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There is no teacher without professional development. Difficulties with proper understanding of the nature of the teaching profession

The article contains deliberations on the essence of the teaching profession and teachers' professional development. The author assumes that a significant number of people from different social groups, as well as among teachers themselves, are unclear about the nature of the teaching profession, which results in a misunderstanding of teachers and their work by society, including the politicians deciding upon the shape of education. The solution to this situation is proper understanding of the essence of teachers' professional development, since, according to the author, this translates into a true image of the teaching profession.

Keywords: pedeutology, nature of the teaching profession, teacher, teachers' professional development, teachers' strike, distorted image of the teaching profession, teaching profession

Nauczyciel rozwojem zawodowym stoi. Kłopoty z właściwym odczytaniem charakteru nauczycielskiej profesji

Artykuł zawiera rozważania nad istotą pracy nauczycielskiej oraz rozwoju zawodowego nauczycieli. Autorka zakłada, że wiele osób z różnych grup społecznych, także spośród samych nauczycieli, ma błędne mniemanie o charakterze nauczycielskiej profesji, co powoduje niezrozumienie nauczycieli i ich pracy przez społeczeństwo, w tym przez polityków oświatowych decydujących o kształcie edukacji. Antidotum na tę sytuację jest właściwe odczytanie istoty rozwoju zawodowego nauczycieli, gdyż to, zdaniem autorki, przekłada się na prawdziwy obraz nauczycielskiej profesji.

Słowa kluczowe: pedeutologia, charakter pracy nauczycielskiej, nauczyciel, rozwój zawodowy nauczyciela, strajk nauczycieli, zakłócony obraz zawodu nauczyciela, zawód nauczyciela

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A few words about the strike in place of an introduction

In April 2019, we witnessed a situation where virtually the whole of Polish society paid close attention to teachers and the teaching profession. This was the result of a strike.

The media indicated a dispute over pay rises between the teachers and the Ministry of Education as the reason for the situation. Following a failed attempt at negotiations, on 14 February 2019, the Polish Teachers' Union together with the Solidarity Trade Union Organisation "NSZZ Solidarność" and the Trade Union Forum initiated collective dispute procedures together with schools, kindergartens and educational establishments. A nationwide teachers' strike began on 8 April 2019 and lasted until 27 April 2019.

A media and community "storm" broke out around the strike and the teachers themselves. In the media, both traditional and social, as well as during real conversations in various places and social situations (at work, in shops, on trains, buses, queues to healthcare facilities, etc.), all kinds of opinions about teachers' obligations, their right (or not) to a strike, responsibility, entrusted tasks and social expectations towards teachers were raised.

A high proportion of these judgments indicated that a significant number of people from various social groups (as well as among educators themselves) have a false opinion about the nature of the teaching profession.

Nevertheless, it was a time when it was possible to take advantage of the general interest and to raise awareness in those who have a false belief of the nature of teachers' profession, its real difficulties and burdens. Unfortunately, this opportunity was lost, and the strike was used mainly for a political struggle. The most important issues of concern in education have been covered with media bites of the type: "pay raises", "salaries", "demands", "professional development path", "obligatory teaching hours", "exams".

However, the subject of analysis in this paper is neither the "misery" of Polish education nor the complex set of difficulties related to the functioning of the teaching profession in the Polish educational system (due to the fact that such issues should be dealt with in extensive multi-volume dissertations). The aim of the text is to draw attention to only one characteristic of the teaching profession, which constitutes its inherent element, is inseparably connected with it and is the key to a proper understanding of the quintessence of "being a teacher", namely: professional development.

For the purposes of the paper, I put forward a claim that proper comprehension of the essence of teachers' professional development translates into a true image of the teaching profession. Understanding the professional development of teachers is synonymous with understanding the sense of teachers' work.

In order to defend this claim, in the first chapter. I present the selected difficulties and myths functioning in the teaching profession and stress the essence of teachers' professional development. In the second part,

I draw attention to the differences between professional development and professional advancement. I also stress that it is not possible to establish a sign of equality between these two concepts.

In conclusion, I attempt to show that freedom of the work and autonomy of teachers are a prerequisite for professional development. Numerous changes imposed on education for a number of years by various agencies (the Ministry, local government, parents) have increasingly restricted the freedom of teachers' work (Zahorska, 2014, p. 164). However, this externally limited autonomy can be regained by teachers in the process of professional development.

