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Educational practice in the context of democratic and cultural changes

In a significant part of the world, democracy was recognized as the basic principle of the organization of social and political life, acquiring, according to Amartya Sen (2001), the status of the “political technology” of our time. We are observing a rapid growth of democracy as a political practice, characterized by quite fundamental differences, which are influenced by local cultural and social conditions. Although in 1900 there were no countries which were fully democratic at all, as early as 2000, 63% of the governments covering 58% of the world’s population were considered democratic (Mair).

In our considerations regarding democracy, special attention should be paid to all assumptions about the “universal values” which lead to theoretical and practical problems by being able to be read differently, depending on the cultural location in different parts of the world and historical diversity. Democratic mechanisms should be treated as conscious co-creation of the future, reaching a peaceful agreement on interests and goals, creation of equal opportunities and leveling of opportunities for individuals and social groups. Then, democratic systems have a chance to create an information society, and in the future a knowledge society and a civil society in which a man will be a political, decision-making citizen, and not just a buyer, customer, consumer, the object of marketing and advertising, the audience and the subject of corporate manipulation (Zacher, 2003: 84).

Democratic changes in the system cause social discussion about changes in education and inspire the process of educational changes, becoming one of the most important indicators of the dynamics of social development. Decisions regarding the new shape of education should take into account the positions and views of not only teachers, but also parents and students. J. Naisbitt (1997) rightly emphasizes that in participatory democracy, people, by participating in the decision-making process, inspire many new initiatives.

The prospects of education development were analyzed in various national, European and global reports. They emphasize the role of the school as an education centre and indicate a need for changes in its functioning and the need to define its new functions and tasks. Priorities and problems of education were considered, among others, in the following reports: *Learning to be* (UNESCO Report, 1982), *Learning: the treasure within* (UNESCO Report, 1998), *Future of the World* (UNESCO Report, 2001), *No Limits to Learning* (Report of the Club of Rome, 1982), *Possible Variants of European Education in the Future. Project I: prepare the man for life in the*

21st century (Council of Europe, 1972), *the White Paper of Education and Training. Towards the Learning Society* (European Commission, 1997), *Education for Europe* (European Commission Report, 1999).

These reports show a need to improve the quality of all aspects of education and set out ideas and directions of change leading to this goal. They show education as an opportunity that should be used in the pursuit of humanity's ideals of peace, freedom and social justice, the eradication of poverty, exclusion, misunderstanding, oppression, and they constitute an important factor in the development of the individual and society. The following ideas and directions of pedagogical changes are to serve this purpose:

- teaching should become learning to acquire knowledge and shape the personality of students. Education should ensure that they acquire the learning tools;
- an important direction is to develop appropriate relations between education systems and other areas of life: technology, work, employment, which should be the basic elements of educational activities;
- a need arises for co-operation between the public education sector and the non-school sector, which should be subject to further expansion;
- a person should learn throughout the entire period of activity, in accordance with the principle of continuing education and the idea of the "learning society" and "educating society";
- teachers play a special role in educational changes, which is why their education and participation in reforming the school should be given a special status;
- it is expected that a person should acquire the skills in the education process to perform appropriate roles and tasks in a democratic society.

Education and training become essential carriers of identity and personal development, as well as a means of leveling educational and life opportunities. The school's task is not only to transfer knowledge, but, above all, to shape the personality of learners through the dominance of innovative and anticipatory learning, as well as to prepare them for democracy, freedom and implementation of the slogan of modern education: "Understanding the world – guiding yourself". These changes require the provision of appropriate economic and socio-political conditions, as well as a well-prepared teacher whose education, attitude, competence and, above all, responsibility become the guarantee of understanding the continuous development of civilization (Banach, 2001, Cieśleńska, 2019).

