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“Education for Tomorrow” in the New Polish Order: Images of the Post-monocentric Global Society

Abstract

In the past decade, the inventory of concepts from the sphere of educational, social and political writings has been enriched with the new concept of the role of education in the *post-communist* transformation in Poland and other countries of Middle and Eastern Europe.

Polish membership in the European Union has contained a long list of various social, cultural, education and/or political problems related to Polish accession to the European Community. In recent years after the events of 1989, until the Polish accession to the EU, a mismatch between the system of education and the system of market economy has become a universal phenomenon in Poland. Unfortunately, there are also signs indicating that the educational expansion does not mean a superior role of the human factor in the socio-economic development of society. As a result, the young generation manifest dissatisfaction and very often frustration generated by their difficulties in fulfilling their social and professional aspirations.

This paper discusses selected social aspects and consequences of increased possibilities of transforming educational and economic reality in Post-communist Poland, at the time of the global asymmetry.

Constant search for solutions to the problem of young people’s successful preparation for work and life in the market economy of the 21st century, as well as for their proficiency in maintaining contacts with financial institutions constitutes focal interest of this draft. It includes analyses of the possible development of social infrastructure, which is bound to shape ‘the education for tomorrow’.

Key words: *education for tomorrow, transformation, education, democracy and market economy.*

Let us share an obvious ascertainment. The modern world (rules, values, education, economy, norms of traditional behaviour, etc.) is changing more rapidly than educational standards in all schools. In this respect, our awareness of the unfolding developments may furnish the future generations with tools necessary for the survival in the altered surroundings.

Social sciences are expected to design a scheme for the development of the post-industrial society and, above all, to forge its methodological principles. There is an urgent need for establishing intelligible criteria allowing us to determine the level of development and the characteristics of the composition of the desired type of society. These guidelines are anticipated to characterize the lifestyle of the members of the 21st century society, as well as to forecast fashion and improve its qualities.

Social and economic advancement has traditionally been measured by the value of the Gross National Product. The significance of other non-economic, but equally essential factors has rarely been emphasised. It is evident that the state of Polish society calls for debates on the quality of life with particular weight attached to the structure of cognitive, evaluative and empirically useful factors, capable of approximating anticipation of economic, moral, intellectual and even cultural aspects of people's existence in the new circumstances of the new century (cf. Muszyńska, 1978, pp. 134–137).

There has only been a decade since the political changeover in Poland. However, a bulk of citizens seems to display some uneasiness and uncertainty about how to assess their own standing and prospects, remaining *de facto* stranded at cross-roads.

At the outset of the decade there were some delusive estimations as to how Poland with other East European societies, unchained and free of total control, would display some characteristics typical of Western societies. The disappointment among experts as well as common people flooded the country with questions about the development of the post - communist society with its political structure, lifestyles, social organisation, economic condition, etc.

A couple of years ago Professor Mokrzycki relevantly stated that the communist social matrix, operative for nearly half a century, had determined the constitution of many social aspects with such a force that it became evident that the remnants of the most massive experiment of the 20th century would be much more difficult to eradicate than it had been anticipated. With the introduction of the communist social and economic order, the entire range of traditional mechanisms, such as property rights of free market economy was replaced with arrangements based on a newly introduced principle of social justice and equality, merged with the idea of central planning. As a result, we have witnessed economic degradation within

several social groups. These phenomena have been described many times with the conclusion that the deviation had its roots in economic exploitation and social derivation. However, there is another important dimension to this phenomenon, particularly significant in the light of the crack of the system. It is the economic and social privileges that, although adequate solely to the bygone system, are considered by many to be indispensable for calibrating 'justice' or 'injustice' in the new, free market economy. Miscellaneous privileges are still widely taken for granted and perceived as an organic right for all, becoming an axiological equivalent of economic success (Mokrzycki, 1991, pp. 8–9; cf. Bielska, Radziejewicz-Winnicki, Roter, 2005).

