



## Country Background Report Poland

### 1. Background – everyday reality versus political framework?

Alongside the system transformation, which brought about a drastic change in the then existing social-political system in Poland (1989), reforms of the education system were initiated. Reform-oriented activities aimed at dismantling the socialist education system, creating non-state schools (private, civic and religious), departing from the centrally built and formulated directives for the educational policy. Intensive work was carried out to eliminate both political and ideological indoctrination from all school programs. Teachers' salaries were significantly increased. The excessive centralism and control (inspection) organs, the so-called school inspectorates, were eliminated. The process of education was liberated from the imposed top-down teaching programs and methodological directives. The innovative teachers were given a chance and permission to introduce into schools and classes innovations as well as pedagogical experiments, original programs and classes. A clear concept of balance and complementation of three basic dimensions of education was introduced: teaching, skills development and bringing up (taking care of pupils).

Within the framework of the above reforms the fact of creating civic schools and incorporating them into the education system was legalized in 1991. It was done by introducing the right to create school councils (public education institutions), regional education councils, as well as the state education council.

The school head's position was strengthened. He was now elected for five years in a competition and was appointed, among others, an employer and made responsible for a part of tasks of the pedagogical supervision.

The possibility of carrying out the school duty outside school which was permitted on the basis of the legally enforceable Education System Act from 1991 was an innovation.

The pace of the described program and structural changes depended on both determination and involvement of the ministers of the successive

governments responsible for both education and bringing up children.

In the newly-created educational system the following are considered: kindergartens, primary schools, gymnasia (lower secondary general), upper secondary general and vocational, post-secondary non-tertiary, art colleges and others.

Higher education is not included in the educational system in Poland, which itself constitutes a separate section of the governmental administration and has its autonomy guaranteed by the Constitution.

In agreement with the Polish Constitution, the right for education is provided to every citizen.

**Education is compulsory from the age of 7 till 18**, but two levels of schools: primary and gymnasium (lower secondary) have the status of compulsory institutions.

**Education at Polish state schools is free**

The reform of the education system in Poland came into existence on 1 September, 1999.

**The Act on the Education System dated 7 September 1991** (frequently amended since then) is the basic document, constituting the education system in Poland.

It defines the functions and responsibilities of schools and educational institutions of all types, as well as principles of their financing. The matters connected with teachers' work are defined by the Act Karta Nauczyciela (Teachers' Charter) and the directive issued on its basis.

### 2. Context

**The national context**

Competences to take decisions in governance of schools and institutions have been clearly defined.

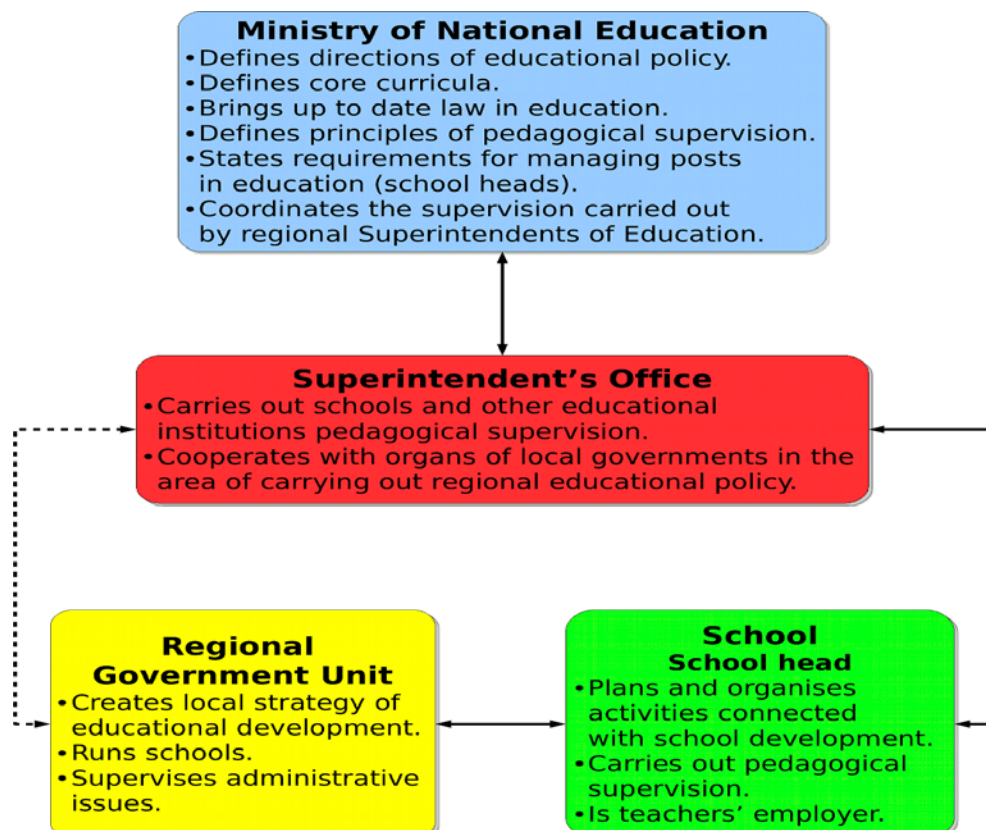
**Minister of Education** – defines the core curricula, outline of school statutes and curricula, general health and safety regulations, manner of documenting the course of education, principles of conducting innovative and experimental activity. He supervises and coordinates the execution of pedagogical supervision by educational superintendents, rules for assessing and promoting pupils, as well as conducting tests and examinations. **He defines requirements which should be met by the person occupying the managing post in education.**

