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# **The organisation of school activity and the social and moral development of pupils**

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## **Abstract**

*The school's management and organizational culture are the basis of providing teaching and upbringing. The whole organization is created by teachers and their approach to pupils and understanding of the educational aim is crucial. Social and moral development is possible only when teachers act with an integrative approach, treating pupils equally and penetrating their individual worlds. When a teacher behaves in the opposite way, he or she forces the pupil to take on their own perception and values. Polish teachers are more likely to execute moral and social rules of their own than to help pupils in the process of social and moral development.*

## **Introduction**

The school is a social organisation on which great demands are placed. Its task is not only teaching but also the formation and upbringing of young people. The efficacy of the school in fulfilling these ambitious obligations leads building society as a community of individual, mutually coexisting units.

Society as such has always been based on defined principles of behaviour, effective laws and binding duties. However, the society, understood as a concentration of diversified social communities, is not integral with regard to understanding and interpretation of certain standards, obligations or principles. Nevertheless every society has been created on the basis of certain primary principles, such as democracy, respecting human rights, and tolerance of differences, which are supranational, supra-European and timeless values.

The role of the school is not to transfer of values as ready-made recipes and schemes of behaviour, as such schemes do not exist. Instead, the school is to induce the sense of respect for these values, indicate appropriate ways of development and support the pupil in his/her individual entering the world of miscellanies and necessities to take decisions. This task is fulfilled at every school, however, not always consciously and adequately, not always in the way which is matured and adjusted to the potentials of social and moral development of the child and not always by means which assure the actual evolution of the child towards making appropriate life choices.

## **Summary**

The school as an organisation assumes a specific formula of behaviour, supervision and management of people, teaching and upbringing. The organisational culture of the school may not be regarded as merely the apparatus of supervision, management and

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organisation, it should be perceived much more broadly, as a system of mutual relations and links among teachers (the teaching staff, including the head master), pupils, parents and the whole society. Organisation of school activity is not a simple task and the literature on the subject supports this observation. It is so, because school management is resolved to universal categories and is separated from educational purposes, demonstrating a clear influence of market-oriented or economic procedures in the implementation of tasks. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the first part of this thesis in order to demonstrate the consequences of such ways of thinking and activity. The social and moral development of the pupil will then be discussed from the point of view of cognitive psychology, with reference to the leading theories of the representatives of this trend, namely, those of Kohlberg and Piaget.

Referring to these very complex issues, two ways of understanding of the education purpose will be presented, together with the relationship between goal perception and the organisation of school activity with regards to the adequate development of social and moral development of pupils and their coexistence in the developed European community.

### **Specificity of the school management process**

Following the generally accepted definition of management, it is a process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the work of organisation members and using all the available resources of the organisation to obtain the goals, as defined by the organisation (Stoner, 1999).

An organisation is a team of two or more people, acting within a predefined structure of mutual relations and collaborating to achieve the defined purpose. The goal of the organisation's activity is everything that guides the course of activity of its members and about where all the means and resources of the organisation are concentrated. The goals of organisations are differentiated with regards to their substance because different values are cared for in business activity, educational activity, health care, social care, security and legal protection, etc. The goals of organisation activity are also different with regards to their social or ethical value. This diversification of goals does not, however, provide any foundation for the general definition of management, therefore, this four-phase and systematic mode of activity manifests itself as available and possible to be applied in any organisation and in all the spheres of its activity.

This statement prompts a conclusion about the overly excessive universality of the concept of management and requires deeper consideration of the subject in question. Analysing the contemporary theory and concept of management, one may draw a conclusion that they are based on general terms (organisation, economy, and system), leading, in consequence, to subject unification. The knowledge about management since its very beginning has been regarded just in this way – as universal knowledge, putting aside the context of social processes, which are to be taken care of by effective management. The presentation of knowledge about management as universal knowledge is not convincing with regards to its adaptive possibilities and flexible potentials for various activity areas. On the contrary, its imperfections and the lack of specificity are clearly demonstrated.

One may talk about imperfection of the knowledge about management because it leaves in a more distant background everything that management should care for, i.e., particular values (economic, educational, health care, social care). Instead, the focus of interest becomes the effectiveness of managed activities, regarded as a superior value and as instrumental and ancillary with regards to values the realisation of which is to be a subordinate goal of management. It is to be understood that management is effective only when the activities included in the management process, serve to achieve the goals.

