

key problem here for local innovators is how to balance financial and professional support. Once they concentrate "too much" on the first, they could be pressured to make unplanned professional concessions, including hosting too many visiting professors and guest lectures or adopting new programs and functions, dictated by the sponsors.

International cooperation can result in globalizing communication and knowledge, affecting both sides. The "foreign" side has an opportunity to be effective at sites of academic innovation as those have been defined by local innovators. Thus, they also gain more relevant knowledge of changing societies from their professional and disciplinary perspectives. The "local" innovators could also gain international recognition and an opportunity to integrate their scholarship into the mainstreams of academic exchange.

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EDUCATIONAL CHANGES IN POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES: A PERSPECTIVE FROM POLAND

Abstract: The question, whether in Poland it is possible in a short time to create a new pragmatic and progressive educational system based on the unified school that is democratic with unified education and the freedom of choice, is analyzed in this paper. Educational policy has been taken up at the background of political democracy and introducing market economy to the national transformation.

Education in Poland represents a dimension of national life in which certain achievements have been accomplished, certain objectives are yet to be achieved and certain important developments have led to open conflict.

Below, I offer only some of my own thoughts on what seems to me the main deficiencies of such approaches. I come to the conclusion which will not astonish anybody, that – from today's perspective – though education and economy have been very badly matched in Poland, the implemented social policy in the domain of educational policy (i.e. possibility of common educating, participation in national culture) satisfied social demands. Intellectual characterization requires that we still continue this old system. Such unity as various approaches to education have consists mainly in the identification of connections and continuities between the educational system and the capitalist society. Education, is said to reflect, correspond to reproduce capitalism. In Poland the case was different. Despite the realization of the ideological aims of the socialist country the education was also open, showing in a small scale other possibilities of the individuals self determination i.e., life models. Can we call it as the educational pluralism of that time?

It is very difficult to answer this question. In any case, one cannot say that in recent forty years it was only the reproduction of the ideological assumptions of the system.

It was a result of the specific relations between estate and religion in the field of education in Poland. The situation in that country reflects the importance of the Roman Catholic Church in Polish history as well as its dominant influence within the opposition to the communist regime after 1945. In the pre-war republic, religion, Roman Catholic or otherwise, was a teaching subject in state-run or private schools; after the war its officially regulated status depended on the changing relations between the state and the church

authorities and the actual power of the Communist Party. Following the Education Act of 1961 religious instruction in schools was finally abandoned, but the Catholic Church established so-called catechetical points in their premises with the voluntary but quite remarkable participation of pupils.*

On the other hand the issue and the role of intelligentsia is to some extent paradoxical. It may be seen that the phenomenon of intelligentsia as an element of social structure concerns only a few nations of Central and Eastern Europe, especially those who speak Slavonic languages.** As Professor Kwasniewicz states: "I would like to show observers from outside of Poland an image of the Polish intelligentsia that differs from the one prevailing in the literature on the subject. In some of these interpretations, the intelligentsia is viewed with a touch of nostalgia, as a narrow, elitist group that functions as the conscience of society and provides it with ideological leadership. Other interpretations intend to demonstrate that in a socialist society the intelligentsia occupies a special place in the governmental system, one that exerts considerable influence on the redistribution of the GNP, and is therefore seen as a privileged social group. In my opinion, both types of interpretations must be viewed as one-sided and oversimplified. Therefore, I intend to provide a multifaced and diversified image of the Polish intelligentsia presenting both its socio-cultural features and social functions.

On the other hand, there are some epistemological difficulties linked to the theoretical concept of the intelligentsia as a structural phenomenon. In particular, one can raise questions about the character of the ties which unite members of intelligentsia as a social group: whether it is an entity which can be labelled as an element of social structure, or if it is composed of loose categories unable, at least for the time being, to transform themselves into dynamic class-like groups influencing, in one way or another, different aspects of social reality.***

Let's quote official elements of Polish educational policy of nowadays (1990).

- Education should serve all and everybody, which means its democratic character. The access and commonness of education together with the growth of the scope of these elements should eliminate limitations connected with the territorial distribution of people and all other barriers and selective conditionings.
- High quality of educational system is connected with the democratic character of education. We are interested in both democratic and modern system, thus covering schools and other educational institution on high didactic, educational and tutorial levels.
- The indispensable condition of realization educational policy is providing society with the level of education adequate to the needs of individual and possibilities of each person. It is assumed that in the nearest perspective all citizens of Poland should have secondary education.
- Free education on all levels.
- School and educational institutions have to organize, as a consequence of educational policy, possibilities-through educational processes for future satisfaction of individuals.

* Anweiler O.: Some Historical Aspects of Educational Change in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. *Oxford Studies in Comparative Education* vol. 2 (1), 1992, p.33.

