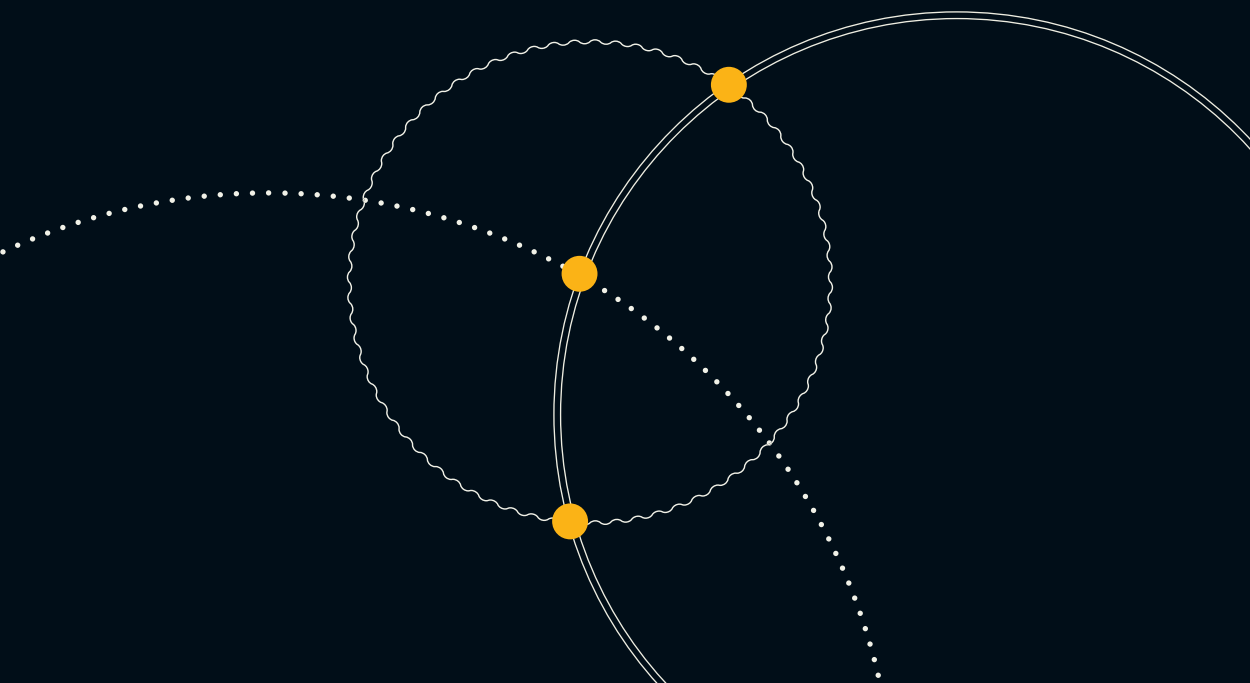
The Role and Tasks of the Psychologist in a Contemporary School

edited by Grażyna Katra | Ewa Sokołowska



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translated by Małgorzata Bieleń

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The book was first published in Polish in 2010 under the title *Rola i zadania psychologa we współczesnej szkole* [The role and tasks of the psychologist in a contemporary school] by Wolters Kluwer. The current edition has been updated and expanded.

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For Professor Antonina Gurycka
and Professor Andrzej Jurkowski
from their students

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Introduction

We have just entered the third decade of the 21st century. This fact leads us to take up again and again challenges and efforts to make our world a better place and protect it from the modern threats – global warming, populism, and intolerance.

It is worthwhile to cultivate the conviction that we can live in a world in which we can care about the common good, about ourselves and each other, while preserving cultural and ethnic diversity. The accomplishment of such a difficult task requires a high level of education in the spirit of respect for the interests of particular communities and each individual. We need an education that would prepare the next generation to meet these challenges, while at the same time creating favourable conditions for personal development. Taking care of both the quality of life and the development of every person, and especially every child, is our priority and duty.

Introducing the next generation into the social and cultural world is carried out in the family and in organisations set up for this purpose, i.e. educational and upbringing institutions. The person who monitors this process and assists parents and educators may be a psychologist – a specialist and expert on the child's upbringing and development from the early years to adulthood. Therefore, it is worth asking ourselves what their role and tasks in this area are. The book *The Role and Tasks of the Psychologist in a Contemporary School* is an attempt to answer this question. Its authors focus on the activities of the school psychologist, who can influence the course of the upbringing and teaching process not only in the school, but also, through the schooling process, in the family.

For years, at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Warsaw, there has been a discussion on the place of educational psychology in contemporary reality (Gurycka, 1983; Jurkowski, 2003; Katra, Sokołowska, 2010; Kowalik,

2010)[1], in particular on the role of a school psychologist, or, broadly speaking, a psychologist working in educational institutions. These considerations led Grażyna Katra to develop a new model[2] of the psychologist's work in the school (described in detail in Chapter 2), which was presented for the first time in the first edition of the book *Rola i zadania psychologa we współczesnej szkole* [The Role and Tasks of the Psychologist in a Contemporary School] (Katra, Sokołowska, 2010). This book is the second, extended and revised edition of the book published 10 years ago. Today, we are richer in new experiences and new knowledge, which have influenced its shape and content.

It seems that it is still worth promoting the vision of the school psychologist's work, reflected in the M-P-I-P model described in this book, as it is a proposal which not only responds to the need to correct the irregularities that arise in the process of upbringing and teaching, but also and above all, it focuses on improving the quality of the student's life and supporting their development through promotional and preventive measures. For the school psychologist, this means that in their work, they cannot limit their efforts to "repairing the holes", but should also, and perhaps most importantly, focus on preventing them from appearing, and on promoting knowledge and such competences among people involved in the upbringing process which can contribute to achieving satisfaction with their own lives here and now as well as in the future.

Our book consists of three parts: (1) "Theoretical considerations", (2) "Main challenges", and (3) "Competences and skills".

The first chapter of the "Theoretical considerations" section is devoted to the role of the school psychologist against the background of experiences in selected countries. The next chapter presents Grażyna Katra's M-P-I-P model, which describes four main categories of the psychologist's activities together with the necessary competences to perform this role. It highlights the professional distinctiveness of the school psychologist as an expert on the psychological aspects of upbringing, who should be a high-class specialist not only in providing intervention in problematic situations, but above all a person who monitors the upbringing process and takes action to optimise it. The next chapter in this section deals with the characteristics of the school environment as a system in which all elements are interdependent and the relations between them affect the functioning of the school and the realisation of its goals (the chapter by Elżbieta Dryll). In her chapter, Ewa Sokołowska

[1] See Specificity and social significance of educational psychology. In A. Jurkowski (Ed.), 2003, *Z zagadnień współczesnej psychologii wychowawczej* [On issues of contemporary educational psychology] (pp.12–26). Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Psychologii PAN.

[2] Model M-P-I-P: M – monitoring; P – prevention; I – intervention, and P – promotion.

analyses the possible approaches to the role of the psychologist in the school described in the literature, proposed by Antonina Gurycka and Andrzej Jurkowski – long-time heads of the Department of Educational Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Warsaw and mentors of our team. What deserves special attention here is the distinction and comparison of the "office" and "frontline" way of performing psychological duties and tasks in the school, which are based on two different visions of the school psychologist's role held by psychologists themselves.

The second part of the book contains the papers describing and analysing the main challenges facing the psychologist in the school. The first two chapters are devoted to problems experienced at younger and older school ages and in adolescence. The authors, Małgorzata Babiuch-Hall and Grażyna Katra, focus on particularly important and not necessarily obvious phenomena related to the development and upbringing of pupils with potential risks, and suggest applying the proposed M-P-I-P model not only to their prevention or intervention but also to their promotion. Promotional activities should take into account age-specific developmental patterns and support the realisation of the student's potential. The next chapters in this section discuss problematic situations occurring in the learning process and school environment. Ewa Sokołowska presents the issue of learning failures and ways of working with a student who experiences them. In the following article, Ewa Sokołowska describes the phenomenon of violence in the school environment and, broadly speaking, among children and young people against the background of world literature and proposes specific programmes to prevent the occurrence or intensification of aggression in peer or pupil-teacher relations. In the last chapter of this section, Elżbieta Czwartosz explains the essence and specificity of conflicts in the school and indicates the place and tasks of the school psychologist in such situations.

The section discussing competences and skills includes the papers devoted to the forms of psychological work carried out in the school, starting from the general principles of individual work with the pupil, teacher or parent (the chapter by Elżbieta Dryll), through work with a group of pupils or educators (the chapter by Ewa Sokołowska and Grażyna Katra), work with the family (the chapter by Anna Cierpka), to work with teachers (the chapter by Karolina Małek). The following chapter, by Ewa Sokołowska, provides valuable tips on how to prepare for the role of a person who promotes psychological knowledge through presentations, talks, or lectures – i.e. in front of a wide audience. The author describes in detail how to prepare for such tasks, as working in the comfort of the office differs significantly from them. The culmination of this part is Magda Budziszewska's reflections on the importance and possibilities of supporting the student's development in school reality as an important challenge, which should be the first priority of an educational psychologist.

The last part of the volume contains final considerations on the professional identity of the school psychologist and the nature of their cooperation with school and non-school institutions. This section analyses and evaluates various forms of this cooperation from the perspective of an educational psychologist, indicating various difficulties and shortcomings in this respect.

Grażyna Katra and Ewa Sokołowska

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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1. Tasks and responsibilities of the psychologist in a Polish school

The state provides psychological care for the child in educational institutions, and this care is strictly defined by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 25 July 2019. (Journal of Laws of 2020, see *Dziennik Ustaw*, 2020). According to this regulation, the psychologist's tasks include conducting research and diagnostic activities concerning students, not only in the case of upbringing and learning problems, but also in order to support the student's strengths. The psychologist is also required to diagnose educational situations in terms of their role in the child's development. It is not enough to indicate educational situations which are incorrect. It is also necessary to determine, through analysis, which are correct and whether they promote the pupil's development, as the psychologist's task is to conduct pro-health education and health promotion among pupils, teachers and parents.

A psychologist employed in education (a school, a kindergarten or a pedagogical-psychological counselling centre) is to provide psychological and pedagogical assistance in the form of prevention, mediation and intervention activities addressed to students, parents and teachers. Another area of activity is related to vocational counselling. A school may employ a vocational counsellor, but in the absence of such a specialist, a psychologist is obliged to help the student in choosing a field of education and career. This help should also be provided to parents involved in the process of making vocational decisions by their child. In addition, the psychologist should use their knowledge and skills to support class teachers as well as educational and problem-educational teams in the implementation of the school's educational programme and the prevention programme, referred to in separate regulations. In the light of the law, the psychologist's role should also include minimising the effects of developmental disorders, preventing behavioural disorders and initiating

various forms of educational assistance for students both in the school and outside the school environment. Moreover, the role of the psychologist is to support teachers and parents in activities aimed at providing equal educational opportunities for students. This assistance consists in giving teachers advice on how to adapt the educational requirements resulting from their respective curricula to the individual psychophysical and educational needs of a student who has been diagnosed with developmental disorders, deviations, or specific learning difficulties that make them unable to meet these requirements.

According to the presented regulation, it is up to the psychologist to initiate and conduct – in a variety of forms – activities aimed at broadening the pedagogical skills of parents and teachers. These may include talks, lectures, workshops on educational and social skills, consultations and counselling.

In the school environment, there are sometimes conflict situations between different parties, for example between parents and the headteacher, or parents and teachers, or between groups of teachers. In such a situation, the school psychologist can mediate so as to resolve or alleviate the conflict. In crisis situations, however, they should intervene in order to overcome the crisis and prevent it from escalating and having negative consequences.

The school psychologist's tasks include establishing cooperation with teachers, the headteacher, parents as well as external educational and mental health institutions.

All these tasks are subordinated to the main goal – the child's welfare considered in individual and social dimensions. It should be noted here that participation in psychological research and psychological interactions is voluntary and free of charge. Psychological assistance can be provided at the request of a student, their parents, teachers, a pedagogue, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a vocational counsellor or a psychological-pedagogical counselling centre, including a specialist clinic.

Psychological and pedagogical assistance in the school is organised mainly in the form of didactic and remedial or specialised classes, such as corrective and compensatory, logopaedic, socio-therapeutic or other therapeutic activities and psycho-educational classes for students and parents. In addition, the psychologist can and should organise classes on education and career choices. On the school premises, the psychologist may also provide counselling for students as well as advice and consultation for parents and teachers. Additionally, psychological help includes organisation of remedial and therapeutic classes in accordance with the relevant regulations, but it is up to the headteacher to arrange such help[1].

[1] Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the organisation and provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions (see *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej* (MEN), 2017).

The school psychologist's tasks and responsibilities resulting from the above regulation are broad in scope and nature and are not limited to intervention and addressing educational and upbringing problems. In practice, however, the school psychologist's activities are often restricted to assisting pupils referred by teachers, which involves diagnosing a child's problems and formulating guidelines on how to proceed, such as referring a pupil to remedial classes. This means focusing on the pupil and their problems without taking into account other aspects of the didactic and upbringing process. Besides, the psychologist conducts classes for young people as part of addiction prevention, which the school is obliged to provide for its students. There is not much room for activities promoting the child's development, and even more so for working with parents and teachers in order to optimise upbringing in the school and in the family. These considerations are supported by the surveys[2] carried out in 2008 and currently in 2020.

To sum up, it may be worrying that there is not enough emphasis on and time for preventive measures, training of teachers and parents, as well as actions aimed at promoting and supporting the development of students, including the gifted ones. School psychologists are perceived as people whose main task is to intervene in the form of support or assistance in difficult, problematic and troublesome situations. They are not independent creators of psychological activities in the school, but the main and sometimes the only specialists in their field. Their task is to respond to the demand of the moment and to the problems of people participating in school life. In other words, the role of a professional psychologist in an educational institution is interventional in nature, primarily aimed at taking care of a child (children) with educational problems or learning difficulties. However, there is no explicit expectation that the psychologist should provide support and direct care for the student's teachers and parents, and not just for the student. In the English literature on the subject, there are studies that relate to cooperation between the psychologist and teachers, which shows that this cooperation is not sufficient (Anderson, Klassen, Georgiou, 2007; Beltman, Mansfield, Harris, 2016; Gilman, Medway, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2004).

[2] (Ad 1) The Second Congress of School Pedagogues and Psychologists was held in Warsaw on 7–8 February 2008 and was organised by the Academy of Special Education, Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, IBO and the Fraszka Edukacyjna Publishing House. The study included 144 persons. Katra, G. (2010). School psychologist in Poland and other countries. In G. Katra, E. Sokołowska (Eds.) (2010), *Rola i zadania psychologa we współczesnej szkole* [The Role and Tasks of the Psychologist in a Contemporary School]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Wolters Kluwer. (Ad 2) The survey was conducted among 86 school psychologists by Grażyna Katra at the turn of June and July 2020 (unpublished report). (Ad 3) *Raport dotyczący usług psychologicznych za rok 2014–2015* (2015).

In many countries, there are associations of school psychologists as well as international organisations of this type[3]. The International School Psychology Association (ISPA) is a global organisation of school psychologists from all over the world. It is an organisation of practitioners and scientists who deal with education and upbringing in general, as well as that in educational institutions. ISPA conducts training courses on, among other things, crisis intervention. It has been engaged in children's rights for over a dozen years, promoting these issues in many countries outside Western culture. Such organisations in individual countries could and should bring together school psychologists, providing a forum for meetings and exchange of experience. They would organise support groups and training aimed at professional and personal development, while at the same time weakening the feeling of loneliness experienced by school psychologists in the educational system (as shown by the above-mentioned research).

When developing the concept of the school psychologist's role, which is presented in the next chapter, it is worthwhile to take a look at the practice and regulations concerning this profession in other countries. Below, I present examples of training and requirements for psychologists employed in schools or other educational institutions in selected countries of our globe.

Training of educational psychologists in the world – examples

School psychologists are trained differently in particular countries. I will start with some examples taken from European countries and additionally describe the situations in New Zealand and the USA.

The United Kingdom[4]

To become a school psychologist, one must have an MA or PhD degree in school psychology. They also need a teaching qualification and a minimum of 2 years of school practice as a teacher. Once these conditions are met, a candidate for a school psychologist will have a one-year internship under the care of a school psychologist approved by the British Psychological Society (BPS) in regional educational institutions administered by the government. The intern is assigned a supervisor whose role is to develop an internship programme in

[3] Poland does not have an association that would bring together school psychologists – or, broadly speaking, educational psychologists working in educational institutions.

[4] See HCPC (2020), Health and Care Professions Council BPS (The British Psychological Society): Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership; Training to become an educational psychologist in England.

accordance with the BPS criteria and to monitor its progress. After successful completion of the internship, the candidate is entered on the list of BPS school psychologists and gains full rights to practise this profession independently. A school psychologist is usually in charge of several schools and works in educational or mental health institutions of higher levels.

The Netherlands

This country does not have a specialisation in educational psychology. A master's degree in psychology or pedagogy is enough to work in a school. A school psychologist learns the profession in practice. The Dutch assume that general education is the basis for taking up a job in a particular institution and that an individual gains relevant competences and experience in the course of their work. It is worth noting that generally, during the master's studies, students have between 640 and 960 hours of practice. Additionally, universities and colleges offer a variety of further training courses for MA and PhD graduates. Depending on the educational path chosen and the experience gained, it is possible to apply for enrolment in an appropriate list of specialists in child and youth psychology, educational psychology, etc. However, this is not a necessary condition for practising the profession.

Norway

In Norway, a school or educational psychologist has a title of Counsellor in Upbringing Psychology. This function requires an MA or PhD in teaching, psychology or social sciences, followed by a specialisation in counselling in educational or clinical psychology with elements of educational psychology. As part of the master's studies, students have from 150 to 425 hours of practice, depending on the field. The internship after the specialist studies takes 5 years, including 160 hours of supervision in the case of teaching, and 240 hours in the case of preparing for the profession of a psychologist. To become a supervisor of educational psychologists, one must have an appropriate licence and at least two years of experience as an educational psychologist. Generally, educational psychologists are required to have a bachelor's degree in psychology and a specialist's licence in psychology or counselling.

The European Union

The European Union guidelines recommend that higher education be divided into two stages: bachelor's degree (3 years), and master's degree (2 years), however, practising the profession of a psychologist requires completing

a master's degree and a one-year internship under the care of an experienced psychologist who is a qualified supervisor.

New Zealand

In this country down under, there are two-stage psychological studies – a bachelor's degree lasts 3 years, and some students complete their master's degree. During the studies, students have limited practical classes. Educational psychology is not considered a separate specialisation. There is no function of a school psychologist or pedagogue. In large secondary schools, there is a person acting as a counsellor, without any special psychological and pedagogical preparation. The counsellor intervenes in special cases of educational difficulties. They do not carry out other psychological activities, such as diagnosis, assistance, development of curricula for gifted children or those who have school difficulties, preventive measures, etc. The Ministry of Education employs psychologists in the so-called special services, who deal with special problems. In practice, psychologists employed by the Ministry of Education are not able to deal with emerging problems or intervene quickly enough.

The United States[5] and Africa[6]

In the USA, there are three similar specialisations in educational psychology: education psychology, school psychology and school counselling. Each of them is related to a specific profession. Thus, it is possible to become a psychologist – a specialist in teaching or teaching and upbringing (educational psychologist), a school psychologist or a school counsellor (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010). An educational psychologist is an expert who works in schools or institutions that focus on improving learning and teaching techniques. They have the following responsibilities: development of educational tests, evaluation of educational programmes and consultations for schools on improving teaching methods and assessing students' progress. The same requirements as in the United States are applied in Africa (an identical career path).

The educational psychologist is a high-class specialist in upbringing and education as well as in conducting research in this field. Among other things, they participate in the development of curricula for students with special educational needs, for example for gifted or mentally handicapped students.

[5] See *How to Become an Educational Psychologist?* (2020).

[6] See SACAP (2020). What you need to know about being an educational psychologist. *Careers in Psychology* (2020).

They also deal with the motivation for learning and the factors that determine it. They support teachers in improving their methods of teaching and in motivating and evaluating students' performance.

The task of school psychologists working in primary and lower secondary schools or educational institutions at regional level is to help students with learning or behavioural problems. The school psychologist is a specialist in teaching and psychology. They work directly with pupils, their parents and teachers and with the school administration, with the aim of overcoming the child's learning and upbringing problems and creating the best possible learning environment. The school psychologist's main responsibilities include (1) holding meetings with parents and teachers in order to explain to them the essence of problems encountered by the child in learning, their family and environment; (2) following the latest scientific developments, implementation programmes and innovations in teaching and providing psychological assistance to the interested parties; (3) working individually with a problem child (manifesting aggressive or passive behaviour towards violence, drug abuse, having problems with motivation to learn) and counselling and teaching the guardians effective educational strategies and social competences; (4) helping to obtain specialist intervention in more difficult cases, i.e. establishing contact with relevant institution; (5) developing remedial measures to deal with the child's problematic behaviours.

There are many possibilities of obtaining qualifications necessary to perform this profession. Generally, the quickest way is to complete an integrated master's degree or a postgraduate master's degree (after the bachelor's degree) in educational psychology. Following graduation, a candidate for a school psychologist completes a one-year internship under the care of a supervisor in educational and teaching institutions. Afterwards, they have to pass an examination before the Commission of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). Fulfilment these conditions is necessary to obtain a certificate (licence) in school psychology, which entitles the candidate to practise this profession independently (Astramovich, Loe, 2006).

Another function related to the student's education is that of a school counsellor, whose role is to support the student in their development and school career from primary school through the choice of a general secondary school or a profiled school to the choice of a post-secondary school or a university. The aim of the school counsellor's work is to advise the student on what choices to make in different spheres of life and individual activities so that they can use and develop their potential. This means helping them to set primary life and phase goals and indicating the conditions and means necessary and helpful in achieving them. In addition, the school counsellor tries to support or defend the student in the case of personal problems at home or school.

For example, a school counsellor can help a student to find schools that offer a suitable curriculum, or traineeships, internships, scholarships or seasonal work. They provide professional counselling and support for a student who is experiencing various emotional, behavioural or learning problems. They teach constructive conflict resolution. Moreover, they organise peer support groups, addiction prevention and mediation in the case of student-teacher conflicts.

The educational system recommends that future school counsellors engage as volunteers at children and youth camps, where they can gain experience in building positive and trust-based relationships with younger people. Furthermore, they are required to have a degree in pedagogy, psychology or sociology. An important thing is to combine practice with theoretical studies. All the states require a school counsellor certificate, which can also be applied for by teachers.

In most cases, psychologists are recruited as school counsellors, less often as school psychologists and very rarely as educational psychologists. School and educational psychologists are employed in state offices supervising the work of individual educational institutions, where they co-create curricula and work on improving teaching methods, motivating and helping students to learn.

These reflections will hopefully allow the readers to gain an initial orientation on the possible approaches to the tasks and role of the psychologist.

ABSTRACT

Tasks and responsibilities of the psychologist in a Polish school

The Polish state guarantees comprehensive psychological care for children and adolescents in educational institutions. The tasks of the psychologist are included in a special regulation and also involve cooperation with the child's teachers, educators and parents.

In practice, the psychologist deals with the student delegated by tutors and teachers, and his activities mainly consist of intervening in the event of learning or behavioural problems. Unlike in other countries, it can be seen that a psychology graduate in Poland starts his professional carrier with relatively little experience (a small number of hours of training). We also do not have a strictly defined path of professional development for a school psychologist, independent of teacher promotion.

KEYWORDS: role of school psychology, professional development, psychological intervention, school psychologist in different countries

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2. The model of the school psychologist's role – an authorial proposal

Upbringing is one of the most important human activities, and its primary goal is and has always been to prepare the child for adult life. This general objective takes on different forms, depending on the epoch and the society that pursues it. A few decades ago, the main task of educators was to prepare the child to play a specific role in the adult world. Today, we want to develop the unique potential of each human being and enable them to achieve full personal independence, which manifests itself, among other things, in high self-regulatory competences. The basic educational goals and tasks have changed – the aim of upbringing is not only to instil binding socio-cultural norms in the child, but also to create conditions for a comprehensive development of their potential and to develop the ability to shape themselves and their life. In other words, this process has two fundamental functions – socialisation and emancipation – which seem to contradict each other. It is possible to try to combine them and treat them as complementary – the child needs to become a member of a specific community (society, culture, family, etc.), but they should also prepare for autonomous functioning and self-regulation, connected with a sense of subjectivity and responsibility.

Subjectivity is an attribute of a person, but also a state of their mind (Gurycka, 1989; Obuchowski, 2000). It reflects an individual's inner sense of being able to design their own self and perceive the world in their own way. At the same time, it means being guided by internal motivation (see Deci and Ryan's concept, 2002), resulting from the needs and system of personal values, which requires maturity of thinking and self-distance. It is worth noting that a person functioning subjectively is able to modify their worldview, aspirations and methods of their realisation by following the changes they are subject

to and which take place in their environment. They are able to do it due to reflecting on them. Such a person has an active attitude towards the constructed concept of themselves and their representation of reality. According to Obuchowski (2000), a sense of subjectivity is the result of designing one's own personality and biography as well as an individual, conscious way of perception. It is connected with the capacity for self-education, autocracy, and planning personal goals along with actions aimed at achieving them (Katra, 2008a).

It is noteworthy that according to the European Union's recommendations (Educational materials of the "Kreator" programme, see *Materiały edukacyjne programu "Kreator". Historia*, 1996), the aim of school education is to develop the following basic competences, which can be regarded as the objectives of education and schooling: (1) organising, assessing and planning one's own education; (2) communicating effectively in different situations; (3) cooperating effectively in a team; (4) solving problems in a creative way; and (5) using information technology effectively. The above-mentioned competences facilitate effective functioning in the contemporary world but still do not exhaust the conditions essential for shaping the pupil's subjectivity.

The aim of contemporary school is to build up these competences, but at the same time create the best possible conditions for every pupil to develop in such a way as to become an independent and responsible person in the future. Individual teachers implement, or try to implement, these demands as part of their tasks, but **the whole educational process should be supervised by a psychologist as the main expert** – a specialist in psychological phenomena. The educational psychologist has the appropriate educational background and qualifications to understand the overall school process in the light of psychological knowledge and to formulate opinions, guidelines and recommendations, as well as take action to support the implementation of the primary goal of education in connection with the specific tasks of the school.

* * *

The previous chapter presented detailed tasks facing the school psychologist. In this chapter, I will present my own proposal for the school psychologist's role, which has been evolving over the last years and is the result of the discussions conducted in the Department of Psychology of Education and Development, headed by Professor Andrzej Jurkowski. This model is based on two basic assumptions. One refers to the fact that the educational psychologist should take an external perspective on school phenomena (Jurkowski, 2000, 2003). Its essence is the analysis of the real functions of educational activities and their effects. In this case, the point is not the intended effects of didactic and pedagogical measures, i.e. the achievement of declared school goals, but diagnosis of the actual results of the phenomena taking place in the school.

It is a look at school as a system from the outside – such a perspective is called extra-systemic, as opposed to intra-systemic. The essence of the intra-systemic perspective is to assess the achievement of educational goals, for which the school as an institution was originally established.

The introduction of the above-mentioned distinction allows for a broader definition of the school psychologist's role, its basic attribute being the psychologist's autonomy in relation to formal school goals, and its main task monitoring all the effects of pedagogical activities in school reality. In other words, the school psychologist is supposed to recognise and identify the actual consequences of didactic and pedagogical actions in the school (broadly speaking, in the educational system) for the child's personal development and for growth of their subjectivity. Moreover, psychologists themselves should initiate and create various activities aimed at optimising the process of education and upbringing in the school and family environment. The above approach to the role of the psychologist as an expert on upbringing and an initiator of upbringing and corrective actions, who at the same time belongs and does not belong to the school environment, sets out detailed tasks and challenges for the school psychologist.

The basic task of the school psychologist comes down to observing and analysing the educational process in the school – goals, situations and pedagogical activities – in terms of their expected (intra-systemic perspective) and actual (extra-systemic perspective) effects on the development of the pupil's assets and subjectivity (see Jurkowski, 2000). It is the role of an expert who monitors a particular phenomenon, analyses it according to selected criteria and formulates an opinion about its course and effects, identifying the appearance of unintended results, important from the psychological and social point of view. Expertise understood in this way can be a starting point for corrective and preventive actions, which the school psychologist should take. It means that they step in when they notice deviations in the functioning of the parties involved in the upbringing process, due to the adopted goals and intentions. Expertise may also constitute the basis for formulating demands directed at the educational system, containing guidelines for desirable pedagogical functions, such as creating conditions for the development of the pupil's self-regulation. These demands may also be addressed to the psychologist and prompt them to initiate situations and actions conducive to their implementation – the psychologist as an initiator of desired pedagogical measures.

To sum up, the school psychologist is a person appointed to facilitate the school education process in order to optimise it, which consists in shaping external (school climate, educational situations) and individual (conscious self-regulatory activity) conditions conducive to the pupil's development. Although the school psychologist belongs to the school environment, their

task is to analyse and assess the real impact of the school on the pupil and to indicate discrepancies between declared and actual requirements of teachers and intended and real effects of didactic and pedagogical work, as well as formulate recommendations aimed at elimination, or at least reduction of discrepancies, and create optimal educational situations and ways of their implementation in school life.

I would like to stress that educational goals include both "purely" educational objectives – directly related to teaching, and those which in traditional Polish psychology are treated as upbringing goals – related to developing the child's personality, moral norms and value system. The school psychologist should be an expert on the implementation of both types of goals: didactic and upbringing. They can monitor the teaching process (formulating educational goals, organising the course of lessons, evaluation) to ensure that it is the most beneficial for the development of the student's knowledge, cognitive skills and competences. For example, they can help to select motivational strategies in the lesson or adapt the range of knowledge and form of its transfer to the child's developmental and individual abilities. In the case of upbringing objectives, the psychologist should make sure that the didactic and non-didactic behaviours of teachers and other adults working in the school encourage, rather than hinder, the primary upbringing objective, which is the comprehensive development of the pupil's potential and their capacity for conscious self-regulation.

* * *

In the above considerations, I have assumed that the main role of the school psychologist is that of an expert. The reason why I have devoted so much attention to it is that I believe that it should provide a basis for other forms of action undertaken by the educational psychologist. This role seems to be underestimated in school practice, among other things, due to the fact that it requires going beyond the school and educational system, i.e. adopting an extra-systemic perspective. The school psychologist is an element of the school, they are subordinate to the headteacher and it is difficult for them to leave the role of the service provider to their direct superior. However, they can strive to create their individual, personal autonomy by offering specific and, in their opinion, necessary activities without waiting for external demand. Such a perception of their role will enable the psychologist to go beyond the internal goals of the school in these initiatives.

* * *

The school psychologist's role can also be characterised by the types of activities they perform, which constitute the implementation of the model of their functioning in the school presented above (see Sokołowska, Katra, 2019).

These activities can be grouped into the following categories: monitoring, psychoprevention of upbringing and educational problems, intervention, and promotion of positive patterns and the development of participants in didactic interaction.

Monitoring is a form of participatory observation and consists in observing all elements of the educational environment and the upbringing process itself from a psychological perspective. It means observing the whole educational system, and especially the school in which the psychologist works, in terms of the functioning of this system at its various levels: as a whole, classrooms, and social interactions taking place in the school. On the other hand, monitoring includes the very course of the educational process, the implementation of didactic and upbringing goals and the actual consequences of the activities carried out by individuals involved in the process. This requires the psychologist to articulate – for their own use – standards for verifying the degree of adequacy of real phenomena and processes taking place in the school. One of the basic standards is the consistency of the assumed educational goals and the actual consequences of pedagogical measures. Another one should be the adequacy of these consequences in relation to the primary goal of human existence, which is personal development and the capacity for self-regulation in order to achieve a satisfying quality of life, understood as the right to dignity and respect._

In their work, the school psychologist may refer to a selected upbringing concept. Here, I would propose Gurycka's concept of experience (1979) – to "watch" these real consequences, namely what is happening in the school. The second proposal – the concept of educational interactions, developed by Dryll (2001) – aims at "viewing" individual interactions in terms of the communication style and subjectivity of the participants in a particular interaction.

Monitoring is the basis for further forms of work performed by the school psychologist. It follows that monitoring is the basic task of the school psychologist. In other words, it plays a servant role in relation to other forms of their work, because it determines the directions and types of further work, and at the same time it is an important element of diagnosis in the case of any upbringing problems.

Monitoring, defined in this way, allows the psychologist to notice not only problems "here and now", but also threats (looking ahead) to the proper course of upbringing and teaching in the school. It also means that the school psychologist does not wait for teachers, the headteacher, parents or students to report problems but identifies them and takes the necessary steps to modify or correct any aberrations or deviations from the adopted criteria for the optimal course of the upbringing process, as well as enrich this process.

On the basis of monitoring activities, the psychologist may undertake other types of action, depending not only on current needs, but also on long-term goals

and challenges related to the child's comprehensive development, which will allow the latter to become a mature person with a sense of fulfilment and eudaimonic well-being (Burnette et al., 2013; Niśkiewicz, 2016; Porczyńska-Ciszewska, 2013).

Any action taken towards this goal may be called promotional activities. Their aim is to create conditions for the student to develop in such a way that they can use their potential in accordance with the requirements of civilisation and culture. The process of education and upbringing plays an enormous role in the formation of the child's personality within its potential and possibilities. Specific predispositions lie at the basis of many different qualities and characteristics of a child and later of an adult. This entails an important task for the educators of the young generation, that is to provide the child with a variety of educational situations and experiences that will develop them in a comprehensive way and help them to choose the direction of their own development according to their personal preferences and abilities. On the other hand, psychological knowledge provides guidance as to what psychological and social competences are needed to achieve a high quality of life and individual well-being. These include high communication skills. The ability to communicate is needed to build emotional bonds between people, to achieve interpersonal goals, to increase resistance to external pressures, etc. Another example is the ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own behaviour and the accompanying sense of responsibility for it; yet another is the capacity for self-regulation, understood as the ability to transpose one's own thoughts into goals and strategies for their achievement and implementation, accompanied by reflection and evaluation of results in the light of intentions and side effects (Zimmerman, 2002; Zimmerman, Schunk, 2003). Promotional activities can also relate to the sphere of personality and consist in raising the student's self-assessment and self-esteem (Lawrence, 2008). These examples do not exhaust all spheres of promotional actions. In general, they provide opportunities to develop the child's qualities and competences, fostering a high quality of life in harmony with themselves and the highest values of our culture.

Another category of the school psychologist's activities is **psychoprevention** in the area of behavioural and educational problems and threats to the student's development. Psychopreventive activities can take the form of psychoprevention at different levels – from primary to tertiary. Primary prevention is addressed to a wide range of low-risk recipients. Its aim is to promote healthy lifestyles, protect children and adolescents from factors that increase risky behaviours, and strengthen the factors that prevent these behaviours from occurring. Such psychopreventive activities can be carried out even when the potential risks are relatively low and there are no clear signs of upbringing problems yet. Secondary prevention is aimed at people whose risky behaviours have already appeared but are not at a chronic stage. In the school, for example, this may

be the case for a group of pupils who are aggressive, who do not comply with social norms or are shy, rejected, or maladjusted to living in a peer group.

Tertiary prevention, in turn, is aimed at people who display risky behaviours on a permanent basis, who return to their environment after the treatment phase and need help to return to a healthy and socially acceptable lifestyle. This type of prevention goes beyond the school environment and is generally not the responsibility of the school psychologist.

It goes without saying that the earlier preventive actions are taken, the more effective they are and the lower social costs they entail (at psychological, social and material levels). Thus, taking actions at the primary prevention level is an important task of the school psychologist and requires them to make a comprehensive diagnosis of the broadly understood educational environment. Obviously, the basis for this diagnosis is the effects of monitoring, which have been mentioned earlier. Other considerations for undertaking diagnostic activities may come from teachers, parents, the headteacher or pupils themselves, etc. In the next step, the psychologist carries out a psychological diagnosis (functional, not only negative, but also positive – see Obuchowska, 1983), based on their knowledge and competences, using tools available or which they developed. It should be noted that primary prevention does not always require a detailed diagnosis. It can be conducted among a wide range of recipients, due to potential threats related, for example, to entering the phase of developmental crisis (physical and sexual development, increased autonomy during adolescence, entering adulthood). Then, the psychologist draws on the knowledge of developmental psychology and takes up work with pupils in order to improve their ability to cope with the developmental crisis and to promote mental and physical health.

Taking preventive measures puts demands on the school psychologist not only in terms of psychological knowledge and competence, planning skills, but also their implementation. Prevention can be carried out in various ways and includes awareness raising as well as conducting meetings in the form of workshops, where participants have the opportunity to acquire and improve specific skills. This means that the psychologist can work not only in an individual interaction but also with a group.

As stated in the first chapter, teachers, the headteacher and parents first of all expect the psychologist to take "corrective action" with regard to a child who does not meet the requirements set for an average student in a particular class in terms of learning or behaviour. In other words, the main type of tasks that the school psychologist is faced with and carries out is intervention, which is conducted when there are evident problems and difficulties experienced by all persons involved in the teaching and upbringing process. Intervention can take different forms, depending on the aim and type of a problem. This category includes all the activities performed by the school psychologist to

provide counselling, guidance, recommendations, child-centred exercises and their implementation under their direct or indirect control. Psychological intervention in the school may also consist in modifying the attitudes of parents and teachers towards a specific pupil or group of pupils, providing psychological assistance and support to a person with problems, suffering physical or emotional harm or a victim of abuse. It may also cover correcting or reducing "parenting mistakes", or mitigating their effects. An important area of intervention is all kinds of conflicts in the school. The school psychologist may initiate and carry out actions aimed at solving them or may undertake mediation between the conflicted parties. Intervention activities may involve the pupil, teachers, parents, or any other parties involved in the problem or conflict. In general, psychological intervention requires engaging – although to varying degrees – not only the pupil but also their teachers, the class teacher (in particular) and the child's parents. Sometimes, it extends to the whole class, the entire teaching staff or even the school's non-educational personnel.

The above-mentioned forms of action carried out by the school psychologist depend on each other in the following ways. The primary type is monitoring, which is the basis for taking preventive, intervention and promotional actions. However, there may be various interdependencies between these three types. They can be undertaken simultaneously, creating a complex configuration of psychological influences aimed at solving the student's specific problem. An example can be an intervention related to aggressive behaviours, which is complemented by (or includes) psychopreventive or/and promotional activities aimed at improving self-esteem, self-control or social competences. Intervention, prevention and promotion may be carried out simultaneously or in chronological order, when after intervention, tertiary prevention is undertaken, followed by promotion activities. This shows that the indicated forms of psychological activities conducted in the school environment can be implemented in various ways.

Distinguishing the described forms of the school psychologist's work should be helpful in monitoring and evaluating one's own professional competences, as well as the style of work in the school by establishing more precise criteria for estimating one's own professional skills. In addition, the basic ethical principles of the psychologist's work in general, which also apply to the school psychologist, should be respected. These include observing professional secrecy, impartiality, transparency, reliable information about the intentions and effects, actions taken and the purpose of psychological interaction, and making a clear contract concerning this interaction.

Each of the above types of activity can be characterised in terms of their essence, goal, form, function, psychological mechanisms and more elementary psychological competences needed (Bednarek, 2020). Their characteristics are presented below, in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic activities of the school psychologist

	MONITORING	PSYCHOPREVENTION	INTERVENTION	PROMOTION
ESSENCE	• observing the course of the upbringing process	• taking action to prevent the phenomena detrimental to the development and functioning of an individual and their environment	• taking action to correct any irregularities (deviations from the norm) in the child's development or upbringing process	• promoting the child's development
GOAL	• identifying unfavourable phenomena in the upbringing process in the course of educational interaction	• preventing educational mistakes or phenomena unfavourable to the child's development and functioning	• restoring educational conditions conducive to the pupil's development and functioning	• forming the child's personality according to their potential and creating a chance to use and develop it
FORMS	• observation and analysis • expertise • class monograph • individual conversation or interview • meetings with children (with the class) parents, teachers (conversation, survey, questionnaire)	• sharing knowledge about education and development • persuasion • group work – workshops, training sessions	• guidance • individual psychological assistance • systemic work in an educational environment	• shaping the educational environment (situational pressure) • training sessions • workshops • proposing patterns
FUNCTIONS	• monitoring the upbringing process and development of the child • recording deviations from the norm	• raising pedagogical competence in educators • shaping and improving pupils' interpersonal competences • developing resistance to adverse environmental influences • developing self-regulation	• restoring balance • correcting parenting mistakes • correcting or compensating for negative educational or developmental consequences	• realising the child's potential • providing patterns and personal models • improving interpersonal competences • improving quality of life • improving the well-being of the child and their educators

Table 1. cont.

	MONITORING	PSYCHOPREVENTION	INTERVENTION	PROMOTION
MECHANISMS	• applying knowledge and familiar cognitive patterns to the psychological observation of the upbringing process and the related activities	• shaping the educational environment by introducing changes in the elements of the system • overcoming discrepancies between the pattern and the actual state of affairs in an individual and the educational system • developing resistance to negative environmental influences • developing the ability to self-control	• implementing resources and strategies for coping with stress • activating compensation mechanisms • shaping new cognitive patterns and patterns of action	• shaping new cognitive patterns and patterns of action • modelling
COMPETENCES	• conducting participatory observation (in the environment, in a group) • making a class monograph • applying sociometric methods • establishing contact with the student, teacher, parents, and the headteacher and other school staff • conducting conversations and psychological interviews • establishing cooperation with the school environment (with the student, the teacher, the headteacher and parents) • initiating group meetings to get to know the people	• applying psychological tools in the diagnostic process • formulating negative and positive diagnosis • providing psychological advice • developing scenarios of classes related to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention • conducting workshops, training sessions, and development-oriented activities • the ability to evaluate the conducted preventive activities	• applying psychological tools in the diagnostic process • formulating negative and positive diagnosis • providing psychological advice • planning and carrying out intervention activities, e.g. compensatory classes, in the field of pedagogical therapy, modification of social attitudes, self-image • self-assessment, problematic behaviours (aggression, shyness, addictions, lack of motivation to learn, etc.) • resolving conflicts • the ability to mediate and arbitrate	• initiating and arranging the school environment optimal for the student's development • conducting interpersonal training and personality development activities • modelling proper forms of social functioning, communication and conflict resolution

ABSTRACT

The model of the school psychologist's role – an authorial proposal

The whole process of an educational institution is to be supervised by an educational psychologist who should adopt an external perspective towards the school as an institution. The essence of this perspective is the analysis of the actual functions of educational activities and their psychological effects, and not the implementation of the declared educational goals of the school. The proposed model of performing the role of a trained psychologist covers four categories of activities: monitoring, psychoprophylaxis, intervention and promotion. It should monitor the course of the educational process as well as promote personal development by shaping competences conducive to increasing the quality of life of a person in the individual dimension and relationship with others. This chapter describes the competences needed to perform tasks in each impact category.

KEYWORDS: model of professional role, monitoring, promotion, prevention, intervention, professional competencies

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3. Characteristics of the school environment

Three levels of the psychologist's activity in the school system

Each school is an individual network of interpersonal relations separated from its surroundings. Its links are individual people, each of whom is different and unique, but each has its place in an ordered network – in the social system. The system differs from a simple set as its elements are arranged in a specific way and the relations between them are not accidental. It is one thing to put pea seeds into a rattle, another – to put the same seeds on a string or throw them into a pot of soup. The whole – precisely as a whole – performs a function of "extracting" those aspects from its elements that are important for this very function. Pea seeds in a rattle are supposed to make a sound, no matter what their shape or nutritional value are. A teacher at school can teach and has knowledge of, for example, geography, and it does not matter whether he can catch fish or not. Being an element of a specific structure means that the properties of this element, which would be marginal outside its boundaries, are extracted and developed. Our geography teacher gains more and more professional experience, collects materials and trivia about his field. He would not do that as a fisherman. Similarly, if a ten-year-old Franek were not a school student, probably nothing would make him interested in spelling.

School is an open system. This means that while maintaining its integrity, it communicates with its surroundings. The school's surroundings include the local environment with institutions that influence it (municipality, ministry) and society – generally present through the national language, customs, media coverage and everything that characterises culture in its specific place and time. The environment provides a background for events taking place in the system, and at the same time this system influences the colour of the background.

Depending on the degree of permeability of its external borders, these relations are stronger or weaker – the school can be an important venue for events involving the local community and, in turn, these events can be reflected in the life of the school, or it can almost completely "live its own life".

The internal organisation of the school system comprises at least three levels. Each level is different in nature. The first one is the whole school level. The second level (and other intermediate ones) is the group level (classes and formal groups in each class, the teaching staff, the student council, various interest clubs and informal groups). The elementary level of the system is made up of people, including three categories of people, each with a different status and place in the system as a whole and in the subsystems: teachers, students and parents.

Analysing the school as the psychologist's work area, it is worthwhile to consider tasks related to particular organisational levels of the system. At each of these levels, the psychologist "exists" and has specific goals. They exist as a role in the landscape of the whole school and carry out tasks of monitoring, intervention, prevention and promotion – those which may concern the whole school. They exist at the group level – as a member of the teaching staff and as an expert and advisor in the classroom. Here again, they perform tasks fulfilling the above-mentioned functions, but different in content – those which are addressed to communities of several or more people. Finally, they exist in individual contact with one child or teacher when they monitor or accompany this person (monitoring), help to solve a difficult problem (intervention), protect against danger (prevention), or create conditions for improvement (promotion).

The psychologist in the school (as a whole)

Analysing the school at the most general level – i.e. the whole system – we can refer to the concept of ecological niche (see Barker, 1968; Jurczyk, 1989; Magnusson, 1976). The authors describing the properties of the niche focus on three groups of dimensions that characterise each environment: its physical, biological and social properties. A group of semantic (meaningful) dimensions should be added here. In the case of the school, this would enable us to describe its specific atmosphere, ethos and mission. What can be important from a psychological point of view in describing the school environment refers to physical and biological (to a lesser extent) as well as social and semantic (to a greater extent) dimensions. The first group would include such characteristics as the architecture of the building and its surroundings, aesthetic design and functionality of the interior, heating facilities, cleanliness, general health situation of the community from which the children come, hygiene standards, and diet. These factors contribute to the school climate and reflect some of the

school rules. For example, the staff room may be an inaccessible stronghold, or a meeting place for teachers and pupils. A school in a smoky part of Silesia faces different problems than a school where a significant percentage of children come from families affected by alcoholism. Stark aesthetics, as opposed to the one that is cheerful and full of colours, affects not only the mood but also attention (favouring either concentration or distraction).

The concept of climate (old but still valid) is used to describe an atmosphere prevailing in the school. According to Bratnicki and Wyciślak's definition (1980), it is "a set of characteristics of organisational situations that are subjectively perceived by the participants in an organisation, which are relatively permanent effects of the organisation's social functioning, shaping the motives of these participants' organisational behaviour" (p. 89). Several studies on this issue (Coelho, Dell'Aglio, 2019; La Salle, Zabek, Meyers, 2018; Mieszczak, 2001; Pinkas, Bulić, 2017; Ruciński, Brown, Downer, 2018; Szafarska, 2002) are focused on searching for factors that have a positive impact on the school climate – to make teachers and pupils willing to stay there and successfully fulfil the tasks that constitute the mission of this institution.

Research on the climate (Szafarska, 2002) is carried out through questions addressed to students. The questionnaire tool used for this purpose contains several dimensions selected on the basis of factor analysis of the material collected in an extensive pilot study. The two most important dimensions relate to social relations within the school. One concerns friendly relations – whether students are sensitive to each other and can count on each other's help in the case of problems. The other is basic justice in the treatment of students – whether teachers give everyone equal opportunities and do not tend to be guided in their assessments by factors unrelated to pupils' progress, effort and attitude. The latter dimension is connected with another one – students' interest (to listen, have time, and respond to problems). An equally important dimension proves to be the school's openness to events taking place outside it and allowing students to talk about them during lessons (social events, but also scientific "news", cultural life, etc.). Other important dimensions are the clarity of rules concerning proper behaviour, students' appearance and propriety as well as naturalness in observing the rules and regulations (their acceptance, lack of fundamental conflicts in this respect).

According to the research (Szafarska, 2002), positive assessments of the school's climate are correlated with positive assessments of its teachers. The influence is likely to be mutual. Pupils who feel good at their school value and like their teachers (their didactic competence, attitude towards pupils). On the other hand, it is mainly teachers who create a good or bad climate. If they are trustworthy people and role models for students, it is much easier for them to create a good climate in the classroom or the whole school.

Many authors (Gołąb, 1989; Gurycka, 1989; Jurkowski, 1989) stress that the school is a laboratory of social life. Although the official goals are formulated differently, it primarily teaches the rules of coexistence in a larger environment than one's own family. Therefore, the above-mentioned climate and interpersonal relations are very important, as well as the attitude to rules, tasks, goals and content. Evaluation received here is very important – both formal and informal – which the child assimilates practically for the whole life. Here, the individual identity (who I am), social identity (what "we" means to me) and many other features of the developing personality are formed. The psychologist should therefore take care of a good school climate. In order to do so, they have to be an important figure in the school – a real authority and expert on "human affairs". Such a position can be achieved by being "visible", independent and competent in their field.

"Visibility" is about being in the classroom, in the corridor, and in the staff room. Hiding in the comfort of their own office does not encourage good orientation in matters that are currently troubling the community. A "visible" psychologist genuinely participates in school life, attends school events, talks with students, brings together people interested in organising various events, works with the student government, knows informal leaders, knows what is said about individual teachers, about former students and about events that "everyone knows". Visibility is also enhanced by informing the general public about what is being done or planned – a clear and encouraging door sign (when and why a student can come here), a bulletin board of the psychological club with meeting topics and timetables, information about valuable events taking place outside the school, an exhibition of popular social science books and many others.

Independence is the second important feature of authority. It is manifested primarily in keeping a distance from the informal networks of the staff room. A good thing is to have enough time for all those who need it – to talk, listen, understand, but not to fully define one's own position (especially in trivial conflict matters). The same goes for the student community – to be in contact with all informal fractions of the student community, but not to let oneself be put in the role of a spokesperson for any of the groups. If communication between the groups or on the student-teacher line is not good enough, the psychologist can build a bridge of understanding. The same goes for parent-school (the parent council-teaching staff), and even parents-students relations.

Independence also gives the psychologist the opportunity to have a base in institutions outside the school – a counselling centre, school superintendents, a social welfare centre, a health centre, or a parish. A separate issue is the reporting line between the headteacher and the psychologist. Here, the matter is regulated by law, but it should be remembered that "do not always say what you know, but always know what you are saying". Even in relations with

their superior, the psychologist is bound by their professional code of ethics, which guarantees the confidentiality of personal information. Raw research data, notes or recordings of conversations may be made available, with the consent of the person concerned, only in the case of teamwork – consultations with another psychologist or other specialists, an intern, students, or during supervision. Other persons with a legitimate interest in the results of the psychologist's work (teachers, parents, school management) receive specially formulated conclusions, previously consulted with the person concerned. When formulating such conclusions, one should always take into account the position of the addressee – their intentions, skills and other relevant characteristics.

The third condition for the psychologist's credibility is their competences. They should be understood broadly, as it is not only about professional (knowledge, experience), but also personal competences: respect and genuine interest in the other person, honesty, creativity, courage and life wisdom. It is not uncommon, especially for a young psychologist, to feel that their own professional competences are inadequate, which is sometimes far from their true level. It is then beneficial to keep in touch with other psychologists working in schools or counselling centres – to consult more difficult matters, to take part in supervision groups, to read and train their skills, but gradually develop their own style of work.

