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Bureaucratization and Ideologization in Polish Schools – the Results of Author’s Own Research

ABSTRACT

The issues raised in the article revolve around the environment, current trends and problems in education that shape the reality of the Polish school. Based on the available literature, the author tries to present the problems of bureaucratization and ideologization in Polish schools. In the article, the author formulated two theses, with the first being as follows: Education in Polish schools at the basic level carries the hallmarks of ideologization. The second thesis: The excessive formalization and bureaucratization of the school paralyzes the healthy dynamics of education inherent in the school community of students and teachers. This article is of a research character with the semi-structured intelligence technique used in the qualitative research. The study involved an in-depth interview questionnaire with eight teachers from elementary school, level 4-6, from the province of Silesia. The purpose of the research was to explore the phenomena of bureaucratization and ideologization at school. The most important conclusions were the following: (a) paradoxically, bureaucratization at school can bring positive results in the situation when the principal and teachers have to deal with the claims of parents; (b) the practical over-emphasizing of legal provisions and bureaucratic solutions at the expense of common sense and the principles of unwritten good manners may intensify the attitude of withdrawal and

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resignation from upbringing in teachers; (c) there is a strong ideological pressure on schools, because the real possibilities of the school are not taken into account – what counts is blind obedience to propaganda and ideology that promotes the idea of tolerance as a superior value; (d) according to the respondents, the content contained in the textbooks addresses the real problems of children (acceptance of the disabled, tolerance towards people with a different culture); (e) respondents do not see any open contradictions between the achievements of particular sciences, e. g. psychology or pedagogy, and the content promoted in textbooks; (f) an important place in the school's life from the point of view of multiculturalism is occupied by activities and habits that prove that the institution is sensitive to the affairs of students of other religions and cultures.

Introduction

Since 1989, Polish society, as well as the Polish school, has been in a permanent crisis. Frequent schooling reforms, often criticised by the experts, staying at the level of didactics at the cost of upbringing, competitiveness and aiming at increasing the effectiveness of education, axiological crisis of the society – all of those factors result in the fact that Polish school is ineffective and unable to bring up the youth. Some trends in the European, but also in the Polish society, want to impose a certain ideological terrorism on us ¹. In terms of upbringing and schooling, there is a discrepancy between upbringing and the vision of a person². Also, some environments, especially liberal ones, are not willing to explore the topic of education from the philosophical and existential/religious point of view³. The postulates on the so-called “neutral worldview” have been raised in the pedagogical environment for several years. The researchers have noticed that such

¹ G. Mucci, *I cattolici nelle temperie del relativismo*, Milano 2005, p. 62.

² On the combination of the two dimensions – see V. Possenti, *L'uomo postmoderno*, Milano 2009, p. 108.

³ Empirical sciences (psychology, sociology, etc.) are not able to provide the bases that would indicate the objectives of upbringing. Such objectives can be found while considering human existence from the philosophical and religious point of view. The former provides information on human nature, while the latter indicates the man's existential situation and his destiny. Cf. V. Possenti, *L'uomo postmoderno*, op. cit., p. 111.

“neutral worldview” is more and more frequently promoted in the context of schooling, which means that the school is threatened with indoctrination. For example, instead of promoting the most important authors of Polish literature, texts written by homosexuals are chosen as books to be obligatorily read by the students. The books are not chosen because their content is valuable, but because they promote tolerance for homosexuals, as a result of which the criteria of selecting the texts and the new objectives of upbringing and education seem doubtful. At present, a lot of pedagogues analyse numerous diseases of the Polish educational system (harmful influence of ideology, bureaucratization of education, etc.)⁴.

This article is of research nature. In the first part, the author discusses the environment, current trends and pains of the educational system that shape the school reality. The above mentioned considerations made it possible for the author to formulate two theses that – due to her own research – shall be subject to verification. The first one is: elementary education in the Polish school is marked by ideologization. The second thesis is: excessive formalisation and bureaucratization of the school paralyzes healthy educational dynamisms of the student community and the teachers.

In the quality research, the technique of semi-structured interview was used. The participants of the interview included teachers of classes 4 – 6 of a primary school from the Silesian voivodeship.

The phenomenon of bureaucratization and ideologization in the school space

For centuries, education has been an important element of social control. Ideologists, rulers and bureaucrats have used this potential in a more or less intensive manner, treating education as the opportunity to make some social groups or individuals obedient to them.

This phenomenon becomes the starting point for the reflection on the role of bureaucrats and ideologists in shaping the school reality in Poland. The authors regret that educational systems in modern

⁴ It is worth to mention the 13th International Scientific Conference: “EDUCATION of the 21st CENTURY. Diseases of the 21st-century Education. Ideology, Politics, Bureaucracy”, organised in October 2015 in Szczyrk.

countries are secularized and undergo more and more serious experiments in terms of teaching and upbringing. The influence of different kinds of ideologies is noticeable at schools, as realistic thinking is replaced with idealism (only what is created in our mind is real)⁵.

