

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

NECE Workshop: The Impacts of National Identities for European Integration as a Focus of Citizenship Education

INPUT PAPER

Contribution from Poland

“Citizenship Education in Poland”

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Education is one of the biggest challenges of every nation, but in Poland – as a post-communist country – the upbringing of young generation to life in democratic and modern world is a essential issue. It is so fundamental problem because refers to comprehensive change of social reality. Many decades the normative system of real socialism was shaped carefully. One of its dimension – *official norms* – was created by propagandist actions, education and ideological indoctrination. Other dimension – *unofficial norms* – was created as spontaneous reaction and protective adaptation of the society in the internal clash into imposed conditions of life. Together – propaganda and life’s conditions was creating characteristic culture syndrome, which can be named *homo sovieticus*. In other words, personality of individuals living in socialistic system was shaped as authoritarian one (not adequate for democratic system) – willingly subjected to the power of authority, addicted to the system and working for its reinforcement. Currently the challenge is modification and reparation of the damages made by socialistic system.

The efforts to change the situation were made before the collapse of system. The education was consider to be one of the important elements, which brings about changes in whole society. Poland is first country from satellite states of past-Soviet bloc, which undertook the reforms of education system. Thanks to experience of the ‘First Solidarity’ and the engagement of intellectual and educational circles some attempts to introduce changes were made even before 1989. First schools initiated by associations of parents and teachers were founded at the end of 80ties. Of course Party authorities were unfriendly towards the experimental curricula, which was not coherent with socialistic ideology. But it was still only ‘the drop in the bucket’.

The year 1989 in Poland was a turning point for the whole Polish society, it determined a birth of a new system and the beginning of the changes. From this moment social reality in Poland, with the rules under construction, entered the way of slowly but breaking thorough transformations. The transition of system’s structure obviously didn’t stay without impact on life of individuals. One of them was feeling as ‘fishes in the water’, others couldn’t (and some still can’t) free oneself of old habits and take advantage of new perspectives and options. Thus, the 1989 was also a beginning of systematic educational reforms. These reforms were indispensable since the school system succeed from Polish People’s Republic (PRL) period was inadequate to new objectives and expectations. For fully exercise of new possibilities

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

and rights, that was created for citizens in democratic system, Polish people have had to learn the rules of its functioning and also absorb a culture, which we can name the civic culture. It is proper to add that it is always uneasy process since democracy turns out to releases civic culture – opens the way to its development but when society does not use of this possibilities then democracy stays underdeveloped and flawed. As Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński (2005:164-5) wrote: *'Civic culture and democracy functioning in the symbiotic relation. Democracy in the conditions of low civic culture functions unfitly, while civic culture without democratic system can not develop'*.

Thus, the collapse of the system caused overnight diametrical change of the cultural expectations. New democratic system based on capitalistic market, democratic politics and freedom of thinking had introduced totally different rules. It was difficult the more so as *Homo sovieticus* – the most important type of personality in the communism era has been in total opposition to the new type of personality generated by capitalism and democracy. Enslaved and 'deformed' society has been not able to quick and easy adapt to the new reality. It goes along with saying that the transition process in Poland had gravitated to the need to enhance the whole society with the civic socialization – an uneven 'training', which one should undertake in order to learn and adapt to the new reality. *'After collapse of the communism rule, the problem was with recreation of civitas'* (Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski 2004: 101). Therefore, the creation of self-care, knowing the rules of the game and participating society seems to be essential challenge throughout almost twenty years in Poland. The education system, then, is important instrument to realise these task.

A school is the most significant institution, where individuals achieve both knowledge and ability to utilise it. The school and its program for education in Poland have been evolving during the process of systemic transition. As it was said, first attempts to introduce changes into the Polish education were made at the end of 80ies and after the 1989 more integrated and co-ordinated activities were implemented. First step in this process had to be decentralisation of schools. In 1991 the government passed the bill which introduced changes at level of primary schools. In compliance with the bill first primary schools were taken over by the smallest administrative units at the local level ('gmina'). From this moment local governments started to invest in 'their own schools'. In the same time first non-public schools were established (like universities a year before)¹. In 1996 all of the primary schools in Poland were relegated to local communities.

Second step was modification of the schooling stages. In 1999 new level of education – gymnasium – started to function in Poland. From this moment primary school takes six years. Gymnasium takes three years as just as high school. In 1999 almost all schools were relegated to local governments: primary schools and gymnasiums to 'gmina', high schools to county – 'powiat' (middle administrative unit). It was also a moment of repeal of uniform school-books. Teachers are free to use the teaching materials of their choice. Some methods or approaches are compulsory while others are voluntary. In consequence of the decentralisation within the scope of managing as well as of curriculum realisations, headmasters and teachers gained more freedom to curricula creation. Though the curriculum time available is usually strictly determined, there is in practice some degree of flexibility.