Professional development as a solution to the "distorted" image of the teaching profession

Henryka Kwiatkowska, a prominent Polish pedagogue, emphasises that the work of a teacher can be described as a profoundly problematic activity, because the teacher makes decisions and takes actions repeatedly on the basis of incomplete data. Their work is vague. Theoretical knowledge, as its basis, is inherently incomplete and uncertain. It is incomplete, because it cannot be expected to highlight the entirety of the situation, and it is uncertain, because it cannot be used as a basis for deciding whether it is necessary to act in a certain way. The "tools" used by the teacher and the conditions in which they work are also a source of indetermination. The tools are non-specific and unreliable, and the conditions are extremely variable. The main actors in the educational process – the student and the teacher – are not constants but are people who react vividly, guided not only by reason but also by emotions. This increases the problematic character of teachers' work and does not give rise to the misleading statement that it is simple work and technical activity (Kwiatkowska 2012, p. 11).

The problematic nature of the teaching profession is also seen in ambivalent social expectations towards teachers and in various – often contradictory – opinions about this profession. This is related to a large disproportion in the scientific view of teachers' work and in its social perception. The scientific view is deeper, reaching the real and significant intellectual and creative layers of the effort of teaching, while social perception is superficial, stereotypical and far from the actual picture (ibid., p. 158). One of the myths concerning the teaching profession and its functioning in our societies is to qualify the work of a teacher as a physically and mentally demanding effort, consisting mainly in repeating known content and practised actions rather than being creative and intellectual. As H. Kwiatkowska stresses, there can be no more erroneous opinion about the teaching profession (ibid., p. 13).

The excess of social expectations towards teachers, the contradiction and dissonance between them, as well as the possibilities of their fulfilment, is conditioned by social, organisational and subjective factors (Murawska, 2009, p. 278).

Nevertheless, these serious contradictions, deeply rooted in the nature of the teaching profession (Mazurkiewicz, 2011, p. 153), contribute to stress and frustration, chaotic actions, confusion, professional burn-out (Sęk, 2012, pp. 83-112) and are also a cause of falsification of the essence of the teaching profession.

The difficulty of practising the teaching profession is also the result of contradictory opinions about its nature. Krzysztof Konarzewski made an accurate comment on this, writing that teachers are idealised and humiliated at the same time. Society – through the voice of both scholars and non-scholars – pays tribute to the abstract vision of teaching, while at the same time, it zealously criticises, admonishes and ridicules the actual performers of this professional role (2012, p. 160).

The teaching profession belongs to the group of “impossible” professions, i.e. those in which the entrusted tasks definitely exceed the possibilities of their execution (Lewowicki, 1994, pp. 79-81). Society multiplies the list of tasks set for teachers and assesses them negatively because of their inability to cope with them. It does not understand the fact that, in reality, these tasks are addressed to the whole society (*ibid.*, p. 80) and, even more precisely, to various groups, institutions or entities responsible for education, not only to teachers. Transferring this responsibility from many social groups to solely one group (teachers) not only results in a decrease of social prestige but also causes the nature of the teaching profession to be considerably distorted.

The tasks set and performed by teachers are also associated with another complication that contributes to an incorrect perception of the profession. Often, only a teacher’s tasks related to teaching, i.e. the so-called work at the whiteboard, are taken into account. In fact, teachers perform a wide array of duties, even those of a non-educational character.

The research carried out in 2013 by the Educational Research Institute, entitled “Research on the time and conditions of teachers’ work” has generated a list of 55 activities performed by teachers. They were divided into four groups: didactics, educational tasks, professional development and administrative activities. In light of this research, the activities carried out by almost all teachers are very often didactic, such as: conducting and preparing for lessons, conducting and preparing for other classes, checking pupils’ work and keeping class registers (the latter belongs to administrative activities). Other tasks, performed slightly less frequently but still quite often, are: preparing pupils for competitions and contests, individual meetings with parents, working in a subject team, searching for and learning about didactic aids, on-call duties at discos, hosting school events, meetings, working in an educational team, participation in conferences, calculating attendance or participation in teaching staff councils (*Liczę się nauczyciele*, 2014, pp. 120-122). The average person does not even know about the majority of them.