Bureaucratization, in the common perception, means excessive formalization and centralization of the system (French: *bureau* – office, and Greek: *kratos* – power). In the context of the school, it may mean excessive emphasis on the procedures and regulations in each aspect of the school reality. The authors have noticed that the contemporary Polish educational system is hyper-administrative, bureaucratized, and reducing pedagogical freedom of different school organs⁶. Heartless regulations and complicated procedures result in the fact that the life of each school is subject to a bureaucratic system created by the officers of the ministerial level⁷. J. Pająk says that the dominant role in educational issues is played by the central level which is responsible for creating educational law⁸.

Bureaucratization facilitates “producing” rules and procedures, but, at the same time, it protects the officer against the responsibility for the decisions he makes. The media also often discuss the problem of the bureaucratization of schools. Because of the fact that it is quite a “risky” issue, many teachers refer to it in an anonymous manner⁹. Also, a lot of journalists of popular newspapers discuss this

⁵ A. Górecki, *Edukacja (deprawacja) seksualna przejawem ideologizacji szkoły*, in: <http://christianitas.org/news/edukacja-deprawacja-seksualna-przejawem-ideologizacji-szkoly/> [access: 08.11.2015].

⁶ Cf. B. Śliwerski, *Pozory sprawstwa reform oświatowych w III RP*, in: *Sprawcy i/lub ofiary działań pozornych w edukacji szkolnej*, ed. M. Dudzikowa, K. Knaściecka-Falbińska, Kraków 2013, p. 105.

⁷ See article by Z. Rykiel, who speaks about the ideologization and bureaucratization of higher education, but – in my opinion – educational problems are common to all levels of education, so some of his remarks concerning universities also refer to elementary schooling. See Z. Rykiel, *Szaleństwo czy metoda? Modernizacja przez biurokratyzację i prekaryzację*, in: <http://socialspacejournal.eu/8%20numer/Zbigniew%20Rykiel%20-%20Szale%C5%84stwo%20czy%20metoda.pdf> [access: 04.11.2015].

⁸ J. Pająk, *Kultura organizacyjna w oświacie. Teoria – praktyka – stymulacja*, Katowice 1996, pp. 30–32.

⁹ Anonymous author, *Biurokracja zabija szkołę*, in: http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,128598,12659823,Biurokracja_zabija_szkole.html?disableRedirects=true [access: 04.11.2015].

situation¹⁰. Sometimes, the media are trying to work out different solutions to this problem¹¹. Some teachers suggest that the school should be more autonomic and the system of education management should be decentralised. They also believe that changes should be implemented in the management of school finances and organisation. They recommend the necessity to make a list of truly useful documents and issue a proper act specifying that list, so that the officers stop producing unjustified requirements related to the preparation of papers¹². Right-wing politicians do not want to develop further bureaucratization of schools. Also, they believe that a primary school teacher should spend a lot of time with his/her students, learning about their talents, problems, needs, and providing the parents with the guidelines for common actions¹³. The researchers have noticed that, due to educational centralism, restructuring hyperactivity, as well as hyper-legalism, the actions of the school are too bureaucratic, and the school has no meaningful purpose to fulfil¹⁴. In his internet blog, B. Śliwerski often makes his readers sensitive to the problem of bureaucratization and centralization which destroy the Polish school. He quotes the authors who emphasize the phenomenon of implementing bureaucratic power into different aspects of schooling, as a result of which the value of the subjectivity of teachers, students and principals is destroyed¹⁵.

¹⁰ A. Grabek, *Szkola przesiąknięta biurokracją*, in: http://praca.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/550588,szkola_przesiaknieta_biurokracja.html [access: 4.11.2015].

¹¹ Z. Magdziak, *Mniej biurokracji w szkole*, in: <http://www4.rp.pl/artykul/945624-Mniej-biurokracji-w-szkole.html> [access: 04.11.2015]. See also J. P. Sawiński, *Jak ujarzmić (eliminować) szkolną biurokrację?* in: <http://www.edunews.pl/badania-i-debaty/opinie/1745-jak-ujarzmic-eliminowac-szkolna-biurokracje> [access: 04.11.2015].

¹² *Absurdy biurokratyczne w oświacie*, in: <http://www.warszawskieforumoswiatowe.pl/index.php?site=hsite&cid=17> [access: 04.11.2015].

¹³ The utterance of B. Nowak in the interview for P. Ogórek, *PIS: zdemolowano cały system nauczania*, in: <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/krakow/pis-zdemolowano-caly-system-nauczania/p4dhnf> [access: 04.11.2015].

¹⁴ See more in: M. Dąbrowska-Bąk, K. Pawelek, *Opresja w szkole*, Warszawa 2014.

¹⁵ B. Śliwerski, *Na horyzoncie wyborów do Sejmu – MEN-ska polityka błędów: arogancji, ignorancji, centralizmu i biurokratyzacji*, in: <http://sliwerski-pedagog.blogspot.com/2015/07/na-horyzoncie-wyborow-do-sejmu-men-ska.html> [access: 12.03.2019].

