SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN POLISH SCHOOL
OF THE 21ST CENTURY – LEGAL BASIS
AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE

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Abstract: For years, the Polish school has taken priority to ensure safety for students at all educational stages. Legal regulations define safety aspects at school and internal procedures specify in detail how to deal with emergency situations. The aim of the article is to discuss and analyse legal acts and everyday practice in Polish schools in the area of student safety management.

Keywords: security, school, management, procedures.

Nowadays, great importance is attached to all issues related to security in the broad sense of the term. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the sense of security is one of the fundamental needs of the human being, whose satisfaction is a guarantee of proper functioning of the individual in all spheres: physical, mental and social. Properly and fully satisfied security needs also affect the behaviour of people and entire social groups, which in turn affects the stabilization of social life in a given area.

The purpose of this article is to discuss and analyse legal acts and school practice in the aspect of ensuring the safety of students at educational facilities in Poland.

Currently, the surrounding reality is characterised by the existence of many threats that cause anxiety and uncertainty. In order to eliminate various threats, and at the same time to provide people with a sense of security, it is necessary to fully identify them, because only knowing exactly what is undesirable, it is possible to monitor it and to prevent its occurrence and consequences.

Different definitions of safety are given in the scientific literature. R. Zięba (1989) is of the opinion that safety can be defined as a state and feeling of security and freedom from threats. A different approach is presented by C.F. de Vaugelas, who considers safety to be "justified or not convinced that one is beyond the reach of any threat" (Delumeau, 1998, p.11).

According to J. Marczak, it is difficult to introduce a uniform definition due to "a huge, all-encompassing range of safety categories, very difficult, if not impossible to describe and define concisely" (Stańczyk, 1995, p.15). Security is most often perceived in terms of the absence of threats, which on the one hand refers to the guarantee of physical survival, and on the other hand ensures the fulfilment of a minimum of other social needs.

Security has its purpose:

–   ensuring the existence of a given entity,

–   survival of the subject,

–   development of the entity.

The above categories are considered to be the safety functions in the literature.

Moreover, safety of a subject is connected with distinguishing values, i.e. features that influence its existence. As J. Prońko writes, considering safety as a subjective state of a subject is possible only in a situation when it is real. It results from the fact that the abstract subject does not feel anything, so in its case it is not possible to talk about safety or threat. Thus, security concerns only real entities, which may indicate their own state of security or threat (Prońko, 2007, p. 9). Security entities are considered to be "all individuals having their own interests and expressing ambitions to pursue those interests" (Koziej, 2006, p. 7).

When analysing the definitions of security, the following aspects concerning the term are observed: lack of a sense of threat, feeling of certainty of objective and subjective nature. Security occurs when there is no real threat (objective factor) and no subjective feeling at the same time (Prońko, 2008, p. 103).

The perception of safety is strongly associated with the subjective evaluation of phenomena occurring around or within the subject. "As long as in his opinion these phenomena have little negative impact on his existence, he feels safe. Which anxieties he considers to be insignificant depend above all on his assessment of his own abilities" (Prońko, 2008, p. 103).

Education is regulated by a number of legal provisions, and the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, treats education as one of the priority civil rights. The right to education is guaranteed by Article 70 section 1, which states that "Everyone has the right to education". Until the age of 18, it is compulsory.

The execution of the citizens right to study is pursued by the education system established for this purpose, understood as "the education system in force in a given society, including established for this purpose various types of institutions of a caring, educational, and didactic nature, as well as all institutions supporting, supervising and coordinating educational activity and the functions performed by educational institutions, roles played and activities performed" (Janus, 2006, p. 169). The aforementioned system is complex and focused on many tasks, thus management thereof may be challenging. The functioning of education is regulated by many legal acts, as well as regulations and orders. Similarly, a number of acts guarantee the safety of students at school. The most important of these is the Act on the Education System of 7 September 1991 (Journal of Laws of 2018, items 1457, 1560, 1669 and 2245, and of 2019,

items 730 and 761). Pursuant to the provisions of the aforementioned act and the Statute, the director of each educational institution is obliged to develop rules for the safety of pupils in the institution as well as procedures to be followed in the event of crisis.

