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Value Systems in the Polish Education. The Past – the Present – the Future

Malgorzata STAWIAK-OSOSINSKA¹

Abstract

Values and their system play an important role of social life stabilizers, they provide an individual and community with support. They enable orientation in the reality, choice and assessment of actions and mutual communication. Values, criteria and their choice as well as problem of personal ideal of a human being are the most important issues concerning education and upbringing. Education is to help in adapting to a specific social reality, assists in accepting required social attitudes, but at the same time it should encourage to shape one's own future actively and create new standards. Its objective is to shape and promote general values: truth, good and beauty. Upbringing and teaching should not be considered without looking at the problem of the upbringing goal, so they do not exist without judging and values. Values are a significant element of upbringing and education process. Education value systems were created through ages. Each period had its own "education ideal" which developed and was specified, which was defended and realized within education practice. The article shows how the canon of educational values changed over the centuries in Poland.

Keywords: Values, education, Poland, history.

1. Introduction

Values are quantities which grow together with the level of consciousness, problems and financial opportunities of our times. They do not provide a stiff border but they are like a horizon we are heading towards and which is moving along with us and is extending as far as we move forward .

(G. Brunner)

Human being lives within values and for values, he works for the sake of values, creates various values and even fights for values wishing to save the positive ones and eliminate the negative ones. Values as popularly understood, have only positive meaning. Values are basic pillars which the whole social life is based on. The world of values includes everything what is

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valuable for a specific individual or individuals all the time or only in a particular situation. Human being as a social creature who exists and always acts within certain social structures such as family, peer group, local community, society, etc. and decides on what is or will remain a certain value (Socha-Kołodziej, 1996, pp. 174-175). Value is a collective phenomenon which quite often evolves in the course of long lasting processes. It is a result of individual and group experience. In sociology, there are three distinct values: values believed in, declared and accomplished. An average human being often seeks contact with values, the results of which are tangible and therefore, against noble intentions, he accomplishes anti-values. Declared values most often refer to general, universally accepted values. Accomplished values, adapted to goals of a particular individual, are usually a bit different (Gajda, 1997, p. 15).

Value as a term is defined in all sorts of ways. Individual authors present multiple interpretations of this term which makes it difficult or simply impossible to find a common and homogenous definition. There is no one accurate term which would display sense of this important word. This indeterminacy results from the complex nature of values. Values can be defined as “everything what is valuable, desirable or worth being selected, what provides the final goal of human aspirations” (Klimowicz, 1983, 418). They are usually construed intuitively and can often be considered equivalent to such synonyms as: ideas, goals and standards. Notion of value is present in many sciences. It is used in philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology, logic, law, cultural anthropology, ethnography, praxeology, as well as pedagogy (Denek, 1994, 17; Strumska-Bialko, 1996, p. 267).

In social life not only single values are significant but also the fact they are arranged in a hierarchy and are harmonized is of great importance (Popielski, 1996, p. 62). Values form a system, that is arrangement of elements related to one another hierarchically, organized in terms of significance. We should live, bring up children according to their system and hand it down to successive generations (Jalowiecki, 1978, p. 21; Misztal, 1980, p. 68; Siemianowski, 1995, p. 30). Values and their system play an important role of social life stabilizers, they provide an individual and community with support. They enable orientation in the reality, choice and assessment of actions and mutual communication. Value system includes beliefs, ideals and preferences. Beliefs refer to an outlook on life an individual considers true, they explain what the financial and ethical order of the world accepted by an individual is. Ideals allow to determine criteria regarding what we aim at, what is ethical, beautiful and decent. Whereas preferences are manifested by means of displaying outside approval of some phenomena, situations, objects or states of affairs (Ejsmont, 1996, p. 220).

1. Education as a selection of values

Values, criteria and their choice as well as problem of personal ideal of a human being are the most important issues concerning education and upbringing. Education is to help in adapting to a specific social reality, assists in accepting required social attitudes, but at the same time it should encourage to shape one's own future actively and create new standards (Nowak, 1996, pp. 252-253). It is a many-sided, multifunctional and interdisciplinary process. It takes place in three time dimensions: the past, the present and the future. Based on the past achievements (especially on tradition, but also on long-lasting and constant values) it prepares an individual for co-creation of the reality for the sake of accepted ideals and new challenges, for changes, to live in the future world (Gajda, 1997, p. 16). Its objective is to shape and promote general values: truth, good and beauty. Each of these values improves individual aspects of the human nature; the truth improves intellect, good and beauty improve willpower and emotions. These values determine a general goal of human aspirations and desires (Wróblewska, 2002, pp. 59-60). Goals and functions of education are the result of the current social aspirations, focused on creating a “perfect” principle of values in which some features are not approved and their influence is weaker, some are rejected, while others become significant (Banach, 2001, pp. 177-178). Upbringing and teaching should not be considered without looking at the problem of the upbringing goal, so they do not exist without judging and values. Values are a significant element of upbringing and education process (Nowak, 1996, p. 242). Introducing system of values to the young generation is essential in order to differentiate values and learn what is good and bad, be able to judge and decide whether to choose one value or another and understand them in the context of social standards and so that the young people demand more from themselves. Education alone does not provide the realization of the demand for shaping and instill the required values. This depends on common, single-track family influence and non-school organizations. Social life level, economic situation of the country and the whole social reality has also considerable impact in this regard (Denek, 1994, p. 247; Nowak, 1996, p. 247).