In the case of school management, the effectiveness of means to achieve goals, such as the social and moral development of pupils, becomes of particular importance, as the school is an organisation based on people and on human mutual relations. The task, realised by the school in its everyday activity, is upbringing and teaching, targeted at care and individualisation of pupils. School activity, understood in this way, requires the assumption of a specific form of management. Consequently, the key guideline for the school management concept should be serving the effective care – provided by teaching staff – of the educational value of pupils and supporting their social and moral process of studying and adaptation to living in society. Therefore, the entire process of school management, from planning to control, should proceed in such a way as to give teachers unrestrained opportunities to fulfil their obligations, while providing appropriate motivation and organisation to their activity, so that the entire environment and all external factors could support the process and participate in achieving the target.

The educational value, as the superior value of management at school, should be the basis for all the contemporary concepts of management in education. Is it so, however? Observation of the present day school often provides a negative answer to this question. Too much time and too high volumes of resources are concentrated around programmatic changes in teaching, organisational changes of the education system, verifications of HR demands and modification of the education subsidizing principles. In consequence, the individualisation and personification of pupils, as well as their development, are receded into the background and replaced by the dominating issue of the effectiveness of the school activity itself. Ignorance of the specificity of the value which is to be cared of, makes the effectiveness of caring about this value artificial and detached from its nature.

### **The social and moral development of the child in cognitive psychology**

The social and moral development of a child proceeds by result of social interactions entered by the child. It is known that these interactions occur at various moments, in various environments and, in consequence, bring different, often adverse, results. The school is one of the communities in which the child obtains knowledge, experience, abilities and behaviour standards. Apart from school, this task is also fulfilled by the family, a group of contemporaries and, in a broader sense, by the community, as well as by the media and its unquestionable effects on the child's way of thinking and activity.

Thus, the school bears a special responsibility towards the society and the individual person, regarding educational and social development. Therefore, it is very important to be aware how the process proceeds, what its consequences are and what the participation

of adults is in creating the individual system of values of young people. Forgetting the above statements, we often come across basic educational errors. As adults (teachers, parents, tutors), we assume that our understanding of a given activity is the same as the understanding of a child; that something which we assume to be right and good, should identically be perceived by the child and that a punishment and a reward represent for the child the same significance as for us and that it will induce the reactions in the child which we expect. And so, such understanding is often more than erroneous, if not destructive for a young man. The concepts of social and moral development indicate the causes of such wrongful understanding and, simultaneously, following their correct identification, provide the basis for the formation of adequate attitudes and behaviours towards developing young persons. In short, a child perceives things, events and their consequences in a different way than adults, while the child's perception apparatus continuously evolves and transforms. This process is fairly uniform and steady, however not identical or schematic in all people. Since the cognition process and its development are individual, they require an individual approach to each individual child. Here one enters the concept of comprehension of educational targets, which will be discussed after having introduced the theories by Kohlberg and Piaget.

Cognitive psychology underlines the significance of cognition process for moral competence acquisition. Moral dilemmas are often very complex. They demand taking into account a lot of data, followed by their mutual confrontation or comparison of controversial arguments. Therefore, solving moral dilemmas evolves with the development of man by subsequent acquisitions of new experience and entering subsequent social interactions. The cognitive approach assumes that a child passes subsequent stages, not disregarding any of them, but with a simultaneous possibility of staying longer at a given stage or never moving to a higher level (Birch, Malim, 1995).

Prior to the period in school, the social and moral development of the child proceeds in other, either formal or less formal organisations. It is worth recalling, for the full understanding of the process, that the initial stages of development, i.e., the pre-moral stage, the stage of moral realism (Piaget) and the pre-conventional stage (Kohlberg), comprise the time of evolution from the total lack of awareness of any behaviour determining rules, i.e., from birth, to approximately the second year of life. This period is followed by the stage of referring moral evaluations to the interests, goals and achievements of the child, together with a desire of acceptance by adult people, which lasts up to the situation, when a group of contemporaries becomes the point of reference. The child begins then to be driven by principles, followed by a given group. The intention to maintain good relations with others and behaviours expected by the majority in the group, become chief motivations for the child's behaviour.

At this stage, the child becomes a pupil, which in the course of further cognitive processes, changes its attitudes to morality. With time, it begins more and more and fuller and fuller understand that there is a certain system of laws and order and that the system is to be observed, as it is the result of a certain system, established among people. Only such formed young persons pass into the adult stage, which is sometimes terminated by development in the highest stage of moral understanding according to Kohlberg, namely the morality of universal ethical principles. An individual is then able to separate the good from the evil, following the proper principles and his/her own

conscience. This stage is, however, either totally unavailable for many people or occurs only at the senile age.

