



This paper is taken from

*Teaching Citizenship
Proceedings of the seventh Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2005

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 389 1

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- multiple copies may be made only by
 - members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
 - a official of the European Commission
 - a member of the European parliament

If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as

Luczynski, J. (2005) Teachers' concepts of protection and their protective activities in schools, in Ross, A. (ed) Teaching Citizenship. London: CiCe, pp 201-210.

© CiCe 2005

CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit at the time of the conference, and for the initial stages of editing this book
- Lindsay Melling and Gitesh Gohel of IPSE, London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Teachers' concepts of protection and their protective activities in schools¹

*Jan Łuczyński, Institute of Public Affairs
Jagellonian University (Poland)*

This paper presents the preliminary results of a study of teachers' and other school professionals' conceptions of protection and protective activities for vulnerable young people in schools. Protective activities are defined as the actions of teachers and other school personnel, often in cooperation with professionals from social services such as health, social welfare and police, directed at students in danger of social exclusion and delinquency. The independent variable was studied by a series of questions on teachers' understanding of protection, its goals and methods. The dependent variables were (i) the teacher's self-assessed degree of involvement in such activities, (ii) their level of competence, and (iii) the part it plays in their professional activities (whether central or peripheral). The hypothesis we sought to test was that the deeper and more positive a teacher's understanding of protection, the more likely they are to include protective work as a central part of their professional activity.

Protective work and education

Dynamic socio-economic and cultural changes in the contemporary world affect strongly the ability of the younger generation to adapt to rapid change. Bauman (1998, 2004) describes these social processes as globalisation and glocalisation: both cause economic, social, and cultural exclusion for large parts of the population. The effects of these in Central Europe seem to be more intensive than in the West, probably a consequence of the relative isolation of the region in the post 1945 period. Thanks to this, for more than 40 years countries such as Poland did not suffer from many of the negative effects of globalisation, such as unemployment, drug abuse, poverty, homelessness, or excessive consumerism. On the other hand, the relatively socially safe world of this society deprived over three generations of opportunities to develop ways of dealing with these social problems. When the political and economic systems changed in 1989 these problems exploded following the strong liberal tendencies in the economy ('savage capitalism'). Thus the younger generation is now in danger of exclusion and delinquency and is deprived of the proper guidance of parents, many of whom also experience great difficulties in adjusting to the new reality. Young people are therefore often isolated and unsupported with developmental and social problems. With little support from adults and even fewer positive models fitting for contemporary reality, these young people try to find solutions by relying on their peers or on icons of pop culture, which may result in even more serious delinquency or crime.

We therefore urgently need measures that will compensate the inefficiency of many families in providing their children with proper developmental guidance and support. The formal education system is commonly identified as an institution that could meet this by

¹ The original paper presented referred to 'prevention' and 'preventive activities'. This has been translated by the editor in the present text to 'protection' and 'protective activities', which would seem to be terms more widely understood by an international audience.

offering the young generation the necessary means – knowledge and skills – to adapt to social reality. But schooling itself has experienced problems in many countries; in Poland there was a massive educational reform introduced in 2000. The revised system is now divided into the following levels: kindergarten (ages 2_ to 6; not compulsory), elementary school (7 to 13), gymnasium (middle school, 13 to 16), and high school or vocational school (17 to 19), followed by college or university. These reforms appear to have generated new problems without solving the old ones.

A characteristic of Polish education is the strong emphasis put on subject knowledge. Teachers make great efforts to convey knowledge to students, and often complain that there is not enough time to cover all the curriculum content. The assessment of achievement seems to be the most important school activity; a series of external national examinations was recently developed and introduced. Financial cuts have led to increased class sizes, which has made individual teaching barely possible. Some teachers have to work in more than one school because of the greater teaching load. There is not the space or time to do anything more than subject teaching.

Social, educational, behavioural and other problems experienced by students because of the factors outlined above mean that there is a very real need for protective work in schools – that is, a need for teachers, in co-operation with professionals from other social services such as health care, social welfare and the police, to work with and support students who are in danger of social exclusion and delinquency. There have been efforts in Poland to make activities such as these more effective: schools are now legally required to develop school prevention programmes and to implement them in their everyday activities. But these programs seem in many cases to remain no more than printed documents, kept by schools for bureaucratic purposes, rather than becoming real programs that guide professional activity.

