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## Teacher – challenges, new professional qualifications in the context of ecology and ethics

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Nauczyciel – wyzwania, nowy profil kwalifikacji zawodowych w kontekście ekologii i etyki

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Children must not be educated simply to achieve the present level  
but towards a possible better future level of the human race,  
in other words taking account of the idea  
of mankind and the universal destiny of man.  
Immanuel Kant

**Streszczenie.** W niniejszym artykule autorki próbują zmierzyć się z rzeczywistością w kontekście realiów zakładanych tez etycznych i ekologicznych, biorąc pod uwagę wyposażenie nauczyciela w nowy profil kwalifikacji zawodowych. Jednak wyzwania, które zostają skutecznie wdrażane w edukację budzą obawy, mogą stać się potencjalnym zagrożeniem, ale też wyzwalają pewne nadzieje.

**Słowa kluczowe:** nauczyciel, wyzwania, profil, etyczny, ekologiczny, kwalifikacje zawodowe, edukacja.

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### INTRODUCTION

It is worth to make an attempt to deal with the reality in the context of the realities of the assumed ethical and environmental arguments, taking into account the new

teacher's profile of professional qualifications. The present challenges that are effectively introduced to the education show great concerns for the potential threats but they also allow to have some hope. It can be observed that the present teaching work often makes a young person 'instrumentalized' due to his/her first steps into the role of the particular subject teacher, educator, or to achieve specific policy and economical objectives, not to mention, to perform specific tasks that are arranged in advance.

#### TEACHER – NEW CHALLENGES

Nowadays, the time is characterized by phenomena such as: the explosion of information, the increase of the educational aspirations of young people and adults, professional mobility, the wide range of mass media, the fast technological progress, the gradually increasing integration of the formal, informal and non-formal as well as school and outside school teaching, moreover, the difficulties associated with maintaining the economical balance, the concept and the role of the teacher has been changing. Speaking of the pedagogue, it is meant to refer not only to the person whose place of work is a school, but also the writers, editors of the educational radio and television programmes, coaches and statesmen (Zalewska-Bujak, 2010).

The essence of the so-called outside school reasons for the evolution of the performed by teachers functions and tasks should be emphasized. They involve, among others, the uncontrolled and increasing amount of information, which requires from the teachers the logical selection, processing and the use of the increasing knowledge, as well as the development of students' skills, the increased professional mobility, the great increase in the importance of the science in the society, the development of mass media, which influences the contents and methods of schools.

The considerations dealing with the role and tasks of the modern pedagogue have been discussed by many researchers. J. W. David focused on the personality of the teacher. He established some features, which guarantee the effectiveness of teaching, namely, the sense of the responsibility and duty, aspiration to achieve the perfection, integrity and courage, as well as the so-called love of human souls. However, S. Szuman looked for gaining educational successes in the 'productive' personality of the teacher, the maturity of the character, and some instrumental abilities to influence the students.

The model created by the individual researchers demonstrates the pattern of the professional personality of the teacher-educator, shaping the personality of his/her students. Such model has been developing, evolving into a youth counselor, a guide to the world of the scientific and cultural values, as well as an organizer of the learning process.

Due to the educational literature and other studies in this field, it can be found that teachers nowadays are subject to the extensive criticism concerning various aspects of their work, and especially, their abilities to perform educational tasks in the currently existing conditions, wide ranging transformations of education and outside school activities.

A. Nalaskowski believes that the current teaching environment is under the process of regression, which is associated with the loss of the traditionally presented competences. The author also states that this social group is a group of people that presents 'the hostile respond' to the content-related criticism. Yet Ch. Banach is critical of the contemporary teachers, due to their routine and inappropriately susceptible to the changes and innovations. (Zalewska-Bujak, 2010)

Looking at teachers today, it should be remembered that the political formation, creating the whole life of our country for such a long time, has also had a significant impact on this particular professional group. At the end of the socialism they were introduced as subordinated performers of the learned helplessness, who used the language of the slogan and learned patterns, schemes and rules for the effective educational activities. For that reason, it is asked: "Can teachers face some challenges, specific roles and functions that they have to fulfill". There are many tasks like that now and there will be more and more of them.