Under these circumstances, the process of post-communist transformation does not bear much resemblance to conversion projects drafted in the subject matter literature. It is difficult to assess them impartially, however, which is due to incomplete data as well as to further governing factors. For instance, the post-communist modernisation has taken completely different trajectory from the one sketched in the projects. The modernisation designed by social democrats was rejected right at the beginning of the 90s, as Professor Jacek Kochanowicz rightly concludes in his outstanding essay (Kochanowicz, 1998, pp. 23–37).

The ideology of the post-communist transformation questions the West European principles of a protective state, which is not driven by the aspirations to social safety, but rather wastes its potentials on the battle for assets necessary to foot the bill. In the end, after the rejection of the 'developing state' model, a neo-liberal project was put into practice (Kochanowicz, 1998; Szmagałski, 1996, pp. 47–53). 'Under these circumstances, it is assumed that both in Poland and in other countries of the region there will prevail an economic system which is bound to incorporate the co-existing local capitalist enclaves with international corporations eager to afford special protection of the state. This, in turn, will create a state that is weak, inefficient and susceptible to bribery. Its social policy will be characterised by a wide range of redistribution, accompanied, however, by inadequate and inept services. A transition towards a more effective model is assuredly not out of question and to a certain extent it is already taking place. However, the process is inevitably lengthy, painful and evolutionary rather than revolutionary by nature' (Kochanowicz, 1998, p. 36). The argument must be supported by the economic and psycho-cultural context of all social changes, which come into effect together with the redefinition of formal relations between people, between institutions as well as between people and institutions, creating unused paths, unprecedented regulations and newly-sprung procedures. Property rights, tax law, free elections, freedom of establishing political parties and other organisations constitute just part of the new reality. Successful attempts at their implementation, however, depend

on the existing attitudes, beliefs, preferences and prevalent values of people, who may be at the stage either mentally tailored to the rapidly changing system or completely unprepared (cf. Wilk, 2002).

Capitalism is commonly portrayed as a system allowing absolute freedom in pursuit of life and career objectives, both by individuals and by social groups. Independent thinking and autonomous actions, self-reliance and self rule also seem to lie at the core of the concept of capitalism. Therefore, it is expected to evoke a spirit of innovations, initiative and ubiquitous competition, which in turn elicits permanent craving for success and unconditional pragmatism of every single action.

Having briefly outlined the ethos of a typical capitalist society, we are aware of the distance between its principles and the historically, geographically and culturally conditioned canons of our mentality (Miszalska, 1997, p. 57). The distance, therefore, extenuates the need for social sciences, including pedagogy, to introduce some institutional mechanisms designed to change some cultural and mental patterns, thus internalising the values and standards already well rooted into the fabric of a contemporary post-industrial society (Wróbel, 1995, pp. 14–17; cf. Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1998, pp. 23–39).

We have emphasised the importance of economic factors to indicate that the global economic co-operation originates in the evolution of contemporary societies. It can be interpreted as an after-effect of the introduction of the right to freedom, the right to migration and a free flow of commodities and property. Artificial or arbitrary barriers hindering or restraining the tendency are bound to be eventually removed. Consumption has become a single powerful and significant mechanism, which formulates the identity of a contemporary human being. Buying, investing, producing, administering and consuming goods, together with the dependence of services have become a modern tool for establishing and substantiating people's identity in the *universum* of social space.

Commercial consumption constitutes an axis for crystallizing life strategies and individuals' self-awareness. Its accessibility and wholly tangible dimensions make it available to masses, who by exercising their choices manifest their hierarchy of needs, preferences and tastes. Furthermore, these choices reflect the social status and mental condition of individuals, which then affect their either disapproving/destructive or approving/creative attitude towards their new social-cultural status quo (Krajewski, 1997, pp. 18–21; cf. Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1989).

