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The Reception of Education for Patriotism in Contemporary Polish Education

*It is not enough to show young people their ideals,
we have to help to achieve them!*

(Prof. Feliks Wojciech Bednarski)

*Bringing up the young generation
in the spirit of patriotism is crucial*

(Jan Nowak Jeziorański)

Key words: patriotism, upbringing to patriotism, Polish education, student, patriot

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the perception of upbringing to patriotism in contemporary Polish education and to make the reader sensitive to the importance of the topic of love for the homeland in today's world. The analysis of the research problem begins with presenting the key terms, such as 'patriotism' and 'upbringing to patriotism'. Next, the article presents selected issues from school curriculums and their analysis paying special attention to developing the attitude of love for one's homeland. The following part of the article analyses selected elements of the National Curriculum, which is the basis for patriotic education. The aim of the article is also to prompt scientific reflection and to inspire others to create programs for teaching to patriotism.

Is a contemporary student of primary school, junior high school or secondary school interested in the issues of nation, homeland, patriotism? If so, what does patriotism represent for the young Polish generation? And, does contemporary Polish education realise the curriculum of education for patriotism, does it teach patriotism? It might seem that these questions do not have

a point, since everyone or almost everyone would say yes to all of them. However, are these really true declarations, is the sense of patriotism properly understood?

Nowadays it is claimed that schools do not provide enough patriotic education (Wolicki, 2006, p. 431). Terms such as 'patriotism' and other similar notions lost their meaning, especially in the times of technop-

oly¹, globalism or even cosmopolitanism. Moreover, it should be noticed that the problem of patriotic education in itself has been present in different measures throughout the history. Undoubtedly, it was vividly present in the period between the two wars. However, after World War II, until 1965 it virtually did not exist (Wolicki, 2006, p. 421). As Irena Jundziłł emphasises, only 'since 1965 (...) articles about patriotic education started to appear more often in pedagogical journals' (Jundziłł, 1963, p.3). In view of the context described above, Józef Wilk's words seem more than appropriate. In his opinion 'today the value of patriotism and its meaning for our national identity have to be rediscovered, and this has to be done fast, because time passes quickly. (...) New generations of Polish people grow up in the context of some sort of vacuum, eradication and total lack of sensitivity to what 'homeland, service to homeland, sacrifice for it, or simply love of one's homeland mean' (Wilk, 2002, p. 177).

That is why both patriotism and education for patriotism and rediscovering its sense are a very up-to-date topic, and in the context of modern Polish education it takes on an even greater meaning. These and other factors justify the need to take up again the topic of education for patriotism in modern Polish education.

Before starting to analyse these problems, it has to be pointed out that the undertaken research analyses have a strictly conceptual sense and they are only a small contribution to the theory of education. The method that was used to attempt to analyse the research problem fundamentally allows to generally capture the essence of education for patriotism in the context of modern Polish education. A lot of topics that arise during the analysis require organising, classifying and additional defining. However, taking into account the character of the article and size limits, they were deliberately omitted, and only the most crucial ones were included. The above methodology principles and factual comments entitle the author now to pose the key question for the undertaken research problem: is it possible, on the basis of modern Polish education, to develop in a young person an attitude truly patriotic, worthy of a 21st century patriot?²

Explication of patriotism and education for patriotism

In order to be able to search for the reception of education for patriotism in modern Polish education, first of all we have to point to the definition of patriotism and then explain how education for patriotism should be understood. In presenting the content of all these terms, the educational aspect of the conducted analysis should be kept in mind at all times.

According to the definition from the Great Encyclopaedia by PWN³, the term 'patriotism' is defined as a social and political attitude based on the rules of love and attachment to one's homeland, and the word 'patriotism' presented in literature, dictionaries or companion guides can be summarised in a few words – loving and cherishing one's homeland. However, this notion undergoes constant transformations, similarly to other terms connected with human social behaviour. Despite this, patriotism today can still be defined as a concern for political life and future of homeland, but even more so as a concern for family, respecting private and common property, conscientious carrying out professional or education duties, putting common good over one's own. Therefore patriotism, as a certain state of positive attitude towards homeland and her problems, should be a basic value in educational work of teachers, and it should occupy an important place in it (Fundakowski, 2006, s. 439).

Patriotism in itself is also a value that calls for submitting and sacrificing personal goals to your homeland and your nation, if this is what is required. In short, patriotism is on the one hand the opposite of cosmopolitanism, and on the other hand nationalism (Lisica, 2014, s. 148).