Another phenomenon that can be noticed in Poland is the aspect of the ideologization of social space. Everyone openly speaks about the ideologization of the Polish science¹⁶. P. Jaroszyński rightly says that even if we cannot directly ideologize mathematical-physical sciences, we can manipulate them through interfering with their assumptions or methods, as a result of which we can extrapolate some statements or include them into numerous educational projects at the cost of humanistic sciences. Also, there is a risk that natural sciences shall be subject to purely biological vision of the man (see Marxist materialism)¹⁷. The authors have noticed that ideologies are usually constructed in opposition to the religion, especially to Christianity. In an ideologized society, everything is to be controlled by the administration and political power. What we are talking about is family, school, religion, culture, media and broadly understood education¹⁸. At present, various schooling concepts may be noticed, which are oriented at a particular philosophy or ideology (e. g. the school's Marxist concept, the lay approach, anti-pedagogical approach, radical-emanicipation concept, technological concept, or the concept of the "Waldorf school")¹⁹. According to M. Nowak, "most of those concepts, being based on the adopted ideology, do not match the reality in ignoring the student and the teacher or reducing their role to, e. g. an officer who fulfils the objectives of a given ideology through the construction of an illusory reality that seems to be offered by the ideology. Developmental or environmental conditions are unimportant – what counts are those conditions that match the criteria of the adopted ideology"²⁰. The contemporary Europe is truly involved in shaping the new generation, which means that there is a discussion

¹⁶ See M. Kowalski, *Nobilitowanie ideologii społecznych przy pomocy nauki (ideologizowanie nauki) – analizy i refleksje*, "Rocznik Lubuski" 2012, vol. 38, part 2, pp. 191–199.

¹⁷ See P. Jaroszyński, *Człowiek i nauka*, Lublin 2008, pp. 242–283.

¹⁸ J.M. Jackowski, *Szkola nadal w okowach ideologii*, in: <http://www.radiomaryja.pl/bez-kategorii/szkola-nadal-w-okowach-ideologii/> [access: 04.11.2015].

¹⁹ See M. Nowak, *Koncepcja szkoły i jej zadania we współczesnej myśli pedagogicznej*, in: *Szkola – Nauczyciel – Uczeń*, ed. T. Kukołowicz, Stalowa Wola 1992, pp. 5–22.

²⁰ See *ibidem*, pp. 18–21.

on what values should be promoted among young people²¹. At the same time, it is emphasized that the basis of education and upbringing is the concept of the person and their actions²². Although the Polish Constitution says that the Republic of Poland is a “democratic state of the law” which warrants its citizens objectivity in religious and worldview issues, at present we can see that different options are in conflict – especially the Christian and the liberal, post-modern one. B. Śliwerski believes that post-modernism rejects searching for an optimum way of upbringing. In the post-modern pedagogy there are no authorities and no requests to practice obedience, follow norms or act according to the models. The category that dominates in a post-modern society is voluntariness. In this perspective, according to the author, such notions as “parents’ rights”, “the child’s good”, “socialization”, or “needs”, seem doubtful and uncertain²³.

Education is the force that influences reconstruction of the reality, so those who rule do everything to interfere with it²⁴. An ideology, which is often related to an influential political fraction, is adjusted to various models of upbringing, strategies of teaching and tools of exerting influence. The process of increasing bureaucratization and ideologization in the Polish school could be noticed after the II World War²⁵. Also, within the last few years, the authors are worried about the ideologization of the Polish school²⁶. An important element of the influence exerted on the children and youth is the proper selection of the books to be read by all the students. Z. A. Kłakówna

²¹ V. Possenti, *L'uomo postmoderno*, op. cit., p. 106.

²² M. Nowak, *Filozofia człowieka podstarwą filozofii wychowania*, in: *Wychowanie personalistyczne, Wybór tekstów*, ed. F. Adamski, Kraków 2005, pp. 133–153. See: the discrepancy between the lack of upbringing concept and educational difficulties at school: A. Kącki, *Niemoc wychowania w szkole jako następstwo braku koncepcji wychowania, czyli o autarkii i acedii postmodernistycznej pedagogiki*, in: *Wychowanie w szkole: od bezradności ku możliwościom*, ed. R. Chałupniak, T. Michalewski, E. Smak, Opole 2014, pp. 81–86.

²³ See B. Śliwerski, *Nauki o wychowaniu wobec wyzwań postmodernizmu*, “Chowania” 2003, vol. 1 (20), p. 11.

²⁴ M. Ślusarczyk, *Spy o edukację wczoraj i dziś*, Kraków 2010, p. 17.

²⁵ See, inter alia, in: C. Banach, *Polska szkoła i system edukacji – przemiany i perspektywy*, Toruń 1999.