** Kwasniewicz W.: Sociological Dilemmas of Intelligentsia. The Case of Poland. In: *The Polish Sociological Bulletin*. No 3, 1991, p. 169.

*** Kwasniewicz W.: op. cit. p. 171.

Problems of transformation the whole educational system unfortunately have not been taken up.

The former Vice-minister, professor A. Janowski says: "A basic problem for the Polish education system are material circumstances – buildings, equipment, teachers, salaries, etc. It was obvious that, although the post-communist government understood the problems faced by schools, a radical improvement could not be expected due to the bad shape of the budget. The situation did not improve in 1990 and in the middle of 1991 became even worse. It should therefore be understood that the changes introduced did not address the most important one – budgetary resources."^{*}

Let us now discuss a few priorities as the Polish Ministry saw them. Political and social changes which have taken place in Poland during last five years offered an opportunity to establish closer and more meaningful links between Western and Polish educationists than has been possible for several decades. The appointment of a new staff in Polish Ministry of Education, autumn 1989, has inaugurated a new period in the evolution of the Polish educational system. This applies to all levels of education, starting with pre-school education and extending over primary, secondary, tertiary and further education. There is already a definite tendency amongst Polish educationalists and administrators to exam the aims of education, to reorganise the whole system of education along very different lines than has been the case so far and to introduce new ideas and new procedures. In the public official discussion it is said that special stress will be put on the examination of the key issues of specific aspects of education which are currently receiving particular attention in Poland, e.g., the problems of reorganisation of educational systems; efforts to increase the effectiveness of learning; new modes of curriculum; innovation and development patterns of political socialisation; transition school, work and labour market; organisation of educational research and its relevance to pedagogical practice; new patterns in teacher education.

"In the autumn 1990 a new act was prepared and passed by the Parliament connected with higher education and all academic centres in Poland. The act grants the higher education institutions almost full autonomy to elect all authorities, design syllabi, determine fields of study and accept new students. Practically, the limitation of full independence and autonomy are financial resources. They are still inadequate and distributed among universities and other colleges by the Ministry. Since the autumn of 1989 the Polish Ministry of Education also started a work on modifying the school syllabi.

It was decided a modern syllabus, which should prepare all pupils for their future function and roles in a new democratic society.

Having examined other syllabi and (until 1989) obligatory textbooks the Ministry concluded that no radical and rapid changes were required for other subjects. Not all textbooks were estimated as too bad, moreover the financial resources were very limited. The Ministry of Education decided that change would be gradual, extending over a period of several years."^{**}

The changes in education touched not only new legal regulations for primary and secondary but one particularly difficult issue.

* Janowski A.: Poland: Changes and Prospects. In: *Educational Innovation and Information*. IBE, Number 70, March 1992. p.3.

** Janowski A.: op. cit. p. 3.

Former school headmasters very often had been appointed because they satisfied political criteria fixed by the communist party. In June 1990 the Ministry decided one-time election of school headmasters. They allowed teachers to give a vote of confidence for the existing headmaster and/or to elect another. Another innovation is an increase of local communities, influence on local school. This resulted in the adoption of a new legal regulation under which local authorities have already taken over the running of kindergartens and 1st January 1994, will take over the running of primary schools.*

One of the innovations, in the new political situation, was permission for founding a number of non-state school. In the end of 1989, it was decided that organizations, institutions or groups of individuals had the right to open quite private and/or other type of half private called "community schools".

Popular in Poland "community schools" (in 1991=200, in the end 1992=600) they operated under the very general supervision of the Ministry of Education and were permitted to introduce broad changes to the syllabi. These are official projects and proposals of future solutions. In public opinion, and in social consciousness of the majority of individuals exist another conviction. It perceives, that in Polish schools, since June 1989 we could see in fact only three important innovations.**

These are:

- including into the school curriculum 2 hours weekly of Roman Catholic religion. These lessons of religious knowledge are taught and controlled by priests and/or nuns authorized by – the Church;
- Russian language (earlier obligatory) is not compulsory any more subject of a class stage.
- increasing a new model of a private and community school in Polish society.

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In all types of schools parents decide about pupil's participant in religious lessons. In secondary schools this decision belongs to individual pupils. In fact, nearly 90% of pupils take part in these lessons. Among that number, a lot of them participate only to avoid a low position of being an outsider in a social structure of the classroom. Introducing religion into the school without any public discussion since the 1st of September 1990, might be seen outside the Polish scene as a first step to make the religious component part of many curricula including also vocational education.*** A limited number teachers of English in primary schools do not allow English to be the obligatory one in place of Russian languages. So, however Russian language is completely unpopular in Poland, around 80% of pupils – in this school year attend lessons.

"Still, the law does not give the local authorities and teachers at individual schools the right to change the school curricula. The teachers have not got full freedom to use various methods. Fortunately there is still an increase in number of private and community schools. They have become a natural terrain for experiments and innovations. In the first two years (until 1991) approximately 200 schools of this type have been opened. Despite being small

* Janowski A.: op. cit. p. 3.