Love for homeland is quite frequently connected with the attitude of emotional bond with one's own nation, its history, and also with spiritual membership of the community that created homeland in the past, does so in the present and will do in the future. Then this is a bond with people who belong to homeland, people that you grew up with in your family, school or other

¹ The term 'technopoly' was first introduced by an American author and media theorist Neil Postman. He defines society that believes that the basic aim of human work and thought is efficiency, and standard procedures or technical calculations are in all respects better than human assessment.

² Recently, numerous authors have taken up the topic of education for patriotism in education. In Polish pedagogy, especially worth mentioning are: W. Cichosz, *Możliwości dialogu*

wychowania chrześcijańskiego ze współczesną edukacją polską, Pelplin 2013; S. Dziekoński, *Wychowanie do wartości jako problem współczesnej edukacji i zadanie katechezy*, „Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne”, 2007, v. 5, p. 77–96; P. Tomasiak, *Pedagogika wobec kryzysu wychowania*, „Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne”, 1998, nr XI, p. 287–318; B. Śliwerski, *Jak zmieniać szkołę: studia z polityki oświatowej i pedagogiki porównawczej*, Kraków 1998.

³ The entry 'patriotism' in *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna PWN*, Warszawa 1966, t. 8, ed. B. Suchodolski, p. 181–182.

close environment. It might also be a bond with native literature, architecture, fine arts or music. If we understand patriotism in this way, it should be emphasised that love for homeland is not only connected with feelings and emotions. We should bear in mind that patriotism understood in the proper way is first and foremost an attitude and that is why it should be presented in the categories of cognitive, motivational, emotional and operational components (Santorski, 1998, pp. 31–39).

After briefly explaining the term ‘patriotism’, we should now focus on the issue of education for patriotism. Anna Zellma notices that ‘education for patriotism, as a process, phenomenon and pedagogical value is inherently a part of educational philosophy of modern Polish society’ (Zellma, 2003, p. 184). Nowadays, in the time of rapid social and cultural changes, understanding ‘education for patriotism’ is subjected to semantic impoverishment and to attempts to alienate it from the context of Polish national ethos. Therefore the right understanding of education for patriotism is strictly connected with the notion of patriotism which, as it has been mentioned above, can be presented in different ways and different aspects can be emphasised in it (Zellma, 2003, p. 185).

In this context, it has to be pointed out that education for patriotism is one of the planes of integral education. Integral education includes all ways in which a student is deliberately influenced, in a specific situation in order to support him or her in developing a true and active love for homeland, and at the same time to shape properly understood tolerance of other nations and cultures. Moreover, it is connected with the effort made to create national heritage, enlarging it and taking responsibility for it, so that it can be passed down to the next generations (Zellma, 2003, p. 186).

Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that education for patriotism understood in this way is connected with supporting young people in developing civic virtues, that is a type of behaviour that displays concern for homeland and the feeling of responsibility for its development. Especially important is dedication that relies on the ability to sacrifice oneself for others. It is not possible to discuss a positive attitude to homeland and her problems without these virtues. They are completed by the virtue of faithfulness, which is present in persistent service to the country. Apart from that, there are also traditional Polish virtues, such as reverence for everything that is Polish, hospitality and national pride that more often than not decides about preserving national identity. The feeling of national pride is connected with respect for national symbols, the national

emblem, banners, cultural monuments. All this constitutes a basis for providing young people with cognitive and emotional experiences, and also with model behaviour, which in turn make it possible to put the country’s good over one’s own, to serve the country, to give it all one’s strength and submitting private interests to its good, and if necessary, to sacrifice one’s own life (Zellma, 2003, p. 187).

Understanding the notion of education for patriotism described above allows us to draw a conclusion that specific mechanisms of shaping patriotic attitudes are present in this process. The most important are:

- ‘assuming ready attitudes through emulation;
- modifying attitudes (especially the model of the homeland) under the influence of knowledge and education;
- identification with one’s country’ (Jundziłł, 1963, pp. 78–80)

However, it has to be remembered that the phenomenon of suggestion, negativism or counter-suggestion is present in education for patriotism, since accepting positive patriotic attitudes from parents or teachers through suggestion and emulation facilitates their deepening and consolidation (Jundziłł, 1963, pp. 78–80). Furthermore, according to Heliodor Muszyński, the program for modern education to love one’s country should call for the necessity to instil in both children and teenagers attractive patterns for the service to the country in conditions of peaceful work through everyday carrying out one’s basic duties (Wolicki, 1996, p. 51).