The Regulations concerning students behaviour at school and ensuring their safety include the following sections: health and safety, the rules of behaviour of students staying on school premises during and after classes, and principles concerning the use of school premises, and equipment.

In the first section, the basic rights of pupils to protection of their health and safety, as well as to first aid in the event of an accident or sudden illness, are considered in detail. Then, the description of pupils' safety responsibilities at school, including the rules of behaviour during breaks, in the locker room or when entering or leaving classrooms is provided. The rules also contain provisions on what students are not allowed to do on the premises of the facility.

Another section of the regulations concerns the rules of behaviour of students staying on the school premises during and after classes. It sets forth not only the rules for the safe stay of students on the school grounds, but also it obliges teachers to bear full responsibility for students in this area.

The last section contains the rules of using school premises, and equipment, including subject offices, cloakrooms, canteens, common rooms or libraries.

Crisis management strategies in the school constitute a crucial element in any educational institution related to the safety of students.

Procedures and strategies are a tool for effective response to difficult or surprising educational situations. Teachers are particularly responsible to respond to disturbing signals and behaviours. The school is obliged to identify the problem at its initial level and take preventive (anticipatory), educational (interventional) and sometimes also rehabilitation (corrective) actions. Strategies are a dynamic structure.

It is considered advisable to present an exemplary scheme of crisis management at schools in Poland, which would facilitate the everyday practice in Polish schools.

1. A general scheme for crisis management in schools

School emergencies are important events with serious consequences for the lives and health of pupils, teachers and school staff (e.g. flood, fire, construction disaster, epidemic, terrorist attack).

General scheme for responding to various emergencies:
− pre-crisis period, during which pre-emptive action is taken in the facility,
− crisis and post-crisis period, during which the school and its staff intervene,
− corrective action is taken after the crisis.

Preventive actions include: collecting all information on the scale of phenomena that have any impact on the fact that a crisis has occurred (e.g. a crisis affecting the school and its staff); identifying potential victims; obtaining information on assistance infrastructure that could be

applied; determining available and effective forms and possibilities of assistance provision; developing a scheme of actions, i.e. specifying procedures related to notification, protection and mental support; regulating the forms and principles of cooperation with potential partners (police, fire brigade and others); appointing members of the School Crisis Team; establishing the place of meeting and meetings of the ECC; conducting training and exercises in the area of applying procedures and taking actions resulting from crisis plans; printing posters, leaflets, scripts; preparing school leaders and School Crisis Team for actions during a crisis; preparing for the psychological consequences of exposure to post-traumatic stress; informing about the importance of the role of mutual assistance; use of specialist assistance; considering potential risk of destructive reactions and behaviours.

Intervention measures include, in particular: protection, management, bonding; formal actions which consist in notifying superior bodies; convening a meeting of the School Crisis Team; collecting data on the event, preliminary diagnosis and analysis; coordinating information; classifying problems; setting priorities in accordance with the scale: moderately important/very important/extremely important; assessing current needs; providing information; coordinating available human resources and possible assistance; organising and providing ad hoc psychological support through meeting victims and suppressing sharp responses and behaviours associated with the crisis.

Corrective actions are: to coordinate cooperation with the institutions involved in the crisis; to make ongoing needs assessments – i.e. to identify how the event has affected the mental state of pupils, staff and parents, as well as the overall functioning of the facility; to develop a crisis counselling programme aimed at taking care of pupils and parents; to coordinate the work of those involved in providing support to those affected, i.e.:
  - distributing tasks,
  - monitoring stress levels,
  - building relationships and connections,
  - gathering and sharing information on the effectiveness of actions,
  - continuous collection and organisation of materials,
  - referral of victims to appropriate specialists.