The psychologist in classes and groups

The middle level of the school system analysis (group level) is characterised by subsystems that are separated to some extent and include between a dozen and a few dozen people. These are individual classes, a day care centre, interest clubs, a scouting or sports team, student organisations, as well as teachers, administration and service staff, and more active parents. Some of these groups are separable in character (basic class membership), others are not. Within separate groups, subgroups are usually formed. This is especially true for classes and teachers. Subgroups have an informal character and are a natural consequence of the processes that take place in groups of over 15 people. Sometimes the make-up of subgroups is rigid, but in most cases it is characterised by great variability (with these people I play ball, and with those I learn, party and talk well). The more flexible the composition of subgroups, the better, since the identity of a whole formal group can be preserved to a greater extent, there are no strong antagonisms, and an individual has a greater choice of people closest to them. Class and other teachers are in a sense part of formal groups. They have a great influence on student relations – both in the "official" and unofficial layers.

Each class has its own individual characteristics. Since it is an intermediate level of the system, its properties are influenced by the characteristics of both the whole school and individuals. Students are in direct and everyday contact with each other; they are participants in the same events, have the same tasks, are subject to the same rules, are evaluated and compared. The classroom environment becomes the second most important (after the family home) scene of their activity. Although what happens at home is a kind of filter of school experiences, all activities in the classroom are a source of important experiences. Gradually, the history of a group is created. Customs are established, roles, expectations and opinions that everyone knows are defined. A system of common meanings is formed, creating an individual variety or shade of the whole school climate for a particular class. All this is influenced not only by group processes, but also by individual people's strong characters.

The characteristics of the class as a group as well as the characteristics of the school as a whole are of great importance to each person participating in these systems. The student finds their place in the class. Not only do they come into contact with other children, but they are immersed in the environment with which they are identified ("boys from Class Two A"). They absorb everything that is connected with the community: values, role models (who is cool and who is not), customs (what is acceptable and what is "cock-up"), games, jokes and sayings, which only those who know how they originated can understand. They do not have to approve of everything, but they are in contact with and have a certain attitude towards what is happening and what has happened. The classroom environment constitutes a reference point in the ongoing process of self-evaluation. Children's individual school experiences can be better understood if their context is taken into account, which is the group they have to relate to, whether they want it or not. Likewise, in the case of teachers, they are also defined and define themselves through their role as members of the teaching community they co-create.

The method of a comprehensive study of the school class subsystem niche is the monograph (Gurycka, 1982). This method can be used in various ways by modifying the successive stages of data collection, depending on the purpose of the diagnosis, the initial information available, or the hypotheses to be verified.

From a classical perspective, a monograph on a class consists of three stages of research, roughly corresponding to the levels of ecological niche analysis (e.g. Jurczyk, 1989). Data on individual people are collected, creating a kind of maps. The maps, showing the distribution of values among particular dimensions, can be superimposed and conclusions can be drawn on the co-occurrence or determinants of group phenomena.

The level of physical, biological and demographic properties is a general characteristic of the living conditions and social status of the families from

which students come from (property, place of residence, parents' professions and education, unemployment, presence of clear dysfunctions or pathologies in the family environment, family structure – two-parent, broken, foster, etc.) and health status (disability, vision and speech defects, mobility difficulties, frequent illnesses, obesity, visible defects in looks, as well as age and gender). The second level is the informal social structure – relations between children and teachers-students. The third level can be referred to as subjective. This level describes how most of the students function in the school environment – their achievements, motivation, interests and involvement in both learning and social issues.

On the basis of a monograph, it is possible to describe the individual situation of a student to better understand their problems (intervention). Group processes can be predicted and preventive actions can be selected for these predictions. Finally, efforts can be made to create an environment in the classroom that would best contribute to the well-being of all children and support developmental tasks (promotion). A monograph can be done once and accessed as long as nothing changes, but it is worthwhile to verify important measurements from time to time or add new aspects of analysis. A record of the dynamics of group processes is then obtained (full monitoring). Monitoring can also be used, among other things, to evaluate the actions taken.

A lot of data needed to create a class monograph can be provided by the analysis of documentation – demographic data on health condition, achievements, involvement in non-compulsory activities (school council, interest clubs, sports, student newspaper). In order to examine the informal structure, sociometric techniques are used (Pilkiewicz, 1962). This is a whole group of tools, in which questions are answered by indicating people from the student's own group. The simplest version consists of three questions about five people who would be chosen by the respondent as their closest companions during various pleasant events (the same room during a school trip, holiday, cinema, etc.). The second version includes positive questions and negative choices (with whom they would not like to do it). Negative choices make it easier to diagnose class antagonisms and differentiate between those who are neglected (unnoticed) and those who are actively rejected ("bullied"). It should be remembered, however, that by asking questions about who in the classroom is actively rejected, a psychologist – a person of authority – actually sanctions such behaviour. The very process of answering this question is an event in which the child becomes more aware of their own attitudes and then compares them with the other children's answers. This can lead to strengthening a shared belief in the classroom about who is "bad".

Another variation of sociometry is the "guess who" technique. The questions asked here are varied in content – in most cases these are descriptions

of fictional characters' behaviours, containing the traits to be diagnosed. Pupils are asked to indicate from among their classmates the people "most similar" to the descriptions presented. It is not so much relationships (who indicated whom) that are analysed, as commonly held opinions (how many people unanimously point to one of the children). Based on the "guess who" technique, it is possible to identify people who have different roles in a class (the leader, their "right hand", the counter-leader and members of the opposition, the grey eminence, the expert, the "spokesperson", the clown-artist, outsiders of all kinds, the group nurse, the mascot, the loser, someone who is guilty of everything) and labels (the nerd, the wise guy, the lick, the "smart and capable but lazy", the most attractive girl in the class, and the genius).

It is problematic to inform children about the results of a sociometric study. An important thing here is to be aware of the effect their disclosure might have on the whole class. Sometimes it seems beneficial to show a bad state of the group as a prelude to working on change provided there is a sufficient motivation for change, a sense of security, a certain amount of openness and maturity on the students' part. However, if these conditions are not met, there may be reinforcement of labels, hostility, the bad feelings of those who are ignored, and the overconfidence of sociometric stars. However, children, like any person who takes part in psychological research, have the right to know the results. If the psychologist decides not to present the whole report to the class, they can provide information individually to the people concerned (at their request), limiting this information to the characteristics of that person's position. Such a question from the child should be treated as an invitation to work on the problem. Sociometric information should be complemented by a serious discussion about how the child perceives their own position, the expectations associated with it, desires, disappointments or fears.

In addition to the informal social structure of the peer group, this level of the class monograph study examines their relations with the class teacher and other teachers. Generally, students' attitude towards the teacher is a mirror image of their attitude towards students. This "mirror" can be a bit crooked – it exaggerates flaws, has no ability to decentralise, nor willingness to forgive weaknesses. It reflects and increases the emotions the teacher brings to the classroom. If they are angry, aggression is born in the students. If they are serene and relaxed, they create a safe atmosphere. If they are bored with the subject of the lesson they are teaching, they cannot expect interest. The teacher's power and the weight of the consequences caused by their grades make the children's attention focus on them – they see more than they want to show. It should be remembered that the teacher's emotions are passed on to their students (Bugental, 1992; Dryll, 2001).

The second mechanism of the teacher's unconscious influence on the relationship with the class is the teacher's expectations. When the teacher is afraid that they will not be respected or unable to deal with a boisterous class, they unintentionally provoke students to behave like this. In the process of interaction, expectations are self-fulfilled (Dryll, 2002; Good, 1980; Rosenthal, Jacobson, 1968). Certainly, relations with the class are not only influenced by the teacher's behaviour. Also students, especially informal leaders and sociometric stars, set the tone for these relations. However, it is always the teacher, as a significant person, sometimes assisted by the psychologist, who can and should take responsibility for their relations with the class.

The psychologist who prepares a class monograph draws information on the teacher-student relationship from observations and conversations with the teacher (sometimes with the class). Having listened to the teacher's talk about the children that they consider particularly "difficult", which problems they find unsolvable, and in the case of which they ask for help, the psychologist concludes about the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's interpersonal competences. According to the attribution theory, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, especially when the subject feels responsible for the functionality of a given relationship, are attributed to the partner ("I cannot communicate with him/her because HE/SHE does not listen to me, screams, does not understand, has ill will..."). The same law applies to teachers and students alike. There are mutual accusations, discussions and "searching for the truth", but it is more important how both parties perceive each other – the content of these perceptions (expectations) rather than their accordance with the facts (however diagnosed).

The third, most subtle (subjective) level of the classroom environment analysis is the study of beliefs shared by all students in the class. The most interesting are beliefs that are directly related to pupils' attitudes towards each other and to the accomplishment of school tasks. They include topics like friendship, kindness and loyalty, envy, rivalry, a tendency to act to someone's detriment, levels of anxiety and stress, as well as interest in learning, the learning process, attitudes towards good or bad performers. In addition to social problems, it may be important to learn about students' intellectual capabilities, their special interests, talents that go beyond what is being taught, their plans, aspirations and dreams.

Some of these beliefs can be studied using existing standardised diagnostic tools (anxiety, stress, motivation to learn, interests, intellect, need for achievement, pro-social attitude). Unfortunately, there is a lack of appropriate techniques for many important dimensions. In such a case, the psychologist can use a non-standard method – a projection technique, a survey, free, written statements, or they can simply ask a few questions. While creating such a tool,

it is necessary to follow the methodological rules as carefully as possible. The most important issue is to formulate questions in such a way that a child at a certain age can answer them on the basis of their own authentic observations. This is especially true for the so-called self-report data. It is important to remember about the effects of social approval variable, leading questions and other traps of the diagnostic process. When conducting psychological research intended to create a group monograph, the psychologist can decide to collect information anonymously. Then, there is a greater chance of getting honest answers, especially when we ask about embarrassing things. However, it is good to know the positive and negative qualities of people in particularly high or particularly low sociometric positions. By knowing this, we can see what values are at the top of the hierarchy in this class, because the most popular students act as role models, whereas those who are clearly disliked are the opposite of them.

The best way to identify the subtle properties of the classroom semantic environment is through participant observation and conversation. The school psychologist's routine tasks should include conducting integration activities with new classes. During such workshops, not only do students get to know each other, but also enable the instructor to get to know them. The psychologist models the communication process with their behaviour by complying with the principles of mutual respect, teaching to listen, to express oneself clearly, to be open and trustworthy. It is an excellent opportunity for them to join the world of a class as a supportive advisor.

Working with a class is obviously not limited to the initial integration activities. The psychologist regularly conducts specialist classes, provided for in the school's educational programme. They also step in when problems arise (intervention), or there is a fear that problems may arise (prevention). Moreover, they should provide programmes that will meet young people's needs, interests and skills (promotion), showing them areas worth knowing. Here, the psychologist should closely cooperate with the class teacher. A prerequisite for good cooperation is total agreement on the common goal and mutual trust. If this condition is not fully satisfied, the psychologist must first work on their relationship with the teacher.

If the class teacher and the class are in conflict, the psychologist does not take sides but remains neutral. In the course of negotiations, they should establish with each party what the other side can be informed about. Their task is to show the mechanisms that hinder agreement, to create a secure framework for feedback, to support the pursuit of mutual understanding, to weigh up arguments, to seek compromises where possible, and to judge the rightness where necessary. The positions of the student and the teacher in a class conflict are not symmetrical. The teacher is expected to be more mature,

patient, self-controlled, and active in finding the best solutions to difficult situations. Both sides of the conflict are expected to respect each other and to reflect on their own behaviour and their counterparty's needs.

A very important subsystem of the school is the teaching staff. Teachers are a group that determines the climate, the quality of the didactic process and the prestige of a school. What is important is not only their competence in the subjects they teach, but also how their mutual relations and relations with students are established. The psychologist working among teachers has a very important role to play. If they have managed to gain trust by proving that they are able to contribute to creating or sustaining a favourable social climate in the school, both the teachers and the headteacher will listen carefully to their opinions on the organisation of the school, the situation in the classroom or each student's individual problems. During teachers' meetings, the psychologist can have a lot to say about difficult problems as well as about improvements in the didactic or social processes taking place in the school. They can take care of increasing skills related to particular areas of the teacher's activities (interpersonal contacts, coping with stress and job burnout, developing creative potential, the ability to work with students' parents and in the local environment and many others). Forms of work with the teaching staff include active participation in meetings, organising workshops, lectures and other special activities, individual counselling, support and solving problems together – including those that may arise among the teaching staff themselves.

The psychologist in individual contact

The most common way of the psychologist's existence in the school is their individual work with students and students' parents (elementary level of the school system). Individual contacts, which improve the psychological situation of a person receiving help, have their specific character and should be as professional as possible. For motivational reasons, it is best when it is the student who initiates such a meeting. Then, according to experienced therapists, half of the work is already done – someone has come to the conclusion that they need help and believe that the person who can give them help is a psychologist of their choice. Then, the mechanism of engagement begins to work – a personally made decision and effort to have a meeting (choose and agree on a date, make an appointment, come to the right place at the right time showing readiness to work on themselves). It is much harder to make contact with someone who has been told to come. Children sometimes treat being "sent to a psychologist" as a punishment for bad behaviour and their parents adopt a defensive attitude, as they want to protect their son or daughter

from this punishment. Seeking contact with a psychologist of one's own accord can be expected from older students. Young children often cling to the "nice lady", may feel her kindness, support and even talk about their troubles, but generally have no idea what her speciality is. Thus, a psychologist can take some steps on their own initiative to get an idea of a child's situation, although it is up to the parents to decide whether or not to take up therapeutic work. A psychologist can ask them to do so.

Parents of young and older children often take the initiative to start psychological work themselves. In this case, the first step is to diagnose their readiness to cooperate. It does happen that parents bring their child in and give them over to the psychologist "for repair", like a broken radio. When later it turns out that they are expected to be very committed and work on themselves, they come to the conclusion that the costs of "repair" are too high and they withdraw. In principle, the task of a psychologist working with a school student and their family is to reconstruct the parent-child relationship, i.e. to help parents to regain their ability to understand and communicate well with their child, which should also be accompanied by establishing or repairing parent-teacher relations. This does not apply to pathological or seriously dysfunctional families. In such a case, the family is recommended to have specialist interventions, and the psychologist's task is to monitor the school situation out of concern for the child's well-being.

The initiation of contact with a psychologist by students and parents is facilitated by the psychologist's good reputation and their understanding of the problems troubling the environment. If they are a person of authority in the school, both students and parents, as well as teachers, say to each other that it is worthwhile to come into contact with this person. A visit to the psychologist is not an embarrassing event, but behaviour approved by the opinion-forming general public, sometimes even honourable. Such social consent – to talk about one's affairs with an adult – turns out to be important especially for older students.

Very often, in fact in most cases, the initiative of psychological work with a student and their family comes from a teacher. In this case too, the first step is to find out what the teacher-student relationship is like, why this particular teacher cannot handle this particular child. The second step is to observe and verify the information provided by the teacher. The third step is to make contact with the child and initially assess the family situation in terms of cooperation possibilities. Only then can intervention be proposed. The aim of the intervention and the reasons why the psychologist makes such a proposal should be very carefully discussed in the first meeting. The result is a contract, i.e. an agreement concerning the scope and form of working together on a specific problem.

Final recommendations

The school system as a multi-level organisation is characterised by the fact that the properties of the whole structure determine the properties of its subsystems and elements, as well as its elements and subsystems co-determine the properties of the whole. The impact on the superior units of this structure is more global and wider in scope. In a school with a good climate, relationships between teachers and students are better. In a classroom with a good atmosphere, students function better. Thus, in a good school and in a friendly classroom, there are fewer difficult individual situations. A psychologist who invests their potential in work addressed to teachers is aware of the problems affecting the whole school, takes care of the groups, and can provide individual help to those children whose problems do not arise directly from their relationships at school. Their individual work can then concern those pupils for whom being at school is a chance to "rebound" off a pathological or deeply dysfunctional family. For this reason, among others, the psychologist should not "exist in the school" merely in their own office, but also across a wider area, as a specialist in interpersonal relations in groups and in the organisational system of the whole institution.

ABSTRACT

Characteristics of the school environment

The school can be described as an open system, distinguishing the level of the whole, the level of subsystems (class, student council, sports group, pedagogical board) and the elementary level (a student, a teacher). At the overall level, the psychologist is concerned with the school climate. At the subsystem level, he/she carries out diagnostic (e.g. class monograph), prophylactic and intervention activities aimed at entire groups. At the elementary level, the psychologist consults individual problems of students or teachers. The more work he puts into caring for the higher levels of the system, the less problems and difficulties there will be at the elementary level. Each of these tasks requires specific skills and the psychologist's authority. An authority is based on independence, high professional competences (knowledge, experience) and personal competences (respect, honesty, creativity and life wisdom).

KEYWORDS: school as social system, competence of school psychologist, class monograph

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4. The psychologist in a contemporary Polish school – theoretical inspirations

> Psychological truths have their place in all kinds of practice: both in cognition and in action. **They should make a difference in the world** which is as much a duty of psychology as it is to create sophisticated theories.
> (Gurycka, 1998, p. 157)

Introduction – not only historical in scope

The school psychologist's contemporary activity – practice and implementation, but also science and research – has its roots in theoretical reflections on upbringing and teaching, which have continued for over 100 years (Dembo, 1994; Dryll, 2001, 2003; Gurycka, 1992; Jurkowski, 2003; Nowak, 2008; Szołtysek, 2017). In this chapter, I would like to encourage the readers to look back[1] and get familiar with what has already been described, documented in scientific research reports and included in theoretical models. We are probably able to discover many things by ourselves, due to informative conversations, observations, and the fact that our work brings effects. Yet, it sometimes resembles a laborious journey along a path that has already been marked out by others, without being aware that we are actually reinventing the wheel.

[1] In his book *Z zagadnień współczesnej psychologii wychowawczej* [On issues of modern educational psychology], Jurkowski (2003) described ahistoricism prevalent in scientific literature as disturbing. What he meant was the fact that one's own concepts are presented as if they existed in a vacuum: it is impossible to see where they derived from or to which views they refer. Similarly, Gurycka (1992) argued that creating and presenting a theory and its applications in psychological practice, as if nothing significant existed before, is an example of extreme ignorance.

It seems wise to draw on the existing solutions, or at least to consider them on a preliminary basis. At this point, I increasingly agree with the opinion expressed by Mieczysław Kreutz (1969) that ideas that are genuinely new tend to happen very rarely. **The psychologist can and should enter the school with baggage of thoughts, both their own and those taken from their predecessors – theoreticians and practitioners alike**. In this chapter, I would like to discuss the theoretical assumptions of applied educational psychology, which are derived from the scientific and didactic achievements of two excellent professors, long-term heads of the Department of Psychology of Education and Development at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Warsaw – Antonina Gurycka and Andrzej Jurkowski. Decades of their work – giving lectures, writing scholarly publications and conducting research – allowed them to lay the foundations of modern educational psychology. In the scientific, and even historical, as well as in the purely human dimensions, it is a form of paying tribute to their ability to inspire the future generations of psychologists, including the authors of this publication. I believe that these views still effectively contribute to understanding: *What role can the psychologist play in a Polish school?*

The school psychologist as a "person in the middle"

Gurycka (1998) proposes to make the psychologist a "person in the middle"[2] (p. 164). A special task for the psychologist is to build such a contact between the child and their parents and teachers that will enable the adults to solve educational conflicts – those occurring now and in the future. The general task is to effectively support their pedagogical efforts. These tasks result from the assumption that **the primary focus of the psychologist in the school is on educational interaction** (Gurycka, 1971, 1979, 1989, 1989a, 1990, 1992, 1998; Gurycka, Jurkowski, Pilkiewicz, 1985). I am close to the Author's view that the school psychologist's work should be focused on organising educational situations for the child[3]. The psychologist does not then relieve any of the participants in the educational interaction of their duties, but rather allows them to understand and shape this interaction wisely. A lesson conducted

[2] It means the proposal to make the psychologist a "person in the middle", who solves the child's problems – to prepare them in such a way that they can resolve educational conflicts – the main task! – by contacting the child, their parents and teachers and by improving interactions between them (Gurycka, 1998, p. 164).

[3] Since upbringing is a "child experience generator" (Gurycka, 1998, p. 22), it is worth considering the teaching process – implemented through teaching units (lessons) – as an opportunity for upbringing. Scenarios of didactic work can realise educational goals (Gurycka, 2000), i.e. be instructive not only because of school knowledge.

in a school classroom is, in fact, a situation in which not only the teaching but also the educational goals are realised. I was captivated by the vision of a teacher who makes a conscious effort to analyse a problem that has emerged in the school (in the lesson or even during the break) and find possible solutions (Gurycka, 1974). I am aware of the qualitative difference between the mobilisation experienced and directly expressed by a teacher to learn and understand something, to work out – under the guidance of a psychologist – some valuable solutions for the pupil, instead of a demobilising referral of a child to a psychologist (since it is their job to "deal with a difficult case"). This changes the atmosphere of a teacher's conversation with a psychologist. Rather than complaining about the child and expressing resentment that they are causing educational difficulties, specific educational efforts are made to tackle these difficulties. Such an approach is constructive, as it actively engages all the parties, including the teacher and parent, in finding solutions. I agree that the vision of a psychologist "overwhelmed by cases", which actually should be dealt with by teachers[4], is invariably frightening, both thirty years ago and now. To put it bluntly, it is an attempt – on the part of teachers – to have the psychologist doing the work for them. The vision in which the psychologist supports teachers and pupils by sharing psychological knowledge and developing useful skills is more acceptable and helpful for all the parties concerned.

Gurycka (1975) consistently describes a "broad" model of work, in which the psychologist does not function exclusively as an "ambulance" (p. 7). Indeed, the Author deplores the fact that such a stereotypical – and unfortunately very widespread – approach to the psychologist's role limits the possibility of effective assistance (from the perspective of Grażyna Katra's M-P-I-P model, described in this book, it would be merely *crisis intervention*). Gurycka (1974, 1975, 1986) postulates that the psychologist should become a person visible in the school environment, due to their knowledge and skills. "Entering" the school environment means for the psychologist having the opportunity to get to know its specificity (in the above-mentioned model, this activity is defined as *monitoring*) and to prove to all participants in the educational interaction that they are an unquestioned authority in the field of psychology, long before a problem or conflict arises (in Grażyna Katra's model, such activities are referred to as *prevention* and *promotion*).

Gurycka's views are extremely pragmatic (useful). Indeed, if the psychologist is not significantly present in everyday school life, being a person unknown to

[4] Gurycka (1974) points out, and it is difficult to disagree with her, that a teacher has a number of options available that allow them to analyse the problem by themselves rather than send a pupil immediately to a psychologist. These include *a conversation with a pupil, a visit to a pupil's home or a visit of the parent in the school, and a referral of a pupil to a doctor*.

most people, they are less capable of acting effectively and comprehensively within the school. To perform these tasks, **the specialist should have free access to the educational environment, which is the school, and in certain situations also the student's home**[5]. The question still remains open: Does this accessibility result from the fact that the psychologist is employed by the school, a psychological-pedagogical counselling centre or the Local Education Authority?

What I find most valuable in the Author's oeuvre is the proposal to create a monograph of a school class (Gurycka, 1975; 1982), i.e. the task of observing the school environment. Such a monograph contains a description of the informal structure, the characteristics of the group formed by students, their status in the group and their personal traits (more about a class monograph as a useful tool in the psychologist's work can be found in Chapter 3, Elżbieta Dryll, "Characteristics of the school environment"). Obviously, getting to know the individuals who make up the school environment and the nature of interactions between them is also based on the psychologist's direct contact with teachers, the headteacher and other staff. The presented activities are a valuable contribution to breaking the vicious circle, which is the fact of coming into contact with a student, teacher and other people only when solving educational conflicts (this would be functioning "in emergency mode": from crisis to crisis). Entering the school environment cannot depend, and never does, only on observation. The psychologist should propose something that attracts attention, proves useful, or creates the need to acquire specific knowledge and skills.

The school psychologist as an expert on upbringing and teaching

As already indicated in the text – according to Gurycka (1975, p. 325) – the psychologist is first of all an "expert on upbringing", and secondly – an "expert on teaching". The most important thing is that as an expert, they should have a well-established and broad knowledge of psychology[6] (Gurycka, 1980). This is a task that requires the psychologist to work on themselves, however without extensive studies, including the habit of consulting specialist literature,

[5] Applied educational psychology used to be called school psychology (Gurycka, 1998), and it was based on the assumption that the school is the primary focus of educational psychologists. However, the area that these specialists have always paid equally close attention to was the family home, or educational institutions such as child care homes (institutional and foster homes as well as children's villages).

[6] Gurycka (1971) sees educational psychology as a field that serves as a kind of *transmitter*, because it allows for the transfer of information from the other fields of psychology into the field of education.

attending training courses and ensuring supervision, it is difficult to meet this challenge. These recommendations are still considered the most important in the psychologist's professional development. For example, Anna Brzezińska (2004) postulates that the psychologist's knowledge should be constantly updated. "The quality of the psychologist's professional knowledge depends on how they will organise the examination and assistance procedure, as well as what diagnostic tools they will apply, and in what way" (p. 215).

I believe that what is crucial in the psychologist's profession is not only reliable and well-established knowledge, but also reflectiveness – asking oneself important questions. These include questions about the school: what it offers to students and what it obliges teachers to do. Numerous discussions about education indicate expectations concerning students' achievements and teachers' competences. One of these questions can be directly drawn from Gurycka's work (2000), and it is as follows: *Does the school really teach and bring up – or does it only create conditions that can foster the pupil's development?* The Author's answer convinces me that in fact the school can only create conditions for development. School education and upbringing could provide experiences that enable adaptation to the new, ever-changing environment (the physical and social world). The world is changing as quickly and dramatically as rapidly a specific knowledge is becoming outdated (nowadays, for example, a different number of planets in the solar system is given, a different material is considered to be the hardest, and the smallest components of matter are described differently than a dozen or just a few years ago). Similarly, narrow and very specific skills, such as operating a printing press, a typewriter, or a slide rule have proved to be useless. Abraham Maslow (1962) postulates that man should be educated towards creativity; then he will respond to various challenges of the world, which is ever-changing. True education – and here I totally identify with the authors quoted above – gives us a chance to benefit from what we know today on a par with what we will know tomorrow. Therefore, it is not a matter of gaining specific knowledge, valid once and for all, but of the student's ability to find needed information, habitually verifying its veracity and testing its usefulness, as well as a creative approach to problem solving (e.g. coming up with many different solutions instead of re-creating them laboriously and mechanically). This should be the key to thinking about modern school. The psychologist can and should promote such an approach to education, and to teacher and student education in particular.

It is only in a traditional school that the most important thing is still to memorise the facts provided by the teacher, and to acquire specific knowledge and skills. However, such a school is becoming obsolete, as there is no such thing as one valid knowledge, and besides, discoveries age too quickly to rely on a definite portion of information. Maria Ledzińska (1999, 2012)

also believes that traditionally understood education, i.e. the one that used to be preparatory in nature, now has no raison d'être. What is characteristic of this education is – perhaps rather wishful thinking – the expectation that the school would equip the student with the knowledge and skills needed in adult life. "No school is capable of preparing an individual for adult life, which requires independence and responsibility in thinking and acting. The task of the school remains teaching, understood as guiding other people's learning (...). The aim of the school is to help in the acquisition of knowledge and to teach complex learning skills, which are fundamental for people of our age: accessing sources, formulating learning goals and developing effective strategies for the acquisition, integration and verification of knowledge or its practical use" (Ledzińska, 1999, p. 354).

The teacher in a traditionally understood school was supposed to be well prepared in terms of content (subject matter): to have a broad knowledge and skills in the area of a particular subject, such as physics, chemistry or Polish language. At that time, nothing more was required from them. However, nowadays such teaching competences are insufficient. A teacher prepared in such a way will not meet the requirements of modern student education described by Gurycka (2000), Ledzińska (1996, 1999, 2012), or Maslow (1962), unless they receive, in addition to subject preparation, also pedagogical and psychological training. As early as in 1970, Janiszewski pointed out that the choice of didactic and upbringing techniques used by teachers should be conscious and result from the knowledge of learning mechanisms. Finally, the teacher should be aware of the goals they want to achieve in the teaching and upbringing process, and adapt them to the student's abilities and preferences. And it is psychological knowledge that will allow the teacher to plan individual didactic methods and control the initiatives taken (Ledzińska, 1999). I would like to conclude my reflections on the role of the psychologist as an expert useful in school life with an incisive statement taken from Grażyna Katra's work (2008): "(Implied: the aim of the psychologist's work) is not to formulate educational goals[7], but to monitor the course of the upbringing process from an external perspective – mainly based on their knowledge of development – and to support educators in arranging the educational environment and the upbringing process in such a way that the pupil has a chance to be the subject in relations with others, and the creator of their own life in the future" (p. 22). Bearing this in

[7] The same opinion, i.e. that psychologists are not assigned to formulate upbringing goals "but they have a good 'sense of real possibilities' (and perhaps the direction in which things are going) and thus they can formulate sensible directional proposals concerning functions, not specific goals" can be found in Jurkowski's work (2000, p. 43). He describes goals as belonging to "the sphere of subjective expectations concerning results, while functions are defined as those that relate to 'objectively observable consequences'" (p. 42).

mind, we will not make the mistake of "doing work for (someone)", instead of "doing work with (someone)", here specifically with people shaping the school environment (relieving others of their responsibilities is not and has never been the task of a psychologist).

The psychologist as a diagnostician, a provider of psychological advice and assistance, a scientific researcher and a populariser of psychological knowledge

According to Gurycka (1974), the work of the psychologist in the school – in the broadest sense – includes activities of a scientific and popularising nature[8]. These activities should never be abandoned. The school psychologist usually engages very intensively in counselling, care and psychological assistance, which leaves little time and energy for anything else (Gurycka, 1980). Counselling requires concentration on diagnosing the problem and providing information that can be helpful in solving it. Nevertheless, it does not rule out "broadening the perspective" of the other person, i.e. providing a wide range of psychological knowledge. Psychological care and assistance involves **accompanying the other person in solving the current problem**[9] and, which is as important, **preparing them for dealing with future problems**. To put it simply, the school psychologist conducts an extensive psychological education, teaching individuals to understand and deal with their life issues. In fact, they even engage in research, by checking the effectiveness of this education. Many psychologists intuitively carry out the work that Gurycka (2000) called the processing of scientific achievements[10] for the school needs. Indeed, this activity can be considered, as the Author suggests, to be a kind of mission in our profession. Psychological knowledge can and should be popularised "on the hoof", without any special encouragement from others. Time and again, it is worth recalling Gurycka's opinion (1998) that **the profession of a psychologist is a type of**

[8] The popularisation of psychological knowledge, about which Gurycka speaks, fits well with the postulate of raising general psychological culture in education (see *Głos w dyskusji na temat służby psychologicznej w świetle raportu o stanie oświaty*, 1973 [The role of psychologists in the new educational system in the light of the report on the state of education]).

[9] "There is no such problem with teaching that would not have a psychological layer – ranging from the assumptions of the school system to the difficulties experienced by a first-grade pupil in mastering the alphabet" (Jurkowski, 1980, p. 31).

[10] Anderson (1950), too, sees the scientist's role in a similar way: as a scientist, the psychologist studies the learning process to learn as much as possible about it. It is the knowledge they gain and the rules they formulate on the basis of it that become the subject of the teacher's studies, so that the latter can better understand how their student learns and how to guide their learning.

service that goes beyond the usual patterns and social expectations. Her words "psychology should serve people, life and transformation" (Gurycka, 1998, p. 157) sound beautiful and wise. What counts in this service is every person and what they can understand and accomplish – with the psychologist's support and inspiration. In the broadest perspective, the psychologist's activity is never purely "service"[11] in character, which means doing not only what is assigned or what the psychologist is explicitly asked to do.

The applicable Act on the Profession of a Psychologist[12] contains information on rendering psychological services, such as diagnosis, expert opinions, evaluation, psychological assistance, as well as scientific research and didactic activity in the field of psychology (see Article 4 of the Act). This perception of the psychologist's role is in line with the times. In the current *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Psychologists* (*Kodeks etyczno-zawodowy psychologa*, 2019) we read that: "The professional role of a psychologist includes interference in the way the other person exists as an individual and unique whole – the interference, the effects of which may be irreversible. (...) The limits of the psychologist's interference are determined, on the one hand, by their professional competence and, on the other hand, by the goals and expectations formulated by persons applying for psychological assistance. (...) The primary value for the psychologist is the other person's welfare. The aim of their professional activity is **to help the other person** to solve life problems and achieve a better quality of life by developing their individual abilities and improving interpersonal contacts".

The school psychologist – frontline and office dimensions of their role

Tasks inherent in our profession can also be viewed through the metaphor of being an "office" or "frontline" psychologist. This approach was taken directly from the discussions and lectures conducted by Professor Andrzej Jurkowski. He told us that there are things that can and must be done in the privacy of the office. An example of this might be an individual diagnosis of a child's intellectual level. However, certain things – which were strongly emphasised in his speeches – require wider and more extensive activity and direct involvement in school life. In individual diagnosis and evaluation, as well as counselling, it

[11] "A psychologist cannot limit their activities to diagnosis and counselling only" (Gurycka, 1998, p. 164).

[12] This act came into effect on 1 January 2006 and was passed by the Parliament, after the amendments from the Senate, on 8 June 2001. It is available in the Journal of Laws No. 73, item 763, see *Dziennik Ustaw*, 2001).

is often possible to use the place where the pupil or the teacher normally stays in the school (classroom, playground or school corridor). This is usually done because the student functions better in a familiar (everyday) setting than in unknown (uncommon) conditions. Sometimes it is even said that the office can create a laboratory situation (too detached from reality). It can be concluded that observation carried out by the psychologist – and observation conducted in the office probably the most – simply changes the child's position. In the sciences, e.g. in quantum physics, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle says that the act of measurement changes the examined phenomenon, that is part of the information is lost and this does not result from the imperfection of methods or instruments of measurement, but from the very nature of reality. Obviously, the nature of the activities undertaken and the place where they are carried out by the psychologist depend on:

(a) the challenges of the situation (when the situation requires conducting a conversation, which no one uninvited can interrupt, the psychologist's office becomes the best possible place);
(b) the student's needs (if they feel better in the classroom, the first conversation can take place there);
(c) the psychologist's personal preferences (their needs, and going even further, their personality properties or temperamental determinants).

And it is a very personal dimension of work that we should be well aware of. Maybe this article is an excellent opportunity to ask ourselves a question about our own school practice, about our own behaviour and the rationale behind it. The question could be: *Where do I work most frequently and willingly in the school? Do I know what motivates me to choose this and not another workplace*?

Anna Cierpka in Chapter 12 ("Working with families in a school") refers to Jurkowski's idea of "office" and "frontline" psychologists in a slightly different perspective. She says that the psychologist can wait – impliedly in their office – for problems to be reported by the headteacher, teachers, parents or students. On the other hand, the psychologist – assumingly being an attentive observer, being "on the frontline", as it were, right in the middle of the school events – need not wait at all but go out and identify a problem by him- or herself, and subsequently take appropriate action. The first of these attitudes is quite passive and it is impossible for the psychologist to intentionally limit themselves only to it. Jurkowski (1980) explicitly states that the psychologist's work in the school never implies "a passive attitude to educational problems, which manifests itself in merely waiting for problems to be reported" (p. 31). The result of such passivity may be the perception of psychologists in a very schematic way, as those who "perform the tasks set by the school system" (Jurkowski, 2003, p. 13).

The psychologist as a representative of their field

If a psychologist is employed by a school, a counselling centre, or an educational authority, this naturally places them within the educational system. The school has its educational tasks in which, as Jurkowski (2003) wrote, the psychologist *nolens volens* is involved. It is simply impossible not to respond to the tasks and problems that arise within this system (!). "It should be remembered that institutions of various kinds (e.g. school) have their own tasks, with some values dominating, and there are specific expectations from psychology and psychologists. **It is important for the psychologist to be able to maintain relative independence in such a situation – to be a representative of their discipline**" (Jurkowski, 2003, p. 18). I agree with Jurkowski that the psychologists should not limit themselves to what others indicate or require. They have knowledge about developmental properties and can use it in practice to a much greater extent than people without a psychological background can imagine (Jurkowski, 1986). **Sharing knowledge and skills** – as much as possible – is actually our duty. Being a representative of psychology presupposes engaging in scientific and research activities as well as in projects related to the transfer of psychological knowledge, e.g. through well-designed textbooks, as well as talks, papers and lectures conducted inside and outside the school for students, teachers and parents. The achievements of psychological research need to be passed on to the people we work with so that they will be able to grasp more general developmental tendencies (broad outlook) and go beyond their own experience, which is often "narrow"[13].

The school psychologist as a person who creates extra-systemic expertise on the educational system

A particularly valuable aspect of the psychologist's role – described many times (Jurkowski, 1985, 2000, 2003) – is an *extra-systemic* approach adopted in psychological expertise. Jurkowski considered expert evaluations carried out specifically for schools as the crowning achievement of the school psychologist's work. Indeed, based on psychological knowledge, such expertise makes it possible to understand what is going on in the school and to indicate the unintended as well as the intended effects of both the didactic and upbringing process – from the perspective of an expert who has knowledge and is

[13] "A person working with younger schoolchildren tends to acquire knowledge relating to this period" (Jurkowski, 1986, p. 6).

"uninvolved" in supporting only one of the parties (the student, the teacher or the parent). The author rightly believed that teaching and upbringing is always part of a certain didactic and educational system, which can be evaluated and changed. The educational system requires evaluation in external categories, and in this case we mean psychological categories. Jurkowski described this approach as *extra-systemic*, because useful research categories are taken from "...a system of categories derived from psychology – albeit with autonomy, i.e. relatively independent of pedagogical doctrines, and respecting values cherished in psychology" (Jurkowski, 2003, p. 24). An extra-systemic analysis of the didactic or upbringing process "can and should be a source of progress in teaching and upbringing" (Jurkowski, 1985, p. 136). The author realised, however, that in most cases the psychologist is not fully prepared for *expert* actions[14]. **An expert evaluation of the educational system is the future of the profession of a psychologist, because it allows for the optimal use and transfer of psychological knowledge to practice**. "Psychological expert opinions are an excellent opportunity to influence a part of social reality, for example education" (Jurkowski, 2003, p. 14). Educational programmes have goals that need to be redefined into operational categories, i.e. tasks that are understandable to teachers and educators – and this can be done by the psychologist. However, as has already been said, the task of the psychologist is not to formulate upbringing and teaching goals (understood as subjective expectations of results), but to refer to the functions of the educational system (intended and unintended effects, objectively observable consequences) (Jurkowski, 2000). "An extra-systemic evaluation of the educational system's functioning, based on the analysis of functions and covering primarily the area of unintended functional effects, can have great cognitive and practical significance (...). An autonomous analysis of 'what is happening in the school' can provide a basis for the formulation of a hypothesis about the existence of some effects that may be important from a psychological or social point of view (...). For example, for a long time now, school has been accused of performing (contrary to assumptions) a function that deepens social stratification by reducing the chances and motivation to learn for certain social groups" (p. 43). Thus, it can be assumed that **the most important question in the profession of a psychologist is: How can the psychologist contribute to the educational and upbringing activities of the school?** And only such an innovative contribution has great social significance.

[14] "We can anticipate that psychologists will face a very responsible task of an expert type for which they do not seem to be fully prepared" (Jurkowski, 2000, p. 40).

Contemporary ending

For more than 40 years, educational psychology has been providing well-thought-out and elaborate ideas on the psychologist's role (and assumptions underlying their work) in school practice. Despite their historical character, the above considerations are aimed at popularising these views. In my opinion, they meet the contemporary standards and can benefit the present generation.

ABSTRACT

The psychologist in a contemporary Polish school – theoretical inspirations

The school psychologist's activities should be rooted in their personal reflection and in psychological theory, especially in educational psychology theories. Thus, the school psychologist can fulfil their role in a variety of ways and be, among others: "the person in the middle"; an expert in upbringing and teaching; a researcher of the educational process and a creator of new approaches to upbringing. The form in which the psychologist fulfils their duties should also change depending on the nature of the duties – which can be described as the "frontline and office" dimension of their role. The most important thing for the school psychologist, however, is that their role can be fully realised if the condition of relative independence from the school system and its requirements is fulfilled – this means an extra-systemic approach.

KEYWORDS: extra-systemic approach, educational interaction, psychological evaluation, school psychologist, role of the psychologist, teaching, upbringing

MAIN CHALLENGES

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5. Specific problems in the development of a younger school-age child: directions and forms of preventive measures

Introduction

The stage of child development starting at the age of 6 or 7 and lasting until the ages of 10 to 12 in psychology is referred to as the period of middle childhood (Turner, Helms, 1995), late childhood or younger school age (Harwas-Napierała, Trempała, 2007), or simply school age (Brzezińska, 2000). The terms "middle" or "late childhood" do not directly suggest an age frame, and the term "school age" can be misleading, because in everyday language, it refers to children attending primary and secondary school and thus also applies to adolescents. Since the main audience of this book is school psychologists, and the subject matter of this chapter concerns preventive measures aimed at primary school pupils, i.e. those between the ages of about 6 and 12, it seems most appropriate and convenient to use the term "younger school age".

During this period, children's development, especially physical growth, is no longer as rapid as during the first five years of life. Developmental processes go more smoothly, and the accompanying changes in body build, motor skills, cognitive abilities, social and emotional functioning are not as dramatic as they were before (Stefańska-Klar, 2001; Turner, Helms, 1995). Moreover, there are longer periods of relative balance and stability in children's behaviour (Ilg et al., 1992). This does not mean, however, that children at this age do not experience any problems. The new environment and new requirements may exacerbate difficulties that were previously barely visible or reveal completely new ones. Developmental disharmony, disruptions in development and specific

disorders (e.g. dyslexia or ADHD) can become a source of some very serious and long-lasting problems.

The way of perceiving developmental processes during the analysed period is strongly determined by the fact that the child takes on a new role – that of a student. From now on, until the end of their school education, this will be the most important social role of the child. The ability to undertake it at a certain age will determine the assessment of the child's maturity, its requirements will largely determine the developmental tasks of this period, and the extent to which the child will be able to meet them will determine the further course of their educational career, create the basis for building an image of own self and identity, determine their place in the social structure of the school environment, and even to some extent determine their future social roles.

Certainly, neither the curriculum requirements nor their concretisation – the educational maturity criteria for children starting their education (whether it is at the age of 6 or 7) – are formulated in isolation from the regularity of psychosocial development. Their structure is the result of knowledge about the development of children at a given age ("what average children are potentially capable of") and social expectations and needs concerning the type and level of education among young members of society ("in which direction they should develop and educate themselves in order to contribute to the growth of society"). Thus if, for example, there is a demand for people who are well acquainted with modern digital technology and speak foreign languages, adequate changes are made to curricula, and methodologies, school equipment, etc. are adapted to them. If there is a need to extend the time of compulsory education, appropriate regulations are introduced (e.g. lowering the compulsory school age or/and postponing the age to which compulsory schooling applies), and curricula and teaching methods are modified (e.g. integrated teaching, teaching small children through play). It should be emphasised that from the perspective of a particular child, the criteria of school maturity determine the degree of their being fit for school as it is. For parents and teachers, a child's school readiness is a determinant of their level of development, which strongly influences the parents' and teachers' further expectations towards them.

When a child does not fit in at school: problems at the start

A child's good start at school can be jeopardised both when school is too challenging for the child and when it is too easy for them and therefore boring and demotivating (Van Praag, Van Caudenberg, Orozco, 2018). In both cases, the school psychologist has a role to play.

The child's readiness to start school, i.e. the so-called school maturity[1], is a general term used in psychology and pedagogy to mean reaching such a level of mental[2], social and physical development that makes the child susceptible and sensitive to teaching and upbringing at school (Szuman, 1970), which enables them to meet school requirements and achieve success without excessive emotional tension and major difficulties (see e.g. Brzezińska, 1987; Jarosz, Wysocka, 2006; Wilgocka-Okoń, 2003). A child's school maturity is therefore a state of balance between their developmental achievements and school requirements. Those requirements are relatively similar for all children of a given age and are related not only to the curriculum, but also to the specificity of the teaching process organisation at school and the characteristics of the school environment. The school maturity or readiness criteria (see e.g. Brejnak, 2006; Brzezińska, 1987; Frydrychowicz et al., 2006; Harrington et al., 2020; Janiszewska, 2006; Jarosz, Wysocka, 2006; Przetacznik-Gierowska, Makieło-Jarża, 1992; Przetacznik-Gierowska, Tyszkowa, 1996; Wilgocka-Okoń, 2003) concern primarily the child's:

- intellectual ability (i.e. the level of their thinking and knowledge, memory ability, the ability to concentrate and maintain attention intentionally);
- perceptual and motor skills and general physical fitness;
- ability to act intentionally (i.e. to take up and complete actions intentionally);
- communication skills (especially in relation to verbal communication);
- social skills (especially the ability to cooperate and function in a group, readiness to carry out the adult's orders addressed to the whole group);
- emotional maturity (e.g. self-confidence, perseverance, emotional balance).

The maturity criteria in the above-mentioned areas of development are determined in accordance with specific school curriculum requirements and average developmental achievements of children at the age when they begin to be subject to compulsory education.

However, are all children who go to school ready to start education in this institution? Since the introduction of the compulsory one-year pre-school preparation for six-year-olds (September 2004), most Polish children with a low level of school readiness have a chance to make up for their delay. This is evidenced by the results of the nationwide research conducted on a sample of

[1] Other terms used interchangeably are "educational readiness" (Koźniewska, 2008) and "school readiness" (see e.g. Frydrychowicz et al., 2006; Wilgocka-Okoń, 2003).

[2] Mental development means all cognitive processes (attention, perception, thinking, memory, imagination) as well as emotional and motivational ones.

almost 70,000 children presented in the report *Six-year-olds in Poland. Diagnosis of the examined spheres of development. Report 2006* (Kopik, 2007). It indicates that over 97% (97.3%) of children starting a one-year pre-school preparation programme show high, good or at least sufficient school maturity. At the end of this programme, unsatisfactory educational readiness is presented by less than 1% of children (0.6%), and the percentage of children who are well or very well prepared increases by almost 8% (from 90.7% to 98.6%), which means that the stimulation to which the children are subjected during the programme brings good results. It should be assumed that a small proportion of children who are not mature enough to learn benefit from the right to postpone compulsory schooling. This is usually the case of children who are diagnosed with mental retardation[3].

On the basis of these data, we could therefore conclude that at the threshold of a school career, a very small group of children (less than 1%) are exposed to difficulties due to their low maturity. However, the percentage seems to be higher because of the over 1% prevalence[4] of certain disorders in the population, which potentially prevent the child from adapting to school requirements, e.g. general (global) developmental delay, developmental disharmony, dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, ADD, ODD, or speech disorders. Some of these do not necessarily manifest themselves during pre-school preparation, thus a child can be mistakenly considered mature enough for school. Only a change in the environment, entering a new role, taking on new responsibilities, and having to face new requirements can reveal deficits that were previously hidden. Therefore, it is important that such children are identified as early as possible and receive help before they become unable to keep up with their peers and, as a result, develop an aversion to school and learning, and feel they are not fit for school.

An important task of the school psychologist is to carefully monitor the functioning of children (including their interactions with teachers) during the first few or even several weeks of learning. In most cases, teachers very quickly identify students in their classes who may have more serious learning

[3] This is especially true for children with an IQ below 50, i.e. with moderate disability, since mild disability is less often a reason to postpone compulsory schooling. For many parents, the decision to request a postponement of the child's compulsory education is a difficult one as they are often more afraid of their child being stigmatised than of them experiencing difficulties at school.

[4] I decided not to give statistics concerning particular disorders, because the data provided in various sources differ quite significantly, as some authors point out (see e.g. Elliot, Place, 2012). However, one may venture to say that each of these disorders affects more than 1% of the population. It is also worth remembering that some disorders quite often coexist (e.g. dyscalculia is even treated as part of developmental dyslexia syndrome).

difficulties in the future or cause trouble with their behaviour due to information available to them about such children's previous achievements (e.g. a diagnosis of educational readiness) and their family situation, and, what is the most important, the opportunity to observe the students in various tasks and social situations and analyse their performance. Therefore, the role of the psychologist is not only to help identify children at risk of difficulties. Teachers usually handle this task well themselves. A much more important task is to make an accurate diagnosis[5], provide assistance to a child in making up for their deficits (methods are described in numerous publications, e.g. Bogdanowicz, 2008; Bogdanowicz et al., 2004; Chmielewska, 2001; Tońska-Szyfelbein, 2009; Weber, 2007; Wolańczyk et al., 2007), establish cooperation with parents (Babiuch, 2002; Whalley et al., 2008), systematically cooperate with teachers, and monitor a child's behaviour. This is essential due to the possibility of adverse effects of teachers' and parents' expectations concerning a child's school performance (Babiuch, 1990), which may be an undesirable, but completely natural and very difficult to avoid consequence of identifying certain deficits or disorders in a child.

A separate risk group is made up of very talented, smart children with developed interests and knowledge of the world (Kargulowa, 1991; Mönks, Ypenburg, 2007). These are pupils whose preparation for school is excellent and whose level of various competences and skills is far above average. By the first day of school, such children usually know everything their classmates will learn throughout the year. For them, school can be an insufficiently stimulating or even frustrating environment. They do not have many opportunities to learn something completely new and often do not have the chance to present their knowledge and skills. They often hear from the teacher: "I won't ask you, I know you can do it", "I have to let other kids show off", etc. These children do not need the teacher's help to master the curriculum content, but they do need his or her attention so as not to feel ignored. Their dream is not – which is often the case with weaker students – to have the teacher forget about their existence and not call them up to the board. On the contrary, they want to be appreciated, acknowledged, or at least noticed. Some of them may try to attract attention in a way that severely disturbs the functioning of the class as a task group (Elliot, Place, 2012), e.g. by clowning, fast-talking to classmates or asking the teacher unnecessary questions (because they are not really interested in the answer). Above all, however, these children need

[5] This task may be referred to a Psychological-Pedagogical Counseling Centre if a school psychologist is unable to do it themselves due to a lack of time or tools, or if they are convinced that a diagnosis by independent experts will provide a better basis for cooperation with teachers and parents.

intellectual challenges[6] and opportunities to acquire knowledge and new skills in order not to lose their enthusiasm to explore the world, not to turn their school activities into a mindless routine, and not to lose the opportunity to be rewarded for their effort, hard work, discipline, and perseverance. Without this, their initial enthusiasm will gradually turn into malaise, and going to school will become a boring duty that can be fulfilled at little cost, or just an opportunity to spend time with their peers. Another, even more worrying consequence may be that the child will become convinced that everything should come easily, without any difficulty or effort, because they are gifted and clever. This way of thinking about themselves may cause the child to be reluctant to take on more difficult tasks for fear of failure, which they treat as a signal of a lack of sufficient abilities (Dweck, 2016).

As long as the behaviour of such children does not cause trouble for teachers, the former can be left to themselves. These children are often highly self-confident, able to express themselves, active and creative, which, combined with above-average knowledge, interests and thinking skills, gives the impression of their mental maturity and can mask their low emotional maturity or lack of social skills. Teachers' failure to notice this is all the more likely because they focus their attention mainly on the cognitive functioning of children. Since they do not experience any learning difficulties, teachers easily transfer their attention and efforts to students who obviously need their help. However, it should be kept in mind that a good start in school is important for all children, although it may not mean the same thing for everyone. For highly gifted children, a good start is to maintain the enthusiasm with which they begin their school career by providing them with the cognitive stimulation they need, giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and assigning them the tasks that require some effort and conscientiousness. The role of the school psychologist is to identify such children and to take a close look at them in order to make sure that they do not show any deficits in other areas of development, e.g. in social or emotional functioning. The next step may be to agree with the teacher on a programme of work with these children, covering both what the teacher can do in the classroom and what can be provided to a child in the form of additional classes (Cybis et al., 2012; Dyrda, 2010; Fechner-Sędzicka, 2013).

