

WIKTOR ŻŁOBICKI

University of Wrocław

TEACHERS VS. THE UNIQUENESS OF THEIR OCCUPATIONAL ROLE. ON THE NEED FOR SUPERVISION IN EDUCATIONAL WORK¹

The reflections on the unique nature of the teaching profession, which I would like to present in this article, seem to be a consequence of the confluence of time, place and task that I have undertaken. As an academic, I work at the Institute of Pedagogy, which has its seat on the street bearing the name of Jan Władysław Dawid, an eminent Polish teacher who lived at the turn of the 20th century. This is hardly a coincidence, because Jan Władysław Dawid, having made pedeutology – a very important sub-discipline of pedagogy – the subject of his reflection, emphasized in his book *O duszy nauczycielstwa* that: “the teacher cannot ‘simply be just a lecturer’; in addition, he or she should perform such functions as the student’s educator, guardian, counsellor, partner, initiator of various cognitive activities, mediator, referee, etc. [...]”².

These views, although published for the first time more than a hundred years ago, are still of interest to pedeutologists. It is therefore worthwhile to refer to contemporary reflections on the teaching profession. The process of progressive professionalisation of teaching is inevitable and that is why Henryka Kwiatkowska emphasizes that when thinking

¹ Originally published: Wiktor Żłobicki, “Nauczyciel wobec osobliwości swojej roli zawodowej: o potrzebie superwizji w pracy pedagogicznej”, [in:] *Pomiar i ewaluacja jakości kształcenia*, ed. J. Grzesiak, UAM w Poznaniu, PWSZ w Koninie, Kalisz, Konin 2011, p. 115-122.

² J. Wł. Dawid, *O duszy nauczycielstwa*, Warszawa 1946, p. 72.

about teacher education³, a specific character of the job must be taken into account. First of all, the preparation of teachers is not limited solely to mastering professional knowledge, but above all should address its efficient use in practice. Secondly, in the training of teachers, one should reject a solely cognitive approach to any problems related to teaching and upbringing. Thirdly, teachers' qualifications cannot be determined by a specific model of professional activities. In reality, practicing this profession requires the ability to take a complementary approach to knowledge, methodical and specialist skills. Contemporary educators are expected to move away from their traditionally understood authoritarian role and become specialists in comprehensive human development. Therefore, in thinking about contemporary upbringing, the humanistic orientation takes on a special significance. According to Stanisław Wołoszyn, this means, among other things, that the educator - teacher⁴:

- perceives every didactic or educational situation as a *meeting between I - another*;
- first of all *can use themselves*;
- discovers his own unique personality and skilfully uses it as an instrument of pedagogical activity;
- treats the acquired theoretical knowledge as an opportunity for personal development and improvement of his/her practical activities.

From a pedeutological point of view, the narrative undertaken by Krzysztof Konarzewski seems to be particularly inspiring, as it contains not only a description and explanation of the peculiarities of the professional role of a teacher, but also a reflection on the strategy of coping with this role⁵. And here comes the point of contact between the knowledge contained in the academic textbook and an attempt at its practical application. The purpose of this article is to point to the need to use supervision in the teacher's work. In order to reflect on this proposal in-depth, it will be right to refer to the aforementioned investigations by Krzysztof Konarzewski, who assumed that the social role is "a set of expectations shared by the majority of members of

³ Nauczyciele nauczycieli. Z teorii i praktyki kształcenia nauczycieli, ed. H. Kwiatkowska, A. Kotusiewicz, Warszawa 1992, p. 4-5.

⁴ S. Wołoszyn, "Teoretyczne podstawy systemów kształcenia nauczycieli", [in:] Nauczyciele nauczycieli, op. cit., p. 71-72.

⁵ See K. Konarzewski, "Nauczyciel", [in:] *Sztuka nauczania. Szkoła*, ed. K. Konarzewski, Warszawa 1998, p. 148-179.

a given community”, towards whom an individual must take their own position, and the contemporary role of the teacher is “unclear, internally inconsistent, psychologically difficult, and incompatible with his other important roles”⁶.

