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Józef Półturzycki in the face of folk high schools. Notes on the basis of the renewal of Polish folk high schools in the years 2016–2022

Abstract. The authors dedicate their text to the memory of Professor Józef Półturzycki, recalling his contribution as the author and editor-in-chief of the “Andragogy Yearbook” and the inspirer of activities aimed at preserving the knowledge of folk high schools in the social (and academic) memory from the 1990s to the second decade of the 21st century, i.e. at the time when these institutions were almost forgotten. The sketch touches on selected threads regarding the revival of the Polish folk high school movement on the basis of the Folk High Schools Development Programme for the years 2020–2030 and the Polish Network of Folk High Schools (PNFHS). The participation of both authors in the 1st All-Polish Folk High School Festival in Koszałkowo in the summer of 2022 was the inspiration to take up these issues.

Keywords: folk high school, Józef Półturzycki (1934–2021), Folk High Schools Development Programme for 2020–2030, Polish Network of Folk High Schools, All-Polish Folk High Schools Festival

We dedicate this sketch to the memory of Professor Józef Półturzycki, who repeatedly expressed his interest in folk high schools (FHSs) and their cre-

ators both in his publications and in interviews with the authoress and author of this text, for he saw great pedagogical and educational potential in the ideas behind these institutions, in their programme, organizational, and methodological concepts as well as in the possibilities of social impact in rural and small-town environments.

The folk high school has become an establishment where the main value and main task was to educate, interact, trigger off values, and not to implement a strictly defined educational programme transferred from a youth school (Pólturzycki 1999, p. 167).

As early as in August 2021, the milieu of Polish Folk High Schools, gratefully remembering his attitude to “the cause of FHSs”, repeatedly expressed in publications and in other activities, made an attempt to invite the Professor to the honorary participation in the Scientific Committee of an international conference to celebrate the centenary folk high schools in independent Poland.* Alas, we were too late... He was unable answer the phone himself... Two days later, on August 25, 2021, he died.

Introduction

Folk high schools in independent Poland already have, let us recall, a tradition of over a century. The first of them was established, as already mentioned, in the fall of 1921 in Wielkopolska (Greater Poland), giving rise to the Catholic trend of these institutions in our country, while the second, was run in the first period of its activity by Ignacy Solarz in 1924, in Szyce, Małopolska (Lesser Poland). It was with him that the history of the secular trend in the Polish FHSs began (Pólturzycki 1999, p. 166). On the other

* The conference was organized in Mierzyn and Szczecin on October 4–5, 2021, i.e. exactly on the hundredth anniversary of the launch by rev. Antoni Ludwiczak of the first course of the Folk High School in Dalki near Gniezno. Its co-organizers were the following entities: The West Pomeranian Folk High School in Mierzyn, the Polish Network of Folk High Schools, and two academic circles – the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences of the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia and the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Szczecin, inside the facilities of which the sessions were held (cf. Bzymek 2021, pp. 135–138).

hand, the beginnings of the very reception of the idea of this Scandinavian andragogic innovation in Poland can be found much earlier, already at the end of the 1860s, while the first attempts to implement it into educational practice by various circles were many years before the outbreak of World War I (Maliszewski 2021b, *passim*; Pilch 2007, pp. 1019–1032).

These are difficult institutions to run, they require solid knowledge and the right attitude from the teacher [...], so there were not many of them in our tradition, just like in other countries, except in Scandinavia, where their number was systematically increasing (Pólturzycki 1999, p. 167).

The fate of the FHS idea in the subsequent decades of operation of folk high schools in Poland was different. Although they never really became mass-scale adult education institutions in rural areas, there were times when an increase in their importance was noticeable, related (to a large extent) to the increase in their number and (most often) attempts to consolidate the Polish FHS movement as a whole. Undoubtedly, this was the situation in the Second Polish Republic in the second half of the 1930s, when there were over 20 boarding folk high schools and work was underway to launch at least a few more, but was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Hopes for a significant development of the FHS network were also brought by the years 1945–1948, when the idea of a “folk high school in every *poviat*” began to be implemented and several dozen institutions of this type were launched, before they were considered a relic of the past useless in the new social reality, or at the end the 1980s, towards the end of the Polish People’s Republic, when the number of FHSs increased to a dozen or so (Byczkowski, Maliszewski, Przybylska 2003, *passim*).

