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LEARNING TO EDUCATE: THE COMPARISON OF THE PRESENT-DAY CONDITION OF COLLEGES IN POLAND WITH THE PAST (CASE STUDY)

Introduction

The following text is the work of two persons: a 60-year-old teacher with long years of practice in both secondary and higher levels of education, worried with the condition of the Polish education, and a young researcher who has the results of specific empirical studies conducted in the environment of pedagogy students, who had the opportunity to compare the conclusions of his older colleague with his own. Both authors believe that at present, at the time of another reform of the Polish education, which started, as we know, with liquidation of gymnasias, it is important to come back to the causes why the Polish secondary and higher education system in the second decade of the 21st century is in the condition that requires deep changes; however, they are first of all interested in the future.

I. The Polish school and universities: then and now¹

I have decided to write this text because I perceive some sort of “cutting the perspective short” in recent discussions about the university-level education system, and there is no comparison of the present-day condition of colleges with the past, and there are no analyses of its wider causes. Usually, the fact is not perceived that problems begin as early as in secondary schools. The students of this day are simply different. As I have lived for some time and I have pretty non-standard (for a lecturer) experience, I believe that I can (obviously enough, using a subjective and personal perspective) compare what it was like before and what it is like today, and to indicate the cause of the differences.

¹ Dr hab. Wojciech Kajtoch, since 1996 working in Press Research Centre of the Jagiellonian University, and then in Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication of the same university, managing Department of Semiotics Media and Visual Communication since 2013. In 2012, he assumed the function of the chief editor of “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze”(Media Research Issues), the quarterly of Institute of Journalism UJ (Media Research Issues is the oldest Polish academic journal devoted to social, psychological, political, linguistic, legal, economic, technological, organizational and professional aspects of mass communication, and in particular of the printed press, radio, television and other media, journalism, advertising, propaganda and public opinion, in the past and present, in Poland and abroad.) Lech Keller (University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro / Vila Real, Portugal) wrote about dr hab. Wojciechu Kajtochu that he had quite unusual history for a modern Polish researcher. Graduating from the Polish studies department in the Jagiellonian University (in the fateful year 1980), he received the doctoral degree in 1991 in Russian language studies in the University of Warsaw on the basis of the paper on “Bracia Strugaccy (outline of creativity)”, and then for years, until 2000, taught the Polish language in a secondary school. The book was published in 1993 by the Krakow-based Universitas (Kajtoch 1993), later (2003) published in the Ukraine (Кайтох 2003) in the Russian language. Habilitation in 2009 in Krakow (UJ) in linguistics on the basis of the 2-volume work on “Językowe obrazy świata i człowieka w prasie młodzieżowej i alternatywnej” (Kajtoch 2008).

1. Polish studies, second half of 1970s

The entrance examination (with the usual rate of ca. 10 persons per place) was conducted as a competition. Right, there were these famous "points" for social background, but it was only theory, because in principle admission was open to everyone who achieved the required average and they took all the places. Experiments started with admitting school contest winners and top students, but the latter quickly dropped out, as a rule, leaving space for "free students", who took part in the classes even though they have not been formally admitted due to weak points achievement in the list of those who passed the exam. There was a test to complete (but not that famous choice test that may be passed by accident) along with an essay and the verbal exam (with three questions). It covered the whole scope of the secondary school material, sample subjects were not disclosed, simply, the assumption was that each school has covered the material of the Polish language course, and if it was not the case, then it was not the problem of the university. Questions were asked by assistant lecturers and assistant professors, demanding knowledge as usual.