**Education superintendent** – cooperates with the organs of self-government units to create and realise the regional educational policy. He carries out pedagogical supervision over schools. He supervises schools' statutes in the light of their agreement with law. He carries out tasks set by the Ministry of National Education. **Education superintendents**, who are elected during a competition, have been carrying out since 1998 pedagogical supervision over schools on behalf of the Voivode (governor), and not the minister of education. The competences of **the superintendents** were also strengthened by granting them the right to apply to the organ running a school with a motion to dismiss its head from the post, if he/she does not carry out the

recommendations of pedagogical supervision. **Education supervisor** takes part in competitions organised to select schools and other educational institutions' heads and may also put forward a motion to dismiss a head from his post with the prime mover.

Unit of **regional government** – creates a strategy of education development in the region. It provides new schools and institutions with statutes. Approves of schools and other educational institutions organisations, and creates units of economic-administrative services to meet their needs. It takes care of both financial and administrative supervision, may appeal to the school head or superintendent in pedagogical matters, entrusts the school head with the post and may prolong it for a further period.

**The school head** undertakes decisions connected with the school program, teaching curricula, school work schedules and timetables, organisation of both pedagogical supervision and school work quality investigation, as well as interior control organisation. He schedules and organises activities connected with school development. He writes organisational and program documents. Teachers are responsible for carrying out the realisation of the core curricula.



Governance of education at all levels considers and is determined by directions of educational policy.

The most important aspects connected both with the construction of education and educational programs are mentioned below:

- Strengthening of the supervision and limiting school bureaucracy defining a clear distribution of tasks between regional government units and superintendents' offices.
- Increasing efficiency of both state and non-state schools' financing system.
- Handing over small schools to both natural and legal persons.
- Providing for a possibility to create international classes at schools.
- Providing for a real time management of teachers' work (hourly distribution); it should be done by defining (generally) the number of hours meant for realisation of the programs.
- Enabling the directors to efficiently manage the knowledge and teachers' skills; this can be carried out by obliging teachers to work with pupils after compulsory classes/lessons within the 40-hour-working week.
- Lowering the age of the beginning of education from 7 to 6 years.
- Making pre-school education common.
- Integration of immigrants' children into the school environment and consequently into society.
- Improving the quality of education by introducing new core curricula.
- Building a precise definition of disability, especially multiple disability and adjusting educational demands to it.
- Popularising access to computing techniques simultaneously with undertaking protective measures against accessing to undesired contents by the Internet users (pupils).

### 3. School Leadership concepts and practices

#### Conceptual framework

School is a very specific body – it represents a meaningful dominance of the human factor over technological and material-technical ones. Simultaneously every school has its original specificity with its characteristic human structure, with accepted principles, procedures and course of action, as well as organised places of activity. The **core curriculum** is realised at school.

The core curriculum is a compulsory set of teaching content and skills at a given stage in the Polish educational law which must be respected in the teaching program; it also provides for building the criteria for school marks and examination demands.