In the unseasoned reality, pedagogy is obliged to prepare young people for prosperous existence in the society embedded in information technology. Experts puzzle over the determinants of the present and future society, over the inevitable changes in the existing educational strategies fashioned out of experiences of the

EU countries, at the same time weighing benefits against the possible dangers (Bogaj, 2000; Pachociński, 1999; Pilch, 1999; Denek, Bereźnicki, Świrko-Pilipczuk, 2000; Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2000; Aleksander, 1998 and others).

There exist numerous expectations for didactics to restore universal and communal values in pedagogy and other educational disciplines. Moreover, school instructions should involve such axiological circumstances which would encourage pupils to recognise, accept, experience and respect the values. In this respect, all the participants of the educational process - pupils, teachers, parents, local governments – are required to attain some axiological sensitivity. The reformed school at every stage of the educational process should put more emphasis on modelling the individual's qualities indispensable for accomplishing social competence and adequate to the post-industrial reality (Denek, 2000, pp. 7–8). This question has been very accurately addressed by Professor Stanisław Palka: 'Systematic, ideological changes introduced to Polish pedagogy and didactic publications at the turn of the 80s and 90s of the 20th century have triggered the birth of new alignments in didactics. The process has been far from being effectuated smoothly and ubiquitously. The didactics in the former system used to be a far more practical discipline, with little nonacademic and ideological influence. This saved it from criticism throughout the transitional period in Poland and in consequence left many under illusion that this discipline, having been so roundly shaped in the past, is still practised in accordance with the old principles. However opportunist it may seem from a practical point of view, it must also be considered as an impediment to the development of academic concepts in didactics and ensuing decline of its significance in the group of pedagogical disciplines. Considering this, I would like to voice my concerns apropos the impulses and developmental strategies for the discipline. The new impulses are, in my opinion, closely connected with the new approach in the discipline of didactic knowledge, to the development of pedagogy, methodology of pedagogical research and auxiliary disciplines, to specifically didactic research, to research on the borderline of didactics and practice. Developmental strategies, on the other hand, would mean giving birth to didactics oriented theoretically and practically, thus creating didactic meta-theory' (Palka, 2000, p. 26).

Educational system in the majority of countries is embedded in a similar organisational framework (primary schools, secondary schools, higher education as well as comparable duration of particular stages). The content of the frames may, however, significantly differ. Our educational system has been continuously criticised without keeping in mind the obvious fact emphasised by Professor Czesław Banach: 'school is not and will never be a remedy for every ailment. Its noticeable weaknesses such as levelling educational chances take their roots from faulty social policies.

The model of a modern school in Poland is far below expectations. Despite the changes, it is still characterised by a high level of centralisation, a low level of communal decision-making and inflexible management. The prerogatives of the School Council at intervals increase and decrease in volume. The correlation between the management and teachers' trade unions, head teachers and their superiors is subject to frequent fluctuations, as well.

The reconstruction of the mutating, but still ineffective school model should mean departing from the deficient method of instructing and commanding in favour of regulatory/task procedures, which encourage self-regulating mechanisms, the incorporation of pedagogical, sociological and psychological research and the implementation of novel experiences of Polish and foreign schools' (Banach, 1999, p. 3).

Professor Lech Witkowski, addressing education in the form of a quality of social sphere at the beginning of the past decade, courageously and judiciously declared that the diverse types of criticism dealt out to schools and various educational systems have begun to be interspersed with the type of rationalisation, which refuses to perceive school's indisposition outside the context of social environment. Therefore, authentic faultfinding, genuine humanisation of teaching contents and classroom relations, stressing the importance of pupils' teachers' and parents' participation in educational processes, effective stimulation of personal development of young people and opening them to broader, universal cultural contexts, are all evidently applicable only together with the analysis of mechanisms and structures of social reality. Criticising pedagogy is thus understood as criticising society itself. The lack of independence in judgement or moral courage and pervasive reluctance to take social initiative leave their mark on the climate and the outcome of education (Witkowski, 1991, p. 141). Educational discipline at the crossroads of political transformation has been particularly affected. Traditional values and research principles have lost their original connotations having become devoid of their only seemingly unlimited potential.

