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Author: Ewa Bielska

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The Process of Social Change and the New Imperatives Directed to Education in Poland

Ewa BIELSKA, Lecturer

Abstract — The contemporary scene of Polish social life is the field of occurring dynamic processes of change. In spite of the fact that the origins of a lot of them starts in the event of collapsing of the communist system it is just not enough to analyse this reality by the prism of this occurrence but there is a lot of conditions, which indicate the need of engaging the more differentiated terms and conceptions, characteristic for the reality of societies of the perpetual, dynamic changes. Between different situations included in the changing processes important field belongs to the educational sphere. It is possible to indicate there the challenges required by the specific socio-cultural conditions which influence the adaptative strategies of educational sphere and paralelly influencing by this field the trajectories of development of the all spheres (macro-, meso- and microsphere) of society. Following paper establishes a trial of the synthesis of two mentioned above problems: contemporary theories of social change and the position of educational sphere analysed in this context.

Facing the social change

The changes taking place during the last decade in Poland realise in a lot of spheres of social life, a lot of specific phenomena which realised during this period prepare the conditions, in which it is just not adequate to analyse them only in the context of post-communist situation but also by the prism of many particular, specific trends which appeared by the process of opening national and symbolic frontiers, globalisational, localisational, postmodernistic trends and

another processes characteristic for the globally mentioned contemporary world. Marek Ziółkowski indicates two main paradigms of analysis of changes in Polish society. These are: paradigm of transformation and a paradigm focused at the process of coming into the political, economical, cultural capitalistic system (Ziółkowski, 1998, p. 51). It is possible to distinguish in the field of changes the institutional — political, economical and law sphere; behavioural level, which define the changes in the sphere of people's behaviour; psychological level — related to the changes of the patterns and convictions; civilisational-cultural level (Sztompka, 1999, p. VII). Zdzisław Krasnodębski indicates new views related to some characteristics which existed in the socialistic system and in the present reality are finding another dimension, these are: changes in the philosophy of life, related to the new look at the antropocentrism and atheistic trends; another quality of the idea of progress; changing trends in the scientific world view and scepticism related to the idea of the universal social consensus (Krasnodębski, 1991, pp. 283-284). Generally, we can find in the social reality of Poland two categories of changes' directions: system changes (transformation) and cultural changes, where we could indicate the processes related to the post-modernistic trends. Marek Ziółkowski indicates specificity of social processes taking place in Poland characterising them as the mix of three models of society: early modernity, late modernity, postmodernity, which carries their consequences in the different spheres of social reality, such as power, authority, style of consumption, etc. (Ziółkowski, 1999, pp. 42-44; Ziółkowski, 1998, p. 54). According to Anthony Giddens, one of the characteristics of the state of transcending modernity in the sphere of societies' functioning is their entering to the state of "extreme dynamism and globalising scope of modern institutions" the mentioned state explains the nature of their discontinuities from traditional culture (Morris, 1997, p. 193).

Philosopher Leszek Kołakowski writes: "The post-communist euphoria has just finished, now starts to appear the more and more signals indicating the coming threats" (Kołakowski, 1999, p. 295). It could be added — also it is the stage of coming challenges. Piotr Sztompka has defined process of appearance of the post-communist reality as an excellent example of social "becoming" (Sztompka, 1999,

p. IX). "Social becoming" is the theory associated with the visions defined as the historical co-efficient and agential co-efficient, which shows a society as "the dynamic process, in which people through their actions produce and reproduce the context of their existence, namely social structures, which in turn become initial conditions, restrictive or stimulating, of their further actions" (Sztompka, 1991, p. 270). We can transpose these words to the level of education, trying to analyse the challenges of becoming the adequate educational reality in the context of new social conditions.

The social occurrence of collapsing of communist system prepared in return set of specific challenges for different social institutions, one of which is education. Maria Hirszowicz writes that all the objects which were created over the time with the changing social system lost their actuality, and now are only the historical exemplifications. Parallely, the main questions are related to the patterns of building another system (Hirszowicz, 1998, p. 18). It could be added that it was also the collapsing of the system of meta-narration, indicating the main social truth, purpose and in the consequence establishing one ideal of educated man. We could compare here two processes, characterised by the key word — ambivalence. Ambivalence of the feeling of fascination and fear, linked with the postmodernistic relativism, and ambivalence linked with the post-communistic deconstruction of social bases of functioning.