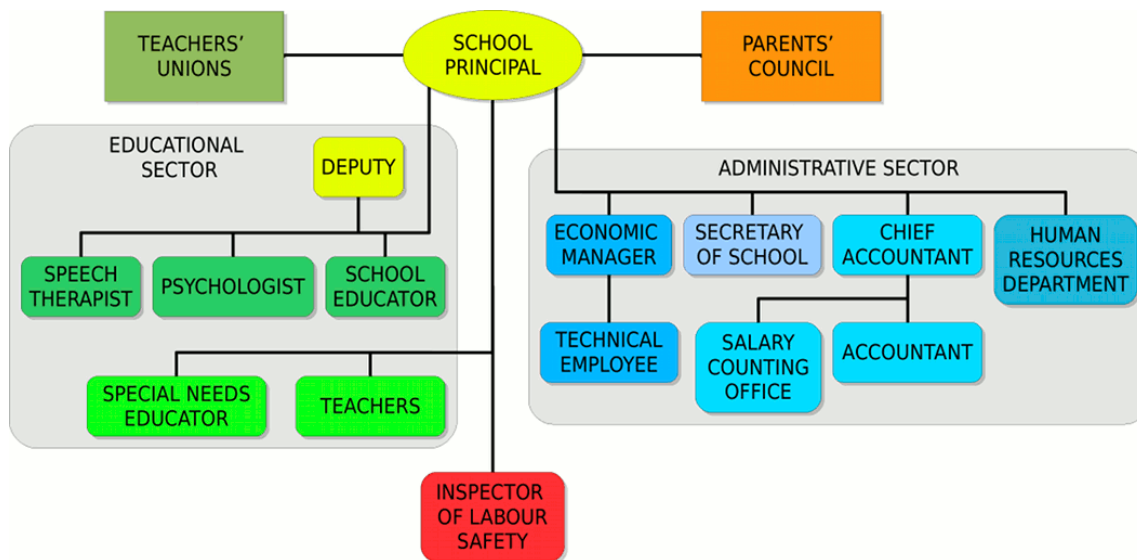
The Polish school head combines many functions: he is a manager, employer, member and chairman of the teachers' pedagogical council, and the person performing the pedagogical supervision. He is also the chief organiser of teachers' activity.

He carries out the pedagogical supervision over the teachers, plans school year organisation annually, and establishes interior school year organisation.

He is responsible for proper utilization of financial means.

He leads the pedagogical council, which passes the program focusing on taking care of pupils, other programs and the program of school development.

The school head defines the manner of carrying out tasks taking into consideration optimum pupil development. He also sets the principles and forms of cooperation with parents. He also organises school work quality assessment. Below is a school management organisational diagram with presentation of subordination principles.



### The focus on teaching and learning

To create conditions for effective work of the whole school staff, i.e. its both teaching and non-teaching members, the head must possess deep knowledge concerning the persons (it is assumed that all the persons creating the staff influence the process of broadly meant education of children and young people; every person met influences us, either intentionally or not).

The head must analyse the staff's competences meant as knowledge, skills and eagerness to carry out given tasks. It facilitates accepting adequate acting strategies to achieve the expected outputs.

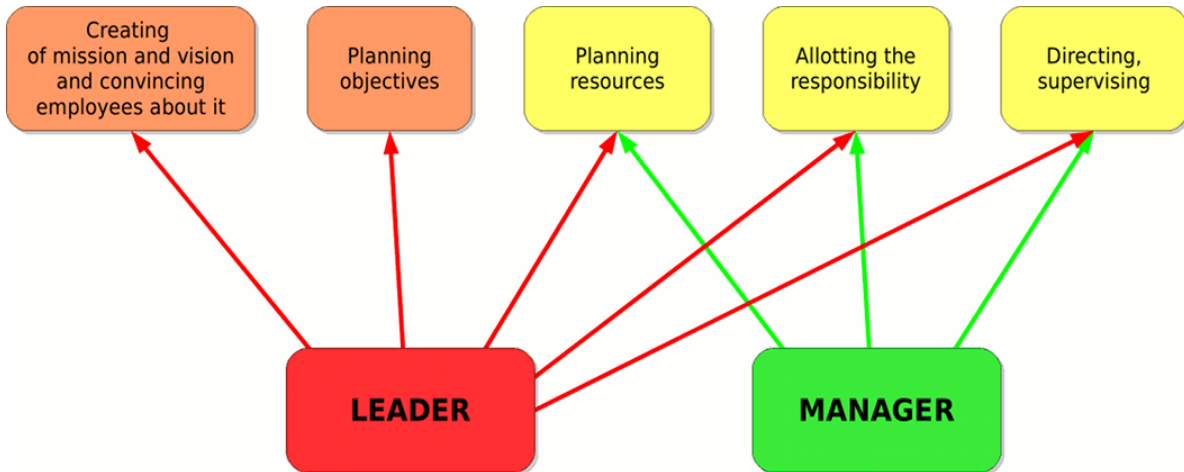
Additionally, the head needs to possess some knowledge on changes: specificity of the process of change, human behaviour in the situation of change, planning and leading his school in the situation of change. Organisational and managing efficiency is also very significant. While directing people, the head must perform as a leader, mediator, facilitator, as well as a manager.

