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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35464/1642-672X.PS.2019.4.06>

With regard to the future Bauman's inspirations for pedagogy and education

ABSTRACT: The Author provides an overview of educational plots appearing in the works of Zygmunt Bauman, which inspire further pedagogical search. The article involves two parts: the first one is presenting chosen standpoints of the Polish sociologist concerning the future, i.a. the lack of long-term projects and visions, lack of prognosis possibility, downfall of citizen's engagement, perspective of social degradation. The second part discusses the postulates and challenges posed by Bauman in relation to educational policy and pedagogical practice. The imaginations of a desired future, accompanied by a pessimistic view of the present world, led the sociologist to the search for solutions to the crisis. One solution he envisioned was rooted in education and learning.

KEYWORDS: Education, youth, future visions, Zygmunt Bauman.

Introduction

This text is an attempt both to reconstruct the vision of the future contained in the works of Zygmunt Bauman and to read his concept of a desirable, effective model of education that prepares future generations for living in an increasingly complex, fragmented, as well as constantly and rapidly changing world. The shape of the postmodern world and various phenomena affecting entire societies are an important field of considerations and interpretation of the Polish sociologist. In numerous publications he also refers to education and learning issues. Among the main ones are: *Szanse etyki w zglobalizowanym świecie* [*Chances of ethics in the globalized world*], *On Ed-*

ucation. *Conversations with Riccardo Mazzeo* and a lecture given at the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, entitled “Post-modern school of life”.

In Polish pedagogical literature, Bauman’s idea is relatively well known, both from source texts and from critical analyses conducted by pedagogues (see, among others, Theiss, 2016; Witkowski 1998). Wiesław Theiss (2016, p. 31), pointing to the wealth of inspirations coming from Bauman’s books, stresses that all attempts to interpret and read Bauman’s works depend “on the adopted ideological stance. Advocates of individualist neoliberalism, the new left or various traditionalist concepts will speak out differently in this matter”. The fundamental value stemming from Bauman’s writings, which brings together representatives of various, often extreme orientations, is “care and hope – ideas based on common universal foundations of Christian culture and the principles of the Church’s social teaching” (Theiss 2016, p. 32).

The perspective adopted in this article is the same as the opinions of those pedagogues and representatives of other scientific disciplines who speak in favor of an educational model based on respect for diversity, creating sensitivity and openness to the Other and their values, referring to the pedagogical category of dialog and decentralization, which means the ability to see the world through the eyes of the Other. In other words, it is an integral model of understanding the world and education, popularized in the Polish pedagogy by, among others, Zbigniew Kwiecieński (pedagogical ecology), Wiesław Andrakowicz, Ryszard Maciej Łukaszewicz (dialectical ecology), Wiktor Żłobicki, Bogusław Śliwerski, Roman Schulz (holistic and systemic education), Rafał Włodarczyk, Adam Chmielewski, Adam Grobler, Maria Dudzikowa (trend propagating the ideal of integrated knowledge) (after: Gop 2015, p. 95).

The first part outlines selected issues of Bauman’s work concerning the future. The importance that He ascribes to this perspective is evidenced by the closing sentence of a book published posthumously entitled „Retropia. Jak rządzi nami przeszłość?": “More than ever before we – humans, inhabitants of the Earth – are put in a situation of either-or: either we will enter a common future, or we will end up in a collective grave” (Bauman 2018, p. 281). The second part of the text refers directly to Bauman’s reflections on the desired form of education, of which “one, unchangeable goal [...] both in the past, now and in the future, is to prepare young people to live in the reality which they are entering” (Bauman 2012a, p. 31). Education is understood here as a process of preparing individuals for an unknown, undiscovered future. Bauman (2012a, p. 20–21) refers to the thought of Gregor Bateson, who distinguished three levels of education:

The lowest level of education concerns the provision of information to be remembered. The second level, 'deuteroeducation', aims to master the 'cognitive framework' into which information acquired or found in the future can be inscribed or incorporated. But there is also a third level, which consists in developing the ability to dismantle and rebuild a dominant cognitive framework or reject it completely without replacing it [...]. The lowest of the three levels distinguished by Bateson has already become obsolete – memory has been transferred from the brain to computer discs, flash drives and servers. However, what Bateson treated as a defective rather than a healthy tissue, became a standard in the process of teaching and learning.

