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Tolerance as Value in Search for Axiological Perspective in Education

Motto:
"Man can, but does not have to strive for values (…) Striving for values, search for values (…) is nothing other than development of man. It is an ethical imperative, which man cannot ignore (…) What does not develop, dies, does not evolve, accomplishes nothing".

J. Gnitecki, W. Pasterniak

Abstract:

The most important aspects of social transformation in Poland, which result in, among other things, the necessity to develop an axiological perspective, also in the sphere of education, are discussed in the paper. Results of absence of values in social life and reasons for their absence are named. Special attention is paid to the problem of tolerance and passing moral values in education in order to avoid the "us" and "them" formula in perceiving the multicultural world.

Key words: *pluralism of values, moral education, occupational competence, image of a teacher, pragmatic competence.*

An analysis of life of contemporary societies undergoing system transformation shows axiological chaos, especially in terms of outlooks and moral values. Many articles and studies stress the necessity of developing an axiological perspective, giving direction to the process of change, because a lack of such a perspective creates a danger of social disintegration, a feeling of confusion, a lack of sense of life and difficulties in telling the difference between right and wrong.

Changes taking place in Poland are unprecedented in historical terms, therefore, there are no patterns or models to follow. In many fields of life changes are made according to patterns and experience of other countries, often incompatible with the Polish practice. According to professor Anita Miszalska: "besides progress we also notice catastrophes and frequent breakdowns in the environment surrounding our human individuals. Lies, lawlessness, pragmatism and progress are closely linked together (…)[1]. Effects of confusion and diffusion of influence of European countries as well as the United States of America and other continents can be noticed in Polish society. In many fields of life changes are introduced through destruction of the old system and creation of a new system completely different form the earlier one, a system which uses totally different mechanisms of controlling production, politics and political decision-making and of monitoring their execution.

In the opinions of many authors, pluralism of values and ethical attitudes is often connected with an individual feeling of confusion on encountering different positions and ideological orientations, which implies the need for searching for answers to questions concerning a catalogue of values that are indispensable in the contemporary frustrated and apathetic society, as well as in the process of education, especially of the young generation.

Moulding tolerance among the young is considered to be the top priority matter, because preparation for life in a multicultural society is an important element of education. The task implies possessing the ability to respect and tolerate different points of view, behaviour, lifestyles and orientations of awareness. Students should be aware of the multicultural character of their environment, see common and different elements while having respect for tradition in which they themselves were brought up. They should be instilled with basic principles of tolerance, such as an ability to respect other people's needs, opinions and an open attitude towards different points of view.

Man cannot live and develop in the world devoid of principal ideals and values. Due to absence of values in the process of education, interpersonal and social deviations and pathologies occur more and more frequently. It was the political and cultural transformations, formation of consumption mentality and underrating the value of school education and, consequently, their absence in social life that contributed to the crisis in the sphere of values.

M. Cybulska sees the roots of the present crisis of values in purposeful endeavours aimed at their devaluation. The authoress lists the following procedures:

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[1] A. Radziewicz-Winnicki, *Oblicza zmieniającej się współczesności* [*Faces of the changing present*], Kraków 2001, pp. 14–15.

1. relativization of values;
2. replacement of values by pretences or fetishes;
3. interception and appropriation of symbols;
4. mistaking or purposeful violating the order of values.[2]

The 20th century will be remembered in history as the age of intolerance, often assuming its extreme form. Intolerance was favoured by violent conflicts of different, often complex reasons and social factors. Therefore, we should draw conclusions from our past and act according to our knowledge, richer in new experience. This pertains chiefly to attitudes of tolerance, respect, openness to innovative solutions that should be formed by tutors in their pupils.

Research and experience show that both tolerance and intolerance are attitudes and behaviours acquired from the character of one's environment and the opinions of one's local community. It should be noted that the attitude of intolerance once acquired, connected with a strong feeling of disdain, hate and fear, is very resistant to any attempts made to change it. Here lies a very important task for each educator: to support respect for freedom, not only one's own, but also that of others, to avoid implementation of the "alien" and "enemy" pattern as the basic outlook on the world. It is a very difficult task, but in my opinion, the future of Polish school and the world undergoing globalisation depends on it. Whereas the empirical research of the recent years prove that the state of awareness of values is very low among occupationally active teachers[3]. As revealed by a survey of 332 teachers conducted by the Department of Sociology of Higher Teacher Education School in Częstochowa in 1994: "there is a clear antinomy between the assumed targets and contents of education, and values (principles) taught during the didactic and educational work. […] It is true that humanistic values, such as: acceptance of a pupil, authenticity, the feeling of empathy, kindness were sporadically mentioned among the traits of a teacher that favour implementation of educational targets, which seems to be the evidence of subjectivisation and dehumanisation of the teacher-pupil contact.[4] For the time being, understanding and internalization of

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[2] Cf. M. Cybulska; *O niektórych sposobach dewaluacji wartości w systemie totalitarnym* [*On certain methods of devaluation of values in the totalitarian system*]. In: F. Adamski (ed.) *Wartości – społeczeństwo – wychowanie. Studia z pedagogiki społecznej* [*Values – society – education. Studies in social pedagogy.*]

[3] Cf. H. Denek, *Wartości i cele edukacji szkolnej* [*Values and targets of school education*], Poznań–Toruń, 1994.

