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## Ukrainians' experience of school evaluation in Poland

**ABSTRACT:** This article is about the opinion of Ukrainian citizens about assessment and education in Poland and Ukraine. Respondents address the issue of differences and similarities between the school in our country and Ukraine. They consider parental support and the importance of assessing in the child's further career whether the assessment translates into the child's fate. In addition to statistical summaries, I provided qualitative data, i.e. some statements of the respondents, their opinions. In my opinion, this gives a better picture of education in Poland and Ukraine, allows a different perspective on people from Ukraine working in Poland.

**KEY WORDS:** The importance of evaluation, Poland and Ukraine, qualitative research.

### Introduction

Evaluation is an extremely important component of the doings of not only teachers, although it is to them that mistakes and lack of objectivity in this regard are repeatedly attributed. The general accusation made against teachers is as follows: the teacher does not treat the student subjectively when grading. Therefore, it is not infrequently expected of those who make assessments to take into account the so-called social factor in their evaluation, i.e. commitment, effort. But such a demand, formulated in this way, carries a lot of inconveniences, because rewarding in the assessment of "willingness and effort" instead of actual knowledge, does not necessarily translate into the quality of this knowledge and skills. The teaching side is sometimes left to vague considerations, as there are no top-down recommendations: how a particular teacher at School A or School B is to evaluate a given task. The range of as-

assessments can vary. Only external tests are averaged, applicable to all passers and graded in the same way. When graded by a teacher, a student is usually stimulated when he or she understands and approves of the teacher's purpose. Therefore, getting information about the results is essential for him. This is part of reinforcing motivation in the form of assessments and building self-evaluation on this basis. Therefore, attempts to abolish school grades have not become widespread (Kozłowska, Kozuh, 1999, p. 14).

Important in this context seems to be the support of parents, guardians for children who, going to school, will be evaluated. For each child, parents are the main social environment that meets his emotional needs. Failure to meet these needs leads to personality disorders. Maslov specifies that when there is a choice (in a child) between giving up security and giving up development-security usually wins. Not every parent realizes this, not every parent is ready to fully accept the child. Many parents focus on themselves, on meeting their own needs, the child's needs are met somewhere along the way. One theory that attempts to determine the differences in educational attainment achieved by young people of different social backgrounds is the differences in value systems that are acquired in childhood, and are related to social background (Pohoski 1984, p. 162). This theory states that children from the so-called "social lowlands" have a lower level of career aspirations, for which they place more importance on the economic sphere. Another theory holds that the secondary impact of the stratification system (the effect of social background on aspirations) is stronger than the primary impact, that is, cultural differences that depend on social background.

The phenomenon of, "labeling" also affects the level of teacher expectations. Assigned to a student, "label" modifying teacher expectations of the student can dramatically affect the level of his performance and self-esteem. Estimates of this effect fluctuate, but it can be assumed that on average it leads to a reduction in grades of about 15%. Of course, on a case-by-case basis it can amount to much more (Rimm 1994, p. 114). Many authors, including Brophy or Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox, Gillham, believe that the factors associated with failure have their cause in social development, when the child experienced failure. Most often in family upbringing, sometimes early institutional upbringing. A child is not allowed to succeed because the path to success does not meet with the approval of the caregiver or parent.

I would also like to raise another issue, namely the damage that punishment, among other things, can cause. I am referring here to the NSSI (non-suicidal self-injury) factor, that is, the occurrence of self-injury without suicidal intentions. This aspect has been researched in many Western countries, in

Poland I have not come across compiled results of indigenous studies. Stroking or reinforcement is not only an element (attribute) of parents, environment. Their ways of motivating students to learn also exist in kindergarten, school institutions.

### Teaching Ukrainian children in a Polish school

If judging is so important, how do people from another country, relatively unknown but present in our living space, that is, Ukrainians, see them?

