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**Social movement for LGBT+ rights
Between family and school
(Sub-table No. 8)**

Introduction

The need for and the fact of existence of a network of contacts between the academic world and its social environment does not raise doubts currently. This environment is formed by such collective entities as the „business world” (entrepreneurs), „the world of politics” (parties, public administration, elected bodies), media, churches and religious associations or social organizations. It is generally felt that any entrepreneur, office, TV station, organization or religious group may belong to this network, but this is not the case for substantive reasons (divergence of activity profile), due to limited resources (structural, employee, financial) or for ethical reasons (divergent catalogue of values). Therefore, the university weighs the arguments „for” and „against” initiating such cooperation, and then makes an autonomous decision, rejecting proposals coming from, for example, those who proclaim content that is inconsistent with its publicly presented values, in various respects unreliable or non-transparent in terms of its activities.

However, in my opinion there is a category of entities which are excluded from the potential partners of universities by virtue of a criterion other than that mentioned above, because their profile is considered to be politically or ideologically risky in some way. Leaving them outside the existing institu-

tional cooperation network is not the result of discussions or official, transparent decisions – this exclusion is beyond individual or collective consciousness, it is the result of a permanent social climate. The entities themselves see their inadequacy in relation to the expectations of universities and rarely make efforts to establish cooperation. These include non-governmental organizations defending the LGBT+ rights¹ – organizations that for a quarter of a century have been making efforts to protect this part of the Polish society from discrimination, monitoring its social and life situation, as well as taking action for the broadly understood social inclusion (Makuchowska, Pawłęga 2012, p. 123).

I would like to stress that the Congress of Social Pedagogy is the very first event in our country of such high rank to tackle this sub-discipline, during which the issue of LGBT+ was discussed and in which NGO's related to this subject took part. This is not only a characteristic situation of social pedagogy, because apart from a few universities (e.g. the Pomeranian University which has been organizing conferences on equality education for several years) and a small group of researchers (gender research), pedagogy, understood as an academic environment and as a scientific discipline, still seems not to notice the importance of diversity issues in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and the related phenomena of discrimination. In the case of social pedagogy, however, this is „inattentiveness” which is particularly acute due to the perspective adopted in it (which shows the processes of upbringing as strongly rooted in the social context) and the specific ethos of social involvement that accompanies it.

The meeting of academics and non-government organizations actively participating in the LGBT+ movement during the Congress had a symbolic meaning and I hope that it will be an impulse for further rapprochement. At the same time, it can be treated as a source of knowledge about the perspectives adopted by its participants, key problems and ideas for possible solutions. The discussion was not designed as a research event, as it provided material in the form of a recording (the transcription of the recording contains quotations² highlighted in italics), and I treat it as a two-hour discursive event, similar in the form of a focused group interview, where participants present their own „social worlds” and related horizons of meaning. Therefore I present to the

¹ LGBT+ – an abbreviation used for lesbian (L), gay (G), bisexual (B) and transgendered (T) people, as well as other groups whose characteristics go beyond the categories currently being used (+).

² Quotations – accuracy of the reproduction and interpretation of the recorded material, was consulted with the participants of the discussion.

readers a report on the proceedings of the section in a rather unusual form hoping it will contribute to a better understanding of the problems discussed by the participants of the section.

Who met with whom

I started to organize this discussion with the following assumptions: it was supposed to be a meeting of people representing academic pedagogy and activist circles active in the area referred to as „LGBT+ rights”. The group of nine persons therefore included three persons representing universities and six persons representing non-governmental organizations. To describe this group I used a category taken from the colloquial language: „host-guest”. Of course, all persons, myself excluded, were invited to participate, so in the colloquial sense they were all „guests”. However, the „guest/host” categories play a slightly different role here – they show the difference and distance between the two groups, as well as their similarities and closeness.