In Bauman's opinion, the transfiguration described above is the core of the processes currently taking place in education. The ability to forget, eliminate or disregard previously acquired and established knowledge is more important than the ability to remember and store. Knowledge has become an impermanent and transient construct, calling into question the legitimacy of its accumulation and storage. The information becomes outdated almost every day, and some of it is either unverified or false. Excessive amount of information, on the other hand, reduces memory capacity, thus limiting the ability to adapt and respond to subsequent market demands.

This modest attempt at reading Bauman is not a holistic and synthetic look at his work – some issues and areas have been treated marginally or completely omitted. The potential of this thinker's pedagogical reflections goes far beyond the issues raised in this text. Nevertheless, the opinions and suggestions of one of the most widely read intellectuals of the 21st century selected and presented in fragments undoubtedly constitute a valuable guide in thinking about education, its reform and setting new paths of development.

The future in Zygmunt Bauman's work – the diversity of contexts

Observation of the present, critical and in its overall perception leading rather to pessimistic conclusions, became a source of Bauman's reflections, on the one hand on the desired and dreamed of, and on the other hand, on the probable shape of the world in the future. An optimistic accent in thinking about the future was the sociologist's belief that the world could be different; that there are alternative options of development; that it is not too late to protect ourselves from a final disaster. In his diagnoses, Bauman pointed to numerous issues and paradoxes of the modern era, their potential consequences for the lives of individuals and entire societies. At the same time, he designed ways and solutions to overcome stagnation and crisis. Reading his texts allows

us to understand the essence of postmodern reality and the consequences of current “megatrends” for future generations; it also allows us to specify important aspects of Bauman’s way of thinking about the future.

The specter of uncertainty is hovering over the world

The fundamental feature of the present is the transition from the “solid” to the “liquid” phase of modernity. Liquidity is recognized by Bauman (2008, p. 7) as a perfect metaphor for the modern world. The epithet “liquid” is to define the nature of the changes taking place. Everything is transient, episodic, changeable, fragmented. “Thus there is a general sense of randomness, pure accidentality, and being at the mercy of fate” (Bauman 2005, p. 140). Anxiety and uncertainty are rising to the rank of key categories describing the present day. Both these emotional states associated with the sense of threat accompany all inhabitants of the globe. In a world of liquid modernity there is no escape from them.

Anticipation and forecasting is a waste of time

This ubiquitous liquidity, uncertainty, volatility of the world and chaos cause that “forecasting is a waste of time and all forecasts are unreliable” (Bauman 2012a, p. 148). The inability to prepare for the future is an irrevocable feature of reality; the future is simply unfamiliar, undefined, unknown. What is more, even attempts to capture relations of causality fail. The popular metaphor of the “domino effect” has lost its relevance, as well as the attributes of „adaptability” or “physical proximity to causes and effects”, which – entangled in the world network – are almost completely random. Local problems are caused by global strategies, and global phenomena – by local solutions. Geographical distances are no longer relevant. The world became one big labyrinth, deprived of a visible and safe path.

End of long-term thinking, planning and action

The life of individuals as well as entire groups and communities is determined by a series of short-term projects and episodes, the number of which is infinite and the structure of which is disordered. They do not combine into any sequences – there is no order of procedures or development set in advance. “All long-term plans [...] do not inspire trust; long-term planning, if undertaken, would only increase the area of risk by adding additional varia-

bles to each profit and loss account or the probability of success and failure (Bauman 2018, p. 238).