When the USSR collapsed and Ukraine came into being, many of the country's residents were able to move outside the country, something that had not been so easy or simple before. According to official statistics, there are officially 1.27 million Ukrainians living in Poland. Unofficially, there are certainly many more. Most of them live in larger cities, with 12 percent of Ukrainian women planning to raise a child in Poland. As Belsat reports: "more Ukrainians live in Poland (56 percent) than Ukrainian women (44 percent). "Men are more numerous in small towns and rural areas, while women are concentrated in large urban centers. Researchers link this fact to the fact that in big cities there is more demand in the service sector, which is dominated by women – in restaurants, stores, beauty salons and health care. In the provinces, on the other hand, there is a shortage of manual labor – in construction and farms, among others" (Belsat 2020). This data is the most authoritative, as phone logs to the network in Poland and Ukraine were analyzed, as well as the Cyrillic operating system.

The nature of emigration varies, however, the majority, is a short-term model. Why is this model dominant? Probably, because it is: „Geographic proximity translating into a relatively low cost of transportation links and short travel time between Poland and Ukraine, as well as existing institutional conditions: a system of statements promoting temporary employment among Eastern migrants, including Ukrainians; a work permit system and visa regime also favor short-term migration" (Brunarska et al., 2012, p. 16).

Foreigners, including those from Ukraine, have the right to study in institutions in Poland, which is stipulated in the Law on the Educational System. If such a person does not speak Polish, such children (students) must be organized additional language instruction and remedial classes for a period of one year. In the school year ending in 2017 alone, according to the Ministry of Education, there were 4539 Ukrainian students in various types of schools (IOW 2020). According to Syrnyk: Under current Polish law, the state is under no obligation to organize for Ukrainian students to learn their native lan-

guage. It should be noted that in the past, when organizing or enrolling students in inter-school Ukrainian language learning teams (a form provided for Polish citizens belonging to the Ukrainian national minority), citizenship was not given special attention. For example, the Inter-school Ukrainian Language Learning Team in Warsaw was organized in 2006, which was established mainly with Ukrainian children in mind and enabled them to learn their native language until 2011/2012 (Syrnyk 2017, p. 56).

If a parent goes abroad for a longer period of time, including with his or her child, then according to Polish law and EU regulations, such a child has the right to carry out compulsory education in the country to which his or her parents have gone. The regulations I mentioned above also apply to people who live in Poland, but are not from Poland, were not born here. Here we are dealing with the principle that says: the implementation of compulsory education and schooling is to be carried out in accordance with the legislation of the country on whose territory the child resides.

Parents of Ukrainian children have had different experiences in this educational experience than Polish parents. Hence, at the intersection of different cultures, customs, traditions, experiences, there may be various clashes, comparisons. This seemed interesting to me, so I decided to do research on Ukrainians living in Poland, sometimes having children in Polish schools.

## Reserch

The research was made possible with the help of Pavel Zapenski<sup>1</sup>. Thanks to his numerous contacts, I was able to obtain research material from 11 people, which will be subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The research tool was my interview questionnaire, translated into Ukrainian by Pavel Zapensky. The main objective of the study was to answer the questions:

- What is the respondents' opinion on grading in Ukraine?
- To what extent is parental support significant in overcoming school problems?

The respondents come from different localities in Ukraine, living mainly in Lubuskie and Wielkopolskie provinces. They are people of different ages, with different life and work experience. The respondents could (if they wanted to) introduce themselves, give their age, where they are from, if they didn't feel like it they didn't have to give information about themselves. My questions were answered by such people: Шарпата Галина, 30 років, місто Чернівів,

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Дібрівна Л.М. 45 р., проживаю в Україні, народилась на Україні, Тетяна Сотник – корекційний педагог, Віталій Івасів. Долина, Україна, Микола Чебанов, Дячок Світлана. Україна, 39 років.

Most of these people have children studying in Polish schools, some of whom went to school in Ukraine.

### Fair grading and parental suport

Of course, the concept of “fairness” is very relative, especially in the grading process. What does fairness in grading mean for a teacher, for a student, for his parent? How many people, so many answers. But everyone who has experienced evaluation has different feelings about this issue, namely: was I/ we evaluated fairly or not. So what are the respondents' feelings in this regard regarding their grades at school in Ukraine in the youngest grades?

