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HOME EDUCATION AND THE FUNCTIONING OF A NATION – THEORY AND PRACTICE (ON THE POLISH EXAMPLE)

Introduction

Although it seems an obvious matter, education “in general” should be defined before defining “home education” – the essential term in this article. This operation cannot be carried out rationally before making a cognitively significant internal differentiation within the phenomenon of education in the *sensu lato* meaning, where education is understood as the totality of influences (processes and activities) on human individuals, generating a sequence of changes in them, as well as the changes themselves¹.

There are at least two logical problems associated with such a definition.

First, the influences (here specifically a particular form of activity) and their effects are called by the same word: education. And although this disturbs adequate communication, each time requiring additions or clarifications of the situational context, the *usus* at this point seems to be invincible. The very meaning of education, understood as an activity or activities, and not their effects, will be emphasized below.

Secondly, the use in this context an indication to various “processes and activities” requires the necessary clarifications itself, and hence there is a justification for this

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¹ Kwieciński, Z. (2017). *The Sociopathology of Education*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej.

attempt to make an internal order within the categorization of the phenomenon of education.

The main assumptions

Let us assume, therefore, that educational “influences” occur in three ways: as “natural education”, as “hetero-education” and as “auto-education” for which there are different “centres of power” or decision-making centres².

Genetically first in this triple sequence of meanings is that one according to which education is a spontaneous, contingent, receptive and relatively uncontrolled natural, and therefore physiological (we do not know if, in part, not a metaphysical one, too) process of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes as a result of random life experiences (such as learning the mother tongue of a young child³).

The “centre of power”, i.e. a specific subject of the decision to learn, is the human “learning instinct” here⁴, which secures the fulfillment of a number of fundamental needs of the individual. In this sense, however, it is at least education *sensu amplo*⁵, if not even „un-education”, which happens by itself, and hence it is not – strictly speaking – the education which is conscious, controlled, procedural and socially standardized. The latter form of education is an “activity” – and if we would call it a process, then only in the meaning of a voluntary process (processing then) as opposed to the process that is involuntary one.

The dominant educational activity for children and adolescents is socially organized and forced educational involvement (from a critical standpoint treated as a form of structural violence), in which, from the outside of the student, broadly understood teachers – social agents or enculturators – provide the enculturated student with factual and cultural (fictional) knowledge, presenting algorithms and heuristics for specific cognitive and practical activities, and finally presenting axio-normative systems to be mastered, and the student is tested for all of this. Additionally, in cases of recognition of the occurrence of such mastery, appropriate forms of evaluation are used using a systemic scale of grades and/or promotion of the student to the next levels on the educational ladder.

2 The underlying original concept of threefold forms of moral development as an inspiration for the discernment proposed above is to be found in the work by Sergiusz Hessen – See: Hessen, S. (1935). *Podstawy pedagogiki*. Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, s. 7.

3 A comprehensive scientific literature deals with the issue of language acquisition by babies. See eg. Lust, B.C. (2006). *Child Language: Acquisition and Growth* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics).

4 See eg. Fitch, W.T. (2011). *What Scientific Concept Would Improve Everybody's Cognitive Toolkit?* at: <https://www.edge.org/response-detail/11453> (date accessed 23.03.2021).

5 The meaning of *sensu amplo* phrase is the difference between the range of *sensu largo* and *sensu stricto* phrases (it's a complement set in terms of mathematical set theory).

Thirdly, education is an autonomously determined and consciously controlled self-activity of the learner. The decision-maker within it is the learner himself, i.e. the self-taught person. Contrary to appearances of freedom, however, due to its intentionality, the form of education is also compulsory, albeit in the form of self-enforcement. Nevertheless this self-imposed obligation is positively valued by the learner as an application of his/her free will.

Importantly, without the will of self-education and the will to communicate its effects, hetero-education may not take place at all, what is seen in the case of full resistance on the part of the learner to educational social pressures. Refusal to speak or write in schoolchildren (i.e. mutism) is not uncommon and is wrongly considered a psychosocial disorder⁶.