The „host” group (or hostesses to be exact) is identified here primarily institutionally – these are female university staff who are somehow connected with LGBT+ issues or who consider it important in the context of their own research activities: Małgorzata Bieńkowska (University of Białystok), Anna Odrowąż-Coates (The Maria Grzegorzewska University), Danuta Uryga (The Maria Grzegorzewska University). When defining and self-determination of this identity, several synonyms of a „higher education institution” appeared (*college, academy, university*), and the term „*academy*” (used by „guests”) can be considered particularly; *academy* is somehow homogeneous highly valued and at the same time airtight. People connected with the *academy* are also *theorists* who are distant from everyday life (e.g. school).

“Guests” are *practitioners* associated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs, *third sector*), in which they work in both organizational and strictly professional fields (as psychologists, therapists, trainers). The organizations they represent are: „Trans-Fuzja” Foundation (Agnieszka Rynowiecka), Kampania Przeciw Homofobii (Campaign Against Homophobia) (Jan Świerszcz), Stowarzyszenie „My, Rodzice” (We, Parents Association) (Ewa Miastkowska, Alicja Miśkiewicz), „Tęczowe Rodziny” (Rainbow Families) (Joanna Śmiecińska), Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej (Anti-discrimination Education Society) (Ewa Stoecker). Their activities are focused on issues of equal treatment (not only in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation) and concern equality education (anti-discrimination). These organizations also carry out research (mainly sociological research).

The „hostesses-guests” division is not clear and sharp, especially due to the professional experience of the „guest” (academic work, research, participation in conferences). This division is also blurred by the experience of „hostesses” (cooperation with NGOs); however, the advantage in the knowledge about discussion partners was on the side of „guests”. Undoubtedly, however, the so called division expresses the special atmosphere and specificity of the course of the meeting:

- it was not an ordinary and everyday event; both sides stressed its uniqueness, talked about its emotions and expectations: *we are very keen to cooperate with the academic world; we are glad that we have been invited and that such talks begin at all; it's great that we're talking; huge respect for you; great respect for the organizers that we managed to put this topic at all at today's conference, because it is a step forward;*
- it was not a meeting of environments well known to each other, of equal status within its framework: undoubtedly, it was the „hostesses” who had a stronger position (the inviting party, familiar with the space, managing the activity of the participants – e.g. evoking statements); the weaker side here are the „guests” (invited, alienated in space, directed, implementing the order of the meeting, responding to calls for statements). Expecting such a „balance of power”, I introduced some elements to the discussion that weakened it (co-hosting the meeting by one of the „guests”, prior consultation with the co-host of the meeting, proposal to move to an informal mode of communication).

Polish school as the lifeworld of young LGBT+ student – the role of pedagogy

A diagnosis of the situation

Describing the situation of LGBT+ youth in Poland, the participants outlined a broader socio-cultural and political context that largely determines this situation and consists of two key elements: the preferred socio-political life model in our society and the role played by the Catholic Church in the public sphere. The attitude of schools to the equality education focused on sexual orientation and gender identity sexual and non-gender students, can be explained in this way.

Deeply rooted, though sometimes pushed into collective unconsciousness (*our mentality, it will cripple every half a generation*), the model of political order mentioned by the participants of the discussion is hierarchical and authoritarian (demanding obedience), adverse to classical liberal ideas (*not free*,

not individualistic). This model, although not reflected in the unambiguously authoritarian form of governance, influences the way of understanding and implementation of the principles of parliamentary democracy, and above all, it is an important point of reference for ideas about what is and how society (communities, groups) and its institutions should function.

It is not a model conducive to changes in the perception of various aspects of human life, including the most important ones, such as sexuality or gender of citizens, as these potential changes are treated as a threat to the socio-political *status quo*. This is probably the reason for the attachment present in Poland to treating sexual and gender diversity through the prism of the medical concept of „norm” shaped in the 19th century (health and behavioral norm). It is from this outdated discourse of medical sciences that the stigma of „deviation”, „disorder”, „pathology”, still present in Polish academic language (*we study using old coursebooks, where homosexuality is presented as a deviation all the time*) and everyday (*there is some deviation in the family, some perversion*), as well as a strong social habit of reducing the identity of LGBT+ people to the sexual sphere.