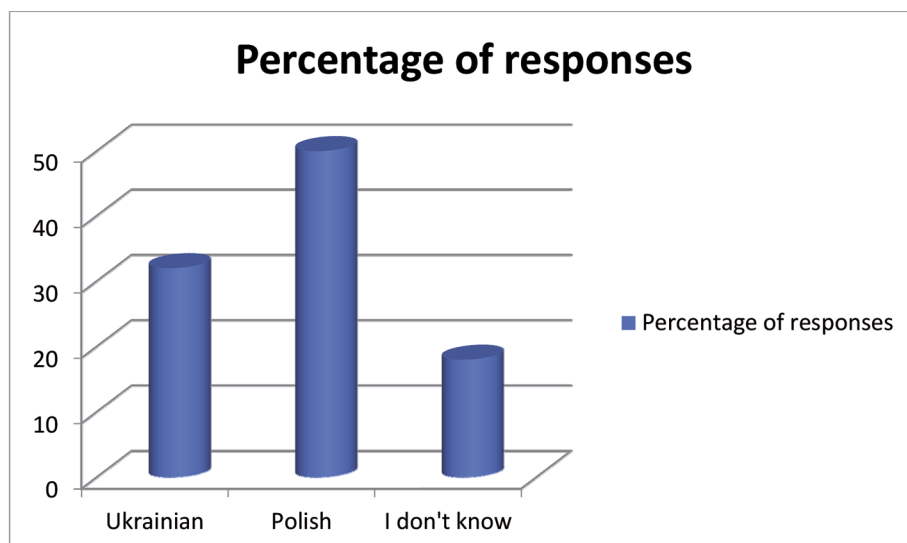


Chart 1. Respondents' feelings about grading, percentage dat

In personal notes, you can read such opinions:

- Я вважаю, що вчителі були справедливими в моєму оцінюванні/ I think the teachers were fair in my grading
- За час мого навчання в школі, не всі вчителі були справедливими до мене/ During my time at the school, not all teachers were fair to me
- Вчителі були скоріше справедливі/ Teachers were rather fair
- Здебільшого так/ For the most part, yes

It is to be welcomed that the majority of respondents have positive memories of their experiences with teachers and the evaluation itself. However, not everyone feels this way. Some of them, which is almost 20 percent, have bad experiences in connection with school and grading. Relating this to Polish students and my research on a sample of almost 800 respondents (Zajdel 2019), the percentage of students having a bad experience with grading was:

- 12 percent considered grading in grades I-III SP to be fair,
- 76 percent as unfair,
- 4 percent had no opinion on the subject,
- and rather unfair by 8 percent.

Of course, the Ukrainian sample is small, but nevertheless this comparison is uninteresting for a Polish school.

So how does parental support compare?

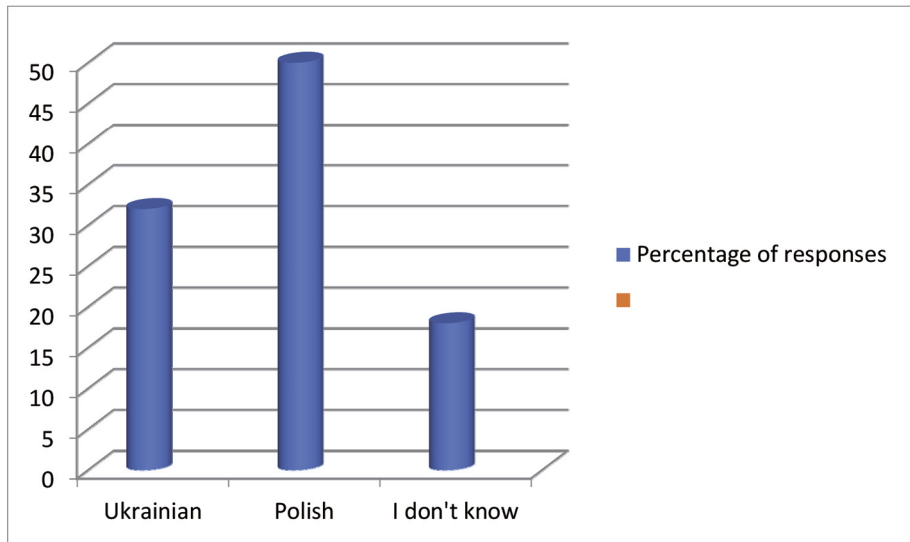


Chart 2. Respondents' opinions on the support of Polish and Ukrainian parents

This question caused a certain discrepancy in the picture of parents' support of Polish and Ukrainian children studying at school. In the details of the survey questionnaires one can read that:

- Підтримка з боку батьків дуже важлива для дитини. Батьки в Україні часто більш зосереджені на оцінках. Система освіти у Польщі, а відтак і орієнтація батьків, більше направлена на дитину, її особисті досягнення та інтереси, а не на високі оцінки за будь-яку ціну/ Parental support is very important for a child. Parents in

Ukraine often focus more on grades. The education system in Poland, and therefore the parental orientation, is more focused on the child, his or her personal achievements and interests than on high grades at all costs.