2. Implementers of crisis measures and tasks to be performed by individual institutions

The implementation of crisis measures covers directly all institutions involved in the crisis, as well as supervising, intervening and supporting institutions. The school director collects information about the scale of the crisis and then decides to undertake joint assistance activities with external resources.

The school is responsible for internal school activities, to which it is a party: appointing members of the School Crisis Team; creation of new or adaptation of existing procedures in the event of the occurrence of specific events; taking intervention actions by educators, teachers, pedagogues, school psychologists in order to respond to the occurrence of critical educational

events; turning for help and intervention to institutions of the justice system, police, municipal police, fire brigade, ambulance service; initiating cooperation with general and specialist support facilities; organising school forms of assistance and support by enabling the use of pedagogical consultations, socio-therapeutic classes.

General support centres (i.e. Department of Education, Education Board, Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre, etc.) are responsible for providing support in crisis actions according to their competences; exercising substantive supervision; monitoring the effectiveness of actions; education; coordinating specialist support provided.

3. Responsibilities of school staff in case of critical school events

Nurse: Providing pre-health first aid; identifying and reporting the need for medical assistance to the victim; identifying people accompanying the injured pupils on their way to hospitals; giving information on the possible consequences of the incident for health; providing doctors and medical services with key information on the situation and condition of the injured persons.

Educator, teachers: providing information to students in the classroom and raising the subject during discussions; quickly identifying students who need a piece of advice, help, and support, and informing psychologist and teacher about this fact; escorting stimulated and shaken up pupils to the place of assistance; monitoring condition of pupils in the aftermath of the incident; accompanying pupils injured and sick; involving pupils, if possible, in constructive or desirable forms of activity; reducing the effects of incident immediately after the crisis.

Pedagogue, psychologist: providing psychological support and coordination of related activities, including reporting the need for support to other persons/institutions in this respect; continuous provision of information as a basic form of emergency support; continuous contact with educators and teachers; keeping records of pupils requiring support and assistance; providing information to parents/legal guardians about the need for support and encouraging their continuation outside the school; helping parents to understand their children's reactions to a crisis event; helping school staff to cope with their own reactions to the situation.

School Secretariat: keeping permanent contact with members of the School Crisis Team and informing them about the places and dates of the team's meetings; directing the intervention services to the place of the incident, informing those interested about the topography of the building, specific features of the situation; directing telephone calls and inquiries from the media to the headmaster of the school.

4. Scheme of intervention measures to be taken

The director of the institution is obliged to: establish and confirm the type of event; obtain key information (what happened, who was involved, who witnessed the event, how it started); notify the police, fire brigade, ambulance service (if required); start school procedures: evacuation, fire-fighting, bombing, other (depending on the incident); set up a School Crisis

Team; call on the support facility; notify the facility staff by announcement or in any other possible way; isolate people who were exposed to danger; prevent disinformation and chaos; make sure that all other pupils and staff are safe; manage school entry/exit controls; monitor the situation; manage those involved in the incident; systematically inform the police/fire brigade of the course of events and possible changes in the situation; collect witnesses and victims of the incident, as well as key information for further action; organise and provide pre-medical first aid to injured people while ensuring the safety of participants; controll the presence of students and staff; appoint a person responsible for informing and notifying the students' parents/guardians; commission the site security and the traces created; cooperate with the police or relevant services while solving the problem; direct the staff's cooperation with the services; notify the intervention services, staff, parents/guardians of the situation stabilisation; initiate corrective action.

5. Contact with the media in a crisis situation

- the facility manager has the opportunity to establish cooperation with the media representatives before the occurrence of crisis,
- the principal works closely with the Department of Education and the School Crisis Team to prepare official communications to the media,
- the principal selects a person from the school staff or crisis team who will be directly responsible for contact with journalists,
- only the person designated by the head of the school can provide information to the media,
- the Director will designate a place at which the media will be met and information provided during the crisis,
- the importance of paying particular attention to ensuring that journalists receive information from the designated staff and do not engage in discussions with students.