The participants in the discussion pointed to a missed opportunity for a fundamental change in this context – it appeared in 1989 during the negotiations at the „Round Table”, where *a lot of time was devoted to the concept of civic education, but there was no space for diversity among these citizens regarding sexual orientation or gender identity*. The consequences of this fact are still noticeable today, in the form of the „closure” of the public sphere on this subject (*to us, to our society, to our politicians, this knowledge [about sexual and gender diversity – DU] does not reach us; this subject is marginalized and preferably not-mentioned at all; the scope of this ignorance is enormous*). Ignoring the greater diversity of citizens than is traditionally the case is expressed, for example, in the absence of a sexual orientation category in the census, which makes non-heterosexual couples sharing households and raising children and their needs „invisible” (*different questions are asked and data collected abroad, i.e. the basis for applying for different things*).

Let us add the second factor to it which has a significant influence on the way of thinking of Polish citizens – a strong presence of the Catholic Church in the public sphere. It is above all a cultural influence that shapes attitudes towards sexuality, making it a social „taboo”. An example of this attitude manifests itself in a reader letter sent to a Catholic magazine provided by one of the participants of the discussion, in which a *concerned father writes about the fact that his child’s school will organize anti-discrimination workshops. And he demanded to show him the program, because he doesn’t*

want his child to be taught some sexual games. The „taboo” associated with sexuality is accompanied by an unambiguous negative religious evaluation of non-heterosexual orientations: *everything that is related to the non-heteronorm, is still treated badly, I think it is mainly because it is badly evaluated by the Church.* This situation results in a social distance or rejection of people who do not fit into the heterosexual and binary gender „norm”: *there is such a thing as true homophobia and true transphobia, not „nasty” at all, but [resulting from – DU] anxiety).*

The overwhelming influence of the Catholic Church on the public sphere also results in the absence of content related to sexual diversity and gender identity at school, which is done under the slogan of protecting children against educationally harmful content: *especially in primary schools, such an argument is used – that these are still small children, and the topic is not appropriate for them at all, and it cannot be done at all.* This attitude is due to the ignorance of teachers about the fact that LGBT+ students were, are or will be present at school, by virtue of statistics (for example, the LGBT+ students are or will be present at school): Świerszcz 2012, pp. 139–141). Equality education in this area meets with active resistance, especially on the part of priests and lay catechists: *on the guidelines to mention different types of family, to support children who seem to be of a different orientation, she called the catechist and said – So now I have to talk about all the pathologies?* Teachers joining such a position sometimes refer to a narrowly understood „liberal” argument (freedom of opinion, freedom of conscience): *my beliefs are that homosexuality is a deviation and I will not teach children otherwise.*

Even if there is other equality-related content in the school (e.g. ethnicity, economic inequalities), sexuality and gender identity content is not included: *many schools have the idea that you can counteract discrimination and talk about how to build a wonderful, open environment, but not touch on these topics.* However, it is clear that the subject of sexuality and the interest in diversity in this area are not excluded from educational circles this way. Unfortunately, what remains is the uncontrolled „spontaneous” occurrence of these themes in a negative context: at best in the form of homophobic and transphobic comments and anecdotes, at worst in the form of various forms of violence, both among peers and by teachers against children.

The subordination of the Polish education to a religious institution (Balsamska, Beźnic 2017) occurs by consent, and often even the encouragement of the educational authorities. A quite recent example shows the willingness of schools to guess the wishes of both centers of power: *In a school, at the time when Giertych was the Minister of Education [...] they took off posters*

about evolution and replaced them with ones about creationism; it is simply a mechanism of endearing to the authorities. This readiness also applies to LGBT+ topics – schools listen carefully to the official narrative on the issue a few schools which go against the grain are the subject of sociotechnical treatments like the one recently held in Poznań: *after the conference* [“Child at risk of homophobia” – DU] *the co-organizer received a letter from the Board of Education – please provide the names of people who were at this conference.* It is, according to the participants of the discussion, possible in an educational system which is fundamentally *feudal, hierarchical, disciplinary and highly unequal*, and it is difficult to expect that genuine equality education will be possible within its scope.