- Дуже важливою! Проте не потрібно перегинати палку. Думаю, польські/ Very important! I think in Polish
- Матеріальне забезпечення навчального процесу в Польщі є незрівнянно краще і з боку батьків і з боку держави. Підтримка морально-психологічна з боку батьків є дуже важливою в житті кожної дитини. Вважаю недоречним порівняння батьківської підтримки в різних країнах, бо то дуже індивідуальна справа/Financial support of the educational process in Poland is much better from both parents and the state. Parental support is very important in the life of every child. I think it is inappropriate to compare parental support in different countries, because it is a very individual thing
- Не можу сказати, котрі батьки краще підтримують своїх батьків – польські чи українські. Але можу з впевненістю сказати, що так, підтримка дитини зі сторони батьків повинна бути. Батьки повинні на власному досвіді демонструвати, що освіта є необхідна. Але не забуваймо про те, що дитина також має право вибору. А отже, батьки повинні приймати і розуміти ініціативу дитини/I can't say which parents support their parents better – Polish or Ukrainian. But I can confidently say that yes, there should be parental support. Parents should demonstrate in their experience that education is necessary. But let's not forget that the child also has the right to choose. Therefore, parents should accept and understand the child's initiative
- Підтримка дитини, яка ходить до школи від батьків дуже важлива. Нажаль не маю досвіду,щоб докладніше відповісти на це запитання/ Supporting the child attending the parent school is very important, unfortunately I do not have the experience to answer this question in more detail
- Так, дитину завжди потрібно підтримувати. Я думаю, що батьки однаково підтримують дітей, як в Україні, так і в Польщі/ Yes, your child should always be supported. I think that parents equally support their children, both in Ukraine and Poland
- Вважаю, що надважливою. Підтримувати слід у всьому, навіть, якщо щось не виходить, незалежно хто ти за національністю/ I think this is very important. You should support everything, even if something goes wrong, regardless of nationality

From these private opinions emerges a picture of people who care about supporting the child always, because it is obvious that a parent supports his child. I was very pleased by this positive response to my question. How it will be in reality is another question, but given the commitment of those answering, I would not have concerns about it.

**Better grades vs. happiness?  
How do respondents see their grades in later life,  
and do they have any significance in their future careers?**

My next questions were about the feelings of the respondents. That is, I was interested in whether, in the opinions of the respondents, better grades bring more joy to the child, the student?

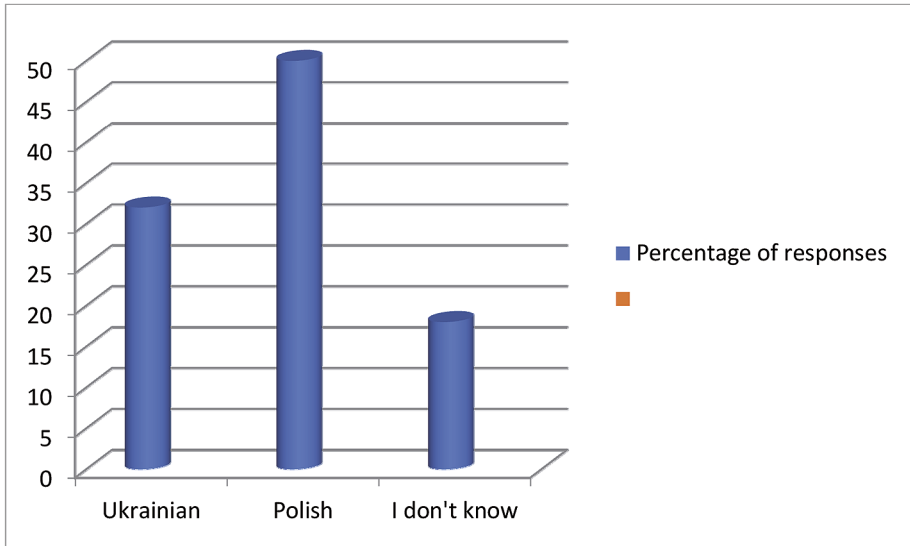


Chart 3. How much better grades make a student happier in class, percentage data

I must admit that this result surprised me. It seemed to me that students want to be well evaluated, and that a good grade gives them happiness. And that the parents of these children think similarly in this regard. In a Polish study (Zajdel, 2019), 12 percent of students completing grades I-III felt unhappy about their grades. What were the respondents' motivations in this regard:

- В шкільні роки оцінки були для мене важливими, тому так. Гарні оцінки робили мене щасливішою/ In school, grades were important to me, so yes. Good grades made me happy



- Гадаю, так/ I think so
- Не завжди/ Not always
- Гарні оцінки = гарний настрій і навпаки. Однак, оцінки не є запорукою щастя загалом/ Good grades = good mood and vice versa. However, grades are not generally the key to happiness

I found these answers challenging. Hence another question about successes and failures in later life, how much grades matter here.

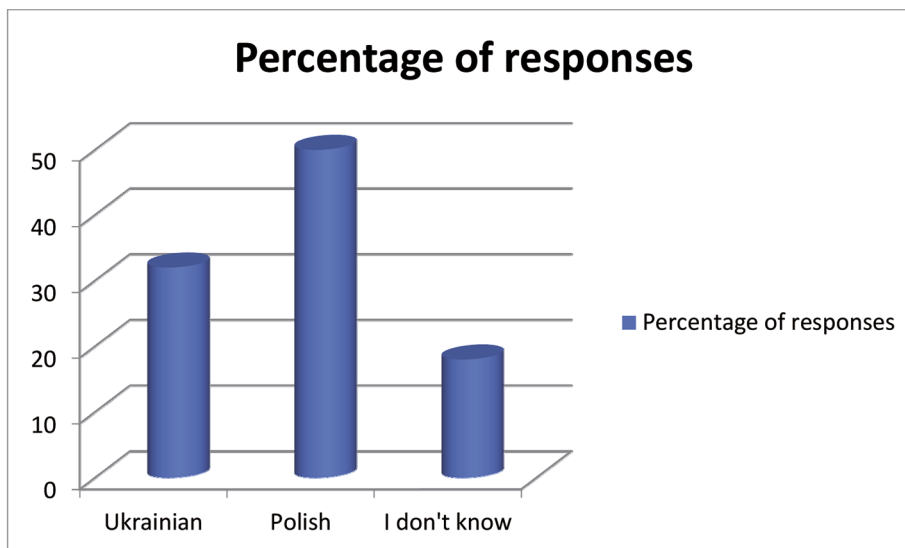


Chart 4. Successes and failures in later life, and grades received, percent data

The responses are mixed. In the Polish study (Zajdel, 2019), the rate of those who had a firm belief that the grades they received mattered later in life was 52 percent. What arguments did the respondents use?

- У деяких випадках погана підтримка з боку учителів і постійне недооцінювання можливостей учня можуть вплинути на занижену самооцінку людини у подальшому житті. В той же час завищені оцінки не допомагають досягнути успіху і самореалізуватися у майбутньому/In some cases, poor support from teachers and constant underestimation of a student's abilities can affect low self-esteem in later life. At the same time, overestimations do not help achieve success and self-realization in the future
- Це залежить від людини. Її психології, переконань та цінностей/ It depends on the person. Her psyche, beliefs and values

- Знаю особисто кілька осіб які мали слабі оцінки в школі але мають успіх в житті дорослим. Але вважаю що оцінювання в школі має вплив на формування особистості/ I personally know several people who had poor grades in school, but are successful in adult life. However, I think that grades in school have an impact on the formation of personality
- Вважаю, що оцінка не є вагомим показником. Значення має те, як ми можемо акумулювати свої знання та застосувати їх на практиці. З власного досвіду знаю людей, які мали чудові успіхи в школі, університеті, але в житті практично нічого не досягли/I think evaluation is not a good indicator. What matters is how we can accumulate our knowledge and put it into practice. From my own experience, I know people who have been very successful in school, university, but have achieved almost nothing in life
- Я гадаю ні як, по оцінкам отриманим в школі оцінюють процес та результати діяльності учня, однак це не стосуються його особистості/ I do not think how the estimates received in school assess the process and performance of the student, but this does not apply to his personality
- На мою думку, оцінювання показує на що слід звернути увагу і прикласти зусиль. В подальшому це мотивує на досягнення своїх цілей/ In my opinion, the assessment indicates that you should pay attention and make an effort. In the future, it motivates you to achieve your goals. As can be seen, the sentiments of Ukrainian and Polish respondents, differ slightly.