In order to improve the education policy and focus it on the activities aimed at the development of democracy, sustainable development of humanity and mutual peaceful understanding among the nations, the authors of the report entitled *Learning: the Treasure Within* (1998: 12–14) rightly propose to overcome the tensions which were found in the centre of issues arising in the 21st century. These are tensions between:

- what is global and what is local;
- the universal and the individual;
- tradition and modernity;
- long-term and *ad hoc* actions;
- the inevitable competition and concern for equal opportunities;

- the extraordinary development of knowledge and the human ability to absorb it;
- spirituality and materiality.

Facing the current and future challenges requires setting new education goals, enabling the individual to discover, stimulate and strengthen the role of his creative potential. To this end, education should include four aspects of training, which will become a certain pillars of knowledge for each individual: *learning to know*, i.e. to acquire a tool of understanding; *learning to act*, to be able to influence your environment; *learning to live together*, to participate and co-operate with others on all levels of human activity; *learning to be*, i.e. a striving related to the previous three, connected with the ability to shape independent and critical thinking and to develop the independence of courts in order to be able to independently decide on the rightness of actions taken in various circumstances of life (Delors, 1998: 85–95).

For the proper coexistence of people in a democratic society, moral and social education is also important (I. Wojnar, J. Kubin (eds.), 1996), whose role is to develop pro-social attitudes and behavior, shaping altruism and empathy, triggering a culture of feelings, respect for others, upbringing thinking individuals, able to communicate with others, sensitive, experiencing, which, in other words, is to teach them “to be human”.

Important activities in the field of education are undertaken by UNESCO, especially within the “Education for All” program, initiated at the World Conference in Jomtien (Thailand, 1990). The goal of the “Education for All” program is to meet the basic educational needs of all people. The balance of achievements of the “Education for All” program, prepared by UNESCO member countries for the “Education for All” World Forum in Dakar (Senegal, 2000), made us aware of the existence of many new areas of activity and the huge needs arising from the diverse economic and political situation of the Member States (the Polish UNESCO Committee).

Because the world is becoming more and more culturally diverse, and global migrations take on an unprecedented scale in the history, the issue of cultural education is taking on a new meaning (Polska w obliczu..., 1991: 35–36; Świat przyszłości a Polska..., 1995: 133). Cultural education is important for the functioning of individuals and societies. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 gave it the status of universal, customary law applicable throughout the world. According to the Declaration, “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.

The European discourse on cultural education is conducted under the slogan of *Arts Education*. Eckart Liebau (2018: 1219–1239) distinguishes five main trends which simultaneously justify the rudimentary significance of cultural education for the lives of societies and nations. In modern countries located in Western, Central and Northern Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia, China and the Pacific Region, Liebau attributes economic factors to the overall functioning of national arts education systems. In his opinion, contact with culture and art stimulates the creativity of individuals, and this becomes a source of social development, improvement of communication skills, dialogue and international

co-operation. It also has a positive effect on the growth of cognitive competences (e.g. linguistic, mathematical).

The second trend emphasizes the responsibility of societies for the protection of cultural heritage and sustainable development. It refers to the cultural heritage and diversity as an important factor in socio-economic development and a means of seeking agreement in the regions affected by ethnic or religious conflicts.

The third important trend in perceiving arts education is its perception as a therapy for individuals and societies confronted with various pathologies, such as inequalities in access to education, violence, marginalization, exclusion and drugs.

The fourth trend in perceiving the importance of arts education results from the equalization of cultural education with general education, which is particularly popular in Europe. According to this position, the individual's contact with culture and art opens up unlimited creative possibilities, enriches knowledge, activates him/her intellectually and enables him/her express emotions. Therefore, it has a significant impact on his/her personality (I. Wojnar, 1976; I. Wojnar (ed.), 2006).

The fifth trend is associated with the belief in the relationship between arts education and the qualitative development of culture, especially art. The importance of pedagogy of culture and innovative forms of cultural communication, co-operation of cultural institutions with schools and social groups, as well as the care for amateur artists are highlighted.

Cultural education, therefore, permeates many aspects arising in the context of aesthetic forms of expression and manifestations of human activity, understood both as purposeful and conscious activity and as unconscious, spontaneous activity, manifested in everyday life, various practices, customs and rituals.