The Author sees the unclear nature of the role as a lack of agreed upon, concrete and tangible criteria of professional excellence. In other words, this ambiguity means not so much ignorance of what teachers should do, but rather disagreement as to the yardstick of their doing their job well. The quality of work is not measured by the grades that the students receive, as they are most often decided by the teacher himself. All the more so, the quality of educational work is not unambiguously determined by the effects achieved. For example, the independent judgements of the students as inspired and developed by the teacher, may be assessed differently by the pupils themselves, their parents, and by the examiner who checks the results of the final test.

Another peculiarity is the inner inconsistency of the role. We deal with it when, under specific conditions, the fulfilment of certain expectations hinders or excludes the fulfilment of others. Krzysztof Konarzewski points to three such groups of expectations: supporting individual student development, reproduction of the social order and introduction to spiritual culture. On the one hand, the teacher is required to take an individual approach to each student in order to develop their potential, and on the other hand, the school and the teacher, in the process of reproducing social order, necessary for the functioning of society, select students in different ways, often hindering their development. The third group of expectations towards which the teacher has to take a stance concerns the introduction of young people into such forms of spiritual culture as: scientific knowledge, art and ethical models of life. It is often the case that some spiritual values are appropriated in the name of current interests of different social groups and thus may lose their universal character. The above examples lead to the conclusion that various requirements placed on teachers make their professional role profoundly inconsistent.

The existence of the psychological difficulty of the role is best evidenced by the significant percentage of teachers affected by the occupational burnout syndrome⁷. This is because of the

⁶ For the sake of this article I will briefly introduce the views on the uniqueness of the teacher’s role: see K. Konarzewski, “Nauczyciel”, op. cit., p. 151-161.

⁷ The occupational burnout syndrome affects mostly therapists, teachers, doc-

psychological burden faced by the employees of the education system. Some of the most important challenging situations include: permanent tension related to the relative unpredictability of the situation in the group of students, asymmetry of relations with students and parents, decreasing social status of the profession, etc.

The professional role of a teacher is also characterised by its incompatibility with other roles, which applies especially to women. The feminisation of the teaching profession may trigger occasional disturbances in systematic work with students due to female teachers' mother roles (maternity and child-rearing leave, sick leave due to childcare). On the other hand, in the case of men, due to relatively low earnings, this occupation may be incompatible with the traditionally perceived role of the father (the so-called head of the family), with a socially imposed duty of a family provider.

Importantly, among the many problems faced by teachers, one often hears about their poor communication skills. The framework of the article allows but a cursory presentation of this issue, so I will limit myself to mentioning some research results that confirm the above claim. The results of a study on communication between teachers and pupils - published both recently and at the beginning of the 1970s - lead to the conclusion that educators make an unacceptable number of mistakes. For instance, in the studies carried out by C. Wright and G. Nuthall, who analysed the average number of verbal behaviour of 17 teachers in five lessons, closed questions (115.2) were six times more frequently addressed to pupils than open questions (18), and other studies on initiating pupils' activity during lessons found that 86% of all stimulation was initiated by teachers and only 14% by pupils⁸. Contemporary research, too, seems to confirm the argument of the relative sustainability of the dominant role of teachers, who, by guiding the process of communication in the classroom, inhibit the activity and spontaneity of stu-

tors, and nurses, or representatives of professions where care about others is a significant part of the job description. See e.g.: J. Fengler, *Pomaganie męczy. Wypalenie w pracy zawodowej*, Gdańsk 2001; M. Sekułowicz, *Wypalenie zawodowe nauczycieli pracujących z osobami z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Przyczyny, symptomy, zapobieganie, przewyciężanie*, Wrocław 2002; H. Sęk, "Wypalenie zawodowe u nauczycieli. Uwarunkowania i możliwości zapobiegania", [in:] *Wypalenie zawodowe. Przyczyny i zapobieganie*, ed. H. Sęk, Warszawa 2009, p. 149-167; S. Tucholska, *Wypalenie zawodowe u nauczycieli. Psychologiczna analiza zjawiska i jego osobowościowych uwarunkowań*, Lublin 2003.

