

### **Controlling of adolescents' behaviour by teachers**

The institutional nature of school implies certain forms of coercion, resulting from its formal organizational structure, to which pupils and teachers need to conform to a certain extent, since the collective nature of school education demands it. That is why, modern pedagogical literature<sup>1</sup> seeks optimal solutions, allowing to set the limits to freedom and coercion at school rather than try to realize utopian models, promoting complete freedom of behaviour. The work of J. Robertson<sup>2</sup> is a good example, since the author presents various methods of controlling students' behaviour, respecting the sense of students' dignity. "It may seem that there is a conflict between respecting a student as an autonomous individual and a student observing school discipline – which was pointed out by M. Łobocki, who writes further, "respecting students' individuality and ensuring they have wider freedom is not possible in a situation of their complete impunity at school and at home".<sup>3</sup> It thus seems that teachers' controlling activities in themselves do not constitute a danger to students' individual development, as long as they focus on supervising and correcting socially undesirable behaviour and not on stigmatizing the persons demonstrating such behaviour.

Although from the formal and organizational point of view most schools show a high degree of unification, schools do differ between one another in the composition of their pupils and teachers. That is why, one may expect differences in the manner of conducting controlling functions within separate schools. Thus, the major objective of the research conducted was to determine **to what extent teachers control various spheres of adolescents' lives**. With this aim in mind, in the period from October to February 2003, survey research was conducted in randomly selected schools, in which 590 pupils between 12 and 18 years of age participated together with 240 teachers.

In the research it was been assumed that **the degree of control** exercised by teachers concerns the frequency of supervising selected spheres of pupils' lives. Determining its value involved organizing 41 factors in an increasing sequence, which each respondent obtained through evaluating (using a scale from 0 to 4) the frequency of controlling the types of

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<sup>1</sup> An example that can be quoted here is the work edited by J. Danielewska, *Granice wolności i przymusu w edukacji szkolnej*, Kraków 2001, Wyd. UJ.

<sup>2</sup> J. Robertson, *Jak zapewnić dyscyplinę, ład i uwagę w klasie*, Warszawa 1998, Wyd. WSiP.

<sup>3</sup> M. Łobocki, *Trudności wychowawcze w szkole*, Warszawa 1989, Wyd. WSiP, p. 87-88.

behaviour from 41 spheres of life. Then, the values corresponding to the 10<sup>th</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> quartile), the 21<sup>st</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> quartile – median) and the 30<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> quartile) sphere were adopted in a growing sequence as variable distribution characteristics for the entire sample. In this way three distributions of results were obtained, referring to the least frequently controlled (1<sup>st</sup> quartile), the ones controlled with average frequency (2<sup>nd</sup> quartile) and the most frequently controlled spheres of adolescents' lives (3<sup>rd</sup> quartile). The results of this operation are demonstrated in chart No 1 presented below.

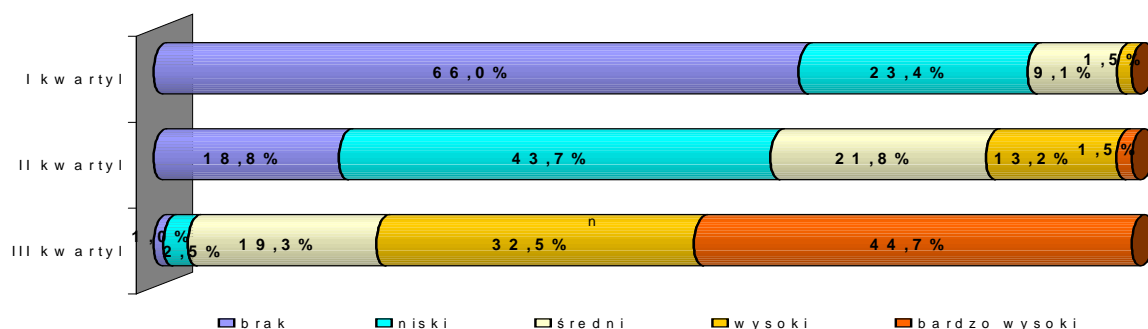
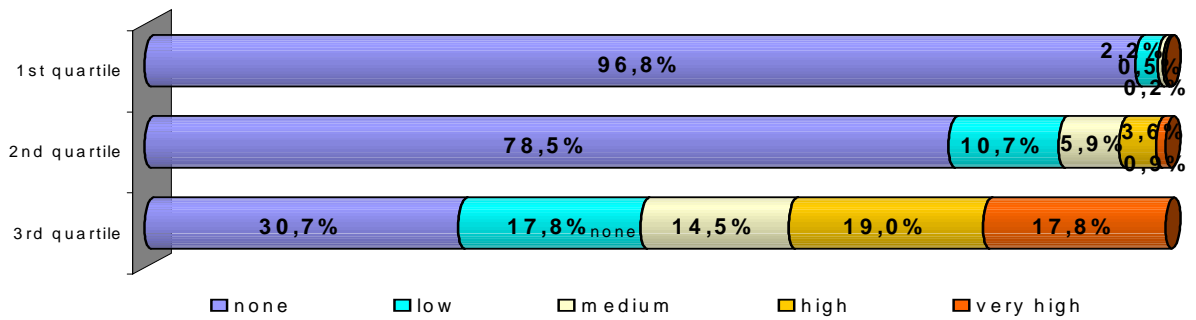