Visions and objectives as a "scarce commodity"

Bauman (2008, p. 46), in his distinctions between modernity and post-modernity, pointed to the different characteristics of both forms of modern society, emphasizing the disintegration and fall of illusion, which was the belief in the ideal order in which everything is planned and organized, in the end of the path leading to a state of perfection, in the transparency of human fate, and finally in the control of the future. Nowadays, as the sociologist notes, the basic problem is the deficit of objectives, not of resources. The known and proven schema of solutions and methods of dealing with challenges have become outdated. The difficulty is not so much in finding the means as in specifying and defining the objective. "Now the problem is the elusiveness (and too often illusiveness) of objectives that fade and dissolve before they are achieved" (Bauman 2005, p. 31). Bauman draws attention to the disappearance of utopian thinking and the absence of attractive visions of a better world. Today's dreams about the future are mainly about the issue of individual survival, which, like everything else, has been privatized. The utopias available today "speak not of a better-organized land, but of my better arrangement in this land, here and now" (Bauman 2010, p. 165).

Market entanglement – "death of a citizen"

An important place in Bauman's work is occupied by the issue of consumerism; in the culture of consumption, consumption itself has become an objective. Consumerism "leads to social ignorance" – it discourages the acquisition of skills in seeking a way out of trouble, together with others, through discussion and negotiation, instilling in people the conviction that they will find the solution they are looking for with much less effort and at less costs in their next trip to the shops" (Bauman, Tester 2003, p. 145). The consequences of ubiquitous consumerism are the lack of involvement in the public sphere, the citizen's escape towards individualism, separating themselves from their fellow citizens. Bauman writes directly that the birth of a consumer means the death of a citizen, their growing passivity and apathy. "A consumer is the enemy of a citizen" (Bauman 2007b, p. 232). The individualism of a citizen manifests itself in the freedom of the market and the nurturing of one's own "self", in participation in free market competition, in decisions about shopping and getting rich.

The perspective of social degradation

According to Bauman, “the outcast’s fate” is passed on to an entire generation of young people. The instilled belief of success, which is within human reach, has become an illusion. Each era and each change brings another outcast, because sudden transformations require the ability to adapt and cope in new, unknown conditions, and not everyone has such an ability and therefore not everyone can maintain their status. Previously applied solutions or attitudes do not guarantee the desired results today. Commonly, a certain part of the generation did not/does not cope with the consequences of changes, “however, the fate of the outcast rarely falls to the entire generation. And perhaps that is what we are witnessing at the moment” (Bauman 2012a, p. 53). Young people were not prepared for the prospect of life in constant uncertainty, lack of security and constant threats. Zygmunt Bauman (2012a, p. 54) sees the young people leaving universities as “the first post-war generation with a perspective of social degradation ahead”. He adds that “a surprisingly large proportion of this generation has actually fallen out, or thinks it has fallen out, of a speeding vehicle, once and for all” (Bauman 2005, p. 30). He notes that this generation “is openly afraid of losing the social position achieved by their parents rather than hoping to improve it; most millennials predict that the future will bring them a deterioration in their living conditions, rather than opening the way to a gradual improvement” (Bauman 2018, p. 102). The prospect of people being replaced by robots and, as a consequence, professional exclusion, which means the marginalization and pauperization of millions of young people entering the labor market, is becoming increasingly real. Bauman (2018, p. 107) argues that hope for controlling the future is illusory and outlines a vision that evokes fear: “we are destined to the role of pawns on a chessboard belonging to someone else in a game played by someone else we do not know and never will know. For this reason, the return [...] to the familiar and comfortable world of remembrance is a real relief”. Maria Mendel and Wiesław Theiss (2019, p. 13) point to alternative consequences of the choices made: “the return can therefore be destructive, constituting a defense of the status quo based on injustice. It can also be constructive, as it is accompanied by the creation of new subjectivities and political representations.

A picture of reality outlined by Bauman leads to pessimistic conclusions. In a world that is completely unpredictable, devoid of prospective projects and civic engagement, the faith in the mythical “better tomorrow” must

be fragile and devoid of rational, logical premises. However, the author (the optimistic dimension of his work appears here) does not leave the reader only with questions, doubts or fears. In his texts he points out the possibilities and chances of overcoming the crisis.

