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# The School as a Space for Introducing Students to Self-Upbringing

## ABSTRACT

In the process of self-upbringing, a pupil becomes a form teacher for himself/herself and undertakes the choice of their own specific life path; making self-reliant decisions and taking responsibility for them; moulding the sense of their own value, knowing themselves; the acceptance and formation of the ideal of their own person and its realization. These acts of doing do not appear independently in the pupil's activity. The stage of introduction to self-upbringing is noticed at the mid-schooling age, meaning that the school is the space where one should look to introduce certain activities to the process of upbringing. The as yet insufficiently described environmental factors of undertaking the work upon the self have become the basis for making the analysis of the upbringing areas of school and indicating the possibilities hidden inside.

The purpose of the article is to show the role of the form teacher/teacher as an initiator and organizer of self-upbringing activity of the pupil, the role of organizing activity of school with particular indication at the pupils' participation in it that is to be reflected in the self-governance, the significant role of the group and time assigned for the upbringing hours. The basis for the article is the analysis of pedagogical literature on self-education and pedeutology. The analyzed issues indicating the above interaction areas show the theoretical, as well as practical, aspects of these interactions.

## KEYWORDS

upbringing, self-upbringing, school, teacher, pupil

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## Introduction

The school functioning as the basic educational institution “deals with teaching and bringing up children, youth and adults according to the objectives and tasks adopted in a given society, and according to the educational-upbringing concept and programmes”<sup>1</sup>. Such activity is based on the curriculum and upbringing programme valid in a given institution. In the conscious school education such influence must be good and subject to the general development of the student as a person. However, each person is not only shaped by external factors, but also by their own efforts, which means that not only does the process of upbringing have to be organised by an institution (school) or people (educator/teacher), but it has to be supported by the action in which the student uses their own resources and improves their own personality<sup>2</sup>.

While indicating the school’s objectives and tasks, we cannot omit the support for the students in working on themselves. Self-upbringing, which is expressed in the students’ free activity aimed at the development of themselves, includes a set of properly selected actions such as specifying tasks, determining the norms and principles of action, deciding to follow them, and fulfilling them. The man is free to choose appropriate patterns, create a programme of action, fulfill it, but also to control and evaluate the course and results of his own work<sup>3</sup>.

Becoming both a student and a form teacher for oneself is not a spontaneous process, but it is shaped as a result of personal and institutional influences<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the process of working on oneself should be preceded by the stage of introduction to self-upbringing. According to Andrzej J. Sowiński, this stage includes two scopes of influence: the student’s acquisition of interpersonal attitudes, as well as initiating, organising and directing the student’s self-upbringing activities. The attitudes to be acquired include, first of all: “self-control, responsibility for oneself, personal courage and activeness, so that later we may shape the attitude of independence, perfectionism

<sup>1</sup> W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 2001, p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> S. Pacek, *Jak kierować samowychowaniem uczniów*, Warszawa 1984, pp. 16–17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. I. Jundziłł, *O samowychowaniu*, Warszawa 1975, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> A. M. de Tchorzewski, *Wstęp do teorii wychowania*, Kraków 2016, p. 192.

and personal dignity”<sup>5</sup>. The influences related to this scope are to constantly motivate the student who should no longer be satisfied with the level of his/her personal development, which is why his/her activity shall include taking up new challenges and increasing the requirements for themselves. The second scope of influence related to the introduction to self-upbringing includes intended and planned introduction of the student to new actions and techniques of improving oneself. Sowiński indicates such detailed tasks as: “showing the models of self-upbringing actions that may be the source of inspiration in building the ideal of oneself; acquiring the techniques of self-upbringing that effectively extend the knowledge of oneself; introducing into the situations that evoke pro-social motives that may inspire self-upbringing actions; preparing to design and plan working on oneself; introducing to works and exercises related to the fulfilment of particular perfectionist tasks, and making the student familiar with the ways of carrying out self-control and self-evaluation”<sup>6</sup>.

The stage of introduction to self-upbringing includes the actions adjusted to the psychological and physical development of children at the mid-schooling age. Thus, the existence of such introduction shall also depend on the activities taking place at school. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse different areas of school life and its opportunities as for self-upbringing influences.