⁸ Data from these studies were referenced in the text by A. Janowski, *Uczeń w teatrze życia szkolnego*, Warszawa 1998, p. 170.

dents. For example, Maria Cackowska's research shows that the most frequent verbal messages given by teachers include: questions (approx. 50%), instructions (30%-50%), judgements (approx. 20%), and longer statements (2%-5%)⁹. In the light of other empirical analyses, in most lessons teachers issue orders and prohibitions, interrupt students' statements and impose their views¹⁰. If we add to this students' fears of unpleasant consequences, misunderstanding, criticism, indiscretion or indifference of teachers, it is no wonder that the postulate of subjective education cannot be upheld¹¹.

Summing up this part of the discussion on the basis of source texts, whose main claims and most important research conclusions have only been cursorily referenced, it is necessary to indicate the need to support teachers in coping with the requirements of their roles. One of the effective forms of coping with the difficulties of the role as described above is supervision. This is "a process of consulting with another who is valued as an expert in order to enhance our work with clients"¹². It must be added that supervision as a form of work is the subject of numerous scientific publications devoted to improving the competences of many other specialists, including psychotherapists, doctors, pedagogues, social workers, administrative staff, and politicians¹³. In foreign literature we find an example of the first supervision group. Set up in Paris still in 1959, it was called SPES (*séminaire de perfectionnement pour éducateurs spécialités*) and gathered educators¹⁴. It was established by Serge Ginger, a psychotherapist and supervisor, founder of the Parisian Gestalt School. Supervision as a form of enhancing the skills of persons professionally linked to the education system is increasingly popular in Poland and offered by both public psychology and pedagogy counselling centres and non-public therapy and educational centres¹⁵.

⁹ See M. Cackowska, "Komunikacja jako wyznacznik systemu nauczania", [in:] *Kultura, język, edukacja*. vol. 2, ed. R. Mrózek, Katowice 1998, p. 139.

¹⁰ See M. Snieżyński, *Sztuka dialogu – teoretyczne założenia a szkolna rzeczywistość*, Kraków 2005, p. 23-24.

¹¹ K. Badora, "Cechy komunikacji nauczyciela z uczniem", [in:] *Komunikacja i podmiotowość w relacjach szkolnych*, ed. S. Badora, D. Marzec, J. Kosmala, Częstochowa 2001, p. 106.

¹² M. C. Gilbert, K. Evans, *Psychotherapy Supervision. An Integrative Relational Approach to Psychotherapy Supervision*, Philadelphia 2000, p. 115.

¹³ This is addressed by M. Belardi in his *Supervision und Coaching: Grundlagen, Techniken, Perspektiven*, München 2005, p. 37.

¹⁴ See S. Ginger, A. Ginger, *A Practical Guide for the Humanistic Psychotherapist*, London 2012, p. xii.

¹⁵ For example, supervision for school pedagogues and psychologists is offered e.g.

We can say that the supervision relation is a meeting of two people who jointly reflect not only on the welfare of the student/s, but also on the welfare of the supervised teacher¹⁶. Regardless of whether the meeting is held in the forum of a supervision group or on the one-on-one basis, it consists in the search for and examination by the supervisee, together with the supervisor, of the general principles of good practice. It is likewise an attempt to reflect on how to apply these principles in a specific situation, rather than to establish rules for what is “appropriate” or “inappropriate” action.

The aim of supervision is not only to take care of the teacher’s relations with students, but also of the overall professional development of a teacher-supervisee¹⁷. If we want to treat supervision as a specific kind of learning, we should realize that

people develop an image of self as learner, which is influenced by parents, teachers and others in authority and that this image will either facilitate or impede the person’s subsequent learning. If learning has resulted in shame or if there has been significant educational deficit the person may learn to defend themselves against being shown up as wanting in a learning context and will approach supervision in a characteristic selfprotective manner¹⁸.