Analysing some sociological traits of conceiving of the process of social change, it is needed to make some classifications, indicating the multitude of different aspects of this sphere of considerations. The positivistic theories of society indicated this construct as an organism, mechanism or cybernetical system. In this formulations all the elements of system have its own necessity for the realising of the global functions. Following the analysis of Piotr Sztompka, the changes of system in this meaning can take the forms of: social development (unfolding of some potentiality inherent in the system, describing the directional process, characterised by the higher level of some selected property in any later moment of the analysis, stimulated by the immanent propensities of the system); social cycle (which is not directional, follows in the circular pattern — every phase can be repeated in the future, repetition is due to immanent tendency of the system); social progress (which is directional, steadily brings the

system closer to the required in the context of any axiological values state). The alternative fluid socio-cultural field model indicate society as a construct resisting in the state of continuous changes, as the author writes "society as a steady state does not and cannot exist". The process of changes is in the meaning of this model treated as an opposition of the systemic model and is perceived as continuous, never discrete, fragmented or broken (Sztompka, 1993, pp. 8-12). From the point of view of this foundation it is possible to analyse situation of any social institution in one moment of time, any next moment of the analysis could be different, and so we are facing the process of changing of one aspect which builds the wider social change.

We could combine proposed by Piotr Sztompka three aspects of social changes with the mechanisms indicated by Jan Szczepański, which are: reforms, revolutions and transformations. Reform is the process of changing any aspects of social reality directed to the improving of social system functioning. Process of transformation means changing of any belonging to the system substance or reality in another quality. It is the process of changing of the nature of any object, e.g. the social or cultural nature. Transformation could be identified with the process of modernisation and in this meaning is applying to the interpretation of the changes occurring in the fields of post-socialistic societies (Szczepański, 1999). Another aspect of the process of changes is the conception of social modernisation, which could be defined as the self-realising developmental evolution and also the special kind of imitation, assimilation of the patterns practised by the other societies and cultures. In this sense it is sometimes being related by the social anthropologists to the process of acculturation (Radzewicz-Winnicki, 1995, p. 19).

The changes could realise in a lot of spheres, where we could indicate: the changes in composition; in structure; change of functions; and of boundaries; change in the relation of subsystems; and in the environment. Sometimes the changes could be partial, without stronger repercussions for others aspects of system, but on the other occasions they can embrace all the aspects of social system (Sztompka, 1994, pp. 5-6).

In the context of new social characteristics it is possible to indicate new functions, realisation of which is required by contemporary

social conditions. Trends of thought of present sociology do not treat "social structure" as construct persistent and unchanging, but it is viewed as concept shaped and influenced by acts of individuals, groups — elements of mesosphere and microsphere. These aspects of social change are noted as a process of morphogenesis (Sztompka, 1999b, pp. 49-50). Applying proposed assumptions to the analysis related to the sphere of education, we could find certain new tasks and challenges the realisation of which is needed in society. Sztompka indicates also another processes related to social change such as transformation and reproduction. Reproduction is often mentioned as the main function realised by the educational sphere, it is main process taking place during the socialisation, practicing of social control, adaptation and adjustment. Reproduction is characterised by the acts directed to preserving the status quo, safeguarding the persistence and continuation of society in an unchanged form, upholding received conditions (Sztompka, 1993, p. 19). Here we can ask the question about the place of education in the society of transformation, where occurs not only quantitative — characteristic for the reproductional societies, but also qualitative changes — characteristic for the transformative societies (Sztompka, 1993, p. 19).

Present social conditions could be characterised in the context of the process of pluralisation, which takes place in the lot of spheres — among others political and cultural. According to Giovanni Sartori, pluralism presupposes toleration and affirms the conviction that diversity and state of dissent are values enriching individuals and the social structures within which they are functioning (Sartori, 1997, p. 58). The process of opening of the territorial and symbolic frontiers is associated with the appearance of the globalisation processes, which require the realisation of some specific educational tasks. Participation in the conditions of global society carries the fact of facing specific kind of ambivalence. It is among others the ambivalence of functioning at the border between the national tradition and the values proposed by the others nations, cultures, it is also the challenge of functioning in the conditions of "cultural relativisation" (Morris, 1997, p. 193).