The resultant vacuum calls for intensive search for new solutions and opportunities (Denek, 1998, pp. 11–12; Lewowicki, 1993; cf. Syrek, 1995a, pp. 85–92; Adamski, 1993-Marzec, Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1998; Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1999, Ferenz, Nowosad, 2004, and others).

The expected modernisation procedures may, according to many experts, be associated with the introduction of educational reforms, thoroughly disputed by Professor Tadeusz Lewowicki. At that point, we would like to quote an authoritative opinion voiced by the author of numerous dissertations promoting the introduction of the new educational ideology: 'The introduction of enforcement of an ideology leads to procedures altering the educational system. New, competitive,

alterative ideologies encourage a total, holistic transformation. Educational policies tend to emphasise the importance of tasks and objectives of schooling proceedings, which in turn requires ideological reorientation of teachers or even their replacement. An accompanying therapy may involve modifications in the syllabus, amendments to teaching methods and the reorganisation of instruction procedures, together with the reconstruction of administration and management. There have been many instances of the introduction of holistic reform strategies in various countries. The modern history education in Poland has featured such acts on several occasions, as well.

Circumstances in which reforms do not reflect new ideological visions, but are rather designed to reinforce the existing ideology, call for a miscellaneous form of segment reforms, also referred to as 'insular', 'mosaic' or 'perfecting'. They usually affect selected domains, not always the most crucial. They are frequently aimed at making an impression of thoughtfulness and concern rather than at the effectuation of a real change. Obviously, these types of amendments may frequently prove to be highly beneficial (e.g. those intending to change learning-teaching methods).

All these reforming methods are characterised by their instrumental character and display servitude either to a political establishment or to an ideology. It is a situation in which remedial strategies are initialised by politicians or educational administration. Pedagogical ideologies are fabricated specifically for the use of reformers. Strategies are interwoven with tactical trickery, ideologies (or their makeshift variants) intermingle with huge appetites for immediate profits. The incorporation of academic argumentation merely provides these political and administrative initiatives with the necessary legitimisation. The sophisticated onomatology of the featuring of well-known names of politicians or educational authorities are intended to facilitate social acceptance and to generate a favourable decor.

The account of ideology and reforming strategy presented in this study undergoes further complications under certain circumstances. The educational system of Poland is marked by a creation of educational ideology, including the diversification of ideologies (similar to the diversification of pedagogical theories, which proves the existence of development of thought devoted to education). In post-industrial societies, pluralism is perceived as a manifestation of modern pedagogy. Having said that, it is also true that holistic and radical reforms are practically unworkable due to financial constraints, poor condition of teaching personnel and the scarcity of clear concepts and strategies' (Lewowicki, 1994, pp. 12–13).

It is becoming a common truth in the civilised world that children should be taught to exercise conscious and rational attitudes to the problems of nature, society and culture. As individual didactic disciplines gain academic disposition,

local distinction fades. For that reason the didactic process should nowadays be far less concerned with the passing on of fixed chunks of knowledge and formal, inflexible instruction. Pupils should rather acquire new cognitive and moral competence, necessary for a prosperous survival as citizens of a liberal republic. They should learn how to independently effectuate their own pursuits, ambitions and beliefs in the context of civil rights (cf. Ekiert-Grabowska, Oldroyd, 1998; Ekiert-Grabowska, 2000).

The plain truth advocated by many authoritative Polish pedagogues is seldom reflected in the decisions made by authorities responsible for practical implementations. The undergoing analyses and discussions form a series of urgent questions asked in order to obtain competent explanations from highly qualified – we trust – civil authorities responsible for shaping and for implementation of educational policies in our country. In the last years, several dissertations have been published. We would like to indicate just a few here: Juraś-Krawczyk, Śliwerski, 2000; Denek, Zimny, 2000; Kwieciński, 2000; Lewowicki, Zajac, 1998; Szymański, 1998; Śnieżyński, 1998; Nalaskowski, 1999; Nikitorowicz, Sobeczki, 1999; Przyszczypkowski, 1999; Śliwerski, 1998; Łomny, 1998; Juszczyk, 2000 and others.