We may then have to deal with a lack of faith in the fact that the learning process during supervision can be cognitively inspiring and emotionally satisfying. This may trigger defensive attitudes in the supervisee. The most common defensive behaviours in relation to the supervision situation itself include: denial of the very need for supervision, fear of new experiences and earlier planning of the course of supervision, excessive concentration on the details of the problem situation. A range of defensive behaviours in relation to the supervisor may include: excessive self-criticism, perception of supervision as an “opportunity” for the supervisor’s criticism, picking up inconsistencies in the supervisor’s actions and burdening the supervisor with responsibility for problem solution¹⁹. In fact, what is at stake is the awareness

by: Psychology and Pedagogy Counselling centre No. 1 in Krakow, Centre for Psychological Education in Wrocław; for class tutors and school pedagogues – Specialist Centre of Support for Victims of Domestic Violence in Lesk; for community pedagogues (street pedagogues) – Group of Social Pedagogy and Animation in Łódź. The author of this article heads a supervision group in Wrocław on teaching at the university level for Ph.D. candidates and junior academics.

¹⁶ See M. C. Gilbert, K. Evans, *Psychotherapy Supervision*, op. cit., p. 51-52.

¹⁷ See *ibidem*, p. 69.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 58-60.

of the responsibility of supervised teachers entering into a relationship with both the student and the supervisor. While in many supervised teachers the interactive nature of supervision itself is unlikely to raise any doubts, the awareness of the interactive nature of the problems reported is much less frequent.

In this context, the dialogical nature of the relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor becomes of great importance. A model of the meeting of the learner and the facilitator can be presented in a diagram below. When interpreting a graphical representation of a supervision meeting, it is easy to notice that the supervisor's role is to constantly support the supervisee in the learning process. Supervision is therefore a process conducive to problem solving via acquisition of new emotional, cognitive, social, spiritual, and somatic experiences.

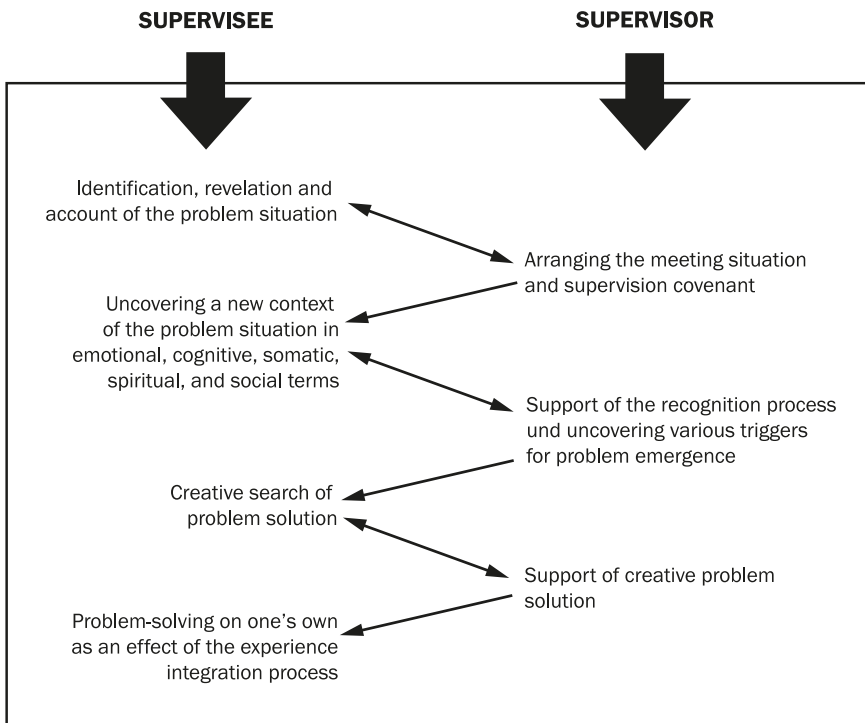


Fig. 1. Model of a supervision structure under the Gestalt approach²⁰

²⁰ The above supervision structure was developed on the basis of the Gestalt learning model, see H. Dauber, *Obszary uczenia się w przyszłości. Perspektywy pedagogiki humanistycznej*, Kraków 2001, p. 181.