At the end of this part, it is also worth mentioning yet another task of the psychologist – its good implementation may prevent problems at the beginning of the child's school career, namely, changing the negative or defensive attitude of parents towards school. This problem concerns mainly parents who anticipate

[6] I mean here such a kind of cognitive stimulation and such a level of task difficulty that enters these children's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2012).

their child's difficulties, because some problems started to appear already during the kindergarten preparation, or they think that the child is not mature enough to learn at school, although in the kindergarten they functioned very well. A negative attitude towards school may also result from the unpleasant school experiences of older children or even parents' own resentments (Babiuch, 2002). Negative attitudes towards school can also occur in parents who are not afraid that their child will not meet school requirements, but rather that the school will not be able to provide their child with adequate conditions. Parents' over-criticism of school or their fear is not conducive to a good start in the child's school career, as it carries a high risk that the child will take their first steps at school with fear, uncertainty, reluctance, and even hostility and arrogance. This, in turn, can create quite serious problems, such as refusal to go to school or destructive behaviour in the classroom (see Elliot, Place, 2012). It is, therefore, important to devote some attention to parents as well and encourage them to contact educators, offer them various forms of getting involved in school life (not necessarily time-consuming and requiring great commitment), convince them that they can count on help and cooperation of pedagogues and psychologists, and clear up all their doubts (Babiuch, 2002; Żłobicki, 2000).

Concluding: The beginning of a child's school career is of great importance for their further development. Thus, everything should be done to ensure that it is a good start. Although almost all children are diagnosed (more or less precisely) in terms of their school maturity, there are still some children at school who, for various reasons, are not able to meet all the requirements imposed on them. The range of reasons for this lack of preparedness can be broad: lack of maturity in specific areas (e.g. in the emotional or social sphere), a mild global delay in psychosocial development, insufficient general knowledge, inadequate level of basic competences, specific disorders and deficits such as speech disorders, dyslexia, attention deficits, or psychomotor hyperactivity, as well as various forms of physical disability, or somatic illnesses. These children are exposed to failure and hardship from the very beginning and are bound to fail without prompt and effective help. Since school requirements, related both to the curriculum and the classroom learning system as well as to the characteristics of the school's social environment, are addressed to the average pupil, difficulties and failures (obviously, of a different kind and severity) can also be experienced by children who develop faster than their peers or are exceptionally gifted.

Among the school psychologist's main tasks related to providing all children with the best possible start are: identifying children who may be particularly vulnerable to school failures and difficulties (on the basis of documentation, observations and indications from teachers), undertaking close cooperation

with these children's teachers and parents in order to agree on an action plan and monitor its implementation, providing children with appropriate pedagogical and psychological assistance (remedial classes at school, specialist assistance in psychological-educational counselling centres), monitoring the effects of actions taken and modifying them if necessary. A separate and very important task is to create conditions for a good start also for the parents of other children, not only those who belong to risk groups. Involving parents in school life, creating a positive attitude and gaining their trust seem to be very helpful in the child's further school career.

When a good start is not enough: problems at a younger school age

Despite the initial screening of children (a school readiness test) and widespread access to compensatory classes in the first year, not all children find the start in their new role equally successful. Moreover, even if it is quite good, which certainly helps a lot in the further school career, there is no guarantee of its full success. Thus, the further they get in the stages of learning at school, the greater the percentage of children who experience various difficulties. There are several reasons for this situation.

First of all, the range of requirements and their level is increasing. This applies not only to children's cognitive but also social, emotional and personality competences. Children have to cope with increasingly complex and difficult tasks, integrate information from different fields, use previously acquired knowledge together with skills and abilities in new ways. Therefore, unless they have mastered the necessary knowledge and skills (e.g. reading comprehension, writing, performing basic arithmetic tasks) in the early years, schooling gradually becomes too much of a challenge for them, even if they were able to keep up with their peers in the beginning. There are also increasing expectations with regard to the ability to concentrate and maintain attention for a longer period of time, as involuntary learning through play is progressively replaced by intentional, structured learning that requires processing of texts rather than images, developing memorisation techniques, etc. An increase in requirements also concerns certain social skills of students, their emotional balance and specific personality traits. As time goes by, children are expected to become more independent and self-reliant, display self-discipline, perseverance, and effort, as well as be able to cooperate with other students and teachers, and understand and follow school rules.

However, not all children develop harmoniously (uniformly in all spheres) at the proper pace and rhythm. As already mentioned, a mild delay does not have to automatically mean school failure at the initial stage of education. If a child

receives adequate psycho-pedagogical help from the school and support from the family, they can do quite well at school for the first few years. However, the significant increase in requirements (in the last years of primary school) can cause a child to experience failure. Children who develop disharmoniously and/or manifest specific disorders such as attention and perception deficits, hyperactivity, speech disorders, emotional immaturity, anxiety, social adaptation difficulties, physical disabilities, etc. are also exposed to school difficulties. Depending on the severity of these problems, their consequences in the form of school failures or behavioural disorders may be more or less postponed in time and also more or less visible (Elliot, Place, 2012; Goldman, Scott, 2012). It is the task of the school psychologist to closely monitor children at risk and provide them with support and assistance before they experience deep and prolonged failure. For children with deeper and combined disorders (e.g. speech disorders, dyslexia, and ADHD), it may even be necessary to provide individual teaching[7].

Another factor that the school psychologist needs to pay attention to is the context of development provided by school as an organisation, teachers and parents. This has a significant impact on how the child copes with developmental tasks and how they react to difficulties. The tasks are defined in different ways. Robert J. Havighurst (1972) described them as: learning the gender role, acquiring school competence, developing conscience, morals and values, achieving personal independence and social skills (attitudes towards groups and institutions), and thus achieving greater maturity in many important areas. Havighurst assumed that there is an interaction between an active learner and an active environment: a developmental task is midway between an individual need and societal demands.

According to Eric H. Erikson, the main developmental task at a younger school age is to achieve a sense of competence (1950). In order to do so, children need to improve their social skills, develop their knowledge, level of thinking, and skills in various activities. Since this is a period of intensive social comparison (Vasta, Haith, Miller, 1999), children evaluate their own achievements in relation to those of their peers. Success strengthens their self-confidence, and failure leads to a sense of inferiority.

Schools, due to their atmosphere or their culture as an organisation, both of which determine the social context of development, can be generally divided into two types: those that are success-oriented, and those that focus on students as individuals and support their individual development (Tuohy, 2004). In success-oriented schools, students who are appreciated

[7] A school psychologist, in consultation with a child's parents, may apply to the district counselling centre for an opinion in such a case.

and privileged are those who can demonstrate some special achievements: in science, sport, art, social and environmental activity, etc. Keeping up with the course of teaching and correct behaviour do not give children a sense of full success and self-satisfaction in such schools. The pressure to continuously improve performance, stand out and compete is strongly felt there. It can be expressed in various ways, e.g. by selecting pupils, both on the basis of initial tests (rejecting children who did not perform well enough) and on the basis of their school progress (segregating pupils in classes by level of achievement), by celebrating successes (displaying diplomas, trophies, awards, and photographs of pupils who succeeded in any area; celebrating victories during assemblies or various celebrations, etc.), or quite explicitly – by the motto of the school (e.g. "failure is not an option"[8]). The atmosphere of such schools stimulates in children the desire to achieve spectacular success and/or be the best in something. The difficulty or inability to achieve mastery in any field can lower the overall motivation of a child and, as a result, lead to lowering their achievements in relation to potential abilities, as well as to developing a sense of inferiority instead of self-confidence and a sense of competence. Depending on what school adjustment strategy[9] a child adopts, they may show indifference or active opposition to school, e.g. by truancy, by obstructing the teacher, or by destroying school property (Elliot, Place, 2012). An important role of the psychologist in such schools is to help children to discover and develop their strengths, assets, talents, and interests. It is more beneficial to focus on helping children to achieve noticeable success, even in a very narrow or trivial area, and to strengthen their sense of competence, self-confidence, allowing them to believe in themselves, rather than trying to compensate for all their deficits.

Another type of developmental context is created by schools focused on the student as an individual and on supporting their individual development. The school's aim then is to establish the best possible and most friendly conditions for all students so that they can realise their developmental potential, i.e. achieve everything that their talents and maturity level allow. Such schools are not focused on building prestige, but on improving care and counselling for their students. They try to fit in with the student, and not the other way around. However, this type of organisational culture is not common. In most cases, it can be encountered in special institutions or integrated schools. Its elements may also be present in success-oriented schools.

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[8] This famous quote from Apollo flight director Gene Kranz is an example of a real motto from one of the schools in the US state of Maryland.

[9] I refer here to the strategies described by Carlson (as cited Tuohy, 2004): withdrawal, rebellion, or the side benefits strategy.

The developmental context is created not only by the school as an organisation, but also by teachers and parents. Their views on the nature of development, intelligence, talents, the nature of social relations, gender differences and the values they cherish all have a significant impact on their expectations of children and, consequently, on how they deal with youngsters. Here is an example of how this mechanism works: if a teacher is convinced that intelligence is an inborn characteristic and its level sets the limits of a child's development, they will act in accordance with this conviction, that is the teacher will expect their students to achieve a level corresponding with the teacher's evaluation of the students' inborn abilities, and the teacher will accordingly invest their efforts and differentiate their treatment of students. The existence of such a correlation is confirmed by numerous studies on the so-called Pygmalion effect (or Loew effect), i.e. the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy (see e.g. Babiuch, 1990; Jussim, 1989; Jussim, Harber, 2005; Konarzewski, 1992; Rosenthal, Jacobson, 1968; Rubie-Davis, 2007). Those studies showed that a teacher's positive expectations towards pupils are accompanied by behaviour that actually fosters good school performance (Pygmalion), or conversely, that negative expectations cause the teacher to behave in a way that results in worse student performance. David Tuohy (2004) considers this phenomenon so widespread that he formulates the thesis that "bright students get an education, middle-of-the-road students get teaching and weaker students get discipline" (*ibid.*, p. 79). He claims that teachers care about the development of gifted children and are genuinely interested in what these children are actually learning. In the case of average students, teachers only care about the results of exams, whereas with regard to weak pupils, they merely supervise them. Another illustration of how teachers' (and parents') beliefs influence the quality of the developmental context they create for children are observations indicating that a teacher's belief in the existence of gender differences in language or mathematical abilities can lead to a different impact on boys and girls and, consequently, to gender differences in achievement levels in mathematics and reading (reviewed in Babiuch, 1990; Babiuch-Hall, 2007). The key element of this mechanism is expectation resulting from stereotypical beliefs the teacher conveys to students, thus strengthening or weakening their motivation for work. Changing teachers' or parents' beliefs seems to be too difficult or even impossible. Still, the psychologist can influence students and, by effectively motivating them (Brophy, 2002), change a developmental context that is unfavourable for them[10].

[10] An effective way to overcome the adverse effects of gender stereotypes is to provide information that proves them to be unfounded in real-world data (i.e. there is no innate difference in maths ability between genders). Presenting a position contrary to the stereotype (i.e. that girls are better at math than boys) does not yield positive results (see e.g. Babiuch-Hall, 2007).

Concluding: A successful start to a school career promotes a child's good functioning in school but does not completely protect them from failure. School difficulties can occur when the pace of a child's development does not keep up with the demands of the school. The pace, rhythm, and harmony of development are undermined when the school environment creates an unfavourable context. Although having a limited influence on both the school atmosphere and the teachers' and parents' views, the psychologist can adapt forms of assistance offered to a child in such a way as to minimise the negative aspects and enhance the positive aspects of the school environment.

When it is not possible to prevent all difficulties: the school psychologist's priority tasks

The role of the school psychologist in the prevention of school failure among younger school-aged children can be very significant. However, we should be aware that even the best prevention cannot eliminate all difficulties. It is also necessary to be able to make choices that will benefit as many children as possible. While the school psychologist can and should be a counsellor and a source of support for children as well as a source of support and inspiration for teachers and parents, their main task is to ensure that children have the best possible conditions for development and are at the lowest possible risk of failure.

As the starting point for designing preventive measures in a specific school and for specific children, teachers, and parents, the following issues should be considered:

- What is the atmosphere in a particular school, what goals does it really strive for, i.e. what is the context for its students' development?
- Does it select and segregate students according to their potential achievements?
- Is it parent-friendly?
- What proportion of children should be classified as being at risk of school failure at the beginning of their school career? For what reasons?
- Does the school psychologist have sufficient resources (time, tools) to diagnose children at risk?
- What kind of preventive measures (Gaś, 2000; Szymańska, 2000) can they recommend and implement autonomously?

A reliable answer to the above questions will allow the psychologist to realistically plan their specific tasks and make the most of their resources.

As we have tried to prove before, a good orientation in the goals pursued by a school must be ahead of any other action, as it is a prerequisite for choosing the right priorities. The psychologist does not have to feel obliged to support the school's goals if they consider them to be detrimental to the development of certain groups of children. However, they cannot ignore them, nor should they openly undermine them. For example, the school's very strong focus on achievement and prestige should lead the psychologist to monitor a wider group of children – not only those who are at risk of failure due to delays, developmental disharmony or specific disorders, but also average children who cope with requirements but have no significant achievements.

The school psychologist's priority tasks may include planning primary preventive measures aimed at all children, or at least at those who, for some reason, may be at risk (e.g. physical disability, low self-reliance, merely average level of school readiness, remarkable aptitude for learning, etc.). Such actions are of a proactive nature, anticipating the occurrence of school failures and difficulties. They include developing general coping skills at school, modelling healthy lifestyles and developing specific skills necessary for schooling. The school psychologist does not have to carry out all these activities by themselves but should inspire them. Primary prevention should also cover families, especially those who are not able to provide sufficient support to their children (e.g. developing a model of school-family cooperation and implementing it can be an example of such activities, see Babiuch, 2002; Pitt et al., 2013).

A very important task of the psychologist is to identify children who are at serious risk of school failure (e.g. children with mild developmental disabilities, children with dyslexia, attention deficit, etc.). Here, very specific interventions are made (developmental support, compensatory classes, cooperation with teachers and parents, etc.). If the school psychologist is not able to carry out all these tasks on their own, which is most often the case, they should at least coordinate them.

The school psychologist does not usually provide tertiary prevention, but only coordinates it, i.e. they do not take any actions that would prevent further failure in children who are already experiencing it, nor undertake activities that would stop children from entering the area of pathology, but rather coordinate those actions with an external specialist. Examples of such activities include specialist, multifunctional pedagogical therapy and psychological support, which cover children as well as their parents and teachers, with whom an individualised education programme is consulted and agreed upon.

Concluding: Difficulties and school failures experienced by pupils are an integral part of their school career, as are successes and achievements. Even the best, most talented students are sometimes faced with crises and a sense of failure. Those who suffer from some sort of disorder develop more slowly or

less harmoniously or are not well prepared for school and are more likely to experience failure than success. Failures cannot be eliminated completely, but they can be prevented, reduced in number and intensity. However, it is important that there are fewer failures than successes, and that they do not overshadow the importance of achievements, nor stifle children's sense of competence and confidence. Such a positive balance is very important for the development of every child. And it is quite easy to achieve, provided that the child's achievements are assessed in relation to their abilities. This is the case in schools that focus on the individual development of each child. However, most schools focus on objective achievements. In this type of environment, it is simply necessary to help children to find and develop their own strengths, special skills, and talents to make them succeed.

Wise prevention, based on a good recognition of pupils' needs and developmental limitations as well as on understanding the specificity of the development context created by a given school, can be an effective tool for reducing the number of school failures among pupils; therefore it should be the main objective of the school psychologist's work.

ABSTRACT

Specific problems in the development of a younger school-age child – directions and forms of preventive measures

This chapter presents the principal difficulties faced by many children at the early stages of education, and some actions which may be taken by school psychologists to prevent their occurrence or at least to limit their negative consequences. The first important task of psychologists and pre-school teachers is to evaluate school readiness of children before the start of their compulsory education and deliver help to those children who do not present sufficient educational maturity (e.g. remedial classes, a delay of compulsory education). Another very important task for psychologists is to observe how well children adapt to new environments and new requirements. Some difficulties experienced by pupils at the start of their school experience may be related to developmental disharmony, disruptions in development or specific disorders (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD, autism), and the need to be taken care of before they become a source of serious and long-lasting problems. This is a task for psychologists, teachers, and parents working together. Attention by school psychologists should also be focused on gifted and talented children. Those children do not normally experience learning difficulties, but they do require teachers' attention to feel as though they are noticed and appreciated. They also need a more challenging curriculum than an average student to maintain their motivation and interest in learning new knowledge and skills, as well as teach them the value of effort in learning. Therefore, the most important tasks of school psychologists at the early stages of school education

are: to monitor the process of adjustment by pupils to new environments and new roles; to identify children who experience difficulties at the start of school education, and to arrange and coordinate help for those children; and to follow up not only with those children with special educational needs but also with gifted and talented students.

KEYWORDS: adjustment to school environment, developmental achievements, developmental disharmonies, developmental disorders, educational maturity/school readiness, gifted and talented children, learning disabilities, monitoring, preventing school difficulties, school psychologist, younger school age

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6. The school psychologist in the face of the challenges of adolescence

The model of the school psychologist's role presented in this book puts the psychologist in the position of an expert[1] on children's upbringing and at the same time a creator of desired upbringing situations, beneficial for the development of the pupil and their subjectivity. Each stage in the child's development has its own specificity, which should be considered in taking up pedagogical measures directed to a given age group of pupils. The following paper refers to the upbringing of adolescents in the school environment and includes reflections on desirable and possible actions undertaken by the psychologist towards adolescents and their educators against the background of knowledge concerning the specificity of adolescence. My aim is to indicate those developmental processes which the school psychologist should bear in mind when directing their efforts to a group of adolescents, their parents and teachers. Monitoring, prevention, intervention and promotion – each of these activities requires reliable knowledge about adolescence.

Adolescence is a particularly important phase in a person's development because it is a bridge between childhood and adulthood. It is during this period that radical physical and psychological changes take place. This stage of development lasts many years (from eight to ten) and there are several sub-periods depending on the dominant changes. All these changes are supposed to result

[1] As a team, we emphasise the role of the psychologist as a co-creator and co-responsible person, not so much supervising as "sharing" knowledge/skills. And it is not so much from the position of an external expert's authority, but from the position in which psychological knowledge and professional experience has earned this authority, which makes them a real expert (Sokołowska et al., 2017).

in the ability to live independently and responsibly (Arnett, 2016; Bakiera, 2007; Smetana, 2016). Thus, we can pose a number of questions about adolescence.

What should we know about adolescence?

In the Polish literature, we do not have a study that would present the period of adolescence in all its complexity. Nevertheless, there are some valuable publications we can suggest that contain reliable psychological knowledge of this developmental stage (Arnett, 2016; Bardziejewska, 2005; Batory, 2013; Brzezińska, Apelt, Ziółkowska, 2016; Katra, 2003; Obuchowska, 2000; Oleszkiewicz, Senejko, 2013; Pruitt, 2002; Smetana, Robinson, Rote, 2016; Turner, Helms, 1995) and its selected aspects (Suchańska, 2001). In my work, I would like to focus on issues that are less frequently found in classical approaches, or those that are presented in contemporary literature in a different way (Coleman, Hendry, 2000; Steinberg et al., 2018; Santrock, 2003).

I will begin my considerations with the important issue of setting the limits of adolescence, because monitoring requires knowledge of this developmental period as well as great watchfulness and sensitivity, so as not to overlook any disturbing and health- (or life-) threatening teenage behaviours. At the same time, it is important not to treat the behaviour that is quite natural for this stage of development as problematic.

The beginnings of adolescence are associated with biological maturation. Its most important manifestation is reaching sexual maturity, taking the form of the pubertal spurt. Although the most visible, the process of sexual maturity does not end a young person's physical development. It is worth remembering that the bone structure can develop even up to 25 years of age and only then does the physical growth of the body finish. Biological changes are accompanied by other developmental processes – in terms of thinking, emotional and social life, as well as in the perception and understanding of oneself and others. The end of adolescence is determined by social factors – in the process of social agreement and legal regulation, society determines the criteria of an individual's status. In our culture – you could call it Western European – reaching adulthood is defined by age. Turning 18 years of age means that under civil law a young person is treated as an adult, although not in all areas of life do they gain full rights (for example the right to vote, and later the right to stand for election, depending on a specific authority of the state[2]). On the other hand, in recent years in Western countries we have witnessed the phenomenon of postponing

[2] The right to stand for election: e.g. people who are 21 years of age or older can be elected to the Parliament; those who stand for the Senate must be 30 or older. Only a person who has reached the age of 35 can run for President of the Republic of Poland.

the achievement of complete independence – mental and material – by youth. The period of education and the time of identity formation are lengthened, and important life decisions concerning work and starting a family are put off. This phenomenon was described and analysed by Jeffrey J. Arnett (2000, 2002, 2011, 2015). In his opinion, adolescence does not directly lead to personal maturity. As a result of cultural and social changes, the *emerging adult* phase has appeared. This is the time between the ages of 18 and 25, during which a young person further develops their education, which constitutes a basis for future professional activity. In his research, Arnett also proved that few teenagers solve an identity crisis in adolescence (Arnett, 2002; Erikson, 1950, 2002). Experimenting with oneself, searching for a concept of oneself and one's lifestyle is extended for years to come (Gurba, 2007, 2011). During this time, young people prepare to build lasting emotional relationship with the other person, gathering experience by engaging in casual and unstable intimate relationships. The second tendency is to shape their worldview (Gurycka, 1991) and the lifestyle associated with it. Young people change their beliefs, views and socio-political involvement in order to find and define their identity, having the consent of their environment to make such a search.

I cite Arnett's concept to show that not only is it difficult to set the boundaries of adolescence, but also that the former approach to adolescence is no longer relevant and that young people, who are no longer growing but not adults yet, should also be given some kind of care and support. Obviously, this postulate is not addressed to school psychologists, but it opens a new perspective on what we can expect from youth and what challenges they face.

It follows that it is difficult to clearly define the limits of adolescence. Physical maturation starts at different ages in children, its course can be more or less rapid, and reaching maturity in individual and social aspects is even more complex and varied. For example, the appearance of physical changes is preceded by internal changes – the endocrine system prepares the body for the pubertal spurt, and this fact is reflected in a change in children's behaviour before the first clear signs of puberty appear. Mobility increases, mood changes for an unclear reason are more frequent. Children who have been polite and obedient so far become insubordinate, overactive, irritable and impatient. Teachers and parents often do not understand this change in their own child's behaviour, criticise them and try to discipline them with punishments. The end of adolescence also poses many dilemmas for teachers and parents: *When to treat a young person as an adult? Should I demand full independence from them? Should I still help them and to what extent?* An extremely important sphere concerns career choices – whether to demand serious commitments or to allow further experimentation. It should be noted, however, that although in the adolescence phase the child does not achieve full personal and social maturity, the changes

in the area of identity as well as decisions made during this time are extremely important, as they determine the shape of future adult life.

In conclusion, this is a difficult time for teenagers themselves, but also for their parents and educators. The boundaries of adolescence are blurred, and it is not always clear whether a particular behaviour is a developmental change or a deviation that requires special intervention. This issue is related to the question of developmental norms.

Which is normal, and which is not in the teenager's behaviour?

Establishing the developmental norm for adolescence is also extremely difficult. There are many criteria that can determine which behaviours and changes fall within the standard and which go beyond it. One such reference may be Havighurst's developmental task theory (Havighurst, 1972; Przetacznik-Gierowska, 1996). A developmental task is defined as specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, or ways of functioning that an individual should acquire or that should appear as a result of developmental processes at a particular point in life. Developmental tasks occur in a certain sequence and the success of each new task depends on whether the previous ones have been completed. If certain tasks are not achieved in a timely manner, there may be difficulties in undertaking and carrying out developmental tasks in subsequent phases, thus it is important that the tasks belonging to a given phase of development are completed.

Each age has its own specific developmental tasks, in adolescence these are: (1) establishing new and more mature relationships with peers; (2) assimilating the male or female social role; (3) achieving physical maturity and the ability to use one's own body effectively; (4) gaining emotional independence from parents and other adults; (5) preparation for starting a family and marriage; (6) career preparation; (7) shaping the system of values, which will guide an individual and their worldview development; (8) striving after responsibility for one's own behaviour and its accomplishment (Sokołowska, 2015).

This theory is useful for every educator and school psychologist because it allows for determining not only whether a given type of the child's behaviour corresponds to developmental tasks, but also that **the absence of a specific type of activity is an abnormal phenomenon**. In general, educators are oriented towards evaluating the pupil's behaviour, less often asking themselves *what type of behaviour is **missing*** in their activity, although this is essential for their proper development. On the other hand, the school psychologist should consider the teenager's functioning holistically, also in terms of those experiences which are desirable and important for their development, but may be missing or in short supply.

Defining the developmental norm is difficult, due to large individual differences as well as changes occurring in the modern world. There is currently a lack of distinct and clearly defined patterns of transition through this phase of life. Values associated with individualism, a huge pool of personal patterns, lifestyles and the possibility of choosing different life goals provide an opportunity to adjust one's individual development and way of life to one's own needs and goals (Katra, 2008; Katra, 2016a). At the same time, this state of affairs may be too much of a challenge for a young person, especially when there is no guide, educator or mentor.

How does the teenager change and what are effects of this change?

Growing up is a complex process and the changes taking place during this time include the physical and mental spheres: cognitive and emotional processes, identity and personality formation, social perception and relations with others. In this study, it is impossible to fully characterise adolescence. I just want to draw attention to special or less known phenomena.

Physical development and sexual maturation is a source of new unknown emotions and experiences for a child (Łuczak, 2001, 2001a, Rajchert, 2013). Their body, physical and emotional reactions, as well as the way of thinking about themselves and the world all change, and so does the attitude of the environment towards them. The adolescent notices the changes they are subject to, but also the fact that they start to be perceived differently by others. They are particularly sensitive to any remarks about their appearance and deeply upset by even innocent criticism from adults and older siblings or classmates. These changes also pose a challenge for the environment. Parents "lose" their nice, polite child, who looks up to them. At their side, a young person is growing up, who is starting to look more and more adult – *How to treat them?* Yet, there are still many times that they behave like a child, on top of that, a moody and critical child, who prefers to spend time with their friends, or alone. Some parents, preoccupied with their work and their own affairs, may be relieved that their child no longer needs such care and is not so absorbing. However, it should be remembered that a lack of contact with a child during this time may result in ignoring the first manifestations of difficulties experienced by them. They may seek ways of dealing with problems and troubles that may take on a form that is socially unacceptable or disapproved of by parents.

A smooth transition through this phase is facilitated by the knowledge provided in advance to both children and their guardians. Knowledge can protect and help to deal with adolescence problems. According to psychologists (Kimmel, Weiner, 1995; Santrock, 2003), for example puberty is insufficiently

understood not only by adolescents but also by adults. It was found that teenagers who know "the facts of life" are better able to cope emotionally with the biological changes they undergo than those who know less about these matters (Santrock, 2003). Well-prepared parents also find it easier to deal emotionally with their children's maturation and adapt their childrearing activities to new challenges (Bakiera, 2010; Smetana, 2010). Sharing knowledge with children, parents and teachers can take place as part of **primary prevention** (Gaś, 1995; Szymańska, 2000). Rapid change and lack of preparation easily leads to a search for inappropriate ways of coping with difficulties and to conflicts with teachers and parents. Therefore, education conducted well in advance can prevent phenomena that are detrimental to the child's development, as well as disruptions in social relations. Reliable knowledge in the field of youth psychology becomes the basis for adequate expectations concerning the teenager's development. It allows both the child and their parents to prepare mentally for the upcoming changes, which will affect the parents' behaviours and the functioning of the whole family.

The most important aspect of physical development is reaching sexual maturity – this phenomenon in itself is a huge challenge for the teenager. At the same time, it should be remembered that sexual development is not identical in individual children. A significant departure from the norm, although it does not mean pathology, may cause negative psychological effects. Children who grow up too early or too late experience a number of difficulties in this regard. They compare themselves to their peers, and marked aberrations in this regard are strongly experienced by them – they may have problems with social and emotional functioning, for example they are more vulnerable. Boys who first grow taller are proud to be stronger and "older" than their peers, often taking a leadership role in the group, but sometimes they feel pressure to prove their "adulthood" in other fields, which can lead to risky, antisocial or problematic behaviours. Girls, who reach puberty earlier, are in a less favourable position. They are ashamed of their maturity, experience their older schoolmates' erotic interest and find it difficult to make friends with their peers (Hayword, 2003). They seek support and acceptance among older girls, whose main interest is their relationships with boys, and in this way teenage girl are involved in the sphere of boy-girl issues and relationships, for which they are not emotionally prepared – they are more likely to develop depression, display problematic behaviours and are more prone to eating disorders. In addition, they neglect school, receive lower grades, and finish their education earlier (Chatizow, 2018; Kimmel, Weiner, 1995; Weichold et al., 2003). It is different when a teenager matures too late. In the case of boys, this can lead to lower self-esteem and to compensatory activity in order to prove at all costs that they are "adults", despite their inconspicuous appearance. It is the other way round with girls,

they generally cope better; they have time to prepare mentally for the female role, but sometimes they can behave more childishly and get into the role of a mascot, which makes it difficult for them to attain a mature personality. In general, however, girls who mature later are better off – in early adolescence they are more childish, but in its late phase it turns out that they have an "advantage" over their peers who became mature earlier – they are taller and slimmer (Santrock, 2003; Weichold et al., 2003).

The school psychologist should pay special attention to these children, providing them with support and assistance to overcome problems related to differences in reaching sexual maturity, so that the identity formation and adaptation processes are not disrupted. When they notice undesirable behaviours and attitudes in a child, they should identify the cause and undertake appropriate intervention, for example a talk about "the facts of life", or actions aimed at sustaining or enhancing self-assessment.

Sexual maturation is accompanied by the awakening of sexual need. Although this is a completely natural phenomenon, it is also connected with the appearance of previously non-existent threats (Beisert, 2001, 2004). Additionally, in recent decades, there have been significant changes in the development of young people's sexuality, which were initiated in the 1960s. The greatest differences are observed in the sexual activity of adolescents. At present, much younger children start their sexual life, although according to the Izdebski report (Izdebski, 2008), the average age for starting sexual activity in Poland is about 19.

Young people who start having sex too early face many risks, such as negative sexual experiences, which can disrupt their further sexual and emotional development. The most serious are HIV infection and premature pregnancy. Both are related to a broadly understood concept of "safe sex", which covers knowledge about people's sexual functioning, attitudes towards sex and practical contraception, including condom acceptance. According to specialists, "safe sex" is conditioned by various factors such as age, gender, attitudes, type of sexual relations and social context in which sexual activity takes place.

Parenthood of minors is also a serious problem. Teenage children who become parents are not sufficiently prepared for this role. They require social and psychological support in fulfilling their parental responsibilities. In addition, they often need material help. This problem concerns a small percentage of young people, but it should also find its place in educating teenagers, especially in prevention and counselling programmes, which would help to prevent such situations, and in the case of underage parents – to avoid mistakes in raising their own children. Here too, there is much that the psychologist can do to help (young parents and their parents) by providing support and assistance

in getting access to institutions set up to help in such situations (family counselling, social welfare).

A marginal but very important issue is the problem of sexual otherness, which affects a relatively small group of people. It should be remembered that together with the feeling of sexual need, specific sexual preferences appear – heterosexual in most teenagers and homosexual in some of them (Engel, Katra, 2003; Engel-Berantowicz, Kamieńska 2005; Katra, 2014a; Lew-Starowicz, Lew-Starowicz, 1999). People who realise they are sexually different feel confused, often desperate, have difficulties in defining their own identity and accepting it. As a result, they may also experience isolation due to prejudices and social stereotypes. During this time, they need personal support (Katra, 2011).

In conclusion, knowledge about teenage parenthood, different sexual preferences and the consequences of unprotected sexual activity should be an important part of youth sex education and comprehensive health education, as well as the promotion of positive personal patterns and positive lifestyles. It is important that it is integrated with knowledge of a person's development as a whole in individual and social dimensions, rather than being a separate, isolated field of study, and that it is not limited to the biological aspect of sexuality (Beisert, 2001, 2004; Grzelak, 2006). Teaching about sexuality requires specialist preparation – a psychologist may ask people trained in sexuality for help, for example a sexologist, but should strive to integrate it with other psychoeducational activities.

How does the teenager's way of thinking change and what comes out of it?

During adolescence, the child physically looks more and more like an adult and their psyche and behaviour also change. The young person perceives themselves and other people in a different way and builds a complex picture of themselves, a relatively stable self-assessment, which is the result of reflection on themselves, their behaviour and achievements, and this, in turn, leads to changes in their behaviour and social functioning. The basis for changes in identity and social functioning is the development of thinking and reasoning. In early adolescence, the ability to think abstractly increases (Wadsworth, 1998). Adults should take this fact into account because it is important in their contact with teenagers. An increase in the ability to think logically and scientifically affects a person's ability to communicate, make decisions and negotiate. The young person wants to argue, discuss and hear arguments in favour of a given opinion, ban or educational order. Parents do not always understand these

changes in behaviour and communication with their children – they consider discussions about obvious issues as a waste of time and a nuisance. However, it is important to remember that these new types of behaviour in the teenager demonstrate the development of their thinking, and it is worthwhile to find time for a longer conversation and try to explain one's position, bearing in mind that an adult does not need to know everything and be infallible, and that their decisions are not always the result of deeper reflection. A conversation with a child can also be an opportunity for the parent or teacher to analyse their position and their beliefs. It can be an opportunity for an adult to better understand their views and thus contribute to their personal development.

Since the role of conversation increases in relations with adults, it is important to build communication skills that the school psychologist can help to develop as part of promotional activities or psychoprevention of family conflicts. Such classes could be conducted in separate groups of students, parents and teachers, as well as in mixed groups.

Undeniably, school tasks stimulate the development of formal thinking, but *do they also promote the comprehensive use of the student's cognitive potential* (Dyrda, 2000; 2008; Ledzińska, 2004; Mietzel, 2002; Rimm, 1994, 2000)? It appears not! Some researchers (for example, Keating and Sasie, 1996, as cited in Santrock, 2003) are concerned about the school practices, which, they believe, not only fail to develop but even inhibit "critical thinking". They do not foster imagination and creativity but focus on the exam skills. This is confirmed by the study on top students conducted by Dorota Turska (2006), who demonstrated that it is not curiosity that motivates these students to learn, but the "compulsion" to maintain the best position in the class. Some of them get very good grades thanks to their extremely hard work, done at the limit of their endurance. Learning for these kids is mainly about "swotting up" the material – this causes severe and prolonged stress. **In many or even most cases, teachers do not stimulate or reward independent thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills or the application of theoretical knowledge in practice**. It is worthwhile for the school psychologist to conduct educational activities in this field among parents and teachers, training the latter in methods of stimulating creative and critical thinking (Dembo, 1994; Dryden, Vos, 2000; Eby, Smutny, 1998; Fisher, 1999; Nęcka, 2003; Nęcka et al., 2016).

Cognitive development and the formation of one's identity are linked to adolescent egocentrism (Elkind, Bowen, 1979), which may seem to be egoism and self-centredness to others. Adolescent egocentrism is the norm for this period and must be taken into account to understand the specificities of young people's thinking and behaviour. This phenomenon results from physical development and the need to define one's own identity, and it manifests itself

in various ways. The two most important faces of adolescent egocentrism are the so-called imaginary audience and myths about oneself. The first character involves the teenager's feeling that since their experiences are so important and absorbing for them, they are also so for the environment. Thus, others are just as interested in them, constantly watching and judging them. These others are, above all, the child's peers, who are becoming an important reference group – it is their opinion that is the most important thing to be reckoned with. The other character is convinced that they are special and that, for example, nothing bad will happen to them in life – thus they can behave daringly and dangerously without fear. The young person feels that if they take drugs, for example, they will not become addicted, or if they have unprotected sex, they will not become infected with any disease. Others may suffer such consequences, but not them. Educators should therefore watch over these children and understand their desire to impress their peers as long as this does not put their health and life at risk, and in the case of myths about themselves, try to weaken this way of thinking, encouraging them to reflect on the direct and indirect consequences of their behaviour. The psychologist's role is to share knowledge about this phenomenon, its determinants and manifestations and to undertake promotional activities for the benefit of self-cognition and development of competences in perspective thinking and predicting the consequences of one's behaviour[3]. Developing a forward-looking perspective and projecting oneself in the future is particularly important (Katra, 2008, 2016a; Liberska, 2004). This is a precondition for developing identity (Erikson, 2002) and subjectivity (Obuchowski, 2000). The accomplishment of one's intentions requires a relatively specific plan and involves a realistic assessment of one's abilities and competences and the ability to anticipate the consequences of one's actions, which makes it possible, among other things, to estimate how close one's actions will get to the desired goal. This type of prospective activity (Katra, 2008; Katra, 2016) makes the self-image realistic, embeds an individual's actions in a specific reality that needs to be taken into account in order to succeed, and thus weakens magical and unrealistic thinking about oneself.

Cognitive development is related to the issue of moral development. The shortcomings in this area encourage asocial, aggressive, and even criminal

[3] I recommend here the series published by Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne: *Scenariusze godzin wychowawczych. Jaki wybrać zawód?* [Scenarios of form period. What career should I choose?] (2008). Bolesław Bielak describes activities with students, aimed at getting to know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, abilities and preferences. In turn, in Barbara Dworakowska's booklet (2008) *Jak wykorzystać czas?* [How to use time?], there are exercises designed to teach students how to plan and manage their activities in a long-term perspective.

behaviours. Harming others, using violence in conflict resolution, bullying other pupils, thefts – these are examples of behaviour which should be strictly opposed, for instance by taking actions promoting young people's moral development. Many practitioners and scholars previously doubted their effectiveness, but contemporary research and prevention programmes confirm the thesis about the possibility of accelerating moral development (Santrock, 2003). Here too, the psychologist can stimulate the teenager's development by taking measures to prevent asocial[4] or aggressive behaviours. At the same time, it should be clearly emphasised that moral behaviours are largely absorbed by observing adults – the attitude which the significant adults (parents, teachers) have towards moral principles has an undeniable influence on the teenager's attitude towards others and respect for their rights. In other words, we raise our children not only through orders and prohibitions, but also, and perhaps above all, through our own behaviours, which are consciously or unconsciously assimilated by the child through imitation or modelling (Bandura, Walters, 1968). An important task is, therefore, to make parents and teachers aware of this and to improve their pedagogical competences.

In general, there are many forms in which cognitive development is manifested in adolescence. Sometimes, educators, absorbed in teenagers' behaviours, do not notice less visible changes in their thinking and perception of reality. It is important to see these two areas of development – action and thinking – as interrelated, bearing in mind the achievements but also limitations of the adolescent's cognitive abilities and the resulting problem behaviours. Teenagers' thinking and reasoning abilities continue to grow and will be further developed in adulthood. Knowing the regularities in the development of adolescents' thinking will help to prevent many misunderstandings and difficulties in contact with young people.

How do the teenager's self-perception and self-esteem change, and what roles do peers play here?

The need for recognition and the associated self-esteem is important to every person (Lawrence, 2008). It is common knowledge that self-esteem has a major impact on the functioning of an individual in many areas of life such

[4] In the Polish literature, there are many publications on psychoprevention and early intervention with regard to undesirable behaviours in children and adolescents. Examples include self-help programmes for students – Gaś (1995), *Pomoc psychologiczna młodzieży* [Psychological assistance for adolescents]; early intervention programmes – see Elliot, Place (2012), *Children in Difficulty*; psychopreventive programmes – Gaś (2006), *Profilaktyka w szkole* [Prevention at school].

as academic achievement, social relationships, mental health and the ability to cope with stressful situations.

As I have already written in this text, young people's physical and cognitive development arouses their great interest in themselves and the need to define their own identity. This process takes place in many aspects – self-image changes and a mature self-esteem is formed. With age, the image of self becomes more complex and hierarchical (Harter, 1999), and self-esteem gets more realistic and stable. However, it is important to remember that the teenager is very sensitive to criticism; it is easy to hurt them and undermine their self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem isolate themselves, they are shy and have problems in contact with their peers – they withdraw or display problematic behaviours or can be aggressive – they mask their insecurity. Problem pupils absorb their educators' attention and are often referred to the school psychologist to "fix" them. The psychologist should not give in to this pressure – rather, it would be advisable to take care of the problematic pupil with regard to their life situation, specific relationships with adults and the experience that comes with it. The psychologist's primary duty in such a case is to help the student, not to make life easier for the parent or teacher. Fulfilling such a role requires getting to know the student, their behaviour against the background of their biography, which is the basis for a reliable diagnosis, which, in turn, is the basis for intervention actions. It is also worthwhile to find out what the teenager's dreams and intentions concerning their future are, even if they are vague and undefined at that particular time. An attempt can be made to persuade them to create the so-called hypothetical biography (Katra, 2008; 2016), which is a project of their own life. This type of narration will allow the psychologist to deepen their knowledge about a pupil and to help the latter to define their visions, projects, life plans or to initiate the creation of these plans.

Often, psychological assistance consists in strengthening the child's self-esteem, providing support and first aid when, for example, their behaviour is the result of a long-term crisis situation. In this case, further specialist help is often needed in a family, or mental health clinic, to which a pupil and their family should be referred.

The situation is different for a shy, withdrawn child. Children who function in such a way may be perceived as polite pupils and their problems may be overlooked or underestimated. Such an attitude on the part of the child may also result from a low self-esteem or be a reaction to a crisis situation. Shy children often become victims of bullying by their peers, they can be rejected or isolated in a group, which is a source of suffering and hinders their social development (Zimbardo, 1994). Preventing such adverse phenomena requires monitoring students' behaviour and cooperation with teachers. In certain cases, integration with a given group of children (the class) or intervention measures

should be taken: supporting and strengthening the pupil's self-esteem. Workshops can also be organised to develop the communication and social competences of shy and problematic pupils. In some schools, due to the so-called difficult environment, preventive measures should be taken to ensure that aggression or violence does not occur in the school.

The self-image and self-esteem of an individual is shaped by many factors. In the early years, parents play an extremely important role in this process (later, during adolescence, the role of peers increases, and then it is mainly relationships with friends that influence self-perception and self-esteem). Schoolmates and close friends constitute a primary reference group for self-esteem and identity formation. The young person compares themselves with their peers in terms of appearance, interests, experiences, views, which they confide only in their friends. Peers were important already in childhood, but in adolescence they take a central place in the young person's life. This is connected with the search for mental (emotional) support outside the family, and at the same time it is a kind of preparation for building a lasting, close, intimate relationship with a person outside the family.

Adults are not always aware of the role that the peer group plays in the teenager's life and often perceive having trouble with a child as a result of their friends' negative influence. As a matter of fact, peers play a positive role in the child's development. The peer group proposes a different system of values and opinions from that of the parents and sets criteria for fashion and taste (Fenwick, Smith, 1995; Figes, 2003; Gurian, 2001; Obuchowska, 1996, 2000; Katra, 2003; Pruitt, 2002). Relationships with peers constitute an area of acquiring and improving interpersonal skills and play a key role in identity formation.

Popularity and position in the group are extremely important for teenagers. For this reason, they are so susceptible to group influences, as well as to the standards and norms applicable among their peers. The group provides important feedback on how they function in horizontal social relationships, while relationships with parents and other adults are vertical in character.

The phenomenon that worries educators is conformity to peers (Gardner, Steinberg, 2005). It should be remembered, however, that in the initial phase of adolescence, it gives the teenager a sense of acceptance and security and strengthens self-confidence, while in late adolescence this attitude weakens. Older adolescents are more individualised, both in terms of appearance and opinion.

I would like to stress again that since the peer group is so important at this particular phase, isolation from peers or rejection by the group to which the teenager wants to belong deeply affects them. This can lead to seeking acceptance in asocial groups, or to adolescent depression and suicidal attempts.

How does the quest for autonomy affect family relationships?

An increased role of the peer group is one of the manifestations of striving for autonomy, as well as emotional and mental independence from parents. These aspirations are a new challenge for parents (Katra, 2007; Smetana, 2010). This is a time of rebellion, which can be either visible or hidden (Oleszkowicz, 2006). The teenager opposes the rules of family and social life and is critical of the world and their family. They see adults' inconsistencies and double standards, which may be the result of experience and life wisdom, as well as a dialectic approach to reality (Oleś, 2012). On the other hand, the adolescent is not able to go beyond concrete and/or formal thinking, which together with a lack of experience makes them categorical in their judgments and can result in their provocative behaviour when claiming their rights. In this way, they build and explore the limits of their emotional and cognitive independence. This process can be experienced by parents and other adults (teachers) as a loss of authority, a lack of loyalty and ingratitude on the part of the child as well as a negative testimony to their pedagogical competences.

Contemporary research (Santrock, 2003) shows that the child's emotional and mental independence from their parents does not mean breaking the bond but requires transformation (Keizer, Helmerhorst, van Rijn-van Gelderen, 2019). For parents who understand this need, it is easier to accompany their child in gaining autonomy without losing a close relationship. Mutual openness and flexibility help to rebuild the bond and improve communication between teenagers and their educators. This stage in the child's development requires educators to modify the forms of control over the child (Katra, Czyżkowska, 2007). Moreover, it should be remembered that the child's adolescence is accompanied by the developmental processes to which their parents are also subject but independently. It is worthwhile to look at their mutual influences, perceive them in a holistic way and include them in undertaking all forms of assistance, intervention, prevention or promotional activities aimed at both youngsters and their parents.

The rebuilding of family ties is not without conflict. On the other hand, the well-established and widespread belief in society that domestic conflicts are inevitable and very intense (Oleszkowicz, 2006) is not fully confirmed by studies (Harter, Monsour, 1992; Smetana, 2010; Smetana, Asquith, 1994; Smetana, Yau, Hanson, 1991). On the whole, relationships in teenagers' families are more positive than negative. Moreover, in many families there is no generation gap. Admittedly, there is an increase in conflicts, but they concern everyday life issues (throwing away rubbish, taking the dog out, keeping things in order) and disputes over the time spent studying at home. In general, most conflicts are relatively trivial. All in all, teenagers' insubordination serves to emphasise

their independence (keeping their own! things in order) and is an expression of a growing need for and development of control over their behaviour, i.e. self-control. Initially, it takes the form of denying parents' prohibitions and orders, to later transform into a search for one's own identity and one's own system of values and building a personal worldview, which, as it often turns out, is – in its final form – close to that of parents.

Many factors can affect the level of conflict within families. The most important is the style of communication. As research shows, proper communication between children and their parents reduces or mitigates conflicts (Smetana, 1995; Smetana et al., 1991). Moreover, as expected, where relationships between parents and children are poor, conflicts increase. They are also exacerbated in families experiencing stress (separation of the family as a result of one or both parents going abroad to work) or difficulties related to environmental factors (living in another country), or when parents do not adequately fulfil their role over a long period of time. In such situations, the child is de facto in a situation of sudden or long-term crisis, and then, as I have already written above, the school psychologist should take a similar position to that of a general practitioner and provide first aid (support, understanding) and refer the child or the whole family to the relevant specialists.

What "threads" connect stress, emergencies, health, and teenagers' risky behaviours?

Difficult situations and conflicts within and outside the family cause stress (Heszen, 2011, 2013; Kaczmarska, Curyło-Sikora, 2016; Lazarus, 1986). Stress is part of our everyday life, and the ability to cope with it is an important life skill that should be built up in students. It is essential to recognise what kind of stress situation we are dealing with, and then adjust an appropriate remedial strategy. There are two main types of stressful situations. One type of such situations is modifiable, and then a problem-focused strategy is more useful. The other comprises situations that cannot be changed. Then, an emotional strategy is more beneficial. The task of educators and the school psychologist is to help the teenager to develop the ability to distinguish between these two types of situations and deal with them accordingly. Coping with everyday stress increases satisfaction with life, self-esteem and self-assessment, it promotes a constructive attitude towards difficulties and, as a result, life's achievements, including learning.

It should be remembered that experiencing and coping with stress depends on the child's gender (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993, as cited in Coleman, Hendry, 2000). Boys deal with stress mainly in an active way, sometimes denying

problems or pushing them away. Girls, on the other hand, seek social support and focus on emotional aspects. Besides, girls and young women experience stress more acutely and perceive a particular situation as more stressful than men do (Breslau et al., 2017).

Some pupils are exposed to excessive stress (too severe or prolonged), which can lead to a crisis and then they need professional help from an adult, preferably a psychologist, who is qualified to provide first aid in such situations. Assistance in this phase involves providing support and protection from the wrongdoer, as well as motivating them to seek further help from a crisis intervention specialist, and later also from a psychotherapist. Currently, there are psychological intervention groups which can be reached in difficult cases. Also, there are more and more psychologists and pedagogues employed by psychological-educational counselling centres who are trained in crisis intervention[5].

The reaction to stress may be, as I have mentioned above, risky behaviours (Baranowska, 2016). In general, teenagers and young people display this type of behaviour more often than younger children and adults. Such behaviours perform a number of developmental functions; above all, they are one of the ways of gaining experience for shaping one's own identity. They are an attempt to cross the barriers established by adults and allow teenagers to challenge the patterns of the so-called "adult" lifestyle. Therefore, they are so attractive. In addition, young people are under the illusion, which also occurs in adults, that they will achieve what they intend – pleasure, satisfaction and acceptance of their peers, without taking into account the unfavourable effects of their actions, including bravado and risky activities. This is associated with the phenomenon of adolescent egocentrism described above. Moreover, risky behaviours are perceived differently by adults and adolescents. The former consider them bad and dangerous, whereas the latter find them attractive because they provide many expected reinforcements (see Zuckerman's sensation-seeking theory, as cited in Glicksohn, Zuckerman, 2019; Zuckerman, 2007). Taking up high-risk behaviour by young people has many determinants. These include, for example, the need to learn from one's own experience, striving for independence from others in making decisions, or lower conformity towards one's peers. Contradictory social messages concerning health and alcohol-, smoking- and drug-related issues are also of importance. This incoherence is often unnoticed by adults but makes it difficult for a young person to gain a reliable knowledge of what is and what is not good for health.

[5] You can contact the Crisis Intervention Section of the Polish Psychological Association (PTP). The addresses of the Crisis Intervention Centres can be found on the website. See www.interwencjakryzysowa.pl

In recent years, the achievements of neuropsychology indicate that risky behaviours in teenagers have a neurological background related to brain development during adolescence (Blakemore, 2019; Steinberg et al., 2016). This is a time of great sensitivity of the limbic system and the reward centre, with much slower development of the prefrontal lobes responsible for cognitive processes ("thought, reflection and planning"), which control the individual's behaviour by, for example, inhibiting our spontaneous reactions (Gardner, Steinberg, 2005; Steinberg, 2007).

Risky behaviours may take the form of both asocial and antisocial attitudes (Hansen, Breiveik, 2001; Jędrzejewski, 1999; Santrock, 2003; Urban, 2000; Ziółkowska, 2005). It is worthwhile to make a distinction between permanent and sporadic behaviours. The reasons for these categories vary and therefore require different ways of intervention (Urban, 2000). Scientists discovered certain regularities that govern this phenomenon. Boys are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour than girls, although according to Czapiński's surveys (2008) conducted in recent years, girls catch up with boys quickly in this respect. The criminal past of a family member is also clearly conducive to such behaviours. Antisocial behaviour is more frequent in poor and socially disadvantaged families. Parents who neglect their child are also a risk factor (Annalakshmi, 2019).