The new state of affairs lends itself very well to alternative educational programmes in the field of new theories and research models. On the one hand, they are composed of bitter criticism of the existent evolvement of theory in domestic pedagogy. On the other hand however, instead of forming a national debate over alternative education, they appeal for a practical and pre-vidistic function of contemporary pedagogy (cf. Piekarski, Śliwerski, 2000, p. 13).

The representatives of Polish academic pedagogy are capable of supplying the decision-makers with a growing number of thorough pedagogical estimations based on accurately applied research diagnostics (Marzec-Holka, 1990). It is a fair assumption that the cultural dimension of the aforementioned reformation has been underestimated. The recognition of its proportions should involve furnishing the local communities with new, adaptive values concurrently with an attempt at emptying the social consciousness of inconsistencies and discrepancies in standard cultural, social and vocational aspirations formed in the past century. The shape of educational aspirations and accompanying values calls for a thoroughgoing reorientation. Thus, there is hope that education and educational disciplines will be capable of active participation in forging and implementing of such transformation strategies, which will promote modernisation of traditional social structures (Frąckowiak, 1998, pp. 13–37; Trempała, 1997, pp. 119–137; Syrek, 1995b; Przeclawska, Rowicki, 2000 and others).

Remittal procedures, forms of support and self-support assistance, coordinated by educational disciplines among others, will sanction the creation of a citizen-

friendly society. The development will be accomplished by the introduction of a series of experiments. The prospects will possibly reconstruct our social consciousness and self-awareness, offering previously verified practical solutions. There are numerous instances, such as the promotion of progress-friendly ideas (archetypes of a postindustrial society) in scientific propaganda. The reconstruction of some elements of public consciousness would frame the main objective advocated in popular texts. One example would be promoting initiative models among pupils and through this framing favourable circumstances for the education of future economists and managers (Radziejewicz-Winnicki, 2000, pp. 63–65; Łaniec, 2000).

The first stage of the enterprise would constitute the instituting of a diagnosis and the betterment of the state of consciousness in selected social groups in the context of acceptance or disapproval towards new forms of thinking, behaving and performing in the market-oriented codes of economic development in our country. Even fragmentary assessment of the state of consciousness in groups of pupils may well be sufficient for the construction of a diagnostic framework workable on society as a whole (Haber, 1995, p. 88). Diversified courses initiated in one of the 'initiative' programmes, which link psychology, sociology and economy, may possibly find their ways to every school in our country in the near future. Are they going to focus on the skill of survival in the new, ever-changing reality? Professor Zbigniew Modrzewski, the co-ordinator of the Stefan Batory Fund programme, assures that 'it is initiative and efficiency training, although not strictly addressed at future entrepreneurs, but devoted to animating creativity and modifying pupils' mentality from passive to more active forms. The programme, introduced so far to 150 diverse kinds of schools, has been contrived with the assistance of the Batory Fund, Know How Fund and Durham University Business School, whose teaching materials were initially used for training. At present, domestic course books and materials are in use, which have specifically been tailored to local requirements.

The market economy and the omnipresence of financial institutions, in which young people will be submerged, urge them to prepare for the plunge. The 'Young Entrepreneurs' programme designed for secondary school pupils, particularly for comprehensive secondary schools, which do not give pupils any kind of specialisation, appears especially useful in the context. The economic programme was contrived in co-operation with an American educational organisation Junior Achievement Inc. (it is present in ca 60 countries; in Poland it is represented by the Batory Fund).

The programme mostly aims at economic training, not merely theoretical but rather at its practical application (a pupil's company is one of the elements of the programme), as well as at exercising interactions between business and educational institutions.