The studies took four years (recently, five), but there were no limitations on the material. It would be right to read more or less one book per day and memorise it thoroughly, because there were no the so-called cribs, and the iron rule of the examiners was to finish the exam if it was found out (and yes, there were ways to find it out) that the person does not know the text. In case of science-related subjects: grammar and logic, one would have to prove the skill of solving problems and interpreting phenomena. Some examinations were in two stages (written and verbal, with a credit taken as a written part), although the verbal exam was the rule. The talk with a specialist that lasted from 15 to 45 minutes exposed all deficiencies in knowledge, because the examiner usually asked questions "till the first error". I still remember a test of linguistic knowledge: after quite long listening to "excellent" answers, the professor heard my response: "this includes B and A" (I was already tired). "Oh, no, that is A and B!" was his triumph interjection, followed by a 4+, the grade that I value very much until nowadays. Indeed, many examinations ended right after the first question. The general rule of the examination with a good lecturer was 40-50% "fails" in each attempt. Only resits had better statistics. All in all, as far as I remember, about a half students finished their education in time out of all these who started.

Didactic skills of professors was rather good. Some celebrities used to speak exceptionally speciously or used a language that no-one understood anything. However, you would go to lectures anyway (although they usually were not obligatory). I was not there always because, as a student with the so-called "individual course of studies", I chose various subjects in other fields and I did not have enough time. However, I usually regretted my absences, e.g. when I had to prepare for the examination in theory of literature from the notes to the lectures generously provided by the professor. It is easy to conclude how much effort I spent to find out his sources, then to get them, study and memorise. Had I been attending his lectures, it would have been much easier. Whatever, 5+ was the result.

We generally complained about the level of exercises. Assistant lecturers had null idea of didactics and regarded the classes as necessary evil, limiting the work to debating the subjects necessary for their doctoral theses. Some positive

exceptions happened now and then, as well as exercise conducted by assistant professors. These were slightly better.

The conditions of studying were gruelling. Add to this lack of books. Over 20 years of students used one copy of "Ocalenie" by Miłosz in the Polish studies department in Krakow. There were no xerox machines, and when they were introduced, they were very expensive (there was a case when I had to put coal to basements to earn money for it). And the authorities showed drastic lack of interest in suggestions from students. These were very rarely even listened to. Breach of discipline was punished radically.

Applying ideological pressure is a myth, at least as far as my faculty goes. The decisive majority of lecturers, clearly (slightly rebellious) members of PZPR, would consider worrying students with their own opinions or indoctrinating anyone simply a blunder. I did see servile attitudes, but these were exceptions, just a matter of the nature of 2 or 3 persons. The same applies to "ideological subjects". Marxist philosophy consisted in studying "Historia filozofii" by Tatarkiewicz (no-one can convince me that he is a Marxist; it was my only chance in life to read "Historia..." from cover to cover). Economy of socialism consisted in learning the basic economic terms, only political sciences were more legalistic, but teaching them differently would rather not be possible.

Students then – and now, as well – used to avoid effort. First, they did not learn and counted for luck (usually with deplorable result), secondly, they related the books so as to spare reading them, they wrote abstracts and shared them, etc. The same was with notes from lectures. E.g. a group "delegated" rotating representatives to the given lecture to take very accurate notes.

The student has always been devising tricks. Although, as I believe, the present-day student reading the above may not believe it: "How did they manage?"

The answer is simple: we practised it in the secondary school.

2. The secondary school of old times

The common belief was that the vocational school was the rule after the primary school, and the grammar school and A-level certificates were for those who wanted and could learn more. So there is no obligation and necessity to pass A-level certificates if you did not deserve it. Our possibilities were thus tested without hindrances. Here are some of the school traditions of these days:

- Iron discipline, requirements as regards clothes, attendance, behaviour.
- Classes six days a week, with more hours and less material than at present, evaluation of the given subject about 10 times in the semester. Numerous written tasks, numerous verbal responses.
- No limitations whatsoever as regards workload and organisation of teaching; homework could be of any size; there were no top-down regulations as regards concessions, excuses, etc. Most often than not, there were no such things. The so-called "Pupil's code" was implemented only when I was in the last year of my secondary school.
- There were no exemptions for dysgraphic persons; without mastering spelling you would not pass the A-level tests, if you had ever reached them. Everybody knew spelling back from the primary school, and real dysgraphic pupils (then in routine numbers, i.e. one person out of several thousand attending Polish schools, if I remember it well) had the opportunity to

complete a special school, although I have never heard about such pupils throughout my school time).