The head, being the person directing activities of the teachers' council, should both know and apply the techniques activating his team, motivating

and releasing both the ideas and creativity of the team and of an individual teacher.

Presently the idea of "educational manager" has become very popular in educational circles. It is used to describe the school head who is capable of creating favourable conditions for a proper course of pedagogical activity, alongside efficient planning and sharing responsibility among his workers. He is also expected to know how to properly utilize human, financial and material resources at his disposal. He efficiently promotes school among the local community members.

It is simultaneously stressed that the school head should be a master in the area of pedagogy, and didactics, as well as be able to define the mission of school and possess his own vision to bring it to life. The director thus described supports professional development of teachers, is their best advisor, and offers his advice to pupils/students and their parents. The head with such a personality is described as "a leader".



The knowledge mentioned is provided during a course of studies in the field of organisation and management, which must be completed by a candidate for the post of a director.

Development of school calls for a team activity of teachers.

The manner of the organisation (types of teams, tasks, mutual and self-education of teachers, exchange of experiences and principles accepted) will influence their work outputs, and, as a result, the level of the graduates' education.

**Restructuring and re-culturing school organisations**

A significant ability is selecting team leaders. An exemplary structure of a teachers' council is as follows:

**Teachers conducting lessons at one level build a team, whose task is especially:**

- selecting a set of teaching curricula as well as textbooks for a given age group, and modifying it according to the needs,
- correlating curricula content, working out plans for realisation of program paths,

- communicating in the area of program demands, control organisation and pupils' progress measurement, and adjusting the demands to pupils' abilities,
- undertaking activities to organise the pedagogical process e.g. planning and realisation of various celebrations, events and thematic modules, problem solving, working out and introducing of plans meant to improve the quality of work in a given area or working out and introducing individual educational programs / plans for highly able children or children with **difficulties**.

**Teachers of related subjects form subject teams, whose tasks are:**

- undertaking all tasks connected with in-service training of teachers and its development,
- selection of textbooks, broadening the teacher's techniques,
- working out tools for pedagogical measurement,
- conducting in-school knowledge and skills evaluation, analysis, drawing conclusions and forwarding them to the council,
- planning and organising actions aiming at improvement of the quality of **school work**.

### Within the framework of the pedagogical council there are task-oriented teams e.g.:

- teams involved in defining techniques and ways of taking proper care of pupils both at primary and lower secondary levels, composed of class tutors, school pedagogical advisor, and deputies. The task of the teams in focus is undertaking activities connected both with taking care of pupils and preventive ones alongside with an evaluation of programs devoted to the two areas
- teams built to assess results of education (including conducting trial tests and exams), comprising deputies and class tutors (of the selected classes)
- school enrolment teams etc.

Some other managing posts may be created at schools. The head defines the scope of authorization, tasks and principles of responsibility.

Presently there is an observable differentiation as far as school managing skills are concerned.

Some school heads are very efficient in their managing practices.

Numerous schools have been already certified in the area of management system in agreement with the ISO 9000:2000 standard and the process is continuing.

The heads passing authorization are super leaders capable of involving the whole community into the process of development. They seek for optimum solutions to educational issues. However, many heads are insufficiently trained in the area, especially in small towns.

A significant meaning for the development of school is expected from the help and attitude of a school inspector from the superintendent's office, as well as those of the running body.

If their knowledge connected with managing is updated and based on their own activity, they will be able to add to increasing the managing efficiency, simultaneously improving the standard of school work and its results. The present recruitment of the officers supervising schools does not verify their managing competence.

### Establishing and negotiating the direction of the school development

In the model of school under construction in Poland, there is a constant process of learning going on, where everybody is important and it is assumed everybody is equipped with a talent; and the school head is a moral and social leader.

There are still supporters of the bureaucratic system with the head assessing everybody in every area of activity. On the other hand, there are concepts of schools without teachers, where the teaching process is carried out via the Internet; the head being the net specialist and teachers are absent.

The political system transformation which changed society influenced the Polish school too; the school changes, though, which are taking place are significantly slower and more problematic.