Another problem is related to the tasks directed to the educational institutions, and resulted from the appearance of the new scales

of social events, such as the maladjustment, which consequences and symptoms are offences committed by the under aged people, threatened by the drug addiction, alcoholism, etc. Applying the social interpretations of the causes of these problems, it is possible to find a lot of theories, e.g. related to the state of anomy characteristic for the periods of social transitions (some aspects of Durkheim's and Merton's theory); state of disturbed identification resulted from the functioning at the threshold of many subcultures (Sellin's theory); state of specific socialisation in the environment being characterised by the existence of the state of "differentiated connections" (Sutherland's theory) (Siemaszko, 1993). Andrzej Kojder defines the process following the transformation as the "destruction of normativity", the symptom of which is an erosion of the cultural and ethical norms, which do not any longer perform their control, socialisation and integrative functions. Similar symptom is the erosion of the obliging criteria of social functioning (Kojder, 1999, pp. 21-25). Janusz Mariański indicates specific processes taking place in the sphere of morality, such as: secularisation of morality, individualisation of morality (related to postmodernistic trends), transformation and reorientation of moral values. All the scenarios realise parallelly, in some aspects being opposite in others complementary (Mariański, 1999, pp. 244-245).

The sphere of education is known in sociology as an important factor of shaping the structure of social statuses, exercising social control over its participants, as the agent of the social reproduction processes (Passeron, Bourdieu, 1990; Bernstein, 1990), realising the tasks of the meritocratic selection and parallelly ensuring the equality of chances of the access to the educational process (Białecki, 1998, p. 107). Like every social structure, the sphere of education could be characterised by dual existence — both is shaped and is shaping the wider social construction (Sztompka, 1991, p. 271). As John Lowe writes, the trends of social consciousness in the European countries indicate the causal relationship between "the quality and level of their national education and training provision and the efficiency of their economies" (Lowe, 1992, p. 582). Kazimierz Denek indicates the recognitions of the experts of CERI (Centre of Educational Research and Innovation), who acknowledge development of the educational sphere as the important condition of the

economical growth, reduction of the social inequalities, economical empowering of the democratic society (Denek, 1999, p. 123). We can admit that in the society characterised by specific contemporary conditions the sphere of education beside its traditional functions will realise some new, specific ones. In the global culture processes of simple reproduction lose their reality — tradition undergoes modifications characterised by the associating a lot of alternative and competitive discourses. The sphere of traditional obligatory knowledge becomes a kind of compromissive set of common contents (Kempny, 1999, pp. 376-377).

Challenges directed to education

Appearance of the specific social conditions requires the adequate reactions from the institutions functioning within the society. Defining the term of “education” as the set of activities related to the process of preparing children, young people and adults to the active participation in the reality characterised by the continuousness of the changes, indicate the need of preparing people not only to the ability of using the current civilisational achievements but also linking them to the creative and active participation in the changing social life (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1995, p. 14).

The phenomenon of coexistence of the characteristics of three types of societies (modernism, late modernism and postmodernism), mentioned at the beginning of this paper, indicate as their consequence specific conditions of our society. All of the indicated types are characterised by the specific features. The main features of the modern society are, e.g., speed and scope of economic growth, the shift from agricultural production to industry, the opening of free competitive labour market, the ownership situation and market position, which is perceived as the main determinant of social status, strong differentiation between the owners characterised by wide spectrum of economical goods, and in the opposite position existing of the pauperised under-class. In the middle positions function the widest, the most numerous middle-class. In the area of culture we can regard the process of secularisation, central role of science, appearance of mass culture. Following Talcott Parsons, we can indicate the features of

modern society, which are: specificity, achievement, universalism, individualism and universality (Sztompka, 1993, pp. 74-76). The stage of the high modernity is characterised by the appearance of some characteristic trends in the social consciousness. These are according to Anthony Giddens: trust, risk, opaqueness, globalisation. Trust in this context is related to the state of relying on the institutions understood as the structures which rules of work are for most of people abstract. Risk means "uncertainty about the consequences of one's own actions, or the undetermined probability of the harmful effects occurring independently of individual will". Opaqueness is related to the uncertainty of the present conditions of living in modernity. Continuing globalisation is the next characteristic of the late modernity societies (Sztompka, 1994, pp. 81-85). Process of globalisation is characterised by a lot of aspects, where could be indicated among others: globalisation of the most important problems which the particular nations are facing, globalisation of the world culture, the social diminishing of the geographical space (Melosik, 1995, p. 74).

What derives from the characterised above view of society for education is the necessity to educate people who will be able to adapt to the new conditions, it is needed to shape a system of national education, which will prepare its absolvents to the effective functioning in the reality of quick and continuous changes (Denek, 1999, p. 127). Parallely, the next imperative indicate the need of educating people who will be able not only to adapt, but also to change existing and creating new conditions of the social environment (Bogaj, 2000, pp. 45-48).

It is a complex problem, where we could find among others challenges dictated by the conditions of civil society. In this kind of social organisation special importance is attributed to the conception of social tolerance, ability to participation and co-operation within the limits of the interests groups, ability of realisation individual potentialities, engaging in the social issues, developed values systems and individual's identities, creativity and rationalism of acting, consciousness of social ties, acceptance for the democratic rules, etc. (Gliński, 1999, pp. 114-116).