All three modalities of education highlighted above are present both in school and home education as forms of compulsory education. But what is the latter?

The notion of home education

Home education – both popularly and scholarly described as a teaching conducted and a learning that takes place in family environment, most often also in a family home, and without attending school and relating to strangers (teachers and a class group of peers) – is a form of fulfilling the legally mandated compulsory schooling, that is in turn legal in most countries of the world. Responsibility for enabling a child to exercise his/her right to education is taking over from traditional social agents – public or non-public education officials and professionals – by both or even one of the parents (or legal guardians) of a given child⁷.

In the world it is known also under such terms like: homeschooling, home-schooling, home schooling (those ones especially in the USA)⁸, but also as a “parental education” (*l'educazione* or *l'istruzione parentale* in Italy)⁹. In the scientific and popular use in Poland the form of education is called “*edukacja domowa*” (being a calque from the English language).

With unnecessary differences in assumptions and technics between home education and school education (with regard to the anthropological vision of human being, the adopted axio-normative system, goals of education, its program,

6 See eg. Bilikiewicz A. (red.). (2007). *Psychiatria: podręcznik dla studentów medycyny*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Lekarskie PZWL. p. 706.

7 For a comprehensive description of home education see: Ray B.D. (2005). *Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling*. Nashville (TN): Broadman and Holman Publishers or Budajczak M. (2004). *Edukacja domowa*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.

8 Gaither M. (ed.).(2017). *The Wiley Handbook of Home Education*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. p. 1.

9 See: di Martino E. (2017). *Homeschooling. L'educazione parentale in Italia*. Scotts Valley: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform and: <https://www.miur.gov.it/istruzione-parentale> (date accessed 23.03.2021).

time schedule for it, methods or didactic means to it), the differences are visible especially in the forms of evaluation. Depending on the legal regulations adopted in a given country, they range from total freedom (state authorities then do not require home students to undergo any exams), to rigorous annual ones (or more frequently organized) exams, which on the one hand perform the function of checking whether home education really took place, and on the other one, serve as a justification for a possible refusal to this form of education in the next school year¹⁰.

But regardless of how we would describe home education, its meaning lies in the assumption (or hope) that it will be a beneficial solution, both for satisfying the right of children and adolescents to education and their personal good, as well as for adults to fulfill their obligations in this regard, and finally to satisfy others – other people's legitimate expectations and therefore social needs.

Of course, it may also be that mistakes made in home education, if we ignore home education as a premeditated means of harming a child or educating him to harm other people, may or may not have negative consequences, but we will not deal with these in this article. Only the beneficial effects of home education and those connected with a nation will be considered here.

Social beneficiaries of home education

The introductory question here then should take the following form:

Who benefits from home education?

The obvious and at the same time trivial answer here is as follows: The child itself (i.e. the home-educated child herself or himself, also in her/his teenage years).

But is that child the only beneficiary of home education?

As it seems the question deserves a careful consideration. If the child is fine (also during her/his adulthood) thanks to being home educated who else is? Those must be at least other human beings: the closest and some distant ones (either in physical or social space and even time). "At least" because if the child is brought up in the atmosphere of caring for our lesser brothers and generally for nature, it keeps being caring of all living creatures and leads their life ecological in its style.

Home education then can be beneficial to human beings other than the home educated one: It can be of worth to parents, possible siblings, other family members, family's friends and people living nearby, in the same community, as well as to those occasionally benefitting on functioning constructively by the home educated child.

However, it's also possible that home education can be valuable for some social entities, although those entities are in fact reified (hypostatized) notions, in-existent as things, but only as sets of human interrelations and interactions.

¹⁰ In this regard see: Rothermel, P. (ed.).(2015). *International Perspectives on Home Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

In this point we'd like to suggest using a "nested" typology of human social entities, starting at the very bottom from individuals, for only them, as members – in their roles of social leaders, their supporters and laymen alike – constitute a given social collectivity.