The 'heritage' of the former system i.e. the centrally managed schools, directive system of the management of education, perceiving the education system as a way of social indoctrination are the obstacles in the process of democratic changes taking place both at schools and local communities.

The decentralisation of school managing planned in the reform of education, calls for a different attitude towards managing functions. The head has received a wide range of entitlements, and the span of his responsibility has been broadened, too; not only towards the educational authorities, but especially the local community and parents. Apart from the tasks precisely defined in the Polish educational law, the head plays various significant roles. They are:

- **Interpersonal role** – the head represents the school, takes care of good relations and communication inside school, inspires people to undertake the previously planned tasks.
- **Informing role** – he is responsible for the proper school information flow system.
- **Decision-making role** - each activity of the head is connected with undertaking specific decisions. The quality of decision-related roles is different but they are always connected with given situations, and are related to defined



results and persons and processes taking place at school.

That is why assistance to heads in fulfilling the roles is especially indispensable, as well as building the support system to assist the educational managing staff.

### **System leadership and cooperation in networks**

The problem of school functioning in a local community is varied to a high degree. It depends on the region, tradition, local cultural habits and, last but not least, on all the people responsible for school at the local level.

The image of the school that is presented by Polish mass media is not favourable for the institution. In the majority of cases the content of the publications questions the rationale of all the suggested changes within education.

Professionalism of the staff is usually doubted, alongside the assumed process of introduction of changes, costs of the undertaking and its usefulness. Poles are aware of the significance of education in human life, and social development, yet it does not translate into trust towards people responsible for the field; and this is a common attitude. Hence any changes within the scope of education (at every level and all areas departing from educational contents and corresponding to system changes) are viewed with unwillingness and as a rule do not find social support.

People eagerly gather to defend themselves against innovations rather than activities supporting changes. The process is observed also among teachers and managing staff.

In a commonly present schematic concept, school is a place of directives, restrictions, hard work and boredom, frequently also unpleasant experiences. The process is strengthened by the media, which very willingly discuss the problem of social pathologies, which appear at schools just the same as they may appear in any other area of life.

The fact that there is no logical comment to the problem leaves in the mind of an average Pole a strong conviction that school and teachers are a necessary evil.

This unfavourable image of school is changed if a child going to a given school meets people who understand the exceptional significance of work within a given local community.

Schools as a rule have not worked out programs of cooperation with a local community, they do not build a conscious image, do not undertake promotional measures which might effectively influence the perception of school and its role in the society., they do not communicate with the society.

School heads are, in a majority of cases, teachers who are almost totally unprepared to carry out such tasks. Teacher training centres organise the courses devoted to these problems infrequently, and people usually do not enrol and that is how it goes on. Examples of good practice result most frequently from a higher level of social awareness of successive people, their personal experiences, transmitted later on to the members of a group, and individual leadership capabilities.

Schools very well-established in local communities, cooperating with the communities and creating the situation of positive feedback are usually small schools, non-state, run by associations or private owners.

The process of creating a state school begins from the moment the school authority decides to close down the place and people decide to defend and keep it. It is then that social eagerness may transform the model of school building into a new model of school management, and alter its social perception. Then the school becomes 'our matter' and is most frequently strongly rooted in the local community.

In each of the cases, supervision is perceived as a form of inspection or control. It is seldom thought to be an inspiration for changes and almost never as a body providing assistance in work or construction of an image of education system in general.

The issue of school participation in the social life is a serious challenge to a school head.

Basically, the head is given freedom to act. Alongside numerous fixed principles of acting in other areas of school life, it most probably proves

a certain lack of worked out principles of cooperation with the communities, rather than leaving freedom of choice.

A prospective school head is expected to know the educational law articles but nobody expects him to be familiar with the law controlling social life. Leadership competences of candidates for the post of school heads, their team work abilities, team constructing capabilities, communicative skills, and skills to create a school's image etc. and support the development of both people and the institution are not verified.

The Teachers' Charter is a serious limitation to school heads' competences. This in practice makes it impossible for him/her to dismiss a poor teacher who continuously commits substantial errors, as well as mistakes in communication with the local community (pupils, parents, social environment).

If the local community is well-informed about the quality of work of teacher X and the head does nothing about it, it is natural that the opinion concerning the school and its results will be negative. Both sides give up any authentic dialogue.

In a majority of cases schools do not take up any conscious activities to build a social image, promote school, people and their achievements.

They do not oppose the above mentioned fixed opinion describing school as an institution presenting a low quality standard of work in general and especially in particular.