The behaviour which is risky by its very nature threatens health or life, although it may be positive (bungee jumping) or negative in nature (damaging public property) (Brodbeck et al., 2013; Hansen, Breivik, 2001; Ostaszewski, 2014). It goes without saying that young people attach less importance to their own health (Santrock, 2003). This is indeed the healthiest age group. Young people relatively rarely require medical help and fall ill less than in childhood. This gives them the feeling that health is their "inalienable" gift and that no special care is needed in this area. On the other hand, they are more absorbed by their appearance and the impression they make on others than by their health. Facts show, however, that young people have relatively many problems with mental and emotional health (Kendall 2000; Popielarska and Popielarska, 2000). Young people are susceptible to depression and relatively often attempt suicide (Ambroziak, Kołakowski, Siwek, 2018; Carr, 2008; Mattis, Ollendick, 2004; Pilecka, 1995). Educators should be particularly sensitive to signs of such difficulties experienced by adolescents (Elliot, Place, 2012; Ribner, 2005; Suchańska, 2001; Szychowiak, 2001).

It is not only difficulties in shaping one's identity, problems with finding one's own lifestyle, adolescent egocentrism or disregard for one's health that can cause emotional and psychological problems. Such problems can also result from comparing oneself with peers. As I have already mentioned in this paper, there are large individual differences in teenagers' physical, mental

and social development. In most cases, even relatively large deviations from the average do not necessarily indicate an anomaly, but an adolescent who is clearly different from their classmates may be unhappy for this reason. Therefore, such kids should be observed from a distance and taken care of. It seems that apart from supporting activities and psychoeducation, promotional activities can play a huge role in this area. Getting to know oneself, orientation to personal development, raising emotional intelligence, increasing social competences and the ability to set and implement one's goals – these are the resources of an individual that contribute to their well-being (Emmons, 2003) and are a precondition for self-fulfilment (Deci, Ryan, 2002). Therefore, it is worth taking such actions, regardless of current problems and conflicts. Shaping these aspects of personality fosters better social relations, a better understanding of others and taking up activities that are in line with one's needs and aspirations.

Conclusions

It follows from the above considerations that adolescence is a complex multi-faceted phenomenon and presents specific challenges for parents, teachers and psychologists. The main developmental task is to prepare for adult life, and this priority means the implementation of minor tasks and challenges and influences the behaviour of the adolescent and those around him. Parents and educators face the changes the child is subject to and do not always understand them. The child's adolescence requires new pedagogical competences, mainly communication skills, as the relationship between the child and their parents and between the adolescent and adults in general, including teachers, is evolving. The psychologist – an expert on upbringing – can and should be helpful not only in dealing with these phenomena, but also, through psychoeducational and promotional activities, support and prepare both young people and adults for optimal transition through this period, so that the new generation is happy, sensitive to others and cooperative.

The educational psychologist should be a counsellor and assistant to parents and teachers in carrying out their upbringing tasks. They can provide the adults with relevant knowledge, shape realistic expectations of the child as well as help educators to develop the necessary pedagogical competences and resolve conflicts with young people. On the other hand, they should help teenagers to pass through this stage in a way that is most beneficial for their development and allows them to achieve a satisfactory lifestyle in the future.

ABSTRACT

The school psychologist in the face of the challenges of adolescence

Each stage in a child's development has its own specifics that should be taken into account in making educational interventions addressed to a given age group. Growing up is the bridge between childhood and adulthood. During this period, radical changes in the physical and psychological nature of the child take place. This stage lasts for many years (from eight to ten), and it can be divided into several subperiods depending on the prevailing changes. At the same time, it is difficult to define its boundaries and the development norm. The most important tasks of adolescence include achieving psychological autonomy and preparation for independent life in adulthood. A young person can achieve this when he receives support from parents and significant adults. Growing up poses new challenges not only for teenagers.

KEYWORDS: adolescence, autonomy, bringing up teenagers, developmental norm

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7. School failure

The school psychologist's work is commonly associated with conducting intelligence tests, and from this perspective, school is mainly a place of learning. Psychological activities taken stereotypically fit into the scheme: a child has difficulties with learning at school; it is the psychologist who checks "whether a child is clever enough". In order to describe the tasks facing the psychologist in the situation when a student experiences school failure, it is necessary to overcome this rather stereotypical view, but at the same time to take it into account. Since transparency and full information about the intentions, actions taken, the purpose of interaction and the necessity of making a contract are included in the standard of the psychologist's work (see Lewandowska-Kidoń, Kalinowska-Witek, 2016; Toeplitz-Winiewska, 2019, 2019a; Ustjan, Śniegulska, 2015) – the primary requirement now becomes to explain to parents, students and teachers **what psychological diagnosis involves and how it is implemented**, as well as **what kind of support and assistance is provided**. Explaining the nuances of psychological actions often means verifying or even refuting stereotypical views (in the worst possible situation, it even involves fighting against prejudice).

The school psychologist's responsibilities always include dealing with students' school failures. You may work in a school and not be a specialist in school negotiations or counselling on educational issues (although it is an irreparable loss), but, to put it bluntly, there is no escape for the psychologist from "entering" the area of the student's problems connected with schooling. Since these tasks cannot be ignored, I will try to describe them in a clear way by presenting the model of diagnosis, assistance and support (in accordance with the division of the psychologist's activities, adopted in the book, into the

following categories: monitoring, prevention, intervention, and promotion – M-P-I-P). The M-P-I-P model was developed at the Faculty of Psychology (and then also implemented and discussed at the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Social Education and the Institute of Psychology of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin). I described the successive steps of the procedure in the form of six rules – having an extremely mobilising awareness that the readers working as school psychologists will easily verify their use.

Rule one: obtain the pupil's consent for psychological contact on a par with that of their parent

In my opinion, Brzezińska (2004) rightly recognises that it is the responsibility of the psychologist to enter the world of the child (and the young person). "It is important for a psychologist to discover how a child thinks, how, speaking the language of Piaget 'they present the world to themselves'" (p. 214). Certainly, this knowledge will be constantly expanded, supplemented and modified during subsequent meetings with a child and their parents or guardians and will be used throughout the whole procedure – "it will have an influence on how long the sessions (meetings) will be, whether they will be attended by people known to the child or not, what language will be used to give instructions to the child, how much information will be given to the child at a time, and what type of help the child will receive and in what situations" (p. 214). The basic requirement in the psychologist's work appears to be making every effort to receive the preliminary consent of the child (and young person) for contact, to establish a dialogue with them and create conditions for their cooperation (see Toeplitz-Winiewska, 2019a, p. 364: obtaining informed consent). Only such a starting point makes it possible to build up a child's responsibility for the achieved success in learning (understood, for example, as progress in learning that is visible both to the child and to their parents and teachers, reflected in the marks received, but also in being able to independently take up challenges related to homework or class work). The psychologist's interview with a pupil, which should take place at the earliest possible stage of joint work, is intended to make the goals clear and to discuss the nature of the future contacts. The child (young person) will then have a clear idea of what the meetings will be like, who will participate in them, and what their content will be. If part of the psychologist's work includes meetings with adults who are important in the child's life, without this child's participation, this child should hear from the psychologist why this is happening. The most important thing is that the child should not treat such conduct as directed against them (after all, children cannot participate in

everything, not because they are inferior, unimportant or "very dysfunctional", and these may be the child's most painful doubts, which must be dispelled). Only these efforts on the part of the psychologist can convince a child that the former has real respect for the latter, and not just declares it. In fact, the basic requirement of the psychologist's work with a child is never to forget that it is not work on but work with the child. It is my impression that the reported "learning problem" is often perceived by children as something that is beyond their control. The child has to make an effort to understand their role/motivation: What do I want to achieve? What problem do I want to work on with a psychologist? Do I do it of my own accord? It seems that the most important task of the psychologist remains to reformulate the goal[1] of the work in such a way that not only does it become achievable for the pupil, but above all, it is understood by them early on.

Rule two: find and precisely describe various sources of diagnostic information and those which provide support for working with a child

At the beginning of diagnostic work, it is advisable to consider the question of information sources diversity before diagnostic hypotheses about a child (young person) are made, so as not to rely only on contact with them. It is impossible to proceed without prior consultation with other specialists working with them or with their adult guardians/teachers. After all, when you undertake work with a pupil in primary or secondary school, you can always increase your understanding of their problems or needs by talking to the people who contact this child on a daily basis. Their understanding does not have to be and often is not complete or based on specialist knowledge. However, since helping a child/young person requires cooperation with their immediate environment, it is useful to know what the people who are most important to this pupil think, feel and how they deal with this child. It should be clear

[1] A well-formulated goal of the work should adhere to the rule expressed in the acronym SMART. This means that it must be divided into stages, the so-called **S**pecific steps, which should be described in detail so that the student can see for themselves whether they have realised them. Also, it should be a goal with clear indicators measuring success/progress, so that you know if you are on the right track to achieve it – in other words, it should be **M**easurable. Besides, this goal should be **A**chievable for the child. It must also be **R**elevant for them, i.e. it must concern the child, it must be something that the child can actually put their effort into, something that they can get personally engaged in, and what really depends on them – what they have control over. Most importantly, the goal must be **T**ime bound – it must simply be specified how long it will take to reach it – whether something will take two days, a month, or a year (see Sokołowska, 2008, pp. 43–46).

to the adult guardians/educators of the child (parents and/or teachers) why the psychologist is working with them and with the child. The perspectives of both the student and their parent (and even the teacher) are interesting and important. Here, we can use the metaphor that no responsible doctor takes up treatment (assistance) without seeing the patient. And since the psychologist also applies the *primum non nocere* principle (from Latin "first of all, do no harm"), which is one of the guiding ethical principles in medicine, this analogy does not seem to go very far. "The primary value for the psychologist is the good of the other person, and the aim of professional activity is to help the other person to solve life difficulties and achieve a better quality of life – by developing individual abilities – as well as improve interpersonal contacts" (Preamble: *The Psychologist's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*, 1992). It is counterproductive to ignore a child, i.e. to talk about a child without this child, without ever asking them for their opinion or motivating them to work on their own (just as excluding is to talk about a child in front of them – but this elementary mistake does not happen too often, as the awareness of psychologists in this aspect is quite high).

Regardless of the procedure, that is whether the psychologist holds a preliminary meeting first with the pupil and then with their adult guardian or vice versa, it seems invaluable not to make the diagnosis only on the basis of a single source of information. Every psychologist is now and then offered an "initial diagnosis" by a person reporting a problem, to which the latter is deeply attached. For example, some parents may claim that "the child has a day and night wetting condition" (which is an attempt to use a medical term). To clarify what this means, they add that the boy "constantly wets himself – at night he pees in bed, and during the day at school he is unable to make it to the bathroom in time and continuously has wet underwear". However, this wetting in and out of the school, while being a real problem for him, was not the most serious (the root) problem at all. In the course of an in-depth conversation, it turned out that when the boy was in the second year of primary school, he had a whole series of school failures, which resulted in emotional disorders. The child was unable to cope with the primary schooling because of, among other things, severe hearing loss and because the teaching methods were not adapted to his limited hearing ability (the parents knew about his hearing loss but did not try to compensate for it, whereas the teacher was not aware). Hence, there is an absolute requirement that the process of defining (identifying) the child's problem or important needs be long enough to allow the key information to be brought to the psychologist's attention. During this process, the psychologist's task is to formulate further preliminary hypotheses (in large numbers, and preferably in writing) based on several sources and to verify them gradually.

Rule three: constantly remind yourself that there are no two identical children or two identical problems

The starting point for working with a child (a young person) that I propose is almost philosophical: I know that I know nothing about this particular child. Indeed, this situation confirms the colloquial warning that *there is a lie, a bigger lie and statistics*. I always repeat this to myself before meeting with the pupil, their teacher and parent. Everything I know about pupils and their failures, everything that results from statistics in the broadest sense of the word (that is, the conclusions drawn from observations and studies of a larger group of children), I suspend for a moment in order to understand this one and only, single, individual, unique pupil. I do this for my own mental hygiene so as not to fall into routine and depend too much on someone else's judgment, to practise perceptiveness and to go through the successive stages of the diagnostic procedure as if anew, **like a scientist who asks questions and seeks answers**. I admit that I do not have a ready answer concerning this particular child, who I am meeting for the first time. Theoretically, this child might turn out to be one in a thousand pupils, i.e. unusual in every respect. This young person may be the only one I have met (and ever will) in my professional life as a psychologist who has serious neurological problems and whose deteriorating learning performance is caused by damage to a particular brain structure (see Borkowska, Domańska, 2012; Jerzak, 2015. Tarkowski, 2016). If I invited a hundred children and examined them in one diagnostic session (a collective examination can be done, for example, with Raven's Progressive Matrices Test), the statistics would be inexorable. In a group study, there would be some correlations, that is I would have little chance – outside the children's hospital ward – of finding more than two children with a cancer problem that results in neurological disorders associated with a reduction in their intellectual level (or "only" disorganises their actions, lengthens their reaction time, reduces their plasticity and triggers their tendency for perseverance, etc.). If, however, this one child enters the office and not a hundred of them together at one time, regardless of whether the psychologist first meets with a pupil and then with an adult or vice versa, the statistics do not work to their advantage. Thus, if you are a psychologist working in a school, I suggest that you should think **idiographically** (individually) when creating case studies. Since the psychologist's task is to pose a number of questions and hypotheses that they want to verify, they must recognise that clues – which stem from their personal experience or the opinion of the school environment, or which come from the statistics of a given school – can be misleading (i.e. they must be verified as hypotheses rather than as certainties). **Discovering, step by step**, what kind of support and help a child requires is embedded in

the model of theoretical work in the cognitive-behavioural current, to which I refer in my professional work (and which I will explain in detail below). This process of discovering should be described, even if only for the purpose of preparing psychological documentation required by the legislator[2]. The psychologist needs to document those elements of contact with the child and the adults important to this child that will help to record the most important actions taken and their effectiveness, as well as elements of causal reasoning (to justify: why it was better to do this and not to do otherwise). The more structured and synthetic such a note in the child's documents is, the easier it is to make a more complete diagnosis (final hypothesis) and assess the effects of the previously planned work.

Rule four: precede every psychological action aimed at a child with a diagnosis

It can be assumed that diagnosis is the answer to the question: How can we understand the problems and needs of the child in a school situation? What psychological meaning can be given to emerging behaviours, emotions and thoughts in the child's mind? The answer is: diagnosis. It is where psychological concepts are explained and feedback to non-professionals appears, i.e. in a language that everyone understands. Then, the question would simply be: Why is it happening this way and not differently? In the context of prevention of risks and problems in education and pupil development, the diagnostic question posed is: What are the potential risks? As an educational specialist, the psychologist takes a broad view to consider: What kind of help can a teacher and/or parent (i.e. the environment that supports development) give to the child? Should the child be pushed or perhaps merely encouraged to take up a task? What measures should be taken to help the child to avoid school failure? I agree here with the views of the late head of the Department of Education and

[2] The statutory obligation to draw up documentation is included in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 29 August 2019 (see *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej*, 2019). (Concerning the manner in which public kindergartens, schools and other educational institutions should keep records of the teaching process, educational and caring activities and types of such records). Paragraph 11 of that regulation reads as follows: "The kindergarten, school and other educational institution keep records of activities other than those entered respectively in the kindergarten's activity record book, the class register, the day-care centre's activity record and the activity record referred to in Section 10 of that regulation, if it is necessary to document the course of teaching, educational and caring activities, in particular classes in the field of psychological and pedagogical assistance, classes developing interests and talents of children, students, adult learners or pupils respectively, as well as classes related to shaping professional competences of students or pupils".

Development, Prof. Andrzej Jurkowski, that there is no such thing as prevention in general, **it is always prevention of something** (preventing a specific unfavourable phenomenon, whereby success/progress – treated as success in learning – is measurable, and failure is as visible). The psychologist's diagnostic activity can be directly translated into the question that parents and/or teachers ask: What can be done to prevent a child's school failure or its recurrence? The next question is what effectively supports the child's development, as it is this aid/support for development – also in the school environment – that is the psychologist's primary task (*ISPA Code of Ethics*, 2011). When planning promotional activities aimed at meeting didactic and upbringing requirements, the school psychologist should ask: What experiences should be provided to enable their development in harmony, not only with themselves but also with the values of our culture? There are a number of development support methods focused on education, accompanied by a reliable diagnosis, including the Good Start Method (Bogdanowicz, 2006, 2008; 2014; Bogdanowicz, Bogdanowicz, 2016; Bogdanowicz, Barańska, Jakacka, 1998; Sokołowska, 2013) and the Method to Support Mathematical Thought in Children (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, 1994, 2012, 2016; Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, Zielińska, 2009; Szewczuk, 2013). The psychologist's actions should therefore result from the diagnostic process and constitute its final conclusions**. In fact, there is no universal diagnostic procedure** – even if the psychologist follows a well-established procedure and has a specific set of diagnostic methods (many of the tests are international in character, as they have been successfully adapted by many countries, cf. the IDS (the Intelligence and Development Scales, as cited in Jaworowska, Matczak, Fecenec, 2012); the WISC (the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, as cited in Matczak, Piotrowska, Ciarkowska, 2008), SB (the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales). Certainly, there is a requirement that only those latest methods be used that are proven and recommended as meeting the fit test criteria (see Toeplitz-Winiewska, 2019). An updated set of test methods, which meet this requirement, may be used in the school (see Krasowicz-Kupis, Wiejak, Gruszczyńska, 2015).

Applying specific research procedures – including psychological texts as well as non-standard research methods, i.e. observation, experiment, psychological conversation – is a useful practice (habit). However, the way a psychologist acts should above all result from understanding the situation of a child – from hypotheses that have been put forward and are verifiable. For example, a child can be helped – using cognitive and behavioural techniques – by teaching them strategies for solving specific life difficulties, or dealing with the stress experienced in specific situations. Intervention in such a situation would take the form of counselling, but if this was not sufficient, as might be the case for behavioural disorders or emotional problems, psychotherapy may be necessary,

and it should be carried out outside the school. Another area of assistance for students could be to help them to improve – in a broad (general) sense – their learning skills, develop cognitive processes[3] and metacognitive and motivational strategies, and develop social skills (this would be prevention, but also promotion). As a result of these psychological influences, the child is expected to learn self-control, self-observation and self-regulation (Zimmerman, 1990, 2002; Zimmerman, Schunk, 2003). And this is a key element of the psychologist's work – encouraging the child to also take responsibility for their learning achievements. The most important for the development of moral responsibility (attitude) is: "keeping one's word; step-by-step implementation of planned activities, despite fatigue or discouragement; fair treatment, according to the declared principles, without omitting both its positive and negative aspects; and the courage to act, which means that you do not avoid difficult situations or postpone activities for ever" (see Annamalay, 2000; McKay, Davis and Fanning, 1995; Stallard, 2005; Wyckoff, Unell, 2004).

The way of working with parents and/or teachers could be based – to varying degrees, depending on the child's diagnosed needs and problems – on giving explanations and examples, guiding them to the appropriate course of action and planning how to deal with the child step by step (Brophy, 2004; Dawson, Guare, 2009; Dix, 2010; Filipiak, 2012; Uhman, 2005; Żylińska, 2013). Probably, providing emotional support (comforting, showing compassion, kindness, and relieving tension) would also be essential. At the behavioural level, the psychologist could use techniques such as demonstrating correct activity to enable the parent and/or the teacher to consciously engage in supporting the child's good learning habits (the so-called positive routine) and in their homework or class work (model presentations, situation dialogues, exercises, role-playing that will gradually increase the difficulty of tasks set for themselves and the child, teaching how to organise the child's work, planning, giving effective instructions, applying praise, paying attention, monitoring their own and the child's behaviour, participating in the child's activity within the zone of proximal development[4], without relieving them of a task).

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[3] It would involve teaching useful memory strategies to make full use of memory resources, training concentration, working on one's self-activity during learning, as well as teaching creative thinking and even the deeply moral actions described in the text (see Gołębiowska-Szychowska, Szychowski, 2015; Majewska-Opiełka, 2015; Schwartz, Tsang, Blair, 2016).

[4] "What a child does today with the help of adults, they will do tomorrow on their own. The zone of proximal development, which takes into account not only what the child has already achieved in this process, but also what is only maturing in them" (Wygotski, 1971, p. 542). "**The zone of proximal development** is a map of the child's area of readiness, limited at the lower end by the current level of skills, and at the higher end by the level of skills that the child can achieve under more favourable conditions" (Brown, Ferrara, 1994).

The pattern of the psychologist's work could be described as follows: **we start our work by explicitly verbalising hypotheses as to the nature of the problem and a child's needs and by precisely justifying where these hypotheses come from**. It involves easy-to-present evidence supporting this particular and not any other way of thinking about the child and the real school failures they are experiencing, or which may occur unless adequate support is provided. When collecting diagnostic data, it is recommended to use **standard methods**, such as psychometric tests or questionnaires (AERA, APA or NCME, 2006; Brzeziński, 2005; *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing,* 2014). At the same time, it is not advisable to rashly give up **free methods**, such as *observation, psychological conversation or projection techniques* (see Silverman, 2007; Stemplewska, Krejtz, 2005, 2005a; Suchańska, 2007). It is helpful for the psychologist to "get insight" into the school documents and the child's various school creations. Only knowledge obtained by means of various methods is really deeply embedded in the school and home reality. An additional condition is that the psychologist leaves their office to reach the child's natural environment.

To sum up, diagnosis means understanding (and, at the same time, explicit verbalisation): the child's needs and developmental tasks they have managed to accomplish in the process of teaching and/or upbringing, their developmental capabilities and demonstrated activity, and the resources of their immediate environment that can be mobilised (natural resources that can be used). This understanding is largely based on the psychologist's theoretical knowledge. A theory is a kind of map that a person uses in a flood of information, ordering and interpreting it (i.e. giving it a psychological meaning). I assume that taking any psychological action should be goal-oriented – the psychologist undertakes some action to achieve something and this is due to their understanding of the child's situation and their environment. Thus, the assistance programme implemented by the psychologist stems directly from the diagnostic process and confirms or modifies it on an ongoing basis (hence, in the cognitive-behavioural approach, the need for constant monitoring). Therefore, the most useful habit that the psychologist should develop is to formulate a case (see Persons, 1989). And this should be done in the language of theory, the assumptions of which are used in psychological practice (to which the psychologist refers).

Rule five: make sure that the diagnosis and any information about the assistance provided is understandable to a non-professional

The habit of formulating a case before taking active action is not always obvious. However, it allows us to prepare for the next step, which is necessary

in the presented model: to discuss our observations and conclusions with all interested parties, including the child. And all this must be done in a way that can be understood by this child. It is not enough to simply say one sentence: "according to my intuition and years of experience", although it does have a reassuring effect. This may be a conclusion, strengthening of the diagnosis, but it cannot be the only point that the interested party (the child, their parent and teacher) will hear. Psychology is a science and is based on the conclusions drawn from empirical and theoretical references. Obviously, not every final proposition is easy to express in a way that can be understood by a person without a psychological background. However, the psychologist should make an effort to express their inspiration for action as clearly and synthetically as possible – in a way that is understandable for a layman (non-psychologist). In the case of school failure diagnosis, it is advisable to refer to the definition and take it apart into primary factors. School failure is a situation where a discrepancy between the didactic and educational requirements and the student's progress and results achieved (lack of success and lack of progress) can be noticed. Therefore, it is worth discussing (a) external conditions that hinder the teacher's didactic work (they are a hindrance when there are system deficiencies, school textbooks are inadequate in terms of content or the way it is conveyed, as well as when there is a mismatch between the curriculum and the student's developmental capabilities, the organisational conditions of school work are difficult, and when there is a lack of didactic aids, etc.); and (b) the teacher's didactic errors (methodical and educational, i.e. insufficient observation of students, poor knowledge of their developmental capabilities, labelling, no disciplinary system, insufficient preparation for lessons or care during the course). "The development of children requires the development of strategies: (1) bringing up children, and (2) guiding their behaviour according to a development 'calendar'. Upbringing strategies are based on providing support, warmth, acceptance and encouragement for exploration – getting to know the environment (including the social world[5]). Control strategies are important to protect children from acquiring inappropriate ways of social functioning" (Plopa, 2005, p. 241).

The background to school failure can be a child's difficulties or limitations, which can be diagnosed as *specific learning difficulties* (reading, writing, mathematical skills), or as a *pervasive developmental disorder, mental retardation* (mild,

[5] The social world and getting to know it is fundamental here. It can be assumed that upbringing (socialisation) "focuses on the pupil's social functioning, i.e. the development of his/her social and moral competences, as well as on shaping their ability for proactive self-regulation. Proactive self-regulation includes the ability to set goals and to pursue them effectively, in accordance with moral requirements and social norms" (Sokołowska et al., 2017, p. 34).

moderate or profound). It is also important to consider problems of a limited nature, which focus on the issues of reduced manual dexterity or sensory efficiency skills (poor vision/hearing), or crossed lateralisation (Sokołowska, 2015). Among non-specific reasons for failure may be unresolved peer conflicts and conflicts that appear in contact with teachers and/or parents. Sometimes the problem is the way in which parents try to support their child's learning at home – but which simply hinders schooling (and in its extreme version it may even prevent it). Negligence or abandonment on the part of the child's closest people is also a factor at play (e.g. malnutrition or refusal to undertake the child's treatment). Such failure may also be a side effect of a pathological phenomenon, such as maltreatment or sexual harassment (the consequence of these experiences is often post-traumatic stress).

The best course of action for a psychologist when they want to explain real risks to laymen is to consult non-specialist studies, which offer a straightforward explanation of the diagnostic criteria applied by psychologists and psychiatrists under the DSM 4/DSM-5 or the ICD-10/ICD-11 (APA, 1994, 2013; Morrison, 2014; WHO, 1992, 2019). A psychologist can simply provide relevant excerpts from popular science books as useful reading for those with whom they work (see Elliot, Place, 2012; Kendall, 2000). It will then be easier for them to understand why something they perceive as problematic or difficult is not always a disorder for the specialist. It is also an ideal occasion to talk about the fact that the diagnosis – for example, of specific school skills development disorders (referred to as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthography) or behavioural disorders (here: ADHD) – is not a kind of crown that a child is supposed to wear (a constant and recurring excuse for everything, because "after all, that is the reason why they do not know how to behave, because they have this disorder"), or even exemption from life problems (e.g. since the diagnosis of dyslexia is so beneficial, one year there was a press report that as many as 98% of the students from a certain region of Poland had the relevant certificate when they were taking their secondary school-leaving exams). This was accurately explained in the publication prepared by the Polish Dyslexia Society for psycho-pedagogical counselling centres (Bogdanowicz, Czabaj, 2007): "The diagnosis of developmental dyslexia often becomes an excuse both for children and their parents. Pupils thus absolve themselves from ignorance of spelling and aversion to reading. They believe that receiving an expert opinion about dyslexia solves the problem and relieves them of having to deal with it further. Nothing more wrong" (p. 10). The people with whom the psychologist works need to have a more extended knowledge of the problem or, broadly speaking, of the pupil's mental functioning (what is still *a developmental norm*, and what can already be described as *problematic* or even *risky behaviour*) and of their own functioning (cognitive, emotional and social processes: to change

their misperception of themselves and/or children, to control their emotions and understand the correlations of the learning processes).

Therefore, each time the psychologist has to resolve the question of how to inform – but never of whether to inform – the people with whom they work about the nature of these people's problems and propose a method for dealing with them. The right to obtain information about the diagnostic process and the nature of the assistance or support provided is inalienable (this principle applies to psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors). Even if someone does not accept this information in full or uses only part of it, the psychologist should prepare it anyway on ethical grounds. It is essential for them to have an opportunity to ask the person they are talking to what is understandable and what is not, and, more importantly, to check what conclusions this person has drawn (e.g. what was most important to them, what has changed in their view of the child's problem). The psychologist then learns how this person understands the problem and the implemented work plan – be it the child, their parent or even the teacher (in the case the specialist intends to work with them). This ensures two-way communication. Within the cognitive-behavioural current, which is my field of work, there is another requirement that I would like to give consideration to, namely **developing a common vocabulary**. Basically, it is a question of providing knowledge that is useful in understanding what the psychologist is talking about, what terms they are using and why. Nowadays, commonly recognised clinical strategies include maintaining a therapeutic relationship of trust and cooperation, informing patients about their problems and explaining the treatment process itself, developing a common vocabulary that allows us to understand patients' problems, developing coping skills, providing constant support and information for patients, ensuring their hope and personal effectiveness (Reinecke, Clark, 2004). To put it simply: the role of the psychologist is to **share psychological knowledge** (theoretical and empirical, derived from current experience) and to teach skills, both at the time of diagnosis and while working with the child, their parents or teachers. It is particularly important to name the child's problem and to formulate the aim of the work in a language that is understandable. It makes sense to assume that all participants in the teaching and upbringing process can become potential and natural allies of the psychologist, provided that the diagnosis and the resulting recommendations are formulated in a clear and acceptable way (the rule of preliminary consent).

Rule six: take care of your professional development

In order to ensure their professional development, the psychologist needs to access helpful literature and master the skills of conducting and developing tests

used in school diagnostics (see Blythe, 2013; Hornowska, 2018; Hornowska et al., 2014; Jarosz, Wysocka, 2006; Paluchowski, 2007). In this context, I will recall the recommendation put forward by Brzezińska (2000) that **the psychologist's knowledge in the field of developmental psychology should be kept up to date**; then it is easy to refer, for example, to the expected achievements of a child at a particular stage of development. "How the psychologist will organise the examination and assistance procedure, what diagnostic tools will be used and how, and so on depend on the quality of the specialist's psychological knowledge" (p. 215). It is the psychologist's "reading", their diagnostic and therapeutic skills, confirmed by certificates and licences, and the habit of supervising their work as well as a felt need to look for a forum to exchange professional experience.

Conclusions

School is of fundamental importance to the student at every stage of education. It is even treated as a basic development context (Schaffer, Kipp, 2010). Educational success, not just the absence of failure, is an indicator of mental well-being. The developmental tasks of childhood include achievements such as literacy, numeracy and writing. It is school that makes it possible, to a large extent, to enrich and organise knowledge about the world and oneself, which is the developmental task of childhood (as cited in Harwas-Napierała, Trempała, 2007, pp. 130–131). Analysing the causes of school difficulties never ends. Nor does the search for wise ways of supporting the student's schooling – involving new technologies (including those requiring the use of electronic media). A well-read psychologist, familiar with new trends in diagnostics and methods of supporting development, will always be the best ally of all participants in the educational process. Dispelling the doubts of adults who teach or suggest methods of learning, as well as looking for ways to motivate and manage one's own learning presents a real and practical challenge of our times, facing the school psychologist.

ABSTRACT

School failure

The school psychologist's tasks related to learning difficulties are among the most important. When working with a child with learning difficulties, it is useful to follow some basic rules. The child's and the parent's consent to the psychological contact should be obtained. It is necessary to use a variety of sources of diagnostic information and to obtain a wide range of support for working with the child. It is just as important

for the psychologist to constantly remind themselves that no two children are alike and that there are no two identical problems in school failure. Also, it is essential to precede every psychological action towards the child with a diagnosis. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that the diagnosis and all information about the support provided is understandable for a non-professional. However, the psychologist's own professional development should not be neglected.

KEYWORDS: learning failure, school psychologist, teaching, monitoring, prevention, promotion, intervention

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8. Violence and abuse[1] – work in a school

Theoretical introduction to issues related to aggression, violence and bullying

Aggression in its broadest sense and violence, including peer violence, are common phenomena, which cause considerable concern. The juxtaposition of aggression and violence is not accidental here. Aggression is a broader concept in this case. Psychology has always dealt with aggression and indicated – from a theoretical point of view – its usefulness or investigated its various functions. In this context, biological theories are cited (pointing to the biological background of aggression, e.g. linking it to hormone levels), evolutionary theories (explaining aggression with the need for survival of the species:

[1] This chapter – as the only one in comparison with the 2010 version – was written by a different author. Nevertheless, it refers to the previous title – actually adding to it. Violence occurs not only inside but also outside the school. Its effects, however, are felt by all participants in school life in both cases. Irreparable harm is happening, and it is necessary to react to it also in the school, by working on traumas and other effects of violence and aggression in the broadest sense of the word. In the original version of the book, now extended and updated, the title of the chapter was "Violence and abuse behind the school gate" and reflected Anna Piekarska's (2010) authorial approach, which put forward a thesis about an institutional and systemic occurrence of violence in the school. The current title, on the other hand, indicates the need to deal with violence and abuse in the school – even if this violence and abuse is experienced outside the school. The very fact that we, as psychologists, have noticed it is sufficient justification to respond to it on the school premises. This response concerns both the negative experiences of aggression and violence and their effects that we have observed. The need for this reaction is even stipulated in the law, although more emphasis is placed on the obligation to report the occurrence of violence (see https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/przeciwdzialanie-przemocy-w-rodzinie; Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Przemocy w Rodzinie na lata 2014-2020).

aggression is used to survive and ensure reproductive success), as well as theories associated with human behavioural genetics (Farnicka, Liberska, Niewiedział, 2016; Wojciszke, Doliński, 2008). They treat aggression as an instinct (an innate pattern of behaviour), as a goal-oriented drive, a reaction to a sum of negative affects (impulsive aggression, as a response to emotional and physiological arousal/stimulation), as a result of learning (social learning theories accentuating the phenomena of mimicry, identification, modelling or external reinforcements and self-rewarding) or a bio-psycho-social phenomenon (an interactive model of aggression taking into account the interaction between cognitive, emotional and arousal processes and an individual as well as social impact). It is the psychological mechanisms of aggressive behaviour formation and development that are most interesting. To sum up, aggression has some positive sides, as it enables us to effectively oppose adversity and fight to defend others (Farnicka, Liberska, Niewiedział, 2016, p. 68).

It can be assumed that the concept of aggression falls within the scope of psychological theory, while the concept of violence has a clear socio-cultural and normative context (see Kubacka-Jasiecka, 2010). It is thus judged through the prism of breaking social norms. Violence refers to the sphere of values, morality, ethics and law. The aim of violence is to force the victim into doing something, break their resistance and harm them. The perpetrator wants to control and dominate; he consciously causes fear, helplessness and often destroys and isolates the victim. Violence is aggressive behaviour in which one party has a clear advantage over the other and uses it to achieve his own ends. It is defined as "any intentional acts which undermine an individual's personal freedom or which contribute to that individual's physical as well as mental harm, beyond the social rules of mutual relationship" (Pospiszyl, 1994, p. 14). Thus, violence would be any action that harms/hurts an individual, a group or a community (see Farnicka, Liberska, Niewiedział, 2016). This harm may be emotional, health-related, concerning unwanted sexual activity, or involving material damage. Indeed, it can be assumed that violence is both aggressive and destructive, and the dominance over the victim is always significant (Farnicka, Liberska, Niewiedział, 2016). It is precisely this distinct advantage of the aggressive side over the victim(s) in the experience of violence that should be emphasised: formal, e.g. power relationship, numerical or psychological advantages, e.g. better communication skills, etc. (Komendant-Brodowska, 2014). The manifestation of aggression or the use of physical force can, obviously, be replaced by the threat of using force or doing harm, and then the most important factor is to take advantage of one's emotional, physical and/or situational superiority.

Bullying is defined as "deliberate aggression or deliberate aggressive behaviour on the part of a group or an individual, repeated several times and

directed at a victim who is unable to defend themselves (...), or as 'systematic abuse of power' in peer relations" (Geldard, 2009). Thus, it involves student violence that is systematic and calculated (fully conscious action against the other person). The destructive nature of this violence can be seen very clearly with regard to cyberbullying (see Pyżalski, 2011; Rogers, 2010). It is difficult to identify this violence at school, but its participants often even share the school bench. This violence is sophisticated and very painful and means using modern technology – the Internet, the telephone and the public media – to publish drawings, photos and/or videos, or to send text messages that put someone in a bad light, insult, slander, embarrass or intimidate them, etc. Bullying carried out by means of the Internet or other electronic tools differs from face-to-face physical contact in that the tormentor can keep their distance from the victim, ensuring a certain level of anonymity and a sense of security that makes them feel unpunished (...). The enormity of the virtual world means that a single photo uploaded in an online chat room can be viewed literally millions of times around the world in a very short time, and the electronically uploaded content is difficult to control. One-time action by the offender may have long-term effects, as the uploaded content circulates online (Rogers, 2010).

In the light of nationwide research, violence and abuse is, or has been, experienced by the majority of people we encounter in the school, although this type of maltreatment does not always take place in the school itself (CBOS[2], 2019; Czapiński, 2008; Przewłocka, 2015; Sajkowska, 2017; Włodarczyk, 2013). Every school psychologist should take steps to assist the pupil, teacher and/or parents – when they are victims, participants or perpetrators of violence – and when they need guidance or assistance in their work. The steps taken by the psychologist on school premises are written directly into educational law (see Jerzak, Zając, 2013; Ministry of National Education: MEN 2013, 2017, 2017a). In the light of this law, it is the psychologist's duty to take actions focused, among others, on socially maladjusted people or people at risk of maladjustment. This maladjustment is most often defined as the use of violence (including peer violence), with a tendency towards behavioural disorders. Supporting teachers and parents in the implementation of educational tasks (diagnosed as educational problems that occur in their relationship with the pupil/child) seems to be fundamental in this respect. Moreover, helping with problems related to violence is simply connected with a broadly understood ethical obligation "inscribed" in the code of psychological activities ("When performing professional activities, the psychologist always strives to ensure that contact with them is helpful for another person or a group of people. Due to their

[2] (Translator's note) The Centre for Public Opinion Research is an opinion polling institute in Poland, based in Warsaw.

profession, the psychologist feels obliged to provide psychological assistance in all circumstances when necessary, as cited in Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Psychologists, 2019). The profession of a psychologist is definitely a profession of public trust (see Bednarek, 2020). As psychologists, we have very serious obligations to support and protect the community – including the school community.

Practical issues concerning psychological assistance in response to violence and bullying

The approach to violence presented in this chapter will be based on our authorial model, which we consistently present in this book: monitoring, intervention, prevention and promotion – M-P-I-P. Thus, in the first place, we will emphasise the importance of paying close attention so as to identify violence and diagnose the needs of the school community and its participants (monitoring). Then, we will focus on promotion which, if consistently applied – as we postulate on the pages of this book – would enable "vaccination"/immunity to violence – strengthening positive social relations and shaping life attitudes that are far from violent. This is not just wishful thinking – more and more publications, including those cited later in this chapter, point to the importance of mental health promotion work, which builds competences and skills and allows individuals to acquire knowledge for community/society building. At the end of this section, we will discuss preventive actions against school violence as well as interventions, which are a form of psychologists' response and are treated as rescue actions when violence has already occurred and causes severe harm.

Observing and being attentive to all forms of violence – priority of monitoring

Monitoring in the context of violence means that, above all, the psychologist has to be sensitive and make teachers, other school staff and parents aware of the need to be on the alert. When these adults see a change in a child's behaviour, they should always consider violence, including peer violence, to be a possible cause of this unfavourable change.

Aggression in its broadest sense and violence in particular are key elements in recognising behavioural disorders in its various manifestations, e.g. conduct disorders or oppositional deviant disorders (Bloomquist, 2006; Kendall, 2000; Kołakowski, 2013; Morrison, 2014). Hyperkinetic disorders/psychomotor hyperactivity syndromes (the ICD-10) from the group of neuro-developmental

disorders – referred to as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) – may lead to CD and often coexist with behavioural disorders (Bloomquist, 2006; DuPaul, Kern, 2011; Kendall, 2000; Kołakowski, 2013; Kołakowski, Pisula, 2011). Obviously, violence or – broadly speaking – aggression does not have to be a symptom of behavioural disorders. Actually, not so many children have full-blown behavioural disorders, because such disorders require all the criteria to be met (Kołakowski, 2013). At the same time, many educational difficulties which do not lead to such serious mental disorders are perceived as a problem and are the subject of a school psychologist's concern. In many cases, verbal, physical, sexual violence fits into behaviours described as risky or problematic, destructive or exterioristic, adaptation difficulties, or the already mentioned social maladjustment (more professional terms indicating the effects of the disorganisation in the environment and negative/undesirable impact on others, including juvenile delinquency, see Anastopoulos, Farley, 2003; Bloomquist, 2006; Crone, Horner, Hawken, 2004; Morrison, 2014). Sometimes, violence and aggression of a milder nature are described as disturbing, annoying, troublesome, contrary or simply rude behaviour (more common understanding, often appearing in conversations with non-professionals, see Elliot, Place, 2012; Laerum, 2006; Sichtermann, 1994).

Caring for others and taking care of personal development – priority of mental health promotion

The most important aspects of a widespread and comprehensive promotion are the objectives formulated positively and the emphasis placed on supporting the development of educational skills (and self-development), the ability to communicate and show mutual care. This care starts with small things, for example from ensuring that things are in place (that there is order), from proper behaviour at the table (so as not to disturb others), to courtesy and good breeding, i.e. the habit of respecting someone's effort and helping others (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, Zielińska, 2008). Looking broadly at care as not crossing other people's boundaries and showing mutual respect – it can be "embedded" in the way we understand communication and upbringing, as it is, for example in the concept of Thomas Gordon – the author of, among others, *Teacher Effectiveness Training* (1974) and Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish – the authors of *How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk* (2012) or *How to speak so that children learn at home and at school* (2002). These concepts have a practical dimension, because on their basis, for example, a school for parents and educators was created, which is regarded as effective and nationwide, involving around 150,000 people as of 2012. This is a promotional educational programme developing educational competences (see *School for Parents*

and Educators – Joanna Sakowska and Zofia Śpiewak, in Lewandowska-Kidoń, Kalinowska-Witek, 2016; Węgrzecka et al., 2012). It is worth noting that especially in humanistic or psychoanalytical upbringing, the emphasis is placed on applying appropriate upbringing practices and showing care in a skilful way (Furman, 1987; Gordon, 1974, 1975). It is important to communicate with the child (here: active listening), to support children in achieving their goals and coping with difficulties (but not to relieve them of their tasks and curb their anger at all costs, without considering their reasons), and to resolve conflicts without loss (without the defeated), etc.

Promotion would include all activities of a general character carried out by a psychologist for the sake of upbringing – which can be called "upbringing without violence" – as well as the principle of showing care for others and respecting their rights (cf. assertiveness, emotional intelligence or upbringing skills training, as cited in Całusińska, Malinowski, 2013; Divinyi, 2003; Król-Fijewska, 1993; 2001; Rees, Graham, 1991).

Prevention of violence (tripartite prevention model)

There are, of course, specific programmes to counter the emergence or intensification of violence and aggression (Fair Play Clubs, see Rosik, 2012; *Aggression Replacement Training*, see Goldstein, Glick, Gibbs, 1998; Lewandowska-Kidoń, Kalinowska-Witek, 2016; *Nonviolent Communication*, see Larsson, 2014; Leu, 2015; Rosenberg, 2003; *Incredible Years*, see Bywater et all, 2011; Webster-Stratton, Bywater, 2015; Webster-Stratton, Reid, 2017). All of these suggest providing care for people who, to varying degrees, are at risk of experiencing violence (as victims, offenders or observers). In contrast to promotional activities that are positively formulated (focused on development, on making something appear/change for the better), prevention activities are negatively formulated (focused on preventing something from appearing or changing for the worse). Violence prevention focuses on ensuring that violence does not occur (primary), that it does not spread once it has occurred (secondary), or that it does not recur, provided that the methods applied so far have proved effective in therapy (tertiary). This means that in the model most frequently used, three-stage violence prevention is carried out. When violence is likely to happen but has not yet occurred or is incidental, it is time for the first stage (general prevention). When the violence has already become evident, but it has not yet caused serious damage and we do not want it to be exacerbated – we can apply the second stage (selective prevention applied to certain individuals and groups). When violence was used by an individual or a group, which resulted in providing external therapy or treatment, and we do not want it to return – it is necessary to consider stage three (individual prophylaxis).

Discouraging violence before it occurs – priority of primary prevention

It is not always easy to distinguish between primary prevention activities against violence and aggression and promotional activities that develop broad competences, such as promoting "non-violent" communication. "**Prevention** and health promotion activities can quite often be similar in nature, as they refer to an individual's resources and the way they are used in different life circumstances. Both types of activity vary in scope (**for risk groups** or the population as a whole) and in their final objectives (**maintaining** or developing[3] **health)**. However, it is not so easy to distinguish between the purposes of activities, whether they are essentially aimed only at maintaining health or at developing it. Likewise, covering the whole population[4] also means reaching the risk groups. It can be argued that modern health promotion or prevention programmes are often a similar process of interference in an individual's health" (as cited in Jelonkiewicz, 2012, p. 116). When the goal is formulated positively, for example to show love and support, to teach cooperation and develop resources/actively take care of health – this is probably promotion. On the other hand, when the goal is formulated as a denial – either not to use violence or to secure resources/health maintenance – prevention is more obvious (as it always prevents something) (Katra, Sokołowska, 2017).

Basic level (primary) prevention, the so-called universal prevention, is a school and class system covering all students, school staff and all circumstances (i.e. taking care of the school climate) (Crone, Horner, Hawken, 2004; DuPaul, Kern, 2011). Talking about violence and aggression in its broadest sense – or praising behaviour oriented towards avoiding abuse – is the content of anticipatory actions (Bloomquist, 2006). We first discuss harmful activities – the negative social behaviours such as physical aggression, harassment, verbal abuse, gossip – and their effects (on the person who is the target, but also on the community – school, family etc.). This is a kind of warning – which is included in the title of the subchapter – that it is not worth using violence. Next, positive social behaviours, i.e. waiting for your turn, sharing, apologising to others, helping others are discussed in detail as an alternative. The discussion is about why it is worthwhile to choose them. This is followed by a demonstration of what optimal communication should be like (observing scenes/films, acting out different behaviours by students themselves), and finally, non-violent people are rewarded in real life situations, for example by appreciating/recognising in class or by talking to a student about what they have done.

[3] This would be about improving physical fitness and the mental condition resulting from it.

[4] Of course, this can apply to a particular group or community.

Warnings concerning abuse are also formulated on the basis of previous experience and addressed to a large part, and sometimes to the whole school community (then it is difficult to distinguish between primary prevention activities and promotion, which will be discussed later in the chapter).

Indicating the harmfulness of violence that has only just emerged and has not been consolidated yet – priority of secondary prevention

Second level (secondary) prevention, the so-called selective prevention, is a special system for groups, targeted at pupils who are at serious risk of problematic behaviour (Crone, Horner, Hawken, 2004; DuPaul, Kern, 2011). More specifically, secondary prevention against violence and aggression is aimed at people who, for example, have already displayed risky behaviour or educational difficulties but these problems do not yet occur chronically. There are warning signs, thus some steps have to be taken before violence becomes established as habitual behaviour. Indeed, in many cases, it is precisely the reaction to the first episode of violence that is considered crucial to ensure that a student no longer uses this type of behaviour as possible or desirable in the future. For example, in the Behaviour Pattern Improvement Programme, called the Behaviour Education Programme (Crone, Horner, Hawken, 2004) – as in most prevention but also intervention programmes – the emphasis is placed on communication (broadly speaking – on shaping social skills, also focused on empathy). The programme has a system of consequences, including positive feedback (appreciating, rewarding solving problems without violence). Additionally, the student is monitored every day and a daily progress report is created. This practice is not so intensive in other programmes, but it should be kept in mind that reports/behaviour monitoring are always necessary. More on the topics and key skills will be discussed later in this chapter.

Making sure that violence does not return – priority of tertiary prevention

Third-level prevention, the so-called indicated prevention, is a special, tailor-made system targeted at pupils who are at high risk of problematic behaviour (Crone, Horner, Hawken, 2004; DuPaul, Kern, 2011). More specifically, tertiary prevention against violence is aimed at people with a history of risky behaviour or adaptation difficulties and/or permanent maladjustment. Its goal is to preclude or prevent such behaviour and this phenomenon from becoming permanent. For example, these may concern children who return to their environment after a phase of treatment (long hospitalisation for neurological or psychiatric reasons) and need help to return to a healthy and socially acceptable lifestyle. Usually this type of prevention is carried out outside the student's

school environment and is not part of the school psychologist's basic tasks. It is assumed, however, that if a child has participated in therapy or crisis intervention, which has proved effective enough to enable to them to return to school without causing harm to themselves and others, then this return should be facilitated. The process of treatment/recovery will not be fully completed if after returning to school and to the family environment, the therapeutic effects (new ways of behaviour, non-violent action) are not "consolidated". There is still a chance to return to the old habits, to these "deep ruts" of violence. Obviously, the psychologist participates in this tertiary prevention to a limited scope. Basically, they observe the child closely, reminding the guardians to monitor the child just as carefully and asking them to be patient and not to label the child (explaining that the child should have a chance for a new start). Emphasis on consistency and explanation in the case of these children (characteristic of the previous type of prevention) should also be stronger than in the case of non-violent children.

Immediate response to ongoing and repeated violence – priority of intervention

Most of the publications and implementations concern the issue of getting help when violence and broadly defined aggression has already appeared and is used regularly (e.g. the Method of Shared Concern, as cited in Rigby 2007; Anger Coping Program and Coping Power Program, as cited in Larson, 2005; Larson, Lochman, 2011; Lochman, Barry, Pardini, 2006; Problem Solving Skills Training, as cited in Kazdin, Weisz, 2017). These measures should always be based on diagnosis and effectiveness evaluation – which can be referred to as careful monitoring of violence and aggression (e.g. *The Conners 3rd Edition™ – A set of questionnaires for the diagnosis of ADHD and co-occurring disorders*, see Conners, Wujcik, R., Wrocławska-Warchala, 2018). This violence and abuse does not have to happen/repeat regularly only on the school premises, it is enough that its effects are felt by participants in school life. The damage caused by repeated violence and frequently manifested aggression is such that there are systems in place to prevent and respond to further escalation of violence, involving – to a greater or lesser extent – a school psychologist as a participant in social life in general. If someone is a victim of violence inside or outside the school, the psychologist is obliged to take concrete steps. After all, it is the school's responsibility to provide safe conditions for learning and upbringing.

Preventing abuse does not only mean protecting the victims of violence and aggression, but also working carefully with the offenders, providing them with psychological assistance, usually in the form of therapy outside the school. There are procedures that change the course of teaching and require transfer to

an educational institution that deals with minors who have broken the law or school/educational institution regulations and are treated as "socially maladjusted"/threatened with social maladjustment. Such pupils require intervention, rehabilitation or sociotherapeutic activities (Ministry of National Education, 2017, see MEN, 2017). As a place of assistance, there are psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, special school and educational centres, youth sociotherapy centres or youth education centres available (Ministry of National Education, see MEN, 2017a). In many situations, it is also necessary for the school to cooperate with the police, the prosecutor's office and the juvenile court (Journal of Laws, see *Dziennik Ustaw*, 2002). In the book on behavioural disorders (Kołakowski, 2013), there are three separate parts, one of which is precisely "placed" in the school and is called "Behavioural disorders in the school or an educational institution". The other two concern diagnosis and treatment – they also cover out-of-school activities, including those conducted in public health institutions (here: requirement for psychiatric diagnosis). Moreover, there is a clear division of tasks – who does what – in the area of behavioural disorders, or, broadly speaking, problematic behaviours. The best solution would be that parents and guardians as well as teachers, who interact with the child every day, could take care of the educational issues and help the child on an ongoing basis (Kołakowski et al., 2007). You cannot "delegate" problems immediately to a psychiatric hospital and psychiatrist, or even to a psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, because it means putting things "upside down". I agree with the model which is recommended in the work on ADHD problems, presented in the form of a pyramid, in which the parental and teaching influence[5] is at the base, and hospital diagnostics is the "tip" of the pyramid, the culmination of treatment, not the first step (Kołakowski et al., 2007, p. 20).

