0	0,3	0,0	1,9	0,9	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	46,8	39,2	11,0	1,7	1,3	0,0	0,0	1,7	0,8	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	14,0	52,2	25,6	6,6	1,0	0,3	0,3	2,3	0,9	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	35,2	38,9	19,3	5,6	0,3	0,7	0,0	2,0	1,0	low
School equipment is modern	46,8	36,5	12,3	2,3	1,0	0,3	0,0	1,7	0,9	old
Management of the school is powerful	40,5	44,5	10,0	4,7	0,3	0,0	0,0	1,8	0,8	powerless
School leavers get job fast	39,2	46,2	10,6	3,7	0,3	0,0	0,0	1,8	0,8	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	13,0	38,5	30,2	14,6	2,0	1,3	0,3	2,6	1,1	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	43,5	32,9	15,3	5,3	2,3	0,3	0,3	1,9	1,1	narrow
Parental involvement is active	55,5	32,6	8,0	3,3	0,7	0,0	0,0	1,6	0,8	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	63,8	30,2	4,7	1,0	0,3	0,0	0,0	1,4	0,7	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	23,3	44,9	21,6	10,0	0,3	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,9	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	43,9	35,9	14,6	4,3	1,3	0,0	0,0	1,8	0,9	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	54,5	33,6	8,6	3,0	0,3	0,0	0,0	1,6	0,8	bad

Table 8

Assessment of school image, parents of third and fourth grade students

Parents 3+4	Relative frequency									opposit adjective
Items / point of scale 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	SD	point of scale 7
School is tidy	55,1	29,9	9,5	4,1	1,4	0,0	0,0	1,7	0,91	untidy
School is atractive	29,9	42,2	18,4	5,4	4,1	0,0	0,0	2,1	1,03	unattractive
The study is difficult	16,3	25,2	34,7	20,4	2,7	0,0	0,7	2,7	1,11	easy
Climate at school is friendly	23,8	39,5	24,5	10,2	1,4	0,7	0,0	2,3	1,02	unfriendly
Quality of educational program is good	34,0	42,2	12,9	8,8	2,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	1,00	poor
Teaching and learning are engaging	16,3	40,1	27,2	13,6	2,7	0,0	0,0	2,5	1,01	boring
Teachers' interest in teaching is high	33,3	35,4	17,0	10,2	3,4	0,7	0,0	2,2	1,14	low
School equipment is modern	43,5	27,9	19,0	6,8	1,4	0,7	0,7	2,0	1,14	old
Management of the school is powerful	32,7	40,1	15,0	10,2	1,4	0,7	0,0	2,1	1,05	powerless
School leavers get job fast	31,3	38,8	19,0	9,5	0,0	0,7	0,7	2,1	1,07	slow
Student behavior is appropriate	10,2	33,3	29,3	19,7	5,4	1,4	0,7	2,8	1,17	inappropriate
Offer of extracurricular activities is wide	34,0	31,3	20,4	10,9	2,0	0,7	0,7	2,2	1,18	narrow
Parental involvement is active	40,8	28,6	21,8	6,1	0,7	1,4	0,7	2,0	1,15	passive
Communication of school representatives is open	55,1	29,9	8,8	3,4	1,4	1,4	0,0	1,7	1,01	closed
Partnership and international affairs are strong	19,0	36,1	29,9	10,2	3,4	0,7	0,7	2,5	1,12	weak
Cooperation with firms is extensive	19,7	42,2	23,1	10,9	2,7	0,7	0,7	2,4	1,11	limited
Promotion of the school is excellent	46,9	29,9	15,6	5,4	1,4	0,0	0,7	1,9	1,06	bad

The following provide commentary on Tables 7 and 8:

- The overall score of parents' assessment is more positive than the assessment of factors by students and teachers.

- The findings show that several parents also have problems with student behaviour, and this view corresponds with the assessment of the same item by students in several classes and with the teachers' point of view.
- The distribution of responses shifts to positive in the items: the school is tidy, the school equipment is modern, the communication of school representatives is open, promotion of the school is excellent, and management of the school is also assessed as positive.

