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## **ABOUT THE LACK OF DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY – SEMBLANCES, SERVITUDE AND DIFFICULT SEARCH FOR CHANGES**

In an era of developing and growing fundamentalisms, life in democratic states, in relative peace and a sense of security, is becoming increasingly valued. At the same time, even in democratic societies extreme nationalistic movements with radical slogans, often distant from democratic beliefs, are gaining in popularity. Why do so many people living in peace, democracy have extreme views, reject dialogue or cooperation, and express intolerant opinions? This article is not an analysis of all the causes of this phenomenon, but it focuses only on education in order to show the areas that may have an impact on how we prepare young generations to live in a time of intense, constant change and what competencies and skills help them to develop (Glaeser et al. 2007). And finally, is the offer of contemporary education timely, authentic and currently responsible?

### **Developing democratic society**

Bogusław Śliwerski points out that:

democracy does not only require social but also political maturity of school leavers, therefore it is extremely important to prepare the young generation for responsible choice of values and making decisions accordingly. Industrial society needs school that teaches and provides knowledge, and information society should replace this type of institutional education with school – laboratory where integral formation of personality, including learning key competences (the ability to find information and act, the ability to work in a team, creativity and the ability to think globally, etc.) will prevail. Strengthening personal competences and interests of the child in the course of education should be accompanied by developing social features such as the ability to communicate directly, to take part in dialogue, develop genuine bonds of friendship and love as well as responsibility. New school should correspond to the idea of democracy and open society in which education would become a process of human existence (Śliwerski 2015, p. 608).

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Edward Glaeser et al. mentioned that the connection between education and political participation is crucial as a feature of “civic culture” (2007, pp. 2-3). They sum up the research about the democracy and education.

The correlation between education and democracy is clear. The reason for this correlation is not. In this paper, we offer an explanation for the correlation. Our explanation hinges on the connection between education and the costs and benefits of political engagement. Schools socialize young people and political involvement is one form of socialization; a variety of evidence shows a positive connection between education and civic engagement. We model education as raising the benefits of political action when individuals choose to support a more or less democratic regime. In this model, democratic regimes offer weak incentives to a wide base of potential supporters, while dictatorships offer strong incentives to a narrower base. Education increases the society-wide support for democracy because democracy relies on people with high participation benefits for its support. We show that better educated nations are more likely both to preserve democracy and to protect it from coups (Glaeser et al. 2007, p. 31).

Betto van Waarden emphasizes the meaning of teaching for toleration in pluralist liberal democracies (van Waarden 2017).

Zygmunt Bauman describes current times as a liquid modernity and notes that we deal with the deregulated and individualized society of consumers, which was formed along with constantly progressing globalization (Bauman 2012, p. 34). The author notes that

the life, which everyone without exception leads, is the sum of fate (about which one cannot do much, although it is, at least in part, a result of human choices from the past) and personality (on which one can work, improve and change). Fate decides what real possibilities one has, but it is the personality that chooses them, tending toward one and rejecting the other possibilities. In any case, one has more than one option [...] and therefore [...] there is not a situation where one cannot do anything different from what one has already done, nor is there a choice, decision or action that precludes an alternative (Bauman 2012, p. 33).

He is also convinced that “in order to use the freedom of choice properly (regardless of all its limitations), one must clearly realize what range of options is given by ‘fate’ [...] and what scope of alternative activities [...] one can choose from” (Bauman 2012, pp. 33-34). It should be added that one needs to know how to notice, analyse, and evaluate these different possibilities critically to be able to make accurate, ethical, socially and individually valuable decisions. This is the role of education – to create conditions for learning to think, assess, make decisions after an in-depth, internal analysis.

### **Education for/about democracy**

Each country, as Sir Ken Robinson notes, is currently reforming public education.

This is so for two reasons. The first is the economic reason: we are trying to find a way how to educate our children to enable them to make the most of themselves in the twenty-first century

economic reality [...]. The second reason is cultural: we want to educate our children to enable them in the era of globalization to preserve cultural identity and transmit the cultural genes of our communities to future generations. The problem is that we want to meet the future offering actions of the past (Robinson 2011, p. 63).

We do not notice that in modern times solutions, methods, means that used to be efficient and effective some time ago do not longer work. Modern school does not create conditions for the development of an independent, creative thinking or confidence in action, and in the era of unrestricted access to information school ceases to be a source of knowledge, thus young people find it more and more difficult to see the sense of spending time in it.