** Of course there are a lot of programme changes especially in such a subject as history. Mostly, another type of interpretation historical events in 20. century.

*** Anweiler O.: op. cit. pp. 33–34.

and financially, troubled, they are attractive for many teachers. They also showed that parents being active in the implementation of school curriculum, were also ready to pay for this new type of education. If community school implements basic and minimal curricula, it is to some extent subsidized by the state.”*

In the beginning of 1993 there are 675 non-state schools. Among this number the majority of them are “community schools” (599) and more expensive for parents private schools (76). Certain stagnation or conservatism in education of the present days as opposed to other types of conservatism may be defined as a conscious or unconscious tendency not to take into account in the urbanized society of the 20th century, the essential changes of various social transformations.

It may also be expressed in the point of view that essential changes in the mode and way of looking at certain processes, which have already undergone detailed analysis, are not necessary. The American theoretician P. M. George, distinguishes two types of conservatism: “passive” and “reactive”. The main elements of the passive conservatism is in his opinion, the satisfaction with the existing status quo, and the reaction conservatism, means the fear or indisposition towards an attempt to take up renewed or new examinations or analyses.** It is also claimed passive conservatism is connected with social prosperity and the reaction type of conservatism is in always connected with the (so-called) turmoil or simply crisis, as it is in Poland.

Socially, the new problems of egalitarianism in national education touch also the problem of shaping the individuals personality in accordance with the educational ideals of a new socio-economic system and raising this postulate to the standing equal other basic functions of society. “In western democracies programme options became blurred with the passage of time, but there political parties were able to create images easily discernible by the voters. In Poland apart from barely emerging movements proclaiming radical slogans or those raising doubts because of their past (Social Democracy of the Polish Republic, Polish Peasant Party) parties are on the local political scene rarely identified with definite programmes.

As was already stated, Poland is not homogeneous, thus the behaviour of voters will be diversified. Political parties functioning on the central scene are not fully aware of this situation thus their programmes do not reflect the diversity of issues important to separate segments of society which is especially clear on regional level.”***

The changes, in the social formation in Poland are represented (inside and outside) as linear – a movement in a straight line, a progression, however, if we analyse those changes through an examination of different levels or tiers or components of the social formation – this perspective becomes rather mere problematic. Very often that what is represented as a post-communist might be well be seen accurately, as a return to a pre-communist social formation. New elite’s of the real power especially in local communities at the moment, are without intellectual support, among them are not enough educated people, owing to their homogenous culture – i.e., programme of perception, thought and action, increasing traditional values of ruling and working classes – create the cultural capital, with a lot of totalitarian tendencies. In today’s Poland may be found many similarities between pre-communist and postcommunist orientation (i.e., nationalism, intolerance, idealism, individual-

* Janowski A.: Poland: Changes and Prospects, op. cit. p. 3.

** George P. M.: Modele i społeczny konserwatyzm w socjologii (Models and Social Conservatism in Sociology). *Studia Socjologiczne* 1971. vol. 2, p. 89.

*** Jalowiecki B.: The Political Scene of local Poland. In: *The Polish Sociological Bulletin*. 1992. vol. 3. p. 165.

ism, hierarchical structure in social organization). Thus the political scene of local Poland is poorly structured because of the amorphous character of social structures, weak associations and political parties which are still vary one of the other. Egalitarian behaviours dating back from the times of real socialism, as well as a tendency towards revindicationism and authoritarianism will dominate for a long time to come the political scene of local Poland.*

So new problems for education arise at Universities: to conserve or to challenge the culture?

This matter has been already partly discussed in local academic centres by the representatives of many subdisciplines of educational sciences. It seems however, that so far the voice of social educationists has been quite modest in this respect. And it is particularly important where new and old educational strategies are suggested and reorganized, thus different, economic-social organisms are created.

What encourages these considerations is the necessity of social sciences coming closer to practice, as well as the situation-world wide to a certain extend – which we also have to do in our country and which we simply did not want to accept and this is the crisis of the educating society consisting in the reduction of abilities and possibilities of educating youth according to the spirit of continuing the system of values, cultural models shaped by older generations and the past epochs. Summing up, these critical issues in this chapter, I would purposefully like to avoid answering such questions: whether and to what extend social policy, at the moment and in the future, in aspect of education in postcommunist country, such as Poland, will be influenced by the pre-communist period of national history? That means, the last four decades, when the education was controlled by central power and territorial state administration. Is it possible in a short time to build a new pragmatic and progressive educational system based on the unified school which is democratic with unified education and the freedom of choice? Only the future will show to what extent can this become a reality.

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* Jalowiecki B.: op. cit. p. 166.