It is also detrimental to identify teachers’ working hours solely by considering the obligatory teaching hours. The same ERI study shows that teachers on average work 47 hours a week (*ibid.*, pp. 122-125), as opposed to 18 hours a week, i.e. the obligatory time.

A frequent myth repeated by most of society is that a teacher has a lot of free time during the year, i.e. summer holidays, winter holidays or other public holidays. In practice, it looks a little different. The teacher has six weeks of annual leave during summer and two weeks of annual leave during winter holidays. The rest of the time, they are at the disposal of the school management and have to come to work at their request. They cannot take holidays during the school year. In addition, the principal may call teachers in the last week of June or early July and late August, i.e. just after the end of the school year and before the start of the next school year.

However, even having the possibility of spending multiple days of the year away from the workplace, in reality most of the teachers fulfil their tasks during that time. If not didactic, educational or administrative, then those related to professional development. In these situations, they do not cease to be teachers.

The teaching profession is among those in which the final form of qualifications cannot be determined. By their very nature, qualifications tend to be hard to specify and at times inexplicable. This incompleteness is not their weakness; on the contrary, it is an asset that inspires constant reflection (Kwiatkowska, 2014, p. 40).

One inherent feature of this profession is development (2012, p. 205). Due to the fact that a teacher's work is characterised by a lack of definition and standardisation, the dynamic changeability of events and the lability of working conditions (ibid., p. 206), professional development should not be subject to formalisation, disambiguation or reduction. Any exaggerated formalisation, over-organisation or "dotting the I's and crossing the T's" may lead to a degradation of the quality of teachers' work (ibid.). Sticking to patterns in teaching work can contribute to a loss of contact with school realities, and to the automatic reproduction of some popular (read: comfortable) activities.

The key to understanding the essence of teaching work is to recognise and comprehend the inextricable link between teaching work and professional development. If every member of society were to recognise these issues, we would not have the myths of the teaching profession, the ignorance and downgrading of its prestige, the misguided reforms and constant changes, and thus the reasons for criticism on the one hand and the rebellion of teachers themselves on the other.

The professional development of teachers, which cannot be captured in a rigid framework, is a "state of discomfort for some teachers and a not inconsiderable opportunity for others" (ibid.). It is uncomfortable for those who treat this profession as consisting of simple technical actions and those that are looking for precise "recipes" that can be used in their teaching work. On the other hand, for teachers who seek, and for reflective practitioners, the nature of teaching work and its inherent creativity, which requires intellectual effort, personal knowledge, reflectiveness (ibid.) and continuous professional development, offers many broad opportunities. It is also an attribute of teacher independence. Therefore, an important element of education for the teaching profession should, according to Kwiatkowska, be preparation for professional development (ibid.). The legitimacy of this postulate is additionally strengthened by the facts that some teachers do not understand the necessity of continuing professional development and that professional development is identified with a system of professional promotion introduced in Poland in 2000 as an element supporting (which was the assumption) the professional development of teachers.

Professional development ≠ professional promotion

Many attempts have been made in literature to define the professional development of a teacher. According to Christopher Day, a great international authority on the professional development of teachers:

Professional development consists of all-natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which

contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (Day, 1999, p. 4).

Many Polish pedeutological researchers have studied the professional development of teachers through the prism of Habermas-Kohlberg-Erikson's theory, initiated by Robert Kwaśnica (1994; 1995) and extended by Kwiatkowska (2012). The Habermas-Kohlberg-Erikson theory posits that development is a process aimed at gaining human independence, i.e. freeing oneself from the influence and pressure of the external environment. Developmental change ultimately brings about an increase in the autonomy of the individual. An expression of autonomy is critical to an individual's ability to distance themselves from the existing patterns of thinking imposed by the social and cultural environment, as well as to search out their own way of being and remain faithful to their own concept of the world and themselves and their own understanding of values (Kwaśnica, 1995, p. 25).

During professional development, attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and personal interests and characteristics are subject to learning (Route, 2014, p. 31). The essence of professional development is to strive for teachers' professionalism and to satisfy their needs. The development is therefore directional, long-term and divided into stages and encompasses qualitative and quantitative transformations. It has many conditions: biological, mental, social, cultural, historical, technical, educational and economic (Plewka, 2009, pp. 71, 107).

According to the Habermas-Kohlberg-Erikson concept, professional development consists of three stages: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional.