- There were no professionally published cribs.

In general, the teacher was the master in the secondary school. Pupils or parents could only listen to his/her decisions. The objective of education was to develop in the pupil, among others, the following skills in humanities:

- self-reliant reading, summarising and interpreting the information presented linearly in huge texts: textbooks, readings;
- precise and well structured replying to questions (the must in verbal A-level tests);
- self-reliant synthesising and generalising of information (otherwise writing the A-test essay would not be possible);
- training memory and accumulating the best erudition.

It is interesting to note that written and verbal A-level tests were in a majority of subjects, the term “presentation” was unheard of (although the best pupils were allowed to write and defend A-level essays instead of replying to a set of 3 questions), and mathematics was a regular A-level test.

3. The new secondary school

Well, with the average grade of 4.87, the Borowy award funded by PAN for the best students, first publications, erudition which I have been using until now and razor-sharp mind, in 1980 I landed a highly responsible function of a tutor in a boarding school (which was an alternative to working in a dairy plant, or at a production line). I did not choose to stay in the college, just like most of those who considered staying and pursuing scientific career. I later often asked myself the question, what was all this toil for? Was it worthy to learn like this? Certainly, there was no goal in it if we view vocational career to be the prize for the studies.

Still, after fifteen years of efforts, I returned to the college, with the doctorate gained in the meantime and three books published, but I also worked almost 10 years as a teacher of the Polish language in a grammar school and I gained diversified experience in the work with the pupils in senior classes of the 8-year primary school and students. Therefore, I can write a further part of this text.

When after 1990 I found myself (not just like that and after much effort) in a grammar school, I faced the condition that triggered my thinking about some sort of historical pattern: revolution (even peaceful) consists in, among others, dismantling the four pillars of power: – the state administration, – the military, – the police and special services, – the school. Teachers of the Polish language remember the beginning of the revolutionary career of Cezary Baryka. He became a revolutionary after slapping the gymnasium director’s face. I often recalled that fragment of “Przedwiośnie” when I observed the orders of education authorities. In the field of education, the Polish revolutionary transformation came top-down, so the slapping figures were education offices and the relevant ministry.

This condition did not evolve right on the spot. The school year with the Mazowiecki’s government seemed to be the fulfilment of long hopes: for improvement of the authority of the teacher, for teaching valuable knowledge, for decent pay. “Slapping” started, really, after the lost school strike “silenced” by the “Solidarity” when (as I remember) the fall of the Suchocka’s cabinet was already sealed. Well, may be this was the goal of the organisers of the strike. The crowning

of the process came with the “reform” of minister Handke and the new A-level tests which (in its initial versions) any idiot could pass (at least in the Polish language), not knowing a single reading. Just to give an idea: the examiner could not deduct points for the statement that “Kmicic² defended Zielona Góra, the monastery of jasnogórcy” (that is a fact, really).

So, in 1990s I witnessed:

- 1) Drastic loosening of discipline. It all started with the order to accept excuses from parents (clearly, forces by the children). At some time, even excuses written by adult pupils for themselves were sufficient. In the teacher vs. pupil disputes, the education office always took the side of the disciple. I remember cancelling a bad result of correction with the explanation that the pupil talked to the teacher a few hours before the exam, which, supposedly, “could have negative effect on the result of the examination”.
- 2) Admitting parents in the school and letting them to co-manage; it was not long before the experts in teaching curricula and methodology started to rule the scope of the material from which, and how, the teacher could organise corrections in prep courses... And add to this the snowballing increase in the number of days off.
- 3) Teachers taking to multiple jobs (with private tuition as the second job, more generous than that in the school) or double professions. Teachers started to sell in shops, work in insurance, etc., just because full-time teaching employment was not enough to live by. And the number of tests and homeworks dropped.
- 4) Outstanding decrease of the level of knowledge and skills achieved by the pupils. These resulted mostly in consequence of the reduction of the number of hours in all subjects.