“We push children through education, desensitizing them. And it should be quite the opposite: we should not make them fall asleep, but wake them up to discover what they have in themselves” (Robinson 2011, p. 65). We want to teach children freedom, confidence, respect for values and norms, and we do this by using various forms of manipulation, expecting subordination and obedience, and all signs of independent thinking are taken as signs of insubordination, against which we believe we must fight by introducing a child on the expected, traced path that is controlled by an adult, who has authority over a child. In the statements and actions of many educators we can find the demands and declarations of teaching children to function in a democratic society. However, we feel that today it is just a fashionable slogan behind which there is an almost unchanged adaptive education. B. Śliwerski is of the opinion that education in Poland is

focused primarily on education **about** democracy and **for** democracy, but not **in** democracy. In other words, it is assumed [...] that one must educate to democracy and about democracy in autocracy without an authentic and engaged students, teachers and parents' experience of democratic processes, their manifestations and consequences (Śliwerski 2011, p. 76).

As Henry Giroux points out, we should understand school as a civic space, as *polis*. He defines public space as a set of learning environments where people gather to talk, to begin a dialogue, to share stories and fight together within the framework of social relations that will strengthen the possibility of active citizenship (Giroux 1989, p. 201). However, this understanding of school, requires confidence in the child's competence and awareness of the child's importance and place in any society. Diverse discourses, widely described in the literature, prove how different the definition of the child and childhood can be.

Observation of educational reality exposes the fact that even though we recognize the need to educate children to live in democracy and we agree on the fact that they need to learn about democracy, there is no broad consent for teaching in democracy to give children autonomy, choice, the right to co-decide while developing responsibility.

## Democracy in education (?)

Living in the post-modernity environment is a significant challenge for pedagogy to create a space where it will be possible to explore and pursue new opportunities – by expanding reflective and critical ways of learning; constructing, and not reproducing knowledge; enabling children to act creatively, and thus realizing opportunities and coping with anxiety (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 114). Education is to create space for gaining experience, which is valuable in modern times and necessary in everyday functioning. Gunilla Dahlberg and co-authors note that

the postmodern situation leads to processes of individualization, but also makes interpersonal relationships come to the fore. Knowledge, identity and culture are produced and processed in relations with others – they are co-constructed. There are many relational concepts, including dialogue, conversation, negotiation, meeting, confrontation, conflict. If knowledge is no longer seen as gathering and reproducing facts, but it is recognized that it is created from a particular perspective and open, one can see a dialogue in it. This dialogue does not aim to achieve a certain result nor reach a consensus or ultimate truth. The dialogue in which none of the parties is favoured (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 116).

Education needs support instead of supervision, and openness and trust instead of finding deficiencies. The democratization of the institution, however, will not happen by itself, there must be understanding, willingness and effort to make changes possible and real. It is necessary to make a conscious choice to democratize education (starting with changes in the institutions of early childhood education and care – cf. Dahlberg et al. 2013; Telka 2009), to change the child's position in the institution and in the whole learning process, and finally to change the role of the teacher completely – from the all-knowing, all-powerful teacher to the one that supports, creates conditions, gives problems to be solved, inspires, values independent thinking and unusual solutions.

It seems obvious and extremely important to emphasize that the competencies desired in the postmodern world, such as activity, participation and responsibility, are acquired in childhood. Therefore, democratic changes in education must be made from the earliest stages of education. And although it seems to be indisputable, even banal and unarguable on the theoretical level, its realization is not so clearly and widely accepted. This is connected with the accepted discourses of the child and childhood and dominant beliefs that children are not sufficiently competent to decide, to choose, to express their own opinions. Therefore, we often deal with semblances of change, declarations, which mask imposing actions that are authoritarian towards children and that are revealed in numerous studies described by the authors of papers edited by M. Dudzikowa and K. Knasiecka-Falbińska (2013), or D. Klus-Stańska (2014).

## Semblances of democracy in education

The features of a democratic society, such as freedom, commitment, participation and responsibility, are generally valued by the inhabitants of democratic states. However, one must note that even though they are highlighted as important both in social and educational life, they often “collide” with the actions (of teachers, head teachers, inspectors, representatives of authorities) observed in the education of children, starting from early education. I discuss this issue in more detail in the article *Pozory demokracji w edukacji [Semblances of democracy in education]* (Olczak 2015, pp. 157-171). In this paper I outline only the problem of the gap between declarations and expectations, and the actual educational activities.

