

POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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This article concerns the attitude of the youth during their education in the upper secondary schools in the time of the political transformation. To be more precisely, it concentrates around the structure of the content of the political attitudes. The starting point for the analysis is the public discourse about the civil education of the younger generation, which was held in pedagogic and scientific circles in 1990-1994. The text was based on sociological research that the author conducted in 2005-2007 on the Polish high school students.

The caesura of time, which was established for the characteristic of the discussion, included the period, when the new model of upbringing in and for the democracy was being created. It was assumed that five years is enough time for an educational process to talk not only about its initiation, but also about its evaluation and judge its` first effects. After five years since the June turning point, when the Poles on the way of parliamentary election told themselves they didn't want to live in the Communist system any longer, the teaching circles started their preparations for the Pedagogic Convention, where the democracy and an upbringing were watchwords.

The discussion was held in the context of the questions such as: what was it course? What was it content? What attitudes appeared? What is the function of the civil education? One of the crucial research issues was to identify, whether the suggested solutions differed from the solutions of the former formation, when it comes to their content and the objective scope.

Formation of the political attitude, in the sphere of knowledge, is when youth gain information about the politics. It allows them to use the set of content, in more or less extended way. Political attitudes can also shape the ability to identify the ideological or political orientation, as well as assimilating and strengthening political values, code of conduct, social roles, the ability of both practical applying or defending them. The ability of creating and manifesting needs, expectations towards political institutions also has great impact.

Young people who are still studying constitute an interesting part of our society when it comes to the scientific aspect. Although they are still under the socializing influence of institutions such as: school, family, church, mass media, they can afford their opinions to be independent and to express criticism toward the state and politics.

Janusz Gęsicki, while analyzing the pedagogies characteristic for the types of social order, which were defined by S. Ossowski, showed that in the new social reality, upbringing should be based on four elements: pedagogy of developing the personality, strategy of releasing the activity of the student, the dialogue and the partnership. Therefore, new reality requires leaving the designing of the educational strategy in a central way to the benefit of localism. Bala and Kwieciński postulated to introduce the model of school, which would be thumping and pulsating with disputes, or as Przyszczykowski is postulating- the school orientated on the pupil and the teacher.

It can be assumed, that youth is like a mirror, which allows to see what is happening in the whole society. On the one hand, we see the society of the adult people, which is hardened in stereotypes and conformity. We can notice, what they considers acceptable, what is reconciled, what is treated as daily routine. On the other hand, we can see the youth with their rebellion and their lack of acceptance for the compromises. The youth does not have to accept rules which run the politics, to love politicians, to believe in media, they do not have to do many other things. Young people often, according to the "law of youths ", reject certainties, revealed truths and do not take anyone word for that. As they are observing the live around them, as well as institutions of the public life and are judging them, comparing with propagated principles of the new social order, such as: equality, freedom, brotherhood, social justice.

The group, which is examined, may be treated as a peer of the III Republic. Fourteen years of the existence of the III Republic is the time they can remember from the moment of more or less deliberate receive of the social reality. They grew up along with the III Republic, it became and developed along with them. The generation which became an object of this work, is first, for which the expression "Folk Poland", "PZPR", "socialist democracy" are the historical concepts. This generation is not burdened with personal experiences from the previous system. It awareness was developed in new conditions. Therefore, the last period of the newest history of Poland is a fundamental core of the life experience of the examined young people.

The area of the whole country becomes the field of the researches. Such choice was caused by the wish to obtain the information about the attitude toward the politics from the youth diversified geographically, culturally and socially.

The research population was a group over 600 000 people, who were born in 1986. The age of examined people was narrowed on purpose. It was done in order to reach and get to know and political beliefs of the persons, who know the former political-economic system only from family transmissions or the history lesson. It was also about reaching people, who in 2004 *de jure* got the majority and became rightful citizens.

Changes which appeared on the Polish political stage after the both presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005, have made the presented material to be even more actual. This thesis is a contribution to understand the reality, which even though took place in the determined moment, but then, a few years earlier, and it walked away already to the past, it still stays current. Without understanding what already happened, one cannot understand what is happening today. It seems that the dilemmas of the Polish democracy, which at some fragmentary dimension are discussed in this work, can turn out to be more long-lasting than what I could imagine, when I started to write this work.