There were also periods of regression in their activities. We faced the largest of them in the years 1948–1956, although the situation of folk high schools in Poland improved only slightly in the following three decades. The gradual decline of Polish Folk High Schools also took place in the first quarter of a century of the Third Polish Republic, when 10 such institutions were closed one after another and new initiatives, both secular and church, except for one (Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów), turned out to be nondurable. Thus, in 2016, apart from the activities undertaken by the Folk High Schools Association, there were only four such institutions in Poland (Maliszewski 2021a, pp. 183–196). Suddenly, a revival of the FHS movement in Poland began.

Professor Józef Pólturzycki and folk high schools in the Third Polish Republic

The examples of Germany, Great Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands seem natural to follow in order to organize modern folk high schools and those profiled according to the needs of socio-educational societies, creators' unions, cultural organizations, the folk movement, and the folklore so rich in our country. Sometimes they could also be forms of specialist professional education (Pólturzycki 1999, pp. 172–173).

In times of regression of the folk high schools movement in Poland, the Professor maintained his own interest in this type of institutions, encouraged others to explore this issue, and also made the columns of the “Andragogy Yearbook” widely available in order to create, in the academic field, conditions for the revival of this movement in our country.

The Professor's interest in folk high schools, expressed in his publications, was the result of a study visit to Sweden in the early 1980s, a direct effect of which was a series of publications on adult education in this country (1983, 1984) and a continued interest in this type of institutions for the following years.

In the publication *Adult education abroad* (1998), he broadened his interest in folk high schools in other countries, e.g. in Norway, Finland, the USA, and in Africa, placing them in the context of lifelong learning and highlighting their functions in the development of new forms of adult education, which was expressed, among other things, in his speech at the conference “Polish folk High schools – the End of Idea or a New Challenge?”, in which he presented a paper under the title “Formal Adult Education and Folk High Schools” (1999). In the analyses of organizational forms, curricula, and participants in folk high schools abroad, the Professor looked for inspiration for the reconstruction and development of Polish Folk High Schools.

In 2009, he returned to the issues of folk high schools in the monograph *Education in Sweden* and then, in the following year, in an essay on the changes of folk high schools as part of lifelong education (Pólturzycki 2010). At the same time, he crowned his accomplishments in the field of comparative andragogy with a two-volume publication co-edited with Anna Frąckowiak *Adult Education in Selected Countries* (2010), in which he himself referred to folk high schools, and encouraged other authors to ex-

plore this issue, so that academic activities and evidence would inspire educational authorities and activists to develop the movement of folk high schools in the Third Polish Republic.

Professor Józef Półturzycki promoted the interest in folk high schools among his associates and among his students. It was largely due to his inspiration that, beginning from the mid-1990s, doctoral students from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń would set off for folk high schools, often taking with them groups of students of the local department of educational studies.* He tried to propagate the FHS idea itself also among the young generation of Polish andragogues, recalling it many times during his own classes at the School of Young Andragogues, held regularly between 1999 and 2015, inspiring the organization of workshops for them in one of the few folk high schools in the country at that time, at the beginning of the 21st century.** Professor Półturzycki also had his share in the preparation of the concept of the Folk High Schools in Teremiski.***

As a long-term editor-in-chief of the “Andragogy Yearbook”), the Professor regularly, from the very beginning of this periodical of the Academic Andragogy Society, invited to its columns authoresses and authors writing about folk high schools.**** Thanks to his kindness, proceedings of one of the most important conferences devoted to FHS held in Poland in the 1990s (when no one else was interested in publishing them at that time) were also published in the journal.*****

It is impossible to list here all the smaller texts concerning folk high schools, which, over the course of nearly two decades of the Professor’s be-

* Cf. e.g. Solarczyk 1997/1998, pp. 244–247; Kławsiuć, Pogorzelska 2005, pp. 165–174. Study visits to the then existing branch of the Kashubian Folk High School in Starbienino were particularly popular (cf. Kwiatkowska 1997/1998, pp. 286–288; Kujawska 2001, pp. 236–238; Szymkiewicz, Szymkiewicz 2005, pp. 185–189).

** Cf. Maliszewski 2000, pp. 318–320; Skalska, Kamper 2001, pp. 233–235.

*** It operated under the name of Jan Józef Lipski Popular University, however, it turned out to be a short-lived initiative.