Parents see problems only in the item of student behaviour. Parents of first- and second-year students see (feel) and assess almost all items of school image slightly more positively than parents of third and fourth year students do.
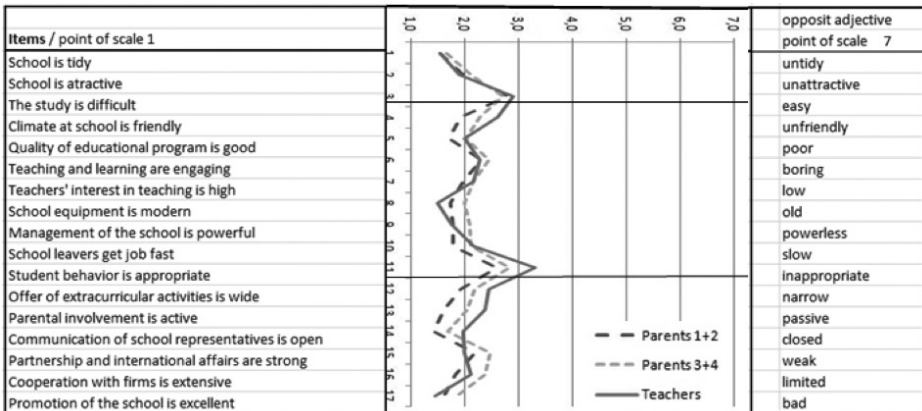
Figure 2. Graphic presentation of school image assessment – teachers and parents.
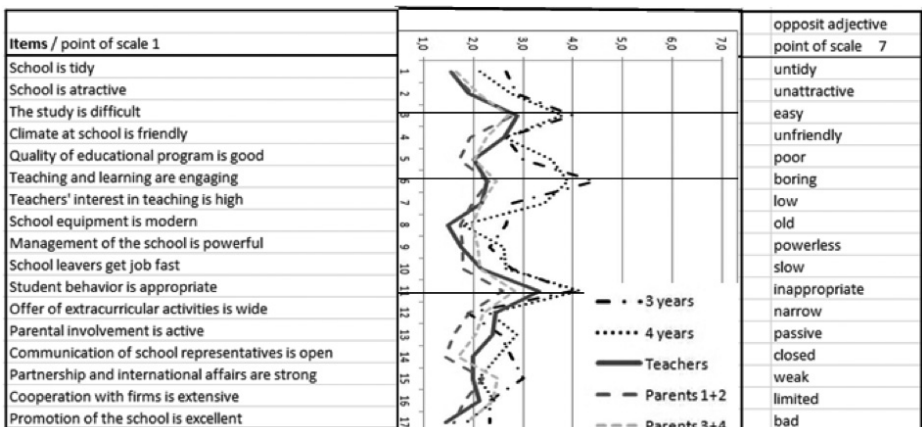
Figure 3. Graphic presentation of school image assessment – students, teachers and parents.

The following provide a commentary on Figures 2 and 3:
- The results of the school image assessment are presented as a picture in which the average scores for each group of respondents are connected into one line.
- Each school image (view of a selected group of respondents) is represented by a vertical 'line of means' that summarises the average perception of the school. For further analysis, it is necessary to analyse the frequency of the respondents' answers in each item of the partial scale (Tables 1-8).
- The lines in Figure 3 show differences in the respondents' feelings and beliefs about the school that exist in their minds.
  - It may be observed that the first interesting difference is in item no. 3. Parents and teachers assess study programmes as a bit more difficult than students do.
  - Students perceive climate of the school and student behaviour worse than parents do (items 4 and 11). This fact requires further consideration.
  - The more important problem is indicated by the results in item no 6. Students assess teaching and learning as slightly below average, especially students of three-year programmes. They call for change in this item. The management needs to find an answer to the question of why a gap between teachers and students in this item exists.
  - All groups of respondents (i.e., publics) assess school equipment very positively (item no. 8), and the management of the school also received a positive assessment (item no. 9).
  - Self-evaluation via school image assessment uncovers problems with student behaviour. However, further analysis shows differences not only in study programmes but also among partial classes. This is important feedback for the school management and teaching staff.
  - Cooperation with firms and the promotion of the school are very positively assessed by all publics.
- Some extreme values can be seen in Tables 1-8. In this case, they show us that there exist differences in opinions between some respondents. It does not mean that image is highly specific.

Based on the results of the school assessment survey, the headteacher immediately organised meetings with students from classes from which negative assessments of the teaching and learning process were obtained and where problems with student behaviour were indicated. It is interesting that in the

study programme for gunsmiths the headteacher, in discussion with students, immediately found a solution to how to improve the teaching process. He also had an appointment with two problematic teachers. One of them decided to leave the school because he was not able to manage the teaching process or communication with students. The above demonstrates how it is possible and important to immediately use the results from the school image assessment as feedback for further activities and school improvements.

The final presentation of the survey for teaching staff was prepared by the headteacher after meeting with an advisor from a university.

Theoretical and practical application of school image assessment

First, it is necessary to note that the survey results of a specific school (of a particular image) will be different from the presented findings from our case study.

Second, often it occurs that the findings of the image assessment do not meet the expectations of school management. What does this mean? The obtained results show the publics' views of the surveyed school and, as mentioned above, image is feelings and beliefs about the school and its programme in the minds of the publics. The image need not necessarily be true. Image is only an indication that shows us how a school is perceived by the other(s). Organisational image is the mental perception of the publics of the school and study programme.