J. Kopeczek, Wychowanie w szkole [*Education in school*]. *Wychowawca* 2000/4, pp. 18–20.

[4] Cf. I. Wagner. Wychowanie kreatywne w aspekcie spuścizny pedagogiki społecznej i badań ankietowych [*Creative education in the aspect of legacy of social pedagogy and surveys*]. In:

values are often the matter of personal and free choice and decision of pupils while tutors remain totally indifferent to the fact. Many of them are afraid of being accused of interference into intimate spheres of life of their pupil and they do not see any difference between imposing their own knowledge of values and forcing their pupils to act according to that knowledge and passing their knowledge to encourage the pupil to choose from among different values and acquire the ability to assess their importance and universal character. Therefore, the purpose of education, especially for young people experiencing moral dilemmas, inner quandaries and looking for their own way of life, is development of the art of making a choice. **Moral values that are the most popular and most often mentioned as indispensable in human life are: honesty, wisdom, veracity, nobleness, tolerance, ability to forgive and integrity.** The said notions are the unquestioned values, irrespective of transformations of the surrounding environment. To follow moral values, it is not enough to be aware of them. One should also experience them, because moral education is only effective when it leads to internalisation of values.

The research by Halina Świda-Ziemba on contemporary young people shows that awareness of otherness, and not of community is what distinguishes them[5]. The diversity of groups of young people, the influence of different trends in culture make young people recognise life tasks as important and worth following to be different in terms of their rank of importance and possibility of implementation. One of the targets of contemporary education will, therefore, be " forming a conviction of one's own dignity and belief in one's strength. The basis for the dignity and identity of an individual is developed personality, a moulded system of values and integrity in one's beliefs"[6].

The latest educational forecasts drawn up by, among others, UNESCO, show that moral education will be an integral element of future education. Occupational standards of the teacher's competence have been established in most countries reforming their educational systems. The term "occupational competence" means: "an ability to perform in a profession in the way that is in agreement with standards required for a given occupational task"[7]. One of those tasks is a demand that a teacher should form moral, intellectual and social skills that are indispensable in the contemporary, fast changing world. There are conceptions of educating a

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Nowoczesna szkoła. Nowoczesność w szkole. Szkice i studia. [*Modern school. Modernity in school. Sketches and studies.*] A. Rosół, M.S. Szczepański (ed.), Częstochowa 1995.

[5] Cf. H. Świda-Ziemba. *Obraz świata i bycia w świecie (z badań młodzieży licealnej)* [*Picture of the world and being in the world (from surveys of secondary school pupils)*]. Warszawa 2000.

[6] T. Pilch, *Spory o szkołę* [Disputes about school]. Warszawa 1999, p. 207.

[7] S. Wlazło, Kompetencje nauczyciela [Competence of a teacher]. *Dyrektor Szkoły* 1999/4.

multidimensional man, capable to adapt to changes, to perform different social roles, often excluding one another, and capable of understanding the vast cultural variety of the local environment and the world as well as inevitability of coexistence, cooperation and tolerance.

In contemporary, democratic societies we can see, on the one hand, a growing selection of chances and opportunities for individual choice, and on the other, a feeling of confusion, disorientation and apathy, fall in repressive measures in enforcing moral rules and standards. All this results in growing difficulty in orientation in the chaos of values, economic paradoxes of "uncontrollable capitalism" in which life without work in the situation of social poverty has become for many individuals and social groups not, as was predicted, a transitory period, but a normal – chronic and unavoidable state"[8].