²⁶ J. M. Jackowski, *Szkoła nadal w okowach ideologii*, op. cit.; D. Zalewski, *Absurdy liberalnej szkoły*, in: <http://cywilizacja.ien.pl/?id=504> [access: 12.11.2015].

notices that there are many educational problems related to the fact that such literature is not chosen properly. First of all, the author emphasizes the fact that, while choosing the books, ministerial officers do not take into account the current psychological knowledge of the students. Also, the arbitrary appointment of books facilitates the ideologization of teaching and an instrumental treatment of a given book²⁷. The most visible field of ideological conflict at school includes the children's sexual education. Internet portals are full of fierce discussions on this topic²⁸. According to the authors, the Polish school, especially the primary school, has a good core curriculum as for the subject: Education for Living in a Family. However, the core curriculum is quite a general document, and the discussed dangerous situations, especially those which involve promoting the gender ideology, may appear in auxiliary materials that are offered by non-government organizations that support moral libertinism (for example: the project of the Nowoczesna Edukacja [Modern Education] Foundation SPUNK from Łódź, connected with the foundation "Jaskółka" which carried out sexual education workshops at schools, as well as the project "Równościowe Przedszkole [Kindergarten of Equality]"). The researchers warn us against such humanism that is "honest" and "neutral" for all worldviews and ideologies. The truth is that each author (Kafka, Gombrowicz, Goethe, Kierkegaard, and others), presents a specific vision of a human being – whether materialistic, atheistic or a nihilist one – and such a vision may become a tool of propaganda in the hands of the teacher when he/she is using the texts of the authors who support extreme ideologies²⁹.

²⁷ See Z. A. Kłakówna, *Opinia na temat listy lektur z języka polskiego w szkole podstawowej z widokiem na gimnazjum i liceum. Klasy I–III (I etap edukacyjny) oraz klasy IV–VI (drugi etap edukacyjny)*, "Horyzonty Polonistyki" 2008, no. 1, pp. 8–11.

²⁸ *Zagłada tożsamości w ideologii gender*, in: <https://prawdaxlpl.wordpress.com/2013/04/21/> [access: 09.11.2015]. See also: M. Nowak, *Edukacja daleka od chrześcijaństwa*, in: <http://www.fronda.pl/a/edukacja-daleka-od-chrzescijanstwa,31291.html> [access: 10.11.2015].

²⁹ See A. Posacki, *Szkola łatwych pocieszeń czy dogmatyzacja fałszywych dylematów?*, in: <http://www.radiomaryja.pl/bez-kategorii/szkola-latwych-pocieszen-czy-dogmatyzacja-falszywych-dylematow/> [access: 10.11.2015].

At present, in our social space, there is a fierce discussion on genderism³⁰. A. Oakley made a distinction that is fundamental for the development of studies on masculinity and femininity – she distinguished biological “sex” and cultural “gender”. The former refers to anatomic and biological differences between the sexes, and it cannot be changed. The latter – gender refers to psychological, social and cultural differences which change depending on the social context³¹. Within the last two decades, the idea of gender has been strongly promoted in Europe. It is worth mentioning that a similar concept appeared in the 70s of the previous century among the existentialists, such as Simone de Beauvoir³². The signs of the gender ideology are more and more frequently noticeable in the Polish schools³³. According to the opinion that prevails in the Christian, right-wing discourse, the gender ideology contradicts the Christian concept of a person, male and female identity, as well as the perception of human sexuality³⁴. The representatives of feminist ideologies are focusing their efforts not only on the equality of sexes, but also on sexual

³⁰ See the subject of the International Conference organised at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in March 2015: *Gender – spojrzenie krytyczne [Gender – Critical Approach]*. Gabriele Kuby is an important representative of foreign authors who criticise the gender ideology. See: G. Kuby, *Revolucja genderowa. Nowa ideologia seksualności*, Kraków 2007.

³¹ A. Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, London 1972, pp. 130–134. See A. Giddens, *Socjologia*, trans. O. Siara and others, Warszawa 2012, pp. 601–604.

³² S. de Beauvoir, *Druga płeć*, trans. G. Mycielska, Kraków 1972, pp. 77–80.

³³ The participation of the representatives of the Ministry of National Education in the conference of 2013 dedicated to the presentation of the “Standards of Sexual Education in Europe” is one of such symptoms. The guidelines for the teachers included teaching children such behaviours as masturbation, sexual techniques, petting, playing with one’s own body. Also, the standards assume that children should know the idea of “acceptable sex” or – with regard to 12-year-olds – they should be able to “communicate in order to have pleasant sex”. See A. Górecki, *Edukacja (deprawacja), seksualna przejawem ideologizacji szkoły*, op. cit. Similar problems of the school with the gender ideology may be noticed in other countries. See G. Amato, *Gender (d)Instruzione. Le nuove forme d’indottrinamento nelle scuole italiane*, Verona 2015.

³⁴ See A. Zellma, *Współczesny katecheta – między chrześcijańskim powołaniem i misją a ideą gender*, in: *Idea gender jako wyzwanie dla teologii*, ed. A. Jucewicz, M. Machinek, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 173–185.

education³⁵. Their vision of a person is criticized because it is based on the ideology that contradicts both the tradition and scientific facts, especially those related to natural sciences³⁶. Also, Catholic and right-wing environments specify the gender ideology as the rebellion of an emancipated man against the traditional world. The above mentioned ideology is destructive for the person because it destroys interpersonal relations, as a result of which the whole social life becomes degenerated³⁷. From the perspective of gender, the role to be played in the society is a cultural construct and not an objective fact. According to D. Zalewski, it is based on a Marxist phraseology in which “the conflict of sexes” or the “conflict of generations” becomes the extension of Lenin’s “conflict of classes”³⁸. The authors warn us against the situation in which the teacher, instead of being a master who teaches civil virtues and transmits knowledge in a reliable manner, is reduced to being a thoughtless officer of a given ideology³⁹.