UNESCO's Report *Notre Diversité Créatrice. Rapport de la Commission mondiale de la culture et du développement* (1996) exposes a need to open European culture to the dialogue of cultures, to extend the basic ethical thinking about culture by its ethnic dimensions. By exposing the creative diversity of culture in a global perspective, it draws attention to a need of finding ethical principles common to the world. Thus, the European way of thinking about culture is "constantly opening up in harmony with the rhythm of the developing world pulsating with changeability (Wojnar, 2010: 25)". This creative coexistence of traditions with innovations and variability is characteristic for the specification of culture and its educational tasks. Cultural education is expected to be a permanent and integral element of the education system and to play an important role in shaping national identity, enriching personal sensitivity, imagination and creativity of learners as developing and multidimensional beings.

The tasks of education are global, which is why they should prepare people for:

- lifelong learning, openness to everything new, gaining an ability to understand and to ask questions;
- adopting a responsible attitude towards nature and the environment;
- defending peace by stimulating mutual understanding between various nations, communities and religions, trying to silence aggressive and intolerant attitudes, strengthen dialogue, and develop human skills as a citizen of the world and a citizen of one's own country;

- a dialogue between the cultures of the world revealing man's identity through various forms of existence, by teaching understanding, tolerance, opening the mind, showing lasting and universal values reflected by various philosophical, religious and artistic expressions;
- building critical awareness of the man, thanks to which he will be able to verify what is happening in reality in terms of values, such as, for instance: ecological balance, development of individuals, equality and social justice, autonomy, solidarity, participation, satisfaction of personal and socio-economic needs at a higher level. Then the man will not give into fascination with dangerous complications and will be characterized by personal independence;
- alternative thinking coinciding with the humanistic vision of development and progress, understood as creating possibilities of something more rational, more valuable and effective than what is happening now, allowing him to develop utopias which have a chance of being realized (Suchodolski, 2003: 81–94; Szempruch, 2012).

P. Dalin and V. Rust analyze eight areas of important tasks of education, paying attention to the limitations of modern educational models which focus only on selected areas. The tasks of education include:

1. Education for democracy – developing skills to make choices, experiencing self-governance, developing understanding and skills necessary for civil and participatory democracy;
2. Education for multiculturalism – developing acceptance and respect for cultural diversity and promoting understanding of unique cultural and ethnic heritage, shaping values, skills and knowledge in the field of interacting with different diverse cultures;
3. Tasks of education towards the media – shaping openness to new technologies, developing criticism of the contents of messages, skills in assessing their value;
4. Tasks of schools for coexistence – developing the ability to live in harmony with the natural environment, education for peace, development of habits promoting health, making efforts for equal opportunities for children, adolescents and adults;
5. Building close relationships between the school and the world of work – developing skills in coping with the labor market, helping in changing the profession, combining three mechanisms of job distribution: free global market, competences and people's needs;
6. Education for beauty and culture – which, seen as social imperatives, should be more widely included in the education programs; they are also a factor in shaping the aesthetic tastes of producers, sellers and buyers;
7. Preparation in the course of education to serve the local community – shaping the ability to identify with this community, act for its development, learn to participate through planning, action and evaluation of changes in the local environment;
8. Education to work on oneself – acquiring the ability to understand the systemic nature of the world, the meaning of the collective sense and individual wisdom, understanding the relationship between individual development and global

dimensions, shaping readiness to solve global, local and personal problems, as well as a sense of responsibility. Preparing to work on oneself also requires the ability to co-operate, empathy and a positive attitude towards differences and creativity, as well as efficient communication with other people, free of negative attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes (Potulicka (ed.), 2001: 136).

The tasks of education are also formulated by the Council of the Club of Rome.

