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## Introduction

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Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

## INTRODUCTION

Considerations about the contemporary problems of the teacher and educator professions find their deep justification in the situation when modern societies undergoing global transformations expect from teachers and educators exceptionally complex and sometimes even contradictory tasks and commitments. In this area one can notice at present strong tensions and conflicts between more traditional, humanistic and democratic functions of education and the teaching profession, education for freedom and citizen's life on the one hand, and education and the role of the teacher as factors of the dissemination of technological progress and neoliberal economy focused on individualized profit and egoistic, isolated consumption.

These processes do not avoid our country because education in the new socio-political structure faces now quite different and unusually difficult challenges. On the one hand, these tasks are connected with the construction of civil society, while on the other, with the necessity of adjustment to the new socio-political and economic reality – it is no longer a publicly controlled free market (liberalism), but rather the developing corporate capitalism of the global postmarket era (neoliberalism), whose influence also affects education and the whole public sphere.

Simultaneously, a debate is intensified about finding ways of exit from special social and cultural loopings into which we have been entangled by modernity. How is it possible to revive, in the conditions of high technology, availability of information, global economy on the one hand, and relativism, individualism, risk, crisis of trust and ontological safety, social stratification, and a sense of uselessness on the other, public sensitiveness without breaching the right to individual lifestyle and self-realization? How can school be protected from market mentality how can people be guaranteed the right to acquire basic cultural and citizen competences and the conscious choice of their freedom in cultural heterogeneity and in an increasingly individualized society?

Enhanced attention is directed to education and school, the latter is expected to undertake this unusually difficult task. It has its specific

dimension in Poland, which undergoes the time of radical constitutional transformations. The difficulty of this task increases in the context of certain particularly visible features of the present time and the accompanying great social and cultural change. They include:

- **variability** as the consequence of the shift from the stage of domination of the permanency and durability of social structures and acquired predispositions, through the stage of individualized variety of social practices, to the situation (phase) of liquidity, impermanence, dispersion, fragmentation of social life;
- **correlation** as the consequence of the shift from the stage of the domination of dependence and subordination of the individual to the structure, through the stage of relative subjective independence and individualization, to the phase of relationality of social structures and double structuration together with the phenomenon defined as the “dialectics of modernity”;
- **reflectiveness** as the consequence of the shift from the stage of the domination of certainty and rightness derived from scientific knowledge (theory), through the stage of the importance of so-called authentic truth derived from personal, colloquial, local and practical knowledge to the methodological stage of doubt both in generalized knowledge and one’s own cognitive resources. It has a relationship with the radical change of the status of knowledge and domination in the activity of so-called experience mediated through abstract, expert systems and electronic media.

The above-contexts of the contemporary civilization and socio-cultural change generate new challenges for social sciences including pedagogy and pedeutology as well as theoretical studies and research practices being developed in these areas. Most generally, they concern new, advantageous conditions of social activity and development in changing reality. This requires:

- firstly, starting a theoretical and investigative discourse about important matters: conditions of the formation of a new type of morality, social sensibility, social rationality (in what people perceive a new significance worthy of commitment and enabling survival), conditions of the creation of a new type of communities; how and around which values and aims people communicate; conditions of constructing a new type of wisdom (how people co-create and use knowledge and learning for responsible development);
- secondly, developing such methodology of research which would supply “sensitizing” knowledge, which “opens one’s eyes to the new type of so-

cial problems; that encourages people not only to describe and explain, but above all to understand and provide solutions;

- thirdly, developing a new type of investigative practices based on partnership dialogue. Various investigative practices understood as the “incessant dialogue with human experience” seem to be gaining significance in research on change. Undertaken problems are perceived as social problems that require a “comprehensive look”, sharing of perspectives, senses and meanings, penetrations into the phenomenology of change<sup>1</sup>.

A series of important challenges emerge before pedagogy, including social pedagogy and social work in connection with such contemporary processes as globalization and European integration and their social effects. A number of new problems and changes occur in all domains of our life, but above all in spheres connected with education, upbringing and social activity. Such phenomena as: pluralization of family forms, low birth-rate, structural mass unemployment exert influence on the teaching profession and the educator. They demand from representatives of these professions acquaintance of manifold contexts of social and pedagogic processes both in the individual and systemic dimension, on the micro and macro scales, in family upbringing, in institutions and school and extraschool environments, in gender relations, and in biographies against the background of the ambivalence of processes of modernization, cultural and civilizational changes.

The significance of such elements as the economy based on knowledge and services, learning society and information civilization, which emphasize the necessity of general continuing education, lifelong education, and creativity – should be particularly underlined. Teachers and educators are required to continue self-access study and professional development.

In the educational policy of the European Union it is underlined that education accounts for an investment in human capital, in the building of the society of knowledge and in lifelong education, which requires raising of standards and qualities of education and the exact co-operation with the economy. The significant role of school is emphasized in the processes of social integration from early childhood and in the prevention of social exclusion of youth, in building social cohesion, in the prevention of discrimination, marginalization, racism and xenophobia, in the propagation of tolerance and respect for human rights as basic values shared by European societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Dróżka, *Generacja wielkiej zmiany. Studium autobiografii średniego pokolenia nauczycieli polskich 2004*, Kielce 2008.