Focusing attention on the role of school in the social and moral development of the child, it should be underlined that each developmental stage should be faced as a reorganisation (update) of the lower stage, and that it is possible only when the child understands the new ways of thinking and behaviour. It is especially important in the case of teachers and parents who, using the ‘adult argumentation’, forget that it may simply be non-understandable for the child, and therefore ignored. It should also be mentioned here why the child wants so much to be in a group of contemporaries and why it understands and accepts the behaviour of the group. Simply because the expectations and requirements of the group are close and real for the child, being, at the same time, distant and not understandable for the adults. Being aware of this rule, a teacher may better control the process of upbringing and social and moral development, adjusting it to the developmental needs of the child.

#### **Understanding of the education target and management of social and moral development in the course of education**

Following Kepiński’s theory about the existence of two approaches of psychotherapist to patient (manual and psychotherapeutic), the following two attitudes of teacher towards pupil may be distinguished, which influence the teacher’s understanding of the educational target, and in consequence, the way of performing his/her work. These are: active approach, which concentrates on the upbringing and support of pupils on their pathway of individual development by means of novel and innovative methods, which are subject to the continuous modification and improvement process, and *passive approach*, diametrically different from the former, oriented towards objective teaching, transfer of encyclopaedic knowledge and only slightly concentrating on the psychological foundations of didactics.

The approach of teachers to the goal of education is also at the baseline of their approach to pupil development (also social and moral). Therefore, the following approach types can be distinguished:

- **Objective approach** characterised by a tendency towards cause-result explanations as the source of upbringing actions, leaving the essence of the problem untouched. Regarding this aspect, a certain similarity may be perceived between the objective approach and the manual approach of psychotherapists, as described by Kepiński, as well as the passive approach of teachers in the educational discourse. In the manual approach, the counselling physician perceives the patient’s world as inferior or worse and undertakes efforts towards helping the patient out of this world. Rejecting the individual way of seeing things and disregarding the sense of phenomena, as seen with the patient’ eyes, the physician tries to direct the patient onto the physician’s way of perceiving the world and the things which occur in this world. The patient then becomes ‘the object of convalescence’, which is to be properly controlled and formed in order to obtain the patient’s subordination to the physician’s dictate. In result of the physician’s activity, the patient should adjust himself to the world of ‘psychically healthy’ people. The objective approach concentrates around the problem in the

perspective of its symptoms and results, and which leads to qualifying the patients (pupils) to general problem groups, without any possibility of individual problem identification (Kepiński 1992).

The objective approach is then the acceptance of his/her values, principles and judgements by the teacher with simultaneous ignorance of the individual abilities, possibilities, experiences and values of the child.

- **Subjective approach** characterised by an opposite approach – integrative, psychotherapeutic (active approach). This approach is characterised by the assumption of equality between the patient and the physician. This contact is penetrating and sincere, which in other words, means that the physician tries to understand the patient's world by sinking into his/her mind and searching there for causes of the existing problems. Treating other people as objects of our own convalescence process is inviting them to direct participation in this process. This postulate is fulfilled via the acceptance of the person's perception and reception of phenomena, which follows previous hearing and understanding of this perception (Kepiński, 1992).

While penetrating into the world of other people, our own viewing of the world becomes simultaneously broader, new senses and meanings of phenomena are discovered and, sometimes, entirely new areas are found, the existence of which we have till now been totally unaware of. We learn and respect the child's world and participate in the child's individual process of social and moral development, providing support and guidelines, instead of imposing any specific behaviours.

### **Summary**

The school management, involving such an organisation in its activity which concentrates on the target, which is the good of the pupil and his/her full, unconstrained development, adequate to his/her individual potentials, abilities and conducted in the direction, desired by the pupil and by the society, is possible only when the education target is properly defined by teachers, who then supervise the teaching and upbringing process, according to this defined target.

The definition of such a mode of management or provision of ready guidelines for implications is not possible at the moment. In the course of my further work with schools, teachers and pupils, I shall be trying to identify the behaviour patterns most adequate for building the proper climate for the social and moral development of the pupil at school.

At this moment and for conclusion, I would only like to underline that the school plays its outstanding role in forming the moral attitudes, creating social individuals and adaptation of young people to living in the world full of moral dilemmas. Because of this, the school is an organisation which prepares a young person to enter the broader world, the world of differences, dependencies and consequences of undertaken actions.

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