And yet it is taking place. This is happening on *islands of positive experiences*, due to teachers who provide solid sex education and are open to LGBT+ children and young people, and they do so *not because it is a part of the curriculum, but because it is due to their values, their mission, often against the pedagogical board, management or other actors in the school.* These activities are often not spectacular at all, as one example shows: *we have a befriended school educator, who always goes on marches* [Equality Marches – DU] *and, as she showed herself for the first time during the march, a few days later, seven people came to her to talk about their orientation.*

The participants of the discussion pointed out that the activities of these teachers sometimes receive support from the local government body in charge (example of a grant competition on anti-discrimination issues in Poznań), but not from educational authorities. They are isolated, both in the process of acquiring the necessary knowledge as well as conducting classes and school initiatives, and in the case of incurring the costs of their activity – participants in the discussion gave examples of school bullying, from unpleasant jokes, through stigmatizing and ostracizing, to institutional repressions (e.g. dismissal or inducing them to give notice).

Parents also contribute to the perpetuation of the situation conducive to discrimination – usually unconsciously – which the participants of the discussion showed in their own (as mothers) example: *When I found out that my daughter is a lesbian, I was most struck by my ignorance of the subject; A friend asked a question: „Would you like your son to study along such a deviant in the classroom? And this forced me to come out in front of him* [i.e. to reveal that my son is gay – DU], [...] *he thought that gays come from some pathological families, that [...] they are brought up by some witches or drunkards.* However, there were also examples of intentional, organized parental activities aimed at conveying knowledge about sexual diversity and gender identity.

The effects of the above characteristics of the Polish school were discussed with particular sadness and concern. These include isolation, loneliness and discrimination against LGBT+ youth, and are associated with a high risk of psychological problems, social marginalization and reduced educational opportunities. A tragic symbol of these consequences is the suicide of Kacper from Górczyn in 2017, the context of which leaves no doubt as to the role of the closest environment, including the school. The summarizing opinions of the participants were unambiguous: *Polish schools are filled with homophobia and transphobia, there is no need to deceive oneself here, there are no more or less friendly environments, only these are generally toxic environments for children who are non-heteronormative.* The school environment, which should aid every child in the difficult development process, refuses to support LGBT+ students who sense or discover their orientation or gender identity: *you can see [...] what happens to the child and before the parent, the children often go to the school educator or psychologist. And there is if not ignorance, if not ignorance, then reluctance; students meet [...] with the opinion that the best thing to do is to transfer to a different school, the subject as it is to be discussed at all, then [...] this student is a problem.*

Recommendations

An important role in changing the situation students, their parents and teachers could be played by an „academic voice”, emphasizing the existence of sexual and gender diversity and that type of discrimination is unacceptable, especially in educational institutions (*that every student, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, has the right to learn, to have their dignity and to be fully accepted*). According to the participants of the discussion, this voice could take the form of an open letter addressed to the school circles, education authorities, leading bodies, teacher training institutions. This document should update the knowledge (broadening the meaning of the terms used, e.g. inclusive education, explanation of relevant terms, research results, legal status – international law, e.g. children’s rights) and emphasize the importance of the teacher’s educational activities. It is also important to maintain a consistent interest in equality issues and to respond to social events in the school spectrum, which are publicized in the media. For example, such as the attack (from right-wing organizations, the Polish episcopate, several educational curators, Ministry of Education) on a group of more than 200 schools participating in the „Tęczowy Piątek” (Rainbow Friday) campaign, initiated by the Campaign Against Homophobia, which aims to „show LGBT youth that there is also a place in school for them – that they can feel safe

there and fully realize their potential.” (Gierdal, Godzisz, Knut, Więckiewicz 2018, p. 15).