For example, I remember one year of pupils who completely did not know the rules of punctuation (probably due to reduced number of Polish in primary schools and giving up teaching of punctuation). But wait, new textbooks were introduced without synthetic and structured knowledge, only with some summaries, pulp of excerpts. The pupil could not learn anything autonomously from this, and there teacher was not there to help him due to the low number of hours. Year by year, the list of readings was shorter, thoughtlessly issued dysgraphia certificates were the plague (I happened to have as many as 25% dysgraphic pupils in the form), there was no time for frequent asking questions to pupils. Finally, the regular verbal A-level test was eliminated, right after the test in mathematics. School started to produce caricatures of graduates who had been there just a few years ago.

In all fairness, I have to add that savings of the authorities on school expenditures and their policy of “democratisation of the school” came along with the helplessness of the teachers in the face of new phenomena, such as mass publishing of cribs, the internet, etc. I dare say that I somehow coped, and my pupils (even those dysgraphic!) knew spelling, and they wrote their essays on their own. I even was able to force learning something from the textbook, horror of horrors, reading a book, but I also was called every to the head of the school, parents full of grievances took the notebooks of their kids to the education office, and complaints

² H. Sienkiewicz, *Potop*

started reaching even the ministry. Well, somehow, majority (with some exceptions) of the youth I was teaching did not have much grievances.

All these along with one A-test procedure during which all my proposed grades were improved in bulk (I had the guts to put Ds or even fail some pupils) finally made me think again about a college and... it happened.

4. The present-day student

For over 20 years, I have been teaching classes or giving lectures in rhetoric, stylistics and culture of the Polish language, semiotics and theory of language (and sometimes of other subjects) to the future journalists, I also have pretty broad experience as a supervisor. All this assures me, I guess, to attempt to create an image of the modern student, or rather two portraits, because students are not all alike. I will start with the sketch to enhance negative features.

A. Bad student

Only incidentally goes to lectures and classes. Mostly because he/she must work, although oftentimes he/she simply does not feel like going. As he/she is a rare guest, he/she cannot see the logic and method of subject and, as it happens with parts taken out context, everything seems nonsensical to him/her. He/she often speaks about it quite loud. This world is his/her kingdom, right? If he/she ever comes to a lecture, he/she is talking or texting. He/she cannot concentrate on what the lecturer is saying or take notes. No-one taught him/her this at school.

Clearly, he/she is cribbing as much as possible and is looking for all legal tricks to evade the unpleasant necessity of taking exams; if it is not possible otherwise, he/she will offer a bribe or smile unusually sweetly (I have never had such a proposal, but, if you were to believe the press, such incidents do occur). When in trouble, he/she can resort to blackmailing, a court case (see above), or even an axe, as it happened in one technical university.³

He/she rarely ever replies to questions and does not take verbal examinations, so he/she cannot correctly phrase a meaningful statement. Asked, he/she replies in a colloquial language, does not respect syntax rules and most often one can only guess what he/she has in mind. As a result, he/she receives positive grades only when his/her flow of words contains but traces of awareness of the subject. He/she has also basic problems with meaningful, in terms of syntax and composition, phrasing of statements in writing. In extreme cases, he/she cannot fluently read aloud, only stammering, without the ability to recall the contents of the read paragraph.

For studying, such expression skills will be sufficient for him/her. He/she takes examinations in writing, with multiple choice tests, so he/she can happily do without the art of phrasing sentences. The supervisor will have quite a "joy" when this student

³"23-year-old Kamil P. was called to the office by the lecturers, suspecting his cribbing during the earlier course test. In the office, the student attacked a 50-year-old professor Czesław S. with an axe and hit him in the head and in the neck. 53-year-old assistant Krzysztof K. who tried to defend him was hit in the head."