### The teacher as the inspirer and organizer of the student’s self-upbringing work

The first and most important educational area of the school in which the elements of introduction to self-upbringing can be found is the personal relation of the teacher and the student. There is no doubt that each teacher exerts an influence on the students – their behaviour, way of thinking, attitudes, manners, etc. The teacher’s personality, his/her style of teaching and upbringing, psycho-social skills – especially the ability to make and maintain contacts with particular students and with the whole group, shall determine the way

<sup>5</sup> A. J. Sowiński, *Samowychowanie w interpretacji pedagogicznej*, Szczecin 2006, p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

the teacher is perceived by the student. Also, such factors shall make it possible for the teacher to influence the student's development. In order to activate the student's self-upbringing work, the teacher should increase his/her activeness, i. e. make the student interested in themselves, motivated to self-improvement, self-control and self-evaluation, and encourage them to independently gain knowledge about themselves<sup>7</sup>.

Before the form teacher starts to consider the methods of working with the class, he/she should answer the question what he/she is like for the students and the class. In this case, the most desirable attitude is partnership, openness and dialogue. Partnership, understood as co-deciding and co-responsibility, i. e. making it possible for the students to make decisions on their own and together with the class, encourages children to being active and independent in different kinds of practical actions. If the teacher constantly makes decisions for the class and the children do not feel responsible for the results of their actions, the students shall probably be passive, uninterested, and motivated most of all (or even only) by external factors. Janusz Tarnowski indicated that upbringing must be humanized through avoiding the interference with the student's life. Instead, we should participate in their life as a pattern – a personal model. Such influence is to lead the student to the attitude of dialogue<sup>8</sup>. Dialogic education requires a common area of agreement, and then learning to listen and talk. In a talk that can become a dialogue there is a chance for discovering oneself and new realities. It is possible due to asking questions, listening to one another and talking, but it often requires overcoming fear, removing prejudice and finding the language of agreement which shall mean the same for both sides. In order to achieve this, we need openness, honesty and authenticity. In the dialogic approach, it is also very important to accept the student's uniqueness of thought, and to respect them and their way of thinking.

It should be noted that partnership is not the same as the attitude of full acceptance of the students' actions, which is why the teacher must be able to demand the compliance with the valid system of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Tarnowski, *Pedagogika dialogu*, in: *Edukacja alternatywna – dylematy teorii i praktyki*, ed. B. Śliwerski, Kraków 1992, pp. 125–126.

norms and principles. The two options can only be reconciled if the communication between the form teacher and the class is open. Between those two extremes there is a place for making common decisions and sharing responsibility for them<sup>9</sup>. A very important element of the teacher's attitude of partnership is allowing the student to make mistakes. Experiencing failure which resulted from one's own decision is more important than achieving success resulting from the actions ordered or directed by someone else.

When the student starts to work on themselves, the tasks of the form teacher are changed. The teacher stops to be an initiator and becomes the one who maintains a given activity, especially at its initial stage. It shall make it possible to decrease the risk of mistake and error resulting from wrong choices, and it shall increase the benefits resulting from finding the proper way. Directing the student's self-upbringing efforts shall prevent accidental and non-systematic actions<sup>10</sup>. The effectiveness of those influences shall depend on the teacher's prudence and "delicacy", so that the student's self-reliance is not disturbed. The teacher has to learn to accept the students the way they are, i. e. he/she has to reject any prejudice against them. Also, the teacher must understand the students, i. e. feel the student's states and psychical processes. The teacher has to be authentic, i. e. honest to themselves and spontaneous in their behaviour.

## The school's organisational activity, self-governance

The school very early starts to be the place which fills the life of children and youth. It is one of the oldest social institutions created in order to prepare young generations for adult life<sup>11</sup>. While getting to know how it functions, the student creates his/her own image of it and, what is even more important, he/she starts to perceive themselves as the member of this organization. People who perform their functions (from the school principal to cleaning ladies), and their

<sup>9</sup> See J. Sempryk, *Podmiotowość i partnerstwo w wychowaniu*, "Perspektiva. Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne" 2006, vol. 5, no. 2(9), pp. 116–120.

<sup>10</sup> S. Pacek, *Jak kierować samowychowaniem uczniów*, op. cit., pp. 43–44.