The pre-conventional stage concerns taking on a professional role. At this stage, the teacher mimics forms of behaviour that are considered typical of the profession. When reproducing behavioural patterns, they do not care about the grounds for or justification of such behaviours. They recreate the convention without being fully aware of it or by trying to understand or intellectually assimilate it. They do not make sense of what they are doing. The main goal is to minimise effort, maximise gratification and adapt to the environment by making their own behaviour as similar as possible to the observed patterns.

The conventional stage is adaptation within a professional role. This is characterised by a cognitive mastery of the convention and its justifications. At this stage, the teacher is able to use their knowledge and skills efficiently, but in a reproductive way. The main effort is directed towards consciously following convention or understanding the "recipe" for the role. The teacher does not discuss the convention and its justifications, but only tries to correctly fulfil the obligations of the professional role. At this stage, in contrast to the previous one in which such patterns were imitated without full understanding, the teacher may manifest a kind of non-conformism. Namely, they can reject those solutions and requirements which they consider to be contrary to their institutionally defined professional role. They may also turn out to be innovators of some kind, perfecting or improving the efficiency of those technical solutions, objectives, methods and means of operation that fall within the scope of the current convention. Full adaptation within a professional role consists in the fact that

the “recipe” for this role, i.e. the objectives and duties set for it, the rules for performing it and its justification, is accepted. However, the measures of action can nonetheless be changed, discussed and modified. In other words, if further development were not possible – if one assumed that adaptation in a professional role was the last phase of development – then one should assume that the teacher’s innovativeness must be limited to the sphere of technical problems, i.e. instrumental questions only.

The post-conventional stage consists of creatively transcending professional roles. This phase involves the empowerment of the individual, which is achieved through taking a reflective, critical attitude towards one’s own knowledge and professional skills. Here, the institutionally defined professional roles are verified, and their justification is examined with respect to the teacher’s own evaluation criteria. This phase of development is post-conventional in the sense that a critical understanding of the world, innovation and creativity in action requires “breaking” the convention by discussing (examining) its justifications, revising and exceeding the role “recipe” and developing one’s own definition of the teaching profession. In contrast to the previous stage, in which the teacher’s action was ultimately judged by the role “recipe” (convention), the source of such justification is now autonomous identity, i.e. a definition of professional duties that derives its meaning from the understanding of one’s own person as an integral whole. In other words, at the level of autonomous identity, professional obligations are equated with the moral obligations that one has towards oneself. Moreover, these obligations, as well as autonomous identity, are shaped by an identification with universal values. Therefore, the understanding of professional duties that a teacher achieves in the post-conventional phase of development is derived from the interpretation of these values and is an independent attempt to translate universal values into the moral obligations and entitlements of a teacher towards a student and towards themselves (Kwaśnica, 1994, pp. 27-30; Kwiatkowska, 2012, pp. 204-205).

Development does not take place on its own; it can be inhibited at any stage. This depends on an individual’s own efforts to understand and change themselves and requires both internal and external stimulation (Kwaśnica, 1994, p. 30; Kwiatkowska, 2012, p. 207).

Among the elements of external stimulation is the system of professional promotion, which was introduced in our country as part of the amendment of the Teacher’s Charter in 2000. The amendment aimed to create a system of financially incentivised professional development for teachers which would lead to a constant increase of competences in the process of professional development, the undertaking of activities to improve didactic and educational processes and, as a result, improvements in the quality of school work (Wiłkomirska, 2011, p. 161). Legislators also hoped to increase the prestige and attractiveness of the teaching profession.

Teachers’ achievements were to be evaluated by external qualification committees composed of representatives of educational institutions and experts in the field, as well as representatives of educational authorities. The objective was to ensure the objectivity and comparability of the evaluation. The role of trainee supervisor for beginner teachers was introduced, and the role of the school principal in the process of promoting teachers was strengthened. The changes (in comparison with the professional promotion levels previously in force) were intended to motivate teachers to pursue their own well-thought, planned professional development path towards continuous improvement and creative self-evaluation. Promotional procedures also offered school

authorities and those exercising pedagogical supervision direct insight into the work of teachers and schools, which had previously been difficult to gain. The idea was to provide opportunities to actively build local educational strategies. One important element was the mentoring of teachers starting their careers in the teaching profession, which had thus far been largely neglected in Poland (Wilkomirska, 2011, p. 162).

