

# LABOR et EDUCATIO

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Mirosław J. Szymański (ed.),  
*Short Lectures on Sociology of Education.*  
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Mirosław J. Szymański, redakcja naukowa,  
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The development of modern education falls on very dynamic times. It would seem to be the most discussed issue, bringing along with it the essence conditions towards what Pierre Bourdieu referred to as the social capital. The transformation of society, instability, fast-paced changes in education – all these radically transform human functioning, habits and personal experiences. Moreover, they are strengthened by the evolution of new media, which consequently makes the identity of modern man become dispersed and ambiguous. New social and educational phenomena are of particular interest to sociology of education. Therefore, I consider the voice raised in the discussion on this area by re-

searchers in social sciences, published in the monograph *Short lectures on sociology of education* to be an extremely important one. The editor of the series of lectures is an outstanding Polish education sociologist, Prof. Mirosław Józef Szymański. The monograph published under his editorship is the voice of scientists on current problems in education, developed in the form of masterful problem-focused lectures.

The reviewed publication consists of fourteen lectures with an introduction and the latest literature sources.

The first lecture by Zbyszko Melosik, „Sociology of education: theoretical (re)structuring”, concerns theoretical concepts, as well as their assumed consequences. The transparent and clear discussion of the theory of structural functionalism, cultural reproduction and postmodern theory is particularly noteworthy. Here an attempt was made to clarify the relationship between society and education, highlighting the differing epistemological assumptions. Presenting ideas that developed around the thoughts of Ralph Turner, Earl Hopper, but also Adrian E. Raftery and Michael Hout are aimed at encouraging the recipient to discuss the impartiality and objectivity of the above concepts.

The second chapter by Piotr Mikiewicz „Social capital and education – various conceptualizations and their consequences for educational research” is devoted to the basic hypotheses regarding social capital. The author defines the issue of social capital in four theoretical aspects.

The third paper, „Socialization in traditional, modern and post-modern society”, belongs to Mirosław J. Szymański. The author presents the issues of socialization and discusses the characteristic features belonging to different types of societies. What draws the reader’s attention are numerous references to the theory of sociology of education, which synthetically arrange knowledge on sociology and highlight the complexity of educational tasks in group, school and the society.

The fourth lecture, which belongs to the above-mentioned author, is entitled: „Identity, control, dispersion, own Self.” Mirosław J. Szymański emphasizes an individual’s identification with their own Self based on the diversity of societies over the years. Indeed, it is crucial to distinguish a new variant of exercising control, which may be a new threat in development and education.

The fifth chapter, by Zbigniew Kwieciński, entitled „Equal opportunities and social inequality of educational achievement” is an attempt to

present indicators that generate inequality in society. This is a particularly important problem approach to the issue determining the shape of society, which not only visualizes the individual mechanism, but allows seeing its almost universal nature in a broader perspective.

The sixth paper, „Contemporary elite secondary schooling. Theory and reality” by Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik raises the issue of controversy related to selection and cultural capital based on the characteristics of elite and democratic schools worldwide. An important aspect that the author raises is the elite schools contributing to perpetuating inequalities.

The next, seventh lecture „Policies of Apartheid in education – the case of South Africa” belongs to Tomasz Gmerek. The paper is a detailed description of the education system in South Africa in 1948-1994. The presentation of the function of education in a society that is covered by the indoctrination process is particularly noteworthy. Tomasz Gmerek drew attention to the existence of discriminating practices in South African society. The author’s emphasis on the essence of the problem prompts the reader to think about the difficulty in developing education and an education system in less developed countries.

The eighth text by Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska „Career as a result of interactions between one’s individualized ‚I’ and one’s social environment” characterizes the complexity of the career phenomenon, as well as the dualistic approach in the mechanism of shaping social structures through the exchange and evolution of symbol identification. The main quality of the text is the combination of subjective and objective views on reflection as regards the creation of success stories. In view of the correlations between and individual and organizations, there is a process of creating careers close to one another or templates, as the author claims.

The ninth lecture „Youth in post-transformation Poland” by Barbara Galas discusses a generation’s modifications over the systemic reforms, socio-economic and cultural changes in post-transformation Poland. The key problem identified by the author is the crisis and cultural anomie experienced by Polish society. Emphasizing the growing fear among young Poles regarding their future will be a huge challenge for educators and families.

The tenth chapter by Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska, „Socialization in the family and the transformation of contemporary roles and family relationships”, characterizes family and marriage models based on the macro and micro-social scale. The author analyzes the family model in the context of transformation, sociology and education. Based on the latest research, the model of a partner family, which is constantly increasing in popularity, has the greatest support among Poles, which may indicate the Polish families’ readiness to democratize the family’s function. The formulated valuable diagnoses in the face of current changes in the family based on the introduction of partner relationships in the structure of intra-family relations are indeed valuable.

The next, eleventh article, „Informal Peer Group and the Process of Socialization”, written by Beata Hoffmann is a juxtaposition of two different concepts: socialization and peer groups in the face of socio-cultural changes. What draws the recipients’ attention is an impressive comparison of important theoretical concepts, taking into account such categories as: socialization, peer group, consumerism, modern tribe, and community. The main issue in the material that the author draws attention to is the breakdown of youth affiliation, which is becoming more and more characteristic of contemporary peer groups.

The twelfth lecture by Błażej Przybylski, „(Educational) Ideologies and Socialization of the Young Generation” concerns the relationship between youth and the influence of ideologies that are strongly revealed at a time of intense social change. The author discussed the present educational ideologies along with a proposal to solve the difficulties encountered in them in the education system. The final part of the lecture is reflective in nature, and the research carried out by the author is not only a starting point for further studies, but deserves great recognition as well.

The thirteenth text by Barbara Wiśniewska-Paź „Educational aspects of shaping a culture of security and the role of intelligence and communication competences in contemporary digital reality” discusses the genesis of globalization. Furthermore, it defines the concept of competence in the context of virtual reality, taking into account the culture of security. The scope of the subject matter undoubtedly encourages the reader to expand their knowledge, as well as to reflect on the desired

key competences for harmonious development in the world with an increasing degree of immersion in cyberspace.

The last lecture by Jowita Bartczak, „Educational Aspirations of Youth – A Sociological Perspective” is a short precise description of the definition in an interdisciplinary approach. The author focuses on the issue of aspirations based on sociological theories. The article attempts to present the educational aspirations of the young generation from a sociological standpoint. By citing selected research results on Poles’ aspirations (which is a big quality of the article), the author indicates trends, possible directions and dynamics of changes in their scope.

The publication contains a coherent set of academic lectures. The form of the book, which is a departure from a typical textbook, draws particular attention. The discussion problems attached to every lecture induce the reader to reflect and tempt to discuss. A common feature of the lectures presented in the book involves the discussion around the issues of education embedded in various theoretical concepts. This is the essence not only to consider, but to seek creative interpretations. The reviewed book stands out with its lucid language and a high substantive level; therefore, it can undoubtedly be included in the canon of literature for students of pedagogy, sociology, as well as teaching faculties.

The reviewed series of lectures may be of interest among academic lecturers specializing in sociology of education as an interesting complement to their lectures or exercises. It can provide a valuable source of knowledge for educators, teachers and all those who are confronted with new phenomena and trends in their everyday life in educational settings. *Short Lectures on Sociology of Education* is a book of outstanding scientific value. It can be recommended with full confidence to all who are interested in the issue of changes in education and their impact on society.