Quote from Tomasz Gawiński: "Student zabił swojego profesora", Trójmiasto.pl, 19.06.2002, <http://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/Student-zabil-swojego-profesora-n3921.html>; (access 15.01.2017)

does not hire someone to write his bachelor's or even master's thesis. More often than not, the bachelor's degree is the end.

This student cannot even read a chapter in the textbook, and if he/she reads it, he/she will not be able to provide a synopsis and memorise the knowledge that is there. Small wonder. It is the first time in his/her life when he/she face such a weird requirement. Poor child, he/she has also problems with maths. He can multiply, add and deduct, but division is beyond him/her if he/she forgets his calculator (how come this people can be waiters?). Operations with ratios and percents are simply black magic. Function? What you mean: function?

When was the battle of Grunwald? I don't know. Who attacked Poland on 1 September 1939? He/she is replying that... probably the Soviets that is Germans???? How many partitionings? Well... ?????? Who wrote "Kordian"? That I know! Mickiewicz!!!

In general, a major percentage of students are nowadays functional illiterates with no basic knowledge of the world and equally basic skills how to get to know it.

But... Not much is really needed to have this ugly duckling transform into a wonderful swarm right in front of the eyes of the lecturer.

B. The true student

He/she does not often go to lectures or exercises, especially if he/she is not interested in them or when he/she takes a second or third major. If he/she is working, although it is not a must, because he/she knows how to get a scholarship in some foundation or EU project, it is not in a pub, but in a newspaper. Writing an article is not a fuss, his/her texts are printed in "Polityka", "Wyborcza", in web portals, etc. He gets author's fees, but just for fame he/she can write for a scientific magazine, especially after the bachelor's degree, so he/she knows what is needed.

He/she takes examinations without cribbing, is learning before them, just know something. He/she views the requirements of the lecturer as an opportunity to show that he/she can be better than those around. I have an excellent review of his/her capacity when I ask students to draft up rhetorical speeches. They can present a court prosecution, a dramatic poet in Allen Ginsberg's style, a rhymed philosophical dialogue, a nice cabaret skit and even rise up to the level that is beyond me. I can learn a lot from him/her – if I only teach him/her first what rhetoric is about. As a rule, he/she does not know it in the beginning and tries to present standard papers.

His English is perfect, sometimes he/she knows two or three languages. Recently, Russian has become more and more popular because he/she does not regard this language as a tool of totalitarian enslavement. Asked, he/she can immediately reach data about the weirdest subjects, or books that I have never heard of.

If I only give him material and suggest a method, the problem which I spend six months on is his within two weeks. I do not develop complexes in his/her company, because if I do not show him/her the method, there will be no results.

He/she happens to have problems with fluent expression. But when you show him/her some examples how to change statements full of errors (or dysfunctional in the given context) into a correct and functional one, he/she will quickly and radically give up these errors. An hour or two spent on correction of the text in presence of the lecturer will do to never see these errors in his/her future texts.

It is a pleasure to have a quarrel with such a student, you can spend your private time with him/her to show something, and, most of all, you can feel in his/her presence that the time for didactics is not lost for the researcher, and that it allows him/her to solve some problems with more confidence and to acquire new knowledge, that comes from the youth.

5. Conclusions

The reader of this text may see that “true students” (in the light of the above portrait of the secondary school) is practically non-existent, because the “bad student” is the ideal and perfect product. Still, yes, they happen to be there, and more and more often. Basically, no one knows why. Is it possible that the secondary school has slightly improved recently? Or, our Polish politicians did not have sufficient pedagogical anti-talent to kill the authentic wisdom, skills and passion in the youth? It’s hard to say. However, if we allow just about anybody to start studying nowadays, something has to be done because these “bad students” multiply and waste bins may start crown not only the heads of teachers,⁴ but also those of university lecturers.

I believe that if the secondary school, limited to three years, deprived of pedagogical tools and any measures of force for the pupil, does not fulfil its premises, universities have to take over its former role. They have to educate the student for themselves.