A project that sought to develop protective activities through teamwork on guidance and educational leadership in schools (Łuczynski, 2004) suggested that, if such protective work is to be effective, an important factor to be considered is how teachers conceptualise protection. This follows psychological theories (Macnamara, 1990; Niemczyński, 2000) that suggest that conceptualisations or idealisations have a pivotal role in human activity. Ideals or idealisations are on the borderline of human actions: they cannot be reached as physical or social realities because they exist only as mental realities. Examples of such ideals are a geometrical line (in physical reality) and justice (in social reality). Ideals are a means of orientation for human activity. The concept of protection that the teacher has in his or her mind may be considered as a professional idealisation, which guides his or her protective activities. Thus the question: is there a relationship between the concepts of protective work that teachers hold and their involvement in protection activities in school?

Protective theory (Vanderhoeven, 1998; Niemczyński, 1999; Łuczynski, 2004) suggests that that school protection may be conceptualised in a range of ways, from understanding it as exclusively negative activity, aimed at eliminating the factors underlying students behaviour and carried out by specially trained protection experts, to entirely positive activity, consisting of helping students develop their individual ways of dealing with everyday life problems, without the need to refer to behaviour as risky or with disapproval. The hypothesis tested is that the more teachers and other school personnel understand protection work as a positive activity, the more likely they are to be involved in protective activities.

Method

Subjects

The research was carried out in the autumn 2004 and the spring 2005 semesters, with school personnel in the Kraków area. Questionnaires were distributed among teachers, school heads, deputy heads, administrators, librarians and others in kindergarten, elementary schools, gymnasia (middle schools), and high schools. The total sample was 400; however, after an initial scrutiny only 300 questionnaires were included in the further analyses, the others being excluded as incomplete or unclear.

The sample was of professionals employed in the first four levels of Polish educational system (Table 1). Some of them worked in two or more schools because of the teaching load they were assigned.

Table 1: Subjects by workplace

School Type	Number	%
Kindergarten	9	3%
Elementary School	86	29%
Gymnasium	53	18%
High School	128	43%
Elementary School <i>and</i> Gymnasium	6	2%
Kindergarten, Elementary School <i>and</i> Gymnasium	3	1%
Gymnasium <i>and</i> High School	15	5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>100%</i>

The sample consisted of members of various professions in Polish schools (Table 2).

Table 2: Subjects by professions

Subject's Profession	Number	%
Subject Teacher	112	37%
Form Tutor	116	39%
School Head/Deputy Head	17	6%
School Counsellor/Psychologist	9	3%
School Nurse/Doctor	4	1%
Administrator	20	7%
Technician	15	5%
Librarian	7	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>100%</i>

They had different amounts of professional experience (measured by years of activity). For this study we identified four intervals of experience, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Subjects by length of professional experience in education

Professional Experience in Education, in years	Number	%
up to 3 years	47	16%
3 – 10 years	81	27%
10 – 20 years	89	30%
more than 20 years	83	28%
<i>Total</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>100%</i>

Research instrument

We developed a questionnaire on teachers' understanding of protective work and on their own assessment of their involvement in it. It contained six multiple-choice questions, the first three of which attempted to measure teachers' understanding of protection work.

- 1 In your opinion, what should be the goal of protection work in schools? (tick the most important)
 - 1) warning students against various kinds of risky behaviour (such as drug use, alcohol use, delinquency);
 - 2) teaching students the social and other skills needed to avoid risky behaviour (such as assertiveness, autonomy to arrange one's free time);
 - 3) providing students with attractive alternative activities to risky behaviour (such as interesting extra-curricular activities);
 - 4) intervening when students indulge in risky behaviour (such as taking measures against those who smoke tobacco, drink alcohol, violate regulations); and
 - 5) helping students to develop appropriate attitudes to themselves and others, and to establish positive values.

This attempted to distinguish between superficial and deeper levels of understanding of the goals of protective work. We assumed that the answers represented five qualitatively different concepts of school prevention work goals: (1) information; (2) training; (3) alternative opportunities; (4) intervention; and (5) guidance; from the most superficial (1) to the most profound one (5).

2. Which of the following activities best helps reach the goal of protection work you chose in the previous question?
 - 1) occasional activities in response to observing problem behaviour by students;
 - 2) special activities prepared and provided by external experts invited to the school;
 - 3) systematic activities provided by teachers as part of the school protection programme; and
 - 4) continuing regular activities by all teachers and school personnel.

This tried to distinguish between understanding protective work as external to a teacher's professional activity and understanding it as a central activity.

3. Who, in your opinion, should be responsible for carrying out protective work in school?
 - 1) various types of 'experts' (such as school counsellors, school psychologists, school head, deputy head, protection specialist, specially trained teacher, school nurse or doctor;
 - 2) form tutors;
 - 3) all teachers in the school; and
 - 4) all school personnel, including administration and technicians.

This question attempted to distinguish the level of responsibility for preventive activities: the lowest level of understanding of responsibility is indicated by choosing 'experts', the highest by choosing all school personnel.