One of the suggested effects of the learning process in the process of supervision is, among others, inclusion, i.e. “capacity to enter into the world of another and at the same time retain a sense of one’s own separateness and difference [...]”²¹. Practicing inclusion allows us to maintain an empathetic attitude towards the other person without losing contact with oneself. It moreover helps to distinguish a truly mutual relationship from one in which attention is focused solely either on oneself or on another person. At the same time, it should be added that the development of inclusion skills during supervision requires the creation of a safe space for the supervisee, in which he or she can have unlimited own experiences, including negative ones, because only after examining his or her own emotions can the teacher broaden the inclusive attitude. Such possibilities are offered by one of the methods of supervision described in professional literature, namely psychodrama²². In pointing to the educational aspect of psychodrama, one should refer to the views of its creator, Jacob L. Moreno, who defined the essence of this method as follows: “Play yourself as you’ve never been, so that you can be as you could be. Be your own inspiration, your own author, your own actor, your own therapist, and finally your own Creator”²³. Under this understanding, psychodrama, as a method of supervision, allows a teacher under the care of a supervisor trained in psychodrama to improvise various professional situations. This is supposed to facilitate the awareness of previously unnoticed emotions and various aspects of one’s behaviour and perception of the world. This is confirmed by a large number of publications on the usefulness of psychodrama in the supervision of didactic work²⁴. Recognising supervision as a form of professional development of teachers, it should be stressed that one of its most important features is the interpersonal nature of the relationship, in which the supervisor and the supervisee

²¹ M. C. Gilbert, K. Evans, *Psychotherapy Supervision*, op. cit., p. 10.

²² See A. Schreyögg, *Supervision: Ein integratives Modell. Lehrbuch zu Theorie Und Praxis*, Wiesbaden 2004, p. 245-276.

²³ E. Røine, *Psychodrama. O tym jak grać główną rolę w swoim życiu*, Opole 1994, p. 23.

²⁴ See e.g. *Angewandtes Psychodrama in Therapie und Pädagogik*, ed. H. Petzold, Paderborn 1978; A. Schreyögg, *Supervision: Ein integratives Modell*, op. cit.; T. Schwinger, H. J. Burmeister, “Psychodrama und konstruktivistische Erkenntnistheorie”, [in:] *Jahrbuch für Psychodrama, psychosoziale Praxis und Gesellschaftspolitik*, ed. F. Buer, Opladen 1996; T. Schwinger, Z. Teoharov, “Training psychodramatischen Rollenspiels als Beratungsmethode in Deutschland und Bulgarien – Fragen und Einsichten rund um einen Workshop”, [in:] *Soziale Verantwortung in Europa. Analysen und professionelles Handeln in verschiedenen Hilfesystemen*, ed. W. Seelisch, Darmstadt 2003; R. Springer, *Grundlagen einer Psychodramapädagogik*, Köln 1995.

arrive at new meanings of the situation under discussion. Last but not least, it is important to focus on developing inclusion and to be aware that what is at stake is investigating the essence of the problem rather than seeking some objective knowledge.

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Abstract:

The issues of the specificity of the teacher’s professional role and the various strategies for implementing this role are important issues of pedeutology. Often, the teacher’s role is unclear, internally incoherent, psychologically difficult and inconsistent with other important social roles to must carried out by a given person, which creates conditions conducive to professional burnout. One of the ways to prevent professional burnout is the possibility of a teacher using supervision, that is, using the consultation regarding their own professional work with a specialist supervisor. The purpose of such supervision may be not only the teacher’s relationship with the students, but in general the whole of teacher’s professional and personal development.

Keywords:

teacher, professional role, prevent professional burnout, supervision