Here is a list of major semblances in education:

- 1) the semblance of human freedom – in education enslavement is seen on various levels – mental or action levels, and in relation to different entities – students against teachers, teachers against head teachers and supervisors, head teachers against educational supervision and authority bodies, and parents generally against school. The problem of enslavement is discussed further in this paper;
- 2) the apparent equality of citizens – unequal position of entities, dominance of teachers over children and parents, the head teacher over teachers (sometimes ostensibly manifested), etc.;
- 3) the semblance of responsibility – students do not have the possibility of taking responsibility for their education; their responsibility is limited mainly to the obligation to respect and fulfill the teacher’s instructions;
- 4) the semblance of tolerance, respect for diversity – the fear of talking about difficult topics, stereotypes are often perpetuated, problems are belittled or infantilized;
- 5) the semblance of dialogue – monologue prevails; the teacher talks and students have to listen, be silent and speak out when they are told to by the teacher;
- 6) we pretend that we teach criticism, independence of thought – in fact any manifestation of breaking established patterns is combated, answers that follow “the key” are assessed higher.

Pretending actions in education brings the risk of preserving unfavourable schemes and strengthening actions that are harmful from the point of view of the child’s development. Hanna Kostyło analyses that the semblance

refers to the phenomena and situations that “pretend”, “simulate” to be something different. They appear to be something other than they actually are. In education we can talk about the semblance in many senses, in the context of the activities of students, teachers, parents and school administration. Each of them takes apparent actions, pretending to be doing something that in fact they do not do, pretending to achieve something that in fact they do not achieve. In this sense we can talk about the apparent knowledge, discipline, socialization, cooperation and

finally education. “The problem is that the reality of education is perceived by most participants as true, semblances are taken for reality” (Kostyło 2013, p. 84).

This involvement in apparent actions and blurring the boundary between appearance and actual action are extremely unfavourable for the discussion about the authentic condition of Polish education and declarations, appearances, superficiality that penetrate it. The difficulty lies in the fact that not all interested and involved in education parties are aware of them, they cannot always see them, interpret, and begin the strenuous task of changing the direction of education towards modern, subjective education based on respect for all entities involved in it.

### **The enslavement of the child and teacher in the educational process**

The above-mentioned phenomenon of enslavement in education, the pretense of freedom, applies to all entities involved in education. Although it is obvious that an individual functions constantly on the border between freedom and subordination, obedience and responsibility, where the individual's actions are restricted by prevailing social norms, and an accepted system of values, it is in education where we observe an alarming discrepancy between the declared by teachers freedom, subjectivity and children's/students' causativity in the educational process, and observed command approach, violence, coercion, domination and indisputable authority of teachers, authoritarian relationships built with young people. This is the pretense of freedom, dialogue, equality, tolerance etc. In this study enslavement is understood as hindering or preventing the individual from actions of liberty, from the possibility of making decisions and choosing freely in various areas. On the basis of my own research I can say that enslavement also involves placing an individual only in the area of duties, without the right to function in the area of freedom and self-determination (Olczak 2011, pp. 211-212). The phenomenon of enslavement does not apply, however, only to students; in the Polish educational reality we see the limitation of freedom of action and decision-making in the activities of teachers, who are subjected to frequent inspections, in the lower grades they have to teach from imposed textbooks, they are obliged to prepare students for examinations and tests in accordance with the adopted key which, in teachers' opinions, limits them, and this happens at different stages of education. Finally, head teachers must follow the requirements of educational supervision on the one hand and on the other the requirements of the authorities. As Z. Melosik and T. Szkudlarek note,

[in] most western countries pluralism became a reality – freedom of speech, press, religion, opinion, association appears to be realized [...]. Full freedom? No. It seems that nothing has changed in a *sense of liberty* of individuals, groups, societies and humanity. The dream of free-

dom is still valid and unrealized [...]. Again (and always) we feel enslaved – by another kind of (more humanistic?) enslavement (Melosik and Szkudlarek 2009, p. 91).