A nested typology of human social entities:

- individual
 - social group (from small to very big ones in terms of membership quantity)
 - local community (sometimes subdivided into smaller neighbourhoods as for bigger localities)
 - regional community
 - state
 - federation
- mankind

Let us add that groups with their special feature of not being territorially bound (they are movable or/and dispersed like for example global associations) can cross the boundaries of other, territorial social entities. And although we can easily identify individuals of the human species, constructing the notion of mankind to be logically reasonable demands some counterpart and here we can point to the rest of nature – animal and vegetal kingdoms with their distinct species along with the whole epigeosphere (a term including geosphere and troposphere) – and nature treated as an issue is or happens to be an important part of human education (See e.g. Andrejczuk 2014).

As one can see, however, there is no nation category among the types of social collectivities distinguished above.

Nation in itself and in its liaisons with home education

What is nation then?

As it seems two meanings are given to the notion traditionally: the objective vs the subjective one. Here we are both of them:

1. The objective definition:

Nation is a human collective with its distinct culture, and especially ethnic language and customs¹¹, that operates:

- as a group (e.g. travelling peoples like Roma)
 - as a local community (any small tribe with one seat)
 - as a regional community (e.g. Basques)
 - as a nation-state (citizens of a relatively mononational state like Poland or adherents to a set of state values in a multinational state like the USA).
2. The subjective (and intersubjective through education) definition:

¹¹ See eg. Guibernau M. (1996). *Nationalisms*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 47.

Nation is a nominal, abstract community, „imagined” or „psychologically experienced” in private or as shared with other people, that is the object of their identification¹².

It's worth to be added that a socially important problem may arise when national identification degenerates into attitudinal and practical nationalism or chauvinism (as the notion not reduced to describe a form of intersexual relationships). National identification demands, both individually and socially, caution and prudence, and also responsibility, all connected with premeditated educational practices and common messages of tradition.

Treated as a living being, nation can't survive the death of its nationals, *id est* users of its culture, but also their abandoning of the cultivation of their national culture, especially under some external pressures or deliberate decisions.

Even nowadays, with the trend of overwhelming globalization, people apparently tend to keep their national identification as important part of their personal consciousness, and being forced to erase this identification, they oppose, trying to defend it. They usually do it in their family circles¹³.

Can home education be of help for people under pressures of denationalisation?¹⁴

The answer to this question would be easier with a real-life example. Let it be the history of Poland and the Polish nation.

Let's start from a short history of sovereignty of Poland, a European country.

- 966 – the symbolic date (not certain because of lack of reliable sources) of baptism of duke Mieszko I, the first ruler of Poland, known as the Baptism of Poland (the first act of christianisation of the country) equated with the establishment of the first Polish state – a dukedom;
- 1000 – the first king of Poland (Boleslav I the Brave) was symbolically crowned by the leader of European Christian Latin countries, Emperor Otto III (with the formal coronation to come in 1025);
- 1573 – the first king of foreign origin (Henri de Valois – a Frenchman) was elected for the Polish throne;
- 1772/1792/1795 – the three consecutive partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Royal Commonwealth territory (I Rzeczpospolita) were done by the neighbouring powers: the Kingdom of Prussia, the Russian Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy;

12 See eg. James P.W. (1996). *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*. New York: Sage Publications Ltd.

13 Sindic D. (2011). *Psychological Citizenship and National Identity*. „Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology”. No 21 (3), p. 202–214.

14 Gibney M. (2020). *Denationalisation and discrimination*. „Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies”, vol. 46/12, pp. 2551–2568.

- 1918 – Poland regained its independence after 123 years of the total annexation – the period is called II Rzeczpospolita (the Second Polish Republic);
- 1939–1945 – from the very beginning of WWII Poland is occupied by Nazi Germany;
- 1945–1989 – under the communist regime (behind the scene steered by the Soviet Union) Poland is still enslaved by other power;
- 1989 – the current sovereignty of Poland, after the collapse of communist state system, was established¹⁵.