**** Cf. e.g. Turos 1994, pp. 178–180; Krzystek 1997/1998, pp. 208–211; Rosalska 2010, pp. 296–298; Maliszewski 2011, pp. 217–225.

***** The chapter under the title “Proceedings of the conference »Polish Folk High Schools – the End of Idea or a New Challenge« edited by T. Maliszewski, containing papers and voices in the discussion of, among others, Professors Wiesław Ciczkowski, Bronisław Gołębiowski, Piotr Kowalik, Józef Półturzycki himself, Jan Szczepański, and Maria Wieruszewska, several representatives of folk high schools and both authors of this sketch, was published as part three of the “Andragogy Yearbook” from 1999 (pp. 142–207).

ing in charge of the “Andragogy Yearbook” (1994–2012), appeared in the journal’s sections on the latest news, reports, or invitations, or in the section devoted to reviews. Let us note only that there were dozens of them.

It can, therefore, be assumed that it was also the periodical run by Professor Józef Półturzycki that played an important role in preserving in the social memory the knowledge about the opportunities offered to individual local communities by both the FHSs themselves and by other educational institutions that model their activities on the methodological assumptions developed there.

In retrospect, it can be concluded that the Professor’s effort to promote the idea of folk high schools and seek developmental inspirations for them abroad has brought results.

All-Polish Network of Folk High Schools

The establishment [...] of folk high schools societies is not without significance. Such wide support enhances the activity of specific institutions and develops them in accordance with the goals and ideas of contemporary adult education (Półturzycki 1998, p. 294).

Repeated attempts made in the Third Republic of Poland to appoint a joint representation of folk high schools did not yield any results for a long time (cf. e.g. Solarczyk 1999, p. 205). It was only on March 15, 2016, at the headquarters of the Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca, where, on the occasion of the conference on the future of FHSs in Poland held a day earlier at the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk representatives of several existing institutions met, that the Polish Network of Folk High Schools (APNFHS) was established. Initially, it was informal in its nature. Subsequent meetings at the Folk High School in Radawnica and at the Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów made it possible to formalize the PNFHS’s (Polish: OSUL) activity and to register the organization in court, which registration was obtained on March 7, 2018.

Formally, the Polish Network of Folk High Schools is a federation – a union of associations and foundations related to the activity of folk high schools. Its headquarters are currently located in Radawnica, where the oldest boarding folk high schools operating in Poland today is located. The President of the Management Board of the PNFHS is Jakub Mince-

wicz (Radawnica), and its members are Angelika Felska (West Pomeranian FU in Mierzyn) and Mariusz Mówka (Wieżyca) (Maliszewski 2021a, pp. 208–209). A member of the Federation may be an association, foundation, or another entity working within the folk high school formula, which will submit (1) a resolution on the wish to join the PNHS, the Statute, and recommendations from two members. In the period from January 1, 2021 to the end of June 2022, the number of institutional members of the Network doubled and during the days of the 1st All-Polish Folk High School Festival it had 14 entities (PNFHS 2022).

The slogan “Folk High School – School for Life”, which clearly refers to the 19th-century philosophy of education of Nikolaj Grundtvig, which gave rise to the Scandinavian Folk High Schools, constituting the prototype for Polish FHSs, became the motto of the federation (Byczkowski, Maliszewski, Przybylska 2003).

As the members themselves point out: “The Polish Network of Folk High Schools was established in order to develop the movement of folk high schools in Poland and to support the development of civil society. Moreover, it represents its members on the national forum [...] caring for their common good” (PNFHS 2022). It seems that the tasks indicated in the cited quotation have been fulfilled by the PNFHS for several years in a consistent and largely effective manner. Thanks to the joint representation, the milieu of Polish Folk High Schools began to be better “heard” by governmental and parliamentary circles as well as by local governments. This resulted in the taking of many initiatives to support individual FHS initiatives and, after several years of efforts, in the preparation of a national Folk High Schools Development Programme, which was launched in the autumn of 2020.

Folk High Schools Development Programme for the years 2020–2030

It is also important to include the principles and foundations of the work of these institutions in the Act on Adult Education, to support them by the state and numerous organizations [...] which educators, people of science, of culture, and of politics, as well as stakeholders and graduates take part in (Pólturzycki 1998, p. 294).

