

## **EDUCATION VERSUS THE NEEDS OF TODAY'S EDUCATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

### The Subjectivity of Man as a Challenge from New Individualism

Today's concept of Individualism in social sciences is most generally referred to the 'individualistically' organized society, or to the 'individualistically' molded individual. The separation of those two areas – viz. the world of society and the world of the individual – makes only an analytical sense, since both the above-mentioned areas remain in a close interrelation. In the analysis of the social world, the concept of individualism appears in works of sociologists in various perspectives; however, it is usually analyzed in the individualism – collectivism opposition. The 'individualistic' society is thus chiefly examined in opposition to 'collectivist' rules of society organization. The individualism – collectivism opposition is the source of fundamental theoretical models of the concept of individualism. Instead, to the 'individualistic' individual is usually attributed the autonomy in decision making and molding evaluative criteria. Individualism is also conceived as a specific strategy of the individual aimed at becoming adapted to the world.

The issues related to individualism and subjectivity of the individual in social life have been enhanced by the modernity, a period of building industrial societies, when creative and original actions of Man were to serve not only to people themselves, but also to general progress.

A consequence of that process is a considerable variety of attitudes, life styles, choices as well as *modi operandi* of members of today's societies, which is observed in the late modernity. From the sociological perspective, the said variety seems to be one of the most important effects and symptoms of individualism. Individualism is treated as the main component in the process of modernization, as a condition for the development, and at the same time, in it discerned is the causative factor of a large number of negatively evaluated processes which occur in the late modernity.

And again, the issues pertinent to individualism and Man's subjectivity trigger many discussions and arouse a vivid interest in the Arts, which is thoroughly justified in the analysis of today's Man and his place in the world. A radical change to the individual's status commenced in the second half of the 20th century; J C. Kaufmann (2004) labeled it 'the second individualist revolution'. It expressed in the demand for human works and initiative, the skill of thinking and cooperation on both the local and global scales. The paramount idea, presently emerging in today's meta-cultural discourses is described as 'a paradigm of subjects' and 'paradigm of coexistence', whereas the model of subjective relations between Man and the world and of self-regulation may be determined as a cultural standard of the education of the individual and her/his preparation for playing various social roles. A variety and variability of roles entail from each of us new adaptive skills and flexibility of action, yet with the skill of defending our own identity.

A change constitutes not only the basic feature of the present time, but is also the fundamental category of its description. Each of us will agree with the statement that the world in which we live is subject to continuous changes, whereas '(...) the life in this world is like a rushing Moloch' (A. Giddens, 2001, p... 40). Man continues to face new challenges, and must be open to a large number of various possibilities, make them subject to reflections and eventually, look for new solutions. This new educational contest - in conjunction with new needs of supporting the development of the individual - will demand that school should refuse the educational model of adaptive nature, rigid syllabuses, codified procedures and goals to pursue. An adaptive model of learning – teaching is no longer socially useful, viz. it no longer helps a young person either understand the present time or become prepared for the future.

Nowadays, the basic tool used by the individual to control their own life is reflexiveness. Knowledge and thinking, reflexiveness and rationality constitute the pivot of civilization-making

processes (J-C. Kaufmann, 2004). In a diversified world in which culture no longer provides custom-made patterns of personality and behavior, Man has to develop his own reflexive ways of defense and of molding his own personality. Reflexiveness is one of ways of coping with new, out-of-standard situations. The question is not only this form of reflectiveness which is a reflection on one's own actions, but reflexiveness as an effect arising from a critical attitude to one's own knowledge, which constitutes the foundation for understanding the world and one's own activity in the world.

Nowadays, the concentration on 'common culture' is acknowledged as one of the main areas of comprehensive education of Man. The authors of the European Commission's Report entitled 'The White Paper on education and training. Teaching and learning – towards the learning society' (1995) do underline that only a solid general preparation may protect the individual from manipulations and undesired external control, and should then provide him/her with some instruments of critical reception of information, a comprehensive examination and creative adaptation. 'The world can be understood when one can perceive its sense, will conceive its functioning and find one's own way in this' (ibid, p. 26). Therefore, the fundamental school function should be seen as enabling a young man to enter culture, to utilize its resources in building one's own subjectivity, autonomy and personal relations with the world.