The above mentioned dates show rather common condition of many countries in the world subjugated periodically by some external powers. What is important here is the characteristics of dependence periods of a given state. Its main points here are:

- political dependence on invasive countries' administrators
- economic exploitation
- deculturalization (cultural denationalization).

The most relevant dimension in inter-national relationships is the last one of the three: the de-nationalisation.

Denationalisation is a kind of cultural politics led by invaders and executed with the application of:

- limiting or forbidding the use of the proper ethnic language by the dominated nation members in the public sphere;
- limiting reading and writing literature in the language;
- forbidding cultivation of the national history in literature and arts (eg. mentioning its heroes/heroines and military victories, and especially those ones over the denationalizing power);
- imposing foreign language, customs, religion and culture¹⁶.

A clear example of denationalisation of Poles with a special educational context (although it took place at schools, and obviously not at homes – sic!) is the „Września children strike” (started May 20, 1901).

In the small (7 thousand of dwellers) town of Września, in the western part of the territory named “the Greater Poland” region inhabited by Polish people, several Polish children who fulfilled their school duty in the Prussian school refused to pray and learn religion in German language (previously religion and music as the only school subjects might be instructed in Polish). Because of their resistance they were beaten by a Prussian teacher. In a reaction to the event 118 children – boys and girls of the school – went on strike. For the children's disobedience their parents were fined and imprisoned (for up to 2.5 years!), and the children themselves had

¹⁵ See eg. Topolski J. (2015). *Historia Polski*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.

¹⁶ See eg. Gibney M.J. (2020). Op. cit.

to attend school for longer. At the peak of this general strike around 75 thousand students of the region¹⁷.

However, even such a spectacular cultural-political action did not bring greater effects for protecting the Polish nationals against a forced denationalization combined with big efforts of invaders to install their own national cultures within the processes of respectively Germanisation and Russianisation of Poles¹⁸.

To oppose the denationalization pressures members of a suppressed national community can use different measures. They can be of political character, sometimes supported by economic power of some patriots ready to finance national cultural undertakings, but generally they are cultural in their specificity. Artistic activity and its spreading are not enough, and here enters the need for “national” education (a national enculturation).

And so it was during the long period of annexations of the territory of the prior Poland. In contrast to the couple of national lost uprisings a guerrilla home education helped to sustain national culture in all its forms, and especially in the Polish language. This form of underground and then illegal education was conducted regardless of the level of affluence and social status of many Polish families. Writers and artists, homeschooled themselves, created masterpieces of patriotic art distributed in many copies and performances within Polish home education circles of the time (e.g. Henryk Sienkiewicz’s books, Frédéric Chopin’s music, paintings by Kossak family members). The Roman Catholic Church with its observance of rituals partly in Polish (along with the Latin liturgy) also strongly helped families of home education to cultivate old national traditions. Pedagogues of the time published many books, articles and even special journals for home educators and autodidacts to make family educational enterprises easier¹⁹.

At the dusk of the WWI, a former homeschooler, a famous pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski individually convinced the then president of the USA, Woodrow Wilson to demand from the Triple Entente reestablishing of Poland as a state at the political map of the world.

Shortly after the new Poland (the Second Polish Republic) appeared, and it revealed that its political elites to govern the country were... ex-homeschoolers of the annexations period (here belong: Józef Piłsudski – the Chief of State, Prime Minister and President of Poland; Gabriel Narutowicz – the first President of the revived Poland; Ignacy Daszyński – the first Prime Minister of Poland; Roman Dmowski – one of the political “fathers” of Poland’s sovereignty; Ignacy Jan Paderewski – a famous musician, Prime Minister of Poland; and Jan Łukasiewicz

17 Dziewulski, S., Kucharzewski J. (1902). *Proces szkolny we Wrześni sprawozdanie szczegółowe na podstawie źródeł urzędowych*. Kraków: W.L. Anczyc i Spółka.

