

**The Actual
Problems of the
Theory and Practice
of Modern
Pre-School
Education in
Poland, Romania
and Ukraine**

editors
Otilia Clipa
Maria Oliynyk
Małgorzata Stawiak-Ososińska



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Polish Teaching Education Standard
Concerning Nursery School and Primary
School Classes (First, Second and Third)

INTRODUCTION

Starting from academic year 2012/2013, at universities in Poland, education has been provided according to new rules. On 1st October 2011, the Law of 18th March 2011 came into effect. It concerned amendment to the Higher Education Act, academic degrees and academic titles act, and degrees and titles within the scope of art. It also concerned amendments to some other laws (Dz.U. 2011 nr 84 poz. 455). according to which the main list of subjects, along with education standards and all labels related to nomenclature as well as number of hours assigned to subject programs, have been abolished. Polish universities have gained the right to provide education according to their own fields of study in conformity with independently developed school assignment, personnel potential and job market requirements. They were also given the right to create own education programs and name them individually (Lipińska-Nałęcz, 2012).

REASONS FOR INTRODUCING HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN POLAND

The reason for introducing changes to recent academic education standard in Poland in case of all types of universities and all fields of study was to adjust the Polish higher education to the requirements of the so called European Qualifications Framework (EQF). They were passed in "Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe" of 23rd April 2008 regarding establishing the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and announced in the Official Journal of the European Union¹. EQF are used as reference tool in order to compare qualifications levels on various stages of education, including higher education level, too. They are to enable verification of what a learner knows, understands and can perform after the learning process is completed. This verification should be carried out within three areas: knowledge, skills and competence (Kudrycka, 2012).

In the "Recommendation" it was clearly indicated that all EU member states should carry out the reform of their higher education systems and adjust them to EQF requirements by the end of 2010, and in special cases by the end of 2012. According to this year's regulations on all new certificates and diplomas, will need to have a clear reference to appropriate EQF level. This reference should be performed through national qualifications systems².

The innovation, introduced by EQF, are so called education outcomes which education and teaching are based on. Each teaching institution is obliged to

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:PL:PDF>

² <http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/38/id/806>

determine outcomes within knowledge, skills and social competence that should be covered during the whole learning process. Each of these outcomes must be measurable. After completing a particular education cycle, a graduate should, according to guidelines, acquire the assumed knowledge, be able to demonstrate some skills and adopt particular attitude. In the course of the education process, a wide range of validation methods should be used so that the acquired knowledge, skills and competence become operational, long-lasting and timeless.

LEGAL BASIS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND

Taking into consideration the specific nature of each European country, it has been decided that internal National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) should be established in every country. NQF “describe mutual relations between qualifications, integrating various national qualifications subsystems”³. This description, by means of common European system, will allow to compare diplomas obtained from various universities within the area of Europe. Therefore, in particular countries, NQF need to have references to European levels. NQF will make the achieved qualifications more clear, available and of higher quality.

Work on National Qualifications Frameworks in Poland started at the beginning of 2010 (Kraśniewski, 2011). It resulted, among others, in: referring particular fields of study to education areas. It was difficult to place some subjects in a given area because their scope often went beyond one area. Among such disciplines there is pedagogy, which provides future nursery school and primary school (first, second and third classes) teachers with proper education. Initially, pedagogy was included in the area of humanistic arts. After long discussion, according to the draft of the Order of the Minister of Science and Higher Education concerning areas of knowledge, fields of science and art and scientific and artistic disciplines of 31st March 2011, it was decided that pedagogy belongs to social sciences⁴.

Taking into consideration the specific nature of this subject, Polish teachers decided that pedagogy can function within one area of science and they started to develop standard education outcomes based on two areas: humanistic and social. According to the Order of the Minister of Science and Higher Education regarding standard education outcomes of 4th November 2011⁵ this resulted in approval of

³ <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/finansowanie/fundusze-europejskie/program-operacyjny-kapital-ludzki/krajo-we-ramy-kwalifikacji/>

⁴ <http://cml.pracodawcyrp.pl/upload/binaries/act/2897/Projekt%20rozporz%C4%85dzenia.pdf>

⁵ According to the approved Order “Subject of pedagogy belongs to education scope of humanistic and social sciences. Subject of pedagogy research is placed within the scope of idea (ideals, standards, obligations) as well as social practice. Pedagogy as education science combines these two perspectives: humanistic, which focuses on education, teaching and learning nature and social nature related to education environment, systems of education and tutelary institutions, their functions and

standard education outcomes for the field of pedagogy for studies of first and second degrees.⁶ This Order has been binding from 18th November 2011.