One can say that, the system's changes were correlated with the modifications of schools' education programs. This changes, among other things, tended towards a successful adaptation to new, democratic reality. From this point of view essential role plays civic education. What more one of the main challenges of first democratic government in Poland was creation of civil society. However, the first changes in the approach to civic education were made by one of the strongest non-governmental, educational organisation – a Centre for Citizenship Education (CCE). The foundation was established in 1994 and is active until today. The main aim of CCE is promotion of 'civic knowledge, practical skills and attitudes necessary in the building of a democratic state founded on the rule of law and civil society. CCE also operates a non-profit teacher-training institute registered with the Ministry of Education and Sports. In addition to developing innovative school curricula in the fields of civics, history, law and economic education and introducing them into Polish schools, the Centre for Citizenship Education is in charge of

¹ Education Act passed in 1990 introduced the changes in higher education and gave an opportunity to founding non-public universities. This changes increased the count of students.

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

a range of activities targeting teachers, students and local authorities². One of the first programs initiated by Centre was 'Civic Education at Local Government Schools' (KOSS). The objective of project was an encouragement students to active learning through discussions, simulations, case studies, individual and group projects. It was first, complex proposition of changes in the field of civic education classes. Contemporary, KOSS is the most often used civic curriculum in Polish schools. For example in gymnasium more than 350,000 students yearly use textbooks published by CCE. Beyond a doubt Polish NGO's have significant contributions to a cause.

Currently there is the complex educational program concern citizenship as a part of obligatory curriculum recommended by Ministry of National Education. In accordance with 'The decree of Ministry of National Education and Sports from 26th February 2002' civic education is obligatory at every level of education: from primary school, gymnasium to high school. Furthermore 'Knowledge of Society' is one of the subject, which can be chosen at the secondary school leaving exam.

Table 1. Civic Education Curriculum in Polish Schools

Education level	Curriculum
Primary school	From 1 st to 3 rd class – 'integrated teaching' – there are no typical lessons just thematic blocks; pupils learns about positive relations with others; attachment to local community, region, country; basic citizen's duties and rights;
	From 4 th to 6 th class – additionally 'educational paths' – one of them, so-called 'Upbringing to live in society', integrates various topics and disciplines connected with citizenship education, consists of three modules: (1) upbringing to live in family, (2) regional education, (3) patriotic and civic upbringing;
Gymnasium	continuation of 'educational paths' – regional education and European education; additionally knowledge about activity in an economy, society, local community, family - 'Knowledge of society' classes;
High school	continuation of 'educational paths' – regional and European education and 'Knowledge of society' classes (education towards activity in an economy, society, local community, family + thematic education as environmental , media etc.).

Source: Own analyses

Thanks to integration with EU next important step in the development of civic education in Poland was made. European education is one of the elements of civic education in compulsory schools' curriculum. But additional opportunities to widen pupils knowledge about EU are developed. For example many 'European Clubs' have been founded. Clubs were meant to popularize knowledge of and stimulate interest in the process of European integration among secondary school pupils. Now they are prevailing at every school level.³ Clubs promote not only the idea and information about EU, they also inspire young people to independent civil activity. A big importance have also European programs and funds for promotion civil society.

² <http://www.ceo.org.pl/portal/english>

³ In accordance with information's from 2003, there are about 6 thousands Clubs in Poland, more information on: <http://www1.ukie.gov.pl/WWW/en.nsf/0/B110E4C38CC0D5DBC1256F12003D03BA?Open>

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

One should point out that civic attitudes and abilities are not learned only during classes of ‘Knowledge of Society’ or outside of lessons hours. As important role (and sometimes even more important) plays the type of social relations in the school, which strongly influence on teenagers. On the one hand relations between peers are essential, on the other hand contacts with teachers and tutor (do they inspire their pupils to be independent and creative) are important. It is common knowledge that many of the Polish schools inculcate into pupils attitude ‘not to stick neck out’. Open relations are restricted even by traditional arrangement of school’s classrooms with clear division between pupils and isolated, looking down on them, teacher. But it is not a rule. It has to be mention that elements of civic education are more and more frequently perceptible in functioning of Polish schools. The role of schools’ self-government, respect for pupils’ and students’ rights and parental involvement in and contribution to schools increased with compare to socialistic era.

The changes and implementation of civic education in Polish schools are also depended on transformations of public sphere. Schools, head masters and teachers are under strong impact of many social actors and ideas, which can also change this reality. In that case interesting issue are definitions of citizenship common in the public discourse. They can be different and undoubtedly there are as many as varied views and political and social attitudes. It is impossible to present all of them but lately the most important is the dual portrait of ‘an ideal citizenship’, created in two systems at the educational dimension:

- as created by ex-Ministry for Education led by a leader of far-right coalition party;
- and as created by non-governmental organisations as Citizenship Education Centre.

The differences are overwhelming while analysing content of programs, forms of organisations, roles and missions of teachers, relations between a teacher and a student, relations with local communities. ‘An ideal citizen’ is a cliché, which helps to present the conditionings and horizon of civic education in Poland (Table 2).