The concepts of freedom and enslavement are inextricably linked, they condition each other and help detect opposite distant conflict areas. “What some people see as a process of civilization, the others see as a process of enslavement and subjugation” (Bauman 1995, p. 35). This is the thesis that does not allow one to make a generalized analysis of the concept of enslavement and the concept of freedom. Also types of enslavement cannot be shown in a clear and closed way. This study is only an attempt to conduct this analysis. Enslavement as a contradiction to freedom can also be defined as a diametrically different situation under the condition formulated by Z. Melosik and T. Szkudlarek who claim that “sometimes what is considered as freedom in some circumstances, in other circumstances it is treated as enslavement” and they add, “what for one person or group is liberating in a given context, for other people in a different context it can be enslaving” (Melosik and Szkudlarek 2009, p. 92).

Z. Bauman notes that certain forms of coercion are “justified” as they create order, but other forms are “wicked and criminal” because they destroy the order and he describes them as a rape (Bauman 1995, p. 59). He also points out that “if the production of order means imposing *regularity* on phenomena – ‘rape’ means *irregular* violence, which undermines the regularity assumed by the model of order. And this violence is a ‘rape’” (Bauman 1995, p. 38). It is worth highlighting that Z. Bauman describes some forms of coercion as order-creating (1995) and Z. Kwieciński talks about coercion of non-developmental nature (Kwieciński 1995, p. 126). Z. Bauman indicates “rape” as a negative form of coercion, and Z. Kwieciński presents the problem of violence of non-developmental type. They both recognize the dichotomy of this phenomenon, indicating that some form of restriction, imposed decisions are needed for individuals and groups, while others are harmful, unwanted, unacceptable. How does it relate to the educational reality? Is violence (especially undesirable violence) a marginal phenomenon? I find Z. Kwieciński’s works very inspiring in this area:

A world without violence, domination, enslavement, authoritarianism and dependence can be built by people with different rationality, by people, whose *structure of deep experience* is dominated by *communicative and emancipatory rationality* rather than *adaptive and instrumental rationality*, by broad-minded people who are open to others. Meanwhile, education, and especially school, as a system of institutionalized actions on children and youth is unmasked in sociology as a *hidden programme* of the reproduction of domination and hierarchy relations, and the legitimization of inequality, hatred and war. And yet school and education are perceived as hope for rebuilding the *psychological infrastructure* of peace (Kwieciński 1995, p. 123).

There are different forms of violence in school reality. Direct physical violence is observed in relationships, especially between students, but in this study, after Z. Kwieciński, I am interested in the forms of hidden violence – structural and symbolic



violence. The former refers to the determination and power of the existing economic, political, social and cultural structures, and the latter refers to the transfer of patterns, behaviour, symbols, and signs of the existing culture together with the imposition of their meanings and interpretations (Kwieciński 1995, p. 124).

J. Galtung says that rape is built into the structure and manifests itself as inequality of power and consequently as inequality of life chances. The structural violence of education manifests itself in imposing the organizational structures of education that are subordinate to the economy and politics, in the top-down definition and limitation of legal knowledge and imposition of the paradigm of transmission pedagogy, the transmission from those who know better, earlier and demand – to those who do not know, learn and master (Kwieciński 1995, p. 125).

M. Falkiewicz-Szult also writes about the need for change in teacher – child relationships. She points out that “by not recognizing and not noticing enslavement an individual (group) interiorizes the principles of cultural arbitrariness in an obvious and natural way, thus reproduces the dominant culture. This somehow explains the principle of a class society that functions with power and authority as specific carriers of symbolic violence” (Falkiewicz-Szult 2006, p. 25).

The concept of enslavement is difficult to explain from the perspective of pedagogical considerations. It can be considered as deprivation of liberty, restriction of freedom (on different levels) without the consent. But I feel that it might also occur in certain situations even without the awareness of the person enslaved. We are stuck in schemes and stereotypes so deeply that we completely adapt to existing conditions and do not realize how much we are steered, manipulated, without control over our own behaviour and decision-making. We block the feeling inside that something is not right, that it should be different – it needs to be changed. The contestation of the existing scheme of the world, at least to some extent, requires reflection, inner-directedness, self-esteem, individualism and non-conformist attitudes towards the world. However, the competences cannot be mastered in a short time, we start to learn them in childhood, hence the huge responsibility for the quality of the overall impact on the child from kindergarten onwards rests on teachers and parents. As É. Claparède says: “We cannot perform a miracle and prepare citizens so that they are free citizens, who obey inner orders if we teach them for twenty years to be only subjects, submissive to external authority” (Claparède 2006, p. 175). But it is not just a matter of organizational changes and further guidance. We need a fundamental change in looking at the child. R. Schulz points out that

today I do not treat the child as a subject of my “noble pedagogical tendencies” but I see a unique human being who has the right to grow freely. And that is why I do not treat education as molding “passive material” (“the beginning of the man”) according to external imposed models, but I attribute to it the function of support and free development of an individual (Schulz 1993, p. 49, cited in Rogala 2000, p. 17).