18 Zdrada J. (2014). *Historia Polski 1795–1914*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

19 Ibidem.

– minister of education signing the Decree of School Duty that legalized home education in the reborn Poland)²⁰.

In the revived on November 11, 1918, country home education was for the first time made legal to Polish citizens (the decree on school obligation enabling parents to home educate their children was signed in the very beginnings of 1919²¹).

During the long night of German Nazi occupation of Poland (1939–1945) all education went underground, and along with regular (i.e. fulfilled within family circle) home education there was invented a mixed school-home solution of secret school groups often led by professional teachers that met at homes of its participants.

Unfortunately, according to the political betrayal of Poland by the main western players at the global political scene, Poland landed on the eastern side of the “iron curtain”. And again the communist way of life with its goal of destruction of traditional cultures failed to be the common standard. Poles still were religious people, independent-minded and cultivating old national traditions (ironically strongly anti-Russian).

Although from 1956 till 1991 all children were forced to attend government schools, on special occasions a regular home education according to Polish national values was conducted (with a peculiar history of formal opposition to the communist regime school duty of B. Boba’s family²², see: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart%C5%82omiej_Maria_Boba), and commonly at many homes especially in the field of national history, that was the object of communist adulterations, and also in religious education.

Home education as a legal option for Polish parents (they have the right to apply for that form of education) was introduced in 1991 into the first version of the first post-communist education system act²³. Home educators as usual (with the exclusion of a group of cosmopolitans, so called social democrats and new agers) try to cultivate the national values in their home teaching their children.

Conclusions

If the measure of strength of Polish identity among citizens of Poland engaged in home education could be an evidence of stability of the Polish national culture and, as a consequence, the Polish nation as such, one could say that home education was and is propitious for the nation existence and development.

20 *Polska niepodległa. Encyklopedia PWN*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

21 See: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19190140147/O/D19190147.pdf> (date accessed 23.03.2021).

22 See: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart%C5%82omiej_Maria_Boba (date accessed 23.03.2021)

23 See: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19910950425/O/D19910425.pdf> (date accessed 23.03.2021).

If it is true, the cautious generalization of the liaisons between national culture and national home education might be accepted as granted.

Home education can help to rescue in hard times and sustain or even develop in some better ones the nation to which home educators belong. And conversely home educators benefit from their own nations, especially in relation to its culture. As it seems it's a kind of mutual good – an adequate symbiosis.

In case of such a complex phenomenon as home education and even much more as nation, in their respective interrelations the proper methods of examining are those from the sociological repertoire – here notably secondary historical data analysis, preceded by a hermeneutic explaining of some theoretical insights letting to adjust hitherto social theories to the assumed field of research. The author of the present paper made an attempt to fulfill such methodological demands. It is worth adding however that the paper is only preliminary in its scope demanding further and deeper historical and biographical studies.

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EDUKACJA DOMOWA A FUNKCJONOWANIE NARODU – TEORIA I PRAKTYKA (NA POLSKIM PRZYKŁADZIE)

Abstrakt: Edukacja domowa to jedna z legalnych (w krajach ją uznających) form obowiązkowego kształcenia dzieci i młodzieży, która w praktyce polega na edukowaniu osób niepełnoletnich w rodzinnym domu, bez ich uczęszczania do szkół. Tak rozumiana edukacja domowa jest globalnie coraz popularniejsza. Być może sprawiają to jej walory. Przy rozpatrywaniu zalet edukacji domowej pod uwagę należy brać także (niezależnie od różnorodnych problemów z nią związanych) korzyści, jakie przynosi ona różnym zbiorowościom społecznym. W artykule tym przedmiotem uwag są związki edukacji domowej z funkcjonowaniem wspólnot narodowych. Przykładem jest tu Polska jako państwo i naród.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja, edukacja domowa, korzyści, naród, Polska, polskość.