In the meantime, two more orders regarding higher education have come into effect. The Order of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 8th August 2011 (Dz.U. 2011 nr 179, poz. 1065.) concerning areas of knowledge, fields of science and art and scientific and artistic disciplines came into force on 1st October 2011, and the Order of the Minister of Science and Higher Education regarding National Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education of 2nd November 2011 (Dz.U. 2011 nr 253, poz. 1520.) which has been binding since 16th November 2011. It specifies education outcomes for individual areas of science (humanistic, social, exact, natural, technology, medical, agricultural) and areas of art and education outcomes aiming at achievement of engineering competence. Field outcomes were prepared for two areas of education: all-academic and practical.

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING EDUCATION OF NURSERY SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL (FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CLASSES) CONCERNING EDUCATION STANDARDS PREPARING TO PERFORM TEACHING PROFESSION

In Poland, education of teachers of nursery school and primary school (first, second and third classes) takes place within the field of *Pedagogy*. As mentioned previously, along with introducing new education rules in universities, it was necessary to adjust to new requirements of teaching education standards. The regulation regarding this issue was announced on 17th January 2012. In the Order of the Minister of Science and Higher Education concerning education standards which prepare for teaching profession⁷, general and specific outcomes, that a candidate for teacher should acquire in the course of studies, description of education process and organization, were specified. Five education modules containing particular education contents were described there, too. Each module (except for the first one, which refers to factual preparation, conducted according to education outcomes for pedagogy) contains the same three components which were

meaning in human being development. Pedagogy deals with understanding how people develop and learn through the whole life and critical analysis of knowledge and understanding nature within dimension of their individual and social consequences. Pedagogy contains analyses of education processes, systems and approaches and their cultural, social, political, historical and economic contexts.” Approved education outcomes are model ones which means that they can but do not have to be accepted as binding in the same form by universities. Legislative Journal 2011, No. 253, Item 1521.

⁶ Apparently, such standard outcomes were approved only in case of: pedagogy, philosophy, mathematics, instrumentalist, electronics.

⁷http://www.men.gov.pl/images/stories/pdf/20120117_standardy_ksztalcenia_dla_nauczycieli.pdf

assigned the minimum number of classes and the number of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits. The Order concerns obtaining teaching qualifications in case of all school subjects.

The first module has to be realized as a core module. The second module concerns psychological and pedagogic scope of preparation and it includes 90 hours of general preparation, 60 hours of psychological and pedagogic preparation for teaching on a given education stage or stages, and 30 hours of teaching practice. The third module (preparation within the didactics scope) contains 30 hours of didactics basics, 90 hours of subject or subjects didactics taught at a given education stage and 120 hours of teaching practice. With reference to the fact that "according to the latest amendment to Higher Education Act, two-specialty education, so far obligatory for first degree studies, was abandoned"⁸, in order to obtain teaching qualifications in a nursery school and first, second and third classes it is sufficient to receive a credit for subjects to be realized within the first three modules and have first degree studies completed.

The fourth module refers to teaching the second subject. This module does not contain the number of hours required to achieve proper factual preparation by a candidate. Such approach provides flexibility in establishing number of hours (there can be fewer hours in case of similar specialties, and more hours in case of those not related). Apart from that, the fourth module should include 60 hours of subject or subjects didactics at a given education stage and 60 hours of teaching practice.

The last – fifth module includes preparation within the scope of special pedagogy. This module is the most extensive one, because within its scope there are 140 hours of special psychological and pedagogic preparation, 90 hours of special didactics and 120 hours of teaching practice (Kaszulanis, 2012b).

In case of teachers of nursery school and primary school (first, second and third classes) – the so called first stage of education – preparation within the scope of the first module takes place during pedagogical studies and it includes preparation for teaching profession at nursery school and primary school (first, second and third classes).