An integral part of the process of ideologization is promoting the so-called worldview neutrality of the school. Many authors believe that the school should be politically and ideologically neutral, ad that

³⁵ See the rejected project of the act concerning this issue, that was discussed in the Parliament. Parliament print 1298 (VII term of office of the Polish parliament). The project was rejected at the sitting no. 66 on 24th April 2014. The fact that the gender ideology is trying to get to Italian schools is signaled by the lawyer E. Frezza in her text *Mala Scuola – “Gender”, affettività, emozioni: il sistema “educativo” per abolire la ragione e manipolare i nostri figli* (trans. of the author: *Bad School – “Gender”, Affectiveness, Emotions: “Educational” System for Removing Reason and Manipulating our Children*), Rome 2017.

³⁶ See A. Wielomski, *Genderyzm czyli szaleństwo importowane z zachodniego śmietnika ideologii*, in: <http://nczas.com/publicystyka/genderyzm-czyli-szalenstwo-importowane-z-zachodniego-smietnika-ideologii/> [access: 10.11.2015].

³⁷ *Abp Hoser: Gender to wielkie kłamstwo*, in: <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,137914,title,Abp-Hoser-gender-to-wielkie-klamstwo,wid,16289558,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=115ead> [access: 10.11.2015].

³⁸ Cf. D. Zalewski, *Antypedagogika i inne herezje*, in: http://www.psychologia.net.pl/e-booki/Dariusz_Zalewski-Antypedagogika_i_inne_herezje.pdf [access: 12.11.2015].

³⁹ See K. Warecki, *Nauczyciel jako funkcjonariusz ideologii*, in: <http://gosc.pl/doc/2197730.Nauczyciel-jako-funkcjonariusz-ideologii/2> [access: 10.11.2015].

it should be open and willing to promote values and ideals.⁴⁰ The idea that upbringing and education are of philosophical nature, connected with the philosophical approach and vision of the man adopted in the school, has been questioned and marginalized. It results in the willingness to create the school and system of upbringing based on the so-called worldview neutrality⁴¹. However, such idea is of utopian nature, because, in practice, each method of upbringing is based on a certain vision of the man whom the method wants to shape and bring up⁴².

M. Dobrowolski emphasizes that the Polish constitution does not include the expression “worldview neutrality”. Instead, he notices the sentence saying about religious and worldview objectivity of the public and national authorities (Constitution of the Republic of Poland, art. 25, item 2). Thus, the author underlines that the organs of national administration are obliged to be objective to the worldview of the parents, teachers and children, so they must not impose their worldview on them⁴³. Also, the hierarchs of the Catholic Church, in the person of Archbishop S. Gądecki, believe that such neutrality seems convincing, but is actually impossible⁴⁴. B. Milerski’s opinion on the school’s neutral worldview is much more critical, but the author does not exclude forms of individual confirmation of axiological beliefs by teachers and students, because – as he says – such confirmation of

⁴⁰ J. Galant, *Czy szkoła może być neutralna światopoglądowo?*, “Nowa Szkoła” 1997, no. 5, p. 14.

⁴¹ Cf. the opinion of the former minister of education J. Kluzik-Rostkowska, who believes that the Polish school needs neutral worldview. See *Joanna-Kluzik-Rostkowska: szkoła publiczna powinna być neutralna światopoglądowo*, in: <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1342,title,Joanna-Kluzik-Rostkowska-szkola-publiczna-powinna-byc-neutralna-swiatopogladowo,wid,16784101,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=115ee0> [access: 12.11.2015].

⁴² B. Stańkowski, *Meanders of Upbringing and Worldview Neutrality*, in: *Rolul Europei într-o societate polarizată. Conferința internațională de drept, studii europene și relații internaționale*, București, 9–10 mai 2014, pp. 830–845.

⁴³ Cf. M. Pabis, *Neutralna, czyli ateistyczna*, in: <http://www.naszdziennik.pl/polska-kraj/88411,neutralna-czyli-ateistyczna.html> [access: 12.11.2015].

⁴⁴ See M. Wilgocki, *Arcybiskup Gądecki do minister edukacji: Neutralność światopoglądowa? Niemożliwa do spełnienia*, in: http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,16409224,Arcybiskup_Gadecki_do_minister_edukacji__Neutralnosc.html?disableRedirects=true [access: 12.11.2015].

ideas is typical of the teacher-student relation⁴⁵. Finally, it should be emphasized that the Polish model of neutrality is specified as “open neutrality”, which means that the state treats all people equally, irrespective of their convictions or religion. According to art. 23, para. 2 of the Polish Constitution, neutrality means that public authority cannot be indifferent to human dignity and rights⁴⁶.