### **Examples of good practice / success stories**

The state of affairs is reinforced by the lack of any social campaign presenting successes of schools (Attention: in common understanding a real success of school are the average high external examination results).

School head seldom bring into existence the social council to cooperate with it in the field of improving the quality of school work and school's perception in the society. These are most frequently formal reasons and not real needs to constitute the body.

However, more and more frequently schools undertake cooperation with higher and lower level institutions. Such solutions are dictated by practical reasons; e.g. the desire to attract pupils in the next enrolment.

The activity of the Civic Education Foundation Centre in Warsaw is worth mentioning here. It builds programs serving schools' development and activating both school and local community.

An example of such activities is the program entitled "Self-learning school" run since 2000 by the Foundation and Polish-American Liberty Foundation. Schools participating in the program jointly define the standards of a good and creative school, as well as support each other in the process of raising the quality of work. Within the framework of the program there are teacher and head training courses organised in two paths: "Improving the work of self-learning school", and "Improving teaching and evaluating methods".

"Formative assessment" is another program which is aimed at teachers seeking new methods of both teaching and evaluating which will assist and motivate pupils for work.

The "Young Citizen" program – assists local governments with involving young people to act for the good of the local community, and additionally facilitates lower secondaries and teachers carrying out the process of education in agreement with the new core general education curricula (basis).

The principal goal of the program "Naturally Active" is protection and promotion of natural resources, as well as tourist values of "small homelands" which is realised in the form of pupils' projects. The focus of the project are young people, who supported by adults, will involve themselves into their local natural resources protection and learn how to effectively and responsibly act for the environment and sustainable development. A good example is marking out original eco-tourist paths.

Within the framework of the project "The young vote" pupils of lower and higher secondaries prepare and conduct educational activities concerning the principles and significance of participation in democratic elections. The



activities are carried out in the period preceding elections.

Thousands of Polish schools take part in the above described projects. They obtain certificates of quality and improve their work style, becoming open to the outside world, building local support networks, improving teaching methods at the same time.

It is of significance in the context of the analysis of research results of Polish pupils carried out e.g. by PISA. Polish pupils are good in the area of simple tasks skills such as information recall (reconstructing). The situation is less favourable as far as problem-solving, defining conclusions and opinions, critical, creative or scientific thinking are concerned.

The programs offered by CEC (Civic Education Centre) popularize ways of obtaining these skills both attractively and effectively.

The idea of participation in such programs is fully supported by the Ministry of Education. Similar programs are suggested and offered by NGOs (including our association "Together for Education"). The examples of good practice are becoming more and more common.

## 4. Recruiting and educating school leaders

### Recruitment and retention of leaders

In agreement with the current educational law, the post of the head may be entrusted to an applicant who is pedagogically prepared and possesses proper qualifications to occupy the post of a teacher in a given school and meets the following requirements:

- He completed higher education or post-graduate studies or management qualification course,
- He possesses at least a five-year-long pedagogical serving period as a teacher or as an academic teacher,
- in the period of five years directly before the head post he obtained at least a good assessment, or in the case of an academic teacher a year directly before the competition,

he obtained a positive evaluation of his professional achievements,

- He possesses a medical certificate stating the absence of health barriers to perform work at managing post,
- there was no disciplinary punishment and there are no disciplinary proceedings against him,
- He was not punished for a crime committed purposefully and there are no criminal proceedings against him.

The above mentioned criteria are general and the candidate's competence depends to a high degree on his/her attitude and involvement. The indicated post-graduate studies enrolment criteria or education management qualification course contain in their curriculum knowledge compendium and skills indispensable in the school head's work but do not exhaust the needs in the field.

The newly nominated school heads can choose from an offer of courses, seminars and training courses organised by various institutions both public and non-public. Additionally the school head obtains financial support which can be utilized on training or completing or getting new qualifications.

The present legal regulation entrusts the evaluation of the school head's work to the body of pedagogic supervision (Superintendent's Office) in cooperation with the school running body (self-governmental unit).

Carrying out the evaluation of the school head's work, demands consulting the school teachers' unions.

The process of the school head's work evaluation is very complex. The substantial element is the evaluation of tasks resulting from occupying the managerial post by the teacher.

### An example of good practice by defining a school head's work evaluation standards.

Standards and indications considered while evaluating school head's work (based on tasks and indications included in Warsaw Superintendent's Office Bulletin No2, 2001).