2. Value systems in upbringing and education through ages

Education value systems were created through ages. Each period had its own “education ideal” which developed and was specified, which was defended and realized within education practice (Łempicki, 1932, p.3).

Individual nations aimed at establishing their didactic activities and through ages planned their education ideals which expressed the way of living and feelings of a given nation. These education ideals of individual national communities were usually based on general education ideal of a given period. Each value system of a given nation was modified and influenced by political and social demands, economic and cultural situation, everyday life and nation's aspirations, tradition, etc. Education ideals always depended on the current reality. They were formed on the basis of everyday life (therefore we can still observe an exchange of some features, but some elements remain constant). Members of the ruling elite and political system had a huge influence in this regard (Łempicki, 1932, pp. 4-7).

The first value system was formed in China in the 7th and 6th centuries BC. It included value principles among which love of another human being, contempt for worldly goods and comprehensive knowledge were the most significant elements. The following value system was created in ancient Greece and Rome. Greek value system included two ideals: Spartan and Athenian. In Sparta, the most significant education values were: courage during the fight, excellent physical fitness and common sense, while in Athens the most significant values were: beauty, goodness, nobleness and knowledge. Roman ideal was expressed by means of the adage: *virī boni – civis Romani* and included, among others, the following values: good origin, nobleness, physical strength, education, flowery language skills. In the Middle Ages, the most important value was religion, sacrifice of life to Christ, renouncing worldly pleasures but also chivalry, agility and refinement. During the Renaissance values focused on the following motto: *I consider nothing that is human alien to me*. Happy and cheerful life ideal was promoted. Dissolute life was opposed while virtuous life was approved (Kurdybacha, 1948, pp. 2-21).

In Poland, the first education ideal appeared at the end of the Middle Ages, together with emerging the gentry. It came down to creating personal pattern of a nobleman. It was present for a long time, from the beginning of the Renaissance to the beginning of the Enlightenment. This period was diversified, starting from national prosperity and national greatness, till the fall of the country. Education ideals developed in different ways although the basis remained similar all the time. Perfect nobleman model included the following values: gentry background (a nobleman was to guard his “racial purity”), gentry equality, obtaining titles and dignity abroad was criticized, tradition of harmonious coexistence of gentry, family tradition respect, solidarity in defending threatened rights and privileges, bravery in the name of fame, economy, religiousness (religious fanaticism), state solidarity, friendship, generosity (but not prodigality), moderation of attires, eating and

drinking, justice, neighbor helpfulness, moderation in thoughts and actions, family and public life, love of country, useful knowledge, suitable religious and ethnical education. Within this model four fundamental nobleman types developed; nobleman knight, nobleman landowner, nobleman citizen and nobleman courtier. The first type was based on medieval upbringing knight ideal. Serving the nation, honor, allegiance to the king, religiousness (based not only on prayer but also faith defense), physical fitness were the most important. As the second one a nobleman landowner type was created – elements of this ideology developed in the mid-16th century survived, with minor changes, until the 18th century. It included affection for freedom and total personal independence, craving for spending the whole life in undisturbed peace and related to this avoidance of all public services and duties, satisfaction with the current living conditions, limited interest in own household (including economic and technological progress), with complete disregard of national issues, average or even low education level. Nobleman citizen model appeared in the 16th century and was present until the fall of the country. Since the gentry started to participate actively in national affairs it was necessary to provide their sons with civic education, indispensable in their future civic duties. On account of political and religious activities of gentry a young individual had to receive historical and legal education and, first of all, have oratorical skills, indispensable during regional diets, conventions, elections, confederacy, during which young people had to express themselves elegantly. These skills were often used during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation in religious discussions (knowledge of Latin was necessary then). Apart from the above mentioned features a perfect nobleman citizen had to be religious (which should be manifested, use various types of religious practice). Other features included: diplomacy, readiness to serve the nation, useful and practical knowledge, physical fitness, ability to use weapon (swordplay, horse riding, swimming, etc. were welcome). Nobleman courtier had to be a person of great social refinement, be able to behave well during court ceremonies and celebrations, have knowledge (not too extensive), have an easy manner to entertain ladies, speak with ease on any subject (social, political, economic, etc.), modesty (Freylichówna, 1938, pp. 14-54; Kurdybacha, 1938, pp. 27-164; Żołędz-Strzelczyk, 1990, pp. 187-214; Łempicki, 1932, pp. 8-11).