Methodological aspects of the author’s own research

The author of the research wanted to explore the phenomenon of bureaucratization and ideologization at school. A questionnaire of an in-depth interview was used for the research which included 8 interviews with primary school teachers teaching in classes 4-6 in the Silesian voivodeship⁴⁷.

The technique of an in-depth interview was used to carry out the qualitative research. The researcher could talk to the respondent “face to face”. The above mentioned technique made it possible for the author to obtain detailed opinions and information on the way the school functions, and on the interpersonal relations in the institution. Another advantage of the technique is the opportunity to explain the mechanisms and nature of the analysed phenomena, which would be difficult to achieve through other techniques. The lack of a negative influence on the respondent by the group, controversial issues discussed during the interview, as well as the necessity to maintain intimacy in obtaining the information, are the factors that determined the selection of the criteria of research techniques. While choosing the teachers for the interviews, their work experience was taken into account, as well as the kinds of subjects they teach. The average time of each interview was at least 1 hour. In some cases it took more time, but neither of them was longer than 1.5 hours. A semi-structured interview was applied in the research. Its advantage was the fact that the

⁴⁵ See B. Milerski, *Edukacja religijna w szkole neutralnej światopoglądowo*, in: <http://ekumenia.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Edukacja-religijna-w-szkole-neutralnej-swiatopogladowo-B.Milerski.pdf> [access: 12.11.2015].

⁴⁶ J. Krukowski, *Kościół i państwo, podstawy relacji prawnych*, Lublin 2000, p 282.

⁴⁷ Due to the controversial subject of the research, the researcher was asked to maintain the anonymity of the respondents and not to disclose the place in which the research was carried out.

list of questions established by the researcher was used, but new questions were also generated, depending on the course of the talk. Thus, the outlined scenario of the interview was modified, which made it possible for the respondent to freely discuss the issues that required additional questions that extended the subject. The atmosphere created by the researcher facilitated mutual trust and the teachers' opening to sensitive, yet urgent problems of the school, which was reflected in an honest expression of individual opinions related to the details of the school reality in terms of bureaucratization and ideologization.

The analysis of the research results.

Interpersonal relations in the school space

According to the teachers, parents too often interfere with the relation: child-child/peer. The respondents believe that conflicts among the children result from the lack of "playground life" of students themselves. The fact that children have no relations with their friends after school makes it impossible for them to create strong interpersonal relations with their classmates. Such situation creates numerous conflicts among the children. "Parents forget that small conflicts among the peers are solved by the children themselves, as the students often reach an agreement after a few minutes" (a woman aged 52). Ignoring this reality results in the introduction of new bureaucratic procedures by the directors who are constantly forced to implement formal corrections related to the new situations among the children, parents and the school. Interestingly, discipline problems mainly refer to the only children (*nota bene* – in one of the classes, 10 out of 24 students are the only children). The teachers believe that it is more difficult for the only children to cooperate with others, and that such children often feel offended and fail to solve conflicts in a peaceful manner. One of the respondents notices that some parents are pretentious and convinced that their children are constantly hurt after they had been given a bad mark. Other teachers emphasize that the parents trust their children more than they trust the form teacher, which is a much worse practice. This way, the teacher loses his/her authority in the eyes of the child because of the parent's behaviour.

The respondents are worried by the fact that the inspector “believes the parents’ words, while the teachers and principals always have to submit papers to prove something” (a woman, 47). If there is a problem with a student, the inspector believes the parents and students in a “limitless” manner, he/she listens to their descriptions even if they are general, and he/she does not want to talk to any witnesses of a given incident. And if a teacher presents his/her version of the same case, his/her words have no “power” and the inspector does not really believe them, asking the teacher to “submit some documents or other proofs” (a woman, 51).

Bureaucratization in the school space

On the basis of the respondents’ utterances, it is easy to notice that the problem of bureaucratization at school is overwhelming. Nearly all the aspects of the school life are subject to the principles of bureaucratization. Here are some of its examples: a) the parents are obliged to confirm each smallest initiative or event with their signatures; b) for each event or trip, the teacher has to create a new set of regulations, separate for each educational level, i. e. a different set for classes 1-3, and another one for classes 4-6; c) the principals create the procedures for watching the students during the breaks. According to the teachers, the above mentioned procedures were created due to absurd resolutions of the principals concerning the presence of teachers among the students during the breaks (e. g. a given teacher has to finish the lesson at a given time, let the kids out of the classroom, close the classroom, take the didactic aids back to the teachers’ room and – at exactly the same time – start watching the children on the highest floor of the building); d) the prohibition of eating meals by the teachers at school.

The problem of bureaucratization also refers to the evaluation of the school. The respondents believe that the evaluation of the school includes additional bureaucratization, requires a lot of work from the teachers and does not result in the obtainment of the actual image of the school as for the quality of work. “It is impossible to fulfil all the requirements; there is always something we fail to do. It is so burdensome to describe everything, analyse all the documents, surveys, talks, etc.” (a woman, 45). The replies of the teachers suggest that – despite

the courses they completed – the teachers do not feel fully prepared to carry out the qualitative survey of the interview or surveys in order to evaluate the upbringing and teaching procedures at school.