Systems in which psychological assistance concerning violence is provided

There is a concept proposed by Urie Bronfrenbrener (see Bronfebrenner, Morris, 2007; Papalia et al., 2007; Sokołowska, 2015), which refers, in a very straightforward way, to the impact of the environment on personal

[5] This is an approach shared by many psychologists, cf. "[Implied: the psychologist's work also requires] attention to the holistic functioning of the child and their family, as well as the kindergarten or school environment in which the client is based. Proposals for behavioural influences (...) will be effective if they are **implemented consistently and systematically, day after day**. They also require the guardian and the professional to maintain a good relationship with the child, based on safety, empathy and trust" (Pawliczuk, 2015, p. 107).

development. Bronfrenbrener pointed out the way the environment influences development, taking into account four different systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, also emphasising the time perspective (Katra, 2014). Bronfrenbrener's concept of a person's ecological human development has been applied/adopted in a very successful way to describe the effective impact with regard to preventing behavioural disorders and providing assistance when behavioural disorders occurred (Kołakowski, 2013, p. 127). The most valuable aspect of this ecological therapy model for children and adolescents is the emphasis on promotional activities, and in the prevention of behavioural disorders, attention is paid to strong aspects of the ecosystem[6]. The model of multi-faceted work – called models of socio-ecological violence at school – can be found in the publication by Swearer and his collaborators (2009).

Family and school microsystem: assistance engaging pupils, their parents and teachers in non-violent education

Microsystems encompass activities, social roles and interpersonal relationships that are experienced in the immediate environment, e.g. in the family, a peer group, kindergarten, school, scouting organisation, church, etc. (see Birch, 1997; Bronfebrenner, Morris, 2007; Papalia et al., 2007; Schaffer, 1996; Sokołowska, 2015). The upbringing and teaching process – of interest to the school psychologist – concerns both home and school (and earlier: nursery and kindergarten). A stable, close and warm contact with parents, for example, is particularly beneficial to the child's development. It is also important to experience acceptance and positive emotions from peers. A support group for the student is made up not only of parents or teachers (adults), but above all of their peers. It is easy to notice some real threats here when peer or family patterns are based on or even contain violence by favouring a power play or explicitly glorifying violence.

The effectiveness of a particular programme should be monitored and this can be done by suggesting actions to be taken at the level of the whole school, which are included in the Olweus Anti-Bullying Programme (as cited in Rigby, 2007). They are mainly activities that allow the psychologist to acquire reliable

[6] "Current therapeutic programmes are most often based on risk reduction. Therefore, in order to maintain a balance, it is important to pay more attention to and build on the strengths of the ecosystem, in which minors stay. An ecological model of therapy for children and adolescents (...) can serve this purpose. Since the social ecological system in which a child lives is very complex, it is impossible for only one person, such as a school pedagogue, social worker, community policeman or parole officer, to do the job alone" (Kołakowski, 2013, p. 149).

knowledge, e.g. about bullying, due to an anonymous questionnaire[7] filled in by all students. This type of monitoring initially shows the prevalence of the phenomenon in the school. Next, the methods of counteracting violence in this particular institution are worked out, for example conducting training courses for teachers. Activities carried out at the class level cannot be disregarded, either. The problem of violence in the classroom is then discussed with the class members, and regular lessons are held to develop empathy, and so on. This systemic work is complemented by actions at the individual level, which include, for example, intervention directed at victims and perpetrators of abuse and conversations with parents of children from both sides (this school-family coordination of activities is discussed in the next section). To conclude this argument, it is worth pointing out that school, as a small community that constitutes a system, can be oppressive, that is, it can be a source of systemic violence/institutional harm (Piekarska, 2010).

Mesosystem: assistance that emphasises cooperation between school and family

The mesosystem comprises all the mutual relations between different microsystems, in which a developing subject participates (see Birch, 1997; Papalia et al., 2007; Schaffer, 1996; Sokołowska, 2015; Trempała, 2011). It therefore includes various relations between the family, school and peer environment, etc. Here, psychologists point to the importance of the coherence of information coming from parents, teachers, doctors, specialists representing various disciplines and peers in terms of a lifestyle, upbringing methods or the character of education. The rules of social life and the process of learning are most easily assimilated when the requirements in the school and non-school environment are coherent, i.e. similar in terms of basic principles and values (provided that these are pro-development values). Unfortunately, we can envisage oppressive actions of the school or domestic violence, and then the damage will be double. Ideally, the role of the mesosystem is to make school education a parental concern and the school environment a place where they can participate in supporting their child in schooling. Upbringing is not only the domain of parents, the school as a social environment and especially teachers as significant adults bring up the child, even if they do so unintentionally (Katra, 2019, Katra, in print). Similarly, education and the shaping of attitudes towards learning cannot be

[7] The most important thing in monitoring – which is promoted on the pages of this book – is, of course, careful observation, "capturing" signals from students' conversations and behaviour that are disquieting to teachers and/or students or other staff, which indicates that "something is up". Obviously, this does not diminish the role or weight of questionnaires, but it is a matter of emphasis.

the sole domain either of teachers or parents[8]. Parents' involvement in the child's education process is treated as fundamental in problematic behaviour training (Bloomquist, 2006). It is necessary to build a system of information exchange between the home and school on an ongoing basis (not only in problematic situations), in which parents help their child in school activities and communicate to them that education has value.

Exosystem: assistance that emphasises taking care of the mental health and social resources of those who are to take care of the student

The exosystem is a very interesting approach to the question of an indirect influence on an individual's development. It refers to the environment which has an impact on an individual but acts in an indirect way (see Birch, 1997; Papalia et al., 2007; Schaffer, 1996; Sokołowska, 2015; Trempała, 2011). What is meant here is an environment in which a student does not participate directly or participates less actively, e.g. the working conditions of the child's parents (which can make them upset when the job is particularly stressful, and this may have an indirect impact on the child), and for the student – the relations between the teaching staff. What happens in an individual's life is indirectly influenced by, for example, favourable microeconomic factors, i.e. a good state of the local labour market, low level of unemployment in a given area, availability of flats built from the municipal resources, etc. "Easier" life for parents or teachers – because it is full of positive and beneficial, but at the same time local solutions (within a small homeland, i.e. the closest surroundings of a municipality, town, county) – is likely to result in positive effects for the children/young people under their care.

Macrosystem: assistance that emphasises the impact of the non-school environment (indirect impact on the climate)

The macrosystem, which is, for example, a system of beliefs and opinions that exist in society, is spread through social institutions and creates a culture or intergenerational message (see Birch, 1997; Papalia et al., 2007; Schaffer, 1996; Sokołowska, 2015; Trempała, 2011). It also includes general economic conditions prevailing in the country; extensive measures aimed at e.g. combating unemployment, coping with recession, or social policy (which should always be taken into account). The four aforementioned systems overlap and

[8] Brophy (2004) makes a helpful distinction between motivation to learn as a disposition, shaped as an attitude towards knowledge and learning, and motivation as a state, e.g. caused by the teacher during a lesson.

create an ecological system of human development (Birch, 1997). As regards the issue of violence, social campaigns such as *I love so I don't beat*; *Because the soup was too salty*, or even *All of Poland reads to children* may make a difference. They allow people to define healthy rules of social life, which, as such, should become common practice (for example, spending time together), and what goes beyond beneficial actions and should disappear from social life (referring to the victim's fault to justify violence or the use of corporal punishment). The last of the three above-mentioned campaigns puts forward an idea for these "I love" and "I show concern in action", which is to spend time with a child in a positive way.

Direct and indirect goals formulated within the framework of psychological assistance (work methods and results achieved)

No matter what form of assistance is provided – be it intervention, prevention or promotion (discussed in subchapter 1) or assistance that broadly or narrowly involves the immediate or more distant environment (discussed in subchapter 2) – the issues addressed by therapists, psychiatrists or school psychologists are similar. There are specific goals that we expect to achieve in order to deal with violence and aggression against a child or young person. Both personal (individual) and external resources of the student can be strengthened and enriched (or built from the beginning). A real disadvantage is that a person without sufficient coping skills (broadly speaking, without personal resources) will not receive sufficient environmental support when the combined difficulties arise (Brzezińska, 2005; Schaffer, Kipp, 2008).

One of the goals pursued by the psychologist in their work should be to inform and educate people, i.e. to enable them to gain reliable knowledge about the phenomenon of violence, its spread and determinants and, most importantly, about how to prevent it. At the same time, the mechanisms of acquiring aggressive behaviour should be discussed in detail (see Chrzanowska, Święcicka, 2006; Herbert, 2005; Kazdin, 2017). Among these mechanisms, the impact of one's own life experience should be addressed. One should reflect on one's own experience (see self-regulation as a goal of upbringing, Katra, in print). On the other hand, one must also set a goal focused on action, i.e. acquisition of specific skills (for the student – concerning self-education, for the parent and the teacher – concerning upbringing). Teaching specific behaviours may relate to the cognitive, emotional or social spheres (e.g. how to analyse one's own behaviour, how to show anger and how to calm down, or how to say no and how to ask for help). The most important thing is to develop personal competences that "collect" this knowledge and allow for its creative use in life.

Work focused on self-education/self-regulation and educational successes

An ideal example of formulating goals regarding a student's personal resources – both in intervention and prevention of all types – is cognitive-behavioural training, called *Skills Training for Children with Problematic Behaviours* (Bloomquist, 2006) and *Executive Skills Training* (Dawson, Guare, 2009). Both of these programmes feature the activities that are key to this subchapter – promoting self-control, self-determination and even self-education of the child/pupil – so that they will take **responsibility** for their development. Here, it is interesting to focus on the capacity for self-regulation[9]. The term "executive skills" involves the ability to make decisions, plan and manage. Therefore, these programmes create incentives and opportunities for training, e.g. inhibiting reactions (the ability to think before you do something); emotional control, staying attentive, persevering towards a goal; time management and action planning and following rules (Bloomquist, 2006; Dawson, Guare, 2009). The anger-replacement activities that a child can learn are very interesting (e.g. from the list of thoughts and actions, as cited in Bloomquist, 2006: *asking someone to hug you; going for a walk; chilling out; taking an assertive attitude towards someone*). Such actions and behaviours are enveloped in helpful inner speech (mobilising oneself to helpful behaviours, e.g. from the list: *Don't give up; Stay calm; Don't get upset; I feel growing tension. Take a few deep breaths*).

Additionally, they are listed as basic and important school skills (educational success/progress) (see *Cooperation with the school*, Dawson, Guare, 2009). Both of these training programmes show a balance of social, emotional and cognitive issues. For example, there is support for the development of the child's self-control, their emotional and social development, as well as enhancing their school skills (Bloomquist, 2006). Indirect influences are not omitted here – engaging the psychologist in work with the parent (improving the parent's well-being and family relationships; sustaining the child's and other family members' improvement at the same time) and in work with the teacher. The parent and the teacher modules are, for example, included in the training sessions by Webster-Stratton and Lochman.

Work focused on education and support of teaching

The Webster-Stratton Incredible Years Programme is an ideal example of formulating environmental objectives – building family and school resources,

[9] Self-control can be treated as a regulation of one's own behaviour (e.g. expression of emotions, refraining from an immediate reaction), while self-regulation can be treated as conscious (realised) intentions and goals with a vision, a plan to achieve them and then implementation with reflection (see Katra, 2016, 2019).

with close cooperation between these communities. The basis for an effective educational and, of course, parental impact is always a positive relationship with the child (Hutchings, 2006). Therefore, for the sake of this programme, a very illustrative pyramid was created, where positive social relations with the child, rooted in love and care, form the basis of adult influence (Webster-Stratton, Reid, 2017). This is "superimposed" by (the following elements are based on this) considering/reflecting and training/learning skills concerning, among other things, paying attention; speaking and listening as well as playing and learning together. It is only when the positive aspects of the educational relationship are worked out – strengthening emotional bond and trust – that the rules required in life and restrictions resulting from breaking these rules are introduced. The most important thing is that the child should trust and rely on the other person and that adults and children have the opportunity to get to know each other and stay together. Apparently, for the authors of the anti-aggression programme – this one as well as the others – drawing consequences and building discipline is possible only when the most important human needs – for safety and love – are satisfied. These needs are even referred to as deficiency needs, according to Maslow, and considered to be the basis for proper human development (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell, 1998; Maslow, 1987). The questions of what can be a breach of the rules, what can be ignored in behaviour and what should be subject to restrictions or punishment are discussed as minor elements. They are simply the last element of the educational pyramid. There is, however, an element that cannot be ignored, as it is the top of the pyramid. These are corrective and remedial actions. Punishment/negative reinforcement or compensation for damage is then applied. These disciplinary elements are, however, subject to precisely defined rules. Their gradation is also provided for. A mild version of sanctions is possible, e.g. reprimand/serious (teacher) conversation, inviting parents to school (see Geldard, 2009) or, for example, the loss/withdrawal of privileges and rewards. Other disciplinary/disciplining measures taken under consideration include staying after school, doing community service for the school, collecting litter and cleaning. The most severe school penalties may comprise temporary or definitive expulsion from school (by the headteacher). Compensation is as important as sanctions for reprehensible actions, including violence.

There are, however, programmes where – and this may be controversial – the offender is not punished, (see the anti-mobbing programme No Blame Approach, O'Moore, Minton, 2008; Piekarska, 2010; Robinson, Maines, 2000). What is more important than to identify the guilty party and punish them is to work through the situation with the group[10] and highlight the victim's

[10] "The NBA takes the fact into consideration that bullying is not just an interaction between the offender and the victim, but rather a situation where a whole group, in this case

feelings (the offenders are often surprised that they have not been punished, but the aim of the programme is not to blame or punish them, and certainly not to investigate who and what they did). The crucial thing is to make the offenders and participants aware of the harassment or persecution: what the effects of violence on the victim are. We get to the heart of the matter quickly and effectively, developing sensitivity and empathy as well as incorporating care and attention to the victim.

Taking care of family relations is extremely important for the school psychologist. Therefore, in this book, a separate chapter has been devoted to this issue. At this point, it can only be mentioned that many anti-violence programmes provide for family meetings in which parents and children participate. Appreciation (in a behavioural approach, rewarding/reinforcing) is shown not only for non-violent behaviour, but also for success in learning (see Bloomquist, 2006; Kazdin, Weisz, 2017). For example, the Coping Power Programme (CPP) includes the module *Organisational and learning/supporting school skills*, where simultaneous work with parents is assumed to be obvious (Lochman et al., 2006). Therefore, parents, like teachers, are encouraged in the first place to see the advantages of the child/pupil, to appreciate their efforts, and even "not to blame" (work consisting in focusing on the change and the effort to make it, regardless of the child's unacceptable behaviour) (Piekarska, 2010). To spend time with a child in a way that is "appreciative" and special (*special time*)[11]. Thus, the objectives of the work include giving adequate praise to the child, creating opportunities to show them warm feelings, mobilising them positively/encouraging their own work. As part of the programmes for educators who deal with problematic children on a daily basis, it is even good to ask them to perform an instructive task: *to "catch" moments during the week when an aggressive child is "reasonably good"*. We even create a diary of good events. Then, all the elements modifying inappropriate behaviour are placed at the top of the pyramid, or even, as it were, in the background of the relationship with the child (a time-out procedure).

Taking care of relationships is always important, and this is also seen as essential for the teacher. Therefore, in the classroom, the pedagogy of love is realised, as Korczak (2002) formulated it. The teacher is not supposed

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a class, is involved" [http://socialna-akademija.si/joiningforces/7-1-context-of-the-no-blame-approach/].

[11] "Unlike the usual time that is simply spent with the child, the 'special time' in this programme requires parents to instruct and correct the child as little as possible, which allows them to see their child's behaviour in a different light, and especially to 'catch them being good'. Such moments provide an opportunity to give the child positive attention, which in turn helps to rebuild a good relationship between the child and their parents" (Anastopoulos, Farley, 2003).

to dominate over the pupil or "force them to be polite", but to stimulate them to think, appreciate and respect them. That is why psychological work emphasises the importance of the teacher's well-being and self-esteem as well as their ability to manage the class and to model students' behaviour (Dix, 2010). One of the elements is assertiveness training and careful analysis of one's own actions and their effects (Hare, 1995). The educator should display alertness (attentiveness) to recognise their own and others' violence – and it is the psychologist's responsibility to make them aware of the gravity of the situation and the range of possible options.

Final reflection on PTSD and PTG as phenomena associated with violence

It makes great sense to address violence and aggression, mainly because, as it has been signalled at the beginning of this chapter, violence causes pain and suffering. In the light of our shared values today, respect for the dignity of each individual, equality in its fundamental sense, the right to respect – nothing justifies abuse. It is mobilising to try to do everything possible to prevent violence or to minimise its effects. It is always worth remembering what Judith Lewis Herman (1997) said in the title of her book about PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) that trauma is a result of violence and has a long-term impact on the life of the whole community (including schools). There is, however, another aspect that should be mentioned in the summary. It is obvious that despite our efforts, violence exists and will continue to exist. Therefore, in order not to lose our strength and hope, we must remember another message from Nina Ogińska-Bulik's book (2013) on PTG (post-traumatic growth) that it is possible to live a good life despite experiencing violence. Many psychological textbooks, including those focusing on post-traumatic growth, remind us of this. These two perspectives, activated at different times, help us to mobilise ourselves (to actively counteract violence) and not to lose hope (when violence has already affected someone).

ABSTRACT

Violence and abuse – work in a school

Violence and bullying is a disturbing and widespread social problem. Therefore, the basic theoretical approaches to aggression, violence and bullying are presented. Based on these theoretical approaches, practical ways of working under the author's model – monitoring, intervention, prevention and promotion – are indicated. For monitoring, observing and

being attentive to any manifestation of violence is considered a priority. Mental health promotion emphasises caring for others and taking care of personal development at the same time.

For prevention, a threefold division into primary (universal), secondary (selective) and tertiary (indicated) prevention is used. For intervention, the importance of immediate and systemic work involving pupils, teachers and parents is indicated – as is the support of the non-school environment.

KEYWORDS: aggression, bullying, violence, school psychologist, monitoring, selective prevention, indicated prevention, universal prevention, promotion, intervention

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9. The role of the school psychologist in dealing with conflicts. Prevention and intervention activities

In the school, as in any institution, conflicts occur. They result from interdependence, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for individuals or groups to achieve their goals. This applies both to official (education, upbringing) and non-formalised goals (individual aspirations, group norms, etc.). Conflicts arise, in various configurations, among people associated with the functioning of a school as an institution: headteachers, teachers, students, and parents. The appearance, development and resolution of such conflicts may follow different scenarios, depending on the balance of power between the parties, the seriousness of the problem, the tradition of dealing with conflicts, and the interpersonal skills of the people involved. The way of reacting in conflict situations becomes habitual, automatic behaviour.

It happens that for fear of revealing a problem, **people often pretend not to see a conflict** as long as it is possible. Sometimes in conversations they courteously change the definition of a situation, convincing themselves and others that nothing has happened and that there are no contradictions (which is typical of the "well-bred"). Sometimes, hiding behind a lack of time, they postpone dealing with a problem (which is typical of decision-makers). Sometimes they simply try to wait it out hoping that everything will work itself out (which is characteristic of subordinates). Such conflict concealment is like constructing a "delay-action bomb". Two scenarios are then possible. One leads to an uncontrolled explosion in most unexpected circumstances. **People then start a fight to destroy their opponent.** Teachers or parents demand immediate dismissal of the headteacher, occupy the school, or organise a hunger protest. Usually there is an escalation of demands that cannot be

met. The mutual enemy creates a special and very strong group identity, which becomes a value in itself. When a certain hate threshold is crossed, entering talks is treated as a loss of face. The parties often demand that an arbiter (for example the minister of education) step in to settle the dispute, but they can only accept a solution that is beneficial to them and destructive to the other party. This scenario occurs when (a) a conflict concerns issues that are important to all the parties, (b) it remains hidden for a long time, and (c) a dialogue is blocked (e.g. due to the parties' inability to conduct it). It may also happen in school conflicts when the above conditions are met. The destructive dynamics of conflict is usually a gesture of despair that mobilises for protest. If such a mobilisation does not take place, then the other scenario is possible. **People abandon their aspirations** and give up without a fight. They feel helpless. Their motivation decreases; they lose the sense that their actions mean anything. When it happens in a school (for example among teachers), it leads to the destabilisation or even the collapse of the organisation. Changing this situation is just as difficult as ending a conflict that occurs according to the first scenario.

When the failure to meet needs and realise important values becomes a topic of discussion, there are two scenarios possible. One is that **people seek support** by appealing to the authorities, building coalitions, or forming pressure groups. Teachers can find support by asking trade unions to represent their interests. Headteachers as a group can create a coalition, trying to negotiate specific solutions with the local government or the school board. Parents can set up a pressure group, demanding that the municipality or the school board make changes in the school. Within the teaching staff, various coalitions can also be formed. Creating coalitions and pressure groups performs important functions. Firstly, the parties and their interests crystallise. You know who to talk to and what to talk about. Secondly, it has a mobilising effect and thus promotes change. Thirdly, it makes the parties aware of each other's interdependence and thus helps to diagnose the structural level of the conflict. Such coalitions are often formed against specific individuals and usually lead to destruction and mutual hostility. It happens, however, that coalitions are formed around a problem to be solved. Such a situation has a good chance to bring constructive solutions. The danger lies in unequal powers of the parties. For example, if teachers manage to involve trade union officials, parents – the local authorities or the media, then it is very likely that their stance will be an ultimatum. If either side wins, the other will lose, which will undoubtedly affect their future relations.

Therefore, the other scenario is much safer – **treating a conflict as a problem to be solved**, either through negotiation between the parties concerned or assisted by a mediator. This requires creating an atmosphere of dialogue in the community, making a joint analysis and diagnosis of the problem, and seeking

solutions. In order to do so, a willingness to compromise and negotiating skills are essential. Another problem for many people is their inability to act constructively in a conflict situation. This is reflected in the action-reaction behaviour type, in which people do not take into account what consequences their behaviour will have in the future.

At school, students are both parties and witnesses to conflicts. Dealing with such problems gives them the opportunity to learn social skills in a practical way.

The psychologist as a provider of conflict resolution educational programmes

Emotional and social competences and the ability to settle conflicts are important indicators for forecasting school achievements (many studies have shown a positive correlation). They directly determine the atmosphere of relations in the classroom and in the school and are a motivating factor for students' behaviour related to learning and cooperation. An overview of recent research results concerning the mutual relationship between conflict resolution skills and basic intellectual abilities or achieving career success in adult life is presented in several publications (Borecka-Biernat, 2010; Covan, Palomares, Schilling, 2007; Deutsch, 1996, 2014; Sandy, 2014).

Acquiring the ability to deal with conflict determines whether conflict will play a positive or negative role (as a chance or threat) in shaping the feelings, intellect and personality of a maturing individual. The distinction is characteristic of typologies – indicated in the literature – of inefficient and efficient ways of handling conflicts, i.e. regarding them as a devastating struggle, avoiding or negotiating them, as well as supporting them through mediation in the case of deadlocked conversations. These constructive ways of interaction in conflict situations stimulate the emotional, cognitive and social development of children and young people.

Conflict is a desirable learning opportunity, as its successful resolution requires mastering lots of skills that form the basis of social competence educational programmes for students of all ages. Generally speaking, the aim of conflict resolution educational programmes is to develop cooperation, communication, recognition of diversity, tolerance, taking into account different points of view, empathy, self-control, creativity, problem solving, and so on.

Analysing typical interpersonal conflict situations from the perspective of the child's development, it is worth pointing out two aspects of this phenomenon, namely the developmentally changing significance of conflict and the role of adults in developing the ability to solve it constructively.

Depending on the stage of development, the child's understanding and perception of a conflict situation changes. Initially, the child "experimenter" examines their abilities in action and resolves conflicts resulting from the limitations imposed on them (due to their empathy) in simple cooperation. Later, the child begins to learn the rules of social functioning due to intensified contacts with their peers. In order to reconcile different goals and interests (by developing the ability to adopt someone else's point of view), children can resort to mediation. Eventually, the young person is forced to learn the rules of social functioning in the adult world. By following their habits, the child tries to prove their maturity and autonomy. They begin to independently negotiate with adults (due to adopting a generalised third-person perspective – the observer) to solve a conflict. To sum up, conflict is a limitation on the child's aspirations and behaviour in their relations with peers or adults. However, depending on the stage of development, children differ in their abilities to resolve conflicts.

On the other hand, at different stages of development, the adult's role in typical conflict situations evolves. Initially, in relation to young children, the adult plays the role of a "guide" who sets and shows the child the boundaries that must not be crossed. The adult encourages the child to learn basic skills – empathy and cooperation, which will be the basis for constructive conflict resolution in the future. In mid-childhood, the adult assumes the role of a mediator in conflicts between children. Observing the adult's behaviour, children learn to resolve conflicts through mediation. In the case of teenagers, the adult becomes a party in a conflict. Therefore, it depends on them whether they will be a model for the child in conducting negotiations. Giving an adolescent the possibility of being a negotiating partner significantly changes their chances to constructively deal with conflicts in adult life.

In the light of the developmental analysis which has been carried out, it can be concluded that it is us adults – parents and teachers – who are responsible for developing the constructive conflict resolution competence in children. Indeed, according to the theses of contemporary developmental theorists, conflict resolution skills should be taught as early as possible – starting from early childhood, and then improving these competences by solving increasingly complex problems.

Investing in teaching children effective conflict resolution strategies has direct benefits not only for them but also for adults. Above all, it is to offer kids the chance to experience childhood and adolescence, and also to enter the adult world in a more harmonious way.

Developmentally diverse social and emotional abilities and knowledge of typical conflict resolution methods by children and adolescents determine **the way of shaping and improving** age-appropriate conflict resolution skills (Sandy, 2014).

The idea of educational conflict resolution programmes was born in the United States. According to Morton Deutsch (1996), schools wishing to stimulate the development of social skills that prepare the child for living in a democratic world benefit from several related programmes based on the idea of (1) cooperation in learning, (2) using controversy in teaching school subjects, and (3) constructive conflict resolution. These programmes assume that simply providing instruction to a group of children or young people is not enough for the skills thus acquired to develop into lasting behaviour patterns. Students must, therefore, have repeated opportunities to practise these skills in their immediate environment, accompanied by a supportive atmosphere. Hence, applying collaboration skills should be students' daily experience in class. The creative use of controversy should become a practice in teaching different subjects. Similarly, the presence of a constructive approach to conflicts (mediation, negotiation) should be experienced by children and young people not only during lessons but also in their school life – in contact with teachers, pupils and support staff. Adults should note and appreciate any attempts made by pupils to apply new skills, as well as model the desired reactions. Constructive conflict resolution programmes can be implemented in lessons (workshops), or in a more complete form by introducing peer mediation into schools, to be provided in student mediation centres (Czwartosz, 2003; Czwartosz, Czwartosz, 1998; 1999).

Morton Deutsch (2014) reviewed conflict resolution educational programmes and the results of research into their effectiveness in institutions such as kindergartens and schools. The researchers analysed the programmes with a view to recognising relevant content and the best ways to communicate it to children and young people. It is especially interesting to see the results of research on the effectiveness of conflict resolution education programmes aimed at problem solving and peer mediation. The research identified a number of factors determining the transfer of the effects of the programmes to the functioning of children and young people in educational institutions. The mere implementation of such programmes at the class or school level is not a sufficient guarantee for the transfer of these skills to everyday school reality. It is necessary to provide students with many opportunities to experience constructive ways of dealing with conflicts. It is also important – in the school environment – to model behaviour patterns acquired by students through negotiation and conflict mediation programmes:

- The whole school environment should be interested in implementing the programme. Its success depends on creating a culture of communication in difficult situations, which will give students the opportunity to consolidate the experience gained during classes. Therefore, the

training scheme should involve all teachers and the introduction of the programme should require their acceptance.
- Activating methods should also be employed in subject lessons, where discussions, teamwork, and so on can be introduced.
- The implementation of the programme should be accepted by parents; it is important that they know its objectives and content.
- The programme should be subject to systematic evaluation, treated as a dialogue between the parties concerned (teachers and pupils) in order to introduce changes that everyone would feel co-authors of.
- The programme should be related to students' interest in the usefulness of applying negotiation and mediation procedures in political and social life, for example accession negotiations in the European Union, international mediation, mediation between the victim and the underage perpetrator, and so on.
- The programme can be continued by introducing peer mediation procedures in school centres.

Bearing in mind the need to create a safe and child-friendly school as well as provide the environment conducive to the development of social competences and the ability to cope with conflict situations, it is proposed to introduce mediation in schools as a basic form of conflict resolution in educational institutions (Recommendation by the Commissioner for Children's Rights, 2017).

A constructive attitude towards conflict is characterised by the fact that a person understands the mechanisms of its formation (a cognitive component), believes in the possibility of finding a solution (an emotional component) and has actions in their repertoire that will make this solution real (a behavioural component). Therefore, conflict resolution cannot be learned from a book or during a traditional lesson. The usefulness of conducting classes in a traditional form is only effective in terms of learning the rules and principles that govern social behaviour, for example the mechanisms of creating conflict situations, conflict resolution procedures, and so on. However, the mere knowledge of rules is not enough to be guided by them in actual behaviour. Skills that require training are still needed. That is why conflict resolution didactic programmes widely use activating methods also called "learning in action".

It seems that school psychologists and pedagogues can play an important role in promoting a constructive approach to conflicts. Due to their professional background, they can take on the role of people who provide information about currently available offers of social skills development programmes for children and young people. They can also implement or coordinate these programmes at school. In addition, they could run training courses for teachers, aimed at

improving their conflict resolution skills and instructing them how to conduct lessons on this subject. In order to do so, psychologists themselves need to master conflict resolution skills and, above all, represent an attitude that accepts a positive philosophy of conflict.

The assessment of such programmes as a product on the market offered to schools requires constant monitoring and evaluation of their effects in terms of intellectual and social value for students, as well as their usefulness in real conflicts at school. Implementation monitoring and impact evaluation may become important attributes of the psychologist's professional offer for the school environment. They can be a supervisor, provider or evaluator of programmes that improve students' social skills. To sum up, it is worth noting that a programme which teaches conflict resolution skills should be introduced only with a full acceptance of the school environment – students, teachers and parents, and the school psychologist could be its supervisor or direct implementer.

The psychologist as a conflict mediator in the school

Mediation in the school can help to extend the use of the mediation procedure in institutions and communities whose aim is to maintain effective cooperation among their members.

The most general definition of mediation is that it is a process in which participants in a conflict try to remove discrepancies in their arguments and positions in the presence of an accepted third party – the mediator. The aim of the mediator's activities is to help the disputing parties work out a satisfactory solution to the conflict, counterbalance the conflicting aims and motives of the parties, and prevent conclusive win-lose aspirations.

Mediation should not refer only to the professional activity of people specifically trained for this role. It also includes parents' intermediation in conflicts between siblings or the mediatory role of teachers in conflicts between students. It is only in the last two decades that mediation has been officially recognised as a procedure to help resolve disputes. The literature on the subject (Moore, 1996) distinguishes contracted and spontaneous mediation. In the former, the mediator is an "outsider", with whom the parties involved voluntarily collaborate. An important aspect of this mediation model is that the contracted mediator's relations cease as soon as they complete the mediation process. This type of mediation is an alternative to court proceedings (divorce, criminal, or economic mediation). In the case of mediation defined as spontaneous, both the parties involved and the mediator are part of a specific system of interdependence. Mediations conducted by the school psychologist

in conflicts between teachers, students, and parents can be classified as such. Spontaneous mediators often have a vested interest in resolving conflicts, because a good atmosphere in the classroom or in the school ensures that educational goals are effectively achieved. And, importantly, after completing mediation, the psychologist-mediator still maintains contact with the conflict participants.

Theoretically, mediation should be a useful procedure in any type of dispute requiring negotiation between the parties involved. The mediator's aim is to support and model the behaviour of the parties so as to prevent an escalation of the conflict (Moore, 1996; Kressel, 2014). For the participants, mediation not only provides an opportunity to resolve a dispute, but it is also an important experience – training their negotiating skills. The literature on the subject indicates that mediation is a useful procedure in conflict situations that satisfy certain criteria: the parties are identified; their interdependence is defined; and the participants have basic cognitive, emotional and interpersonal skills to represent themselves and are interested in resolving the conflict. Most typical conflict situations in the school meet these conditions. Mediation turns out to be an effective way of helping in conflicts where there are obstacles that hinder or prevent the parties from solving these conflicts by themselves: (a) interpersonal barriers, such as strong negative emotions or destructive communication patterns; (b) disputes that concern the inability to communicate on fundamental issues – needs or values; (c) in a particular environment there is a tradition of resolving disputes by means of force or control.

Thus, in conflicts typical of school reality, informal mediation can be used, in which the school psychologist could be the mediator. However, this method of conflict resolution is neither known nor used. Whether mediation becomes a popular and acceptable tool for dispute resolution at school might be determined by breaking some of the barriers inherent in the school environment such as traditional ways of resolving conflicts – referring to the headteacher's or teacher's arbitration; some common beliefs: that personality traits (a student's disposition towards conflict) are the source of conflict, that conflicts should be avoided, and that the dominant motivation is the participants' desire for revenge and retaliation. An additional difficulty may be the absence of a person who is generally accepted and has enough skills to act as a mediator. Such a function could be performed by the school psychologist. Preparing school psychologists for this role is another problem. The school psychologist should also be able to promote mediation services – to inform about such a possibility, and to convince their environment about the merits of using mediation in school conflicts. To sum up, training future school psychologists should include specialisation courses concerning both the aims and principles of mediation and the instruments of the mediator's work.

The specificity of mediation, which distinguishes it from other conflict resolution procedures, is determined by four basic principles: (a) **impartiality**, i.e. not favouring any of the parties in any way; (b) **neutrality** towards conflict resolution – not advocating or even suggesting any particular solution; (c) **voluntary participation** in mediation; and (d) **confidentiality**, i.e. the guarantee that the mediator will not disclose any information that they become aware of when performing the mediation. Compliance with these rules can be particularly difficult in the case of spontaneous mediation conducted by the school psychologist. For example, in a teacher-pupil conflict situation, the psychologist-mediator can be regarded as a person who is not fully neutral and impartial. They can also be perceived in their environment as a representative of the teaching staff's interests – being a full-time employee of the school and therefore highly dependent on the institution.

The literature on the subject points to three types of activities that are associated with the mediator's role and constitute a specific type of interventions: diagnostic, contextual and classical. They occur in a specific phase of the conflict resolution process (Coleman, Deutsch, Marcus, 2014; Kressel, 2014). These aspects of the mediator's role will be briefly described below.

The task of the mediator as a diagnostician is to obtain information about the nature of a conflict and the persons participating in it, analyse its source, and separate evident and hidden problems. It is also important to identify the leaders of the dispute or people who may affect the course of the conflict, in other words understand the balance of power between the disputing parties. The range of techniques enabling the mediator to perform the aforementioned tasks includes asking different categories of questions concerning the problem and solutions, observing the parties' verbal and non-verbal behaviour during the mediation session, rephrasing the parties' statements so that they are properly understood, and so on.

In turn, the aim of contextual interventions undertaken by the mediator is to create a climate for constructive dialogue and an exchange of mutual expectations and solution proposals put forward by the parties. The mediator should be a catalyst and moderator rather than a source of pressure or an advocate of a definite agreement between the parties. This task is related to the basic principle of the mediator's neutrality towards proposed solutions, and giving the parties concerned the right to decide on the outcome of their dispute. Contextual interventions include, among others, modelling the process of communication between the parties, creating norms for showing respect (talking without interrupting each other or taking offence, expressing one's anger constructively, establishing an acceptable form of explaining the facts, or guaranteeing the privacy of the talks). The tools that help the mediator to achieve the above objectives are: active listening, the "self" communication,

and knowledge of effective negotiation methods (identifying positions, issues and interests; BATNA; etc.) (Fisher, Ury, Patton, 2000).

Classical interventions refer to the mediator's behaviour that aims to guide the parties in reaching an agreement: helping to find solution options, formulating the content of the agreement and making the parties aware of its implementation terms. These tasks require neutrality on the part of the mediator. As we have already pointed out, the mediator cannot propose their own solution and the parties should not feel subject to the mediator's will. This type of intervention also involves assisting in writing down an agreement (if it has been reached), establishing criteria and ways of monitoring the conditions for agreement implementation, and determining further actions to be taken if the parties fail to meet their accepted commitments.

Mediation is an important and useful instrument for dealing constructively with different forms of conflict, even in cases where the types of mediation activities described above do not lead to agreement between the parties. The direct benefits of the mediator's work include reducing the tension related to a conflict situation, sorting out the facts and issues under dispute, or changing the way of perceiving the other party. Even a mere attempt to tackle conflict through mediation, with the mediator modelling the ways and techniques of conversation, broadens the communication skills of the parties involved and develops their social competences for coping with conflicts. Thus, mediation conducted by a trained school psychologist can have not only immediate (solving a specific dispute), but also long-term benefits – for example by providing an alternative to the commonly used way of resolving conflicts from the position of the teacher's authority or the headteacher as an arbiter; by promoting a culture of constructive conflict resolution at school, and so on.

It is worth noting that the mediator's efforts may focus on the task (i.e. reaching an agreement), or on the social and emotional dimension of the conflict (i.e. current and future relations between the parties), with varying degrees of concern. In the latter case, the aim of mediation can be to improve communication between the disputing parties, to make them understand each other's feelings, needs and points of view, and to take care of their future relations. This different understanding of mediation goals and the related ways of functioning as a mediator may result from different theoretical orientations – mediation concentrated on agreement or on the parties' future relations.

Conclusions

Is the school psychologist the right person to act as a spontaneous conflict mediator in the school? It is becoming more and more common for psychologists

to attend specialist courses in conflict theory, effective communication, negotiation and mediation during their studies. It can be claimed that nowadays these skills are becoming an indispensable minimum in professional training. Another issue is the possibility of using these skills in professional practice. It is highly probable that the role of a mediator can be taken up by people with a strong professional position, who adhere to a positive philosophy of conflict and ensure the school environment's integrity. Thus, these would be people presenting an innovative offer of psychological services – conflict resolution and mediation programmes. However, it requires (following the metaphorical classification of psychologists' work methods developed by Prof. Andrzej Jurkowski) that the school psychologist should become a "frontline psychologist" rather than an "office psychologist".

By offering mediation services, teaching mediation skills and encouraging teachers, students and parents to use mediation, school psychologists have the opportunity – according to Kressel's thesis – to transform mediation from an oft-underestimated tool into a well-known and widely used conflict resolution instrument in everyday life (Kressel, 2014).

ABSTRACT

The role of the school psychologist in dealing with conflicts. Prevention and intervention activities

Are school psychologists suitable for spontaneous conflict mediation at school? Students of psychology increasingly participate in courses focusing on conflict theory, successful communication, negotiation, and mediation. These skills appear to have become part of psychologists' core qualifications. Their application in professional practice, however, is a separate issue. Successful mediators are likely to be individuals with authority at workplace, advocating constructive conflict philosophy and promoting cohesion in the school environment. Thus, good candidates would offer an innovative range of psychological services: educational programmes of conflict resolution and mediation. This would require the school psychologists, to use a term from metaphoric classification of psychologists' work methods, to switch from being an "office psychologist" to a "frontline psychologist".

By providing mediation-related services and education, as well as encouraging students, teachers and parents to apply to its principles, school psychologists have the opportunity to promote peaceful conflict resolution procedures.

KEYWORDS: conflict as a problem, educational programs of conflict resolution, school psychologist as a mediator, mediation services at school, peer mediation

COMPETENCES AND SKILLS

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10. Individual work

With whom and under what circumstances?

The psychologist in the school faces many challenges. Their role and tasks are not sufficiently crystallised because in the social consciousness (of parents, children/young people and even teachers), it is still not clear what they should do. It is often expected either too little or too much of them. Therefore, the work model implemented by a specific person is a compromise between the expectations of the environment and this person's skills, predispositions and own vision of the profession. It seems that the more effort is put into the school as an institution and the classroom, the better environment it becomes, which entails less risk of individual problems (see Dryll, in this volume). However, a significant part of the psychologist's time is always spent helping individual pupils. Their role in this area can be compared to that of a general practitioner. They do not deal with specialised, long-term psychotherapeutic interventions. If they feel that someone needs such treatment, they refer that person to an appropriate institution outside the school. In the case of problems that are revealed by pupils, it is important to take an interest in their family situation, because unresolved problems and difficulties of children indicate a temporary or permanent impairment of parental capacity.

It often happens in the child psychologist's work that parents want to shift the burden of parenting onto someone else. They want the child to change ("for the better"), but they themselves have no intention of working on what makes them unable to handle the upbringing process satisfactorily. The reason for such an attitude may be a strong resistance to change in the family system, when the fact of having a "bad child" plays an important role in maintaining its homeostasis. Another reason is ostensible recognition of a particular feature of

functioning as inappropriate, while actually approving of it (e.g. in the school, parents complain about their son's aggressiveness, but in fact they think that there is nothing wrong with it and just want the teachers to stop nagging). Another reason for refusing to cooperate (relatively easy to work with) is parents' ignorance of the correlation between their children's and their own behaviour or their ignorance of some specific psycho-correction procedures (e.g. how to practise auditory analysis and synthesis).

Work on parents' cooperation in the process of helping their child (especially the young one) is an indispensable condition for undertaking such action. Even if it was possible to change the child "for the better" quickly and easily, the dysfunctional home environment would reinforce the previously occurring symptoms and the therapeutic effect would be cancelled out. Depending on the reported problem, the initial diagnosis and the parents' willingness to cooperate, the psychologist can offer them individual work, family sessions or dyadic work with the child. However, it is not always possible to achieve real (not apparent) cooperation. If this is the case, the situation becomes very difficult, not only because of the effects that can be achieved, but also for ethical reasons. According to the Polish legislation, it is parents, whatever they are like, who are responsible for their child. In extreme cases, parental responsibility can be removed or restricted, but until this happens, no one else can decide what is good or bad for the child.

Psychological conversation

Individual conversation is the most typical form of psychological intervention. Different therapeutic schools formulate slightly different rules of conducting it (see Grzesiuk, 2005). However, it is always characterised as an interpersonal event in which a specialist meets with a person in need of help – they establish contact and talk, and the effect of the meeting is to improve the patient's functioning. A psychological conversation is fundamentally different from an "ordinary" social conversation, as the roles of the interlocutors are extremely polarised. Its subject matter concerns only the patient's problems, while the psychologist is responsible for its structure.

The formula of psychological conversation is not obvious to all those asking for help. It is rather to be assumed that someone who goes to a psychologist for the first time in their life unknowingly expects the kind of relationship that is usually established with a doctor. At the doctor's, you should not talk too long or too much. In the very beginning, you should rather briefly describe your symptoms and then be examined. During the examination you should not "disturb" – what the doctor does is certainly necessary. Then you have to

wait patiently for the verdict. The doctor is not always willing to say "what the matter is with you", they sometimes order additional examinations, then write a prescription and explain how to take the medicines. That's it. Now, you have to go, buy your medicine and eat it as recommended. It will make the disease go away – you will feel normal again.

At the psychologist's, it is different. Basically, the entire visit (especially the first one) is filled with what is an introduction at the doctor's – a story about the emotions the patient considers "sick" and wants to be "cured of". The initial exposé must evolve from what is well known to the patient and what they earlier identified as symptoms that made them want to visit a psychologist, to what was unknown before – something deeper, perceived in a different way. The reason behind this is the fact that the main therapeutic factor in a psychological conversation is not advice that should work like a pill. It is a reconstructed autonarration.

There is no doubt that a person who decides to turn to a psychologist with their problems has already tried to think them through themselves. They tried to understand the situation or solve it, but failed – not because they lacked the knowledge that the psychologist has – a secret recipe for a successful life. Being at the centre of their problems, feeling a whole range of negative emotions, they remained in the circle of the same beliefs and evaluations, interpretative patterns and well-known remedies which they had heard of so many times (e.g. "when you have bad grades, you have to learn more"). If they asked friends or relatives for help, in most cases they did not learn anything that they had not known before. When they were talking to people who were somehow involved in the problem together with them (parents, colleagues), they did not need to articulate clearly everything they all unanimously considered unquestionable ("you know what our teacher is like"). They used abbreviations and understatements, an inner language that was a combination of reflections and feelings as well as patterns that were never questioned. They spoke without a distance, unaware of the subjectivity of their perspective.

When constructing a narrative addressed to a stranger and at the same time a professional, the patient must verbalise everything that is obvious to them. They hear their story as if they were reading a book. A person can analyse the behaviour of literary characters and confidently comment on other people's affairs. By listening to a story about themselves, the narrator, who is also a listener, activates their evaluation system and analytical skills. In addition, their story is listened to by someone who – as they believe – is a specialist in the analysis of personal stories. We always adjust the formula of a story to the expected interests and competences of the listener. The patient listens to their own story as if through the psychologist's ears (according to their own

conception, and to the content included in the structures of "the generalised other", see Mead, 2015).

As an "ear", the psychologist has a very important role to play, and the task is not easy at all. They have to listen in such a way that firstly the patient wants to talk and secondly that they talk in such a way that allows them to change. You never know what kind of story they bring. Neither do you know what change or what solution will be the best for them. All this is slowly discovered. The psychologist gets to know the person, but at the same time that person gets to know themselves – but differently. From a different perspective, they discover and in a way illuminate the darker recesses of the "obvious" way of thinking – they tell themselves anew.

The "ear effect" is one – probably the most important – factor influencing the quality of the patient's narration. However, the psychologist does not remain completely passive. They have a number of subtle means at their disposal, due to which the story develops in the right direction – they guide the patient to where it is the most difficult, i.e. to the topics which are the centre of the problem. The art of directing the patient's reflection is based on the ability to recognise properly what is important for that person. Non-directional statements serve this purpose – paraphrases, sensitivity to certain compositional features of a story and the ability to read the indicators of a changeable affective state (Dryll, 2000).

Priceless paraphrasing

A paraphrase is a statement made by the listener in which they prove that what has been said they have heard and understood. Morphologically, paraphrasing consists in saying in a different way what the interlocutor has just said – without adding interpretations, evaluations, advice, or suggestions. In psychological paraphrasing, we do not focus on the facts being recounted, but on the attitude to these facts. The most important thing is to clearly and explicitly articulate their emotional meaning, which is communicated implicitly. In their narrative, the speaker makes some "suspensions" – having said something important, they do not know yet which direction to go in. They expect a comment or a hint. It is precisely at this point that a paraphrase, which conveys the essence of the fragment of the story just told, will provoke them to enter into the depths of their own experiences. The listener's statement, which brings out emotions, at the same time shows the speaker that these emotions are accepted, "appropriate", and it is worth continuing to talk about them.

Certainly, a paraphrase may be inaccurate. The patient may disagree with a given interpretation of their words. In the case of a mistake, however, a paraphrase still serves a certain function – even though it is not correct, it

directs the story towards the emotional significance of the facts recalled and concentrates on the speaker's perspective. While modifying the content of an incorrectly paraphrased statement, the patient still remains at the level of examining its meaning. It is then necessary to accept their reservations and continue to follow the path they have chosen. However, it is worth remembering that sometimes denial ("no, no, I was not angry at all then") can be a sign of resistance. Denying as resistance is quite easily recognisable because it is accompanied by emotional agitation. In this case, we also get important information: what constitutes a "protected zone" for the patient. According to classical trends in psychoanalysis, resistance had to be either overcome or circumvented, but nowadays views on this matter have changed significantly (Grzesiuk, 2005). Resistance should be respected. It shows that the patient is not ready to accept and analyse certain aspects of their experiences. They will certainly return to these issues at the subsequent meetings.

Composition of the story

Sensitivity to the compositional features of the story involves a very thorough tracking of the arrangement of thematic threads, the time spent on particular episodes as well as the wealth of details, vocabulary and grammatical forms (e.g. impersonal verbs, nominalisations). Particular attention should always be paid to any assurances expressed by repeating selected content. A person who says "I am very honest" every second sentence probably has a problem with the assessment of their own honesty. If a woman says more often than it seems necessary "but I love my husband very much", it is worth considering why she is so eager to convince the psychologist (herself?) about it.

A typical arrangement of content in the case of the speaker's reluctance to disclose the core of the problem is the "star" structure of the narrative. All the threads taken up lead to one – the key theme. Yet, when the narrator approaches it, tension appears, the speaker quietens down and abruptly changes the subject to a completely different one. A few times, they come closer and further away. At that point, we can help them realise this by showing that this is precisely their strategy – they develop the threads of their story in a "star" manner. We can also wait until the narrator decides to go deep inside of their own accord.

Another characteristic composition figure is omission. In a systematically composed story, there is a clear lack of a certain part (e.g. the narrator talks about all the members of their family one by one but omits the younger sister, or he tells the story of their life but "loses" one of the periods somewhere). Such omissions usually indicate particularly problematic zones. In many cases, it is caused not only by their reluctance to reveal them. Indeed, some traumatic

events are not remembered by the patient – they have been strongly repressed. Recalling disturbing memories can result in trauma recurrence. Therefore, it is necessary to proceed very cautiously, slowly preparing the interlocutor to accept the fact that something has happened in their life that they do not want or cannot integrate with the rest of their personal experience. The narrative is the best cure for trauma (Burke, Bradley, 2006; O'Kearney, Perrott, 2006; Pals, McAdams, 2004; Sewell, Williams, 2002; Tuval-Mashiach et al., 2004), thus making a story about a forgotten event is vital but requires a great deal of subtlety.

Sometimes events that are consciously omitted or mentioned very briefly are not constitutive of a narrative that is supposed to convey a particular message (Habermas, 2007; Pasupathi, Hoyt, 2009; Pillemer, 1998). In victory narratives, for example, these are episodes of experienced defeats, but in rumination narratives, these will be episodes of success. Paying attention to the events that "do not fit" into the general message plays a very important role in therapeutic work. It is the so-called work with exceptions – the main tool for restructuring identity autonarration in narrative therapy (Chrząstowski, 2014; de Barbaro, 2011).

Compositional indicators that should guide the patient's reflection during a psychological conversation also include identifying the principle according to which the narrator organises their utterance. The chronological order of the course of events – the narrative mode of a feature film type – is characterised by reported stories, worked out by the patient and relatively "cool". The same facts reported in the argumentative mode are usually an indicator of an ongoing internal dialogue – which is "hot" – and in which different rationales clash (accepted by the narrator to a comparable degree). At the beginning of such a statement, there is often a thesis, which is to be justified by further parts of that statement. Also, the thesis is often repeated at the end (Dryll, 2013).

Indicators of the affective state

Detecting the indicators of the patient's changeable affective state is an absolutely fundamental condition for a good psychological conversation. This information is provided by observing facial expressions, body posture, the way the patient moves and gestures as well as voice intonation. In general, non-verbal indicators of emotions are similar in all people, but each person has their own individual style and pattern of experience expression. Sometimes the manifestations of experienced emotional states are so delicate (especially when the patient considers emotionality to be something that should be hidden) that they are not easily accessible either to others or even to the patient. This makes it all the more important to be sensitive to the subtle features of the way feelings

are expressed – to learn an individual pattern, which requires some time to be spent with that person.

With good contact and complete focus on the conversation, the psychologist has one more source of information about the patient's emotional state. This is the patient's own affective state (recipathy). Observing a growing anxiety, anger or astonishment in ourselves, we can conclude that a similar emotion is being experienced by the interlocutor at the moment, because emotions transmitted emphatically (as in connected vessels) affect the listener as much as the speaker. Obviously, the psychologist, being a professional, should not let themselves be "carried away" by the patient's emotions. Being aware of what they are experiencing, psychologists use it as a diagnostic tool. Many beginner psychologists feel uncomfortable during conversations in which strong emotions (especially unpleasant ones) emerge. It should be remembered that strong emotions are always "cooled down" by verbalisation.

Formulating the goal of psychological work

While listening and discreetly navigating the course of the narrative, the psychologist follows the patient, who examines various aspects of the problem situation and identifies what has so far been the incomprehensible and unnamed centre of the problem. They thus make a certain discovery. This is usually accompanied by deep sadness, sometimes a sense of guilt or harm, helplessness and unwillingness to further penetrate their inner self, but also a kind of relief – "now I know, I understand". The next step is to formulate the direction of change, i.e. the goal of working together on the problem and its solution. This part of the psychological conversation is a bit more directive, because it requires more guidance.