Chart No 1. Degree of control according to the teachers surveyed

The data on the chart show that most teachers control adolescent's behaviour to a high or very high degree, but that they restrict this controlling activity to very few spheres of behaviour (77% of the teachers surveyed in the distribution based on the 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile). However, if one assumes the values of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile to be the indication of the degree of control, then it appears that a half of the selected spheres organised in a growing sequence remain beyond teacher's control or are controlled to a low degree (2<sup>nd</sup> quartile: 63% of the teachers surveyed indicated lack of or low degree of control). **Consequently, one may assume that teachers quite frequently exercise supervision over adolescents' behaviour, but only in regard to selected spheres of behaviour.** As presented below, the supervised spheres concern most often the rules of behaviour at school. For the purpose of comparison, chart No 2 presents the data collected from adolescents.



**Chart No 2. Degree of teachers' supervision according to the adolescents surveyed**

Comparing the two sources of data demonstrates both certain similarities and differences. On the one hand, pupils' answers confirm the tendency declared by teachers to systematic control over only few spheres of life. On the other hand, when comparing both charts, it is evident that adolescents assign lower degree of control to teachers than it would appear from teachers' declarations. The statistical value of the differences observed is confirmed by tests of median conducted for particular pairs of distributions (1<sup>st</sup> quartile  $\chi^2=149$ ,  $v=0,436$ ,  $p=0,0001$ ; 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile:  $\chi^2=223,53$ ,  $v= 0,534$ ,  $p=0,0001$ ; 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile:  $\chi^2=60,74$ ,  $v= 0,298$ ;  $p=0,0001$ ). Probably the demonstrated difference results from the fact that either teachers mostly supervise adolescents in such a way that adolescents do not realize it, or that teachers' interest in adolescent behaviour actually does not occur so often. Another possibility is that adolescents do not want or are ashamed to be supervised by teachers and that is the reason why they are unwilling to admit to such experiences.

When analysing the degree of teachers' control over pupils, it was found that it also concerns a narrow group of spheres of adolescents' behaviour. It is thus interesting to determine which spheres of teenagers' lives become the subjects of interest on the part of teachers the most often and the least often. Chart No 4 presents the relevant data.

Chart No 4. Degree of control over particular spheres of adolescents' lives according to teachers

Spheres of adolescents' activities	Median	Average
Conduct during class	4	3.63
Manner of speaking	4	3.58
Attendance at class	4	3.57
Conduct during breaks	4	3.57
Conformity with social conventions	4	3.30
Preparation to classes	4	3.15
Behaviour towards peers	3	3.08
Cheating at tests	3	3.02
Checking the knowledge of a subject	3	3.01

Devastation of equipment	4	2.84
Smoking cigarettes	3	2.74
Maintaining personal hygiene	3	2.65
Taking drugs	3	2.45
Alcohol consumption	2	2.33
Conduct in public places	2	2.32
Obedience	3	2.23
Expressing one's outlook on life	2	2.20
Manner of dressing	2	1.98
Type of haircut and wearing of make-up	2	1.84
Type of newspapers and books read	1	1.52
Choice of school and occupation	1	1.35
Maintaining relationships with others	1	1.31
Computer literacy	1	1.28
Manner of listening to and type of music	1	1.08
Amount of free time	1	1.08
Place of spending free time	1	1.07
Television watching	1	0.98
Gambling	0	0.83
Type and amount of meals consumed	0	0.83
Manner of meals consumption	0	0.80
Selling things to others	0	0.69
Manner of obtaining money	0	0.68
Amount of time spent on sleeping	0	0.66
Lending things to others	0	0.65
Departures from home	0	0.63
Taking part in religious observances	0	0.62
Reason for and place to which they go out	0	0.57
Hours of returning home	0	0.57
Doing household chores	0	0.57
Manner of spending time with a boy-/girl-friend	0	0.56
Manner of spending own money	0	0.50