The beginning of the university-level education should then have the nature of year zero, that is to be basic and primary. The youth admitted to the studies has to be taught how to read textbooks, keep in memory their contents, meaningfully and without errors speak and write in Polish, take notes, read books, and take regular examinations (verbal, written, tests). Then these skills should be checked and those who have not mastered them and there is no hope they will ever do it, should be get rid of. We must become the secondary school and implement screening if the relevant act of the law prevents the examination sieve at the threshold of the college and the secondary school does not fulfil its function. It will really be more reasonable than complaining that students do not go to lectures. They do not go there because they do not make use of them, and this is because oftentimes they are not able to. They sometimes simply do not know what to do when they are there!!!

Obviously enough, it’s not about basic education from the scratch. The youth did attend schools and know something. The key issue is to trigger the conviction that this apparent nonsense of taking notes, reading books, answering questions, and writing essays indeed has some purpose.

Then, the normal teaching may start, with verbal examinations (now, practically impossible to pass for majority of students), without cribbing, and with less or more elevated standards of knowledge.

However, to resort to this solution, a few changes are needed. First, the detailed regulations of studying have to be drafted up, including disciplinary codes. Secondly, more didactics specialists are needed, experienced, old-school teachers, who now sell bagels. Thirdly, didactic skills of lecturers have to be appreciated and the career

⁴ In 2003 pupils bullied a teacher in one of Toruń schools, and filmed it to boast in the internet PAP: “Ośmiu uczniów relegowanych z toruńskiej budowlanki”, WP Wiadomości, 16.09.2003, <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1342,title,Osmiu-uczniow-relegowanych-z-torunskiejbudowlanki,wid,1471317,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=118730> (access 15.01.2017)

and assessment system of the academic employee has to be made more liberal, because now it accepts and prefers research only. In simple words, an experienced senior lecturer should have professor's salary and enjoy respect only a dot lower than that of a professor (clearly, he/she not could take positions reserved for professors and collect the relevant function additions), and the beginner assistant should have the guarantee that – if he is an excellent didactics specialist – nobody will get rid of him if he is late with habilitation.

Finally, the most important issue: there must be more jobs in universities (relatively more, which means commensurate to the number of students) so that this basic education could be effected. There must be more money. Nobody wants to give it. Until we get it, we will only complain.

II. Polish schools and universities then and now (a different view)

Please note that there are many factors that affect the results of learning by students,⁵ each one with different value that should be considered separately.⁶ There are no doubts that quality of the teacher – pupil relation (and its components) is related to positive results of education.⁷

It is also interesting to note that European integration processes play a special role in modern changes in teaching standards, including joining the European Union by Poland. The Bologna Process, related to development of the European Higher Education Area, has the most visible effect on the evolution of Polish colleges after EU accession in 2004. Expectations of students from academic teachers are also interesting. Exploration of this matter was conducted with the following questions of the questionnaire: “undertaking studies is related to some expectations – what most important expectations did you have: from academic teachers” (several answers were possible). The results are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Declared expectations of pedagogy students (N = 375) from academic teachers (multiple choice question)

Reply	%	Number of replies
high quality of the teacher – student relation	36.27%	136
high quality of education	31.73%	119
authenticity of the teacher in relations with students and openness to people	17.07%	64
teacher's passion	15.73%	59
fairness in grading	11.47%	43
high ethical standards and culture	6.13%	23

Source: own research (2015/2016)

⁵ N. Kiuru, K. Aunola, M. K. Lerkkanen, E. Pakarinen, E. Poskiparta, T. Ahonen, ... & J. E. Nurmi, *Positive teacher and peer relations combine to predict primary school students' academic skill development*. *Developmental psychology*. 2015, 51(4), p. 434