Apart from subject contents provided for in the course of study, a candidate for a nursery school teacher and a teacher of younger classes should obtain the basic knowledge of psychology and pedagogy (including special pedagogy). Therefore, in case of subject contents, the following need to be taken into consideration:

- fundamental psychological terms and notions, personality theories, information regarding developmental and educational psychology, information concerning behaviour, stereotypes, prejudices, assertive, submissive and aggressive types of behaviour, stress and managing it, basic psychological concepts of a human being and their relation to interpretation of pupils' behaviour and various school situations, processes, types and barriers of communication, conflicts,
- information regarding education (its types, functions, structure,

⁸ <http://www.monitor.edu.pl/newsy/rozporzadzenie-w-sprawie-standardow-ksztalcenia.html>

characteristics, dynamics and basic educational environments, education methods and attitudes),

- information concerning school as institution of education (its nature, creating education atmosphere within a class, education methods and their effectiveness, difficulties and education mistakes, cooperation between school, families and other institutions),

- information concerning teaching profession (its nature, teacher's roles, development, model, responsibility, self-training, professional burning out),

- media and their role in education,

- international and local regulations regarding human rights, rights of children, students and disabled people, knowledge about standards and pathology, developmental, emotional, medicine, personality, addiction, eating disorders, health, physical and intellectual disability, communication, language disorders, comprehensive developmental disorders,

- pupils acquaintance (types of pupils, able pupils and pupils requiring special education, school failures),

- prevention issues,

- knowledge and skills of creating prevention programs, teacher's diagnosis, rules concerning psychological and pedagogic help and advice, dealing with pupils with special educational needs⁹.

Apart from that, every student who wants to acquire qualifications to work at nursery school or a primary school (first, second and third classes) should gain so called specialty knowledge and skills. They should be based on systemized knowledge of nursery school and early-school pedagogy and all acquired knowledge and competence should focus on child's development, care, cooperation with family and institutions acting for children and teenagers.

Additionally, after candidates complete their study, they should have the knowledge of the following issues:

- how physical, mental, ethical, social and emotional and motricity development of a child is proceeding,

- what laterality is,

- what is the role of playing in a child's development and what are its types,

- how child's adaptation in a peers' group and class is proceeding,

- what does protective and education work come down to,

- what types of developmental dissonance and disorders can occur in case of children,

- what is school maturity and how it can be measured,

- how to provide children with security¹⁰.

An important element of preparation for the teaching profession is mastering the knowledge of general didactics and detailed methodology knowledge

⁹ http://www.men.gov.pl/images/stories/pdf/20120117_standardy_ksztalcenia_dla_nauczycieli.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid.

and skills. Concerning general didactics, a student should have the knowledge of education goals, principles of didactics, teaching methods, forms and contents, organization of education process and pupils' work, classes and lessons planning, methods and techniques of work with children, didactics resources, education programs (their structure, standards, models) – subject, inter-subjects, author's class management styles. Moreover, a student should learn how to plan education activities for especially talented pupils, and those with special educational needs, what the nature of work in an integrated, therapy and special class looks like, and what inclusive and individual education is about. Apart from that, students should familiarize themselves with evaluation, control and assessment of education outcomes, acquire knowledge what a school assessment system is and what descriptive assessment is. Within the scope of didactics classes a student should learn how school system functions and what legal acts regulate its organization¹¹.

Based on general didactics information, a student should gain the knowledge concerning program basis for nursery school and first, second and third classes of a primary school and contemporary education concepts of a small child. Furthermore, a student should be able to conduct a class from the scope of Polish studies education (methods which help to shape child's readiness to read and write at nursery school and in younger classes to learn letters, read texts, have contact with a literary work, required reading discussion, learning about punctuation and orthography rules, shaping the ability to express thoughts in a coherent form while speaking and writing, stimulating child's drama expression, using language, logical and situational games, leading to communication development of a pupil, etc), mathematical education (methods of proper recognizing and calling spatial situations, set-work, using jetons and other manual auxiliary resources in math's teaching, counting within the scope of four calculations, solving text tasks, present calculations graphically, solving elementary geometry problems, etc.), education about environment (methods of natural environment observation and natural phenomena, arranging field classes, shaping ecology habits and respect for environment).

Furthermore, within the scope of detailed methodology, a student has to acquire several skills concerning:

- preparing classes in form of a synopsis, with properly formulated education goals (main and operational ones), using various methods of work with pupils, variety of didactics means, work forms and interesting class course,
- integrated system work,
- independently run meetings with parents,
- proper communication with children, school authorities and parents.
- learning motivation and encouragement methods, methods to keep pupils quiet, introducing order and obedience,
- selection of textbooks, educational packages and didactics aids,

¹¹ Ibid.

- preparing descriptive mid-term and final assessment,
- using various technical and plastic techniques,
- using various forms of musical initiative (singing, games involving physical movement and elements of music, group singing and playing, dance elements, methods of creative expression, etc.),
- recognizing worrying symptoms of children's behaviour and diagnosing them initially,
- quickly react to learning difficulties,
- work with exceptionally talented pupils,
- individualizing and adjusting pedagogic actions to children's needs and abilities (also children from national minorities, from immigrant families),
- proper physical exercises selection according to ability and physical fitness of pupils,
- running compensatory classes,
- develop pupils' social skills, ethical behaviour, communication competence and appropriate health, hygiene and cultural habits¹².