Fighting for respect, trust and acceptance for the child, their needs and potential, in my opinion, should become an area of the special, reflective attention of educators and parents.

### **Difficult search for changes in education**

Education is “an important process aimed at the future of the state (and the man as a citizen), society (and the man as an individual) and the man in the personal dimension” (Waloszek 2014, p. 23). The importance of education for lifelong human functioning and society cannot be overestimated, therefore it should be shaped with great care and responsibility. School must not be turned into political weapon or a farm of private interests of various decision makers. It is essential to seek a change towards the construction of a democratic education, and preparation for functioning in freedom but also in the spirit of responsibility. We need to develop community, cooperation, positive relationships, but without losing the potential of individuals, their interests and abilities. Therefore, we face the task of moving away from education “in which there is no room for diversity, bottom-up cognitive initiative, important questions, reflection, ambiguity, alternative, opposition” (Klus-Stańska and Gawlicz 2013, p. 13). Poorly organized education “becomes a space for producing a particular type of entities and retail knowledge in detail, but sterile conceptually, knowledge that has been approved by authorities, so often outdated, superficial, selective, rigid and mechanically acquired” (Klus-Stańska and Gawlicz 2013, p. 13). G. Dahlberg, P. Moss and A. Pence indicate that “institutions for young children are socially constructed [...]. They are what we as a *community of people who are causative entities* make of them” (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 121). We need to realize that education requires change from the earliest stages and even “institutions for young children may be understood as *public forums located in civil society, where children and adults jointly participate in activities of social, cultural, political and economic importance*” (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 134). These institutions will not become democratic by themselves. If they are to become a forum in civil society a conscious choice of the direction of change in these institutions must be made. In our reality it is necessary to widen the field of freedom for all participants in the activities undertaken in them. They are to be places that offer many opportunities, that are open to new ideas, which sometimes are not known at the starting point, rather than places where curriculum is imposed and effects are measured (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 138). Therefore, we need trust in children, teachers, head teachers and parents, because regardless of the stage of education generally the goals are common – development of the child, creation of a space that is favourable for learning, discovering and maximizing the potential of the individual as well as for building a community.

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### **About the lack of democracy in education for democracy – semblances, servitude and difficult search for changes**

**Abstract:** One of the key tasks facing education in a democratic society is to prepare citizens to function in a constantly changing reality. This raises the question of whether one can prepare citizens for life in a democratic society and fully understand the mechanisms of democracy without practicing democracy from childhood? How do we want to build a democratic society, while constantly limiting children's participation and forcing them to be subordinated? Education is full of semblances, enslavement, and conservatism in the perception of the child and the adult power is an element that commonly justifies authoritarian relationships. There must be a change in the organization of education. We need to change the way of thinking about the child and teacher in the educational process.

**Keywords:** democracy, semblance, servitude, childhood

### **O braku demokracji w edukacji dla demokracji – pozory, zniewolenie i trudne poszukiwanie zmiany**

**Streszczenie:** Jednym z kluczowych zadań stojących przed edukacją w demokratycznym społeczeństwie jest przygotowanie obywateli do funkcjonowania w stale zmieniającej się rzeczywistości. Rodzi się pytanie o to, czy można przygotować obywateli do życia w demokratycznym społeczeństwie i w pełni rozumieć demokrację, bez praktykowania demokracji od dzieciństwa? Jak chcemy budować demokratyczne społeczeństwo, gdy stale ograniczamy partycypację dzieci, wymuszamy podporządkowanie. Edukacja jest pełna pozorów, zniewolenia, a konserwatyzm w patrzeniu na dziecko, w spostrzeganiu władzy dorosłego – to elementy powszechnie uzasadniające autorytarne relacje. Potrzebna jest zmiana w organizacji edukacji. Potrzebujemy zmienić sposób myślenia o dziecku i roli nauczyciela w procesie edukacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** demokracja, pozory, zniewolenie, dzieciństwo