There are several rules for a proper formulation of the therapeutic goal (Hallanzy, 1992). The first and fundamental aspect is that you can strive to change yourself, but not the "world" (your wife, relations at work, bad neighbours). The patient might not accept this approach (for example, parents who want their child to change of their own accord, or the school and teachers with their grades and requirements). In that case, however, the psychologist will not be able to help them in any way. Expecting the world to change cannot be done in a psychological office (although in general it is not impossible).

If the prerequisite, i.e. personal involvement of the patient, is met, we can proceed to formulate a detailed work goal. The goal should be presented in a single sentence formula. What does this mean? Having told us why they decided to ask for help, what presents a difficulty, what they would like to "cure" themselves of, having bypassed facades and having overcome resistance,

the patient finally gets to the core of the problem. However, it may turn out that this core is expressed in the form of a "wish list". The patient then has to take a further step, finding out how these wishes are related, which of them are key and superior to the others. We can help them to do this by asking: "If you had already achieved A, would it be easier with B or maybe the other way around?" By using their imagination and applying their own code of determining possible goals of change, the patient establishes their hierarchy and is able to choose such a goal of change that will make it possible to go further.

Another important aspect of formulating the goal of psychological work is to refer to a positive rather than a negative motivational pattern. The goal should be based on striving, not on avoiding. For example, the goal "I would like to stop being afraid..." needs to be rephrased. Such a reformulation is not an automatic procedure. "Not to be afraid" means "to be calm" for one person, "to be brave" for another one. "Calm" is a state in which emotions are calmed down, while "courage" requires mobilisation – they are completely different. The patient has to discover themselves which of these two opposites of fear they want. The positive formulation of a goal, apart from making it more precise, has one more advantage. The imagination – what I will be like once I stop being afraid – is activated again. For a moment, the patient "sees" themselves as a calm (or brave) person, starts considering such a state and begins to create an image of themselves the way they want to be. Creating this image is conducive to further work.

The third condition of a well-formulated goal is to define indicators of its accomplishment. "How will you know you're already X?" Searching for indicators anchors a new self-image, created just now, in everyday situations and physiological sensations. "I'll be poised, once I notice that when I feel anger, I clench my teeth and hands, I get hot, but I speak in a calm voice and I can think logically, I can argue, I stay connected, I don't beat, I don't use dirty words". "I'll be better organised, when I see in the evening that everything I have written down in my calendar, I've done, I've been everywhere on time, and I haven't had to apologise once for not doing something. And my clothes in the closet will be neatly folded".

The result of working on a well-formulated goal is the patient's noticeable joy and openly expressed sense of hope. On the wave of this good mood, it is worthwhile to work out another two dangerous types of resistance, which may appear at further stages. One of them is the patient's belief that the goal is impossible to achieve, the other results from the reluctance to deprive themselves of the possibility of deriving side benefits from the experienced problem (Enright, 1987).

Subjective evaluation of the possibility of achieving the goal, which is the patient's own change, is not a trivial procedure. Its content is of lesser

importance than the patient's current attitude. As soon as a new self-image is created, some people are deeply convinced that they want and can "move mountains". This portion of hope will bear fruit in terms of effort and give rise to new hope. For others, even a small change, although seemingly accepted, does not appear possible and remains a dream. For them, the effort will always be too hard, and they will look for further excuses for their own weakness and play "yes, but..." with a psychologist (Berne, 1964, 1972). When asked: "Do you believe you will achieve this goal?", the patient usually answers "yes". By listening to the intonation of this "yes" and carefully observing the facial expressions, the psychologist can feel how congruent it is – consistent in all indicators of an affective state, because it comes from the depths. The expression "well, rather yes", "sure thing", "of course", "how else" and any inconsistency require stopping and explaining. "You said YES, but your hands made a gesture I DON'T KNOW. Why?" "Why did you say RATHER yes?" Responses to such concerns may vary. If it turns out that the patient does not really believe in the possibility of achieving the goal just formulated, everything must start from the beginning. Sometimes it is enough to clarify doubts and provide support ("I will help you anyway").

The final question is: "What will you lose when you're the way you want to be?" At first, it causes consternation, but after a proper consideration, the patient often finds some advantages connected with the already unwanted way of functioning – minor ones: compassion from relatives, an excuse to concentrate on themselves, or more significant ones. Without being aware of what can be lost as a result of the change, it is not possible to make a fully responsible decision on whether someone still wants to work on the problem. Many symptoms fit into the existing system of relations between the patient and the environment so that their disappearance would adversely affect the functioning of the system (e.g. the husband will again spend more time away from home, because his wife has already "been cured" and does not need to be given attention or replaced in looking after the children). The possibility of losing something more valuable than the patient's own well-being may block the motivation to change. Then it is necessary to work on other "healthier" ways to achieve the same benefits. Obviously, the patient can also give them up, prioritising their own change over that.

Working with children versus their age

The above-described method of conducting an individual conversation is a framework, which often has to be modified. The most important factor influencing its necessary variability is the interlocutor's age. The ability to construct

a narrative about oneself is developed gradually. A very young child is taught to tell stories about past events at an early kindergarten age (Fivush, 2007). However, a full range of linguistic means for constructing narrative stories freely is only available to them at the age of about 12 (McCabe, Peterson, 1991). Telling one's own story is even more difficult. Above the age of 8, it is limited to episodic memories that are not interconnected and are not ordered on the timeline. A 12-year-old notes the chronology, a 16-year-old can construct an autobiography composed of facts (Habermas, Ehlert-Lerche, de Silveira, 2009), but they are still a long way from efficient autobiographical and reflective inference (McLean, Fournier, 2008; Staudinger, 2001). The zone of proximal development in this field covers the period not earlier than 12–14 years of age (strong individual differences). The ability and disposition to reflect on one's own experience is most fully developed during adolescence. Thus, it is only in the oldest years of primary school that the psychologist can expect such contact with the child, in which it will make sense to work on constructing (and sometimes reconstructing) an identity story. This is also the time when the bonds with parents loosen. The adolescent no longer sees their parents as an "extension of themselves" – as all-powerful and all-knowing individuals (Budziszewska, Dryll, 2008), which also makes it easier for the psychologist to work with them individually (currently, for legal reasons, with the knowledge and consent of the guardians).

Younger children should be treated differently. Psychological difficulties experienced by a child in pre-school and younger school age (except for some biologically based disorders) are the effect of inadequate parental capacity. It is parents' responsibility to support and foster the child's development in accordance with the values of the historical place and time in which they live. Most non-pathological parents are aware of this and make an effort to fulfil this task. For various reasons, however, they do not manage to construct a relationship with their child in an appropriate way. The psychologist's task in this situation is to work with a dyad, with the aim of reconstructing the relationship so as to restore parents' ability to establish good family contact with their child. While performing this task, it is important to modify the way the child is perceived and what is expected of them (Dryll, 2001).

Working with a dyad has many advantages. The psychological processes engaged by the patient during a fruitful psychological conversation are analogous to those that appear in the process of personal reflection of one's own experience (Staudinger, 2001). On the one hand, it is the recreation and selection of experiences related to the problem, on the other, verbal understanding, evaluation and re-evaluation. A young child is not able to make analysis and conclusions, and their mother does not have direct access to their experiences. Thus, the functions necessary to make a fruitful reflection reevaluating an

experience are divided into these two people, but possible to accomplish when working with a dyad. Obviously, the proper separation of functions is a prerequisite for this, but this is the responsibility of a psychologist in charge. The bond between the mother and her young child, regardless of its quality, is so strong that during the contact with the psychologist, the processes related both to the child's direct experience and their mother's understanding of the problem are complementary. As a result, the mother can understand anew what is at the heart of the problem. The child will gain acceptance for what they feel, a corrective experience of being understood, and support in trying to cope with the difficult situation.

Work with a dyad requires all participants' full commitment, but different from each of them. The psychologist speaks first and foremost with the child, while the mother should listen, look and think very carefully. She should not actively engage in the conversation without being invited, either by speaking on behalf of the child or by "helping" the psychologist ("well, answer as you have been asked"). A conversation with a young child is much more directive in character. Usually, just like at the doctor's, it is the mother who formulates the initial exposé characterising the problem as she sees it. Having listened to it, the psychologist needs to find out how this problem is verbalised by the child. Then, it is immediately clear "whose" problem is being reported (see Gordon, 1974). Children at a younger school age often repeat – in an uninvolved manner – their mother's words in response to a question about the problem ("I am stubborn and speak very disrespectfully to my grandmother", "I don't want to do my homework and I always say that nothing has been assigned, and then a note in the school diary again"). Sometimes they try to talk about the experiences that are the basis for it, "in their own words", but they may have difficulty conveying a comprehensible message. Then, it is good to refer to another form of expression – drawing, playing with dolls or animals, verbal projection tasks ("what must be done to be naughty?"), interpretation of simple pictures, completing stories (about a boy who didn't want to do his homework), questions about their favourite characters, about the saddest or happiest day and the like. During the speech, the psychologist should pay special attention to the emotions as well as parents' reactions ("and what would Mum say about this?). Paraphrase is used in the same way as in a conversation with an adult. When working with a dyad, the paraphrase of the child's statement is addressed to the parent – they are the one to recognise the sphere of experience and focus attention on it.

In addition to conversations, drawings and games related to the reported problem, in the case of younger schoolchildren and preschoolers, their perception of family relationships should always be diagnosed. For this purpose, a family drawing interpreted according to the principles presented by Braun-Gałkowska

(1991) and the Children's Apperception Test (CAT) in its animal version serve well. When working in a dyad, both the drawing and the CAT are done in the presence of the mother, and the psychologist comments in real time (addressing the child) on those aspects of the performance that they want the mother to pay attention to ("You have drawn your grandmother the greatest; she is the most important at home, isn't she? And dad is so far from mum. There is such a thick tree between you and your brother – it separates you. Don't you like being close to your brother?").

At the stage of formulating the work's goal, we also start with a conversation with the child. It is best to use the same forms of communication that proved to be effective during the diagnostic part. It may be a request to make a drawing where "everyone will be happy", to complete a story so that it has a "good" ending, the question "and if this familiar boy of mine didn't want to be naughty anymore, what would it be like?" etc. At the end, we ask the parent about their vision of the work's goal, encouraging them to speak in such a way that the child understands it (in reference to their vocabulary or the projection used).

Just as in individual contact with an adult or adolescent, we strive to make the patient look at their experience in a different way – notice what they did not know before, and, on this basis, change their daily functioning, the same applies to the work with a dyad. Here, the functions of behavioural regulation are to some extent carried out by the child's adult guardian. As a result of the change in the way they look at the child's emotions, there will be a change in the routine of the dyad's everyday life. We can expect the mother's improved attentiveness, her comments to be different, the child's greater ability to talk about their experiences and desires, and greater hope – shared by both sides – for well-being and understanding.

Further stages of working with a dyad involve setting small, easy, and if possible, spectacularly successful assignments. The meetings are devoted to discussing their implementation and current issues. At the same time, the process of working with parents or just the mother may take place, in which the child does not participate. Its starting point is usually the mother's need to make sure that the conclusions she has drawn from the conversations with her child are correct. The process can go deep into her personal or family problems. Depending on the severity of these problems, we can take action to intervene, or we can offer to turn her to an external institution.

Therapeutic meetings with children, or with children and their parents, last until the patients conclude that they no longer need it. Such a moment usually means some improvement in the way they function. Sometimes "relapses" occur. Then, the process is shorter and brings a more distinct improvement. Obviously, we are not always successful, but we should always hope that

a well-conducted treatment will bear fruit in the patient's life one day, sometimes at a completely unexpected time. In order not to lose this hope and not to have doubts, it is worthwhile to mention the Hippocratic principle *primum non nocere* and bear in mind that no doctor has managed to cure all patients, and yet they should always spare no effort to make it happen.

ABSTRACT

Individual work

Psychological counselling in school conditions has its specificity. The psychologist has to face the expectation that at the request of the teacher or parent, he/she will "fix" the child's behaviour according to their wishes or at least provide some reliable advice. The basic method of individual work is to analyse the personal narrative of the reporting person about the experienced problem. Important information is contained not only in the consciously expressed content of the narrative, but also in the compositional features, vocabulary, and accompanying emotional reactions. The psychologist primarily uses paraphrasing to evoke and sustain a narrative. After identifying the problem, the psychologist decides whether he will continue to work with the person or refer them to a specialist outside school. In order for further work to be effective, its purpose should be carefully formulated. An interesting but difficult procedure that can be used in school conditions is working with a parent-child dyad.

KEYWORDS: psychological counselling at school, evoking client narrative, well-formed outcome

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11. Working with a group in a school

Starting with the research conducted by Kurt Lewin and his collaborators (Lewin, Lippitt, White, 1939), we have been observing a great interest in social groups, especially small groups and the so-called group processes. This is due to the fact that people carry out many tasks together, in smaller or larger teams, and their behaviour depends to a large extent on the characteristics of the group to which they belong. In turn, the functioning of the group relies on the properties of individual group members and its leader, as well as on the processes that transform a set of people into a social group, as defined in social psychology. Nowadays, it is emphasised that a social group is a construct immersed in a specific context, i.e. in a broader environment (Neal, Neal, 2013; Mathieu, Wolfson, Park, 2018). In school reality, it is the school class that constitutes a basic formal group, with the teacher as a formal class leader. Therefore, in order to understand a specific schoolchild, it is important to take into account the fact that they are pupils of a particular class in a particular school.

Another argument in support of the need to gain and apply knowledge about group mechanisms and group dynamics is that we can acquire certain competences only as members of one or another social group, and that group work has different effects than individual work, that while working in a group, we learn from each other by performing common tasks. A well-functioning group also gives its members a sense of security and community.

To sum up, the school psychologist can and should have knowledge of group processes and competences to work with a group, not only with a group

of students, but also of teachers or parents (Karolidis, Vouzas, 2018). In this chapter, we will present the most important rules and guidelines which are necessary to make the psychologist's work with a group effective.

How the number of participants in a meeting affects its character

It is obvious that **a group is more than just the individuals that make it up** (Corey, Corey, 1997).

When working with a group, the psychologist considers the processes that take place in it (group dynamics). This simply means that they answer several basic questions (and this is the effect of careful monitoring):

- What is the communication between the individual persons?
- What roles do these people play in the group?
- What characterises the interpersonal relations established by the group participants?
- To what extent do they manage to carry out group tasks?
- What are the rules of cooperation developed by the participants and the norms applicable in the group?

In practice, a thorough psychological observation may concern a small group, consisting of a few or a dozen people at most. **Working with a small group**, in which it is possible for everyone to communicate with everyone, allows for full feedback on its functioning (see Allen, Reiter-Palmon, Crowe, Scott, 2018). This is the result of active cooperation, in which dialogue takes place between: (a) the psychologist and an individual participant in the meeting, and (b) the psychologist and the participants as a group. Thus, there is a chance for psychological activities similar in their essence to those described in Chapter 10 ("Individual work"). The most important thing is to establish contact with the participants and to have a conversation (dialogue). The psychologist is responsible for the structure of the meeting with a group as well as with an individual person, and the participants are responsible for its content (each of them individually and all together). The art of leading a group is first and foremost the art of active listening (paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, clarifying, interpreting verbal and non-verbal behaviour, etc.). The difficulty lies in how to enable the participants in a workshop, training session or support group to "emerge" in a group in such a way that they can exchange their thoughts and describe their own experiences. There are several solutions and each of them has its pros and cons. The psychologist may ask each participant to make a short statement (in order of sitting, which is the easiest when sitting in a circle, or

in order of coming forward), or it is possible to "address" the problem of one person in one meeting (and the problems of other people successively in further meetings). The psychologist then has a real chance to incorporate the content "brought in" by the group, i.e. to monitor and react to the processes taking place between participants on an ongoing basis. The rules of communication, the roles performed in the group, the existing relationships, the way in which tasks are accomplished and the norms are observed can be changed or adequately developed by providing useful knowledge and teaching specific skills (these activities fall within the scope of intervention, prevention and promotion). The course of the meeting with a small group depends mostly on the participants' activity and their readiness to cooperate. The psychologist acts as a leader or authority – because they are predisposed to this role by their psychological knowledge and interpersonal skills – introducing certain issues, describing exercises, games, drama activities, as well as summarising what "worked" and/or giving mini lectures. What counts here is something more than just the ability to listen actively; what really matters is the ability to organise and plan what may or may not be a valuable task in a group work. The elements that can and should be prepared before starting work with a small group are:

- a schedule of the whole meeting (scenario)[1];
- the content of instructions for exercises and games or other elements of group work[2] (theatrical productions, dialogue lists, role-play, psychodrama, etc.);
- the content of materials to be distributed or shown to participants (slides, posters, PowerPoint presentations);
- polite greeting and farewell formulas, rules for addressing participants;
- a short outline of the summary (what should be included in it – especially important for beginners in leading a group);
- formulas useful for getting feedback and/or the content of evaluation questionnaires.

It is obvious that exercises, games or mini-lectures prepared in advance – even those that "worked", i.e. were perceived as valuable by the participants

[1] In the literature, you can find more or less detailed scenarios of the psychologist's meetings with parents, students or teachers in the school. An example is the book *Gdy dziecko zdaje egzamin. Scenariusze warsztatów psychologicznych dla rodziców* [When a child passes an exam. Scenarios of psychological workshops for parents] (Sokołowska, 2007).

[2] These elements of meetings are described in detail in most publications on psychological games and group exercises (see Bida, 1994; Branders, 1991; Griesbeck, 1999; Jachimska, 1994; Johnson, 1972; Kobiałka, 1994; Palomares et al., 2008; Portmann, 1999; Rojewska, 1994, 2000; Sekuła, Pielok, 1993; Vopel, 2001, 2003, 2004; Wiśniewska, Cassidy, 1991).

in previous meetings – may prove unsuitable for the group we are currently working with, and even if there is only one such group, they will have to be changed. As has already been written many times, the psychologist's work, including this with a small group, always contains an element of the unknown. Therefore, it is advisable to have – "in your head" or on a piece of paper – some alternative ideas concerning the most important parts of the meeting and to show a lot of flexibility in applying them. As far as possible and necessary, the psychologist usually shortens or lengthens:

1. introduction (introducing to the subject matter and focus of the meeting);
2. feedback on the nature of the group's activity (exercise, games, drama activities, dialogue lists, behavioural experiments, etc. usually "open" the group to new experiences and enable its participants to describe their previous situation);
3. conclusion (summary) (Allen, Reiter-Palmon, Crowe, Scott, 2018).

The central part of the meeting is the most activating and least predictable. It should also be constructed taking into account the principle of diversity to avoid monotony (tiring repetitiveness). The activity proposed to the group must not involve the participants in identical activities. For example, they cannot be asked only to do the pencil-card exercises (i.e. requiring them to write down their thoughts, impressions or fill in something). It would also be good for the participants to have a chance to do some movement activity or perform a role-play.

When a group consists of a few dozen or several hundred participants, the above-described working methods cease to apply. When **working with a large group**, the psychologist becomes the speaker (the party giving the message). Thus, they have to give a speech in front of a more or less attentive audience (in front of the party receiving the message). The activity of such a large number of people during a meeting with the psychologist is – in the most optimal situation – limited to listening and/or following a multimedia presentation. Basically, what people who form such a large group can do – without disturbing the logic of the psychologist's argumentation – is to ask a short question, express their opinion in a few sentences and show non-verbally how interested they are in their arguments (for example nodding, smiling, looking at the speaker, and even taking notes). In order to avoid general chaos, it is the psychologist who gives them the floor and decides on the time to implement an action other than just listening, e.g. participation in planned drama activities or giving extended examples from their professional life. However, it is only the above-mentioned elements of working with a large group that are created spontaneously – "on the fly". The other elements of this type of psychological

work require not so much improvisation as thorough preparation (laborious and time-consuming design of the argument in terms of content and form, together with its precise presentation). The aim of the psychologist's meetings with large groups in the school is usually:

- to provide knowledge,
- to persuade the audience to accept their (i.e. the psychologist's) reasons,
- to illustrate and familiarise the audience with different forms of work with the child and/or with themselves.

Lectures, papers, talks or research seminars are forms of meetings with a large group, where the psychologist "dominates" in terms of content. During these meetings, the psychologist mainly shares their knowledge, thoughts, experiences and analyses ways of effective action. It usually takes from 80 to 100% of the meeting time. This means that listeners do not have much time to talk about their personal experiences, thoughts or ways of acting (even if these are problematic for them). Under optimum circumstances, the psychologist signals to the group that they want to answer questions, accept comments or reflections. The psychologist also takes care of the form of the meeting – and there is no difference here between working with an individual or a small group. In every situation, their responsibility is to make sure that the message is clear and precise. To sum up, it is impossible for the psychologist to establish a close and direct contact with a large group. This requires two-way communication and a balance in the activity involved (initiative on both sides, completing the messages and reciprocity).

What builds group cohesion

Apart from the size of the group, one of the most important parameters the psychologist should take into account in their work is **group cohesiveness**. This can be understood as the strength of the bonds that link group members (see Oyster, 2000). The psychologist should do their best to facilitate cooperation and perhaps even to establish emotional ties between the group members. Meetings with psychologists usually have a specific purpose, i.e. they try to respond to specific needs. Some groups psychologists work with can be created as one-off gatherings (the reason for their formation may be just one meeting – the one that is currently being held). This usually requires building up some initial coherence of the group and the need to use exercises and games to integrate and give the participants a sense of security. Alternatively, these may be groups established long before the

meeting with a psychologist, which work together *de lege artis* ("according to the law of the art"), or groups which need to be helped because of the existing problems in their mutual interaction (coexistence). In the latter case, the work is two-stage and includes diagnosis (monitoring) and psychological intervention. In most cases, it concerns school classes in which pathological phenomena have occurred (e.g. peer violence, long-term conflicts between students and teachers).

A group's cohesion depends to a large extent on the care and attention paid by the meeting leader to the following aspects:

- getting the participants to introduce themselves and setting the goal of working together (agreement that the topic of the meeting is important and defining the extent of each participant's involvement in its accomplishment);
- setting out useful rules to achieve these goals – writing a contract;
- establishing and respecting the rules on how to respond to the participants' proposals, demands, comments, etc.:
  - referring to them in their statements (paraphrasing, summing up, making reference to them, etc.), but **without making any judgement**;
  - clarifying;
  - interpreting;
- enriching the content of the meeting with psychological knowledge (lecture elements) and new skills (training elements);
- summarising the most important elements of group work:
  - collecting feedback from the participants, in oral form;
  - asking the participants to fill in evaluation questionnaires.

It is worthwhile to single out the issue of **contract** here. Ideally, it should be written down, signed by the participants and somehow prominently displayed during the work with the group. When the psychologist starts working with a group, they should help the participants to work out clear rules of cooperation. Afterwards, however, it is not the psychologist who ensures compliance with the rules, but the group members.

The most important thing in the psychologist's work is the age and life experience of the participants

The school psychologist has a chance to carry out group work with each of the school community members: teachers, students and their parents, in exceptional circumstances also with a group of related professionals (during conferences,

workshops and lectures aimed at improving qualifications). Working with adults or with groups of adults (families or classes with a teacher) is different from working with children or young people. Unlike children and young people, adults do not need to be provided with so many activities related to group participation. This means that **when working with adults, less time is spent on integration and creating group ties than when working with children**. Adults simply work of their own accord to get to know and feel safe with others – after all, they draw on their considerable life experience. Basically, when working with adults, **there are not so many interludes**, i.e. elements that calm down (to rest, to relax) or provide energy (to activate motor skills, to stimulate the mind and imagination). Children simply enjoy engaging in motor activities much more than adults do. Therefore, children and teenagers (and university students) are offered a wide range of group games and plays – concerning assertiveness, communication, dealing with stress, anger management, etc. – one third of which, approximately, feature motor activities. In group meetings intended for adults, there are much fewer such exercises and games (or none at all).

The most effective way of **learning** in youth and children's groups is **through experience and emotional involvement** (it is not enough for them just to listen and look). For children and young people, an important value is the ability to directly and concretely experience, observe and reflect, actively experiment with situations, check conclusions and formulate generalisations. In fact, it is only for adults that lectures, talks and papers can be appreciated on a par with workshops and training sessions (active methods). An example of work based on experience, instead of just words, is creativity training (Dembo, 1994; Góralski, 1996; Nęcka, 2003; Nęcka et al., 2016; Paszkowski, 2008; Szmidt, 2005) (see Table 2 below).

When working with adults – whether it is a workshop or a training session – there are fewer psychological games and plays, and more **behavioural** (i.e. instruction, modelling, role-playing, or doing a practical task at home) and **cognitive techniques** (which make it possible to distinguish observations from interpretations, recognise cognitive distortions and errors, and adequately modify internal dialogue). The psychologist's role in working with adults – including groups of adults – is simply to provide them with knowledge and skills to support the development of the child (young person), shaping their personality and exerting a positive upbringing influence on them. This task includes teaching effective techniques of controlling and developing new behaviours, as well as self-help in children (among others, Brejnak, 2008; Gillen, 1997; Herbert, 2005; Król-Fijewska, 1993, 2001; Rees, Graham, 1991; Reimann, 2007; Ridley, Walther, 1995; Rosen, 2005; Sokołowska-Dzioba, 2002) (see Table 3).

Table 2. Objectives pursued in creativity training

GENERAL	SPECIFIC	Examples of exercises
Promoting cognitive development	• seeing analogies in unrelated phenomena • creating metaphors, breaking away from already existing definitions and names, transforming them • applying deductive reasoning • using non-obvious classifications and creating a chain of associations • performing analysis and synthesis skilfully • using visualisation, anticipation, etc.	• specifying possible uses for the nail, in addition to the functions for which it is usually used (modelled on Guilford's Alternative Uses Test – fluency of thinking) • listing all things that are similar to the flag (flexibility of thinking)
Developing social and emotional skills	• communicating your ideas to others in an effective way • accepting and offering constructive criticism of the ideas produced • the ability to "pick up" and develop other people's ideas when their evaluation is positive • recognising and emphasising one's strengths	• drawing up a group contract together • tasks based on the rule: what would happen if
Training artistic abilities	• stimulating verbal, visual, motor and musical activity	• an exercise that involves writing a poem, a piece of prose (e.g. an unusual group story, a "training" song, and even an advertising text) • performing a drama

Table 2. cont.

GENERAL	SPECIFIC	Examples of exercises
Learning to deal with obstacles and discouragement	• criticism of already existing and thus obvious solutions • using analogies and useful metaphors • drawing on one's own experience to expand the standard approach to tasks • the ability to defer evaluation of emerging ideas and to refrain from criticism as well as develop others' and one's own ideas • taking joy and pleasure in "making up" (creating, fantasising) • nurturing an inner conviction about one's creative abilities • a sense of detachment and humour	• redefining (for a teacher, an "impassable" problem may be: How to quiz a large number of pupils/students in a short time? The underlined word after rephrasing will be: to test or categorise. And this is a good starting point for considering non-obvious actions, as cited in Chybicka, 2006)
Creative problem solving	• identifying and redefining a problem as well as solving it *directly* • analysing the essence of the problem and existing obstacles, generating ideas, evaluating them (evaluation) and planning the implementation of the solution (improving methods to facilitate implementation) • the realisation that solving a problem invigorates • thinking through analogies, metaphorical thinking • the principle of systematic search of the problem field, i.e. putting together all existing possibilities, checking all combinations	• the brainstorming technique: generating as many ideas as possible and refraining from criticising them • the association chain technique

Table 3. Examples of group work topics

TOPIC	Content
Two-way communication	• active listening: expressing interest, formulating questions and tips so as to positively influence the other person's well-being and activeness, e.g. formulating the "I" message, paraphrasing, statements reflecting feelings • showing emotional engagement and expressing emotions in a way that supports the other person • ensuring consistency between verbal and non-verbal messages • expressing negative feelings in a way that does not hurt the other person (elements of empathy and assertiveness training)
Influencing the child	• observing and controlling the child's problematic behaviour (applying direct consequences, building and implementing a system of rewards and negative costs, giving orders, providing feedback, ignoring, break time, logical and natural consequences, and verbal reprimand) • supporting the child's play and learning (planning and organising the child's work, giving clear instructions and formulating effective requests, explaining, giving examples, referring to one's own experience, giving feedback, supporting, praising and complimenting the child, appreciating the effort put in, skilfully encouraging and arousing interest in the content of an activity, positive attention, special time) • teaching the child new behaviours and modifying their unfavourable habits (e.g. through participatory observation, modelling, direct conditioning) • solving child-adult and child-child conflicts
Self-observation, self-control, solving interpersonal problems	• adequate assessment of one's own competences as an educator – a participant in social interactions (providing evidence for and against, the Triple Column Technique, reframing, responsibility pie, behavioural experiment, self-rewarding) • dealing with interpersonal problems (e.g. PICC strategies[3]) • coping with stress (alleviating its symptoms through relaxation, massage and respiratory training, and self-talk) • anger management • ways of obtaining social support when needed

Sometimes the psychologist works with a mixed group, i.e. a group that consists of both adults and children. These can also be groups created specifically to meet with a psychologist (through their offer, they enable people to meet

[3] PICC is an acronym for a strategy containing four steps to help a person solve their life problems. (1) **P**roblem – **P** is a letter describing the consideration: *What is wrong with me? What is my problem?* (2) **I**dentification of goals – **I** is a letter pointing to the need to specify: *What do I want to achieve? What am I aiming at?* (3) **C**hoices – **C** is a letter indicating the need to define solutions in response to the question: *What are the ways out of this situation? What solutions come to my mind?* (4) **C**onsequences of choices – **C** is a letter meaning that we need to consider: *What are the pros and cons of the proposals? What will I gain and what will I lose by doing this and not the other way round?* (see Sokołowska, 2007).

and work together for some time). An example of such group work involving several pairs or threes (parent/parent-child) are instructional classes in the Good Start Method (by Marta Bogdanowicz, see Bogdanowicz, Bogdanowicz, 2016; Bogdanowicz et al., 2006) or the Method of Developing Mathematical Thought in Children (by Edyta Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, see Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, Zielińska, 2000, 2005). The psychologist is much more likely to work with a formal group (with a class and their form teacher), but also with an informal one (with a sports club and their coach, with a student association and their supervisor). Thus, this type of group is not formed just for the purpose of meetings with a psychologist and dissolved after these meetings finish. Such a group has a natural leader – an adult supervisor (teacher, pedagogue, sports instructor), and the psychologist supports the interaction between them and the pupil. The psychologist gets involved – for a while – in observing, assisting, working to improve the atmosphere in the group, facilitate communication, and verify the norms and rules applicable in the group.

What competences and skills the psychologist needs in group work – summary

Both in group and individual work, the psychologist is an active participant in the situation or interaction and at the same time an "outside" person. Thus, they perform two roles simultaneously: one requiring direct involvement, and the other – distance. Reconciling these two levels of functioning requires specific competences. At the first level, the fundamental issue is to master high communication skills, emotional maturity, self-awareness, including awareness of their own limitations, as well as openness to others and with others; at the second level, psychological knowledge – about an individual and social groups – is essential. In addition, the team leader is required to have organisational skills, i.e. the competence to plan joint work for a particular goal, to anticipate difficulties, and to deal with obstacles that arise while implementing the project (here: during the meeting). This category of skills includes competencies necessary for a leader, especially a transformational leader (Anderson, 2017; Katra, Bilska, in print; Rafferty, Griffin, 2004; Thompson, Glasø, 2015). It is also worthwhile to be trustworthy and believe in the positive attitude of the people you work with, which will contribute to the participants' greater involvement in joint activities and motivate them to achieve the goal, and as a result, make them more responsible for accomplishing it.

ABSTRACT

Working with a group in a school

When working with a group, the psychologist takes into account its size and the processes that take place within it. Especially working with small groups allows direct contact with them and full feedback on their functioning and can be used for a variety of preventive, intervention and promotional purposes. Thus, the art of small group management is the ability to listen actively and to enable the participants in a workshop, a training session or a support group to "emerge" in such a way that they can exchange their thoughts and describe their own experiences in addition to practising/acquiring skills. In general, working with a group is demanding, because it involves being part of the group – by actively participating in situations or interactions – as well as being an "outside" person, because it means monitoring carefully and supporting the group's development.

KEYWORDS: group processes, group work, school psychologist, social group

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12. Working with families in a school

The role that the psychologist and pedagogue could play in a school is increasingly being discussed in education-related circles. Discussions are revolving around the transformation of the educational system, the adaptation of the school's functioning to the requirements of the contemporary world as well as the need to meet the problems of today's school (Gęsicki, 2008; Gurycka, 1980; Janowski, 1995; Maerlender, Palamara, Lichtenstein, 2020; Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2014; Rylke, 1993). At the same time, it is becoming more and more difficult to define the tasks of psychologists and pedagogues working in educational institutions. I propose taking a look at the model of the school psychologist's work with pupils and their families, developed from a theoretical base as well as several years of experience gained in psychological work with families in the school.

Let's start by determining the place of the psychologist working with families in the school. The basic assumption is **the autonomy of the school psychologist in relation to the formal goals of the school**, and thus adopting an extra-systemic perspective: observing the real functions of pedagogical measures in school reality from the perspective of psychological knowledge and optimisation of the child's personal development (see Jurkowski 1985a; Katra in this volume). On the other hand, the structure of the school system and the mechanisms of its operation should not be ignored. All the "parties" involved in encountered difficulties occupy a specific place in the school structure and are interconnected by numerous dependencies: the headteacher, teachers, administration, pupils, and the school psychologist. It is sometimes very difficult to separate certain commitments linked to the role from the basic principles that govern deeper interventions. A good example here is the dilemma of a psychologist employed by the headteacher and often performing a supportive

function for teachers – the dilemma related to the obligation of professional secrecy in working with clients. As a complex institution, the school is not a good place to conduct therapy in the psychological sense of the term. However, it is certainly a great place to perform many activities supporting the student's family. Seen in the context of the assumptions described above, the school psychologist can be like a "general practitioner" for parents coming to them for help. This means that their actions undertaken in the school are certainly very important, often very supportive to the functioning of the family, but they cannot be a therapy, a deep-reaching intervention, or signing a contract to carry out the process of psychotherapy. This article will discuss the proposed model of working with families in the school, taking into account both the possibilities and limitations of the institution.

General introductory issues

Both theoretical and empirical data clearly show that it is essential to engage parents in cooperation in the case of their child's difficulties (Babiuch, 2002; Doliński, 2001; Kargulowa, 1991; Semeniuk, 2019; Webster-Stratton, Bywater, 2015; Żłobicki, 2000). In the course of their development, the child needs support from parents, both in terms of education and social functioning in its broadest sense. The child's problematic behaviours or school difficulties usually have an important function of "stopping parents in the middle of the run", showing what is important for their child. Very often the child's school problems are also a signal of the family system's dysfunction – the child, as the weakest link of this system, can in some way amplify its deficiencies (see Chrząstowski, 2014; Cierpka, 2003; de Barbaro, 1994; Namysłowska, 1997; Pohorecka, 1992; Praszkier, 1992; Reinke, et al., 2009).

When planning to start work with families in the school, it is worthwhile to think first about establishing specific rules of cooperation on the school psychologist-family-teacher-headteacher line, taking into account the possibilities and specificity of a given school. During an interview, the psychologist should work with the family on their own, the presence of the third parties in the office is undesirable. It is sometimes recommended to establish an additional, afternoon duty in the hours allowing working parents to visit the school. It is extremely important to establish the rules of professional secrecy at the very beginning of the work. Separate contracts should be formulated with the headteacher, teachers, parents and the student, clearly specifying the scope of relevant information to be provided.

The postulate of understanding the main task of the school psychologist as observing and supporting the teaching and upbringing process in the school in

order to optimise it from the external perspective of knowledge and pragmatics of educational psychology (see Chapter 2, Grażyna Katra, "The model of the school psychologist's role – an authorial proposal") requires undertaking concrete actions belonging to specific categories: monitoring, psychoprevention of educational and upbringing problems, intervention and promotion of positive patterns, as well as development of participants in didactic interaction (Katra, *op. cit.*). These activities will be further discussed in relation to the possibilities of working with families, provided by the school environment.

Monitoring activities

Monitoring, understood as observation of all elements of the system, identifying the needs and undertaking necessary actions on an ongoing basis, requires constant watching out for possibilities of psychological intervention. The school psychologist does not have to wait for problems to be reported by the headteacher, teachers, parents or students but has to recognise them by themselves and take appropriate actions (the idea of a "frontline psychologist" rather than a "office psychologist" – Professor A. Jurkowski).

With regard to working with families, monitoring activities may concern:

- careful observation and rapid response to students' problems, including the recognition of the family context in which they function (identifying and naming the problem, determining any potential links to the family context);
- engaging (informing) parents in the child's affairs on an ongoing basis;
- monitoring the situation of children from vulnerable groups (dysfunctional families).

Monitoring can take different forms such as observation of the child on school premises, an individual conversation or a family interview (with the child, their parents, teachers, and the form teacher), meetings with larger groups and discussions on family issues (see Babiuch, 2002; Rylke, Klimowicz, 1982; Webster-Stratton, Bywater, 2015).

Psychoprevention of upbringing and educational problems

Obviously, the tasks of the school psychologist also cover actions in the field of psychoprevention of any threats and difficulties, including family issues in the broadest sense of the term. Thus, primary prevention, which is addressed to a wide range of recipients, offers the organisation of various meetings on

issues related to family life, e.g. the importance of the family for the child's proper development, relations with parents as a basis for the development of the child's relationship with the world, good communication within the family, the principles of the family system functioning to satisfy the needs of its members, as well as advice given to parents on how to talk to their child, etc. (see Babiuch, 2002; Elliot, Place, 2012; Faber, Mazlish, 1979; Gordon, 1974; Ilg et al., 1992; Johnson, 1972; Rylke, 1993, 1995; Rylke, Klimowicz, 1982). In fact, the topics of the meetings depend on the psychologist's creativity and attentiveness to the specific needs of the environment and can also be a response to specific proposals coming from the groups concerned.

Secondary prevention is aimed at people whose risky behaviour has already appeared but does not yet occur chronically (aggression, social maladjustment, shyness, withdrawal, etc.), and it is based on family problems. Here, the psychologist can apply selected forms of work focused on education and reinforcement in order to eliminate a dysfunction. Meetings of a workshop character, allowing for a more free exchange and expression of emotions related to a specific problem, may prove helpful here. Additionally, such workshops enable participants to gain experience and some skills by reliving and participating in situations created by the psychologist (see e.g. Rylke, 1993; Rylke, Klimowicz, 1982; Webster-Stratton, Bywater, 2015).

Tertiary prevention, understood as relapse prevention, is addressed to people who manifest risky behaviour on a permanent basis, and who return to the school environment after a temporary stay in an intervention centre (e.g. children from pathological or dysfunctional families). Although this type of prevention usually goes beyond the scope of the school psychologist's work, it is necessary to prepare for specific actions also in this area (see Dutton, 2001; Pospiszyl, 1994).

Intervention activities

When noticeable problems and difficulties occur, the school psychologist makes an intervention, understood as direct work with the student and their context of social functioning[1]. Below, we will propose a model of the school psychologist's work with families, taking into account the complexity of the school system and the multiplicity of possible situations. The following activities are proposed below.

[1] Every child participates in a complex social reality, combining their experiences of being with adults, including parents and teachers, and with their peers. The pupil's social relationships often form a dense network of mutual interdependencies – the occurrence of difficulties therefore requires intervention in a wider social context.

Conversation with a student

The first meeting between the psychologist and the student usually involves determining the nature of the problem. A child who comes to the psychologist (most often brought in) usually knows that they have done something wrong or are not coping with something – to put it simply, they have a problem. At this point and in addition to providing the child with an atmosphere of good conversation, the psychologist's task is to understand the nature of the difficulties and formulate a goal[2] that should be pursued in this situation. An obvious but probably necessary reminder is that the psychologist is to understand rather than judge the child. The next step in working with the child is to look for solutions, discussing various possibilities and ideas for eliminating difficulties. Finally, the child is proposed to engage their parents, and arguments are given as to why this is considered so important. The first meeting should end with a kind of contract – an agreement with the child about the rules of cooperation with the whole family with regard to the discussed problem and about the next steps that will be taken by the psychologist to solve the difficulties. Having a good meeting means that the child leaves the psychologist with the feeling that they have been heard, understood and are not alone with the problem. The psychologist, on the other hand, has to be sure about the specific conclusions reached during the meeting and the ensuing concrete work plan. It is hereby assumed that the school psychologist has the right to decide that it is necessary to meet with the child and talk to them about their personal difficulties – to hear what the child has to say, ask about circumstances and facts, together with the child define the nature of the problem and conclusions about further constructive steps. The psychologist acts here as a "supportive adult", a person who has a place in the school system for a particular purpose and is entitled to carry out specific actions in accordance with that purpose.

Making an appointment with the child's parents

The next step is to make an appointment with the child's parents by phone (or directly). It should be emphasised here that it is the responsibility of the school psychologist, not the child. During the meeting, the psychologist is

[2] Establishing a concrete, realistic goal is extremely important for understanding the essence of the problem and for determining the direction of work with the child, defining the area of intervention, e.g. "I would like to learn how to talk to my classmates without violence – use words (instead of beating) to defend my opinion". This should be accompanied by naming a minimum change, by which we will know whether we are heading in the right direction, e.g. "If I manage to contain myself and tell my mate that I have a different opinion about myself, instead of hitting him without a thought, I will know that something is changing for the better... and I will feel satisfaction – I made it!".

supposed to briefly present the situation and the child's problem, at the same time presenting arguments about the value of the parents' cooperation[3].

"0" meeting

The first meeting between parents, the child and the psychologist is often referred to as "0" (zero) meeting – an initial meeting of all parties involved (excluding teachers and the headteacher). It is usually a short session to discuss the situation and to jointly reach concrete conclusions. The psychologist also mentions the contract made with the child. The meeting ends with establishing the terms and conditions for mutual cooperation and parents give their consent to start work. The emphasis is placed on a formula for further work, which includes meetings with the whole family as well as only with parents or only with the child. The duration of the planned work must not be long; activities must be focused on the basic problem in order to avoid entering into the family reality of the people involved too deeply. Basic problems that occur in the school psychologist's work usually concern the child's learning difficulties – e.g. developmental dysfunctions, ignorance of learning techniques or lack of motivation for learning; difficulties in relations with peers – shyness, rejection by the group, aggression, etc.; conflict with the teacher – disputes about learning or inappropriate behaviour. As already mentioned, much of the so-called "difficult" behaviour of a child at school results from their family problems – isolating themselves from the peer group can mean a desire to hide personal problems and experienced emotions, aggression may be a way of reacting to tensions in the family. The psychologist's task is to understand what message is hidden underneath the child's helplessness, in other words, what the child is trying to say in this way.

First meeting – with parents, without the presence of the child (an interview)

The underlying aim of the first meeting with parents, organised without the child's participation, is to establish good contact. This is usually a key prerequisite for further effective work. The psychologist also has to understand

[3] For example, "Your child has problems talking to his classmates – he uses force more often than he tries to use words to communicate his reasons. He feels rejected by the class, he is not popular. I think that we can best help him supporting him together at the same time: you – by listening to your child (giving him your time and interest), sharing your experience, and showing constructive solutions; me – by conducting meetings, helping to 'sort out' emerging ideas, carefully collecting conclusions, supporting good communication between him and you and sharing my psychological knowledge".

the parents' point of view, taking into account the uniqueness and specificity of an individual family biography. Asking questions about the family, its history, people belonging to the family, activities undertaken, etc., can be helpful.

The next step is to establish rules of cooperation. The psychologist must inform the parents about the possibilities of working with families in the school, the scope of the proposed activities (family support, not therapy). If there are doubts about the legitimacy of working on the school premises, they should be discussed with the parents, also taking into account the possibility of referral to a specialist centre[4]. The issue of professional secrecy in the psychologist's work should also be raised, and it is important to agree with parents what information (or what type[5]) can be given to the teacher and the headteacher.

Before we move on to discussing the problem, it is worthwhile to offer parents a fairly free conversation about their child ("tell me about your child..."). Parents often tend to focus on the negative aspects of their child when meeting with a psychologist. An advisable intervention here is to invite parents to talk also about the child's good sides – what they do well, what interests them, what their internal resources are. The aim is to reorganise the child's image, making it more specific and complex (everyone has better and worse qualities). It is also valuable to make parents aware that the child's strengths can become a counterbalance to their weaknesses.

The next phase of the conversation is to determine what the problem is, how both parents perceive it, and what their expectations (goals) are. It is important to identify the nature of the problem and to consider possible concrete solutions.

At this stage of work, in many situations, it is enough to start psychoeducational activities (e.g. problems of dyslexia, left-handedness, correct communication, supporting the child's development). They can either be the basis of the intervention or its part. If psychoeducation is included (finished with the presentation of specific practical applications based on

[4] The list of selected specialist centres is attached; see also www.ptp.org.pl (list of centres and persons recommended by the Polish Psychological Association).

[5] Every psychologist, including the one working in the school, is bound by professional secrecy (cf. the Psychologist's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct – Psychologist as a Practitioner, pt. 21, 22). Disclosure of information covered by professional secrecy may take place only if there is a threat to the safety of the client or other persons. It is necessary to inform the child's parents about it, at the same time giving examples of information which the school psychologist, due to their position, will pass on to the headteacher or teachers, e.g. "In Johnny's life, difficult problems have appeared recently – for this reason the child has a problem with managing his emotions and with controlling his behaviour; we are working on this together with the child's parents. I ask you to show understanding for him, and, if possible, to recognise and support Johnny's efforts in a positive way" (version for the teacher).

knowledge – procedures clearly presented to parents), a follow-up meeting should be arranged with parents. The main aim of the meeting is to check the quality of the actions introduced by the parents and the observed effects. On this basis, recommendations for further cooperation are formulated – thus, what we adopt here is a flexible "following the family", not a rigid model of work. Conclusions from follow-up meetings vary – sometimes it is enough to continue the previously established activities with parents and their child (the psychologist confirms their validity), sometimes it is needed to modify them (the psychologist determines the necessary changes with parents and sets them within the framework of specific interactions), and sometimes psychoeducation turns out to be insufficient. In such a situation, it is proposed to extend the formula of support for the family (Family Life Space Map, family dialogue deepening, etc.).

"Second"[6] meeting – with the whole family (parents and children)

During the next meeting, the family is offered the Family Life Space Map technique (see Mostwin, 1992; Schier, 2005), a joint symbolic drawing of areas important for the family. The members of the family have the task of drawing important people, places, facts and events in a circle symbolising their family and defining mutual communication. The joint drawing provides an opportunity to stop for a while and focus on its content, important for each family member, understand what may be happening in the family at a given moment, and openly discuss the current family reality. The direct result of this exchange is to identify the problem[7] in the family forum as an issue to be solved together and agree on possible solutions and specific tasks to be performed by individual family members. The meeting ends with an agreement[8] on the

[6] A quotation mark was used here deliberately to emphasise the conventional meaning of the "second" meeting – the second in the model description, as the next phase of work.

[7] In the family forum, the problem is formulated by each member of the family to make it clear what we are going to work on, e.g. "the problem is my way of expressing anger – I would like to learn to better talk about it with my parents, to be able to say what is really happening to me" (Johnny); "the problem is that I do not know how to talk to Johnny – I would like to learn how I could better listen to him, talk to him so that I can understand him and help him" (mother); "the problem is that I do not know how to talk to my family – I would like to learn how I could better talk to them so that I can understand them and be close to them" (father).

[8] The agreement (contract) includes the definition of the work duration (e.g. five meetings with the family every week or every two weeks), the objective of the work (formulated as specific problems to be solved) and the category of minimum change by which the family will know that something is changing for the better (is closer to the objective), e.g. "If I sit down with my dad and tell him how difficult it was at school today, I will think that something has

implementation of the formulated recommendations and setting a deadline for their accomplishment.

"Third" meeting – with the family (parents and children)

Another meeting is primarily aimed at checking the implementation of the pre-determined actions carried out by individual family members. However, it is not only about assessing who did the task and how, what was difficult to do and why, and what – for some reasons – was easier. Each time the effort of all the family members should be emphasised, even if only part of the recommendations are being followed, as well as their good will and readiness to introduce certain changes. It is pointed out that the implementation of changes in families is usually done in stages, it is spread over time and should not be hastened. On the other hand, the importance of the family members' commitment to their common affairs and the influence of each of them on the quality of life within the family system[9] is underlined. The next stage of work is to determine the current level of the problem (expected change or lack of it) and the related possible verification or maintenance of proposed actions. If necessary, it is possible to include projection techniques[10] at this point as a supplement to the diagnosis, the image of the family functioning (while taking care of the intervention depth level).

"Fourth–sixth" meetings – with the family (parents and children)

Subsequent meetings are aimed at implementing the proposed forms of work with families and monitoring their effects. The psychologist's task here is to talk to the family about possible difficulties arising during the realisation of specific recommendations and to support the family both in terms of substantive solutions and emotional areas. Often in work with families, at the stage of reformulation of family reality, emotional support for the family system from the outside is necessary, supplementing the family's resources, which are overstretched and "depleted" in the process of achieving changes. Understanding the feelings of individual people in difficult situations and confirming that it is not easy to rebuild the intricate family structure in a crisis very often sustains

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just changed for the better"; (and vice versa) "if I notice that my son comes to me and wants to tell me something, I will put my papers away and turn to him to listen... it will mean that something is changing for the better".

[9] The family system understood as a hugely complex network of interactions and connections between individual family members (see Cierpka, 2003).

[10] For example, the tests: CAT, TAT, the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank, the Family Relationship Test, the Family Drawing, the Tree Test, etc.

the motivation of family members to take further actions and stimulates them to start developmental trends.

Meetings with the family should be concluded with a summary – assessment of the current state of affairs (in individual meetings and in a whole family setting) and with clearly formulated final conclusions (end of cooperation, possible recommendations, referral of the family to a specialist/therapist). Both the family and the school psychologist should feel that a certain stage of mutual cooperation has been completed, that the issues raised in the course of the work have been closed and that the goals achieved have been specifically named, likewise areas requiring further activity on the part of the family.

The end of work with the family often means having to give specific feedback to the institution (teachers, the class teacher, the headteacher). This question also appears throughout the course of the work, although expectations are usually the strongest here. Obviously, it is essential to provide feedback to those working with the pupil if we are to involve the latter in a complex form of support based on the cooperation of all interested parties. However, there may be some information that should not be given to outsiders without the knowledge and consent of the family. This usually relates to the personal matters of individual family members or areas reserved by the family as a secret. When passing on the conclusions from the work with the family, the school psychologist always has to consider carefully which information can help the teacher in the process of supporting the pupil, and which will be a violation of the family boundaries (e.g. it is sometimes enough to clearly state that the child's difficult behaviour is related to the parents' divorce and that the child should be given a little more attention in connection with this situation, without giving details of the parents' difficult break-up).

Actions promoting positive role models and the development of participants in an interaction

Promotional activities are aimed at providing opportunities to develop important skills of functioning in society and to use one's own potential (comprehensive personal development). In the context of working with families, the psychologist can promote, e.g., improving the quality of communication within the family, enhancing interpersonal competences, taking care of life quality in the family, the value of its members' personal development, raising self-evaluation and self-esteem, etc. Promotional activities do not have to be targeted merely at pupils, but also at their parents. Another method of working with the whole family that also proves to be successful involves free (although monitored by

the psychologist responsible for the meeting) exchange of experiences aimed at broadly understood development.