Another aspect of analysed problem indicate that society which highly estimates self-realisation prepares the possibility of becoming

particularised, individualised, diffusing the narcissistic-hedonistic patterns of individuals' personalities (Marianiński, pp. 249-250), we can add here a concept of *homo oeconomicus*, whose way of functioning in society runs through the prisma of joining interests. It is possible to indicate the important position of the educational sphere in shaping attitudes, which will help individuals in not only adaptive but also critical social functioning. It is meaningful to make a reference to postmodernistic theory, final of the great narrations, what indicates re-bear of tolerance imperatives, high valuation of the open-mindedness and flexibility. As write Elizabeth Hatmaker and her research collective, in the economical and socio-cultural conditions of present societies the desired directions of educating are equivocal, we are facing the co-existence of the patterns of the modernistic, related to liberal humanism individualism and the post-modernistic conditions of plurality, relativism and openness to the point of view of "the other". They write: "(...) the overwhelming hegemony of individualism block student's access to the social power of collective action, limiting students' awareness of the possibilities and procedures for political action based on the shared experience of social groups and shared interests among groups. However useful the pedagogy of individualism may have been at a particular historical juncture, then, it is inadequate for the current historical moment" (Hatmaker, Herstad, Nugent, Prothers, Strickland, Swarts, 1997, p. 347).

Jan Szczepański indicates some new characteristics of functioning of the educational system in the context of new situation. His remarks are related to the imperatives for educating the independent, full of initiative, responsible for himself man (Szczepański, 1995, p. 183). According to Peter F. Drucker, we can indicate the characteristics of educated man, these are: universality, defining ability to functioning not only in the organisational society, but also in the pluralistic, multicultural and multiorganisational society. The next feature is the ability to alternative performing several social roles, e.g. the role of an intellectualist and manager; treating of the *techne* sphere as an integrative part of the self; joining high qualifications related to the main sphere of specialisation with the ability to apply another branches of knowledge; participation in the process of knowledge transmission and diffusing an opinion related to the equal importance

of the different branches of knowledge (Gasparski, 1998, pp. 93-94). It could be added to the mentioned above characteristics that it is needed to educate a man characterised by the flexibility, and open-mindedness what predispose him to the functioning in the reality of free market (Słomczyński, Mach, 1996). As it is recognised in sociology education resists, in the wide relation with the employment market, where substantial are such factors as: qualifications and professional competency, level of education, which plays also an important role in the process of shaping status positions in the occupational market, secure the safety of the employment, contents of the performed work, occupational position and the chances for development, level of the earnings, etc. (Denek, 1999, p. 125). In the economic categories education is regarded as an investmental or consumptional value (Białecki, 1998, pp. 107-115). As writes Hermann Rohrs, dynamic society impose an effect at the sphere of work what carries specific challenges for the vocational education. Between directed to this sphere postulates it is possible to indicate process of enabling an individual to understand relations between the forces functioning in the world of work and economy, shaping the patterns characterised by professional flexibility, capability of adjustment, co-operative behaviour, constructively critical involvement in the performed activity, creativity and inventiveness, etc. General task for education is also following the changes continually taking place in the sphere of work in the conditions of postindustrial society, what indicates also the need of unceasing education, as the author writes: "Career socialisation asserts the existence of a continuous learning process based on the acquisition of employment skills and the formation of human relationships." The last indicated proper we can pair with the imperative of ethical education, or in the context of work — ethical profile of career. Professional competence in this meaning is related not only to knowledge, ability, skills but also to responsibility, personal commitment, farsightedness in professional dealing (Rohrs, 1992). We can find in this context actualisation of written more than decade ago ideas of Józef Koziellecki related to the unadequateness of the educational conception of the enlightened man. It is a model, which loses actuality in the changefull, dynamic conditions, where adaptations means ability to solve the economical, social, personal problems (Koziellecki, 1987, p. 7). In this context

finds actuality question related to the controversy between narrow- and wide-range education, between the enabling people during the educational process to the possibility of perfectional realising tasks related to any specialistic branch of studied issues or preparing them to the ability of performing occupational functions belonging to another kinds of activity than immediately studied branches (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1995, pp. 167-178).