Non-government organizations operating in the field of anti-discrimination education are recommended to look for partners, e.g. in local government, among ombudsmen (civil rights ombudsman, government representative for equal treatment, children’s ombudsman), in associations of parents’ councils, educational management organizations, Teacher Training Centers.

It is recommended that teachers look in the scope of core curriculum and school curricula for places that need to be supplemented to convey full educational message, using existing pedagogical discourses (e.g. on the topic of inclusive education), interest in the child as a „whole” (*All elements of identity affect [education] and the teacher planning the teaching process in their classroom, must know everything about their children*), attention to „little things” in educational relations (*every gesture towards a non-hetero on the part of the teacher*). In September 2018 the new core curriculum came into force and it is clearly of a conservative nature, but its content, according to experts, „continues to allow to conduct classes ‘in a spirit of acceptance and respect for others’ as well as a broad discussion of issues such as human rights and their protection, tolerance, acceptance, response to physical and mental violence. Teachers are still able to introduce topics relating to LGBT, protection of their rights and against discrimination” (Gierdal, Godzisz, Knut, Więckiewicz 2018, pp. 14–15).

Facing the needs of LGBT+s in higher education – what kind of academic education it is?

A diagnosis of the situation

Schools are closed to the issue of LGBT+, they are controlled by educational authorities and influential opinion-forming centers, but this is only part of the picture that emerged as a result of this discussion. The key role played by teachers and specialists in this field prompts us to ask questions not only about the general condition of this environment (this is a separate and very broad topic), but also about the entities responsible for its form in terms of professional preparation. For understandable reasons, the image of the university was characterized in less detail by the „guest” participants of the discussion as for most of them it was not an area of primary activity.

The role of higher education institutions training future teachers was presented in the statements of the participants in the discussion as limited by socio-economic considerations. Lack of diligence taken by political decision-

makers about working conditions, remuneration and social image of teachers, results in wrong people are selected for this line of work, and at the stage of education – wrong candidates are selected for studies (*it is difficult for pedagogical universities to attract some great people who would really like to teach at schools and had an idea of who they want to be*). The „weakness” of students of pedagogical faculties does not only present itself lower level of their intellectual and creative abilities, but also a lower level of psychosocial competences (*these people burn out very quickly and fall out, because the collision with the system is really painful*). With regard to the subject matter discussed, there was also an important remark that for a decade now universities have been training students educated in a school where sex education, although theoretically present, is not conducted in a solid and effective manner: *People who go to college to study pedagogy simply do not have any knowledge of sexuality*. In the core curriculum of general education, the content of sex education has been present for years, but it has a marginal status if one takes into account the regulations concerning the way the core curriculum is implemented – the current framework curriculum allocates 14 hours per year for the subject „Family life education”; in most types of schools it is to take place within the hours at the disposal of the principal (usually dedicated to other subjects) and is not obligatory for students. Moreover, Polish coursebooks on this subject „perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices, use non-scientific theories” (Gierdal, Godzisz, Knut, Więckiewicz 2018, p. 13).

The above mentioned ignorance of young people finishing compulsory education is maintained during their pedagogical studies, where the subject of sexuality and gender is discussed sporadically and with great caution (*pedagogy is afraid of sex*). The existence of sexual and gender diversity and the existence of LGBT+ groups that are socially marginalized, discriminated against and subjected to violence (including those institutions that have traditionally been the focus of pedagogy – school and family) is even less present or completely overlooked. This subject matter is denied its importance and place in the process of academic pedagogical education, although its aim is to educate teachers and staff in the so-called aid professions. K. Gawlicz, P. Rudnicki, M. Starnawski (2015, p. 15) write about the absence of „potentially politically touchy subjects”, including homophobia, heterosexuality and heteronormativity in scientific pedagogical literature.