Pupils are expected to feel at home with basic economic rules, to gain skills of functioning in the world of financial institutions, to learn principles of market economy and, last but not least, to cross-examine their knowledge in practice by running their own company. These formulas are not intended to bring profit (they have been in use for merely 5 months). Most of the time, they simulate all kinds of procedures that take place in an 'adult' company. The trainers are advised to facilitate contacts between young adepts, entrepreneurs and representatives of financial institutions (stockbrokers, bankers) so that pupils have an opportunity of a first-hand experience in a bank, in a warehouse or companies.

The Batory Fund started the introduction of the programme at the beginning of the 90s in 12 school interested in the furnishing of their pupils with this kind of knowledge and skills. This year 70 schools are involved in the project, which is not an impressive number taking into consideration the total number of comprehensive secondary schools in the country (1200). The Ministry of Education complies with the project, which is unfortunately not always true about school superintendents and head teachers. Some of them consider extra-syllabus skills necessary, which cannot in this case be accounted for financial constraints of schools, as teacher courses, computer laboratories, student books, workbooks and teacher books, computer simulation programmes are all sponsored by the Batory Fund and co-sponsors of the "Young Entrepreneurs" programme' (cf. Szempińska, 1994, p. III).

Social education, also called mass education, may, as well, constitute an answer to the breakdown of the social system in the form of a renaissance of support and selfsupport systems reconstructed in local communities. There is a noticeable shortage of highly qualified teaching personnel in the field of theory and methodology of social service, who are capable of incorporating the existing knowledge into the framework of future needs. Shortages are also discernible in teaching equipment and subject matter literature.

Successful implementation of many innovations is additionally hindered by civilisational incompetence, at which we have methodologically hinted for the past few years. The incompetence is manifesting itself both in academic and decision-making spheres (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1999, p. 194–195).

The appealing notion of 'civilisational incompetence' is a negation of its antonym: 'civilisational competence'. Professor Sztompka, who coined the term, suggests that it should be understood as a deeply rooted set of habits, skills and routines necessary for utilizing institutions, organisational forms and lifestyles, as well as technical implements assembled throughout the permanence of the modern industrial society. It is therefore perceived as a skill of an automatic appropriation of the three axial structures attributed to modern, western societies: free market, political democracy and an unrestricted flow of intellectual and artistic ideas, as well as

well-established cultural standards in law, democracy, discourse, planning, ecology and every day life, apparent in the spheres of interpersonal interactions (Sztompka, 1993, pp. 88–95; Sztompka, 1994, pp. 14–15).

Standards attributed to western civilisation are contrasted by the author against the syndrome of 'civilisational incompetence', "Hereinafter, I would like to specify the most obvious and frequently perceived symptoms of the aforesaid ailment. In economy they manifest themselves in the recession of the ethos of labour, in the decline of selfdiscipline, loyalty and conscientiousness as well as in law, characterised by a disparaging attitude to law and the easiness of evading its regulations; in politics, by indifference, passiveness, disregard for public property and mercenariness; in discourse in a form of dogmatism, intolerance, affinity to gossip and attachment to stereotypes; in planning, in the form of camouflage, make-believe manoeuvres and low efficiency; in technology, in the form of insufficient precision, carelessness and technological illiteracy; in ecology, in the form of wasteful exploitation of nature; in everyday life, by selfishness, egotism, hostility, apathy, sloppiness and disorder" (Sztompka, 1994, p.15).

* * *

In conclusion, we are utterly convinced that the traditional forms of inherited behaviour presented in our paper, being entirely inadequate to contemporary post-industrial society, also erect barriers effectively blocking the development of *education for tomorrow* in Poland. We dedicate our paper to the representatives of a lot of foreign academic centres and world institutions, precisely today's education in the following categories: education for peace, human rights, forum of policy dialogue, transformation, modernisation and real democracy.

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