### **Differences between education in Poland and Ukraine**

People from Ukraine living in Poland have encountered Polish education. They often send their children to Polish schools, have heard about our education, have dealt with students (being a babysitter, for example). What, then, is the respondents' impression of whether education in Poland and Ukraine is similar or different.

What do the respondents justify their opinion with? According to them, it is mainly about:

- думаю, що відмінності є/ But I think there are differences
- Українська освіта є багато в чому схожа до польської. Це пов'язано з тим, що в процесі реформування системи освіти, ми запозичували багато з польської системи освіти. Так освіта в Україні стала більш

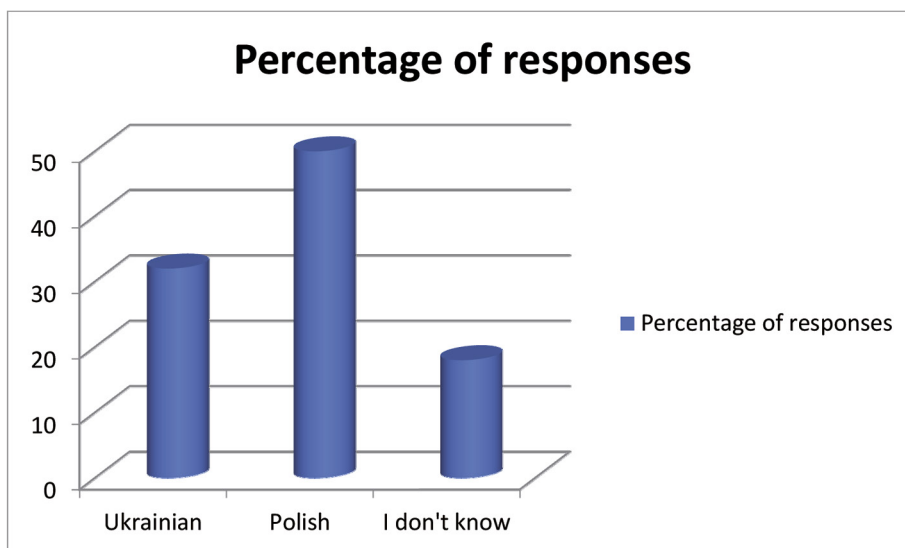


Chart 5. Differences between education in Poland and Ukraine, percentage data

демократичною/Ukrainian education is largely similar to Polish education. This is due to the fact that during the reform of the education system we borrowed a lot from the Polish education system. Thus, education in Ukraine has become more democratic

- Школа вища відрізняється, бо ма кращу матеріально-технічну базу і не ма корупції/ The school is different because it has a better material base and there is no corruption
- Так. Але система освіти українська мені імпонує більше/ Yes. But the Ukrainian education system impresses me more
- Не надто гарно знаю тонкощі польської освіти, але вона здається схожою з системою НУШ. Фінансування польської освіти краще/ I am not very familiar with the details of Polish education, but it seems to be similar to the NUSH system. Funding for Polish education is better.

Of course, a few years in Poland is not always the right amount of time to form an opinion about Polish education. In addition, a Ukrainian student in a Polish school, will always be a “stranger”, until he learns the language, the process of entering the group will not be successfully completed. This may be associated with a bad feeling of such a student, so that the view of school in Poland and education, will not always be positive.

The last issue I was interested in was whether, given a choice between the (theoretical) Ukrainian and Polish school systems, which institution would the respondents choose (select) and why.