Apart from this variety of knowledge and skills that nursery school teachers and teachers of younger school classes should acquire, they should be aware of the fact that they are responsible for the pupils. A teacher must also realize that he is an authority and apply teaching ethics rules every day.

"New standards of teaching education focus on achieving practical skills required for the teaching profession, according to an assumption that theoretical knowledge should give support for a teacher while gaining practical experience"¹³. The aim of teaching practice "is gaining experience related to protective and educational role of a teacher, managing a group and evaluating individual pupil's needs and comparing the acquired psychological and pedagogic knowledge with pedagogic reality in practice"¹⁴. In comparison to education standards of 12th 2007, the issue of teaching practice has been defined precisely. In order to teach at nursery school or in younger classes of a primary school, a student does not have to complete a course leading to a master's degree. Knowledge acquired in the course of undergraduate studies (bachelor's degree) is sufficient and both study period and teaching practice are shorter. In spite of the fact that the Minister of Science and Higher Education assured that more emphasis will be placed on practical knowledge, taking into consideration 150 hours of teaching practice significant part of education will not be realized in the educational institution, but in university, especially as there is quite a lot of practical skills to acquire. Teaching education standards assume that teaching practice will include:

- familiarizing with the specific nature of work in nursery school and school, learning about the scope of tasks realized in a given protective-education institution,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ http://www.bibliotekako.pl/news.aid,1460,Nowe_standardy_ksztalcenia_nauczycieli.html

¹⁴ http://www.men.gov.pl/images/stories/pdf/20120117_standardy_ksztalcenia_dla_nauczycieli.pdf

work organization, carrying out the documentation,

- monitoring lessons and everyday work of teachers¹⁵,
- cooperation with practical teaching tutor,
- independent class giving and taking care of pupils as a class tutor,
- ability to use new media and information technologies,
- preparing required teaching practice documentation,
- discussing acquired experience with other students and teaching practice tutor,
- cooperation with the school educationalist, education psychologist and specialists working with pupils¹⁶.

Furthermore, it is assumed that teaching practice should be arranged by universities at various types of institutions, and as obligation, those places where a graduate has been prepared to work at. University should arrange teaching so that a student could participate in it continuously and in the middle of a year. In both cases, a student should have an opportunity to monitor, consult and give classes independently (Kaszulanis, 2012a).

Teacher's qualifications to work in a nursery school and first, second and third classes of a primary school, can be acquired in the course of post-graduate studies. It can be done in two ways: as preparation for teaching the second subject (then postgraduate studies should take into account contents assigned to module 4 and 5), and as preparation within the psychological and pedagogic scope and didactic for graduates who have covered factual preparation to teach the subject (give classes), and those who do not have covered psychological-pedagogic and didactic preparation (then modules 2 and 3 must be realized, with 270 hours of psychology, pedagogy and detailed didactics classes and at least 150 hours of teaching practice)¹⁷.

CONCLUSION

Educating teachers to work in nursery schools and primary school (first, second and third classes), according to the principles described above, has started in academic year 2012/2013. For the first time candidates for this profession were accepted without any selection, which has not been the best decision. In the future, this may result in the situation that profession which requires a lot of charisma and vocation will be practiced by casual people who will not realize the amount of responsibility they will have to accept. Teaching qualifications required to work at

¹⁵ The scope of observations is defined precisely within teaching education standards.

¹⁶ http://www.men.gov.pl/images/stories/pdf/20120117_standardy_ksztalcenia_dla_nauczycieli.pdf

¹⁷ http://www.men.gov.pl/images/stories/pdf/20120117_standardy_ksztalcenia_dla_nauczycieli.pdf

nursery schools and primary school (first, second and third classes) will be acquired after completing first degree studies, which may have negative effects. "Number of hours within the scope of modules anticipated in teaching education is inadequate to assumed general and detailed education outcomes. Individual modules were assigned such extensive scope of competences that their development becomes impossible, which makes students themselves to burden of responsibility for preparation" (Śliwerski, 2012). Result of the current education reform in universities (which so far has stirred up emotions and raised doubts) will be assessed in three years' time. We can only hope that candidates for the teaching profession will be critical with reference to the knowledge they will acquire in the course of their studies, and their goal will be to receive complete higher education. And during their work as teachers, they will constantly supplement and update their knowledge and strive for the latest solutions and ideas.

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