Third, the management of the school should ask: Are we making any mistakes in communication with the public? Evans (1995) argues that the worst mistake in communication is when the school does not know what the community wants.

The data collected from the survey form the basis for an analysis of image. The findings from the image survey are then the basis for our school image development plan. We can obtain three main outputs: the image is favourable, neutral or unfavourable/undesirable.

1. If the image is favourable, you must maintain or develop it.
2. If the image is unfavourable, you must change it, and you need to create a good plan.

From a practical point of view, we recommend using not only the results of the image survey but also a SWOT analysis and, for example, evaluation of the inspection as the three main components for self-assessment (the inspection report is, of course, an external evaluation).

The steps available for preparing a development plan for school image are (Elsner, 1999; Eger, Egerová, & Jakubíková, 2002; Evans, 1995):

- Stage 1: Reporting and discussion.
  - Management presents the survey findings and discusses with teachers and other staff the results (How do we and other publics see our school?)
  - We need to know what people think about our school, its policy, study programme, etc., and why they think this way as well as their attitudes toward the school, etc.

We need to understand how the school is known and what publics think about the school, its study programme, etc.

- Stage 2: Creating a definition of school image.
  - Management prepares its definition of the image of the school.
  - Teachers or a group of teachers prepare their own definition.
  - (at secondary schools, students may also prepare a definition)

At this stage, we project the desired image of the public or among the target group. At the meeting, all groups present their definition and then create a collective definition of the school image. This new planned, favourable preferred image and analysis of the present situation from the conducted survey are important for the development plan. The planned organisational image should positively correlate with the mission statement of the school.

- Stage 3: Implementation of the plan.

We recommend creating and managing a plan for the new school image as a common marketing planning process. Partial items are: tasks, time, resources, responsibility, support, monitoring and control, among others. In the case of a negative or unfavourable image, the management of the school needs to focus first on either neutralising or eliminating any possible misunderstandings.

Managing the planned image will help the organisation to achieve its mission.

We should keep in mind that the implementation of the change affects individuals, teams and the school as a whole, its structure, its norms and values and its environment. Therefore, there is a strong need to take into account these key factors to be successful in change management.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to contribute to the existing theory of marketing for schools and of school self-assessment. The primary objective of this paper was to explain the importance of communication concerning school image between the school and the public. It is evident that developing and maintaining school image is perceived to be an important public relations task belonging to the key responsibilities of the school management. The theoretical part deals with a model of school image and the application of the semantic differential for school image self-assessment. We have also tackled the question of what typical image factors are appropriate to use in a school image survey. The provided answer explains which statements about their opinions, views, feelings, behaviour people used when talking about school image (questionnaire limitations, Gray, 2009).

The secondary objective was to demonstrate how to use self-assessment of school image for school improvements. The presented case study is a positive example of the above-mentioned theory in practice. Overall, it was found that the assessment of factors influencing school image varies across different groups of respondents (stakeholders). More specifically, the assessment of image factors by teachers and parents is more positive than by students. This finding is consistent with the work of Wilkins and Huisman (2013) who note that personal experience and different sources of information influence the perception of school image and image factors. Furthermore, significant differences were indicated in the factors (items) including the quality of educational programmes and the quality of teaching a learning process. Previous studies found that the quality of learning content and the quality of teaching process are among the most influential factors of school image (Marič, Pavlin, & Ferjan, 2010). Therefore, schools ought to prioritise the quality of education and study programmes to develop and maintain a positive school image.

Finally, the paper provides a set of recommendations on stages critical to developing a school image plan.

The case study also has research limitations. To interpret the findings, we must take into consideration that the image of each school is different due to external and internal conditions and history. The plans of particular schools are also different and, of course the publics of each school are different.

Schools have had to cope with a set of expectations. These expectations are also expressed in the debate about school quality. At present, the focus on quality leads schools to implement total quality approaches (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1994), and customer-driven quality is an important part of total quality management.

Some schools feel the pressures of competition and, in some segments, a market in education exists. Some public schools offer education (usually in small towns) without competition with another subject. Consider, will they survive if their customer-driven quality is poor? It means the relevant publics of the school are not satisfied with their image.

Benefits for researchers and practitioners resulting from this research can be noted; the theoretical part shows the applied model of school image and application of the semantic differential as a suitable method for marketing purposes (cf. Kotler, 2003). The empirical part of this paper clearly points to the fact that the management of schools must pay attention to communication with the public and maintain or develop the school image (Eger, 2006; Elsner, 1999; Evans, 1995). Choosing a school also depends on the quality of information (including image) available to families (Lubienski, 2007).

Future research may consider differences between types (primary, secondary) and size of schools, the influence of the location of schools (rural and urban etc.), the influence of special programmes or of communities around the schools, etc. We also need to consider the influence or correlations between the image of the study programme (perhaps also brand image), school image and image of the national education system.

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