

NEW CHALLENGES FOR A TEACHER OF THE MODERN SCHOOL

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Abstract

In the global information society those citizen who are required are: self-informing, communicating, learning and creating new services and products. This model of using teleinformation goods consists of the citizens' competences. There is need to rebuild system of education in Poland and make it suitable for expectations and needs of contemporary men. Setting new aims for education implicates getting teachers who are necessary to realize them. New challenges are given to a teacher because he/she should accommodate to social changes, to Europeanisation and life globalization.

Introduction

Nowadays Poland is in the process of transformation into a global information society. The most developed parts of the world have already faced such challenges. It is assumed that the economy of an information society should be based on knowledge so citizens' education can be treated as a strategic assignment of the nation. Poland's share in the transformation process will undoubtedly define its place in the world in the near future. Creating social and educational mechanisms which build up citizens' needs and consciousness will allow people to cope with challenges issued to information society.

The demand for continuous development of a citizen, not only in his/her youth but also during his/her whole life indicates explicitly that sweeping changes in educational policy of the country are needed. In the information society we expect: a self-informing citizen, familiar with telecommunication devices. This will allow him/her to obtain the information they need. The information needs to be reliable, trustworthy and easily assimilated. Moreover, the information society requires a citizen who is able to communicate via e-mail with people of different cultures; a citizen who is eager to learn and who is aware of the necessity to update his/her knowledge related both to their professional and private lives. In addition to this he/she needs to realize the advantages of being able to access electronic sources of knowledge; a citizen who is able to create new products and services as well as meeting the needs of well-informed, communicative and knowledgeable citizens.

The above-presented uses of teleinformation opportunities complement each other and they have been ordered according to the increasing competences of citizens¹¹. It seems that the most important challenge for today's Poland is the revamping of the education system. Despite the educational reform, the system still responds more to the needs of the industrial society than preparing the contemporary citizen to face the challenges of the democratic society and the information age. It is then therefore necessary to establish new aims for the education system as well as drum up teachers' support to realize these aims¹². Teachers should adapt to changes in society, Europeanisation and globalisation of life.

Modern education system must be geared not only towards teaching society to use knowledge, but primarily towards the creation of knowledge that is unconventional and unique. This task requires new teacher training methods that will be mostly based on the participation and thorough initiative of students, who are would-be teachers. The paradigm of comprehensive development of both teachers and students suggests that the nature of the teacher training and professional development is not cognitive, but also innovative, pro-social as well as practical.

The teacher should meet the requirements and expectations of contemporary reality. Thus, there are new challenges the teacher must confront, since professional skills can no longer come down exclusively to learnt situations and behaviour, and effects to set patterns, known rules and principles. The contemporary teacher assumes that educational future is usually unpredictable and exceedingly complex, therefore "he should be a creative subject of action, searching for new ways and methods of education and avoiding stereotypes"¹³.

¹¹ W. Abramowicz, *Obywatele globalnego społeczeństwa informacyjnego* [in:] *Polska w drodze do globalnego społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, Warszawa 2002, p. 121.

¹² W. Cellary, *Wnioski i rekomendacje* [in:] *Polska w drodze do globalnego społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, Warszawa 2002, p.136.

¹³ L. Hurto, *Przyszłość – potrzeba zmian w procesie kształcenia* [in:] M. Nowicka (ed.) *Nauczyciel i uczeń w przestrzeni szkoły*, Olsztyn 2002, p.72.

The teacher's professional development relies on constant searching, improving his/her teaching skills, recognizing his/her abilities, conscious designing of classes and on reflexive explanation of his/her teaching actions. Pedagogists emphasize the fact that the teacher should be reflexive. It implies that in a difficult, new or conflict situation the teacher can use his/her knowledge, skills and professional experience to solve a problem. The ability that plays a significant role in school practice based on the reflexive education model, is the conscious modification of the teacher's views and actions. It is required of him to critically reflect on the creation of situations favorable to learning and educational actions. It should be assumed that the teacher acquires his/her professional qualifications in his/her systematic daily work. It is impossible to learn to be a teacher forever, but it is necessary to become one constantly. That demonstrates the importance of "the ability to understand educational situations. Without empathy, the ability of deep self-realization and of critical analysis of one's own work conditions, we can talk about neither the teacher's readiness nor an authority up to standards of the educational change"¹⁴. The teacher's tasks spring from the objectives set to education, therefore abilities to enter the role and adapt to this social role are crucial here. Undoubtedly, self-understanding as well as the creation of the adequate self-picture¹⁵ is vital, too. Authors of contemporary pedagogical work agree that the development of the teacher's value and attitude system should be of primary importance"¹⁶.

The teacher is obliged to progress in understanding the axiological nature of his/her vocation, therefore he/she should be value- and personal development-oriented. "A teacher must possess sufficient amount of self-esteem. That is the essential condition for manifestation of courage related to 'being yourself' and 'being authentic'"¹⁷. Self-trust and self-confidence lead to job satisfaction and disinterested satisfaction towards his/her students.

Contemporary education system requires from a teacher going beyond stereotypical actions and acquiring creative and innovative attitudes instead. Education based on creativity refers to humanistic pedagogy which relies on the individualism and autonomy of both a teacher and a student. Only a creative teacher exhibits independence of thinking, behaviour and action and is able to go beyond cliched patterns. They are valuable personality traits which enable the teacher to stimulate student's personal development. They comprise such virtues as sensitivity, openness to experiences, ingenuity, readiness for risk taking, enthusiasm, spontaneity, perseverance and ambition. A creative and future-oriented teacher promotes independence of thinking among his/her students and he/she inspires them to express their thoughts, experiences, viewpoints and opinions. By means of actions such a teacher is able to motivate his/her students, awaken their sense of curiosity as well as elicit openness and teach both critical and creative attitude to problem solving¹⁸.