The change of the political system in 1989 started the process of changes not only in economy or politics, but also in the sphere of the mental consciousness. As far as the economic changes can be noticed easily, we have to wait some time to see those changes in the mental sphere. Also, when we analyze the transformations in the educational sphere, it turns out, that the situation is far from the primary assumptions. The discussion about the shape of the civil education, which was held in 1990-1994, showed that things cannot go this way anymore. The system of democracy requires the rejection the rule of pedagogical monocentrism. Moreover, it showed also how weak is the institution of the state, when it comes to regulate or initiate some essential educational activities. This discussion revealed that in Polish schools, there is a place for a civil initiatives organized by non-governmental organizations. It will prevent entering the path of indoctrination or political manipulation.

Reconstruction of the course of this discussion outlined the background for the presentation of the two methodologically different ways of examination. The first examination had the quantitative character, it was realized among pupils. Second one was realized with the quality method among the teachers who conducted the subject: knowledge about the society. Both researches were contribution to reconstruct the state of the both political and civil awareness in Poland, 15 years after the civil society begun to create.

The quantity researches, presented in the article, were aimed to answer some research problems. *The first research problem* concerned the issue – what is the level of an interest in politics?

While analyzing the declarations of the examined youth, one must say that 75% of the respondents are not interested in this field of life at all. The biggest percentage of the examined students (47,6%) declare the middle level of interest in politics. 13% of respondents is interested in politics to large or even larger extent. Left 18,5% respondents do not show any interest in politics. Although that the interest in politics does not have an uniform character and one cannot speak about

one, constant tendency, still the data allow to formulate a hypothesis on the universality of an interest in the politics.

The level of the interest in the politics shows very low, positive correlations with the number of books, which respondent has at home and with his or her sense of influence.

There is a weak correlation between the level of the interest in politics and the tradition of the civil activity in the family, when it comes to the examined group. Among the people, who came across the civil activity in their families, one can expect none or very little interest in the politics, whereas in families where such tradition exists, one can expect more interest in the politics. The level of an interest in the politics is connected with the membership of the parents in the social organization. It is also connected with a little bit higher level of an interest in the politics.

The connection between the level of the interest in politics with the membership of the parent in the social organization, or fulfilling some functions in the political parties, has been noticed. In both cases, the fact that parents were involved into political activities (which may be understood as the membership and fulfilling functions in the political party) effects that their children show a little bit more interest in politics.

The second research issue concerned the issue if and to what extent, the politics is important in the youth's life?

Generally, Polish youth estimate the importance of the politics in their lives as less than average important, and it amounts to 3,85 on the one-step scale.

Almost every sixteenth examined person (5,8%) said that politics is not important in his or her life. As to say the least faint, but fewer than average – 58,7 %. 12,8 % declared the average evaluation examined. As more than average in their lives, 22,8 % of examined pupils determined the politics to be important and very important.

As the studying pupils declared some interest in politics, they did not notice it meaning in their lives. Less than every fourth examined person thought that politics has more than average meaning for his or her life. The level of interest in the politics shows high, positive correlation with the estimation of the politics in one's life. It also shows the attitude which is expressed by the constant estimation of the role that politics has in one's life, as well as one's own interest in this field. Among all the examined people, 5,0% do not feel that politics has any meaning in their lives, and also they are not interested in politics at all. On the other hand, there is 0,7% people who estimate the meaning of the politics as very high, and they are interested in this field at the high extent.

A significant group of respondents- 15,1% - estimate those two fields as not very important. However, 11,4% of students believe, that politics is important at the low extent and they show no

interest in it, whereas 16,4% with the same estimation of the meaning, declare average interest in politics.

There is a connection between number of books at home and how the youth estimate the importance of politics in their lives.

This estimation is combined with the sense of influence and safety, and moreover, with the fact that one's parents were involved in the social activity, were members of the political party or they fulfilled some functions in the political parties.

The third research problem concerns the following issue – where do students take the information about politics and political events from?

Students, who were examined, usually use from commercial TV stations, public television and commercial radio stations. However, they hardly make use from colloquia and special interest groups, as well as Polish-speaking programmes from foreign radio broadcasting stations, the foreign weekly press, foreign-language literary publications about the politics, national publications about the politics and of foreign television news bulletins, as well as from the knowledge disseminated by youth organizations. The factorial analysis of the received data allowed to separate three styles of the way, in which sources of information about politics are used. It turned out, that there was a correlation between the increasing dimension *of using the school and sources of information, which are alternative to it when it comes to politics*, with the place of living, financial situation of the family, number of books at home, the level of father's education, with the participation in services, with tradition of a community work at home and with the membership in the organization, the association or a special interests group.