Implications for pedagogy and education Bauman's reflections and postulates

A significant proportion of Bauman's prescriptions for diseases of the contemporary world relate to education. Some of them are already strongly rooted in the consciousness of theoreticians, scientists, experts and committed citizens; they are not innovative ideas, but they only strengthen the belief of their potential and the legitimacy of implementing proposed solutions and strategies. Some of them shed light on new challenges, which should not be surprising since their Author is considered to be one of the most outstanding interpreters and the most insightful observers of modern times. During one of his lectures, Bauman (2000b, p. 153–154) said about himself that he is not a professional pedagogue; he also noted that the issues he raises among the “professional” pedagogues and philosophers of education have already become the subject of comprehensive analyses by Polish theoreticians dealing with education. In Bauman's reflections and postulates there is undoubtedly a considerable pedagogical potential – He suggests not only what “effective education” should look like, but also exposes commonly accepted positions and assumptions. The list of his suggestions provides valuable guidance to all entities interested in education, school reform and the search for innovative, effective learning pathways.

Lifelong civic education

Bauman (2007b, p. 229) states that if “education and learning are to be useful, they must be continuous and be continued throughout life”. The idea of lifelong education has been extremely popular in the Western world for several decades; there is a complete consensus on the need for continuous and systematic learning until the old age. The paradigm of lifelong learning has become a dominant vision of human participation in social life, but it is often identified with the market and professional sphere. People have to constantly improve their knowledge and competences in order to meet the challenges of the market, the economy and the world of work. Bauman wants even more – he believes that lifelong learning must concern the area of citizenship. “Not

only technical skills need to be renewed, not only vocational education needs to be continued throughout life. Civic education requires the same, even to greater extent” (Bauman 2007b, p. 232). It is to promote, among Western citizens, the importance of social activity, civic and political knowledge, it is to lead to the development of basic civic competences and to discover the need to engage in public affairs. The overarching objective of lifelong education is to be activation (or “empowerment”). As Bauman explains (2007b, p. 330), “to be empowered” means to be able to make choices and actually deal with them, and this in turn means the ability to influence the spectrum of possible choices and the social conditions in which they are made”. Education must not be limited to the development of individual skills, equally important are social competences, which are a prerequisite for building a culture of trust and solidarity. Bauman (2007b, p. 235) states that “we need lifelong education so that we can have a choice. We need it even more to save the conditions that make this choice possible and realistic”. Only life-long civic education for creation of a committed, open society can lead to full and genuine democracy based on active and aware citizens who believe in and respect the whole catalog of democratic values.

The postulates concerning the implementation of civic education, although known and widely accepted, have not yet been realized. Civic groups, the community and the public sphere remain forgotten and neglected categories, although theoreticians point to the potential of participatory citizenship since the beginning of the transformation in Poland (see, among others, Przystyczykowski 1999; Koczanowicz 2005). Poland – when looking from the point of view of voter turnout, respect for democratic rules, respect for the rule of law and self-government – is an example of a country in which civic education needs immediate repair. However, education focused on shaping mass human beings is not about critical thinking (Potulicka, Rutkowiak 2010). Zbyszko Melosik (2016, p. 42) sees a way out of this dead-end, postulating “critical thinking and distance pedagogy”, of which the “aim [...] would be to construct competence in critical thinking, and at the same time to have a distance to social reality. An important thing about it would be a distance in relation both to the pop culture offer and the drifting, unlimited freedom (or sense of freedom)”.