In addition to the general crisis management procedures outlined above, a number of specific procedures are being developed in schools. They cover the following areas: conducting teachers in situations where children and young people are at risk of demoralisation; dealing with situations when there is a suspicion that student use / is under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants on school property; dealing with teacher (or other school employee) who: notices a student smoking cigarettes; finds drug resembling substance on school property or suspects a student to carry such a substance.

Specific procedures include also the teacher's conduct: when violent behaviour is revealed; towards a student who committed a punishable act or crime or was of a victim of such an act; with regard to justification for student absenteeism and enforcement of systematic school attendance; in the event of a student's illness or malaise; in the event of a student's accident; as well as activities connected with administration of medication; procedures for responding to

the presence of strangers entering school grounds; the response procedure – in case of the student's attempted suicide; the response procedure: in case of a bomb incident and a stranger at school.

Based on this example, the safety procedures developed by educational establishments address many of the areas and risks that students may encounter at school.

Poland is a country where lot of attention is paid to ensuring safety in schools. Psychologists assume that the sense of security is one of the basic needs in the hierarchy of human needs, because "it belongs to the group of higher, existential, and therefore basic and it is a prerequisite for maintaining the balance of the organism, prevents a sense of internal conflict, is conducive to the proper personal, intellectual, psychological and physical development, enables a sense of belonging, stability, peace and confidence" (Janus, 2006, p. 128).

There are number of legal acts in force that define in detail the areas and guidelines for schools in terms of providing students with a sense of security. Despite facing many problems, the educational authorities and schools in Poland are prepared to take action in emergency situations and react efficiently to any signs of deterioration in the safety of students at school. Providing students with a constant sense of security is a priority task for any educational institution that takes action to maintain stability and security in all its dimensions. "Nowadays, for people living in the era of terrorism and conflicts, the need for security has become equal to physiological needs. In the modern, alternative definition of the concept of security, it is understood as a process in which the level of security is constantly changing and cannot be maintained at a single level" (Kubiak, 2007, pp. 518-519). Despite this understanding and truly changing external conditions, educational institutions strive to maintain a constant, high level of student safety.

As mentioned earlier, teachers bear full responsibility for the pupils at school, whether during lessons, on-call duty, breaks between lessons, or during trips and excursions outside the school. The scope of teacher's duties concerning the obligation to ensure safety of students during classes organized by the school is contained in the Teacher's Charter, as well as in the provisions of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 21 May 2001 on framework statutes for public kindergarten and public schools what should be specified in detail in the statutes of the school/ kindergarten/institution. The statutory obligations set forth in the Teacher's Charter are as follows:

Art. 6 "The teacher is obliged:

1) reliably perform tasks related to the position entrusted to him/her and the basic functions of the school: didactic, educational and caring, including tasks related to ensuring the safety of students during classes organized by the school,
2) support each student in their development,
3) strive for full personal development,

4) educate and educate young people in the love of their Homeland, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, in the atmosphere of freedom of conscience and respect for every human being,

5) take care of the development of moral and civic attitudes among students in accordance with the idea of democracy, peace and friendship between people of different nations, races and world views".

Anyone who does not properly perform the aforementioned tasks shall be subject to disciplinary liability, as provided for in Article 75 section 1 of the Teacher's Charter.

To conclude the above considerations, it can be stated that it is the school's responsibility (as a part of the education system) to ensure safety of students in all situations at school. The article refers to legal acts in force in Poland and shows practical solutions that are a response to the need to ensure students' security on the premises. It was pointed out that specially developed procedures allow undertaking quick responses to emerging threats, which directly translates into the effectiveness of both preventive and intervention measures.

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