Conclusions

The basic assumption concerning the school psychologist's work with families at school is to activate and sustain potential family resources, and to support the family both in terms of specific actions (psychoeducation) and areas of emotional needs (understanding difficulties, taking into account the specific situation of a particular family). The psychologist's activities with regard to families may include such categories as monitoring, psychoprevention, intervention and promotion. The assumption of the school psychologist's autonomy in relation to formal school goals gives them a privileged position in the school system but at the same time requires them to actively and independently undertake the above-mentioned actions.

Within the framework of implemented interventions, it is worthwhile to focus all activities around the reported problem, treating meetings with the family as a crisis intervention, not as a form of therapy (if such therapy is needed, the family should be sent to a specific institution). Referring to the notion of crisis makes it possible to place the family in conditions potentially conducive to development – a crisis situation usually provides above-average conditions for development, forcing new actions, strategies and solutions, as the old ones turned out to be inadequate. Thus, the school psychologist can support creative possibilities of the family system, serving with their knowledge and openness to the uniqueness of family biographies and helping the family to implement ideas that build its reality.

ABSTRACT

Working with families in a school

The article discusses the proposed model of working with families in a school, taking into account both the possibilities and limitations of the institution. The basic assumption concerning the school psychologist's work with families at school is to activate and sustain potential family resources, and to support the family both in terms of specific actions (psychoeducation) and areas of emotional needs (understanding difficulties, taking into account the specific situation of a particular family). Within the framework of implemented interventions, it is worthwhile to focus all activities around the reported problem, treating meetings (three or four) with the family as a crisis intervention, not as a form of therapy. If such therapy is needed, the family should be sent to a specific institution.

KEYWORDS: school psychologist, family therapy, intervention activities

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13. Specificity of contact between the school psychologist and teachers

In the proposed model, we assume that the school psychologist should adopt an external perspective on phenomena occurring in the school environment. This is particularly important in working with the teaching staff.

The school psychologist's activities aimed at teachers and cooperation with them should take place on many levels and concern the teacher's functioning both in relation to individual students or classes and as a person in a specific work environment. These activities could be addressed to the whole teaching staff at the same time and take the form of, e.g., meetings – training workshops for groups of teachers, or cater for particular teachers' individual needs. However, in order to be able to cooperate effectively with the teacher and be helpful in solving problems related to the teaching and upbringing process, the school psychologist should be aware of the teacher's psychological situation and place in the school system.

The teacher's psychological situation in the school

The teacher's psychological situation in their work environment is not easy, contrary to what may seem to people who do not know the realities of school life. One of the reasons for this is the difficulty in clearly defining the teacher's role at school, and thus the tasks they should perform. The problem that teachers have to face is *role conflict*, resulting from the need to meet diverse and contradictory expectations (Friedman, 1991; Papastylianou, Kaila, Polychronopoulos, 2009). The teacher is supposed, for one thing, to support the student's individual development and their special skills, and at the same

time implement a specific syllabus while working with a group of students. They are to be supportive and sensitive to their students' needs, but at the same time to evaluate and make assessment. Such role conflict is considered to be the main cause of stress at work, also observable at physiological level (Friedman, 1991) and may be one of the risk factors behind professional burnout (Papastylianou, Kaila and Polychronopoulos, 2009). Another cause of stress may be *role overload*, defined as a situation in which an individual is forced to perform more tasks than they can do – a situation that is familiar to every teacher. A third significant stress factor associated with the teacher's job is *role ambiguity*, which means being confronted with a task without having all the necessary information. Such a situation is not uncommon in school reality, which is subject to frequent changes and external regulations. The importance of the above-mentioned factors for teachers' well-being is indicated by research conducted among teachers practically all over the world (e.g. Carlotto, Gonçalves Câmara, 2019; Nigeria – Manabete et al., 2016; Great Britain – Skinner, Leavey, Rotho, 2019; Spain – Bermejo-Toro, Prieto-Ursúa, Hernández, 2015).

All the above-mentioned difficulties, characteristic of the teacher's role, are strongly related to the professional burnout syndrome. As scientific research indicates, significant causes of professional burnout may have an environmental character (Bermejo-Toro, Prieto-Ursúa, Hernández, 2015; Farber, Miller, 1981; Goddard, O'Brien, Goddard, 2006). This pool of factors, correlating with a higher level of professional burnout, includes insufficient supply of teaching aids in schools, staff shortages, low salaries, difficulties in passing through successive stages of professional promotion, and lack of support from superiors – the elements of everyday school life known to many teachers all too well.

The symptoms of the teacher's burnout prevent them from functioning effectively in the work environment and can have a deeply negative impact on the upbringing and teaching process (Dorman, 2003). The symptoms of burnout can be – at an emotional level – strong anger or anxiety in situations that require commitment, moreover boredom, lowering of mood as well as somatic symptoms. At the level of interpersonal contacts, burnout may be manifested by maintaining only formal contacts with others, high stiffness, and in the final stage – by objectifying the other person: ignoring their needs and feelings, manifesting disrespect and indifference. Teachers suffering from the professional burnout syndrome do not feel satisfaction with their work, they do not prepare for lessons and have inadequately low expectations of students.

Awareness of the above risks and difficulties in performing the role of the teacher is extremely important for the school psychologist. It allows for a better understanding of the situation and functioning of teachers, who constitute one of the key school subsystems. According to a systemic approach, the way they work influences the whole school system and all its other elements

(students, parents, other school employees). Therefore, the psychologist should make sure that teachers are recipients of a wide range of activities such as counselling, training, consulting or supervision. These can take the form of group or individual meetings.

Work of the school psychologist with a group of teachers

The work of the school psychologist with teachers should concern both aspects of teaching – purely didactic (e.g. adapting the content presented in the lesson[1] to students' cognitive development level) and relational (e.g. teacher-student relationship). The school psychologist would then undertake to monitor both these aspects of school reality on an ongoing basis, to allow detecting unfavourable phenomena as quickly as possible and taking effective measures to prevent them. At the same time, specialist knowledge enables the psychologist to perform educational actions aimed at teachers.

The school psychologist can act as an expert on the regularities and disorders of children's development and the resulting consequences for the upbringing and didactic process. Providing teachers with knowledge concerning, e.g., the specificity of contact with students of different ages or presenting ways of the cognitive functioning of students with specific learning disorders (e.g. dyslexia) may contribute to teachers' better understanding of these issues, as well as to working out more effective ways of teaching and functioning in relations with students.

It is equally important that teachers are presented with information on the proper functioning of the family and its impact on the way the child exists in the school system. The school psychologist can also use their knowledge to explain and interpret students' problematic behaviour and to recognise particularly alarming symptoms that may indicate a growing pathology.

Another issue that the psychologist, as an expert, can present to teachers is the way groups function and the regularities in the course of group process. It is particularly important as this knowledge can be helpful for a teacher in understanding the phenomena occurring within the school classroom or in other, less formalised groups which function within the school system (sports team, interest club), and in undertaking appropriate educational activities, adjusted to a specific stage of group process.

[1] (Editorial note) The psychologist does not have any influence on the content that the student is taught (the core curriculum is decisive in this respect), but on the way it is communicated and the method of working with students – motivating students, training them in learning techniques, teaching – by "prompting" the teacher how they should work to achieve much better results.

Presenting these and other important psychological issues to teachers can take various forms. The school psychologist's educational activities addressed to the teaching staff may be held both during training sessions and take the form of lectures or presentations as well as workshops in which participants are invited to be active. The school psychologist's assistance may also consist in co-creating and co-organising with the class teacher the programmes of classes carried out during the form time. Such cooperation may result in the creation of a programme which, on the one hand, will be based on reliable psychological knowledge, on the other hand, will take into account specific needs and upbringing issues important for a particular class.

According to Bombi and Scitarelli (1998), the school psychologist's educational activities aimed at teachers have the character of primary prevention. Making teachers aware of possible changes in students' behaviour over the years, which result from developmental regularities, showing potential sources of danger, helping to understand students' behaviour (e.g. specific manifestations of adolescent rebellion), or knowledge of group psychology may have a positive impact on the quality of contact between teachers and students and on the general school climate. A closer relationship with students, based on understanding and trust, offering support, and a positive school atmosphere are all associated with students' better functioning – both psychosocial and intellectual (Bombi, Scitarelli, 1998). The psychologist's psychoeducational activity directed at teachers proves to be also effective in preventing problem behaviours of youth, e.g. peer aggression. As research indicates, a greater knowledge of the phenomenon, an increase in competence in early recognition of problem behaviours, becoming familiar with appropriate ways of responding and an increase in the teacher's sense of competence in dealing with similar situations is connected with a decrease in the prevalence of such behaviour among students (Newman, 1999).

The above-described methods and topics of the psychologist's work with teachers concern issues where the student is the focus of attention. Another type of the psychologist's work, also preventive in nature, is group teacher supervision. During supervision meetings, it is teachers themselves, their doubts, needs and fears that remain the focus of attention.

Teachers participating in supervision meetings have the opportunity to look at the dynamics of their own interpersonal contacts with students and school staff, the pedagogical strategies they use, as well as exchange ideas and jointly seek solutions to the problems facing individual group participants (Rupar, 2006). The role of the person conducting the meeting (the school psychologist) is to ensure such a level of comfort that will facilitate the participants' willingness to share their experiences and to discuss situations that the teacher finds difficult to cope with. To make this possible, it is necessary to draw up a

contract with people participating in such meetings, specifying their objectives and the rules of cooperation. Defining the objectives by participants themselves makes them feel responsible for the results achieved. The negotiated rules taking into account the needs and expectations of the group members shape the group's boundaries and enhance their sense of security. These rules may concern, e.g. ways of communicating (not interrupting, communicating directly, refraining from formulating evaluations, etc.) or establishing time frames for meetings.

By participating in the supervision process, teachers gain a better understanding of their work, learn new, more effective behaviour and have the opportunity to discuss professional problems in a safe environment. This may be helpful in their better coping with difficult situations as well as reducing their sense of helplessness – after all, the teacher will always be able to count on the help of the group co-participants. The support and real help obtained during supervision meetings can significantly contribute to the reduction of stress related to teaching, and thus be one of the ways to protect teachers from professional burnout, proving the preventive nature of supervision (Hulusi, Maggs, 2015; Weller, 1983).

Supervision also has a promotional function. Due to participation in meetings, the teacher has a chance to improve their skills and acquire new ones. The acquisition of knowledge is done by processing the experience according to the Kolb cycle (description of a specific experience, reflection, generalisation, planning and implementation of change) (Rupar, 2006). The psychologist can supplement these meetings by sharing their knowledge or refer to specific literature (research reports or descriptions of models and concepts). In this sense, supervision is a method of supporting teachers' professional development.

Another task of the school psychologist is to carry out intervention activities, either aimed at teachers or with their participation.

As a person with knowledge and competence in, among other things, ways of effective communication and conflict management, the school psychologist is the right person to mediate in disputes between different subsystems functioning in the school and its environment (e.g. teachers, parents' council). However, this task is only possible if they are able to deal objectively with disputable issues and are not involved in such a conflict themselves. Therefore, as already stressed before, it is extremely important that the school psychologist should adopt an external perspective on phenomena taking place in the school environment.

Another type of intervention activities carried out by the psychologist can be to organise and conduct meetings of teams made up of teachers and other school staff, set up to solve a specific problem (*collaborative consultation*; Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, Nevin, 1995). It can be a difficult situation for a student or the whole school class, requiring very specific actions. Collaborative consultation

makes it possible to establish a coherent strategy for dealing with a given problem, discuss methods of its implementation and its systematic correction, based on continuous observation of a student's (or group of students, or a class's) reaction to the introduced changes (Meyers, 2004; Bellinger et al., 2016).

This method of work has many advantages: it allows for working out the best possible way of dealing with a given situation, which takes into account its specificity; it enables discussion on the forms of intervention proposed by the participants; and finally – it gives teachers themselves greater support as well as a sense of security and empowerment in solving the problem (Zins, Murphy, 1996).

Work of the school psychologist with the teacher – individual contact

Another form of the school psychologist's work with teachers is an individual meeting. This can be a consultation on a child's (class's) problem, the way the teacher functions professionally, or it can be a space that provides the teacher with understanding and support. In the first situation, the psychologist helps the teacher to determine exactly what the specific problematic behaviour of a child (class) is, under what circumstances it manifests itself, and to discuss the ways the teacher has previously used to deal with the problem. The next step is to jointly develop a new, more effective intervention plan and evaluate it when implemented. This is a type of consultation based primarily on applying the principles of behaviourism – properly matching reinforcements to a given situation (Meyers et al., 2004; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, Merrel, 2008). This consultation is interventional in nature – the pedagogue can take part when problematic behaviour already occurs, and the focus of the psychologist's attention is not so much on the teacher as on the student or class and their reaction to the intervention proposed by the teacher.

In the case of another type – the so-called consultee-centred consultation (Delligatti, 2004), the school psychologist tries to understand the reasons for the teacher's problems in dealing with the pupil/class and determine how much they are to blame for the creation or persistence of difficulties[2]. This approach

[2] (Editorial note) It should be emphasised that the psychologist while learning and analysing the nature of teaching difficulties focuses on recognising the causes and mechanisms of their persistence (element of diagnosis) in order to help the teacher in their work (element of psychological support). This gives a chance to improve the teacher's work and ultimately helps the student. Showing this final effect – explicitly speaking about this goal of helping the student – may alleviate some of the teacher's fear of being assessed by the psychologist. The author focuses on this goal in the further part of her text.

places particular emphasis on the specificity of the teacher's relationship with the pupil/class and on those characteristics (personality traits, ways of reacting, pedagogical strategies used, values, attitudes and beliefs, etc.) that may be relevant to its course. The shape of the teacher-student relationship is crucial for the effectiveness of both upbringing and educational activities. A good relationship based on mutual respect and trust between the student and the teacher has a positive impact on the psychosocial and intellectual development of students.

While carrying out this type of consultation, the following categories may be helpful in considering the teacher's behaviour towards the pupil: lack[3] of understanding of the problem (resulting, for example, from lack of knowledge of the cognitive functioning of a child with ADHD), lack of skills, i.e. competences to deal with the problem (using inadequate pedagogical strategies), lack of confidence in a specific relationship and lack of objectivity (Meyers et al., 2004). The latter two categories may, for example, be related to the personal experience of the teacher, which may make them unduly involved in a relationship with a student or keep too much distance, and thus become inaccessible to a student. In this case, the role of the psychologist is to help the teacher gain insight and distance from personal experiences so that they do not adversely affect their relationship with the student. This kind of work with the teacher is not far from those processes and methods that take place during clinical psychology supervision practice. As research indicates, it is a highly effective form of activity, connected both with greater well-being of the teacher and greater adequacy of their activities (Warren and Baker, 2013). It turns out that providing space for the teacher's personal reflection on how they experience contact with students and the teaching and upbringing process fosters other, more effective methods in both areas. Classroom management (Farhat, 2016) becomes more effective (Sullivan, Glanz, 2005; Veloo, Komuji, 2013). The same applies to conducting lessons that include giving instructions, formulating requirements for and evaluating students, as well as ways of engaging and rewarding them (Sullivan, Glanz, 2005; Veloo, Komuji, 2013). It also appears that involvement in this kind of supervision process becomes a factor protecting teachers from professional burnout (Marashi, Bani-Ardalani, 2017).

Both types of consultations are of preventive nature in relation to students and preventive and/or promotional in relation to teachers. Consultations

[3] (Editorial note) Of course, this is not always a lack – sometimes it is a shortage of knowledge, or a shortage of skills or insufficient competences. The teacher consultations are used to "sound out"/understand what the teacher needs or what could help them to deal with a problem. Then such a type of education and training is proposed that will help to overcome these shortages or insufficiencies – because it is rarely a complete lack of knowledge, skills or competences.

enable the teacher to gain new knowledge, skills and broaden the repertoire of behaviour, the understanding of students' problems increases, and teachers' attitudes and beliefs which have a negative impact on the teaching process may be modified. Importantly, the experience gained during a consultation on one problem can be used again and again in situations involving other students and their difficulties, allowing the teacher to react more quickly and effectively to them.

Teachers' resistance to contact with the school psychologist and its causes

Quite often, the teacher's contact with the school psychologist is limited to referring problem students to individual consultation. The pupil is even brought in, and the psychologist's job is to "do something about it" so that the pupil's behaviour improves. This form of contact with the teacher is extremely frustrating for the school psychologist, and the intervention that the psychologist makes in relation to the pupil usually turns out to be ineffective. Often teachers invited to meetings to discuss a particular problem react with surprise and reluctance. This may result both from unawareness of the benefits that contact with a psychologist can bring and from resistance to consultation itself (Gonzalez et al., 2004).

This resistance may be due to a number of factors that the school psychologist should be aware of. First of all, participation in a consultation, whether individual or group, requires the teacher to devote extra time, which, if the teacher is not aware of the benefits that may result from taking part in such a consultation, can be seen as a considerable cost.

Another factor may be the teacher's fear that their request for help or advice will be interpreted as admitting to incompetence or ignorance. Many teachers may be afraid of how their participation in a consultation will be perceived by other members of the teaching staff and school management. Other concerns may relate to the issue of discretion on the part of the school psychologist. Some teachers may feel that they are losing control of the reported problem and fear that participation in the consultation/supervision will reveal other deficits than just those relating to the problem in question (Gonzalez et al., 2004).

Consultation may also induce fears and anxieties in the teacher (client), typical of any kind of meeting with a psychologist – e.g. tension connected with establishing an interpersonal relationship, fear of a possible change, fear of losing secondary gratuities resulting from the problem, etc.

Being aware of these possible concerns, the school psychologist can minimise the teacher's resistance to consultation by applying specific strategies

(Meyers, 1995). One of these is to give the teacher a choice to accept or reject the vision of the problem proposed by the psychologist/group and the resulting conclusions and recommendations. Another way of reducing the teacher's resistance is to minimise the psychologist's role in finding a solution to the difficulty the teacher has reported. This is possible when the psychologist refrains from giving the teacher specific instructions and focuses primarily on gathering information, recapitulating and helping the teacher/group to reach a solution by themselves. In this way, teachers can feel responsible for finding solutions and feel more involved in the consultation process.

It is also important to present consultation as a meeting of two professionals who are experts in two separate fields. The teacher here will be an expert on the content-related side of teaching and the only one to have a broad knowledge of the behaviour presented by the student in class. In this sense, it is a partnership that brings together people who are at the same level, focused on solving a problem.

Moreover, taking part in a consultation makes the discussed problem no longer the sole responsibility of the teacher reporting it, but also that of the psychologist. Shared responsibility can be especially important for the teacher when they are confronted with a particularly difficult and complex situation. The awareness that the responsibility for resolving a problem is shared with another person can help to reduce the tension and anxiety involved.

In addition to the strategies discussed above, the psychologist's competence and knowledge of a clinician – the ability to establish and maintain contact, to work with resistance, and to implement interventions and support – are extremely important for minimising resistance and improving work effectiveness.

Working with teachers – among the main tasks of the school psychologist

The various forms of the school psychologist's work with teachers presented above certainly do not exhaust the whole repertoire of possible measures. However, this brief overview shows how important this aspect of the psychologist's work is for the whole school system. Activities aimed at teachers or undertaken in collaboration with them can significantly improve the students' intellectual and psychosocial functioning in the school environment. The scientific literature even postulates a change in the proportions of the psychologist's involvement – according to some authors, they should focus more on working with the teaching staff than on individual work with the student (Kerwin, 1995). After all, when working with teachers, the psychologist indirectly influences students – by introducing changes in one subsystem,

they indirectly influence the other ones as well. It has been proved that such a systemic work method brings much better results – it is more effective in introducing changes because it affects (indirectly) a greater number of people involved in the life of the school (pupils, teachers, parents, school management and other school employees) (Meyers, 1995).

However, in order for a school psychologist to work effectively with the whole school system, including the teachers' subsystem, it is necessary to look at them from an external perspective. In the Polish reality, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, given the fact that a psychologist is part of the teaching staff. They are perceived in this way by pupils and teachers, as they work under the direct authority of the headteacher and are subject to the same external rules as teachers (e.g. the school psychologist's professional promotion is in accordance with the rules written in the Teacher's Charter). Being an integral part of the school system, the psychologist is involved in extremely complex relationships with the other school staff, which may make it difficult or impossible to carry out some of the tasks proposed in this paper (e.g. engaging in conflict between teachers and school management will make it impossible to take on the role of a mediator). However, taking into account the benefits of the presented measures, we believe that it is worthwhile to take up the challenge of psychological work with teachers. The psychologist may strive for a different definition of their position in the school system – to become separate and autonomous. They can also inform teachers and encourage the latter to participate in supervisions or consultations organised outside the school, proposed, among others, by Teacher Vocational Training Centres, as well as present and promote friendly group meetings focused on difficulties experienced by teachers, which also prove to be an effective way of coping with the challenges of their profession (Blase, Blase 2014).

In this text, the author aims to present such possible forms of the psychologist's work with teachers which are not practised too often in Polish school reality. Their application and inclusion in the repertoire of the psychologist's tasks could significantly contribute to the introduction of beneficial changes in the functioning of the school system.

ABSTRACT

Specificity of contact between the school psychologist and teachers

Teachers are at risk of professional burnout experiencing ambiguity of the teacher's role, its internal inconsistency or/and overload of tasks. At the same time, it is the teacher, as an adult in the relationship with the student, who is responsible for its formation and quality.

Effective collaboration between the school psychologist and teachers should take place on many levels. It concerns the teacher's contacts with students and parents in everyday work (group and individual), substantive support in situations of challenges related to special educational or relational needs of students (and their families) as well as counselling for teachers in their professional development. Building an area of constructive cooperation is an important task for school psychologists, taking into account high risk of teacher burnout on one hand and the teacher's reserve and frequent unwillingness to cooperate with a school psychologist on the other.

KEYWORDS: teacher burnout, teacher supervision, teacher consultation, school psychologist

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14. "Facing an audience"

> It's not enough to speak to the point;
> you need to speak to people.
> (Stanisław Jerzy Lec)

I take it for granted that **not every psychologist working in a school feels prepared to make public speeches**, even if they concern topics close to their profession (i.e. typically psychological issues). I have even heard – not once or twice – that lecturing or speaking in front of a large audience is not part of the psychologist's profession. I would like to add a reservation: not yet. The future might prove much more demanding for psychologists in this respect, as for any person with higher education. The chapter I have written is meant to help the readers to overcome any possible barriers or reinforce their conviction that public speaking – including online appearances – is a challenge worth undertaking (for our own satisfaction and to have a positive impact on others, as opposed to acting under pressure, with the thought that *there is no other option*, without any pleasure).

How to consciously and effectively prepare for a forum?

To ensure the clarity of the message, I put the elements important in the speaker's preparatory proceedings in **Table 4** (Key questions for speech preparation) and then discussed them in detail. I would like all the readers to have the opportunity to check before speaking *what they know about the most important issues and activities*. If you want to stand in front of the audience and do it responsibly, you need to consider carefully in advance what you have at your disposal and choose those opportunities that are best suited to your audience.

Table 4. Key questions for speech preparation

Key questions	Tasks	Methods to achieve the objective
(a) What is to be covered in the speech?	• entitling and summarising the whole • putting forward the theses • summarising the speech • presenting references confirming the argument (including the most recent ones)	• reviewing electronic and other resources (i.e. books, publications, films, etc.) • conversations with specialists • preparing clear notes, diagrams, and tables presenting knowledge and collected data
(b) What is needed to accomplish it?	• developing a logical, consistent and substantive argument • dividing the speech into introduction, body and conclusion • strengthening the verbal message	• presentation, e.g. in Powerpoint (a multimedia projector and/or a laptop) • writing during the presentation (a whiteboard, chalk and/or markers, flip charts) or prepared beforehand (posters in A0 and A1 sizes, printing materials in A2) • a film (a video recorder, a DVD player, a file to be played on a computer) • an audio recording (a dictaphone, a computer) • props
(c) What is the purpose of the speech?	• providing information about... • encouraging or convincing the audience of... • making the audience to change the way they deal with...	• collecting statistical data • preparing experts' opinions • discussing psychological concepts that explain the causes and mechanism of a phenomenon (schemes and models) • arguments supporting the theses • selection of the form: a lecture, a paper, a workshop or a talk • matching the means of expression to the character of the speech: intonation, volume, speaking pace, a way of pausing, etc.

Table 4. cont.

Key questions	Tasks	Methods to achieve the objective
(d) Who is the speech addressed to?	Adjusting the language form to: • age • gender • education • the profession of the listeners (being aware if they are professional psychologists)	**For professional psychologists** (as a starting point): • professional terms (specialist language) • collective models • advanced diagrams • comparative tables **For non-professionals:** • a short compendium of knowledge • defining basic concepts and giving their synonyms (sometimes by comparing them to familiar phenomena and using appropriate metaphors) • colloquial speech **For everyone (including an online audience)**: ready-made polite phrases and sometimes disciplinary phrases/asking for attention/ asking not to disturb the speech
(e) How long should the speech last?	• deciding on the time and chronology (planning the number of breaks, what will be before and after the meeting) • setting a time for the three major parts of the speech (introduction, body and conclusion)	• a short recording (even for a few minutes) • a short talk, presentation, or paper (from 45 to 90 minutes) • a lecture (up to 120 minutes) • a workshop (up to 7 hours)
(f) How many people will attend the meeting and what will be the circumstances/ how will the speech be made available (a venue and/or a medium, time/time of transmission)?	• having a look and even trying out the "lectern" (room acoustics, space, layout, etc.)	• a tripod or directional microphone and projecting multimedia presentations (always for an audience of over 50 people) • using your own voice, writing materials in A0 to A4 sizes and a whiteboard (possible for a small audience of up to 20 people)

Table 4. cont.

Key questions	Tasks	Methods to achieve the objective
(g) What is the audience's level of knowledge and skills?	• monitoring (during the speech) • evaluation whether the acquired skills and knowledge seem useful to listeners (after the speech)	• indicators of interest (during the speech, e.g. moments of animation/laughter, nodding, taking notes, questions from the audience) • evaluation questionnaire (after the speech/as a comment on an online presentation)
(h) What are the listeners' expectations?	• asking listeners about their expectations • self-calculation: what existing needs can be addressed and what needs are still to be awakened in the audience	• initial questionnaire/providing space to enter expectations; • activating the listeners' minds and feelings (referring to their intellectual, aesthetic, and other needs)
(i) Why to stand in front of the audience?	• listing your strengths and weaknesses in making various speeches (evidence for and against) • preparing the content of the speech or its detailed plan and rehearsing it	• motivating self-addressed statements (used before a performance like a broken record) • identifying what you can do well (indicators of being a good speaker) • making a statement about your competences in the introduction to a lecture

What helps to prepare the content of a speech?

A thorough and substantive preparation is the most important step to be an effective speaker. Lewandowska-Tarasiuk (2005) wrote straightforwardly: "You can speak in public when you really have something to say" (p. 59). Thus, it is worth taking "under the magnifying glass" what you want to say to others – for example by doing three basic exercises.

An exercise in entitling (No. 1) consists in writing out a few or even a dozen or so titles of the planned speech on a sheet of paper. It is best to use the brainstorming technique (you write down everything that comes to your mind, without judging whether the ideas are good or bad, because it is about quantity, not quality). Generated titles are then tested carefully: Do they meet the basic criteria? The title of the speech is meant to encourage the audience – it cannot be too complicated and extensive. You should avoid using too many words or being too concise. At the same time, the title is to signal the subject matter and arouse interest. The most important thing is that the title must not promise too much (exaggerate), that is, talk about something that cannot be fulfilled.

Another stage of skill training is **an exercise in summarising** (No. 2). The idea is to write out a few sentences that initially (tentatively) recapitulate the content of the speech and are formulated "off-hand". Some speakers do not make a real summary until they have written (prepared) the whole speech and after a thorough and even arduous search for what is worth saying. You can also do **an exercise involving writing down the basic theses and sources that should be accessed** (No. 3) – at this stage without consulting sources other than your own head.

These three exercises – done together, but also each of them separately – make the future speaker aware of what they still do not know, what they know very well, and what needs to be improved or merely better illustrated and documented. The potential of these exercises is so great that they can be repeated – after consulting the sources of specialist knowledge, that is after taking notes and preparing diagrams based on books, training materials, lectures, films, etc. The only thing is that they must be up-to-date and verified. Relying on the notes made years ago or even on a ready-to-use speech delivered at that time is not the right thing to do if you do not add a new perspective. I do not insist on extensive and lengthy studies on the subject discussed in a speech. I only suggest that **it is worth spending a day or two looking for new knowledge and consolidating that already possessed**. I find it invaluable to simply read a lot (listen or familiarise oneself with the visual material). It allows us to refresh our memory resources, to get used to new knowledge, and to fill in the gaps. Source searching is not only about getting acquainted with

the material by reading it, but also about making accurate notes[1]. I suggest writing down basic definitions, terms, concepts, the so-called keywords and their synonyms, and even the most valuable quotations. They will be used to construct the content of a speech and deliver it. Norwid beautifully spoke about the requirement to "give things proper words". Some of these notes can be used to prepare an A4 sheet with the topic of a speech, basic theses, useful quotations, and even good-bye and welcome words (or e.g. notes on the margins of a presentation, not made available to the audience or viewers when sharing the screen online). In the latter case, it is a matter of ready-made language templates[2], which take into account the rules of politeness. This is a kind of a "life belt". Using a ready-made template is a good option when suddenly the speaker is lost for the right word or the plot or wants to address disturbing listeners/participants in a polite manner. The rules of politeness apply to all communicating parties, i.e. the speaker as much as the listener/participant (also online, where it is sometimes necessary to mute the microphone, but also to comment on the information provided at the same time). It is only natural that being late, or starting after the time fixed for an

[1] Reportedly, there are people who perform offhand, without laborious collection of materials and data, without even preparing an outline of a speech (Bocheńska, 2005). However, the opinion that appeals to me is that "the best improvisation is a prepared improvisation" (Lewandowska-Tarasiuk, 2005, p. 97). If somebody decides to collect and organise data in such a way, it is worth checking the method proposed by the author (a) making flip cards (cards with a headword, to which we add keywords, phrases, etc.); (b) preparing folders (which we title and where we put everything on a given topic from press clippings through photos to recordings); or (c) placing thematic bookmarks (narrow strips of paper, sometimes described in one or two words, to be inserted in the appropriate place in the book), or (d) creating files on a computer (with output documents, fragments of a speech). Guidelines for such carefully prepared improvised presentations are also included in the publication by Morreale, Spitzberg, Barge, 2015. Apart from the three-part division, identifying the most important issues and making notes that structure the speech, they suggest that we should finish at the right moment, i.e. stop talking and not be denied the floor, because, in fact, "the biggest mistake of improvised presentations is that speakers do not stop talking" (p. 278).

[2] Marcjanik (2007) in her work entitled *Grzeczność w komunikacji językowej* [Politeness in language communication] describes in detail the types of behaviour that should not be neglected, i.e. a specific language etiquette that applies to public communication. The author's observations that are particularly valuable are those of when it is appropriate to say "good morning/good afternoon" (always, it is a common and polite greeting in interpersonal communication), and when the form "hello" is acceptable (people must be well known by the lecturer, constitute a small group, and they must also be met by the speaker regularly, for example every week, and be rather young), in which situations it is acceptable to use the form "ladies and gentlemen" (always, as this is a universal form containing a sufficient dose of politeness), and in what situations it is acceptable to use the form "dear folks" (implicitly these are students with personal connections to the lecturer, or young people of the same rank as the speaker).

online meeting, or interrupting the speaker at the beginning of the speech is not welcome; neither is talking to each other, answering the phone or disturbing a meeting with other "undesirable" sounds (see Bocheńska, 2005; Wiszniewski, 2003). Every speaker should know how to demand politeness, with subtlety and sensitivity (by making a request or by giving feedback on what is disturbing them and what they expect). The so-called "I-message" can be used for this purpose. It contains three useful elements: (1) **I feel**... (it is important to specify an emotion you are feeling); (2) **when you.**. (it is about describing a specific action of the other person(s) to which you want to draw their attention); (3) **because...** (it is a description of the concrete consequences of the actions described). Małgorzata Babiuch (2002) gives an instructive example of such a message: "Every time you interrupt me and ask me about something I have just said, I have to repeat the information especially for you and I feel awkward because I am wasting the time of the other parents", p. 37).

What helps to achieve perfection in making a speech?

Having fully researched and analysed the issue, it is still necessary to present it in a convincing and understandable way. Who cares about the fact that the speaker has a great plan for their speech – a coherent structure of the presentation, with well-developed content – when it is difficult for them to articulate individual thoughts in a clear[3], transparent and captivating way? The act of speaking is always speaking to someone and about something. It is, therefore, important to establish contact with the listener, to share knowledge, to provide relevant and new information, or to convince them to change their way of acting. According to Bocheńska (2005), the speaker is a prestidigitator juggling with words. Their main task is to visually and clearly demonstrate everything that they know and can do, and that might be useful to the listener. In Table 5 in the text below, I have included information that may be helpful in the analysis: what is recommended while delivering a speech (reasonable steps) and what should be avoided (mistakes).

[3] It would be worthwhile for the speaker to ask the audience (if they are well-disposed towards them) about the logic and intelligibility of the argument. Good speech never offends the audience's intelligence. Clarity does not mean that the speaker is lecturing in layman's terms, too literally or using too infantile language. However, the question of language comprehensibility is fundamental in the psychologist's work – also as a speaker. There is a separate chapter in the code of ethics concerning precisely the issue of comprehensibility and responsibility in formulating opinions, especially when using the media (including TV, radio or online statements), and the demand to develop communication skills (Toeplitz, 2019) .

Table 5. Positive and negative actions of the speaker during the presentation

Key parts of the presentation	Benefits possible to obtain	Appropriate actions	Inappropriate actions (mistakes)
The introduction (introductory part of the presentation, lasting up to 10% of the time)	"Winning over" the listener: • making a good impression on them (first minutes) • attracting (captivating) their attention • arousing curiosity (even surprise) • making them the addressee of the speech, the most important person at the time of the presentation (caring about polite language form) Helping them to get initial orientation on the subject: • introducing them to what will be discussed • making them interested in the problem	**It is always worthwhile**: • establishing and maintaining eye contact, and remembering about a "welcome" smile • welcoming the audience using a polite expression, e.g. *Good morning* **Your choice** • presenting yourself and defining your competences (what qualifies you to be a speaker) • thanking for the invitation • expressing your satisfaction with meeting your listeners • choosing a form of addressing the audience (e.g. *Ladies and gentlemen, Fellow colleagues*, and even with a small and friendly group, *My dear friends)* **or** • using an anecdote (a joke, ideally about yourself) • using a quote, telling a story, showing a picture, a piece of a film, etc., which are **even loosely related to the topic of the speech** • using a dramatic element (telling an alarming situation that really happened) • posing a rhetorical question • referring to any current issue • providing (showing) statistical data	• being late and not starting the meeting for too long (without apologising and giving the reason) • putting the speaker in the foreground: publicly reflecting on your dilemmas as to whether it is worthwhile to be a speaker, showing excessive modesty *(I don't know why I have been invited here, I don't know much about it, I am not the best speaker, I am not prepared*) • reading the entire paper/ presentation (a sheet of paper, e.g. of A4 size will be helpful, i.e. one including the outline of the presentation, with the titles of the parts, the most important quotations, the key moments and the way they are to be delivered – a suggestion when to use a pause, an accent, intonation, or a raised or muted voice)

Table 5. cont.

Key parts of the presentation	Benefits possible to obtain	Appropriate actions	Inappropriate actions (mistakes)
		or making a substantive introduction to the issue: • emphasising the title of the speech • providing keywords • listing basic theses • saying what will be discussed (outline) in accordance with the Grenville Janner principle[4]: *start by saying what you want to say, then say it, and finally say what you have said* **or** When the listeners are unwilling to listen, politely call them to order *(Good morning, I see you still have something important to discuss)*	
The body (the main part of the presentation, lasting up to 70% of the time)	Providing the listener with help (support) to gain knowledge and skills: • supplying new, relevant information in an attractive form • illustrating an argument to make it clear (visualisation) • choosing forms of addressing the audience in a polite and consistent manner so that they feel appreciated, even "invited" to contact	**Always:** • control the pace and volume of speech (audibility), make conscious pauses, control intonation and language correctness (style, grammar) • address the audience directly, personify the message, use dialogue forms (*will you..., please, take into consideration, let us think about the consequences*) and be respectful • smile as often as possible (summoning up and showing enthusiasm for speaking)	• improvising (*use improvisation, only if prepared*) • using only professional (specialist) vocabulary: "clarity of expression is proof of an educated person's courtesy." (Jules Renard[5]) • making language mistakes (incorrect Polish)

[4] There are many references to this saying on the Internet, thus it is quite popular (see www.edu.newsweek.pl and www.wprost.pl or www.sgh.waw.pl).

[5] This is another maxim available on the Internet (www.narloch.net; www.cytaty24.eu).

Table 5. cont.

Key parts of the presentation	Benefits possible to obtain	Appropriate actions	Inappropriate actions (mistakes)
	• making the argument logical and objective (activating the listener's mind) and/or • appealing to emotions and imagination (activating the listener's feeling) and/or • referring to their trust in the authorities	**Your choice:** • illustrating the main theses with diagrams, models, etc. • providing research or statistical data in tables, on charts, etc., and ensuring they are visible (posters and multimedia presentations for an audience of over 50 people, flip and wall charts, props, boards, etc., for an audience of under 50 people) • referring to scientific research, providing statistical data • citing the literature accurately • specifying indicators (symptoms), drawing conclusions on the basis of phenomena or situations that we consider analogous to those under consideration, analysing connections • using repetitions, narrative understatements (pause for a moment, ask a question and wait)	• reading from a script or a slide without establishing a dialogue (through eye contact, gestures and facial expressions) • delivering a presentation too fast or too slowly (usually 3 minutes per slide is sufficient) • giving the impression as if you were at the lectern for punishment, referring in an impassive and uninvolved manner (without changing intonation, accents, pace or volume)
The conclusion (the concluding part lasts 10% of the time, and can be supplemented with questions, which take another 10%)	**Summing up** • closing the main thread • encouraging people to try the ideas out in their lives • maintaining a sense of connection with the speaker • terminating the contact	• bidding the audience goodbye, using a polite formula **or** • referring to the introduction (repeating the main idea) • recommending the literature, handing out useful material **or** • summarising (even repeating) the most important theses and conclusions, showing them in a collective slide	• no ending at all • ending in a hurry, almost in mid-word, in an unexpected way, without signalling that it is the end • exceeding the organisers' time by more than 10% (extending the presentation unduly is as bad as shortening it)

Table 5. cont.

Key parts of the presentation	Benefits possible to obtain	Appropriate actions	Inappropriate actions (mistakes)
		• explicitly stating the most important proposals made to the audience **or** • making a joke, but a more reflective one and strictly related to the content of the speech • introducing a quote that will get stuck in the listener's memory • asking a rhetorical question • saying the slogan or motto, or reminding the thesis put forward at the beginning of the meeting **or** • setting homework (something that can be done later) • directly encouraging action (try it out, test it out) **or** • thanking for the invitation/opportunity to speak (*for their attention, for taking their precious time, for their kind reception, for listening, for their patience*) • saying a sentence that speaks of satisfaction with the contact (*I'm very pleased, I am honoured*) • specifying the benefits of the meeting (*I'm full of hope, I'm very glad we could*) • encouraging future contact	• returning to the lectern, i.e. continuing the thread or introducing a new one after saying goodbye (thanking the listeners)

I believe that an argument can “speak” to the listener only if it is divided into three parts (introduction, body and conclusion) (see Marcjanik, 2007; Morreale, Spitzberg, Barge, 2015; Pijarowska, Seweryńska, 2002). It would be good if it had its logic and coherence. It can be constructed by deduction (which means going from the general to the specific), or induction (going from the specific to the general), or it can be based on the so-called symptomatic thinking (Then, it is enough to name the indicators, as the doctor does in medical diagnostics); or reasoning by analogy (then conclusions are drawn on the basis of things, phenomena or situations that are considered analogous to those under consideration) (see Wiszniewski, 2003). Moreover, it is worth establishing – as the quoted author suggests – whether the speech will refer to:

(1) logic and reason (being subject of a rational assessment),
(2) emotion and imagination, and
(3) trust in the authority.

In the first case, scientific literature is used, research and statistical data are cited; in the second case, pictorial comparisons, visualisations and certain stylistic (dramatic) devices are employed; and in the third case, the opinions of people known and respected by the audience are cited. The argument should also be methodical[6], which means that **when organising the material of a speech, it is necessary to determine where its climax is, which brings together the themes addressed**. The focus on the clarity of the argument requires that there should not be too much material presented (to avoid the effect of overload). It is only during the preparation phase that there can be too much material, thus that the speaker has something to reject. In the realisation phase, during the speech – if in doubt whether to leave something or not – a particular fragment is always removed (it is not delivered). The main theses should be properly presented and illustrated. Most listeners are “visualisers”, and they need additional help from the lecturer (speaker) to receive the information fully. Therefore, any visualisation that allows them to see data in a new light is helpful, i.e. drawings[7], pictures, charts, sketches or diagrams (the importance of visualisation as a mechanism

[6] Wiszniewski (2003) claims that everyone can speak truly (according to the recognised state of affairs, without distorting reality or manipulating facts), but being able to speak methodically and wisely is an art.

[7] “Having a picture, we can look for information **visually** instead of searching our memory (and forget about other things we are thinking about at the same time) (...). A special benefit of visualisation is that pictures, more precisely than words, show relationships” (Schwartz, Tsang, Blair, 2016, p. 104).

for learning/acquiring information is also convincingly argued by Schwartz, Tsang, Blair, 2016). Even very complicated psychological concepts can be illustrated with an example, a metaphor or analogy[8], or just a simple diagram or drawing (see Fortuna, Urban, 2014; Urban, 2010). The general rule is that **the equipment and aids used are only means to an end and as such are meant to help the speaker, not to replace or drown them out.** Therefore, the speaker should beware of too sophisticated computer animations, above all the sounds accompanying them – they can distract the audience and, with time, even irritate them. The materials prepared for listeners have an ordering function – they synthesise or illustrate the main theses, but they are not the content of the speech. **A wise speaker never reads every single word of the pre-prepared text** (of a presentation or materials for the audience). In the course of an argument, the content is simply supplemented and expanded accordingly. Sometimes – and only in exceptional cases – you can prepare the text of the whole speech (e.g. when the fear of speaking in public is so strong that it may paralyse the whole event). In other situations, it is better to read only the most important fragments of the speech, where the accuracy of an argument is extremely important (so as not to omit or twist any fact or to render the essence of someone else's statement). It should also be remembered that making, for example, an illustration on a whiteboard or a flip chart while delivering a speech means that the speaker turns their back on the audience and thus distracts them. But at the same time, these elements of a presentation which are created live usually make it easier for listeners to take notes (e.g. because the time needed to take notes is similar to the time needed to create a drawing, chart or text "in front of participants' eyes"). Everything has its pros and cons which should be carefully considered (for example, using the PICC strategy[9]). These measures are useful provided that an audience is small

[8] In order to explain the nature of analogy, in their book on training, the authors use the example of the psychologist's profession. To capture the correspondence of phenomena, i.e. to explain the phenomenon of psychological assistance, they offer a suggestive comparison that when someone is ill, they go to the doctor, and when they are sad, they can go to a psychologist. This example makes it easy to grasp that "the psychologist's work resembles that of the doctor, because they both help in suffering, and the difference concerns the examined and 'remedied' functions" (Fortuna, Urban, 2014, p. 29).

[9] The PICC strategy describes four steps helping to solve real-life problems. It is an acronym, i.e. it comes from the first letters of four English words: (1) Problem (it is about understanding: *What trouble do I have? What is my problem? What is bothering me?*), (2) Identification (it is about defining: *What do I want to achieve? What are my goals?*), (3) Choices (it is about calculating: *What are the ways out of this situation? What solutions come to my mind?*), (4) Consequences (it is about considering: *What are the pros and cons of these proposals? What will I gain and what will I lose by doing this and not the other way round?*) (see Bloomquist, 2006; Larson, 2005; Sokołowska, 2007).

and the participants are sitting close enough (such steps are best suited for a seminar group of 25–30 people). Also, using A0 to A4 size writing material (pre-prepared posters or handouts) is only possible with a small audience. For groups of more than 30 people, only large posters, slides or multimedia presentations (e.g. made available online) are useful as illustrations.

The ability to speak can be mastered by doing exercises in delivering a specific speech (No. 4). These exercises should be carried out a few days before the proper speech so that you can still follow up on feedback and effectively practise new ways of non-verbal and verbal behaviour in front of the audience. The remarks listened to shortly before the speech should only be constructive: *what is working out well for the speaker, what they should focus on, etc.* (it is not worth criticising too many aspects of the prepared speech at the last minute, because the speaker will not control everything – they can only control one or two things at most). The final verification of the speaker's skills in this respect is, of course, performing in front of the intended audience. It is about **practising a speech in front of a small audience** (No. 4a) (initially one or several people, in the advanced version up to 50 people). It would be the *step-by-step* behavioural technique, i.e. gradually becoming accustomed to speaking in front of people who are watching and listening. A group listening to a "rehearsal speech" might consist, in its initial version, of *friends or family members*, in a more demanding version – of *colleagues* who will share their comments (it refers to another psychologist, a pedagogue or a teacher who can effectively give speeches), and in the optimal version – of *a familiar teaching staff or a group of parents and students* (i.e. people with similar characteristics to the proper audience, but less numerous and better known to the speaker). Another technique is the *total immersion*, i.e. speaking offhand in front of an audience of up to 100 people and collecting detailed feedback after the speech.

The next valuable exercise is to **make an audio and/or video recording, covering at least 20 minutes of the future speech** (No. 4b). The recording is analysed either by the psychologist or "a specialist on speaking" (this should be someone the psychologist considers to be a good speaker). An alternative exercise is to make a speech without an audience and without recording it. These are the so-called **exercises in front of a mirror or an imaginary audience** (No. 4c). Even such speaking without a real audience allows for checking the fluency of an argument, the real speaking time, and the non-verbal means that are used while speaking. Speech proficiency is increased when you simultaneously verbalise your thoughts (you develop the argument) and make an effort to speak clearly, loudly, with the right intonation, accents, and taking appropriate breaks. Sometimes it is advisable **to practise the beginning of a speech while climbing the stairs and/or during a brisk**

walk (No. 4d). Physical effort creates similar conditions for voice emission as stage fright experienced by the speaker (nervousness related to having to speak in public). This exercise is a good way of recreating the realities of the speech – as it is at the beginning of the speech that the speaker usually experiences the most intense stress (e.g. they feel the increasing tension as a contraction of the laryngeal muscles, a general feeling of muscle stiffness, rapid breathing and heartbeat). It is a success if the speaker manages to control their voice (e.g. control breathlessness, dying away of the voice, hoarseness) and keeps up intonation, puts the accents correctly and does not lose the sense of an argument. As a matter of fact, getting into the speaker's "shoes" should be literal. For example, since the speech is to be delivered "standing up", it would be worthwhile **to practise ways of standing and moving – for an hour or two – in clothes and shoes specially prepared for the event** (a feeling of physical comfort is a minor problem, but even so it should not be neglected) (No. 4e). Without doing any of these five exercises (No. 4a to 4e) and without reflecting on *what is working out well and what is not,* the speaker may not have a sense of reality, i.e. an awareness of *what is worth and what is not worth doing*. **Self-analysis or careful analysis by others should involve the verbal elements of a speech**, i.e. *logic and substance*[10], *stylistic and grammatical correctness of the argument, politeness of the language forms used*, **as well as its non-verbal elements**, i.e. *body position*[11] and *distance*[12] from the audience (proxemics, i.e. the way the space is arranged), *gestures and facial expressions* (the movements[13] the speaker makes), and *the way of speaking* (non-linguistic means of expression, i.e. the pace of speaking, volume, vocal

[10] In most cases, it is difficult to **analyse the substance of a speech** (the logic of the argument, the clarity of the theses and the way they are presented), because it is not prepared in its final form so early. However, some key fragments can be presented to selected people with a request to comment on the content of the speech. On the other hand, the **evaluation** function can be accomplished in a professional way by means of questionnaires including questions which could be asked after the actual lecture: *Do you find the lecture interesting? What was new for you? What can be used in your everyday life?*

[11] "A person's posture or pose determines the way they stand or sit. Indicators of the posture's properties are: the degree of relaxation of different parts of the body, the body tilt forwards or backwards, the level of openness, i.e. crossing or not crossing your arms, crossing or not crossing your legs while sitting" (Matusewicz, 1979, p. 324).

[12] We distinguish between public distance of 3.6–6 meters and social distance of 1.2–3.6 metres (Góralczyk, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, this spatial difference should be taken into account in speaking, because in personal life, we usually observe personal distance, i.e. stand from the interlocutor at a distance of 45–120 cm, or in the case of intimate distance even at as little as 0–45 centimetres.

[13] The main means of emotional expression is the face, especially the eyes. However, the movements of the hand, arm and whole body play an important role (Matusewicz, 1979, p. 328).

colour, intonation, pauses made, sounds that accompany the speech) (see Góralczyk, 2007; Matusewicz, 1979; Sikorski, 2011). The ultimate goal is that the speaker should correct those language habits that make it difficult for listeners to follow the argument, and choose such means of expression[14] that facilitate presenting the case. Therefore, it is worth asking oneself and others about the language issues (substantive, connected with the content of the argument and its comprehensibility): *Is the argument interesting, coherent, with a clear underlying thread, without too many digressions?*[15] *Is the vocabulary not too specialised and sophisticated? Does a tedious search for words not occur?* The analysis should also include the following non-verbal[16] issues: choreography of gestures (*Do "excess" movements – "non-readable" for the listener appear*? The examples here are *curling hair, covering the mouth with the hand, leaning against or tapping the tabletop with the hand, glancing at the watch over and over again*); the way messages are addressed to the listener (*Does it happen that the speaker looks into space without trying to establish eye contact? Is the form of addressing the audience polite and encourages listening?*); facial expressions (*Do nervous tics appear? Which faces or grimaces disturb?*); and correctness of speech (*Do errors in pronunciation or speaking style appear? Is the pace of speech steady?*[17] *Are there unexpected pauses or interruptions?*) **It is not about the speaker posing for someone they are not, but about self-awareness and self-control.**

Preparations can include general exercises – not related to a particular speech – but which concern **voice emission**[18] (exercise 5). **The voice, when properly used, is the speaker's primary tool – next to the head**[19]**, or rather "its contents"**. A frequent mistake of an untrained speaker is to pause after each word (Bocheńska, 2005). A pause is a space in a statement which is supposed to strengthen it (thus, it is not just a matter of taking a breath, but of keeping a significant silence to catch the listener's attention). It is

[14] **The speaker is really an actor of the word** – thus they must consciously use possible means of expression (see Bocheńska, 2005; Lewandowska-Tarasiuk, 2005).

[15] Usually **the listener is put off by the incomprehensibility of the argument** (too long and drawn-out – as it is multitasking – getting to the heart of the matter), **along with the speaker's inability to express themselves and incorrect Polish** (see Wiszniewski, 2003).

[16] One can say important things, but in such a way that it does not reach the recipient (Bocheńska, 2005).

[17] For example, a steady pace is 120 words per minute, with proper intonation; it is neither soporific nor frantic.