Community learning

Bauman raises geopolitical issues many times. He sees Europe as a continent that should play a special role in the world. He is aware of the signifi-

cant military, technological and economic advantage of the United States and China and does not expect any rivalry with the powers, nor absolute confidence in the policies of its allies. He is convinced, however, that Europe has a unique mission to fulfill and has the opportunity to make this world better in terms of spirituality and intellect. Bauman sees its greatest value in the diversity and “abundance of differences”. He also makes it responsible for passing on to citizens the art of learning from each other. As he notes, in Europe, as nowhere else in the world, this mythical “Other” is always close, near, almost at hand. Learning from each other is intended to strengthen the currently deficit values: solidarity, kindness, respect and understanding of otherness. The need for constant and daily improvement, learning and practicing coexistence with strangers and their differences is inevitable (Bauman 2012a, p. 11). Since the early 1990s, Bauman (2000a, p. 365) asked whether Europe “which is accustomed to teaching and instructing [...] can also learn”. He considers it a great sin to separate oneself and turn one’s back on the needy and the disadvantaged, the excluded and the victims of financial globalization. He accuses Europeans of “closing Europe’s door tightly and refraining from any action that might improve the situation that has led immigrants to leave their countries” (Bauman 2007b, p. 311). Sociologist calls for greater responsibility and solidarity: “Humanity is in crisis – and the way out of it is through solidarity between people” (Bauman 2016, p. 26). The majority of Polish pedagogues share Bauman’s stance. Maciej Tanaś (2006, pp. 75–76) notes:

we educate them for war – aggression and rape, not behavior characteristic to the time of peace. It is enough to look at what games our children are fascinated with, what media content reaches young people, then everything becomes clear. Let us also pay attention to the windows of houses – “blue from TV sets”. It reveals a ruthless truth about people who once felt like they were two halves of the whole, and now they are sitting next to each other in front of the screen, reliving the fate of the television characters, strangers to each other, not even trying to understand each other.

In the light of such phenomena, how to refer to the category of subjectivity, which humanities and social sciences insist on tenaciously? In contemporary discourses conducted by representatives of science, among others, subjectivity is connected with the awareness of the individual’s relations with the external world, understanding the environment and the situations arising in it (Lewowicki 1994, p. 59), with the ability to detect causal relationships between phenomena and the role of one’s own behaviors in their generation (Kofta 1989, p. 38–39). Subjectivity is the antonym of objectification, an ex-

pression of the desire to empower an individual. In the scientific and political discourse taking place in the era of the thriving culture of individualism, the concern for citizenship and democratic participation is intensified (Hołyst 2015). In view of the deficit in civic education, it is fully justified, as it is about the competence to make rational choices that will affect the future, and not to succumb to tempting, albeit indestructible, proposals. Bulgarian political scientist, Ivan Krastev (2018, p. 44–45), notes that:

unlike the Catholic Church or former communists, the new populists do not propose any catechetical or pedagogical dimension [...]. The ambition of the new populism is to support people without any future-oriented project. In this sense, it is a doctrine perfectly suited to the expectations of societies whose citizens are, above all, consumers who see their leaders as waiters who are supposed to fulfill their client's wishes as efficiently as possible.

The visionaries are replaced by populists who promise to eliminate all contradictions and issues, guarantee prosperity and security, a stable and predictable world, simple and quick solutions to complex problems with complex causes and multiple sources. Bauman consistently warns against them, exposing their proposed “shortcuts” as “a route to nowhere”. This is illustrated, for example, by the anti-immigrant narrative suggesting that without newcomers the world will be safer and free from uncertainty (Bauman 2010; 2016).

Education – openness – humanity

Continuous change, the need to make choices and adapt in an era of ubiquitous risk and fear, require appropriate competences and skills. “In order to prepare for it (*I – for the future*), they need guidance and instructions; practical, concrete knowledge that can be applied [...]. To meet this ‘practical’ condition, good education must stimulate and promote openness rather than closing of the mind (Bauman 2012a, p. 31). Only those who are open to others, to emerging opportunities and chances, who have the ability to act and make the right choices, have a chance of success. Bauman recalls Hanna Arendt (1986, p. 61; after Bauman 2007b, p. 346), who claimed that “openness to other people is a prerequisite for humanity in every meaning of this content-rich word”. In this sense, openness is a fundamental, constitutive feature of humanity that goes beyond market and professional contexts and embraces all aspects of human being in the world. Bauman is convinced that education must be open, that it must teach openness, otherwise it will not restore

empathy and responsibility in people. Jerzy Brzeziński (2010, pp. 223–224) speaks similarly, by calling:

Today, as never before, we need an 'open university' that speaks out against xenophobia, dogmatism and intolerance, a pluralist, understanding and empathic university. [...] It is in the name of its centuries-old mission that a university must undertake formative tasks – no less important than acquisition of scientific knowledge and the development of skills. One of these tasks is related to shaping the attitude of pluralism, both in scientific research and in everyday life.