Another issues are related to the imperative of accesibility of education for the people of schoolage, where some of the new aspects of the analising social phenomena are the trends of commercialisation of the educational sphere — preparing the system of the free educational market; and preparing the system for the compatibility with the requires of the process of European integration (Lowe, 1992). Andrzej Radziewicz-Winnicki indicates the problem of modernisation and challenges directed to individuals in this context. The author writes that in the situation of complicated and characterised by the plurality of institutions social reality it is important to concentrate educational processes on the enriching its participants in the abilities and possibilities of practicing adequate reactions to the different conditions of social environment (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1999, pp. 133-134).

Occurring on the great scale, in the conditions indicated by modernistic trends, processes of globalisation are related to the enabling people to identifying the universal elements of culture, regarding the representants of different social groups as the part of the earth ecosystem and participants of the international reality, regarding them as the parallely consuments and creators of the culture sphere, consciousness of the differences present in the acts of valuing world problems. The main ideals of the education directed to the world are: intercultural dialogue and consciousness of the pluralism, orientation to the global change, ability of thinking in the terms of global system and possibility of analysing problems in the context of existing controversions, the attitude characterised by the openness on the participation in the tasks of resolving global problems (Melosik, 1995, p. 75). As the effect of postmodernistic trends, the process of globalisation is realising parallely with the rediscovering localisational trends, the need of modification and projecting activities, related to the protection of “the world of inrooting” and parallely

indicates the cultural requirement of realisation activities directed to the shaping of global and European consciousness (Nikitorowicz, 1998, p. 142).

Continuing the analysis of the problem, one of the challenges directed to the educational sphere is the re-definition of the required quality of schooling. Some of them are surely related to the preparing of the effective "substantial staff development programme; stable staffing; dynamic leadership; parental support; a sound core curriculum; whole school policies; imaginative local and national government backing; education authorities that understand the problems of schools and work in co-ordination with them" (Lowe, 1992, p. 585). What derives from these elements is the imperative of activation of local communities? We could treat these imperatives as an answer related to the agential co-efficient vision of society and associated with it idea about man's responsibility for the social events: "In society, nothing takes place by itself, automatically, as a result of historical necessity or dispensation of fate. Everything is a product of human beings" (Sztompka, 1991, p. 271), or as Władysław Jacher writes: "Interaction between all the educational subjects is the best way to educating to the co-responsibility, to treating someone's acts and behaviour in the social and moral dimension" (Jacher, 1998, p. 101). Peter F. Druker pays our attention to the problem of placing educational institutions in the society of knowledge. He writes that there is importance of placing school "in society" (as the opposition of placing in the relation "of society"), it means in the relation with another social institutions and opened to the disposition of the representatives all the age- and education-levels (Gasparski, pp. 95-96).

In the mentioned conditions, it is possible to indicate an important imperative of promoting the adequate practices of permanent training directed to the representants of the widely comprehended spheres of education, social care, institutions concerned in the activities relating to the social rehabilitation, etc. Permanent education directed to the mentioned group (the representants of the service sector focused at the "work with people") finds a particular actuality in the contexts of dynamic social change, characterised especially by assimilation of the patterns of democratic and civic society or free-market economy, what in the consequences prepares a lot chances,

but also different social problems, like unemployment, pauperisation, social marginalisation, etc. The mentioned conditions indicate the great need of realisation the acts of empowerment, community development, actualising the potentials analysed in the categories of the human capital (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 1992, pp. 35-36; Stochmiałek, 1999a; Stochmiałek, 1999b; Żebrok, 1999).

There is a lot of different theoretical options in the field of sociological reflections related to the contemporary social reality. We can find the trends focused at the process of modernisation, institutional apprehension, conception of Habermas, theories of globalisation, world system theory, dependence theory and post-modernistic trends (Ziółkowski, 1998, p. 52). All of them carry implicitly the specific, sometimes similar, sometimes opposite, sometimes existing in the neutral relation tasks, functions and demands. This reality prepares an exciting and interesting field of sociological analysis and explorations, but it means also the need of adaptation and preparing the correct way of functioning mutually for the global educational sphere so as for the individuals, who will realise the teacher's functions in the pluralistic, multicultural, multiideological, ambivalent and also controversial society. It is also important to realise that most of aspects of changes in our country are not just related to the post-communistic status, but rather are linked with the trends taking importance in the global social field, but the fluctual nature of the processes of social change oblige us to recognise the specificity of dynamics characteristic to every particular social constructs. The presented analyses are the trial of outlining some aspects of conditions of society caught in the specific, particular time. It is also invitation to regarding and analysing in the educational context many important processes taking place within contemporary societies.

Correspondence

Ewa BIELSKA, Lecturer

Chair of Social Pedagogy, Faculty of Education and Psychology

University of Silesia, ul. Grażyńskiego 53, PL -- 40-126 Katowice

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