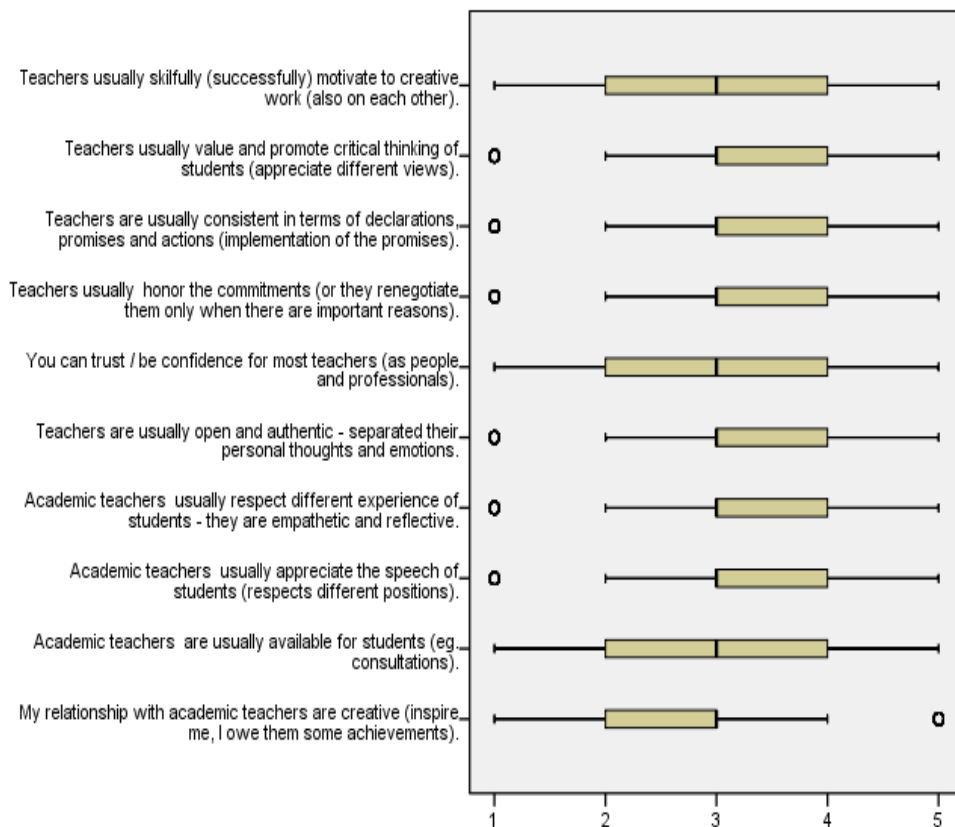
⁶ M. A. Flores, *Teacher Personality and Belief Systems: A Study of the Relationship between Teacher Resilience and Teachers' Beliefs in Their Ability to Help Students in a High School Environment*. St. Thomas University. 2016, p. 2

⁷ M. Kavenagh, E. Freeman, and M. Ainley, 'Differences between Adolescent Boys' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Student – Teacher Relationship', *The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*. 2012, 29(1), p. 3

Thus, the most apparent trend in the realm of the declared expectations of students is in the quality of the student – teacher relation (36% of responses); high quality of education ranked second (almost 32%). Personal features related to authenticity, openness to people, as well as ethical behaviour and culture of the teacher were definitely less important, in the range of 17-6%.

It seems that the view of Wojciech Kajtoch presented in part I of the text and the declared expectations of students as regards quality of education are consistent. However, in the realm of the student – lecturer relation and the types of mutual contacts, the students (N = 577) highly accessed accessibility of teachers for consultations and talks (over 40%). This coefficient was also reported for: respect for others, empathy, sharing experience with students, keeping promises, consistency in action, commitment to didactic classes, being an expert in one's field, as well as implementation of good upbringing principles. For responses in the types "difficult to say" and "no opinion", the percentage in these issues was around 30-53%.

BOX-PLOT 1. Types of relations and types of contacts with academic teachers and in opinions of pedagogy students (N = 577)



1 – not agree, 2 – rather not agree, 3 – difficult to say, 4 – rather agree, 5 – fully agree

Source: own research (2015/2016)

The results of the above study and my⁸ own experience indicate that the Polish education system undergoes changes in recent years in, among others, communication of the pupil with the teacher (in all levels of education). Among other factors, this change is determined by the change in the quality of relations, which loses the autocratic (formal) nature, emphasised by Wojciech Kajtoch, in favour of the partnership style with elements (or base) of the master–disciple relation, in which the teacher uses elements of mentoring,⁹ coaching and tutoring¹⁰ to bring out the whole potential of the student.