In his texts, Bauman repeatedly calls for global responsibility and solidarity. The citizen should “treat society as an area of co-responsibility and creative effort” (Bauman 2007b, p. 372). The human being is, after all, a social being who lives among and for other people, and therefore their efforts should be directed towards Community matters, and not towards the narrowly understood interests of the individual. This message, full of moral responsibility and community care, is one of the key issues in Bauman's work. In a world that rewards extreme individualism and selfishness, the opinions that encourage fraternity and solidarity are too often ignored.

**„Knowledge does not provide success,
and education does not lead to knowledge”**

Education does not respond to the challenges of liquid modernity and cannot ensure a good life for everyone. Bauman (2012a, p. 48). recalls “that all or almost all of today's heroes of the ‘rags to riches’ type of stories, who were lucky and made billions of dollars in one fortunate idea [...] are not fully educated [...]. They are the ones who embody the idea of a successful life”. This regularity, however, is not intended to imply an abandonment of the pursuit of the highest possible level of education and of the best possible quality. The level of education has long been a selection instrument and a tool for segregation in the struggle for the most attractive jobs. Today, however, neither education nor a willingness to devote oneself fully to work guarantee success. The meritocratic assumptions underlying the system are of little significance in the context of the multitude of well-educated and unemployed youth. “In our societies, where the economy is supposedly driven by knowledge and information, and education guarantees economic success, we observe that knowledge is not a success and education does not lead to knowledge” (Bauman 2012a, p. 80). Bauman emphasizes the inadequacy of the acquired formal knowledge to the needs of the labor market. Despite the increasing level of education,

there is a deficit of desirable competences of people entering the labor market. “At the global level, there is a significant dispersion of formal knowledge [...], but this formalization does not go hand in hand with skills, with the art of management of concrete things, which transforms school knowledge into everyday practice” (Bauman, Leoncini 2018, p. 98).

Also educators point to the currently dominant pragmatic approach of society to knowledge. People “today are looking for knowledge that is detailed and useful in specific professional circumstances. They are more oriented to ‘qualifications’ and ‘skills’ than to ‘knowledge’, more to ‘practice’ than ‘theory’ (Melosik 2000, p. 205). Knowledge, skills and qualifications are incomparably more instrumental than autotelic.

The contemporary human being learns not in order to know; not to be; not to act; not to be with others, but above all to have a good job and professional position, a home, a car, etc. Meanwhile, the potential of a human being which could be used to repair the future remains completely untapped. Harald Welzer (2016, p. 159–164), using the example of the fight against climate change, points to a combination of causes that hinder perspective thinking and action. First of all, there is an excessively extended time structure between causes and consequences, which discourages action, because in the near future the effects will in any case remain unnoticed. The lack of a clear causal relation dilutes political responsibility: the “victims” will only find out in the future that they are victims. Secondly, the causes of phenomena and problems are complex and dispersed, and if “everything is connected with everything, it seems that there is no chance of obtaining any kind of diagnosis, let alone applying some kind of remedial actions”. Thirdly, there is no comprehensive strategy for coping with global problems. Negotiations and agreements between the powers do not lead to any real action; they only serve to tantalize public opinion with promises of overcoming crises. Fourthly, for most people, globalization is an abstract phenomenon, incomprehensible and far beyond their cognitive abilities and competences. The latter argument in particular poses a challenge to pedagogy, of which “the power as a scientific discipline” – as Bogusław Śliwerski emphasizes (2006, p. VII) – “is proved by the fact that it reflexively, with great distance and seriousness of reason, absorbs novelties appearing in social sciences and humanities, reacting almost immediately to social and political changes in our contemporary societies and facing their challenges and hopes”.