The new contexts of education and school, such as the development of information technologies, pluralization of public life, multiculturalism, increasing autonomization of local communities and schools, all that cause teachers and educators to undertake new tasks to which they must be properly prepared. This concerns particularly their greater participation in school administration and management, use of new information and communication technologies, promotion of human rights and civic education and preparation of pupils to continuing education.

The subsequent tasks appear in connection with the increasing number of pupils and the increasing differentiation (heterogeneity) of school communities, which result from the integration of immigrant children as well as children with special educational needs, who cause upbringing problems, including children and youth from poor and socially marginalized environments. These tasks create many difficulties for teachers and educators. This is evidence that teachers and educators should be equipped with interpersonal and communicative competences, which has a special significance with reference to ethnic and language minorities and pupils with special educational needs.

The change of the context of culture and civilization, high social expectations of the quality of education, increasing professional tasks, the necessity of continuous learning, additional training and improvement of skills cause the teacher's profession to be a more and more difficult profession. Simultaneously, new challenges indicate that this profession requires clever people; however, in many countries and regions of the EU one can observe reluctance to this profession and even a high risk of the shortage of cadres. In the light of latest research of OECD this is connected with too low salaries and difficult working conditions<sup>2</sup> (lack of flexibility in establishing job description, insufficient teacher independence, work load, insufficient pedagogical support, a bad state of school buildings, necessity to work with mixed ability pupils, etc.). The frequent phenomenon of the lack of support for beginner teachers in the period of professional start and professional adaptation is also emphasized as a cause of resigning from the profession in first years of service<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Raport OECD, Warunki pracy nauczycieli w szkołach, Komisja Europejska Przedstawicielstwo w Polsce, 2009, [online] [www.europedirect.um.warszawa](http://www.europedirect.um.warszawa) [quoted: 20.06.2009].

<sup>3</sup> *Kluczowe problemy edukacji w Europie*, vol. 3, *Zawód nauczyciela w Europie: Profil, wyzwania, kierunki zmian*, Raport I, *Kształcenie i początki pracy zawodowej*, Eurydyce, sieć informacji o edukacji w Europie, ed. A. Smoczyńska, Warszawa 2009.

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In the context of the above considerations one ought to consider a collection of pedagogic texts prepared by the scholarly workers of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Art, the Jan Kochanowski University. They include more than a dozen articles which are divided into three thematic groups that make three parts of the publication.

The first part, entitled *Articles & Essays*, deals with the following issues: problems of professional performance of the middle-aged generation of teachers in the period of social and educational transformations in Poland in the light of autobiographical research (W. Dróżka); transformations of the role of nursery school teachers in the context of the reform of the education system (M. Kwaśniewska); teacher – profession, mission or vocation? (A. Kaczmarczyk, M. Kątny); updating of teachers' professional competences in the conditions of democracy (M. Wasilewska); teacher training in the foundations of the educational policy of the European Union (M. Pękowska); the work of a social educator with family (B. Matyjas); labour educator – profession of the future (M. Krawczyk-Blicharska); essay as a form of enrichment of the workshop of a teacher and educator (M. Kaliszewska).

The second part, *Researches & Statements*, concerns the following problems: emotional bonds in a group of teachers from non public primary schools (Z. Zbróg); the value of teacher's authority as the factor of correct school education (T. Łączek); beginner teacher in contemporary school, values, life and professional aims (R. Miszczuk); problems of contemporary education (M. Molenda); the knowledge of teachers on the subject educational barriers in rural areas (J. Miko-Giedyk); qualities of the teacher training in Poland in comparison with chosen European countries (E. Kula, M. Pękowska); attitudes of teachers in the face of the phenomenon of computer games (K. Krzystanek); the competence of teachers of foreign languages in Poland and Europe (A. Szplit); accomplishment of tasks concerning the education and care of gifted pupils (T. Giza, J. Massalska); the role of the school educator in the support process of education, socialization and upbringing of children (P. Forma); the role and tasks of a school-careers officer (M. Wolska-Długosz); the organization of free time in contemporary school (P. Hanyga-Janczak); the role and tasks of the educator in a daily family support centre (A. Róg); the function of substitute mothers in SOS Children's Villages (A. Róg); tasks of the educator in assisting a poor family (P. Forma, M. Wolska-Długosz).

The third part, *Reviews, Reports & Opinions*, contains reviews written by A. Suchanek, W. Bednarkowa and P. Banakiewicz.

The authors of articles are in majority members of the Polish Pedagogical Society – Kielce Branch. Discussions held during a meeting in spring 2008 resulted in the selection of problems presented in this book and its publication.

All persons interested in the problems of pedagogy and teacher development are invited to read this publication. We thank the authors of the texts for active participation in this collective publication.

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