The dimension of *using the electronic media* is connected with the domicile, taking part in the services, the tradition of community work at home and the membership in the organization, the association or a special interests group.

It was recorded that the connection between the dimension of *using press as a source of information about the politics* increase with the domicile, the number of books in the household, level of both father and mother's education, with tradition of a community work at home and with the membership in the organization, the association or a special interests group.

It was additionally recorded that there is a connection between sense of influence with all of the three styles of using the informational media.

It was stated that the higher intensity of the style *using the school and sources of information, which are alternative to it when it comes to politics* appeared, when students' parents were involved into social activity, and also when parents fulfilled functions in the social organizations, the higher intensity of the style *using the electronic media* and lower intensity of the style *using press as a*

source of information about the politics appeared in the case of students, whose parents were engaged into social activity.

However, the sense of safety was connected only with the intensity of the style *using the electronic media*.

The fourth research issue, stated in the research, concerned the question – is the youth satisfied with the democracy in Poland?

The results, which were received, allow to state that most of the examined are satisfied with the democracy in Poland at the lower extent. Descriptive statistics seem to confirm this result: the value of the average, which is 3,79 and median – 4. 61% of the people are dissatisfied, 22,5% are satisfied.

Second indicator examined youth`s opinion about the democracy in Poland was the estimation at what level the power is wielded in democratic way. Almost half of the examined people (48,4%) was positive about this statement, every third respondent (35,3%) answered negative, every sixth respondent did not have opinion about the case.

Received data let us state that the interest in politics is connected with the satisfaction from the way democracy works in Poland.

Examining the correlational relations permitted us to establish that only those young people who admitted that they interest in politics is very high, were satisfied with the way the democracy functions in Poland. At the same time, the biggest number of those, who were dissatisfied with the functioning of the Polish democracy were also those, who estimate their interest in politics as high, average or very faint

The fifth research problem concerns in the issue of estimation of the democracy in the procedural dimension (so called model of R. Dhal).

Most of the examined youth attributed politics with following such principles:

- all the citizens have a guaranteed right to vote	81,4%
- there is freedom to set up organizations and to participate in them	66,9%
-there is freedom of information	64,4%
- people standing for election have equal rights for competing for voices of electors	63,7%
elections for the parliament and local government in Poland after 1989 are free and honest	61,6%
-there is a freedom of speech	60,7%

Rules of the democracy are considered in the procedural dimension gained so many positive indications that it can be said that democracy is realized in the *high or very high level*.

On the basis of the received answers, the Scale of Procedural Democracy was built. Its layout let us say that more people feel that democracy functions weaker in this dimension.

Perceiving the procedural dimension of the Polish democracy is correlated with the respondents' sex, with the place, the participation in services and the number of books at home. Situation is similar, when it comes to analyze the connections of the scale with the level of education of both of the parents.

On the basis of the analysis of the correlation of the Scale of Procedural Democracy one can formulate two conclusions. The first one says that in case of the Polish youth, the Scale is negatively correlated with the sense of safety. The second conclusion claims that perceiving democracy as a certain set of procedures or rules is positively correlated with the sense of influencing the social issues.

What is more, also the fact that parents used to fulfill or are actually fulfilling functions in the political parties, has some additional influence in this dimension.

The sixth research problem concerns the issue about how Polish youth estimates democracy in its egalitarian dimension?

On the basis of the analysis of the modal value, one can formulate a conclusion that examined youth believe that the egalitarian principles are not realized in the Polish democracy.

Analysis of the layout of the Scale of Perception in the Egalitarian Dimension let us state, that more of the examined people have weaker sense of the way the democracy functions in Poland, when it comes to the dimension, which I am interested in.

Perceiving democracy in the egalitarian dimension is connected with the respondents' sex and the material situation of their families, as well as with the sense of having influence on the social issues, with the scale of the democracy in the procedural dimension and with the scale of the economical optimism.

The Scale of the Democracy in the Egalitarian Dimension is negatively correlated with the sense of safety.

Estimations given by people, whose parents are or used to be functional persons in the political parties, are positively correlated with the grades formulated on that Scale. The examined youth had a strong feeling of the social inequality in Poland. In their opinion, following rules are not realized in Poland - equality regardless of the social origins (59,0%), equality regardless of the material situation (73,2%), world-view (50,0%) and party membership (50,0%).