Diploma as an illusion of success

Despite the low usefulness of knowledge acquired in formal education, also in Poland, the following phenomena have spread: “the diploma disease” (Dore 1976), “educational expansion” (Mikiewicz 2014), “educational boom” (Sadura 2012). The desired diploma is considered to be a ‘letter of authentication’ (Collins 1979), a pass to the world of safe people and winners and striving to obtain it really means “fighting for a good life” (Melosik 2000, p. 203). “While in past people judged each other by looking at their origins, now diplomas on the wall are what matters” (Bregman 2018, p. 196). However, despite the apparent “inflation of school titles” (Bourdieu 2005, p. 181), formal education – as e.g. Ulrich Beck (2004, p. 227) notes – has not become unnecessary at all. On the contrary, without qualifications and diplomas there is no career in the future at all. It is becoming common knowledge that diplomas and qualifications are less and less sufficient but are also increasingly necessary to achieve the desired professional positions”. A paradox emerges, where on the one hand, diplomas are no longer a guarantee of success and, on the other — they are necessary to dream of success at all. Without them – speaking the language of sport – from the start we have an impossible handicap to make up for, we lose a game with a walkover, „throw a white towel”, not even taking up the gauntlet.

Zygmunt Bauman (2012a, p. 79) removes every doubt. He is convinced that the belief in a diploma as a guarantee of joining the group of winners is already unfounded today, and “more and more graduates put university diplomas in a drawer among other family heirlooms and are satisfied with work that does not require special qualifications”. High grades, solid education and an increasingly richer CV do not help in satisfying ambitions. Desired positions do not await the graduates from institutions of higher education. By completing next internships, apprenticeships, courses and trainings, they can only count on receiving a job, but not on the job matching their qualifications and expectations. However, “the importance of higher education and diplomas in individual differentiation and stratification of societies will not diminish in the future. The hierarchy of individual universities is likely to play an increasingly important role in this respect” (Gromkowska-Melosik, Gmerek 2008, p. 34). This phenomenon in the Polish educational system was noticed by, among others, Zbigniew Kwieciński (2010) and Henryk Domański (2010), calling it “new educational inequalities”.

Diplomas from elite universities can guarantee success, while others will retain their sentimental value or increase frustration and disappointment. On

the other hand, the expectations of the multitude of well-educated youth may be of transformational significance. It can be assumed that their ambitions and claims will become an origin of change and an impulse to create an alternative order, which would be a positive result of the growing level of education of western population. It is possible that Paul Mason (2015, p. 29) is right when she says that “we need a comprehensive transformation of the system. The best educated generation in human history will not accept such high inequalities and sluggish development in the future.”

Disagreement with the marketization of education

The negation of the neoliberal approach to education is quite common among Polish educators. There is consensus on the negative consequences of neoliberal policies for the education system and the obligation to protect it against market processes (see, among others, Potulicka, Rutkowiak 2010; Szahaj 2015; Śliwerski 2015). There is also a large scope of opportunities for debates about educational institutions, questions about school, university and other places where people gather experience, interact and learn. If they are to learn throughout their lives, the tasks and structures of the classic organizers of educational offers must also change. “School will never again be the only treasury of wisdom, but it may still be an important place to seek it [...]” (Skrzypczak 2006, p. 65). However, changes must be rational and serve society and not the interests of the authorities or business groups – as critics of modern universities stress and insist that it should not cancel its long and rich tradition, succumbing to immediate pressure and betraying its mission. In the dominant narrative, also political and educational, the market is considered to be “a force capable of colonizing every sphere of human activity, including the academic one” (Stankiewicz 2014, p. 110). People of science are above all demanding to free universities from economic pressure of sponsors and their influence on the nature of research activity, which should serve purposes other than to multiply the funds they invest (Brzeziński 2010).