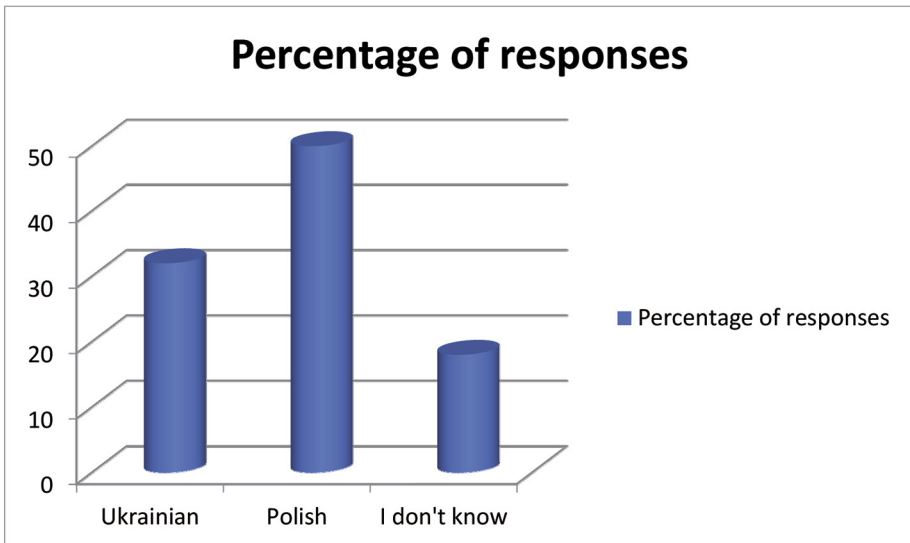


Chart 6. Respondents' choice of school: Polish school versus Ukrainian school. Percentage data

The results were surprising. What motivated the respondents' choice?

- Хотілось би спробувати польський варіант для порівняння/ I would like to try the Polish one for comparison
- Якби в мене був вибір, я б скоріше обрав навчання в польській школі. Це пов'язано з тим,що в українській школі існує багато недопрацювань в питанні доступності освіти та якості навчання/ If I had a choice, I would prefer to study in a Polish school. This is because there are many shortcomings in the Ukrainian school in terms of accessibility and quality of education
- В школі польській, бо в українській я вже вчився/ In a Polish school, because I was already learning in Ukrainian
- Обрала б навчання в українській школі. Вважаю, що українська система освіти дає гарні знання для тих, хто має бажання навчатися. Але навчання у польській школі було б новим цікавим досвідом/ I would choose to study in a Ukrainian school. I think the Ukrainian education system provides good knowledge for those who want to study. But studying in a Polish school would be a fun new experience.

### An attempt to summarize

Assessment is perhaps the most important factor in a student's career. A great deal depends on it, both here and now, when the student is learning,

and it matters in the later years of education, and especially after graduation, when the student is making decisions: what to do with himself or herself next, what career path and profession to choose.

Surveyed Ukrainians going back in time recognize that they were evaluated fairly by teachers, which is a valuable experience in contrast to the Polish students I surveyed earlier. There, the declarations were much lower. All Ukrainian respondents believe that children should be supported during their education, because it matters to them. And that's why more than 50 percent of them believe that good grades mean better well-being for their children. Those with the opposite view on this issue are almost 30 percent. But looking into adulthood, also 30 percent believe that career, success in life does not relate to the grades obtained. But 70 percent have a different opinion, and this means that, however, the grade determines future career choices and the success achieved. This is what the respondents think.

60 percent of respondents see differences between education in Poland and Ukraine, only 20 percent do not. So if they had a choice, half would choose Polish education, 32 percent would choose Ukrainian, and 18 percent have no opinion on the subject.

Why do they declare this? Probably by comparison. They themselves were participants in Ukrainian education, so Polish schooling interests them. They point to its transparency, the quality of education. Are these the only selection criteria? We won't know until the end, as these are only declarations here and now. But when there is a need to choose, there is no such choice in Poland. There are no Ukrainian schools, there are Polish ones, so a Ukrainian child must fulfill compulsory education in a Polish school.

I think this short article will give the reader some insight into the problem of education and assessment in Poland and Ukraine. What are the similarities, but also the differences? It is a Ukrainian-only view, but it is about a Polish school, so it is an interesting experience.

I did my research before the war in Ukraine. It would be worthwhile to be tempted to repeat it, when so many Ukrainian citizens have settled in Poland, how do they now see Polish schooling and grading?

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