

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; Kutra, 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 model² 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 Kutra and Ewa Sokołowska