The denial of this subject of importance is accompanied, in the opinion of the participants in the discussion, by the shifting responsibility to other entities. One of them is an abstract, socio-cultural school, which should fulfil its duties and „transfer” graduates to a university with a sufficiently high level

of knowledge about human sexuality and gender, self-aware in this area, open to diversity. The shift of responsibility also presents itself in the direction of the students themselves and their personal choices – it is left to decide for themselves how to present the sensitive topic of LGBT+ to their future pupils and how to relate to non-heterosexual and transgender students at school, which is very likely to be *toxic* to them.

It is an issue that the participants of the discussion do not understand in some way, as it undermines the idea of embedding academic education on the basis of scientific knowledge. A person who has received a university diploma should not graduate with incomplete and outdated knowledge (Analysis of academic coursebooks in terms of their contents concerning sexual orientation and gender identity can be found in the publication by A. Loewe 2010, in the report by M. Makuchowska and M. Pawłęga 2012, or just a suggestion that the attitude towards this part of a person's identity that we call sexual orientation and gender identity is, on professional grounds, her private choice: *it's as if to disagree with the multiplication table, because I think it's a little bit different, because „1 times 9” is maybe 19*. However, such a non-transparent message from the university is accurately interpreted, and is expressed in the quoted question of a student of pedagogy attending a general course in sociology: *And why should I learn about fags?*

Properly understood responsibility of the university for the education of future teachers should, in the opinion of the discussion participants, result in taking into account the realities of the functioning of schools (from which their students „come”, to which they „return”) and taking appropriate actions to them: we trust ourselves [...] to give people space to have views and attitudes, even if they're terrible, because it is simply so that we have them, but also to give them a chance for rehabilitation.

At the end of the analysis of this topic, it should be noted that according to the participants of the discussion, the academic „conspiracy of silence” is not only a phenomenon concerning education in the field of pedagogy – it also concerns the education of medical personnel or psychological education (*How are psychologists prepared to work with 'rainbow' families? They are not prepared at all, as the study proved they know nothing about it*). It is normal in Polish universities that the issue of LGBT+ is hidden under different slogans – so that it is not explicitly referred to, and that I can teach and talk about a little about it, but I cannot call it directly, because it will be boycotted immediately.

So far, universities lack the courage to address this issue in the field of education, and they are not treated by non-government organizations as serious partners (*if we find universities that have the courage to do so*).

Recommendations³

The change in the situation of LGBT+ students in schools is closely linked to the issue of education of teachers. A module of anti-discrimination education should be included in the curriculum for teaching staff and aid professions, which would, among others, fill the gaps in the general education of students (sex education), take into account the knowledge about mechanisms of discrimination and violence motivated by discrimination, which would develop the competence to respond to their occurrence and prepare to conduct anti-discrimination actions with children and young people, with parents as well as legal and social guardians of students.

Program changes should be accompanied by the involvement of academic staff in the creation of specialist coursebooks for students of pedagogy and supplementation of coursebooks of cross-cutting theme with issues concerning the work with non-heterosexual and transgender children.

Due to the complexity of the situation and pedagogical tasks, education should take place „closer to school”, the daily life of students. This may be achieved by changing the model of pedagogical practices – focusing them not so much on education training in a specific scope of content and methodology, but on getting to know the child in educational terms, accompanying them in school life, learning and social relations.

In academic education, it is not only the content of the curriculum that is important, but also the atmosphere in which the education takes place. Another recommendation therefore concerns the promotion of academic anti-discrimination standards and at the same time an open affirmation and support of LGBT+ persons, since distance and „silence” is the consent to maintain the status quo. A positive example in this area are the activities initiated by the Pedagogical University of Cracow within the framework of cooperation with non-governmental organizations, including the Anti-Discrimination Education Society (TEA) (Stoch 2016).