<sup>11</sup> I. Szybiak, *Z dziejów szkoły*, in: *Sztuka nauczania*, vol. 2: *Szkoła*, ed. K. Konarzewski, Warszawa 1991, p. 9.

relations with the students, should create the culture of voluntary cooperation which includes the common establishment of objectives and tasks. Besides, interpersonal relations should be based on mutual trust. The school entities construct their community together, they influence the image of this place, they have the impression that they are members of a unique group and community. Therefore, each of the teachers and other school employees should be aware of being a part of a community and the need to build a common system, which means building self-governance, improving social competences and sharing their potential<sup>12</sup>.

The acquisition of interpersonal attitudes by the student should take place “in the natural situations of everyday life, in his/her actions and tasks related to the fulfilment of the role of a student and member of a peer group, during the fulfilment of school and home obligations, as well as in his/her free time”<sup>13</sup>. While formulating the basic models of values and beliefs, the school influences the students who are to adopt and express them. The school establishes and executes the law expressed in the statute, regulations, school discipline, the organisation of everyone’s work, as well as keeping order and discipline. Not only does compliance with this law order the space in which the student functions, but it also shows him/her attitudes characteristic of a community and helps to shape their ability to coexist and collaborate with others, as it makes the student consciously included into the circle of social relations. It all takes place in everyday, natural conditions, and it is reflected in actions and tasks related to the fulfilment of the role of a student, i. e. it is connected with the real life and not ideological problems.

However, reducing upbringing to the proper organisation of work may lead to multiplying codices, regulations, rights and obligations, without shaping the sense of responsibility and reliability. If we do not want such results, we have to make the student co-responsible for the school – we have to support his/her self-governance<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, we do not only mean institutionalized self-governance expressed

<sup>12</sup> M. Sowisło, *Funkcje samorządu uczniowskiego: założenia i rzeczywistość*, Kraków 1996, p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> A.J. Sowiński, *Samowychowanie w interpretacji pedagogicznej*, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> See P. Ziółkowski, *Samorząd uczniowski – idee, uwarunkowania, doświadczenia*, Bydgoszcz 2014, pp. 95–98.

in legal forms, such as school or class self-government, but also other independent, spontaneous and organised activity of the students. The most precious are those initiatives which are very difficult for the students, make them deeply involved in the task and force them to intellectual effort, as well as those which influence the environment, activating different subjects from outside the school. The result of independent actions plays a very important upbringing role, as it makes the students satisfied with their work and happy for their success<sup>15</sup>. Such satisfaction and happiness shall motivate them to take up new tasks, as a result of which they will be more and more active.

Self-governance is a factor necessary in preparing to take up social responsibility and to self-upbringing. It evokes pro-social motives and shapes a wide range of good attitudes, as a result of which it encourages the students to improve themselves, i. e. to increase the level of their knowledge, skills and competences. Not only may it facilitate searching for the ideal of oneself, but it can also inspire self-upbringing actions.

### Mutual influence in a peer group

The way internal relations are arranged and the organisation of the life of the team constitute the crucial factor of shaping the student's personality. In each group there is a set of norms of behaviour guarded by the so-called social control, i. e. the way everyone responds to the behaviour of individuals, as a result of which proper behaviour is awarded and improper behaviour is punished. Living in a group is based on the simultaneous leadership and subordination of each member towards others, and on the responsibility of individuals in front of other people. In a group, a lot of our needs may be satisfied: the need for security, emotional contact, being accepted by the group, recognition, respect, and success. Also, in a group we can shape many interpersonal attitudes<sup>16</sup>. The teacher must realize that he/she shall fail if they attempt to change the student outside the class, i. e.

<sup>15</sup> Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, *O programie wychowawczym szkoły. Biblioteczka Reformy*, Warszawa 2001, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> I. Ramik-Mażewska, *Klasa szkolna jako przestrzeń innego*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2015, no. 34, pp. 92–93.

outside his/her group of reference, and without taking into account the norms and values valid in the classroom<sup>17</sup>.