The seventh research issue concerns the problem of the way students perceive the authorities.

When it comes to the received data, it turns out that it is judged in a negative way. It proves that such estimations of the authorities arrange in a certain continuum, and they are in fact

consequent. Examined youth do so in every dimensions, no matter if they use the negative or positive scale.

There is a correlation between the first scale of the estimation of the people who exercise authority (so called 'negative'), with the mother's education. Negative correlation occurs between the evaluation of the authorities and the scale of the economic optimism, as well as with the trust to the state institutions.

Examined people, whose parents fulfill functions in the social organizations, have more negative opinion about the people who exercise authority in Poland. In case of the second marking scale of the people exercising authority, I noticed some statistically essential, however - low and negative, correlation between the positive scale of the assessment of people exercising authority and the domicile and educating the father. Also, there is a positive correlation between the evaluation of the power and the scale of the economic optimism, the confidence in state institutions along with the sense of the influence. Essential statistically correlation occurs between the evaluation of the power and financial circumstances of the family and the number of books at home.

The examined youth, regardless of their sex, domicile, educating the mother and the father has similar views on, what kind of people are exercising authority in Poland. They have an obvious tendency to assess those people in both critical and negative way.

The eighth research problem was aimed to judge whether the youth have trust to the institutions of the public life.

The research showed, that none of the institution or organization gain such number of the positive indications, so one could said that it has high or very high level of confidence. The highest note, with the average of 3,47 was gained by the private media: television and radio stations. Just behind them there was a place for public television with the average of 3,42 and the public radio – 3,41.

Received data let us state formulate a hypothesis that the students do not trust in the Sejm and the government, so two institutions, which exercise the legislature and executive power in the country in the direct manner.

There was recorded a correlation between the trust in the organs of government and the material status of the family; between the trust in media and the material condition of the family, between the trust in the organizations outside the government and the parliament with the number of books at home.

There is a correlation of the sense of influence with the trust in the state, trust in media and trust in the organizations outside the government and the parliament .

The sense of safety correlates only with the trust in the organizations outside the government and the parliament.

The correlational analysis let us state that people, whose parents used to fulfill or are now fulfilling functions in the political parties, have now less trust for the organs of the state. What is more, people, whose parents used to fulfill or are now fulfilling functions in the political parties or were members of social organizations, have less trust in media. However, people, whose parents were engaged in the social activity, have more trust in the organizations outside the government and the parliament. Less trust for those organizations have people, whose parents used to fulfill or are now fulfilling functions in the political parties.

Low location of the mentioned institutions of the public life on the scale of the confidence - is a symptom of the crisis of the legitimization of the judicial, legislative and executive powers in Poland.

The ninth research problem concerns the issue, how do young people assess political parties?

None of the political parties or the political movement gain such number of the positive indications, so one could said that it is consider to be trustworthy at the *medium, high* or *very high* extent. Civic Platform achieved the highest average – 2,98. Just behind it there is Law and Justice party – 2,84 and the Union of Freedom – 2,55.

Students declare very low trust in political parties and political movements. They were very careful, when it came to give the best score. What is characteristic is, in none of the cases, the modal reach scores such as “rather positive” or “definitely positive”. In the case of Self-defence party, it was noted that in its estimation, the opinion “definitely negative” was the most popular one.

The attitude of the young Poles to the political parties, aversion is the dominant feeling. Even the most important parties are received rather with aversion than with favor.

The tenth and eleventh research issue. They concern the issue of what is the attitude to the social activity and charity and how does their own activity in associations and social organizations look?

Attitude to the social activity and charity, which was considered by me, was based on the reply to a few questions. First of them concerned the sense of the social activity. Half of the respondents (51.1%) acknowledged that the social activity make sense, but under certain conditions. Almost every fourth examined (23.3%) judged the sense of such activity as a definitely positive. People, who could not see the meaning of such activity, constituted the 8.8% of respondents altogether. Every sixth examined (17.1%) didn't have an opinion, when it came to answer the above question.

There was some statistically essential, however - low, correlation between the answers to the question and the sex of the examined, the domicile, participation in services, mother`s education and the number of books at home.

The second question concerned the sense of charity. 83,7% of the respondents decided, that social activity makes sense, every second respondent in that number (54,5%) estimated such kind of activity as a definitely sensible.

There was some statistically essential, however - low, correlation between the answers to the question and the sex of the examined, the domicile, participation in services, education and the number of books at home.