Since its introduction, the system of teachers' professional promotion has undergone several amendments, which is undoubtedly a sign of the system's weakness, but also an expression of the authorities' willingness to improve the adopted solutions. In the last two years, it has been amended twice, in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, professional promotion was extended from 10 to 15 years, two years of which were to be a traineeship period for a novice teacher. The money "saved" in this way was to be used for raising teachers' salaries. This solution caused great dissatisfaction among teachers and was one of the reasons for the teachers' strike in 2019. As a result of this protest, the government decided not to go ahead with the changes concerning teacher promotion. The current amendment to the Teacher's Charter (Act of 13 June 2019 amending the Act – Teacher's Charter and some other acts, Polish Journal of Laws 2019, item 1287), in force since September 2019, is the result of the post-strike agreement.

The main assumptions of the system of teachers' professional advancement in Poland provide that a teacher can obtain four degrees during the course of their professional life, with the successive stages of their career path being trainee teacher, contract teacher, nominated teacher and certified teacher.

When a teacher takes up a job, the first step is to be hired as a trainee teacher. The traineeship lasts nine months and usually starts at the beginning of the school year and ends at its close. This is the time when a person starting out in the profession learns to work with children and young people. The trainee teacher implements their own professional development programme, which is approved in advance by the principal of the school. The trainee also has a designated person who becomes their tutor for the first year of employment. The tutor is usually an experienced teacher who has been working in the profession for several years. They provide advice and try to help solve problems that arise in the first year of work. When the traineeship ends, the trainee teacher has to prove that they have implemented the development plan, done well as a teacher and achieved sufficient progress to get the first promotion. This is a kind of test of competence, although, according to the law, it is called a job interview. If the teacher is approved by the qualification board, they receive the degree of contract teacher.

The qualification board for teachers applying for promotion to the degree of contract teacher is appointed by the principal of the school. The boards are composed of: 1) the principal or deputy principal of the school as chairman; 2) the leader of a team of teachers or, if such a team has not been appointed in a given school, a nominated or certified teacher employed in the school or, in the case of a kindergarten, school or institution where nominated or certified teachers are not employed, a contract teacher; 3) the tutor during the traineeship (Polish Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1287).

A teacher may start another traineeship for the degree of nominated teacher after working in the school for at least two years. The length of this traineeship is two years and nine months. After obtaining a positive assessment of their professional achievements during the traineeship, the teacher submits an application to sit

an examination (which must take place in the year in which a positive assessment of the professional achievements was gained). The examination board for teachers applying for promotion to the degree of nominated teacher is appointed by the body running the school. The boards are composed of: 1) a representative of the body running the school as its chairman; 2) a representative of the body exercising pedagogical supervision; 3) the principal; 4) two experts from a list of experts determined by the minister in charge of education. If the teacher passes the exam, they receive the degree of nominated teacher (*ibid.*).

A nominated teacher may start a traineeship for the degree of certified teacher after having worked in the school for at least one year from the date of the previous professional promotion. The traineeship for the degree of certified teacher lasts two years and nine months, or one year and nine months in the case of teachers with a doctoral degree. The certified teacher degree is awarded by the body which exercises pedagogical supervision (usually the Board of Superintendents for Education). As in the case of nominated teachers, there are two stages in the assessment before a new degree is awarded. The first one – at school level – is based on an evaluation of achievements and the traineeship. The second, carried out by the body exercising pedagogical supervision, consists of the best possible presentation before the appointed commission. If the assessment is positive, the teacher is promoted to the degree of certified teacher (*ibid.*).

The system of professional promotion has been the subject of criticism since the very beginning and has also had followers, as well as opponents, amongst teachers. The main doubt, which arose just a few years after the system was implemented, is whether the subsequent stages of promotion actually ensure development, understood as an increase in qualifications, and a deepening of the knowledge and professional competence of teachers. Practice shows that the professional development of a teacher does not always go hand in hand with reaching the next level of professional promotion. Many teachers treat the system of professional promotion as the only element of professional development, which ends with the achievement of the degree of certified teacher.