A class is a task group called to fulfil certain objectives. From such point of view, teachers and students create a task team and are co-responsible for the effectiveness of their work. If the teacher encourages the students to get involved in the task and if he/she shares with them the responsibility for the process and effects of the work, the motivation of the whole team and the relation of the group with the teacher shall change. The teacher shall still play the managing role, but the students shall perceive him/her as an equal or even necessary team member. The form teacher's basic task while working with the team is to organise the team's life and activity. The teacher has to care for establishing, together with the team, common goals and norms that regulate the behaviour of an individual both in the group and among other people who are not members of the group. If we want the work with the class to become an element introducing the students to self-upbringing, we have to make the team of students involved in making different decisions, as well as inspire and fully use all the initiatives of the team. This is facilitated by initiating task activity, initiating discussion that requires making a group decision, or working on the students' willingness to become co-responsible for different things. "If we do not want to waste the students' self-upbringing abilities, we should stop making decisions for them, working for them and bearing responsibility for them. We should create conditions in which they can make decisions, collaborate with others, take responsibility for what concerns them and for what they can influence"<sup>18</sup>.

The ability to properly communicate in the group is to be shaped by the teacher. It requires the fulfillment of certain conditions, such as the appropriate attitude of the teacher, care for the proper way of asking questions, the avoidance of giving advice, and it should take the form of a guided or non-guided talk and discussion. Discussion makes it possible for the class to reveal actual attitudes towards the case and openly comment on the suggestion of solving the problem. Having the sense of co-authorship, the group shall be more willing

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<sup>17</sup> M. Łobocki, *Teoria wychowania w zarysie*, Kraków 2004, pp. 325–327.

<sup>18</sup> S. Pacek, *Jak kierować samowychowaniem uczniów*, op. cit., p. 44.



to adopt such a suggestion as their own<sup>19</sup>. Thus, it seems necessary to apply such techniques of upbringing as brainstorming, group decision, socio-drama, or drama games. These techniques result in the fact that important decisions related to the rules valid in the society are made together, with the acceptance of everyone, through negotiations and with the opportunity to re-formulate the suggested rules. They reinforce the communication between the group and the form teacher, and they make it possible for the students to take responsibility for the solution that has been worked out. Also, open discussion and confrontation of attitudes makes it possible for the community to notice the relation between the adopted solutions and interests of particular people and the class as a whole<sup>20</sup>.

The acquisition of the ability to collaborate with each other is to be reflected in the rational organisation of the students' actions. The tasks should be divided in such a way that the students can learn to act as individuals and as a team. The students have to notice that taking up conscious and purposeful actions, and carrying them out in such a way that they form a structural whole, shall contribute to the accomplishment of a given objective, but they should also see that the actions they take up are meaningful. Rational organisation of the students' actions forces the teacher to deeper pedagogical reflection, but it also means planning together with the students, mastering the ability to specify the objective and establish related conditions and means, preparing detailed plans, dividing the tasks on voluntary basis, as well as subtle control that should rather be self-control and self-evaluation. The latter is of special importance, as it is to teach the ability to assess oneself and others<sup>21</sup>.

### Time of lessons with the form teacher

Purposeful and planned introduction of the student into the process of self-upbringing is showing and encouraging him/her to

<sup>19</sup> J. Kosz, *Współdziałanie w szkole – oczekiwania i potrzeba współczesnej praktyki edukacyjnej*, "Forum Dydaktyczne" 2009, no. 5–6, p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> See M. Łobocki, *Teoria wychowania w zarysie*, Kraków 2004, pp. 234–248.

<sup>21</sup> See Z. Pietraśiński, *Kierowanie własnym rozwojem*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 141–143.

particular actions and making them familiar with the methods of working on themselves. Those activities result from further stages of the self-upbringing process, such as: idealization, self-knowledge, initial self-evaluation, perfectionist aspirations, self-fulfillment decisions, self-upbringing actions, and final self-assessment<sup>22</sup>.

The process of upbringing, in a more or less conscious manner, is carried out during all the classes, but focusing on the fulfillment of the curriculum results in the fact that there is not enough time for the man's personal development. That is why, the lesson with the class teacher is so important for the introduction of students to self-upbringing. This lesson should be utilized in the best possible manner – it should be planned, meaningful and valuable for the upbringing of a young person. It is assumed that this particular lesson in a week is dedicated to upbringing issues. However, the utterances of the students suggest that during this time teachers focus on formal activities, such as confirming notes justifying students' absence, analysis of grades, organising the class' work, preparing performances and celebrations, making decorations, etc. The fact that lessons with the form teacher are dedicated only to current issues (even if they are important for the students' upbringing) results in the fact that upbringing is perceived as the teacher's reacting to the students' bad behaviour, disciplining them or organising the life of the class. Thus, it is more an organisational lesson with the form teacher than a lesson dedicated to upbringing, as a result of which the teacher plays the role of an organiser, and not an educator who tries to participate in the students' upbringing.