The condition of the autonomy of the individual and of being free is continuous learning and extending one's own possibilities of cognitive control, making one's own world model and determining one's own needs.' Freedom allows looking ahead, but it arises from its understanding of external reality and one's own individual identity [...](A. Giddens, 2001, p. 67). Freedom, autonomy, creativeness, self-fulfillment are great challenges, a symptom of mental and social transformations, typical of the entire age of late modernity. On the one hand, the present time with its attributes means threats, but on the other – it will make the individual enriched. Nowadays, Man is compelled to take control on his own life by himself, on his own subjectivity and the skill of creative adaptation. In dissipation and variability, Man has to learn to choose what is right and useful to him, to be able to go by values and moral principles in his life. A reasonable and admirable life which can be described in the terms of life style is a project and obligation taken up by today's individual towards themselves and others. Correct life choices entail a vast range of independence and responsibility to which a young man must be prepared. The development of one's own subjectivity and autonomy is the main remedy for constructing a successful and satisfactory life with others in this hard world.

It should be reminded that according to today's theories of socialization, the subjective being of Man in the world is not an attribute of Man, but it will rather become an attribute as the individual is developing. The individual will mold their subjectivity in interactions determined socially and culturally due to a graduate development in the skills of integration of their own 'Self', and the management their own intentionality and activity. Subjectivity is a historically determined, cultural way of controlling continuous individual-environment interrelations. (N. Elias, 2008). It holds the functions of mental integration and social adaptation. In other words, it can be said that subjectivity is the individual's infrastructure which develops within the system of the individual's interrelations; it also not only makes a system of the aforesaid interrelations and responsibilities, but also controls this system. Subjectivity manifests itself in active participation in various dimensions of reality.

Does the school teach a young man cultural tools for shaping himself/herself? Does it teach them at all how to make good use of the miscellany of present time for making their own unique personalities? Does it teach the attitude of creative being in the reality subject to dynamic changes? Does it develop the subjectivity in a young man? With what kind of competence will the young man be endowed?

Competences of the individual vs. preparation for changes

The question about the role of today's school in preparing a young man for life in the

changing reality was set forward by J. Bruner in the study entitled “The Culture of Education”. Should the said preparation be aimed at creating individuality or at having the individual assimilated through the reproduction of culture? According to J. Bruner, the traditional stress laid upon the opposition between the development of Man and socialization through culture assimilation in various theories of education seems to be apparently contradictory. The support given to Man’s development is based upon the understanding of the nature of mind – nature of culture relation, whereas the concept of the development is strictly related with that of culture, and means chiefly a specific human way of developing natural predispositions and skills of Man. The process of individualization and socialization of the individual is aimed at broadening the space of his/her independence, initiative, personal choices and possibilities of action. The development of the individual’s self-regulation mechanisms and his/her endowment with proper competence, standards and norms allows them to pursue their own life objectives with advantage to social transformations.

The preparation of a young man not only for coping with the present time challenges, but also for utilizing some possibilities of shaping the conditions of good life as offered nowadays is of interest to researchers and politicians in many EU countries. Within the activities of the European Commission there have been scheduled some joint projects on identifying and determining such a range of competences which [i] would allow citizens to participate actively in the society of knowledge that is coming into existence and [ii] which are decisive for a success in their life. The problem is to elaborate a joint definition of competence in conformity with the expectations of Europeans and a selection of such types of competence which should be possessed by each European citizen. (Key competences, 2005). The selection of the said competences should regard not only the needs of economic growth and/or stabilization on the job market, but also an improvement in the quality of personal life and consolidation of interpersonal ties. Be also stressed that differences in the resources of competences lead to social divisions, income stratification, and thus to marginalization and social exclusion. If a society is divided into those who are, respectively, ‘rich in competence’ and ‘poor in competence’, this will intensify the contradictions typical of the society, in particular various aspects of rivalry, which diminishes the aspects of cooperation. The counterbalancing of interrelations of the tendencies said to secure on the one hand a high quality and efficiency of economy, and on the other – an equalization of life opportunities, solidarity and social justice – is related to seeking a new quality of education and molding people who are independent, enterprising and able to take a risk, or characterized by initiative or distinguishing themselves in a creative attitude. At the same time, the same people ought to be endowed with the skill of work group, distinguish themselves in level-headedness, solidarity and the sense of establishing a dialogue and active citizenship.