The created models of the future teacher are the consequence of the modern times, which concern a lot of changes. The three-dimensional formula is one of them and it involves: subject and educational perfectionism as well as thorough education; complete acquiring of the educational and protective skills; active mastering of at least one foreign language.

The teaching job today should refer to the existing realities of the social life. The specificity and the roles that are played by teachers depend on their position in different social systems. Therefore:

- in the global society, teachers play the role of the personal models;
- in the social system of science popularization, they play the role of pedagogues who consciously and actively create the personality of the younger generation according to the precisely defined curriculum;
- in the education system, they refer to the role of the representatives of the school as the social institution;
- in the professional group of teachers, they play the role of the subject experts;
- at school as their workplace, they play the role of the employees who perform their functions depending on their positions, jobs, or work experience.

S. Kosinski refers to the teaching profession in the sphere of the “spiritual-intellectual” kind. He states that this particular profession requires the specific knowledge and skills, and its performance constitutes the basis of the prestige and the social and professional position. Nevertheless, J. Rusiecki refers to the results of the conducted research. He concludes that in the contemporary public opinion the teacher today should primarily be characterized by professionalism (has the knowledge and skills of providing it), communicativeness, tolerance and fairness.

Nowadays, the teacher has to be more than just the person providing students with the knowledge. His/her role is more complex than it used to be in previous centuries. The modern pedagogues has to be a scientist and researcher who follows the social, political and educational changes. Furthermore, he/she must be constantly developing his/her level of knowledge and skills, must be professional and considered as an expert in his/her field, not to mention, that he/she must be the creator, initiator and designer of the educational innovations.

As it has been postulated in the introduced reform of the educational system in 1999, the teacher should have the academic education, the innovative learning ability, the ability to shape his/her students skills in this field, in addition, to be able to face the educational function as well as the one that involves protecting his/her students and taking care of them, to constantly develop his/her professional skills and should have the passion for his//her work.

C. Banach established ten the most desirable characteristics, teacher’s qualities, namely:

1. openness and the ability of the contact with young people, empathy;
2. content-related and methodological competences;
3. respect for the human dignity of subjectivity;
4. fairness and objectivity in assessing students for their work, their results and attitudes;
5. being able to refer to dialogism, negotiations, and democratic style of the group management;
6. maturity and consistency in proceedings;
7. general good manners and pedagogic good manners;
8. tolerance;
9. ability to plan and organize their own work and the collective work; the learning ability and the ability to develop their own workshop;
10. the sense of humour (Banach, 2001).

### THE NEW PROFILE OF TEACHING PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE ECOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL CONTEXTS

Dealing with the professional qualifications, it is meant to specify some professional qualities of the human connected with the learned and practiced profession. Focusing on teaching professional qualifications, it is thought of the specific set of the knowledge and skills required to practice their profession. (Zalewska-Bujak, 2010).

A key role in the education and teaching is played by the teacher. The kind of the contact with the child, adolescent, young person – a student and a high school student will have with the school mainly depends on the teacher. To a significant extent, the attitude and willingness to learn are caused by the appropriate action and teaching approach of the teacher.

Teaching has to be one of the most rewarding and exciting professions, as stated by the psychologist Thomas Gordon. However, it is appropriate to ask the question whether it is possible in the current reality (Gordon, 2002).

Teaching is also known as the process of directing the learning process by the teacher, which seems to be, however, considered as the incomplete and imprecise term, due to the omission of many important features. Among other, there are the following aspects are talking taken into account, namely, the exchange of information between the teacher and other sources, as well as the student, enabling to master the scientific knowledge by its adoption in the prepared final form, or by individual problem solving. There are the following types of teaching forms:

- holistic teaching, also known as the global, or complete teaching,
- early childhood education, or elementary teaching,
- providing teaching,
- problem solving teaching,
- syllabus teaching,
- subject teaching,
- multi-level teaching (Gordon, 2002).