[18] For more information visit the following websites: https://cloud2x.edupage.org/cloud/CWICZENIA_DYKCJI_I_EMISJI_GLOSU_DLA_MOWCOW_MLODSZYCH_I_NIECO_STARSZYCH.pdf?z%3AuXnUlarWOlKsRRV%2F96v2ac2nrko1IoqRgHhhqIotJZHuqbtMhwTjxa%2B75MRWRhCZ; www.emisjaglosudlanauczycieli.pl; https://wyszukiwarka.efs.men.gov.pl/product/materialy-dla-studentow/attachment/7

[19] Bocheńska (2005) says that "good speakers are heads, not throats" (p. 20).

even advisable to mark such significant pauses in the speech notes. Another problem might be the incorrect intonation of sentences – or there might be no intonation at all, which makes it difficult to determine the meaning of the whole statement. Of equal importance for the speaker is to make sure that there are no unnecessary sounds. Sometimes the speaker stutters, coughs or grunts, says continuous yyyy every few words, or repeats one word or sentence again and again (e.g. "as you know", "really", "please note"). It is also detrimental to a speech if the pace is too slow or too fast, or if the volume is ill-adjusted (usually the speaker talks too quietly, too quickly and unclearly) (Bocheńska, 2005).

Among voice emission exercises, the most popular is the one **that requires using your voice during some physical effort** (No. 5a). The idea is to speak fluently in spite of rapid breathing and heartbeat, and despite a feeling of increased muscle tension (it is about physical effort, the effects of which are similar to those of stage fright in this aspect). Sometimes it is also good to do **exercises that "warm up" the voice** (No. 5b), such as distinct repetition of vowels (a, o, u, i, e) or some sentences that are more difficult to pronounce ("She sells seashells by the seashore"), or to utter a literary work that requires linguistic virtuosity (finesse). The next stage of practising voice emission is careful self-observation: How do I operate my voice (how do I use it)? In order to improve speaking skills, we can use the form that has already been discussed, i.e. **an audio or video recording of an excerpt from our own speech** (we can start with a poem or even some prose) (exercise 5c). The point is to analyse the recording carefully (to look at it *with fresh eyes*). The spoken text is then to be "corrected" (e.g. trying to slow down the pace of speech), recorded once more and listened to again. The operation is repeated until we no longer detect articulation, intonation or pause errors.

What are the general objectives of the speech?

The cognitive goal, i.e. to make the listener reflect and provide them with necessary knowledge, is best achieved by giving a lecture or a scientific paper (Marcjanik, 2007). It requires rigorous argumentation, substantive information and the use of professional concepts. The persuasive goals, i.e. bringing the listener around to a certain idea or a view, instilling a thought into them, or gaining support and understanding, are best achieved by giving a talk or a lecture (see Bocheńska, 2005; Lewandowska-Tarasiuk, 2008). Such presentations are of a popular science character, and the language the speaker can use is never specialised, but can be full of metaphors, comparisons, and hyperboles and can even be quite humorous.

Who makes up the audience?

When it comes to the question of who you are talking to, it is worth thinking over what language should be used. It can be taken for granted that **specialised terms are reserved for a group of qualified psychologists**. There is no point in introducing strictly psychological terms when talking to parents, teachers, and even more so to students without explanations, synonyms, comparisons and pictorial examples. They will be incomprehensible, and employing them will create the impression of "being a smart alec" (it will distance the audience). I like the development of the idea expressed by an academic teacher of physics that a good didactician is one who will cheaply give back what they have gained dearly, i.e. who will "sell" – in a simple, pictorial way – knowledge that is in fact quite complicated. In order to get rid of professional jargon, it is helpful to do **an exercise consisting in writing out as many synonyms of the key concept as possible** (No. 6), most elaborate descriptions, pictorial comparisons, metaphors, in other words, everything that explains and substitutes the concept. **The form of addressing the audience also requires some thought and practice** (No. 7). The aim is to prepare and try to articulate – in full length – the words of welcome, the formula for presenting oneself and the content of the lecture, the words of farewell and language schemas used to address listeners directly in order to establish dialogue with them and even to maintain discipline. Without practising a longer fragment of a speech while directly addressing the audience, one can fall into the trap of impersonal speaking or over-addressing, where the phrase "ladies and gentlemen" is inserted in each sentence in all ways possible.

How long should the speech last?

As a general rule, the speaker is obliged to stick to the pre-arranged speaking time. If the listeners have come to a one-hour meeting, they should be able to hear – during that time – all that has been prepared. There is a recommendation in this regard that **the expected speaking time should not be exceeded by more than 10%** (see Wiszniewski 2003). For example, a one-hour speech can be shortened or extended by 5–6 minutes. In order to improve the ability to control the time, it is recommended to do **an exercise which consists in delivering the whole speech** (No. 8). A speech is prepared literally and given while measuring the time (the aim of this exercise is not to practise speaking at the forum, or to record and subsequently identify mistakes, but to find out how successful this "acting within the time frame" turns out in practice). Next, the fragments which excessively lengthen the argumentation and those which are unclear (disrupt the logic of the argument) are removed. To make this rule applicable, it is advisable to prepare at least some components of the speech

(quotations, data) and practise saying them beforehand in conditions similar to the real ones. Due to lack of time, it is possible, of course, **to rehearse only the key elements** (No. 9) in conditions similar to the circumstances of the speech (standing instead of sitting comfortably in an armchair or in a favourite place of relaxation such as a bathtub). A good solution is **an exercise in planning** (No. 10), which involves writing down the duration of the speech's key elements (taking into account how long it takes to show and discuss the materials). Usually, the planned core part of the speech should take at least 70% of the total speaking time. The introduction and conclusion of the speech should receive 10% of the speaker's time each and reserve an extra 10% for possible questions (see Wiszniewski, 2003). When presenting slides, it is important to calculate how many to prepare. For example, if it takes at least 3 minutes to discuss one slide, then there cannot be more than 15 slides presented during a 45-minute lecture. A useful technique of time--based planning is **to use the buffer** (exercise 11), described by Wiszniewski (2003). The author advises to prepare a speech in which certain fragments are "to be omitted" without much loss for the whole argument. You do it when you know for sure that you are running out of time (it is enough to discretely compare the time in the prepared schedule of the speech with the real time passing). Thus, we leave – as if in the parentheses of the speech – some content which may but need not be delivered. It is wise to determine in advance what can be shortened rather than deciding about it randomly, during the speech.

What do you know about the venue and the circumstances of the presentation?

There is a general rule that every speaker should follow so as not to feel any discomfort. The point is **to get to know the realities in which they will be performing.** Therefore, it is advisable to go to the lecture hall prior to the performance in order to check its acoustics, temperature and "airiness", to try out the microphone and the lectern, to try handling materials/slides, or multimedia presentations. Training makes the master, and getting used to the realities (getting familiar with the circumstances of speaking) boosts the speaker's confidence.

What do you know about the audience's knowledge?

Without prior direct investigation (questioning)[20] of the listeners, it is impossible to predict what they know and do not know about the topic of

[20] This could involve filling out an initial questionnaire or answering a direct question from the lecturer.

the speech (some of them are probably well-read and very interested in the subject). Therefore, it is good to follow the rule formulated by Wiszniewski (2003) which says: **do not overestimate the audience's expertise.** Indeed, if the speaker prepares their presentation very carefully, the listeners can always learn something new or see it in a different light. Bocheńska (2005) developed a rule complementary to the above-mentioned: **do not provide the listeners with too obvious information, because it offends their intelligence**. One cannot argue with this opinion. It is indeed the speaker's responsibility that the listener should learn something that they will certainly not hear anywhere else. Even referring to the commonly known knowledge[21] should have the speaker's "personal trait", i.e. the summary should be done by the speaker by carefully selecting the content of the subsections, drawing clear diagrams and representative pictures, or preparing tables (then what the listener gets is not a simple replica or duplication of other people's work). The point is that the listeners should not be disappointed that they have already heard and seen everything (painful déjà vu effect).

Why do you stand in front of an audience?

The person standing in front of an audience must be credible as a speaker, an authority in psychology or someone who is "the best man for the job"[22]. Being a speaker involves making an effort to speak, which must be consciously taken. Eloquence, i.e. the ability to speak smoothly – as has already been stressed many times – should be practised. This point is beautifully summed up by the following statement: *poet nascitur, orator fit* (a poet is born, an orator is made) (Bocheńska, 2005, p. 20). The last issue to be considered is the speaker's mental attitude. Even if they are well trained to develop an argument in an efficient and substantive manner, the question of personal satisfaction (the joy of being a speaker) remains open. Sometimes in order to fully enjoy this experience, the speaker should simply write down their strengths and everything that "situationally" works in their favour (what positively affects the audience). Next, they should remind themselves that there are things that are beyond their control (e.g. the preconceptions of the audience about the subject or content, or an annoying background noise).

[21] Wiszniewski (2003) rightly claims that banality is a painful abuse of words and listeners' patience.

[22] The speaker's credibility is the precondition for the success of their message (see Wiszniewski, 2003).

What should be done during the speech to make it attractive and effective?

As shown above, the speaker can prepare for standing in front of the audience in quite a detailed way. However, the most important task is to deliver a speech. This task can be divided into five stages:

1. Making a positive first impression.
2. Keeping to the three-part division (introduction, body and conclusion) while speaking.
3. Addressing the speech to the audience.
4. Maintaining close (even warm) contact with the audience.
5. Ensuring that the speech is hearable and understandable.

To create a favourable first impression, you can, for example, tell your listeners about yourself and your professional competences. However, this should be done briefly and without false modesty. It is essential to refrain from informing the audience about your possible aversion to public speaking or doubts about the content of your speech. The words: "I'm not really prepared", "I haven't had time", "I'm not the best speaker" can be treated as a symptom of disregard for the listener who has taken their time to come to the presentation and has the right to judge for himself or herself (besides, such phrases are usually not treated as an expression of modesty anyway). If you want to speak favourably about yourself – this praise should be adequate, discreet and firmly rooted in reality. After all, in a moment the listeners will be able to check if the speaker is really familiar with the issue. I would take it for granted that it is unprofessional to "dwell on" your own difficulties at the beginning of the speech (at the end of the speech you can apologise for real shortcomings or comment on them, but you must not pretend that everything went wrong if in actual fact your presentation was quite good). On the other hand, a very professional and encouraging introduction that "makes a good impression" is one that will help listeners to answer the questions: What is the speech about?, and How will it be constructed?

What should be done to keep the audience's attention? As I have repeatedly highlighted, it is constructing and developing a consistent argument, with a clear introduction, body and conclusion. The final impression is reinforced by the way the speech ends. Therefore, it must not be closed prematurely and with a statement that invariably confounds the audience: "I have nothing more to say". Moreover, you cannot prolong your speech indefinitely. When you say goodbye, it is a definite end, you must not return to the lectern (Bocheńska, 2005), that is after the word "thank you", you should not pick up new threads or continue your argument.

Addressing a speech to listeners means looking at and talking directly to them. Such a sense of connection with the audience can be achieved by an activity suggested in Marcjanik’s work (2007). It should be done at the very start of the lecture – the speaker sweeps at least the first few rows of the auditorium, from right to left, and next the last rows, in a similar order. They can also choose a person(s) cooperating well enough to signal listening (because they are nodding their heads, returning the smile, laughing in response to a joke, taking notes on the subject and speech). It is the speaker’s courteous duty to maintain verbal contact with the audience. For this reason, they should know how to properly address statements to the audience. Marcjanik (2007) suggests that treating the audience as a partner is evidenced by using certain established dialogue forms, for example “Let us think (together)...”, “let us notice...”, “of course we know...”. It is advisable for the speaker to keep in mind throughout the lecture the principle that the audience should be treated with respect and in a polite manner. At the beginning of the meeting, a form of addressing the audience is also established – which is to be polite and give a sufficient sense of freedom to both sides. This is all the more important because the recipient must be addressed somehow, and this must be done in accordance with the conventions (Łysakowski, 2005). In addition, taking care of the form of speech cannot be overestimated. I was delighted with the proposal to deliberate on what grammatical form to choose so as to better reach the audience. Using the first person plural often means trying to indicate the fact of creating some kind of community with the listener. I say, “As parents, we must first of all make sure that...” and in the process, put myself in an equal position – I say the rule is not without exception. In order to maintain contact with the audience, it also seems important **to smile as often as possible – as long as it is appropriate to the content of the speech** (a lecture on post-traumatic stress disorder or professional burnout will probably provide fewer opportunities to present a cheerful face). “A warm smile is the most universal language” (Wiszniewski, 2003, p. 63). **The postulate** to have a happy facial expression is rather a suggestion to clearly signal the willingness to contact the audience, openness to information exchange, and readiness to arouse enthusiasm in them. This is in line with the principle known from social psychology that “we like those who like us”. **The speaker should not give the impression that they are at a lecture as a punishment and consider speaking to this audience to be a chore.** What I mean is not that the speaker is deceiving the audience, but rather that they should not conduct lectures without finding a single argument that would personally convince them of this type of activity. The speaker should do the job aiming at creating a positive internal monologue. In 99 cases out of 100, the lecturer’s frustration becomes a source of frustration for the listeners (a scared or gloomy lecturer may evoke pity, but just as often

embarrassment or anger). If someone does what they like[23] and finds satisfaction and enjoyment in a specific activity, it is easier for them to convince the listeners of their arguments. This is because from the situation described above, it is just a step to showing disrespect – if somebody does not try to be polite or have an open and inviting attitude (*this is for you, parent, teacher, I'm trying to do my very best to make you understand, to make you feel encouraged, to make you feel in the centre of my attention*). "Mustering up" some enthusiasm is the fundamental commandment of the speaker who is standing in front of the audience. The best thing they can do is to talk about something that they know, that attracts them and makes them happy – it arouses similar enthusiasm in the audience. Uninvolved, impassive recitation, or even reading from a piece of paper – without changing the pace, intonation, accents or volume – can put the audience to sleep. Listeners usually believe people who are regarded as enthusiasts of what they do (Bocheńska, 2005).

The task of interacting with the audience, establishing close (warm) contact with them means – as has already been said – speaking not into space, but addressing them directly. It is about personifying the message ("please notice...", "try to analyse...") and articulating it in such a way that the listener feels directly encouraged to act (Bocheńska, 2005). It is obvious that the speaker also receives – as in any communication – verbal and non-verbal feedback from listeners (it is about entering into dialogue with the speaker, through questions or comments during and/or after the speech, as well as gestures and facial expressions expressing approval or disapproval). The speaker can look at the listener like in a mirror – seeing what has gone well and what has gone wrong (Bocheńska, 2005). In order to please the speaker, it is enough to accompany them by giving non-verbal signs of interest (laughing when something is amusing, nodding when something is convincing) and after the presentation to applaud or to approach and thank them (to express your opinion and stress that they have been listened to with attention). Wiszniewski (2003) calls it "creating the feedback" that the speaker needs. This is a precondition for starting fruitful cooperation. The form of this cooperation obviously depends on the size of the audience (Marcjanik, 2007). The reactions that signal "the situation getting out of control" are valuable. Exceeding the time

[23] Good speakers like the audience, because it is only direct contact with people that warms up and gives wings to their minds (Wiszniewski, 2003). I could say, following Bocheńska (2005), that **giving a speech is not a punishment but a privilege**, even **a chance to shine and make oneself known**. Every appearance may arouse our enthusiasm; create a chance for us to enjoy it. Thus, instead of going for a scaffold as it were, maybe it is worth looking for harbingers of change in our attitude, something that would make us really happy? Too many people see it as a necessary evil which must be done to function professionally; in other words, being a speaker is rarely a moment they are looking forward to.

is recognised by the fact that a slight noise increases, and the participants start leaving the room (because there is always a group of people who demonstrate impatience more vigorously than others). Such information coming from the audience obliges the speaker to change the topic or their speaking style, or to shorten the speech (Marcjanik, 2007). They should only react decisively and politely to what is directly disturbing them and register the rest (and reflect on what it means). It is assumed that it is the lecturer and organisers who are responsible for discipline, that is for those talking, disturbing (entering, leaving, pushing themselves in) or just confused (when it is stuffy, crowded, etc.). The authors cited above agree that **not every question asked or comment expressed requires the speaker's response.** The speaker has the right to respond collectively, randomly, or merely acknowledge or treat some points as rhetorical statements. The distribution of evaluation questionnaires is a requirement in the sense of self-preservation instinct. They are necessary to analyse what went perfectly (and to repeat it), and what still needs to be worked on.

Taking care of speech intelligibility is to control nervousness, perceptible in the speaker's voice (after all, people can hear it trembling), breath, and movements. In the first minutes of a speech, the level of nervousness is usually the highest and then a solution might be to lower the speech volume (then you do not strain your voice). You can also stop for a while – drink water or take a deep breath (actually you can use any technique of relaxation or calming down provided it does not take too much time[24]). Perhaps – if you do not take yourself too seriously and can laugh at yourself – this is an occasion to turn the situation into a joke or make some humorous comment about stage fright. In most cases, these signs of nervousness do not last long and you calm down slowly (getting used to the situation). If this is not the case, the argument becomes much less comprehensible. The listener is supposed to understand the words and see the speaker, with all of their strengths and weaknesses (as cited in Wiszniewski, 2003). It is usually the spontaneity of the speech that captures the listener. It cannot be achieved by reading it monotonously from a piece of paper, without taking your eyes off it, or without trying to modulate your voice (i.e. without proper theatricalisation[25]). In addition to audibility, it is necessary to ensure that the speech is intelligible and that

[24] Usually, relaxation training includes short muscle relaxation, respiratory or visualisation-based exercises, which will easily meet the speaker's expectation to calm down (see Bloomquist, 2011, p. 48; Cungi, Limoousin, 2010; Sokołowska et al., 2015, pp. 126–127, 133; Weller, 2007).

[25] Ewa Lewandowska-Tarasiuk (2005) entitled her book *W teatrze prezentacji. O sztuce perswazji* [In the theatre of presentation. On the art of persuasion]. She convincingly justifies that the performance has a lot to do with stage art. Any exaggeration is bad, but a sense of stage is essential.

some of its content is preserved in the listeners' memory. The speaker is also responsible to some extent for making the listeners curious. Thus, it is advisable and expected – something that is not usually done when writing an article – to repeat key or more difficult content, sometimes even return to specific sentences, even several times (in the case of an article that would cause *a redundancy effect*, because readers can always return to a certain issue, while listeners are in a way left to the speaker's *devices*) (see the guidelines from a practitioner in the book *Sztuka mówienia* [The art of speaking] as cited in Wiszniewski, 2003).

What makes a psychologist a good speaker?

According to the proverb *Physician, heal thyself,* which may sound bantering (although it is not the reason why I am invoking it), a good speaker is formed by overcoming their limitations and making conscious use of their psychological knowledge. It is practice that makes the master (Latin: *repetito est mater studiorum*). That is why in this chapter, I have proposed so many exercises for the readers to do. Let me put it this way**: a psychologist will become a good speaker when they consciously prepare for a speech and use familiar rules in practice!** (here included as sample tips and tricks). The effort put in should be assessed – both by the speaker and their listeners – in terms of its results. A good speaker is a person who has "shared" with the listeners the knowledge that is relevant to them (or who has consolidated it) and/or allowed them to acquire (consolidate) useful skills. **It would be ideal if a psychologist's speech could fit into the rule of Truth, Goodness and Beauty**[26] (Marcjanik, 2007, p. 157). The psychologist's honesty is attested by demonstrating objectivity, revealing the sources of knowledge and information gathered, and using recognised authorities in psychology. The aesthetic value of their speech is determined not only by the correctness, but also by the finesse of their argument (what matters is originality, efficiency and intelligence).

[26] Marcjanik (2007) believes that a speech should comply with **ethical** (be honest, contain truth, not falsehood), **aesthetic** (be beautiful, in the sense of its sound), and **social etiquette rules** (be good, i.e. not offend the audience by treating them too familiarly and rudely). Euripides claimed that there is grace and benefit in courtesy (p. 104).

ABSTRACT

“Facing an audience”

An important challenge facing the psychologist is public speaking in front of large audiences. The aim is usually to spread psychological knowledge or ideas related to mental health promotion and improving the quality of life. Each such speech requires careful preparation of the content, its structure, as well as the speaker themselves for this difficult situation. Therefore, it is advisable to rehearse and self-analyse the presentation and take into account the comments of the audience. The success of a presentation also depends on the audience, whose expectations the speaker should adapt to. Thus, it is useful to keep in mind such issues as making a good first impression; sticking to the three-part structure (introduction, body and conclusion); addressing the audience; maintaining warm contact with them; and ensuring audibility and comprehensibility.

KEYWORDS: being a good speaker, practising a speech, public speaking, school psychologist

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15. Promoting the student's development. A holistic perspective

The place of promotion in the school psychologist's work model

The model of the school psychologist's work presented in this book includes, among its other functions such as monitoring, psychoprophylaxis, or intervention, also a promotional function. In this chapter, we will deal with the latter more closely. The statement "prevention is better than cure", which is addressed mainly to doctors, can also refer to psychologists. However, neither prevention nor cure exhaust the range of possibilities psychology can offer for working with people. Another large area of the psychologist's professional activity is to promote personal development, so that what is already good at the starting point can become even better with time and surpass the existing state. Similarly, in modern medicine, apart from preventing and treating diseases, health promotion is also addressed. The advantage of this approach is to break a one-sided focus on "problems" and formulate goals in positive terms, i.e. colloquially speaking, to reinforce strengths instead of "grubbing up" weaknesses.

The promotional function differs from the narrowly understood developmental function in that it is not limited to the focus on what currently appears in an individual's development as a new achievement or skill but extends to the whole person and concerns the perspective of life in its full course. Thus, the developmental function in its narrow sense would include development in accordance with the norms for a certain age (for example the age at which a child learns to write or carry out abstract reasoning during a maths lesson), while the promotional function would also include development in its wider sense. It lasts a lifetime, exceeds average requirements, leads to creativity,

extraordinary achievements, and also promotes specifically human characteristics (for example social sensitivity, empathy, or innovation), for which there is no such thing as an expected norm. The need for such an approach is particularly stressed by Jurkowski (1985): "If, therefore, we were to take into account not only the achievements of the so-called child psychology, but the entire body of modern psychology, we could probably formulate a more basic psychological function of teaching than the developmental one – namely, the promotional function. The name derives from the Latin word *promovere*, which means "to move forward/to support". Its essence consists in supporting, cultivating or shaping such internal conditions in an individual that are conducive to both their further development and to organising specifically human ways of regulating relations with the environment (*ibid*., p.139)

If we imagine a coordinate axis where "zero" means the absence of any pathology, disorder or hazard, it is easy to notice that prevention and intervention are activities located on the negative side of the axis, below the point "zero". If the psychologist's work were to be limited to this range, its only goal could be to bring a person to the state "zero", defined as the norm, the absence of problems, and a good adaptation and functioning. However, it is far too little. The other part of the axis, which is between the zero point and the potential for further development, seems to be less frequently noticed and at the same time more difficult to define. Maybe such a situation results from the fact that the issues formulated "on the minus side" – that is to say "problems" – are more pronounced and burning. Also, it is easier to describe and group them. Continuing with the medical metaphor – it is as if there were a defined ready-made catalogue of diseases and a list of risk factors that lead to them. In that case, it would be enough to apply the appropriate countermeasures to avoid a problem. However, it is different "on the plus side". For matters which define possible ways of personal development and achieving important goals and values, there are no norms – or perhaps even there should not be – that are specified as clearly as in the case of diseases. Creativity always has an element of something new, and the whole pleasure of developing an existing potential, at least in part, lies in the fact that we never know what effect it will have. Less detail on the positive part of the axis does not mean, however, that it is less important than the "on the minus" part. It is especially classical representatives of the humanistic current in psychology (Maslow, 1987; Adler, 2006) who admit that this very sphere of goals, motivation, development, the pursuit of values and surpassing oneself is specifically human and should not be neglected in psychology in favour of focusing on "problems". A similar postulate is also formulated within the framework of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002). Józef Kozielecki (1986), in turn, defined this specifically human need to transcend the biological and social frames as

transgression. Its manifestations are creative, innovative and expansive activities, or going beyond the previous experiences and achievements. Transgression will be, therefore, any development that not only meets social and biological standards, but exceeds them in search of new values.

In the context of the school psychologist's work, it is close to the question of whether and what the psychologist can do in their work for problem-free children, for exceptionally talented pupils as well as for "difficult students". The latter also have their strengths and developmental potential, independent of the type of problems they display (Allport, 1961; Cohen, 2001).

Formulating promotional objectives

Personal development takes place in the context of the whole life and the requirements set by its individual stages (Levinson, 1978). At different stages of life, the assessment of the previous developmental achievements changes and the development itself is redefined (Bruner, 1987). Sometimes what seemed to be a "step forward" and brought short-term satisfaction, in the long run is often assessed as a mistake. For example, it could be a focus on learning and neglecting social relationships in the case of very talented pupils who play the role of "straight-A students" at school. Thus, how should developmental goals be formulated so that they are as universal as possible and also respect pupils' autonomy and subjectivity? If we discuss the promotional function, it is worth establishing what is to be promoted. At this point, we can refer to psychological theories that deal with developmental tasks, and in particular the notion of "**maturity**", which seems to be a good way to describe what Professor Jurkowski (1985) called "specifically human ways of organising relations with the environment", or in another place, an attempt to "make every human being as human as possible" (*ibid.*, p. 139). This may translate into a sense of fulfilment in life and its better quality.

When writing about a mature personality, Gordon Allport (1961) proposed the following characteristics:

- self-knowledge and reflection;
- the ability to have interests beyond the "self";
- self-distance and a sense of humour;
- having an overriding system of meanings, values and a philosophy of life;
- the ability to have deep, authentic and friendly contact with others;
- attaining a level of practical skills necessary to cope with the demands of life;
- readiness to engage in projects aimed at the common good – not only of man, but of all living creatures.

Allport's proposal is accompanied by other classical theoretical studies. For Alfred Adler (2006), the criterion of personal maturity is the ability to cope with one's own inferiority or superiority by developing "Gemeinschaftsgefühl" – a sense of social bond, that is being connected with others. This means that an individual renounces irrational rivalry and derives a sense of value from the bonds that connect them to the whole community, and from the satisfaction of being part of a larger whole. Similarly, for Maslow (1987), the criteria of mental maturity are adequate perception and contact with reality, respect for oneself and others, spontaneity and authenticity. A mature person is to engage in the affairs of the outside world, be faithful to their beliefs even in the face of resistance, maintain integrity and implement their life plans. Maslow conducted research on people he considered to be mentally mature and self-fulfilling. In his opinion, such people do not judge others schematically – based on stereotypes or group affiliation – but make friendships beyond divisions. They are sensitive to the culture in which they live and have a deep aesthetic sense, but at the same time they can be critical of the dominant culture and exceed its standards.

The contemporary concepts of a person's psychological development emphasise the importance of subjectivity and creativity as important criteria of a mature personality. They should characterise an ideal member of contemporary Western society and are consistent with the fundamental values of that society (Katra, 2007; Lucas, 2016). In this sense, subjectivity is understood as autonomy, which is not only independence from the influences of others (culture, parents, or stereotypes), that is "freedom from", but also autonomy regarded as "freedom to", which manifests itself in formulating one's own goals, drawing up plans for achieving them, as well as self-regulation of needs, drives, activities and emotions (Collins, Gleason, Sesma, 1997). Thus, it is possible to speak of the ability to self-regulate as a manifestation of internal maturity, which is at the same time the ability to formulate and choose goals (and values) and the ability to achieve them with perseverance, along with a number of activities needed to be effective in this respect (we would not call a mature person someone who, despite formulating their own valuable goals, is not able to make and continue the effort to attain them). Psychological activity aimed at achieving the desired future, which comprises internal mental and emotional activity together with accompanying behaviour, in psychology is referred to as prospective activity (Katra, 2007). Today, there are theories and educational programmes that promote personal development and skills for planning and self-regulation of prospective activity in young people (Katra, 2007; Zimmerman, 2002). A certain level of executive skills together with their self-regulation is a prerequisite for being able to function maturely in society.

Hence, from the perspective of the school psychologist's work, the question arises as to whether and how they can contribute to building an environment at school that is conducive to the development of precisely those desired qualities, namely an environment that would fulfil a promotional function towards pupils. It seems that there are several ways that could make this possible. These include shaping the educational environment by sharing knowledge about personal development and raising awareness of the importance of developmental processes (emotional, social, etc.), work with students aimed at improving emotional and interpersonal competences, encouragement and support for students, reflection on the type of developmental experiences provided by the school and adapting them to the age of students, as well as taking care of themselves and their own development, which translates into cohesion between their own attitude and conveyed values.

Shaping the environment and raising awareness

Raising awareness of the importance of the pupil's holistic development means, in particular, sensitising people involved in the educational process (parents, teachers) to non-intellectual aspects of development. This usually happens not only directly – through lectures and workshops for teachers and parents that provide knowledge about (and encouragement for) development, but also, and perhaps more importantly, during daily conversations with teachers, staff, and parents, as well as in parent-teacher or staff meetings. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2008) recognises that one of the fundamental goals of the psychologist's presence at school is to help create such a school environment that promotes not only the intellectual but also personal and psychological development of the student. Although education and upbringing are goals that are naturally interrelated, it does happen, however, that the school focuses primarily on students' textbook knowledge. This is all the more so because students are assessed first and foremost on the basis of their knowledge, and it is this knowledge that is a ticket to further stages of education. Therefore, the task of the school psychologist should be to ensure – by creating an appropriate school climate and environment – that the emphasis on knowledge and learning does not lead to one-sidedness and neglect of other, non-intellectual areas of development (Cohen et al., 2009). It is worth remembering that even when the schools claim that they do not have time for upbringing, they still do it, but in an unintended manner. Raising awareness of such a process in everyday interpersonal interactions that constitute school life and its significance for students' maturation (and thus upbringing) is one of the most vital tasks of the psychologist.

Teachers' relations with each other and their relations with younger and older pupils (and with other school staff), adult people's attitudes towards different current affairs happening at school or in the outside world, as well as mutual respect and a set of core values held by adults – all these shape students' personalities and value systems. The psychologist should make sure that this "obviousness" does not escape the attention of all those who make up the school system. Thus, their task in this respect can be described as raising awareness and sensitivity to these aspects of the school functioning. It is a kind of constant reminder of the simplest and perhaps obvious matters, yet easily escaping attention. The psychologist is, therefore, supposed to be **a conscious advocate of development**.

The table presented at the end of the text (Table 6) shows the possibilities of fulfilling this task when working with different people who make up the school system.

With regard to individual students, it might become important to acknowledge and praise such – perhaps unconventional – students' achievements that are not of an academic nature, but that reflect their curiosity and diversity of interests. Another aspect of promoting holistic thinking about development is to train students to adopt a life span perspective in their plans for the future (Levinson, 1990; Katra, 2007). This can include supporting self-activity in planning – metaphorically speaking, increasing a sense of "authorship" of their lives as well as extending the range of options available for a young person to choose from when setting their life goals. Schools, for example, organise meetings for this purpose and invite people with significant achievements not only in academic but also artistic or social fields. Other people's life stories – including their personal experience, not just general knowledge – can broaden students' view of the world and at the same time widen their perspective on a variety of possibilities that they face. Similarly, listening to other people's experiences can promote a more long-term and holistic thinking about their own life and its future course (Gurba, 2001). Students are, for example, told about the challenges of reconciling professional, parental and personal tasks, or shown different ways of life from the perspective of people in middle or late adulthood.

As the aforementioned Professor Andrzej Jurkowski (1985) writes: "There is a strong tradition of seeing the task of the school in preparing its pupils for life (...) I believe that the most appropriate psychological interpretation of 'preparation for life' is to view it in terms of regulating the relationship between an individual and their environment while emphasising human specificity in this respect" (*ibid*., pp. 139–140). This type of "preparation for life" should be free from excessive didacticism or promoting the only correct solutions. It should have the effect of creating in students a feeling that "the world has expanded" and, consequently, that their own abilities and their sense of freedom and autonomy have increased as they are about to graduate from school and enter adulthood.

It has been shown that promoting students' autonomy by teachers improves young people's well-being and acts as a protector (Yu et al., 2016). Ideally, such an attitude translates into lifelong self-study and self-development and the ability to use, for the sake of one's own "authorial" development, many sources of knowledge and experience, such as cultural heritage or relations with other people.

"Preparation for life" also covers the specificity of navigating in the rapidly changing modern world with its complex challenges. These include the fluidity and rapid change of the environment as well as technological development and its consequences: handling situations of information overload and a multitude of disinformation along with specific opportunities and threats related to the role of the Internet and social media (Crone, Konijn, 2018). Moreover, it is extremely important to support children and young people in developing their understanding of the social world, including politics and building their social and civic attitudes. It is during early and late adolescence at school that the foundations of attitudes towards serious social problems (such as economic inequality or exclusion of some people) and political beliefs are formed (Flanagan, 2013). All these areas of a person's participation in and understanding of the wider world should not be neglected in their development. In recent years, there has been a growing wave of concern among young people, sometimes even anxiety, about macro-social problems. This is particularly evident in the context of problems with a future perspective that will be left to the youngest citizens – such as global warming and environmental devastation, but also a growing risk of social conflicts, migration crises, terrorism and war (Ojala, 2005). The social and civic activity of young people provides a possible arena of development that supports their sense of empowerment and hope with regard to macro-social problems. Young people who engage in pro-social activities, including civic and protest movements, display a greater ability to cope with stress and a stronger sense of empowerment (Ojala, 2007). Hence, youth activism is at the same time a unique opportunity for their positive development.

Developing emotional and interpersonal competences

Apart from schooling, holistic development includes shaping knowledge and intellect, as well as improving "psychological" skills. The latter range from emotional and interpersonal competences to accompanying attitudes towards oneself and the world. Among these there are such skills and attitudes as:

- perceiving and naming one's own and also other people's emotions,
- awareness of oneself and one's own preferences (Who am I? What do I like? What do I know?),

- self-respect and self-acceptance,
- respect for the other person and empathy,
- listening skills,
- assertiveness,
- decentration skills.

Both in individual and group work such as training sessions and workshops, psychologists apply various skills and techniques that enable pupils to gain experience beneficial for their development. Psychologists can use programmes available in the literature (especially workshop and training programmes), or if necessary and in accordance with their professional skills, create their own school-specific programmes. Socio-emotional education programmes aimed at different age groups are present in schools in many countries and generally yield good results (Cohen, 2001, Diekstra, Gravesteijn, 2008). These programmes teach students, for example, to recognise, name, accept and cope with different emotions. Conducting certain types of coaching (e.g. interpersonal coaching) may also require psychologists to receive some additional training in this area – through self-training or supervision.

Although most of the aforementioned skills and attitudes are well known to psychologists, it is worth enlarging on some of them. The ability to decentre and the resulting adoption of different perspectives are well described by Robert Selman in his five-stage model of social perspective-taking (1980). One of the early and important developmental achievements, namely the ability to self-reflect and adopt the perspective of the other person, should appear, according to this author, between the ages of 7 and 12. Then the child learns that the other person also has, like them, their own world of experiences, motives, and their own perspective. The child becomes capable of noticing and taking this perspective, in other words, looking at the world through someone else's eyes. The social perspective then develops into the ability to adopt the third person's perspective, that is the ability to look at oneself and one's own relationships as if from the outside. The child perceives themselves and their mind as an observer and manager of their own activities and understands that behind the relationships and conflicts experienced on the surface, there are deeper intentions and motives hidden. The last stage of this development – called a deep symbolic and social perspective-taking by Selman – should appear before reaching adulthood. It means gaining an intuitive insight into the fact that people do certain things unconsciously, and that conflicts can lie in relationships and interactions between people, rather than in their goals. The child's intuitive understanding of the concept of personality deepens, both of their own and others', which results in better and deeper emotional relationships with other people. Acquiring the ability

to take the other person's perspective and understand the mechanisms that govern the psyche is important because development can also be referred to as a series of changes in the child's relationships with others. Attaining an increasingly mature view of themselves in relation to their parents, peers and other people involves transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Possible psychological influences in this area include broadening the perception of interpersonal relationships, enhancing empathy and communication, and respecting their own and other people's boundaries. Any group activity will be helpful here, as well as reflecting on events that take place at school – conflict and other interpersonal situations. Simple communication techniques, such as paraphrasing or emotional mirroring, active listening and formulating open questions, carried out in an atmosphere of safety and respect for the other person, can be extremely helpful in developing the child's awareness of how they are perceived by others and in being able to take their perspective.

In addition, working with emotions and achieving greater emotional maturity deserves a deeper theoretical reflection. At least two classical developmental theorists – Jung and Labouvie-Vief (1994) – strongly question the belief, characteristic of Western civilisation, that rationality is something superior or more important than the symbolic and emotional sphere of man. Labouvie-Vief understands the development of personality as a gradual combination and integration of the rational and emotional spheres – those of *Logos* and *Mythos* as a fusion of cool, objectifying rationality with subjective and profound aesthetic experience. In her view, the price of one-sided social, individual and cultural development is a gradual detachment of man from what is organic, spontaneous and natural. According to Labouvie-Vief, it is women who bear the brunt of this situation as it is their biological nature that is sacrificed to culture. Intuition, the ability to create bonds and empathy play as important role as rationality, and only their harmonious integration results in attaining a mature personality. In order to develop emotional competencies such as an adequate understanding of one's own and others' emotions, the ability to name and express them in a way that is not destructive to oneself and others, acceptance that different emotions can coexist, and so on, one needs above all a clear awareness that emotions are important and that this sphere of life should not be depreciated. Thus, there is a need for simple psychological education in this area. Emotions such as sadness or anger are an important source of information about what is happening to us, whether we are being harmed, or whether any of our important needs are unsatisfied. Thus, while conducting various workshops and educational activities, it is desirable to teach students how to use this source of information, and how to accept their own emotions and express them in such a way as not to trespass on other people's boundaries. The awareness of and closeness – "good contact", using psychological

language – with their own emotions can help the young person to develop and mature in the way, the value of which cannot be overestimated. The message that is conveyed through teaching emotional competences is expressed in the maxim "it is good to be oneself and in harmony with oneself". Getting to know oneself and developing one's own identity, and not just fulfilling the expectations of others, is an important task of adolescence and does not have to mean self-realisation at the expense of the environment. On the contrary, people who develop a good emotional understanding of themselves, of their likes and dislikes, and their role in the world function better in their relationships with others and can better cope with the task of choosing their future life paths after school. Respect and sensitivity to one's emotions undoubtedly support personal development in the best sense of the word.

School as a source of developmental experience in different periods of life

When discussing the personal and psychological development of students (as opposed to merely cognitive development), it is worth considering the knowledge accumulated so far about the regularities of this development. Many classical authors, such as Freud, Piaget, Erikson or Kohlberg, have spoken on this subject. Most of these developmental typologies are well known and it is impossible to quote them all. According to one of the best known, Erik Erikson's (1968) concept of psychosocial development, the period of schooling is marked by three stages of development, culminating in the creation of a sense of self-productivity (younger school age), identity (adolescence) and a capacity for intimacy (early adulthood). These three tasks illustrate the possible developmental spheres, experienced by school-age pupils. A child who goes to school needs to gain – based on all their first experiences at school – a sense of competence. It is important for them to know that they are good at something, that they are able to do something independently, and that they are efficient. This experience will be much more valuable for their future work and study than learning this or that knowledge at school (Erikson, 1968). Here is a question for the school psychologist: How can you work with children of this age group in such a way as to ensure that school is not a source of their belief in their inferiority and lack of competence, but to help them accumulate good experiences? How can we escape the stereotype, which is unfortunately still quite popular also among teachers, that students need to be shown mainly what their gaps in knowledge are, what part of material they still have not mastered, what their weaknesses are, and so on, in order to motivate them to work.

According to Erikson, a person entering adolescence is confronted with an identity crisis. From the perspective of educational institutions, this age is not easy. However, what from the school's point of view is problem behaviour, for example youth rebellion, experiments in ideology, group affiliation, defining one's role, or rejection of authorities – from the perspective of holistic development is a manifestation of a positive crisis aimed at determining "who I am and will be in my life". If this is the case, could the school psychologist become – in this difficult educational period – not only an advocate of the institution's educational policy, sometimes used by the school to discipline students, but also an advocate of space allowing the young person to seek their personal identity? It is obvious that this space cannot be without limits and must remain within the rules of the institution, but on the other hand, a lack of such space undermines the important developmental goal of determining personal identity. As we grow older, the last of Erikson's developmental tasks, associated with adolescence and early adulthood, also becomes more and more important. It is the ability to build intimacy and bonds with others, long-term friendships and intimacy with a partner. When students go to school, they not only learn, but often collect experiences of first love and friendship, which become part of a reservoir of important experiences for them as adults. Teachers, pedagogues and school psychologists, therefore, often witness young people's first tragedies related to love, closeness and friendship. Engaging in emotional relationships may not be easy for adults around them (regardless of the former's own attitudes and beliefs) and cause different, more or less conscious, reactions on their part. If so, are there any opportunities to wisely support such a delicate developmental task as learning intimacy with the other person? The opposite is isolation, so painful in early adulthood (Erikson, 1950). Adults' readiness to take up and not to underestimate this topic (openness to conversation and respect) might be very important for many students who are about to leave school. In some schools, there are support groups for those young people who find it difficult to establish close relationships. The issues discussed there show that it is the sphere of interpersonal relations that has to be learnt a lot in this period of life. Also here, classes including elements of interpersonal training could prove helpful (Król-Fijewska, 1993).

Conclusions – the school psychologist with a wealth of opportunities for development

The path of individual development, understood more broadly than just intellectual development, is a process that every person goes through in a different way, often pursuing other personal goals as well. Promoting development is

Table 6. Promotional function in the school psychologist's work – selected possibilities for intervention

With regard to pupils	• group training, communication, assertiveness, emotional competences, elements of interpersonal training, support or developmental groups (depending on the needs and interests of students) • taking the perspective of encouraging and supporting development in individual contact with students, for example finding the strengths of weaker students • modelling attitudes, especially in terms of interpersonal relationships (for example when it comes to respect, empathy, setting boundaries, or dealing with conflicts) • teaching students that they can develop their potential throughout their lives • providing patterns and models – using narrative methods (telling different biographies), organising meetings with interesting people and authorities in various fields, animating social and cultural activities • shaping attitudes towards social, political, and civic reality and macro-challenges of civilisation (e.g. climate, ecology, etc.) by providing opportunities for action, self-organisation, participation, social and civic activity, and a chance to talk and discuss these issues
With regard to teachers and school staff and to the educational environment as a whole	• shaping an educational environment conducive to holistic development by providing knowledge and modelling attitudes • if necessary – education or workshops for parents and teachers • communicating an attitude of support for development in various fields during daily conversations with teachers, staff, and parents, as well as during parent-teacher or staff meetings
With regard to institutions and programmes	• making sure that holistic, especially psychological development is included in programmes created by the school • ensuring that actions taken in a particular school are consistent with the pupils' age and developmental stage
With regard to themselves	• taking care of themselves, self-development, rest, balance, and so on • influencing through their attitude and behaviour modelling • educating themselves, improving knowledge of current social challenges • reflecting on the importance of the promotional function in their work (as long as the focus is only on negative phenomena and difficult pupils)

not so much about interfering in this process (this would fall outside the tasks of the school) as about creating a context in which it can take place in the most beneficial way possible. We always mature to something – we refer to school maturity, maturity for marriage and motherhood, as well as social, intellectual or artistic maturity (Mellibruda, 2007). Therefore, deliberations about development are so difficult – they touch on the question of values, in which this development is embedded. From the psychologist's point of view, it becomes important to be able to accompany the student in this process in a friendly manner and without imposing their own ideas. Also, it may be useful in various situations to be an advocate of hope, which by definition is included in the concept of "development" (Baltes, Smith, 1990). Often the strongest stimulus for development is that of hope and support – "I believe in you", "you can do it" – expressed by an important adult (and this group may include psychologists as well as form and subject teachers). These are not shallow statements, but a real and sincere commitment to a young person's developmental efforts, in their best interest and with respect for their autonomy, that is without adult people imposing their ideas upon the child. The psychologist can, therefore, become a safe and friendly companion in the student's personal development.

The psychologist themselves is the most important tool in their work. The same applies to school psychologists, whose role is to create a proper educational environment and to model attitudes that foster developmental maturity. It also means taking care of their own development – an obligation written into the ethical code of the psychologist's profession.

ABSTRACT

Promoting the student's development. A holistic perspective

In this chapter, I focus on the role of school psychologists in promoting students' positive development in a holistic perspective. School environment offers a multitude of opportunities to support the student's development such as group work on communication, emotional competencies, and similar soft skills, providing role models and good practices. School also offers opportunities for shaping attitudes towards social, political, and civic reality and macro-challenges of civilisation (e.g. climate change) by providing opportunities for action, self-organisation, participation, social and civic activity, and a chance to talk and discuss these issues. The psychologist should also offer promotional perspective and support the development of teachers, and be aware of their own developmental needs and trajectories.

KEYWORDS: promotion, positive development, macrosocial challenges, soft skills, growth

Final considerations

Professional work is a form of activity that allows for the realisation of individual life goals and brings a number of psychological consequences. It is an opportunity to take on various roles and tasks which influence the structure and style of an individual's life. That allows for the development of intellectual competences and specific skills. It plays an important role in shaping a sense of empowerment and effectiveness. Moreover, work determines the place that an individual occupies in society. It becomes a category that influences how an individual perceives themselves and how they are perceived by their environment. Thus, it contributes to forming a person's self-image, self-assessment, and self-esteem; it is an important aspect of a person's individual and social identity (Paul, Moser, 2009). It is undoubtedly related to the attitude towards the profession, which should be formed already during studies, and to personality traits (Moldazhanovaa et al., 2016; Morrison, 2013).

Psychologists refer to professional identity as an important "piece" of an individual's personal identity. Walsh and Gordon (2008) distinguish the cognitive and emotional aspects of professional identity. The cognitive aspect is associated with reflection on what constitutes the most important attributes of a professional role and to what extent the subject suits them. The emotional component, on the other hand, reflects the sense of belonging to a given professional group and identification with a role and with a specific professional group. The final reflections should include these two components, as this is a true closing of the authors' considerations. The discussion on the professional identity of school psychologists was initiated among the authors of the book earlier (Sokołowska, Katra, 2019). Also, one of the authors conducted a survey among school psychologists (95 people), which shows – based on a preliminary analysis – that identification with the profession is relatively

strong, however a sense of prestige quite low. School psychologists feel lonely, they miss contact with other professionals as well as supervision and training in vocational preparation (Katra, 2020).

Identity plays a regulatory role, that is it guides our behaviour in a specific way (Vignoles et al., 2006). Professional identity also fulfils such functions and is closely related to professional experience, i.e. that of a person working in a specific position (Boros, Curşeu, Miclea, 2011). This also applies to school psychologists as a separate professional group. In addition, it is worth noting that school psychologists generally work alone, which can make it difficult for them to identify professionally, as it is important to have contact with other professionals, and to be able to model themselves directly and observe the behaviour of other psychologists (Petriglieri, Obodaru, 2019).

Some propose a multidimensional model of professional identity and distinguish the personal (*I am a psychologist*...) and social dimensions, including the group dimension (*We educational psychologists...),* the organisational dimension (*We school psychologists...)* (Knez, 2016), and even the dimension relating to relationships (relationship pattern). These are "clusters" of knowledge (scripts, schemas in semantic memory) referring to specific situations (conversation with a teacher about a student, with a parent about a child, diagnostic tests of a child) that happen in a given type of professional activity.

Today, personality and social psychologists believe that these dimensions of identity are closely related (see Turner, Helms, 1995) and are linked to an individual's well-being and job satisfaction; they protect against professional burnout (Duffy et al., 2013; Rupert, Kent, 2007). At the same time, there are reports that the school psychologist can influence the school climate and the quality of work of the whole school system (Gibbs, 2018).

These mental representations determine (or orientate – act as a filter) our perception, interpretation and understanding of professional situations (Baldwin, 1992; Terry and Hogg, 1996). A person who obtains a professional identity will also acquire patterns of behaviour and scripts of situations that make up their professional activities. Some researchers have shown the connection between the concept of identity and decision making, i.e. the ability to make decisions in the professional field (Duffy, Sedlacek, 2007), dedication (Dobrow, Tosti-Kharasm, 2011) and commitment to the profession (Duffy et al., 2012). Studies confirm that a clear, well-defined professional identity is associated with greater professional commitment, higher performance and increased job satisfaction (Luyckx et al., 2010; Sawhney, Britt, Wilson, 2020). Individuals with a higher sense of professional identity have a better-defined self-concept and achieved identity. Some authors associate the concept of professional identity with that of vocation because a person who has a vocation for a particular profession incorporates this sentiment into their identity (Hirschi, 2012).

In general, it can be pointed out that professional identity gives a sense of meaning and direction in terms of one's professional activity, it increases one's ability to overcome difficulties and take up professional challenges and allows a person to demonstrate their personal qualities: strength, interest, commitment, preferences and life goals, or main values and aspirations (Skorikov, Vondracek, 2011).

An interesting model of professional identity and identification with the institution in which a person works is the concept developed by Blake E. Ashforth and his colleagues (Ashforth, Harrison, Corley, 2008; Ashforth, et al., 2013). In his view, the concepts of professional identity and identification help to grasp the essence of who people are in their professional roles, how they function in their professional activities and what determines their attitude to work and their professional duties and tasks. The presented model of the psychologist's professional identity requires more elaboration, and so does its use for further research: identification with the role, being an effective psychologist as well as improving one's well-being – which everyone should be aware of. Most probably the MPIP model might be useful in building professional identity and role identification! Therefore, we are planning to carry out our own research in this area. Certainly, the last word on this subject has not been said yet.

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Grażyna Katra – a holder of a post-doctoral degree in humanities, an educational and developmental psychologist, a research and teaching staff member of the Department of Developmental Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw. She deals with the problems of adolescents, growing up and shaping their future prospects with regard to planning their lives. In recent years, she has been involved in negative and positive risky behaviours of young people and young adults – their determinants and the role of prospective activity as a protective factor. Her scope of interest also includes the psychology of sexual development and functioning of families started by LGBT people. Currently, she is the head of Educational Psychology specialisation.

Karolina Małek – a PhD in social sciences, lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw. She conducts classes on the work of the psychologist with teachers as well as courses preparing future teachers for working in the school. She has worked as a school psychologist in a lower secondary school, a sociotherapeutic community centre and the Day Support Centre for Children, where she provided psychological assistance to children and their families. Karolina Małek works clinically as a therapist for couples and families. Her scientific interests focus on applying the narrative paradigm in various research areas.

Ewa Sokołowska – a PhD in humanities, since 2020 she has been an assistant professor at the Institute of Psychology of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Also, for 15 years (from 1993 to 2008), she worked as an assistant at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, and for 9 years (from 2008 to 2017) as an assistant professor at the Institute of Psychology, the Academy of Special Education. She has experience in working with children and young people who have failed at school, as well as in working with parents. Her main focus is on educational problems, including those related to

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Index

This index covers the main text and footnotes, with cursive marking page numbers where the given individual is mentioned only in footnotes.

The book presents an authorial model of the psychologist's work in a school, tested for 10 years in Polish educational institutions, to the wide audience, also outside Poland. The authors' intention is to initiate an international discussion on the role and tasks of the psychologist in education. The proposed model places emphasis on monitoring and promotion of appropriate patterns of behaviour as the activities that have the main psychological and educational impact in the school environment. It regards prevention and intervention only as their necessary complement. This approach underlines the importance of the proper course of the educational process, school climate and students' development. The publication highlights the positive role of the psychologist, who is a contributor to a properly functioning school community, not only a person responsible for solving problems arising in the school or educational environment.

[This is] a unique and extremely important book on the Polish publishing market. [...] so far, the only one [...] with a holistic approach to the role of the psychologist in a school, proposing a model that defines the actions that the psychologist should undertake, indicating their essence, forms they can take, as well as the necessary skills and competences to carry them out.

from the review of Jagiellonian University Professor Dorota Czyżowska, PhD

I perceive the reviewed book as fundamental to the process of building a professional identity of the school psychologist in Poland. This process is presented against a broad theoretical background, which sets the framework for the challenges faced by the school psychologist and defines the necessary competences and skills to meet these challenges.

from the review of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Professor Dorota Turska, PhD

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