Prosperity, privileges, lack of wars, free elections contributed to the fall of gentry ideal. Self-interest, debauchery, drunkenness, morals freedom, inconsideration towards nation's fate, looking after only own interests became part of the gentry life. The country was headed for collapse. In order to rescue the Home Country it was necessary to carry out fundamental reforms and prepare the new value system. The first attempts were made in

the mid-18th century and they resulted in creating national education ideal, an ideal of good and enlightened Pole, which included the following features: sense of civic duty, love of country, integrity, religiousness, sense of honor, affection for justice, worship and allegiance to a king, respect for public rights, government offices and military authorities, national and civil education, social refinement, sense of personal dignity (based not on coat of arms but on awareness and morals), physical fitness, education within freedom and for freedom. Citizens were made aware of their duties, respect for rights, care of strength of the Republic of Poland. It was worth dying for the home country, but also living and working with dignity. The above mentioned features were supposed to describe a progressive political and social reformer (Łempicki, 1936, pp. 17-23).

Attempts to rescue the country ended with complete defeat. The period between 1795-1831 was transitional, full of hope for regaining independence quickly. In education, an ideal of Pole created before partitions of Poland prevailed. After the collapse of the November Uprising and numerous repressions of the invaders, the new romantic value system was created. It was influenced by emigration. The following issues became crucial: country independence, love of Home Country which required supreme sacrifice, patriotism, constant readiness to fight for the country independence, religion, home and family pervaded with the Polish spirit, Polish education (to be a free man and for freedom), respect for tradition, any anti-invaders activities, faith in messianism (Łempicki, 1936, pp. 24-41).

Political events which took place the beginning of the 60s of the 19th century, especially the defeat of the January Uprising resulted in national mourning, helplessness, lack of faith in a better tomorrow. Education program established by positivists was the best remedy for difficult time. They completely rejected an idea of armed fight with an invader and they created value principles thanks to which it would be possible to work for oneself and for the country, prepare and wait for the most suitable moment to regain freedom. The most important feature of this program was progressive and democratic realism, usefulness of knowledge and work, moderation, reserve and not revealing patriotic feelings, tendency to compromise with invader authorities (for own interests and for peace of mind), faith in spiritual power of the nation, economic strength of the society, progressiveness, justice and tolerance. At this time, an ideal of Pole worker appeared. He strived to real, positive and the best results in all fields of actions, he believed in natural sciences, in economic benefits, showing objective consideration for the reality, current events, working hard every day in order to increase material and spiritual goods of his society. Hero

soldier was replaced by hero worker, a soldier making daily effort, community worker (Łempicki, 1936, pp. 42-68).

Towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, together with an activity of various political parties, new education ideals appeared. Then, the most popular was a socialist and national ideal. At this time, the most important features were: nation and its best interests, readiness to fight for liberation, patriotism, political activities, physical fitness, freedom of thought, discipline in action, friendship, solidarity, ability of cooperation.

During the interwar period two value systems developed. Both of them focused on national education ideal. The first one developed during the period of the Partitions of Poland at the end of the 19th century. The other one appeared after the May Coup. After regaining independence the superior values became freedom, love of the regained Home Country, sense of responsibility, honor, national dignity, joint responsibility for the country situation (development of consistent nation, awareness of its quality, identity and rights), deep religiousness, diligence (worker – citizen), patriotism, tradition respect, knowledge of national history, responsibility (for contribution to culture development), sensitivity, perseverance, honesty, friendship, cooperation, sense of organization, democracy, tolerance towards other nations (after regaining independence Poland became a multi-ethnic country – inhabited by many minorities) (Araszkiewicz, 1978, pp. 89-114). Since 1926 fundamental changes took place within value hierarchy. Diligence was at the top of the most important values, among which there were justice, freedom, authority, individuality, social solidarity, economic interventionism, respect for language, culture and customs of minorities, freedom of conscience, tolerance, religion, sense of civic duties, harmonious co-existence of all social classes, social solidarity, loyalty to the country, patriotism, socialization, physical and mental health, nationality, education, activeness, integrity, honesty, agile, bright, logical and clear way of thinking, discipline, respect for rights, independent thinking, optimism, honor, courage, bravery, enthusiasm, idealism (Araszkiewicz, 1978, pp. 153-269).

