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## **INTRODUCTION**

The monograph entitled *The School of Tomorrow Centred on Pupils* is a collective paper which, on the one hand, is based on the research conducted by and experience of many Polish and foreign theoreticians and practitioners of school education and, on the other, is the aftermath of an international academic Symposium “From the Traditional Towards the Future, Pupil-Oriented School” organised at Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, to which many highly-competent authors of this monograph contributed.

It should be noted that the Symposium was held on the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Commission of National Education (operating from 14<sup>th</sup> October 1773 until 31<sup>st</sup> May 1792), which was the first central national institution for education in the Polish Republic created in the civilised world.

It is therefore fully justified to adopt a many-sided approach to the past, present and future of the Polish school in a broader European and global context.

In the final section of my monographic study *Nauka o szkole* [*Science of School*] (Kuźma 2011) I concluded, among other things, that: School as socially-educational institution did not come into being accidentally. It served the very important needs connected mainly with the intellectual, religious and also physical, moral and aesthetic education of people. It was the way of using free time too.

For first millenia, and even majority of centuries of the latest millenium, school had elitary character. Education was available only for young people from privileged classes of society, that is aristocracy and clergymen (government officials and priests).

School transformations had their source in two mutually dependent processes: converting the individual pedagogical (educational) work into team work and passing from elitary to mass educating, what required modern forms of organization for education and new methods of school managing.

It is worth noticing that now we can perceive the opposite process – leaving mass school and education in favour of smaller school creating conditions for individual development of pupils. However, it is taking place in other reality different from the one, in which first schools came into being.

Looking at school development both from closer and further time perspective we come to some general conclusions. Analysing the development of school as social institution, from further time perspective (from the point of view so called „conception of long lasting” F. Braudel), we can see some logic which is compatible with the paradigm of continuance and change.

However, if we try to look at the development of school or school-system from closer perspective, we can see, that this development was not happening in evolving way or according to a plan as it seemed to, but mainly disaccording to a plan and in an inconsequent way. The periods of successful development of system of education were happening alternatively with crises of school, both on European, Northamerican or other continents.

In all formations, we can observe distinct dependence of school and process of education on socially-political system dominating in the country.

For many centuries the system of education was in the servance of privileged classes. However, when deprived classes of society were gradually gaining rights, education was becoming more and more democratic and common in national countries.

At the beginning, school was isolated from the surrounding but becoming more and more democratic, common and popular, it has changed into open institution.

For majority of epochs, the access to school education for women was impeded or even impossible. Contemporary school is becoming more and more available not only for children and the youth but also for adults and, at present, even for older generations.

Depending on political and ideological trends dominating in certain epoch or country, the character of schools was either religious or secular. These tendencies were taking place and are still going on rather changeably, without clear continuity.

School and system of education, in its long history, experienced longer or shorter crises many times. So the present crisis isn't probably the first or the last one.

The latest crisis of school, which started in the seventies of the last century, seems to be much longer and extensive. Crisis of school, just like the crisis of teachers' state is the crisis of civilization, of unequal economic growth, of unequal chances, moral crisis of a man and in consequence the crisis of religion, politics, science, education and culture. The confirmation of all, probably not quite realized sources of global crisis of education, from the turn of the millenium, we can find in many foreign and Polish reports and scientific works.

It results from these reports, that school and the whole sector of education, are still the most important in the modern civilisation based on science. School is still a living institution and contributes towards the development of society in many ways. School possesses the great capital of human knowledge and experience, that mustn't be wasted.

Analising the literature concerning the history of school and system of education, comprising the whole education, we find school as social and educational institution, meeting very important evolutionary needs of various generations, especially of children and youth.

The solutions to the challenges that the Polish school and education face should be sought both in the past and in the present.

Professor Czesław Kupisiewicz, the 'nestor' of Polish educationalists who devoted nearly all his writings to the school, has diagnosed the current state of our schools as follows:

"Educationalists also criticise the school because its **objectives and the tasks** it undertakes are too general and out of contemporary, and **teaching plans and programmes** are based on the principle "the same for everyone", and not, as it should be, "the optimal for each and every one", according to their abilities, needs and interests; because the **methods of teaching and upbringing** fail to develop the ability to think and act independently in children and young people and instead they favour verbalism and insufficiently link theory with practice; because the **organisation** of institutionalised education places too much importance on collective education, to the detriment of individual and group education, whose role has been growing recently owing to personal computers and the Internet; furthermore, because the school **practice** devotes less and less attention to the upbringing of children and young people and

cooperation with their parents, which results, among other things, in such negative phenomena as increasing drug abuse, antisocial and even criminal behaviour among pupils.”<sup>1</sup>

In recent years there have been heated debates concerning school and teachers to which everyone has contributed: academics, theoreticians and practitioners, teachers and parents.