The second, equally important role played by the teacher at school is upbringing/ education, which means the conscious organization of the activities, “based on the sort of parental relationship between the student and other students, as well as the teacher. The aim of this process is to allow the desired changes in the student’s personality, which includes both the cognitive and instrumental ways – related to the perception of the reality and skills of influencing such reality, as well as the emotional and motivational ways – involving the formation of the human’s relation to the world and people, his/her beliefs and attitudes, the value system, and the purpose of life.

The process and results of upbringing/education are influenced by:

- 1) conscious and intentionally impact of responsible for the upbringing/education process individuals and institutions (e.g. parents, teachers, school, social and political, as well as cultural institutions);
- 2) the parallel upbringing/education system, especially the appropriately organized activity of the institutions;
- 3) the efforts of individuals to shape their own personality” (Okoń, 1996). The basic components of upbringing/education are the following:
  - mental education,
  - moral education,
  - religious education,
  - public, or social education,
  - aesthetic education,
  - physical education,
  - polytechnical education.

A teacher is a person who “teaches others providing them with some information, or teaches someone how to live”. The first meaning has been influenced by new trends in teaching and evolved significantly, becoming more and more the meaning of the other. The contemporary teacher, then, becomes the person who teaches, educates, and develops students that he/she is responsible for (children, adolescents, adults). The success of such work depends on the students, on syllabuses (i.e., training and educating programmes), as well as on the external conditions, but above all, on the teachers themselves.

The last dependence is determined in two ways, namely, it is associated with teachers and their teaching qualifications. The teachers’ successes depend on their work in the sense that they become a kind of a model, since they are continuously observed by students and because of that they can become an example of the ways students should or should not behave. The desired example of the conduct they can become particular if they do not consider themselves as excellent teachers and they keep on working to develop as humans, as professionals, and as pedagogues, when trying to manage the ideals of the truth, goodness and beauty in their lives, when they try to lead their lives according to the general truths, generally approved ways of behaving, and the beauty, moreover, they like their students when they respect students’ subjectivity and try to do their best to prepare them for their future lives (Okoń, 1996).

Thus, the teacher does not only mean a learned and performed profession, but also a kind of the vocational calling to work with young people, who is performed by the

person in charge of his/her behaviour being the result of not only the acquired knowledge, but the empathy and the appropriate and individual approach towards children.

The same definition states further that no less successful the teacher can be due to “practical qualifications”. They refer to the idea if the understanding the objectives of education and training, therefore, the teacher can employ such methods and means and provide students with such conditions that would enable them to achieve the intended changes in students that allow to show their multilateral activity:

- cognitive,
  - emotional,
  - practical,
  - and what activities promote their partnership with the teacher himself /herself.
- Both of factors are in their mutual dependence.

The first one, far too little appreciated in the teaching training institutions, involves the process of shaping in candidates for the potential teachers the awareness of their own role, of the self-acknowledgment, moreover – shaping the role of teachers' competences subordinated to this role” (Okoń, 1996).

R. Kwaśnica lists the following competences needed by teachers, i.e., the practical and moral competences – (interpretational, moral, communicational) and the technical competences (methodical, that allow to realize aims). With regards to the vocational education of teachers the author states that the practical and moral competences take the dominant role in the teaching vocational calling and are prior to the technical competences. These ones, however, have in the vocational calling of teachers the limited range because they only belong to one sphere of such activity, that is, to arranging and organizing the process of providing students with the knowledge (Kwaśnica, 1994).

The educational literature demonstrates also other definitions of competences, namely:

- ability and willingness to fulfil the tasks at the set level;
- earned, acquired ability to do things well, skills useful for dealing with problems;
- characteristic, personal property, which is expressed in demonstrating, established at the level of the social standards, skill of the adequate behaviour in the awareness of the need and consequences of such behaviour, as well as take responsibility for them (Strykowski et al., 2003).

According to W. Strykowski, there are three groups of teachers' competences established:

- content-related competences concerning the issues of the taught subject – the teacher is the expert and the advisor in its range;

- educational and methodical competences, which concern both the teacher's and student's workshops, therefore, the methods and techniques of teaching and learning, mainly the activating ones, the project, ones and group working ones – the teacher is the teaching advisor;
- educational/ upbringing competences involving different ways of influencing students, they include, e.g., communicational skills, contact making skills, etc. – the teacher is the educational and life supervisor.