In order for the university to fulfill its educational mission, as one of the participants of the discussion put it – to *wear this candlestick* – it should also make an in-depth self-reflection and make an effort to change its organizational culture, e.g. by appointing an academic ombudsman or rector's plenipotentiary for equal treatment (both positions have appeared in recent

³ The presented recommendations are similar to the recommendations accompanying the reports on the social situation of LGBT+ – see: Makuchowska, Pawłęga 2012; Godzisz, Knut 2018.

years in several Polish universities (e.g. Warsaw University, Adam Mickiewicz University, Nicolaus Copernicus University) systematic training for employees on sexual and gender diversity that would make them aware of violations of standards and norms towards LGBT+ persons (*it should be known that this is unacceptable* [homophobic comments – DU] [...] (*that this is not normal that the professor laughs at the equality parade, but this is a violation that can be reported*), support LGBT+ events, student organizations/associations focused on LGBT+ issues, or „microactivities” at the level of everyday teaching (*that lecturers introduce this theme into their lectures*).

In order for the change at school level to be really noticeable in the future, it is also necessary for the above mentioned recommendations to be disseminated as a part of the pedagogical preparation offered to students of non-pedagogical faculties, who in the future will become teachers of specific subjects, because *all areas of teaching have an impact on students*.

Pedagogy in the face of phenomenon of sexual diversity and gender identity – which scientific activities?

A diagnosis of situation

The participants of the meeting in question were also asked how pedagogy as a discipline of science can contribute to the change of situation of LGBT+ persons in Poland. The starting point for this issue was the statement that while in pedagogical theoretical and empirical research the topic of gender socialization is increasingly frequent, there is a lack of interest in the subject of sexuality (including sexual orientation) and gender identity as well as discrimination on this basis. It is an „absent pedagogical discourse”, which is often replaced by discourse of sexology.

The few exceptions to this rule meet, at best, with disapproval from the scientific community (*Why do you deal with these perverts?*). Taking LGBT+ issues into account and communicating this fact openly is still a kind of personal challenge in Polish social sciences (*you're almost coming out when talking about the type of scientific work you're doing!*). People who reveal their „special” scientific interests in this way, experience how strong the normalizing environmental pressure is – for example, they avoid conferences in academic centers with a religious profile (*with all respect, I deal with a subject that is not appropriate for this university*), where they can meet with reluctance or even aggression of a discriminating nature (*I could tell from the skin color of a few men's faces that they were ready to simply carry me out of this room, when they realized what I was going to talk about*).

What are the consequences of this? The omission of such important aspects of human identity as sexual orientation and gender identity reduces the scientific perspective (“standardized” vision of biopsychological and social human development, limited to the heteronormativity and the binary model of sexuality). This applies to almost every topic of theoretical and empirical research, but especially to the exploration of phenomena of key importance for pedagogy – concerning family, school (educational environments), peer groups, working environment, local environment, social life in cyberspace, mass culture. One gave an example of „lost potential” of expensive study designed at a large scale by a recognized scientific and research institution (concerning school safety) in which the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity was completely ignored (*they did such an extensive study and could have asked four additional questions*). As noted by one of the participants of the discussion, this is not a substantial issue even for these trends of pedagogy in which its presence would seem obvious: *Even in critical, emancipatory pedagogy, this issue is ignored, as if they are not able to draw on this diversity.*

However, pedagogical research on LGBT+ is carried out in Poland, but not by pedagogical academic community and non-governmental organizations (although sometimes with the participation of academic researchers and reviewers of scientific and academic publishing houses)⁴. Representatives of non-governmental organizations taking part in the discussion are aware of the limitations in this respect – first of all, financial ones, which do not allow for the organization of research of a wide range (*we do not have enough funds to make research that are really meaningful, broad, cross-cutting*), but also substantive ones (*very often these are not the best, not the strongest research in methodological terms*). Without strong institutional support on the part of academic environment, NGOs, regardless of their efforts to maintain the level of research (*we always make sure that our reports are reviewed by people with many titles and always by different people*), are not treated as partners in the substantive research discussion (*but this is not important, because this is the third sector and not the academy*). In this case, it can be considered that the *Academy* generally chooses the safe position of an uninvolved critic.