As in the United States of America, there is double rhetoric connected with the educational reform, where some suggest various reforms without realising the complexity of the reasons for the educational crisis and others come up with simplistic solutions.<sup>2</sup> In fact the situation of the school is much more complex, since we are dealing not with double, but with multiple, often controversial rhetoric and it is often forgotten that at school children are of primary importance and education should be pupil-oriented.

The current research and in-depth analyses indicate that at present the Polish school system and teacher training system are at the crossroads. On the one hand, there is stagnation and even regression and, on the other, badly planned and inconsistently conducted reforms, usually abandoned due to the change of authorities. Not only is there no long-term, but also no short-term educational policy.

The present teacher training system is criticised for the excess of theory and insufficient practical preparation as well as for the lack of the proper selection of candidates for the profession which requires professionalism and a considerable degree of competence.

The present monograph focuses on two ways of perceiving pedagogic reality: the theoretical and the practical one.

The theoretical part discusses the problems connected with the holistic perception of the functioning and role of the school in the educational system: the vision of the future school and the idea of teacher training (J. Kuźma), new technologies and media (J. Morbitzer), the place and timeless role of values in education (K. Chałas), the trends and challenges related to the functioning of educational systems in other countries: Ukraine (O. Boczarowa), Bulgaria (T. Giza),

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Czesław Kupisiewicz, holder of an honorary doctoral degree from the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education [Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej], Warsaw, A.D. 2013; Lecture *O szkole [On School]*, pp. 45–51.

<sup>2</sup> H. Gardner, *Inteligencje wielorakie. Teoria w praktyce*, Media Rodzina, Poznań, pp. 121–127 [*Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, Basic Books, New York 1993].

and the style of teaching in which the process of the independent acquisition of knowledge plays an important role (K. Borawska-Kalbarczyk).

The reflections connected with the changes in teacher training system are empirically exemplified by the discussion of problems focussed around working with gifted pupils (J. Aksamian), the multidimensional shaping of teachers' competence (J. Pułka), the teachers' attitude towards intercultural education (B. Dobrowolska), and the trends and challenges related to the functioning of educational systems in Sweden (E. Johnsson), and the mathematical literacy competencies (M. Cotič, D. Felda).

Theoreticians of education agree that the schools of tomorrow or future ought to be pupil – oriented.

In a pupil-oriented school the teacher works towards the all-round development of each individual's personality, treating them non-instrumentally. They try to get to know every pupil so that they can, as far as possible, adjust the didactic and educational process to the pupil's needs and current level of development. In educational practice the pupil-oriented school, based on differential didactics, will require a new organisation of classes, mainly conducted in small groups or individually.

For today's schools, compared to the traditional ones, it is far easier to concentrate the didactic and educational process on the pupils and adopt an individualised approach to children and young people. It is possible thanks to the rapid development of new Information and Communication Technologies, which allows teachers to organise classes in small groups and work individually with particular pupils, not only the gifted and retarded ones.

On the other hand, the rapid growth of developmental and cognitive psychology as well as neuropsychology creates greater possibilities of recognising the pupil's potential for development than before. It must be observed, however, that research into the brain's cognitive potential, the process of thinking, memorisation and motivation for learning, although advanced, is in practice difficult to apply in schools, mainly with regard to the description and interpretation of the complex phenomena taking place in the brain examined by means of positron emission tomography.

Thanks to the new ways of recognising developmental needs and new educational technologies, our children will learn quite differently than we did. They are a prefigurative culture generation (M. Mead), which is characteristic for new societies.

The modern pupil-oriented school can provide fully valuable education and upbringing of children and young people if it focuses on three areas: school education (core curriculum), extra-school (parallel) education and virtual education (Interactive Information and Communication Technologies). These three areas must be taken into consideration when developing the theory and vision of a good quality school.

As far as I am concerned, the new school should still be down-to-earth and allow the pupils to have a direct contact with nature (educational trails in the mountains, at the seaside, near lakes and in the forests) as well as organise outings to museums and theatres. At the same time it should be based on scientific research and new Information and Communication Technologies.

This vision and responsibilities of the future school should already be included in the teacher training programmes at tertiary level, while scholars representing various scientific disciplines should adopt a comprehensive (holistic), not a fragmentary or segmented approach to the school and education. Any proposed changes in the teacher training system ought to be considered inseparably from the reform of the whole educational system in a given country.

We are convinced that our Readers will broaden their idea of teacher training and pupil-oriented school in all possible areas, systems and aspects of the rich and complex process, since the mission of educating and upbringing the young generation can undoubtedly be described as such.

We hope that the effort will mainly be used for the benefit of our **children and young people** and will contribute to a significant improvement in the quality of tomorrow's education.

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*Translated by mgr Renata Babińska*