Other types of teaching competences are presented by K. Denek, that is:

- praxiological competences - expressed by their effectiveness in organizing, planning, monitoring and evaluating the educational processes;
- communicational competencies, that relate to the effectiveness of language behaviour in educational situations;
- competences of the interaction, which are manifested in the effectiveness and efficiency of the pro-social behaviours as well as the integration activities of teachers;
- creative competences, which involve innovativeness and unconventional activities;
- competences involving informatics, which are very important nowadays, observed in the efficient and effective use of the modern sources of information;
- moral competences, demonstrating the great ability for the moral reflection and the awareness of their own ethical obligations towards the education (Denek, 2000).

Due to the dynamics of the educational processes, the professional competence of the teacher is, primarily, the category of changes. It means being open to the subjectivity and the creative development of students, to the novelty and innovations, coping with the stress during conducting the activities, as well as the creative approach to the tensions and conflicts in a school group and their settlements. The openness to the change is regarded as the responsiveness and considerable tolerance, the understanding of the changing world and the personal place in it (Zalewska-Bujak, 2010).

In terms of competences, the function of the class teacher/supervisor is referred to, and that is: the teacher responsible for coordinating and carrying out educational work with his/her group of students – class (Okoń, 1984).

His/her functions include:

- getting to know all students in his/her class, their home conditions;
- taking care of their behaviours, the social and moral attitudes, cultural and healthy development of students;
- creating the positive attitude towards learning; providing assistance and care in individual cases.

The complete characteristics of the teachers' professional personalities of "the school of tomorrow" involve, mainly, their mental and moral qualities, content-related and pedagogical skills, the culture of work and the achieved results of teaching, educating, taking care of. Analyzing the content-related skills and intellectual values, the following aspects should be mentioned: outstanding level of the intelligence, developed cognitive abilities, such as memory, attention, imagination and intuition, and particularly the skills of logical, critical, and creative thinking, the ability of learning alone, the extensive general knowledge, the wide-ranging knowledge of the taught subject and very well mastered capabilities and skills related to the theoretical and content-related knowledge. Discussing the pedagogical competences, the following aspects must be specified, i.e., a wide-range of the pedagogical knowledge, the familiarity with the system of the ideological and educational values as well as of the educational process, moreover, the methodology of teaching, educating and taking care of, the psychological and sociological knowledge about the proper and harmonious physical – mental development and the social development, communicational skills (i.e. dialogue, discussion, conversation, creating tasks, advising, persuading, negotiating), and the ability of using the variety of teaching resources (electronic media) (Zalewska-Bujak, 2010).

One of the key roles played at school by a teacher is teaching. According to Thomas Gordon – teaching is a popular activity – every one does it. Parents teach their children, employers teach their employees, coaches teach their players, wives teach their husbands (or vice versa), and of course professional teachers teach their students (Gordon, 2002).

By the teaching process, it can be understood that it is "planned and systematic work of the teacher with students, intended to get the desired lasting changes in their conduct, dispositions, and their personality due to learning and mastering the knowledge, experiencing the values and practical actions" (Okoń, 1998).

It should be also kept in mind that in the teaching – educational process, it must be stated during providing the knowledge that the human is inextricably linked with the nature and all his/her activities are reflected in the surrounding environment. Therefore, it is so important to make the public aware of the possibilities and methods of functioning in the least harmful way so as to benefit from the nature. In the literature, such human activity is called "sustainable development". It involves "doing any business in the harmony with the nature, that is, so as not to cause irreversible changes in it" (Cichy, 1995). It is also essential to make clear what the future consequences of such activities are, that the environment is used not only by us but it will be also used by the next generation.

Showing the dangers and introducing the new ethics requirements essentially cause the need for the question of how the human will develop the right attitude towards the

environment, recognizing its intrinsic value while taking care of the decent human life. It is also our duty to the future generations, which cannot be achieved at the expense of the present wealth, to develop the new forms of actions. The basis of such responsibility is created by the fact that future generations will have to exist, and the preparation of the conditions for their lives is the fundamental issue, having its source in the recognition of the fact that environment is the common good of the humanity.