Bauman takes a similar stance, criticizing the strategy of reducing spending on higher education in western countries, the increase in tuition fees and the expansion of private education. He identifies cuts in spending on education with a dramatic decline in the position of European civilization; with a vision of marginalization and peripheralization of the Old Continent. A direct consequence of this policy is a reduction in the number of jobs at universities and the abandonment of non-commercial research projects. A much more socially severe effect will be an increase in social inequalities and “the

greater inequality in society seems to increase people's fears about social valuation as it makes social status more relevant" (Wilkinson, Pickett 2011, p. 60). Families in a worst situation will show even greater restraint concerning investing in the education of their children, for fear of growing debt and the need to repay long-term, often life-long, loans. The risk of wasting money will be too great, which is why a significant proportion of parents from socially disadvantaged backgrounds will resign from sending their children to expensive private schools. Bauman (2012b, p. 219) concludes: the "tripling of tuition fees will inevitably decimate young people from disadvantaged areas affected by social and cultural deprivation", leading to the impoverishment of society "by a growing number of potential diamonds who have been denied polishing". He has been consistently calling on decision-makers to support public education and to make education available to everyone, regardless of their origin as well as economic and social status.

Guy Standing (2014, p. 153), a popularizer of the term "precariat" describing the new social class, removes every doubt: "the neoliberal state has for some time been transforming the education system, making it a permanent part of the market society. Thus, it shifts the role of education towards the formation of 'social capital and preparation for work'. This is one of the most disgusting aspects of globalization. The author estimates that "commodification of education is a social disease" (Standing 2014, p. 160). Equally convincing is Joseph Stiglitz (2015, p. 440), who – among many proposals for the transformation of the socio-economic system – calls for broadening access to education, which is the main mechanism of social advancement: "we can move in the opposite direction to the one we are moving [...] but it will require a collective, national effort". The economist Thomas Piketty (2018, p. 82) has the same opinion about the chances of system repair, this time in the context of the French model: "experience shows that it is possible to introduce greater transparency and equality into our education system, while maintaining all its strengths". Therefore, there are not only alternative directions of thinking about education, but also real strategies for the development of public education.

In lieu of an ending. Faith in education

Zygmunt Bauman does not outline an optimistic vision of the future, because it is difficult to hope in the future when reality is full of antagonisms and dysfunctions: "today, disability and humiliation, besides growing social inequality and weakening solidarity, are the main causes of moral devastation and the source of social conflicts (Bauman 2010, p. 175). He estimates that

“nowadays we are rather afraid of the future, having lost faith that somehow, collectively, we will manage to alleviate its cruelty and make it less frightening and repulsive and slightly more user-friendly” (Bauman 2018, p. 101).

Yet Bauman’s message can also be read as an appeal not to give up and not to lose hope. He himself sees opportunities and chances to make the world more friendly and bearable. One option is education that promotes commitment, openness and solidarity. These values were constantly and consistently demanded by Bauman. His attitude as a committed researcher can be described – using Gramsci’s (1950) expression – as “pessimism of the intellect, but optimism of the will”.

Attempts to read the writings of the eminent sociologist not only allow for a deeper recognition of the deficits and contradictions of the world; they also clarify the educational wilderness. Bauman’s concepts do not provide answers to all important pedagogical questions, but they always constitute valuable analytical material. His stances on educational strategies and pedagogical practices contain impulses for action, reflection and further research. Bauman’s comment is encouraging (2012a, p. 38):

It seems that the possibilities of influence of the modern education system are indeed limited and that it increasingly complies with the rules of the consumer market, yet its transforming power may be so great that it can be counted among the promising factors of such a revolution.

In other work, Bauman (2000b, p. 168) adds: “pedagogy must somehow swim against the current”. This statement should accompany it on a daily basis and, what is more, remind us that “all discussions on the subjects of education, Polish humanities and upbringing should take place taking into account all the transformations happening to us, as well as the conviction that in the postmodern world humanistic values are threatened” (Faron 2006, p. 34). Above all, however, as Albert Camus’ maxim says: “Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present” – humanity cannot afford passivity, delay, sluggishness. Neither precise maps nor clear signposts will help when there is no (political, social, community) will to move towards right direction, starting “here” and “now” from learning how to practice democracy.

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