Standard	Indications
<p>School head is responsible for didactics and bringing up level of the institution. He organises the teacher's tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He diagnoses the pupils' community.</li> <li>- He plans and organises pedagogical work.</li> <li>- He works out the school developmental program of improvement if the necessity occurs.</li> <li>- He plans, organises and carries out the interior school work quality measurement.</li> <li>- He analyses the results: promoting, classifying and correction of examinations, tests and interior examinations.</li> <li>- He monitors pupils' achievements (e.g. Olympics, competitions), their marks and realisation of the assumptions by the teaching staff.</li> <li>- He monitors the process of taking care of pupils at school.</li> <li>- He works out and organises cooperation between pupils' parents and graduates.</li> <li>- Provides for training key competences: foreign languages, IT and others.</li> </ul>
<p>The head creates conditions of both independent and self-controlled pupils' work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He creates conditions for pupils' independent planning of educational activities.</li> <li>- He creates conditions for pupil's self-evaluation by means of responsible teacher's didactic work.</li> <li>- He enables talented children to develop their scientific, artistic, or sports skills organising extra classes for them.</li> <li>- He supports pupils with learning difficulties (e.g. cooperation with specialist centres) psychological and pedagogical assistance organised at school.</li> <li>- He introduces SEN pupils into the mainstream tutelary and didactic process.</li> <li>- He observes that the rights of the pupils' self-government are respected.</li> </ul>
<p>The school head provides teachers with support both in carrying out their tasks and training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He investigates the needs of teachers as far as training is concerned.</li> <li>- He creates an interior system of teacher training.</li> <li>- He motivates and creates conditions for teachers to participate in both interior and exterior forms of training.</li> <li>- He provides trainee teachers with assistance (trainee support).</li> <li>- He observes the course of the traineeship is correct.</li> <li>- He builds an effective system of information flow.</li> <li>- He works out standards, indications and criteria of teachers' work evaluation.</li> <li>- He creates conditions for a pedagogical innovation process.</li> <li>- He employs teachers according to their qualifications.</li> </ul>
<p>The school head puts the pedagogical council's and school council's resolutions into effect; passes within their competences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He plans and organises the pedagogical council's meetings.</li> <li>- He keeps a register of resolutions and inspects their realisation.</li> <li>- He observes the law and executes it.</li> <li>- He overrules unlawful resolutions.</li> <li>- He provides a background for team work.</li> </ul>

Standard	Indications
The head leads the school's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He organises the school work in agreement with the statute.</li> <li>- He keeps pedagogical documentation in agreement with the regulations of educational law.</li> <li>- He observes an efficient circulation of the documentation; and information system.</li> <li>- He provides for conditions to cooperate and take decisions in teams.</li> </ul>
The school head exercises the pedagogical supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He worked out a quality assessment system (measurement of schoolwork, defining the manner of carrying it out, documenting and results utilization).</li> <li>- He worked out a timetable and areas of class assessment inspections.</li> <li>- He verifies the achievements of pupils, and next the results are utilized at school to modify work of both teachers and pupils.</li> <li>- He consults both pupils and parents on their expectations towards school.</li> <li>- He gathers information about teachers' work.</li> </ul>
The school head takes care of pupils and provides background for their harmonious psychological and physical development through various pro-health activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He provides for both pedagogical and psychological assistance.</li> <li>- He defines / assesses the pupils' community in the aspect of addictions.</li> <li>- He creates safe conditions for pupils while at school.</li> <li>- He provides substantial help for children in difficult financial situation.</li> </ul>
He performs other tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They depend on the specificity of a given school.</li> </ul>

It is a difficult task to define objective indications of school head's work evaluation.

The evaluation itself, apart from its motivational function, has no definite influence on the person's work; providing it is not negative (then the head is dismissed from his post).

It must be remembered though, that the head's term lasts for five years (or less – in justified cases), and after the period the running body is not obliged to prolong the term of the head in office; it may announce a competition for the post, to select a new candidate.

### Attractiveness of school leadership

The material status of the Polish school head is varied. It depends to a high degree on the remuneration regulations, which also describe the level of the executive and motivational bonus, as well as the system of awards for school heads. The accepted system of executive bonuses depends

on the number of classes and so if there are big schools their heads will get a high salary.

In smaller and poorer districts there are cases when no candidate applies for the advertised school head's post since the difference between the teacher's and headmaster's salary is insignificant. Yet, still the social standing of the school head is high and the local community usually trusts and respects him/her.

### National structures of pre-service, induction and in-service education of school leaders

New institutions were formed in the education system involved in teacher and educational managing staff training.