A teacher who is supposed to get involved in the accomplishment of tasks within contemporary education system should not be "just" a lecturer but also a tutor. The key role in education process plays a sense of vocation including good morals and tactful teacher-student approach. Teacher's effectiveness and communicative competence result in initiating and maintaining good relationship with students and parents. The teacher's abilities to listen, to show empathy, to understand speaker's intentions and his/her unambiguous non-verbal communication constitute the model for interpersonal and intrasocial relations of the young.

Being a tactful tutor lays foundations for an individual-oriented approach towards a student. The tutor's tact can be demonstrated by means of respect for student's dignity, his/her feelings and privacy as well as by avoiding conflict, expressing trust and understanding towards a student. One should bear in mind, though, that the thoroughly organized education process is supposed to display an individual-oriented approach to a teacher, as well. Therefore, information society which is responsible for the process of up-bringing should be value- and individual-oriented and should rely on the "to be" values¹⁹ in accordance with the concept of humanism. Consistently, it is of utmost importance to recruit for education business individuals who not only have received comprehensive schooling and training but also display a humanist personality, broad-mindedness and positive motivation for their personal development. They should also exhibit high accountability to their students.

"Teacher's pedagogical culture is shown and influenced by many factors such as: his/her relationships with students, other teachers, parents' organizations, trade unions,

¹⁴ R. Parzęcki (ed.), *Dyskusja o nauczycielu*, WSH-E, Włocławek 2003, p.86.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.89.

¹⁶ Cz. Banach, *Nauczyciel wobec reformy systemu edukacji* [in:] B.Muchacka (ed.), *Kształcenie nauczycieli przyszłej szkoły*, Impuls 2006, p.9.

¹⁷ H. Kwiatkowska, *Edukacja nauczycieli*, Warszawa 1997, p.200.

¹⁸ K. Polak, *Podstawy edukacji*, Kraków 1994, KN Krosno, p. 236.

¹⁹ Cz.Banach, A.Rajkiewicz, *Najpilniejsze problemy do rozwiązania w systemie edukacji w latach 2004-2015* [in:] *Strategia dla Polski po wejściu do Unii Europejskiej*, Warszawa 2002, p.126.

headteachers, supervisory boards, local government, local organizations [...] and also with media²⁰. Media play a very important role in contemporary world and that is why teacher's competence connected with media communication is so important.

Information technologies are very important both for teachers and students and can help a lot in organizing their work. Teachers and students should be able to use computer equipment for communication purposes and also as a useful tool for broadening their knowledge. Computer classes are very important in the 21st century school and should be used for promoting multimedia education. Media are an undeniable source of knowledge about the world. The road to wisdom leads through information management and transforming different items of information into solid knowledge.

Contemporary school requires teachers who are competent and can use all the assets of their personality in their work, but are also open to students' needs and moods. A teacher who is competent to accept different views and lifestyles and is aware of differences in children's possibilities. He/she is open for the dialogue with his/her students. The new model of teacher-student relationship is based on the assumption that both of them are the subject of pedagogical activities and should cooperate in this process.

When we take into account this new outlook on teacher's activities, we must also stress his/her changing role in a new school. Instead of being a person who passes information to his/her students and checks their knowledge, controlling them during this process, he/she should support children's development. And this entails aiding his/her students with self-development and self-improvement.

Conclusions

These new challenges require from contemporary teachers constant upgrading of their professional qualifications, which will enable them to use their experience and the most recent pedagogical research and theories and adapt them to their work. Teachers must be aware that their activities bring about not only immediate but also delayed results. This should give teachers a lasting sense of validity of their work. It can be gained through intensive training which will prepare teachers to this new role in contemporary educational system. It also forms the basis of „education for the future” ideology.

The idea formed in UNESCO Report „Education: A Hidden Treasure” should give an incentive for such changes. Its authors mention four pillars of knowledge and education: „to learn in order to know, to learn in order to act, to learn in order to live together, to learn in order to be”²¹. Success of this project depends on teachers, „their devotion and competence, their readiness to learn and implement new theories into their everyday work”²².

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²⁰ Cz. Banach, *Nauczyciel wobec reformy systemu edukacji* in B. Muchacka (ed.) *Kształcenie nauczycieli przyszłej szkoły*, Impuls, 20006 p. 17.

²¹ „Education: A Hidden Treasure” UNESCO Report of International Education Committee chaired by J. Delors, Warszawa 1998, p.85.

²² F. Mayor „The Future of the World” Fundacja Studiów i Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2001, p.380.

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In the process of transformation into a global information society it is assumed that the economy should be based on knowledge and that is why citizens' education can be treated as a priority. Demands for constant education and continuous development during the whole life of a man, need to be tightly interrelated with citizens' competences. That assumptions require to set new purposes for an education system. The most important strength of the modern education system is its cognitive, innovative, fresh as well as pro-social and practical character. That is why modern school expects from the teacher independence of thinking, creative and innovative attitude, reflection in action, authenticity and value-orientation. Direct predisposition – moral attitude, communication skills, tact and pedagogy culture are components of basic competences of teachers in the modern school.

Only intensive efforts, directed into preparing teachers for realization of tomorrow education as well as education for future, will let us to come up with demands which are issued to information society.