Negative consequences of the transformation in Poland make the complexity of the creative character of the teaching profession overlap the multifaceted and multidimensional character of the contemporary situation, in which socialisation of pupils takes place. The surrounding reality abounds with the number of educational situations, which form an enormous conglomerate of facts, events, plans and targets. Teachers' work is saturated with a large coefficient of changeability and uncertainty. Consequently, the results of educational and tutorial activities of a teacher are accumulated (or not) in educational effects of a pupil – his or her school partner. And as it was stressed many times earlier, they are:
  – results of effect of many factors situated beyond the teacher's competence;
  – effects do not accumulate in the personality of a pupil simply or directly;
  – a pupil undertakes auto-corrective and auto-creative activities himself or herself.[9]

The impossibility to unambiguously prove to what degree and extent competence and skills achieved by pupils are effects of the work of a teacher and to what extent of the pupil himself or herself and of the conditions on which none of them had any influence, results in postulates of abandoning empirical research focused on one-sided presentation of a teacher's potential in favour of grasping the relationships between activities of both actors of educational reality, that is of a teacher and a pupil. The point is particularly in observing changes taking place in the

[8] M. Hirszowicz, E. Neyman. Państwo opatrznościowe i jego ofiary [*Providential state and its victims*]. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1998/1, p. 72.
[9] Cf. J. Szempruch, *Pedagogiczne kształcenie wobec reformy edukacji w Polsce* [*Teacher training versus educational reform in Poland*]. Rzeszów 2000.

course of their mutually complementing activities and assessment of their effects.

Pedeutological literature provides extensive knowledge on the desired image of a teacher and his or her occupational competence. A. Janowski determines and defines the "model store of knowledge and skills that each teacher starting work in a Polish school should have". It should include knowledge on four fields of education:

– general cultural and civil preparation;
– general pedagogical preparation;
– factual knowledge in the field of teaching;
– preparation in methodology of the art of teaching.[10]

In many publications, the contemporary teacher is perceived as a person specially marked out in setting an example in establishing values, behaviour and ethical order in societies where one can notice symptoms of moral crisis expressed by the consumer attitude set on narrowly understood immediate consumption of goods and acquiring maximum pleasure, in the phenomenon of excessive eroticism or questioning certain ethical values[11].

In the Act of September 7, 1991, it is stressed that **school should provide conditions necessary for the development of each pupil by preparing them to perform their duties as family members and citizens on the grounds of principles of solidarity, democracy, tolerance, justice and freedom**[12].

The effectiveness of educational activities requires the presence of moral values in contents, methods and educational targets. The task of moral education is to prepare man for making a choice from among a number of different values, and the choice should be reasonable and free (independent of inner and external pressure), non-contradictory to the good and to ethical principles of other people.

A project of a set of occupational competence standards was accepted at the meeting of the Pedagogical Science Committee of the Polish Academy of Science on November 13, 1997, devoted to requirements concerning the occupational training of teachers as a basis for their preparation for performing teaching, educational and tutelary functions. The set included praxiological, communicative, cooperative, creative, informational and moral standards. A year later, another project of standards of teachers' occupational competence was created, in which,

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[10] A. Janowski, Reforma a model nauczyciela [*Reform and model of a teacher*]. *Nowa Szkoła* 1998/4/14.

[11] St. Pamuła, Wartości podstawowe w wychowaniu [Basic values in education]. *Problemy Opiekuńczo Wychowawcze* 1994/3

[12] Uniform test of the Act on the System of Education. 1997, p. 3.

for unknown reasons, moral competence standards were abandoned, whereas a medial standard was added to the informational standard and an interpretative standard was added to the communicative one. **It is quite surprising that pragmatic skills of a teacher are promoted in contemporary education, while moral competence, in which tolerance and respect for a pupil's dignity are of major importance, is neglected or marginalized.** After all, moral education is an indispensable need of any community as it helps a human being to understand the sense of his or her life, the need for development of his or her personality, to accept people who have different outlooks, ideas, religious beliefs and/or sexual orientations. It is difficult to understand this, especially that the time of the "great transformation" in Poland creates not only opportunities, but also threats to the processes of creating new values and rules and their implementation in the sphere of education. Education should create favourable conditions for both the development of skills and accumulation of knowledge by a pupil as well as teach the art of making conscious choices, which seems impossible without the presence of axiology in education and tolerance – as a rule of life in integrated Europe. According to Professor Tadeusz Pilch, the essence of the occupation of a teacher involves using repression and showing a certain kind of intolerance. It is instrumental repression, applied with a feeling of necessity, measured by effectiveness of action and regulated by consideration of respect for the person to which it was applied[13]. Without intolerance to evil and aggression in school, it is difficult to imagine functioning of school as an educational environment with definite moral and standard order, in which we learn to live together and be responsible for our actions and their social consequences.

Advancing "axiologisation" of education may mean choosing the most promising line of action for contemporary pedagogy that will allow creating better and better conditions for the formation of personality and attitude of man, his or her attitude towards the world and full awareness of their chosen goals in life.

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[13] T. Pilch, *Spory o szkołę*, [Arguments over school], Warszawa 1999, p. 165

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