Teachers, who are overloaded with work, often activate their defense mechanisms and use ready-made documents available in the internet. What is worse, some form teachers, in order to match the officers' requirements and avoid the necessity to implement a corrective system, adjust the obtained results to those established by the ministry as the expected ones. "I do not want to be harassed by the superiors or educational authorities, so I cheat and, this way, I get rid of the problem" (a man, 38).

The relation: parent-school-teacher lacks mutual trust. The teachers are required to create new reports from their meetings with the parents every time the student's bad behaviour is involved. On the other hand, the parents are asked to submit a written complaint about the teacher if there are circumstances that justify such a complaint. Most parents do not want to participate in such a "dialogue" with the school. However, the parents often accuse the teachers of non-adjustment of the guidelines of pedagogical counselling centres to the level of the student's intellectual abilities and behaviour. Nevertheless, the respondents agree that such practices hinder the creation of the atmosphere that facilitates building the educational community.

The last sign of the bureaucratization of schools is the teacher's obligation to document the way he/she works with a talented student and with a difficult student – the one who has problems both with the behaviour and studying. The teachers admit that they are burdened with a lot of extra work (consulting the parents, collecting written permissions, cooperating with the pedagogue or school psychologist, etc.). In the school practice, the obligations of the pedagogue and psychologist are often transferred to the form teachers who, in turn, feel incompetent to effectively work with a difficult student.

Rigid, frequently changed regulations, incomplete regulations and fear of the superior

Frequent changes and modifications introduced into the school regulations are one of the school's pains. Constant addition of procedures to the set of regulations creates chaos in exercising its provisions.

Some respondents mentioned that the excessive emphasis on the regulations and incompleteness of the assessment instructions may paralyse fair evaluation of the student's school achievements⁴⁸.

A similar situation refers to the students' behaviour. The following factors are taken into account as for its assessment: a) good manners; b) the approach to school obligations; c) discipline. The mark is established on the basis of the arithmetic mean. The teachers indicate that a student with a very bad approach to school obligations or discipline may be given a good mark for behaviour, because it is calculated on the basis of the arithmetic mean.

Forcing the teachers to increase the grade for behaviour or other grades by the principal is very frequent. "We yield to the pressure of our superiors. Perhaps the headmaster is afraid that his school may lose its reputation because of bad marks" (a woman, 50). While listening to the teachers' utterances, we may get the impression that the teachers are against such practices, but they follow the superior's commands as they are under pressure. Nevertheless, they are aware of the fact that they do something wrong - something against their beliefs. "I yield to the principal's pressure because I do not want to be disobedient. I know that young teachers may be somehow punished for such disobedience" (a man, 35). Other talks suggest that if a teacher is disobedient, after his temporary employment agreement expires, the headmaster may not sign the permanent contract.

Also, educational authorities tell the teachers to document both good and bad behaviours of the students. The teachers are to make a detailed register of various incidents in which the students were involved - they even have to quote the students' utterances, including vulgar words. The respondents believe it is a good element, even if the situations described in the class register sound funny and include vulgar words.

⁴⁸ Sometimes the students get the mark 3 (in the scale in which 1 is the worst mark - failed, and 6 is the highest grade - excellent) for the first semester, and 1 for the second semester. In this situation, the teacher is obliged to give them 2 at the end of the school year. Thus, it seems that in the second semester the student can do nothing, and he/she shall get a positive mark at the end, anyway. It results from the lack of proper regulations saying that the students should obtain a positive mark for both semesters.

The teachers complain about the fact that they have no tools to teach the children good manners (proper clothes, neat appearance, polite words while talking to another person). They say it is more and more difficult to be a “mother” or a “father” to the children, on the basis of what their heart, consciousness or common sense says.

The signs of the ideologization of the school space

According to the respondents, the ideologization of schools is not a phenomenon that would permeate all the aspects of school life. The teachers notice certain symptoms showing that an ideology or propaganda does not take into account the real abilities of the school. One of the examples is the approach to the issues related to the European Union. “The topics related to the creation of the EU are discussed, new festivals, such as the European Union Day, are celebrated at school, and – at the same time – the handbooks do not offer a critical approach to the problems generated by the co-existence of all the EU members” (a woman, 51). The religious upbringing is reduced to the religion lessons only, and important events, such as the commemoration of a religious patron of the school, are neglected. The directors of many schools are reluctant to take into account the religious issues, which is reflected in the fact that some of them offer two options of commemorating the school’s patron – through obligatory celebrations at school and voluntary celebrations in the church. However, according to the teachers, the school meets the needs of the children who represent other religions and cultures. The children are not forced to take part in celebrations related to a particular religion. While discussing customs and traditions of a particular religion, e. g. Christmas, the children of other religions do not participate in these classes. The members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses denomination are not forced to certain activities related to the school life (singing the national anthem, taking the student’s oath, etc.).