Table 2. Two kinds of citizen.

Citizen constructed by ex-Minister for Education (Giertych’s citizen)	Citizen constructed by NGO (Centre for Citizenship Education)
<p><i>patria</i> orientated based on national (nationalistic) tradition civic duties more than civic rights activity based on nationalistic values</p> <p><i>Teacher as a mentor, an unquestionable authority; order giver;</i></p>	<p>wider concept of citizenship free and creative thinking civic rights and abilities activity based on creativity, self consciousness and democratic values</p> <p><i>Teacher as local animator; sustainer of basic values, rules; partner.</i></p>

Source: Own analyses

Thus, we can say that in the Polish reality we can find at least two opposing conception of citizenship education inspired by two ideas of a citizen. Firstly, authoritarian one sees the citizen as a conservative individual, who legitimates and accepts current institutions and social norms. This idea is still closely connected and has some common aspects with *homo sovieticus* public personality and finds supporters specially (but not only) among older generation. Secondly, democratic one sees citizen as liberal individual, who appraises critically societal institutions, structures and processes.

Education and schooling are very important, even decisive forces of development of societies – it can flourish or decline the development. Thus, we can ask about the effectiveness of civil education in Poland and about its role in democratic citizens creation. Results of many pieces of research concerning condition of civic activity and civic society in Poland are not optimistic. Both civic attitudes and behaviours do not diffuse in the Polish society. Surveys of level of trust, relations to the others, to the

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

institutions or to the social processes and also those on the feeling of control of own life are good examples of this phenomenon. High level of trust is indispensable for creation of social networks, making people able and open for the co-operation and it is also essential for development of social capital. But as it turned out in European Social Survey (ESS), in Poland the percentage of people trusting the others is about 19 per cent. Poles are the most distrustful among European societies⁴. Also the faith in own abilities and the feeling to be equal while doing something on one's own is very low. 26 per cent of Poles do not believe that thanks to the co-operation with others she/he can help people who are in need or resolve some problems of their community (BS/19/2006, CBOS). In one of the research reports of The Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS)⁵ it is said: *'After fifteen years of democratic system in force only less than every seventh Pole (...) has feeling that this, what happened in Poland, in some way depends on her/him. By far most people think that ordinary citizens don't have influence on this what happens in the country'* (BS/101/2004 CBOS).

Under this circumstances it is difficult to require people to willingly take up any political or civic actions, if they don't believe in its advisability and efficacy. At last, also the Polish survey 'Social Diagnosis 2003 Objective and Subjective Quality of Life in Poland'⁶ supplies with interesting data dealing, among other things, with issue of concern on public good. Thus, the fewest people care about that someone does not pay duty, 'stills a ride', bribes and the most care when someone groundlessly receives a benefit or does not pay rent. 40-56 per cent people surveyed are indifferent to what will happen with the public sake (Czapi_ski, Panek 2006: 195). Taking into consideration mentioned aspects, one can say that the level of civic culture in the Polish society is still too low. We can still rather talk about the need of learning of civic culture in Poland, then about finish the process. But what is consoling,) young people are characterised by higher level of liberal and democratic values then their parents or grandparents.

It is not possible to definitively say that in Poland dominates one of the civic education types. It depends what kind of case study we will choose, which school or even which class we will take into account. There are a lot of examples of active schools, teachers and pupils who have involved in many projects like 'European Club' or mentioned 'KOSS', but there are also examples for schools which prefer other relations and which reduce their activity to minimum. To summarise, citizenship education is affected by many factors in Poland. From one side there is an intense need of that kind of education at all levels of the society, from other side the content of handed down knowledge is still very differentiated and often contradictory. Last of all it is also worth realising the difficult situation in which were generations of Poles brought up in socialist Poland. The transition concerns all dimensions of Poles' life, thus furthermore, the adaptation to the transition needs similar 'evolution' of individuals. At first they must learn themselves living in the new, democratic world and only then can transmit their knowledge and experience to next generations. The further change will be an outcome of co-operation among many actors, as Pacewicz wrote: *'Before the collapse of communism school was treated as an arena for the state propaganda. Obviously school is not the only provider of civic education – for my generation families, peer groups, local communities and church were the main sources of civic culture. Unfortunately – the experiences of long lasting rejection of official state, civil disobedience or even dissident movement do not translate easily into a positive version of civic culture and education. At the beginning there were no curricula, no textbooks, no credible teachers, no recent experiences to build on. This has changed quickly thanks to the efforts of both educational authorities and non-governmental organisation'* (Pacewicz 2004: 1).

⁴ To comparison in Hungary percentage of people trusting the others is 23,4 per cent, the highest is in Denmark – 74,6 per cent (ESS 2002).

⁵ CBOS is research center established in 1982, is a publicly funded independent research centre. It is one of the largest and most renowned public opinion research institutes in Poland, http://www.cbos.pl/EN/cbos_en.shtml

⁶ <http://www.diagnoza.com/index-en.html>

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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