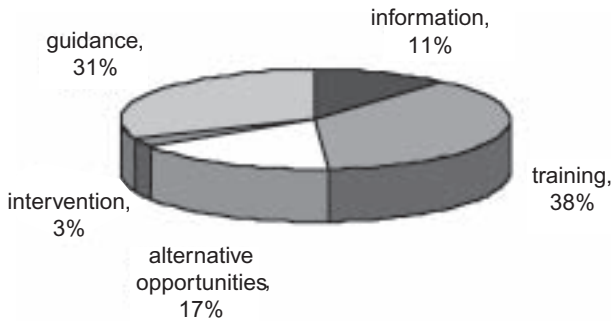
The remaining questions were designed to investigate our subjects' own assessment of their level of involvement in protection work. Each requires the respondent to assess one aspect of his or her involvement on a seven-point scale.

4. Please indicate to what extent you include protection tasks in your activities with students
'not at all' (1) ----- 'substantially' (7)
(level of respondent's involvement in undertaking protection)
5. Please indicate to what extent you feel competent in carrying out protective activities with your students
'not at all' (1) ----- 'highly competent' (7)
(self-assessed level of competence to carry out protective work)
6. Please indicate how important you consider protection activities in your professional practice.
'it is not a part of my professional activity' (1) ----- 'it is the most important part of my professional activity'
(importance given to protective activities as part of professional role)

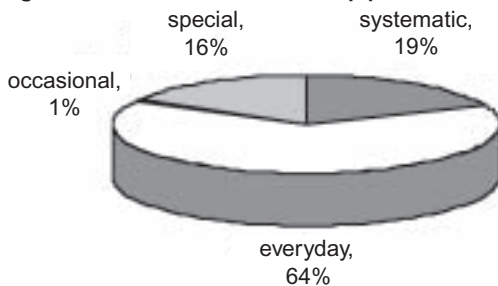
Results and discussion

No correlations were found in the sample between the questions exploring independent and dependent variables in the sample.

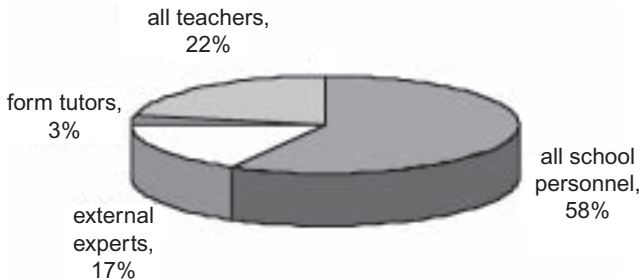
Responses to question one (understanding of protective work) showed that respondents consider training 38% and guidance 31% as the most important goals (figure 1).

Figure 1: what should be the goal of protection work in schools?

The answer to question two (how central or peripheral this was to a teacher's professional role) shows that most subjects (64%) consider that the teachers' everyday professional activity is the best means of protecting pupils. They understand protection as a positive activity. Those seeing it as a mostly negative activity were only 11% of respondents.

Figure 2: Which activities best help protection?

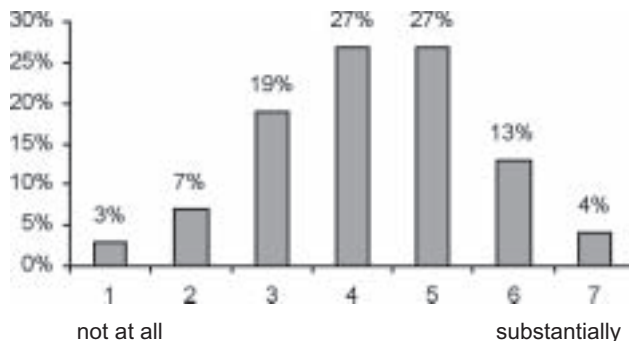
Interesting and promising results came from question three: 80% of respondents claimed that protection was a responsibility of all teachers, and almost 60% also included other school personnel. Again, this shows a positive understanding of protective work.

Figure 3: Who is responsible for carrying out protective work in school?