It is evident that teachers' attention concentrates mostly around the types of behaviour demonstrated by adolescents at school. These are in order of importance: conduct during class, manner of speaking (use of proper language), attendance at class, conduct during breaks, conformity with social conventions, preparation to classes and devastation of equipment. The spheres that are the least controlled ones include: manner of spending own money, doing household chores, reason for and place to which they go out and hours of returning home, amount of time spent on sleeping, amount type and manner of meals consumption, etc. On the one hand, it seems understandable, since teachers do not want to violate every family's right to privacy, and on the other hand, it could be perceived as an indication of a very low degree of teachers' interest in children's living conditions in their family environment, which in certain circumstances may be unfavourable from the point of a pupil's development.

Another surprising finding is the low degree of teachers' supervision over alcohol consumption by teenagers and over their behaviour in public places. Considering documented research<sup>4</sup> of relatively high alcohol consumption by young people in the area of former Szczecin voivodeship, it can be assumed that to a certain extent the responsibility for this state lies partly with teachers, who prefer not to get interested in what young people do after school and whether, by any chance, they do not consume it somewhere in the vicinity of school. The fact that out of the selected deviant types of behaviour only equipment devastation attracts teachers' close attention is very telling. It is probably due to the fact that cigarette smoking, drug taking, alcohol consumption or gambling do not constitute such serious problems directly to teachers, at least from the financial point of view. Pupils' comments confirm, unfortunately, the fact that teachers seldom pay attention to dangerous types of behaviour demonstrated by them.

Very few of the surveyed teachers declare supervising both adolescents' interests and the manner of spending their free time. Adolescents themselves confirmed these findings. If one looks at it as an indication of teachers' interest in the world of pupils' experiences, then the knowledge of teachers about their pupils is very little and from this perspective it seems that there is a long way before school starts forming the interests of its pupils. This must partly be the reason for the little appeal that after school activities hold to young people and low involvement of pupils in such activities. The current state of affairs may also have positive aspects. Leaving more freedom to teenagers in organising their leisure time may positively affect their self-development, since it creates an opportunity for self-expression and self-creation. One must not forget, however, that leaving this sphere entirely beyond any control carries the risk of teenagers engaging into destructive activities.

It seems then that for teachers school achievements of pupils constitute the sphere of greatest significance and controlling the remaining spheres of their behaviour is subjected mainly to that end. It might be an indication of a wider phenomena, in which teachers perceive themselves chiefly as educators, and only secondly as class tutors and then only within school walls, more precisely in the course of didactic process and lessons. It is undoubtedly connected to the dominance of teaching processes over upbringing, taking place in this institution. Nevertheless, this is an unfavourable phenomena, because it brings down the role of a teacher to a government official, since "teachers typically automatically join both these functions [the function concerning didactic processes and upbringing], trying at the

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<sup>4</sup> M. Krężel, Alkohol i związane z nim problemy w województwie szczecińskim, Szczecin 1997, Wyd. CD i DN.

same time to limit the understanding of upbringing to the obligations of teaching. (...) Pupils in turn – next to didactics and upbringing – would wish to enjoy closer individual contact with teachers outside of classes or in more informal environment, (...) a considerable group of pupils would see their class tutors in the roles of animators of social and cultural life in the school environment as well as in the roles of people maintaining closer contact with their parents”.<sup>5</sup>

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A. Olubiński, Podmiotowość roli nauczyciela i ucznia, Toruń 2001, Ed. A. Marszałek, p. 96.

**References:**

1. A. Olubiński, Podmiotowość roli nauczyciela i ucznia, Toruń 2001, Ed. A. Marszałek.
2. M. Krężel, Alkohol i związane z nim problemy w województwie szczecińskim, Szczecin 1997, Wyd. CD i DN.
3. An example that can be quoted here is the work edited by J. Danielewska, Granice wolności i przymusu w edukacji szkolnej, Kraków 2001, Wyd. UJ.
4. J. Robertson, Jak zapewnić dyscyplinę, ład i uwagę w klasie, Warszawa 1998, Wyd. WSiP.
5. M. Łobocki, Trudności wychowawcze w szkole, Warszawa 1989, Wyd. WSiP,