The desiderata put forward by Professor Pólturzycki began to be partially implemented only in the last two years, when folk high schools obtained support for their activity from public funds allocated to the implementation of the FHSs Development Programme (FHSDP) specially dedicated to them. This, in turn, caused a much greater interest in the programme, organizational, and methodological concepts of Polish FHSs by other organizational entities. Will the desideratum put forward by the Professor at the end of the 1990s, to “include the principles and foundations of work” of folk high schools in a separate act regulating the issues of adult education, be implemented? It is hard to judge today. It is worth remembering, however, that the support of FHSs using the funds allocated specially to them in the programme would also have been difficult to believe a few years ago.

As noted on the website of the National Institute of Freedom as the programme managing authority:

It is the first programme in Poland the main goal of which is to develop adult education in the form of Grundtvigian Folk High Schools. Financial support under the programme covers 4 priorities:

Priority 1 – Infrastructural and programme support for the operation of folk high schools that provide full-time courses using the boarding-school base or part-time courses.

Funds from the programme will be used for the development of non-governmental organizations and a more effective implementation of their statutory activity through, inter alia, improving the skills and qualifications of teachers, purchasing equipment and supplies, and improving management standards.

Priority 2 – Support for the establishment of new and the reactivation of previously existing folk high schools.

Grants are received by civic organizations planning to launch a new institution, conducting educational activity in accordance with the principles of Grundtvigian methodology, and organizations that intend to reactivate the activity of a previously existing folk high school.

Priority 3 – Support for the networks and agreements of folk high schools and dissemination of Grundtvigian education.

The support is dedicated to networks and federations of civic organizations operating within the formula of folk high schools.

Priority 4 – Support for the development of civic education and preservation of heritage in local communities.

Grants are given to local partnerships with the participation of folk high schools interested in the creation and development of an offer as part of civic education (NFI 2022).

As indicated by the National Freedom Institute, the Programme has been planned in the long term for the years 2020–2030. A total of PLN 100 million has been planned for its implementation, i.e. approximately PLN 9 million per year for the activities carried out within its framework. The FHSSP enjoys great popularity. As part of it, in 2020, applications for grants were submitted by 213 different entities, while in 2021, by 123. After their formal and content-related evaluation, support was granted to 28 applicant organizations in 2020 and another 16 in 2021, respectively (NFI 2022).

Under Priority 3, in 2020, a grant for its activities was also awarded to the Polish Network of Folk High Schools. As part of it, a number of institutional and methodological activities were undertaken to enhance the Network itself and its entities, as well as undertakings aimed at a wider dissemination in society of the idea and concept of educational work of folk high schools. One of them was the all-Polish festival of these institutions. The mission of coordinating this task as part of the PNFHS was entrusted to the Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca near Kościerzyna (PNFHS 2022).

1st All-Polish Folk High School Festival

[Folk high schools] are establishments strongly associated with contemporary life, its needs and achievements. They introduce and use modern technology, especially film, television, and computers in the process of organization and education. They are connected with the area of this activity in the form of evening courses, Saturday and Sunday classes, ad hoc forms of courses, occasional lectures, exhibitions, meetings, discussions, and they even organize tourist trips combined with the programme of classes [...] (Pólturzycki 1998, p. 293).

On July 28–29, 2022, the 1st All-Polish Folk High School Festival took place in Koszałkowo, Kashubia. organized by the Polish Network of Folk High Schools and the Kashubian Folk High School. It was the first event of this type in Poland, where folk high schools from all over the country had an opportunity to present their activity in one place. Wojciech Kaczmarczyk, the director of the National Freedom Institute, the institution man-

aging the Folk High Schools Development Programme and financing the described event, took part in the opening of the Festival. The main idea of the Festival was to combine education with artistic and handicraft activities, which is a characteristic feature of activities carried out in folk high schools.

In the music zone on the big stage, every day, from 4:00 p.m. till late evening, concerts of bands were held presenting the repertoire of traditional and folk songs (Duet of Traditional Songs from the Lubuski Folk High School, Begebenheit – parade dances, the Blue Country Choir associated with the Folk High School in Radawnica, Michalove, Drěszě) through klezmer music (The Sejny Theatre Klezmer Orchestra, the concept of which was created years ago at the branch of the Kashubian Folk High School in Starbienino), popular music, and jazz (Rambo Band Orchestra), to the strong sounds of rock music and singing (The Miond Seekres), to literally resonate the idea of the festival, the actual purpose of which was to popularize the ideas and activities of contemporary folk high schools.