It should be also paid special attention to the role of the ethics today, which establishments should support the educational programmes. We can shape the environmental awareness only in such way. The important role is played by the educational process carried out from an early age. Therefore, the environmental activities at the school level are very significant and deserve their promotion.

Since the ecological matter is closely linked to the process of creating the moral consciousness, the school should be involved in the protection of the natural environment, mainly, by the development of the truly responsible attitude. Thus, the ecological/environmental education must become the integral part of the human education starting from an early age. The aim of the education should be the development of the pro-environmental attitudes, which will be against the uncontrolled exploitation of the resources and which will demonstrate the concern for the natural environment. The proper environmental sustainability is achievable only if people are convinced of the need to give up the consuming lifestyle (the so-called ecological asceticism). In such circumstances, it seems to be inevitable to introduce the new ethical standards called eco-ethics.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be noted that the space of the modern education has been expanding to the great extent. The continuous changes in the society today have been making greater than ever demands on the school and teachers. Such situation influences, to the different degree, the conditions and contents of their work. The teachers' role is related to the teaching and educational/upbringing activities according to the specific system of ideological, philosophical and ethical values. To get the pedagogues' work complete and effective, they must have the support of other individuals and institutions. Additionally, it is also important to acknowledge that the school education space cannot not be limited to the school building itself. The confirmation of such conclusions are justified by the following words: "Such activities are necessary in order not to make the life at school isolated, artificial and/or abstract for children. To get the idea that the world created inside school is understood for children and as close as

possible to their everyday lives. To get the idea that things they learn at school, are in line with what they experience outside school and that their skills would be appropriate to overcome the difficulties experienced in the reality (Michalak, 2004).

For the centuries, the concepts of the children's education and the education of the youth, as well as the school model and the teacher's role have been subject to the constant changes. In the era of the extraordinary pace of the development of science, engineering and technology, but also during the occurrence of the various pejorative events, the school constantly has to face the need to make further changes. Moreover, the teacher faces the constant dilemma. Therefore, it is also important to highlight the role of the teacher's cooperation with parents, but it is significant not to make student's parents responsibility for their child's education. It is essential that the teachers should treat students as partners, however, without losing their authority. Moreover, children should be given a lot of freedom, but at the same time the teachers should direct them in the appropriate way. It is important to make students feel safe at school, and at the same time, such freedom cannot be overwhelming, allowing courageously meet the new challenges. It is vital that the teachers should have the content-related and mental preparation for their work, allowing to express students' views, opinions, ideas and observations willingly. It is important for teachers to be demanding, but at the same time they should treat students individually, moreover, their requirements must be adapted to the abilities and skills of every student.

To do so, the visions of the human capable of living in the society of the knowledge must be specified, and the following questions answered: What kind of the value system do we prefer? What the ideal patterns of the upbringing do we want to accept and realize during the teaching and training processes? Do we have to, during the educational process, focus on the process of becoming humans, the way of being a human, the human relations with the external environment, or all these issues together? Due to the intensification of the globalization and the integration the new problems occur to which the modern school must have the solutions: What does it mean to be a human in the era of the globalization, and what does it mean to be European and Polish? Who are we if we are so different from the others? Who are we – and who are we going to be – in the so uncontrollably changing world (Kupisiewicz, 2006)?

Teaching does not only mean to provide students with the knowledge. It means to prepare them for life in the constantly changing world. Education does not only refer to the teaching of the particular subject, it is also associated with providing students with the appropriate qualities, such as: empathy, respect for the values, the ability to learning alone, creativity, and above all, the use of the acquired knowledge in practice, in the future. The teacher of the twenty-first century should therefore be open, creative, and ethical. The teacher should create a young person who is multi-dimensional in his/her

actions, moreover, autonomous, free, and most importantly independent, who is able to cope with everyday life, but also to live wisely and in accordance with the generally accepted rules resulting from the culture, traditions, regardless of the political system, the educational system, the increasing development of the civilization, the pressure of the negative patterns of behaviour and many other factors to which we are exposed.

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