However, there is a dark side to this new educational change in Poland, or, to be more precise, the situation with the distorted “partnership” relation of the teacher and the pupil changes into the one in which the teacher, instead of being a partner in the interaction, assumes the role of a buddy, and in extreme situations of a charge or a victim of his/her pupil, which implies fading away of the formal limits that determine the pupil – teacher social roles and may even result in acts of violence, e.g. putting a waste bin on the teacher’s head, not to mention the falling quality of education.

Clearly, another key aspect in creation of the community of learners and scholars – the *universitas* – is the selection of those who will receive their student’s books. If only finances count in this selection, it is highly probable that irrespective of communication (or any other) competencies of the lecturer, waste bins will find their way to the heads of the Polish academic teachers.

I think that quality of education is or should be a common denominator connecting generations of students and academic teachers, participating in the discourse on effective methods of education, accompanied by a special respect of human subjectivity. Moreover, may be it would be worthwhile to implement / restore the medieval ceremonials and customs, for example eating together in one hall (practised by some British universities even now) or free medical services provided by professors of medicine for colleagues and students.¹¹ These customs would serve to strengthen one of the pillars of the university that comes in the bond between the members of the given *universitas*.

Summary

The paper presents opinions of two persons: a 60-year-old teacher with long years of practice in both secondary and higher levels of education, worried with the condition of the Polish education, and a young researcher who has the results of specific empirical studies conducted in the environment of pedagogy students, who had the opportunity to compare the conclusions of his older colleague with his own. Both authors believe that at present, at the time of another reform of the Polish education, which started, as we know, with liquidation of gymnasias, it is important to come back to the causes why the Polish secondary and higher education system

⁸ Leszek Świeca, PhD student, Faculty of Management and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University in Kraków & Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Silesia in Katowice

⁹ Center for Academic Teaching – *Ars Docendi* at the Jagiellonian University: Training for teachers: master-student relationships: mentoring-coaching-tutoring.

¹⁰ D. S. Black, J. L. Grenard, S. Sussman, L. A. & Rohrbach, *The influence of school-based natural mentoring relationships on school attachment and subsequent adolescent risk behaviors*. Health education research. 2010, p. 893

¹¹ J. Woleński, *Relacje międzypokoleniowe w środowisku naukowym* (in:) P. Sztompka, K. Matuszek (eds.), *Idea uniwersytetu. Reaktywacja*. Kraków 2015, p. 101

in the second decade of the 21st century is in the condition that requires deep changes; however, they are first of all interested in the future.

Key words: reforms of the Polish education system, quality of education, teacher – pupil relation

Streszczenie

W artykule zaprezentowano stanowiska dwóch osób: sześćdziesięcioletniego nauczyciela – praktyka z długoletnim stażem pracy na obu – średnim i wyższym – poziomach wykształcenia, zaniepokojonego stanem polskiej edukacji oraz młodego badacza dysponującego wynikami konkretnych badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych w środowisku studentów pedagogiki, który miał okazję zestawić wnioski wyciągnięte przez starszego kolegę ze swoimi. Obaj autorzy uważają, że obecnie, w dobie kolejnej reformy polskiej edukacji, która – jak wiadomo – zaczęła się wraz z likwidacją gimnazjów, warto powrócić do kwestii przyczyn, dla których polskie średnie i wyższe szkolnictwo w drugiej dekadzie lat XXI wieku znalazło się w stanie wymagającym głębokich zmian, lecz nade wszystko zainteresowani są przyszłością.

Słowa kluczowe: reformy polskiej edukacji, jakość kształcenia, relacja nauczyciel – uczeń

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