Polish education today and education for patriotism – selected problems

Passing on to a more thorough analysis of the research problem, we have to centralise the research conducted not only in the modern Polish education. In that case, how should the term ‘modern Polish education’ be understood? Or, we should rather ask, what is the foundation of modern education? An excellent answer is given by Wojciech Cichosz, who in his book *The Possibilities of a Dialogue between Christian Education and Modern Polish Education* (Pelplin 2013) claims that ‘(...) on 27th August 2012, 15 years after passing the Constitution of the Republic of Poland on 2nd April 1997, Polish school received the *Directive of the Minister of National Education about national curriculum in all types of schools* (Dziennik Ustaw z 2012 r. poz. 977) (Muszyński, 1996, p. 51). The new publication, signed by minister Krystyna Szumilas, has become not only the foundation for

education of children and young people, but also a kind of a signpost that shows the way of the new educational reforms. One cannot accept these facts indifferently and without a reflection' (Cichosz, 2013, pp. 13–14).

It seems that the recurring question of education for patriotism concerns the very essence of the conducted reforms of social life. Wojciech Cichosz reminds that 'after the first democratic elections in after-war Poland (04.06.1989), after demolishing the Berlin Wall that was built on the night of 13th August 1961 (09.11.1989), and after the political system changes in Poland, a new school inspired a lot of enthusiasm and hope. For this purpose, *Education System Act* of 7th September 1991 was prepared, and introduced. In an independent country, after 44 years of painful experience of social and materialistic education, this fundamental document guaranteed to Polish people education in the spirit of European civilisation (...) Article 13, point 1 provides students in public schools with the possibility to sustain the feeling of national, ethnic, language and religious identity, and in particular learning the language and one's own history and culture' (Cichosz, 2013, pp. 16–17.; Cichosz, 2010, p. 76).

Undoubtedly, Polish educational system creates the possibility to shape patriotic attitudes for teachers and educators. For the purpose of this article, the author deliberately limited the scientific analysis to the mentioned above the *Directive of the Minister of National Education* of 27th August 2012 about the national curriculum. Therefore, a fundamental question should be asked: to what extent does this document respects the possibility to sustain the feeling of patriotic identity? For the clarity of the undertaken analyses, one has to agree with Wojciech Cichosz, who emphasises that 'the current curriculum only slightly differs from the curriculum included in the *Directive of the Minister of National Education about national curriculum in all types of schools* of 23rd December 2008, which through the decision of minister Katarzyna Hall was in effect since 1st September' (Cichosz, 2013, pp. 17–18).

It must be added that the national curriculum from the *Directive of the Minister of National Education* of 27th August 2012 defines a higher purpose of the educational work of a teacher. It is a pillar on which the educational activity of school is based. Moreover, it includes elements that are directly connected with patriotic and civic education. These are:

- 'learning about the heritage of the national culture through the perspective of European culture;
- strengthening the feeling of cultural, historical, ethnic and national identity;

- making students aware that family, local community and homeland are a principal value in the life of every man, and that everyone has duties towards these communities' (Fundakowski, 1996, p. 442).

To supplement the above analyses, it is worth mentioning, quoting Stanisław Fundakowski, that in their principle most of them are more of a declaration, since it is not possible to measure directly the student's 'level of patriotism', just like it is not possible to examine the efficiency of modern Polish education in this respect. However, it can be done indirectly, using the method of observing behaviour and attitudes in the so called 'situations of truth' etc. Fundakowski, 1996, p. 442).

There is no doubt that, however, that modern Polish education on all the educational stages nowadays should particularly strongly emphasise the elements connected with culture and national heritage which would inspire students' healthy patriotism (Wolicki, 1996, p. 436). Therefore it is good when a child, just after entering a school, has the possibility to learn about the national emblem, national anthem, and learn respect for these symbols, which carry a rich historic and patriotic content (Wolicki, 1996, p. 436).

National curriculum as the fundament for education for patriotism in education

Due to the fact that this study is the search for the reception of education for patriotism in modern Polish education, the art of conducting scientific research, so to speak forces the author to undertake now the attempt to analyse both curriculum solutions and textbooks, and also to conduct a research in individual institutions in order to objectivize the results. The author shares the opinion of Piotr Tomasik, who says that such broad research is definitely needed (Skoczylas, 2003, pp. 142–157). Nevertheless, for the needs and purposes of this study, further direction of the conducted analyses will be limited to the guidelines from the new national curriculum.

Piotr Tomasik carried out a thorough analysis of the national curriculum with respect to education for patriotism in his article *Patriotic Education as the Basis for Correlation Between Religious Education and School Education* (Tomasik, 2004). In this work, the analyses allow to find the reception of shaping the attitude of love for one's country in modern education. The author of this work emphasizes that on the second educational stage, education for patriotism appears among school objectives in subject called *History and Society* (Civics), and in music

education in the form of most important patriotic songs, and finally, as part of a module called *Patriotic and Civic Education*. According to Piotr Tomasik, the proposal of these activities and subjects concerns both creating bonds with homeland and civic awareness, and their content refers to symbolic sphere, role models of great Poles and the norms of social life (Tomasik, 1996, p. 500).