⁴ These include in particular Lambda Warszawa Association (which was the first organization in Poland to publish a report on the social situation of LGBT+ in 1994), Anti-discrimination Education Society (TEA), Trans-Fuzja Foundation, Campaign Against Homophobia. Selected publications related to education, signed by the above mentioned NGOs: Abramowicz 2007; Makuchowska 2011; Świerszcz 2012; Makuchowska, Pawłęga 2012; Gawlicz, Rudnicki, Starnawski 2015; Chustecka, Kielak, Rawłuszko 2016; Dynarski, Jąderek, Kłonkowska 2016.

Recommendations

Recommendations addressed by the participants of the discussion to the scientific pedagogical environment emphasize the need to conduct extensive and in-depth research on the situation of LGBT+ youth in the environment of school and family, let us add – research of interdisciplinary profile, the conclusions of which could serve in the daily work of practitioners. Not only projects in the form of valued research grants, but also doctoral and diploma theses are important here. It is also important that research activities which are not strictly related to LGBT+ take into account the perspective of diversity in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity (*if each of us starts to do what they are actually dealing with, having this perspective in mind, it will be awesome*). It is also worth looking for synergistic effects in research partnership cooperation with non-governmental organizations, i.e. cooperation which will not be limited to the use of the research area made available by them and under which NGOs will be considered as a source of expert knowledge.

It is important to include the LGBT+ issues in the programmes of pedagogical conferences, regardless of the expected interest in it by the participants or the general perception of this idea (*in general, it would be great if we could raise this issue anywhere, even with various reception*), and even friendly peer support for researchers hosted at our university, if we feel that because of the subject of their speech they can be perceived badly (*he walked into the section where I presented my paper, sat down and just did not let others to immediately block my opportunity to speak*). Another important scientific activity supporting LGBT+ in Poland is editorial activity, including translation of important pedagogical publications, creation of pedagogical monographs comparing the research achievements of countries with a long tradition of research on LGBT+.

Summary – a few words on hope

The discussion meeting commented on was an opportunity not only to exchange opinions and formulate postulates, but also to express faith in the meaning of the actions being carried out as well as hopes and desires related to the change in the social situation of LGBT+ in our country.

The introduction of LGBT+ issues to academic discourse has, to some extent, already paved the way: *I think that it happened analogously to social and cultural gender, our experiences show that it is possible, there is only an issue that sex is a taboo subject to a greater extent than gender, so that it is*

an additional challenge. The condition for this, however, is a change in the attitude of the academic community, especially in the field of pedagogy: (it is high time that pedagogy stopped pretending that this issue does not exist; so that, eventually, pedagogy really followed the social changes). The main task of the Academy is now to build such a discourse where these different orientations and identities are simply an element of social diversity.

A change in the attitude of *the Academy* may contribute to a change in public discourse (*this must be spoken about loudly; the dam, the taboo of silence must also be broken*) and, what is crucial for the participants of the discussion, to a real, lasting change in the school environment: *it must be said directly that the school must be friendly to every child and „for every child” means also for non-heteronormative children.* In case of this task, the academic community already has a partner ready to cooperate – NGOs determination and activity of which should not be underestimated (*we will simply create a strong group that will bring about change*).

The change in question cannot be postponed for the future, it can even be considered that the current historical moment is the most favorable for it, due to the open clash between the model of liberal democracy, established in the values of humanism, and the model of excluding and hierarchizing authoritarian power. Now it is the right time to *lay on the table what we have in our minds, and not to be afraid to reach high and want everything right away.* It is not just a matter of striving LGBT+ groups to be present in public discourse and ready to express their opinions. We should have hope for an opportunity to act soon: *When the fire is over, we cannot start thinking about the next step, we simply have to be ready to sow everything there.*

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