It mentions:

- “acquisition of knowledge;
- shaping intelligence and developing a critical sense;
- better understanding of oneself and conscious recognition of one’s own abilities and limitations;
- mastering the ability to overcome one’s own unwanted drives and destructive behavior;
- permanent awakening of creative abilities and imagination;
- acquiring the ability to perform a responsible role in social life;
- acquiring the ability to communicate with other people;
- helping others to adapt to and prepare for changes;
- enabling each person to form his or her own, most comprehensive and holistic, view of the world;
- making people more operative and ready to solve many new problems” (King, Schneider, 1992: 202).

Education has also found its rightful place in the development strategy of Europe until 2050, where the main development priority is to put Europe in the highest phase of the development of information civilization and adapt it to the requirements of the new phase of the development of the future market economy by building a modern knowledge-based economy. This requires a broad approach to development goals, taking into account the needs of the ecological breakthrough and the associated civilization change, and thus expanding its social and ecological content (Karpiński, 2007: 37–43).

Education is also becoming an important priority for Poland. The social change in Poland initiated in 1989 caused not only significant economic and social transformations regarding the realization of the ideals of freedom, but also caused a change in the conditions of human existence and accelerated the reform of the educational system. In order to collectively reconstruct the social and economic order in Poland and strive for modernity, freedom, openness to the world and other cultures, while preserving our own heritage and identity, attempts have been made to change public education for children, adolescents and adults. The idea of lifelong learning, which opens up new opportunities for organizational, program and methodological solutions to education, has gained new meaning. In 2009, UNESCO Member States assigned a significant importance to lifelong learning in solving global and educational problems and challenges. They emphasized the relationship between learning and the successful development of humanity. Much attention was devoted to the postulates of determining the place of education in the development strategy of Poland. The goals and tasks of the education system were reformulated with a view to a wide range of challenges of the modern world and human fate.

In preparing the man for functioning in a changing democratic society, attempts are made to reconcile two educational approaches presented by Bogdan Suchodolski: “instrumental education” preparing for a profession, achieving a career or performing specific social roles, and “selfless education” based on the concept of existence (the “to be” principle) and belief in the unit value of the experiences which make up the human life.

Conclusions

Analysis of democratic changes on a global scale and the role of education in the environment of such changes justifies the conclusion that the time has come for a new education which will make an effort to help people recreate and understand their past, shape key skills to understand their environment and efficiently adapt to it, and which will also help them to change their current location and communicate in a multicultural world. A change in thinking about education aims at preparing people to create the future in conditions of its opacity (Kwieciński, 2007: 29), helping to develop competence for reflectiveness, critical reflection on the world, culture and one’s own humanity, continuous learning and interaction with others. Education understood in this way will enable a person to actively achieve self-realization, develop his/her own self, as well as achieve full developmental opportunities.

In changing educational practice, it is important to educate man to humanistic development, the transformation of democracy, freedom and civilization. It is important to base education on universal values and European education ideals.

Interdisciplinary knowledge of man, world and education should be the basis for creating visions and models of humanized continuing education, making up a lifelong individual. In a modern society, it is education that determines success, and the reflective creation of oneself and the effective work of the individual on its own development is becoming more and more important.

The issue of educational change should be analyzed by all those who face difficult educational problems and challenges in the present and the future, especially by teachers, educational politicians, parents and others problems of the functioning of education. It is also important in the organization and implementation of the education process in higher education, as learners in the humanities education system should become autonomous actors capable of thinking themselves, deciding and responsible procedure.

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Abstract

The article addresses the important issue of democratic change in the modern world and their impact on changes in education. On the basis of an analysis of changes in education and the prospects for its development presented in the UNESCO, Rome Club, Council of Europe and the European Commission reports, it presents the most important tasks of current and future education. It also analyses the place of education in Europe's development strategy by 2050. Questions arise from the analysis: What should educational practice look like to prepare children, young people and adults for their conscious and responsible functioning in a democratic society? What action should be taken to prepare individuals to address future challenges and strengthen their creative and critical thinking potential?

Keywords: education, democracy, change, education policy, education tasks

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