In modern Polish education on level of a junior high school, references to patriotism are highlighted in proscribed books, which include a lot of classical works of national literature, such as *Reduta Ordoña* by Adam Mickiewicz or *Potop*, *Krzyżacy* and *Quo vadis* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, also *Kamienie na szaniec* by Aleksander Kamiński. Patriotism is also one of the educational objectives of history lessons. It is worth mentioning here that the authors of the curriculum operate mainly in the symbolic sphere, since another module of the subject of History and Society, which is mainly about educating students for taking active part in economic life, does not include any references to patriotism. Information about Poland's natural, population, cultural or economic potential is included in the Geography curriculum. On the third educational stage, teaching music and art does not include any guidelines supporting education for patriotism. At the same time we should bear in mind that subject curriculums in junior high schools connect elements referring to love of one's country with regional education and Polish culture in comparison with the Mediterranean tradition. In the first case educational activities aim at consolidating the feeling of national identity through the development of local (regional) identity, and in the second case – building cultural identity of Poland on the basis of ancient and Christian heritage (Tomasik, 1996, p. 501).

However, on the level of secondary schools education for patriotism might be constituted by learning about literary works that form the heritage of Polish culture during Polish lessons (*Bogurodzica*; *Dziady część III* by Adam Mickiewicz also *Pan Tadeusz* and *Wesele* by Stanisław Wyspiański). The school's aim is to introduce students to national tradition and help them recognise the presence of patriotism in modern culture. Thanks to Polish lessons, students are supposed to receive help in developing their own language culture and at the same time to be sensitive to the beauty of native language. Among the values that the curriculum should refer to are homeland, *heimat* – little homeland (regionalism)⁴, nation and society. Suggested set books

refer to numerous works of Polish literature, also the ones that directly support patriotic education. And the educational objectives of the subject called Civics include both developing social and civic virtues as well as responsibility for the common good (Tomasik, 1996, p. 500).

The discussed document of the ministry unanimously allows to state that the reception of education for patriotism in modern Polish education is the result of not so much the educational imperative (that is, ministerial programme guidelines) but of personal axiological preferences of teachers, their outlook on life and their competence. It is teachers who in the first line are responsible for right learning, interpreting and evaluating by students the content that is included in the national curriculum. Thus, every teacher is acknowledged by the Ministry as the main creator of the process of education for patriotism (Cichosz, 2013, pp. 317 – 318).

Conclusion

The problems of today's world and the crisis in education that modern Polish education is faced with cause that its significance and importance is presented in new light. It seems that the only strategy that would make survival of modern civilisation possible and that would allow to avoid disaster is development based on human resources, on potential and creativity of individuals that make up the society. Human capital is renewable not only thanks to next generations but also thanks to the fact that man as species possesses an unusual ability to accumulate and pass on knowledge and patriotic values to next generations (Warych, 2012, p. 30).

In this context it might seem that an especially important aspect of modern school education is on the one hand shaping the feeling of one's own national identity, protecting everything that constitutes Poland, developing among young people the attitude of responsibility, respect and love for homeland (Frączek, 1996, p. 462), and on the other hand instilling in young people the joy of life and the feeling of pride of being Polish, worthy of a 21st century patriot.

Nowadays patriotism must first of all be put into practice, in other words lessons must be conducted in patriotic spirit, because only this will lead to forming

and teachers called 'National Heritage in a Region. Curriculum Guidelines' it has been pointed out that the main aim of regional education should be shaping the feeling one's own national identity. Look – Ministry of National Education, *Act of 07.09.1991*, p. 4.

⁴ The Reed for regional education is articulated by the Ministry of Education. In the document written for schools

patriotic attitudes. In this process teachers play an invaluable role. They cannot limit themselves to only encouragement or instruction about patriotism, but they have to aspire to the situation when students assimilate patriotism slowly and with awareness. Therefore the influence of both modern Polish education and a teacher on the education success is invaluable – *verbavolant exempla trahunt* – deeds, not words, give the example. The example of personal life in the spirit of patriotism is particularly needed now, more than ever before. The principle is simple: through the example of patriotism in educational space the possibilities and limits of teaching and education for patriotism are outlined (Janiga, 2004, 223–224). It seems then that this principle is on the one hand an indirect answer to questions posed at the beginning of the article, and on the other hand it expresses a perfect reception for education for patriotism in modern Polish education.

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