In the “Ulowisko” tent, all the time during the festival, the Folk High School in Radawnica, the Kashubian Folk High School, the Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów, the Folk High School of Artistic Crafts in Wola Sękowa, the Folk High School in Złotów, the Lubuski Folk High School, the Folk High School in Adamów, and the West Pomeranian Folk High School were offering to adults and children, participation in numerous handicraft and educational workshops (including Kashubian embroidery, setting up gardens in a jar, painting on fabrics, creating plaster figures, making bead jewelry, weaving straw and wicker, Macramé, and knowledge about ecology).

In the chillout zone, simultaneous film screenings and debates were held with the participation of invited guests, including with: the creators of the film *Stories of This Land*, the president of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association Łukasz Grzędzicki, and the researcher of Kashubian folk wedding songs Sławomir Bronk.

During the Festival, a promotional stand of the Polish Network of Folk High Schools was also operating, where promotional materials and book publications prepared by the Network and individual folk high schools were made available. The organizers took care, not only of food for the spirit, but also for the body – providing a gastronomic area with local delicacies.

On the occasion of the festival, a meeting of representatives of FHSs forming the Polish Network of Folk High Schools was held at the headquarters of the Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca,* during which the latest activities were discussed and summarized, including the conference “Folk High Schools in the Face of Contemporary Challenges” in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, which took place on June 10, 2022 in Jacek Kuroń Hall under the honorary patronage of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Ms. Elżbieta Witek. Previous publications prepared as part of the “Folk High School Method” series were also discussed (reviewed in this volume of the “Andragogy Yearbook”), the publication of the next volume was discussed, and experiences from the implementation of the Folk High Schools Development Programme were shared.

The 1st All-Polish Folk High School Festival echoed in the regional media, left traces on the organizers’ websites, but most of all it was an enriching experience for its participants, many of whom had contact with institutions of this type for the first time. We believe that this initiative will be continued in the coming years to further spread the idea of folk high schools and to listen to the needs of new generations.

Conclusions

How loud and up-to-date sound today the comments made by Professor Józef Pólturzycki in the summary of his paper prepared for the conference “Folk High Schools – the End of Idea or a New Challenge” (Starbienino, October 9–12, 1997), in the context of the renewal of the Polish movement of folk high schools, which we have observed in recent years. He wrote then:

1. These transformations have disseminated and developed the work of the folk high schools.
2. The circle of participants has also widened, and [now] other social and professional groups are taking part in the work of the folk high school.

* Aside from the main thread of considerations, let us add that the 40th anniversary of the Kashubian Folk High School was inaugurated during the Festival, addressing to its founder and long-time director Mr. Marek Byczkowski and to the current President of the Management Board of the Kashubian Folk High School Foundation Mr Mariusz Mówka, words of appreciation and wishes for further success.

3. The curriculum profile has also changed [and there are opportunities for further development in programming the content of education.
4. One thing, however, remains permanent in the work of the folk high school, i.e. serving the participant in his or her further development, helping to improve oneself and cooperate with others, emphasizing educational, moral, national, or regional values.
5. It is taking place in the age of telecommunications and computerization, in the age of [...] the explosion of mass culture and entertainment.
6. Organizers of educational activities take into account these changes and find more and more opportunities for the work of folk high schools (Pólturzycki 1999, pp. 169–170).

Today, years later, summing up this sketch devoted to the revival of Polish Folk High Schools as a result of the launch of the Folk High Schools Development Programme (2020) and the establishment of the Polish Network of Folk High Schools (2016), we could draw similar conclusions. We were also confirmed in our opinion by the talks and observations made in the summer of 2022 during the 1st All-Polish Festival of Folk High Schools in Kashubia, which we took part in.

In conclusion, it is worth quoting one more far-sighted remark of the Professor, referring to the methodology of work of contemporary folk high schools:

These establishments would have to become [...] institutions of modern education, with multimedia possibilities, with the use of computer techniques, and especially with access to the Internet. As valuable examples of tradition, they may include, on an ad hoc basis, earlier forms of education and facilitation techniques, but one cannot limit oneself completely to them, because this reduces the modern institution to the role of an educational museum worth visiting, but completely unsuitable for independent educational activities (Pólturzycki 1999, p. 173).

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