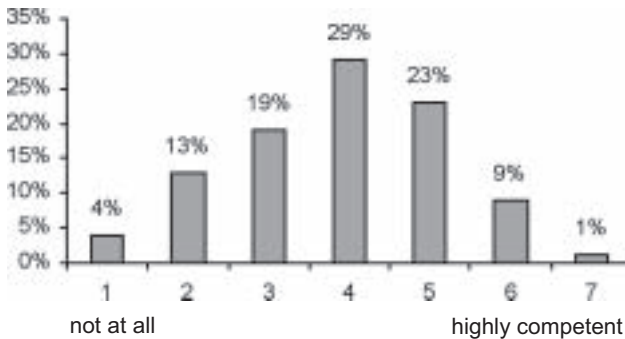
The results from these three questions about the respondents' conception of school protective activities show that teachers and other professionals in schools have rather mixed ideas about such activities; negative as well as positive. Two of the questions produced a high percentage of answers indicating understanding of protection as a positive activity: 64% of them chose 'everyday activities of all teachers and other school personnel' as an answer to question two and 58% chose 'all school personnel including administration and technicians' as an answer to question three. Thus some 60% of respondents chose two indicators of understanding of protection should be seen as a positive activity. But the results from question one are not clear: the distribution is bimodal with the highest percentage giving training (38%), indicating an understanding of protection as a rather negative activity (providing training in skills necessary to *avoid* danger). But the second highest response was guidance (31%), which indicates understanding protection as a positive activity. This bimodality might be attributed to the specificity in conceptualising the teachers' professional role: since some teachers tend to see this as providing knowledge and training in skills (subject teaching), this may also constitute the framework for their thinking about protection. However, this conclusion needs further investigation.

The questions about teachers' self-assessed level of involvement in protection activities in school showed a rather medium level of involvement. Asked to assess the extent to which they include protective tasks in their professional activities (Q 4), most subjects (73%) assessed this as medium (points 3, 4, and 5 on the seven point scale), though 17% assessed it as substantial (points 6 and 7).

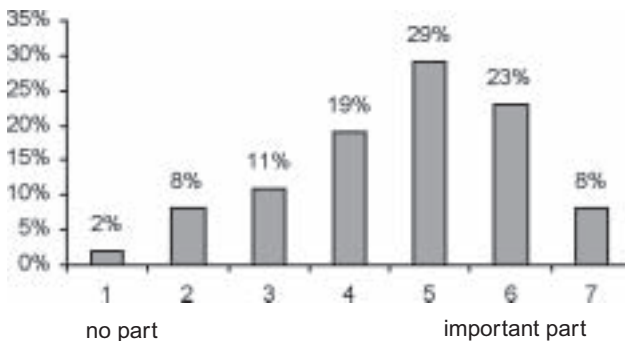
Figure 4: To what extent do you include protection tasks in your activities?



The self-assessed level of their competence in carrying out protection activities was examined in question five. This rather reverses the picture shown in the previous question. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents declare medium levels of competence (points 3, 4 and 5 – 73%) though only 10% assessed themselves as highly competent (points 6 and 7) and 17% as less competent (points 1 and 2).

Figure 5: To what extent do you feel competent in carrying out protective activities?

Another picture was shown in the responses to question six, on the importance of protective activities in the respondent's own professional activity. Almost one-third of subjects (31%) declared that it was highly important (6 and 7).

Figure 6: how important do you consider protection activities as part of your professional practice?

Conclusions

The preliminary analysis of the data showed no correlations between the indicators of the respondents' conceptions of protective work in schools and their self-assessed level of involvement in protection activities, but our qualitative analysis allowed us to draw some conclusions.

1. Although subjects tend to have rather mixed conceptions of protection, combining elements of protective work as positive as well as negative activity, the positive elements are more common than the negative.
2. The self-assessed level of involvement in preventive activities is moderate. Respondents do not feel very competent to undertake these activities; however, they consider them an important and central part of their professional role.

References

- Bauman, Z. (1998) *Globalization. The human consequences*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Bauman, Z. (2004) *Wasted lives: Modernity and its outcasts*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Luczyński, J. (2004) Prevention work in schools: Education for citizenship. Paper presented at the Sixth European Conference of the Children's Identity & Citizenship in Europe Programme, 20 – 22 May 2004, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków, Poland
- Macnamara, J. (1990) Ideals and psychology, *Canadian Psychology* Vol.31, pp.14-25.
- Niemczyński, A. (2000) Szansa na powrót idealów do rozwoju poznawczego.[A chance for reintroduction of ideals into the cognitive development.] In Polish. *Psychologia Rozwojowa* , 5, 1-2, pp 5-9
- Niemczyński, A. (1999) Możliwości i ograniczanie współpracy różnych podmiotów w zapobieganiu przestępstwom na poziomie lokalnym. [Possibilities and limits of collaborative action in the area of crime prevention in local communities] in Polish, in: Czapska, J., Krupiarz, W. (eds), *Zapobieganie przestępczości w społecznościach lokalnych*, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych
- Vanderhoeven J. L. (ed) (1998) *Counselling and prevention work in Schools*, Leuven Apeldoorn: Garant