The omnipresent requirement to tolerate all people and behaviours is also valid at schools. According to the teachers, it sometimes takes grotesque forms, as all students are to be welcome at a given school (intellectually and physically disabled, students of other religious beliefs, etc.), but there are not enough staff members to meet the requirements of working with such children.

The respondents do not notice any official attempts to introduce the gender ideology to schools, nor the attempts to promote sexual education influenced by this ideology. However, when they analyse the handbooks, they notice that the subjects of broken, divorced families in which a parent has a new partner, are promoted⁴⁹. According to the surveyed teachers, the handbooks lack the texts from belle-lettres. Existential problems are mentioned in short stories (drug addiction, alcoholism, family and social dysfunctions) which often teach the students how to avoid addictions – e. g. the stories: “I do not drink”, “I do not take drugs”.

In the primary school stories there are many texts in which there is no character, the character has no name, or the order of the events is difficult to establish. The lack of a lyrical ego or a foreground character is noticeable. It is the children who are to determine who the narrator is. According to the respondents, the child, i. e. an immature person, is to become the narrator. “Texts without the introduction, explication, clearly separated events, or names of the characters – texts that do not constitute a logical whole, encourage the recipient to free interpretation, which is not good at this educational stage” (a woman, 44).

An important statement of the respondents is that in books for classes 1-3 there are no contents that contradict the achievements of science. Thus, the teachers have not noticed the promotion of the idea that children can be brought up or adopted by two men/two women. However, certain symptoms of ideologization can be noticed in the handbooks that emphasize All Souls’ Day without paying attention to the significance of All Saints’ Day.

The respondents admit that training teachers to conduct Education for Life in the Family involves many different subjects, such as: a) how to deal with a dysfunctional student; b) with a poorly disciplined student or a student with ADHD; c) activating the students during the classes; d) using modern teaching methods; e) using multimedia in teaching. Nevertheless, the above mentioned obligatory training, organised by the educational supervisory authority, does not aim to ideologize teachers or promote any particular worldview.

⁴⁹ See H. Januszewska, *Ja i mój świat. Nauczanie I–III*, part VIII, story *Basia*, Kielce 2011, p. 68.

Conclusions and postulates

1. In order to avoid cheating and presenting unreliable results of the school's work, the respondents suggest that the school should work out the criteria of the evaluation of work on the basis of its own experience, as well as failures and intellectual, educational and upbringing abilities of its students.

2. The respondents believe it is a good idea to describe the student's behaviour in a detailed manner, including the words spoken by the children (even the vulgar ones), gestures they had shown, etc. According to the surveyed teachers, such documents may be used as proofs against those students who might be given a guardian by the court. Paradoxically, in this case, bureaucratization may have some advantages. Such "proofs" may help the teachers and principals to initiate disciplinary proceedings against the students who constantly breach the school's regulations and whose parents do not respond properly to their children's behaviour. Another advantage of those detailed remarks recorded in the class register is the fact that such documents can be used against demanding parents who constantly question and criticize the way the teacher treats their child.

3. The surveyed teachers notice that the regulations of the school or other legal acts do not include the detailed list of proper forms of behaviour in each situation. In disputable situations, when the non-written rules of good manners are in question, it is difficult to educate the children without reference to one's common sense and to the replies coming from one's heart. In practice, legal regulations and bureaucratic solutions seem to be promoted more than the common sense and non-written principles of good manners, as a result of which the teachers may feel that it is useless to teach the general principles of peaceful living in the world with other people.

4. Emphasizing the role of the EU in the life of the society and promoting the so-called European values may lead to the exaltation of the EU at the cost of other values and aspects of life which are neglected or reduced in the life of young people.

5. The school is under pressure with regard to functioning according to the requirements of tolerance and equality, but nobody verifies whether a given school is able to solve the problems occurring within the school context, e. g. problems resulting from the presence

of the disabled children or children coming from other cultures. The above mentioned pressure is of ideological nature, because it does not take into account the real possibilities of the school, but only blind obedience to the propaganda and the idea of tolerance as the most important value.

6. It is good that the texts included in the handbooks discuss the actual problems of the children, e. g. discrimination of the disabled or the lack of tolerance for people from other cultures. However, it is not good that there is no narrator in the stories read by the children, as it results in free interpretation and deprives the adult (the form teacher) of the influence on the child through presenting particular contents and life models (characters).

7. The respondents have not noticed any clear contradictions between scientific achievements and contents promoted in handbooks. The idea that the child develops properly (spiritually, psychologically and intellectually) in a family with a mother and a father is respected.

8. From the point of view of multiculturalism, it is important for the school to promote actions and customs proving that the place is sensitive to the issues of students of other cultures and religions. However, it is unclear to what extent those actions – or the lack of them – facilitate the creation of the atmosphere of tolerance and mutual enrichment among the students who represent different cultural codes. According to the author, the fact that the school does not make it possible for the children to teach one another's customs through playing and learning about different cultures or religions, is questionable. It is because tolerance cannot be taught through the elimination of other customs or disputable issues from the school life. The school should welcome otherness, because this way the students are given the opportunity to get to know it, as well as notice the common values linking many religions and cultures.

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