The institutions are run and financed from the national budget and they carry out statute tasks which comprise preparation and realisation of developmental programs of the managing staff.

Training skills are team teachers' and school head's obligation – placed in the Act but in practice the state-organised training system does not function too efficiently.

The training offer prepared by the institutions is insufficient and outdated, and institutions not properly equipped with electronic tools lose in the competition with private training institutions since those utilize the human and material means more economically. The quality of work of the two types of institutions is continuously being discussed.

### **Coaching and other forms of support**

Educational management staff creates its own unions and associations.

Exchange of experiences and good practice, as well as broadening the theoretical knowledge, not only from pedagogical and psychological areas, but also from the field of management theory, theoretical involvement in the introduction of ISO procedures-facilitating work organisation in educational units, are challenges which are undertaken by school heads during annual meetings and conferences.

These are the organisations which define the directions of staff training.

The most numerous organisation of this type is Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Kadry Kierowniczej Oświaty (Polish Association of Education Managing Staff, approx. 3400 members). It carries out the tasks regarded by its members as most important for the educational community, improving the functioning of the education system, it also consults on projects of legal acts handed over by the Ministry of National Education.

### **To sum up: challenges, areas of innovation and underlying evidence**

The directions of changes and ways of education management presented in the material, point to a strong determination at every level of its management to aim at autonomy and socialising. There is yet a lot to be done.

PISA tests showed an unsatisfactory level of results our pupils obtain; the same was recorded

in the results of the national system of external examinations. It still reaches the teachers' minds with difficulty that the old model of school making pupils memorise loads of knowledge is exhausted.

It is much easier to follow certain directives rather than undertake decisions and be responsible for them. A conservative attitude towards management is represented by Teachers' Unions; they treat school as a workplace for teachers. That is why the discussions about the Polish schools sometimes become a battlefield against changes. Moreover, they seem to aim at keeping the old order of things. Politicians are weakly engaged in promoting educational changes, they prefer spectacular successes, and these are long way away in the field of education.

The present educational authorities in Poland more and more frequently turn to the functioning non-governmental organisation working in the field of education. The organisations are very often involved in school, or kindergarten running often in the cases in which otherwise it was not profitable. They are involved in building pro-education coalitions, popularising new methods of work and obtaining money to finance educational projects for local communities.

They promote the principles of the UN, along with popularising the idea of the society of citizens. The Minister of National Education introducing the new core curriculum starting September 1, 2009, incorporated the organisations to promote it. It proves the determination of the ministry to introduce changes.

Discussion forums on management in education pay attention to the still existing:

- Excessive centralisation – pupils and parents, local communities, and employers influence the Polish education to an insignificant degree. It gives an impression that the system works first of all for the benefit of its participants i.e. first of all teachers.
- Inequalities between towns and rural areas – results of teaching achieved in rural schools are generally worse and the possibilities of selecting an educational path are narrower for the young from those areas.

- Evaluation and supervision – not much has been done in Poland to create standards of criteria of evaluation, and the pedagogical supervision still fulfils its inspecting / control functions, and to a lesser degree adds to stimulating innovation and passing knowledge to teachers.

The belief that it is worth engaging oneself in school matters and introducing changes step by step and year by year, is a significant factor in both school heads' and school leaders'

development. The changes will bear fruit in the form of the civic society, citizens knowing their rights, having educational inspirations, being responsible and wise.

Both courage and leadership talent are needed to carry out the task, alongside proper conditions created by all participants of the school managing process. Our organisation is involved in the activities.

## Appendix

### Bibliography

Bogaj, A. (2005), *Kształcenie ogólne – wybrane problemy i dylematy przemian (1945-2004)*. Warszawa: Elipsa.

*Drogi i bezdroża polskiej oświaty w latach 1945-2004* (2005) Zbiór pod redakcją Cz. Kupisiewicza. Warszawa: Elipsa.

*Edukacja narodowym priorytetów (1989)*, Opracowanie zbiorowe pod redakcją Cz. Kupisiewicza. Warszawa-Kraków: PWN.

Kuźnicki, L. (2001), *Nauka i edukacja w strategii rozwoju Polski do roku 2020*. Warszawa: Elipsa.

*Reforma systemu edukacji w Polsce. Warunki powodzenia Zasady kontynuacji – „Głos Nauczycielski”* wrzesień 2000.

*Strategia rozwoju edukacji na lata 2007-2013* (2005), Warszawa MENiS sierpień 2005.