The very choice of subjects discussed during the lessons with the form teachers requires reconsideration. The topical axis of these lessons must include the school's upbringing programmes, but it is the form teacher who selects particular issues to discuss. During the lessons with the form teacher, students should learn to interpret the world and themselves in this world. Working on oneself often starts from getting to know oneself, which means gathering information on one's physical and psychological features through the observation of one's own behaviour and the analysis of one's own reactions, but

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. M. de Tchorzewski, *Wstęp do teorii wychowania*, op. cit., pp. 190–191.

also on the basis of the opinion of others<sup>23</sup>. The lesson with the form teacher is the best time for making the students acquainted with the methods and tools of learning about themselves. Also, the form teacher's support should be expressed in encouraging the students to think about their own achievements, interests, motivation, etc.<sup>24</sup>

Living in a pluralistic society, which forces us to competitiveness and offers a wide variety of different behaviours and values, is very difficult for a young, inexperienced person. Thus, it is necessary to take up different topics during the lessons with the form teacher, as those topics should match different kinds of problems the students shall face in their life<sup>25</sup>. It should be emphasized that both the teacher and the students should choose the topics, as only the students know which subjects they truly need to discuss.

If the lesson with the form teacher is to introduce the student to self-upbringing, it should be carried out with the use of specific methods and working conditions. Each team is different, each of them has different needs, so the form teacher himself has to work out such methods that shall make it possible for him/her to conduct such lessons. Those methods have to activate the students, enable them to play different roles, experience various situations, as well as feel, name and cope with emotions. Also, the methods should focus on particular problems so that the children can search for different motives of actions and solutions. Such methods encourage the students to find reasons and solutions, and make it possible for them to analyse various problems, as well as make decisions and bear responsibility related to each decision. The methods of group influence shall play an important role in this case, which, additionally, shall confront the student with other people and their way of thinking<sup>26</sup>.

It is good to support the application of such methods with the provision of proper external conditions, such as a redecorated classroom with places for playing different roles, chairs arranged in a circle, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Z. Matulka, *Samowychowanie chrześcijańskie*, Toruń 1995, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. K. Ekert, *Jak pracować z młodzieżą na lekcjach wychowawczych*, Wrocław 2015, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of National Education, *O programie wychowawczym szkoły. Biblioteczka Reformy*, Warszawa 2001, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> See M. Łobocki, *Teoria wychowania w zarysie*, Kraków 2004, pp. 218–225, 234–235, 243–250.

Not only shall it destroy the barrier between the form teacher and the students, but it shall also – in a natural way – open the participants to mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas. This 45-minute meeting is to be an attractive, but – first of all – valuable time.

## Conclusion

Any activities that support the effort focused on working on oneself should be preceded by adopting the truth that a young person is a free and rational being, who is sensitive to good, truth and beauty, and who is capable of self-awareness, self-fulfilment and creative activity, but also of transcendence. Thus, the students have the right to be independent and self-reliant, but, at the same time, they are responsible for their behaviour and for the management of their development. Nevertheless, the school is also responsible for the right to the full development of one's personality, so the school entities have to realise that introduction to self-upbringing is one of their most important tasks. If such introduction is neglected, Stefan Pacek will be right to say that “the school uses only a part of the student's potential and skills (...). While being at school, the children are not given enough opportunities to use their own self-regulation forces to make changes and improvements in their personality. They cannot choose their own, specific way of living, make independent decisions and take responsibility for them, shape their self-esteem, get to know themselves, or accept and form the ideal of themselves which they wish to achieve. External control, which – first of all – makes the students an object of manipulation, does not make it easier for them to achieve maturity that enables self-upbringing”<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> S. Pacek, *Jak kierować samowychowaniem uczniów*, op. cit., pp. 16–17.

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