An outbreak of the Second World War thwarted all plans concerning education. It also influenced education value system. Under constant threat, fight and danger related to Nazi occupation the most important thing was to survive, to fight with occupying forces, resistance activity.

The liberation of the Polish territory occupied by Nazi, apart from the longed-for freedom, resulted in the change of the political system. The principal goal of the new authority was to win the society to build up socialism. From now on education was to reinforce the basis of the new social and political reality. Education value system changed radically.

Between 1944 – 1948 the most important values were: freedom, diligence, social involvement in the rebuilding of the country after the ravages, honesty, responsibility for the future, dedication, social service, ability to cooperate, sensitivity to social inequity and injustice, patriotism, readiness to fight and life sacrifice defending independence of Poland, struggle for peace and people's democracy, social justice, aiming at acquiring thorough knowledge (Chylińska, 1981, pp. 85-86, p. 112).

The period between 1948 – 1956 was noted for an increased ideological offensive. Teaching was based on verbalism and enforcing terms, formulas and platitudes from propaganda booklets and placards. The most important features of contemporary education included: ability to work on reinforcement and development of socialist home country, vigilance against the class enemy, readiness to supreme sacrifice while Poland, pride in country achievements, love of the home country, mother tongue, knowledge of the progressive national and social traditions, sense of solidarity with the socialist camp, affection for revolutionary, progressive traditions of the working class, belief in superiority of socialist economy over capitalist economy, bravery, creative initiative, diligence, perseverance, responsibility, altruism, dedication, civil courage, friendly solidarity, beauty sensitivity (Dobosiewicz, 1971, pp. 21-22).

After B. Bierut passed away the following issues were criticized: methods of influence on children, language of political generalizations, using terms and categories drawn from propaganda speeches, preparing ready pieces of information which did not correspond to the reality, etc. At the same time a turnabout in country politics took place and the new political and economic programme concerning Poland development appeared. The new educational value system which was part of the socialist education ideal occurred. The following features were distinctive: humanism, internationalism, egalitarianism, democracy, social commitment, affection for freedom, work respect, patriotism, social usefulness, economy, responsibility, collectivism, respect for human dignity, respect for life and health, tolerance, protectiveness, respect for public property, perfectionism, optimism, courage, knowledge (Pomykało, 1977, pp. 472-475; Muszyński, 1974, pp. 67-98). This model was present in the 60s and the 70s.

The beginning of the 80s saw new changes within education value system. Social and political situation of the country, a wave of strikes, state of emergency and electing deputies to the Sejm in 1989 resulted in redefinition of attitudes, change in education goals hierarchy, disappearance of some features and appearance of the new ones within the value system. Eventual development of the new education ideal took place in the 90s. Among others, the following values were of special importance: right for

personal liberty, human subjectivity and identity, dignity, responsibility, civil liberties, patriotism, life free of war threats, democracy, political pluralism, honesty, tolerance, family, health and its protection, opportunity of self-realization, work and decent level of financial and spiritual life. These values are considered contemporary education values ((Banach, 2001, p. 178).

2. Summary

In the face of recently growing spiritual crisis manifested in the form of brutalization of life, crisis of consciousness, disappearance of the sacred, boorishness, sloppiness, arrogance, mess, drunkenness, drug addiction, mugging, thefts, stupidity, lies spreading, violence, aggression, drug dependence, egoism, insensitivity to the beauty of nature and art, etc. (Denek, 1994, pp. 14-15). scientists quite often keep asking themselves *What will the future value system look like?*

Among suggestions concerning the future education ideal, the following values appear most often: serving the truth, respect for the peace and peacekeeping, respect for the basic human rights, civic liberties, democracy, tolerance for beliefs, attitudes, ideas, preferences, dissimilarities, sensitivity to the human injustice, human solidarity, responsibility for ecosystem, ability to solve problems in the form of a dialogue, personal dignity, activeness, resourcefulness (Kupisiewicz, 1996, p. 82; W perspektywie, 1995, p. 12; Edukacja, 1999, pp. 16-17).

The above analysis of education value systems provokes the following reflection that education activity developed in every period so that young individuals could continue some thought, culture and behavior. However, there was not a full compliance between propagated education ideals and education activity. Education ideals were never fully realized. This gave an opportunity to search for and develop other values which would better correspond to current life. Only general values: the truth, beauty and good remained constant through ages.

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