Ch. Day draws attention to a fundamental issue for understanding the essence of professional development, in light of which teachers cannot be forced to develop, because they must have the desire to develop themselves. Referring to the results of international comparative research on this profession, Ch. Day introduces a completely new variable, a causal factor that significantly determines the effectiveness of education, which is the scope and quality of a new type of professionalism (1999, pp. 15-35). Every official attempt to introduce professional standards and use them to assess all teachers makes this process overwhelming, dehumanising interpersonal relations and reducing the assessment of progress or achievements only to measurable matters and technical skills, significantly simplifying the real value of teachers' activities. In a situation where teachers have to administratively manage their professional advancement, they not only lose their drive and authority but also their creativity in their work with children and young people (Śliwerski, 2006, p. 6).

Therefore, it is worth remembering, and making candidates for the profession aware, that the professional development of teachers is superior to professional promotion. Promotion is only a tool, not an end in itself.

Development needs autonomy and provides autonomy

To conclude and sum up this deliberation on the nature of professional development of teachers, it is worth stressing that this profession, whose important, basic feature is professional development, needs a certain amount of freedom of work, which requires the provision of more autonomy.

In the opinion of teachers, the freedom of their activities has been increasingly restricted by the numerous changes imposed from above. Research conducted by Marta Zahorska (2014) and Małgorzata Falkiewicz-Szult (2011) shows that teachers consider subsequent changes in education to be an obstacle to their work, introducing a lot of chaos (Zahorska, 2014, p. 164; Falkiewicz-Szult, 2011, pp. 37-40). Regulations issued by the Ministry are criticised by teachers as being detached from reality and often mismatched with the specificity of schools. Teachers believe that they are being asked to do more and more and that the tasks they face make no sense and only take up their time. The school has become a bureaucratic institution in which the evaluation of teachers' work is based on a variety of papers that do not have much in common with the actual tasks performed by teachers. They feel increasingly controlled and have less and less freedom to fulfil their duties. The most important are the procedures, and failure to comply with them results in sanctions. Teachers complain about the lack of empowerment; they feel like pawns moved by politicians, as well as parents, deciding on the shape of education. The imposed tasks are not consulted with them, which immediately raises their negative attitude towards the changes. They feel that their rights are being restricted and their duties inflated (Zahorska, 2014, p. 164).

A similar phenomenon of imposing changes on teachers was noted by Bogusław Śliwerski, who writes that:

The teaching profession is subject to regulations which are constant and mutually exclusive in time. Along with the government, which changes every few years in the Ministry of Education, extreme and opposing approaches appear (...) Regardless of the political system, almost every authority is tempted by the desire to administer (manage) pedagogues as if it was not only a group of people whose space and time of their work can be objectively determined, but also a group which should have the scope of their activities and the expected effects of these activities clearly established (2006, p. 6-7).

The decisions of politicians deciding upon the shape of education in recent years, and in particular the efforts to increase the control over teacher's work, have additionally contributed to the conviction that teachers are not trustworthy in society (ibid., p. 6), which has reduced the prestige of the profession.

Apart from political decisions at the ministerial level, there has been a number of initiatives at the local level that have undermined the credibility of teachers and reduced confidence in them. A striking example was the initiative of the customs office (with the consent of the mayor and his representative for the sake of security and education) in Łódź in 2001 to search pupils for the presence of drugs using a Labrador retriever. In connection with several cases of teachers who distributed drugs, in some schools, the dogs were also sniffing around teachers, in the teachers' room, in the principal's room and in the school pedagogue's room. This was a clear message to the pupils about the lack of credibility and responsibility and about the questionable moral

status of their own teachers and educators. The fact that every teacher and school pedagogue is checked to make sure that they are not carrying drugs, as well as occurring within their school premises, is an important indicator of the symbolic meaning that all those who have undertaken the difficult task of education cannot be trusted (Dudzikowa, 2001, pp. 91-93).

Is professional development possible in a situation of low credibility of teachers, lack of trust in them and with their empowerment being limited? This is certainly much more difficult. However, in spite of all the above, it is worth undertaking this effort, as it ultimately brings about an increase in the autonomy of an individual. In the process of professional development, teachers can gain independence, as well as free themselves from the influence and pressure of the external environment (Kwaśnica, 1995, p. 25). Professional development is therefore a guarantee of teachers' autonomy.

It is also worth remembering that an autonomous teacher provides, both for themselves and their pupils, different kinds of possibilities for action and fulfilment: the ability to think and act independently. On the other hand, a teacher surrounded by the concreteness of regulations, rules, standards and being deprived of autonomy shapes the personality that meets the requirements of the external assignment, e.g. ministerial regulations (Kwiatkowska, 2014, p. 42).