When one compares the answers for both questions, it turns out that youth believes that charity makes more sense than social activity. They perceive it in a better way, and therefore – they estimate it better. Half of the examined people see sense in social activity (under the certain circumstances), but when it comes to charity – they make no circumstances, while judging this kind of activity.

In spite of that most of the respondents (83,7%) believed that the charity make sense, only every fourth examined (26,2%) worked as a volunteer. Such a low level of participation in charity activity, with such a high approval for it at the same time, may be caused by the lack of knowledge, where and how it is possible to become a volunteer. It is confirmed by a fact that nobody turned with the proposal to undertake charity activity for the half of the examined (53,0%).Lack of educated patterns of such activity in the nationwide scale, as well as the local community is another reason.

Half of the respondents answered, that if someone offers them a job as a volunteers, they would neither agree nor disagree to take such job. Does it mean that they would need some time to re-think the proposition, to get to know with the offer, or they are just refraining from the refusal? Over one third of the examined would take that job immediately. Only every tenth of the examined people would say no to that offer.

The achieved results concerning the level of engagement into association life, means in practice moving away from association life, but it does not mean that youth do not like to get involved in some forms of public or social activity at all. Those, who notice the need of creating new organizations, declare also will to participate in these organizations (44%), and the 15% of the examined declare that they will be acting in them.

The results show that young people want to act in a different way than in the past. They want to participate in the new organization-movement, which they will create on their own or in the association with the characteristic of the charity. After 1989, there was a dynamic development of

the movement of the association among the secondary school children, which was slowed down in 1991-1993 years. It is possible to say that in those years there was the crisis, when it comes to the spontaneous activity among youth.

The last research problem concerns the range of the social activity, which is measured with the membership in the organization of different kind, associations, special activity groups or clubs.

These sphere of social activity is called by us, Poles, as civil society, French people - *la vie associative* and Englishmen – *civic society*. Although since many years the crisis of the social activity is expected, Polish youth is interested in such form of activity and wants to take part in it.

Over half of the respondents belong to some organization or association. Membership of the examined to the organization, movement, the association or the club does not have homogeneous character. Rank and files of the organizations dominate among the examined. Most of the examined pupils admit that they are members of the sports clubs, the Polish Red Cross and in artistic circles of different kind. Every eleventh of the respondents admits to take part in the student government. So called “youth organizations”, such as: ZHP, ZHR, ZSMP and ZMW, have the lowest popularity. 14.9% of the socially active respondents altogether belong to them.

Declaration of the organizational social activity is correlated with the education of the mother or father. The better they are educated, the more probable it is that they children are members of the organization, association or the special activity group. In the group of parents with the elementary education, only every third examined was active in an organization. In case of parents with the higher education, this percentage is rising almost twice. It confirms the truth of the socialization hypothesis saying that the social status is determining the course of the socialization process.

The analysis of the social activity of the examined with chosen demographic or social features does not show that the sex diversifies examined young people in terms of the activity. Almost the same number of boys (51.8%) and girls (53.0%) declare a membership in some organization. Also the domicile is not affecting the level of the organizational commitment.

Existence of the tradition of the social activity in the family influences on the membership of the examined young stock in the organization, social associations or special interests groups. People, who came from such families, declared the membership of an organization more often. There is a link between the membership in the organization and the tradition of the social or political activity in the family.

There is a connection between membership to the organization and the number of books at home and the material status of the family, as well as with the membership to the organization and the sense of influence. However, there are some differences in the examined attitude between the

groups of people from the families with the tradition of social activity and the groups of people without such tradition.

It seems that the problem, discussed in this article, requires further researches. They should start in the point of the analysis of the actual state of knowledge, e.g., metaanalysis of the all researches about the political attitudes of the youth, which were conducted after the political transformation. The first step has been somehow made. Recollection of the many interesting data through the discussion shows, that the problem is not indifferent for the researches. The attempt to find examinations to this particular subject should leave the borders of Poland. On the level of metaanalysis it is possible to review hypotheses due to the sex, economic-social status, of differences between the generations or the socialization processes, which take place within such social groups such as: family, school, peers.

Regardless of the metaanalysis, examinations of the oblong character should be undertaken, because there is lack of panel studies, which would concern the same research trial in the time aspect.

One should survey with the teachers of the civic education with examinations. Their attitudes, lifestyle, values or political opinions should be put in the centre of interests. However, their educational practice should become a primary issue.

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