The first effects of the work of research panels from various countries within the field of elaborating joint assumptions of key competences will lead to the following conclusions:

There is no one universal definition of key competences;

Each attempt to define competences should indicate their potential advantages to the society and the individual as well, irrespective of the sex, social status, culture, race or language;

Key competences must conform with the values and rights of ethics, economy and culture;

The term of key competences is to mean something important and advantageous to both the individual and the society – ‘something which enables the individual to become successfully integrated with various social groups, and at the same time, to save his/her independence and skill of efficient acting in the known and the unknown environment, too’. (Key competences, page.14);

Key competences should also enable a continuous updating of knowledge and skills, viz. an updating which allows one to keep abreast of rapid development of civilization;

Key competences should constitute the foundation for preparation for performing diversified roles in one’s life, viz. the role of a job-holder, student, parent, tutor as well as of a participant in political and/or cultural life and of a leisure organizer.

Key competences are indispensable in one’s independent, responsible and successful life.

Apart from the types of competences defined beforehand, viz. reading with understanding, mathematical thinking, CT [computer technology] competence, communication competence (incl. foreign languages competences in particular), in the 1990s much attention was devoted to the determination of the competence labeled 'comprehensive' or 'interobjective' (E. C. Wragg, 1999). Those types of competences are not related to any branch of knowledge, but are applicable in various fields, and they may be described as 'cross-sectional'. The most important comprehensive skills include : language skills, problem solving, logical thinking, leadership, creativity, motivation, group work and learning skills. But apart from them, for a creative adaptation of Man in a dynamic and complex life space indispensable are personal and interpersonal competences. The definition of personal and social competences and their inclusion in the objectives of general education is another task to be assumed by the education authorities in the EU countries.

An example of understanding the semantic range of personal competences may be an attempt at their description as shown in the report of the authorities of the Flemish Community of Belgium (Competence, 2005, page. 56-60). This concept encompasses : self-control and self-regulation, incl. the sense of responsibility, skill of critical thinking, skill of reflection, making one's choice, skill of independent action, perseverance, self-confidence, a positive picture of oneself and tendency to self-development. Those are aspects ranked in the theory of psychology in the semantic range of subjectivity.

And therefore, nowadays, the development of Man's subjectivity becomes the pivotal issue of education. We would like to remind that the subjectivity is not given to Man by nature or bestowed from outside. This is a potential disposition, skill and possibility of an individual of 'being a subject'. This process is characterized with dynamicity, Man has to develop his own 'being a subject', and this process will last for the entire life. Subjectivity results from socialization, does not develop naturally; each individual entails social support in constructing one's own subjectivity and personal ties with the world. According to many concepts, subjectivity is seen as a status/ feature/ attribute. Then, 'being a subject' means being an autonomous author, viz. one who initiates and controls the course of their own actions through independent decisions made in line with one's knowledge and preferable order of values, and who distinguishes himself/herself in a relative independence of external influences. The subject is an active causative factor, an independent source of actions. Apart from activism, self-determination and autonomy, another attribute of the subject is rationality (judiciousness), ability to be responsible, awareness and self-awareness.

Social competences will need more accuracy in their definition. Their semantic range regards an active participation in the society with respect of its multicultural dimension and observance of the principles of equal opportunities, and will encompass communication competence and skills of cooperation. Therefore, social competences will refer to establishing and maintaining personal and professional relations through appropriate communication, group work, language skills and consideration for other cultures and traditions. A high level of social competences will cause an additional effect , viz. a display of personal competences, like self-esteem, motivation, perseverance or skill of taking the initiative. Particular personal and social competences are of essential importance within the sphere of personal and social life, social integration, participation in social life as well as in the economy based upon services. Those competencies are very useful in seeking jobs as well in conscious and active participation of the individual in the community to which he /she belongs.

Development of subjective and social competencies of the individual as the basic objective of education

Nowadays, education is treated as a tool for supporting Man's development and social change. The educational model based upon the functionalistic paradigm where effects are examined in the categories of reproduction and adaptation has lost its importance, and is no longer useful in designing educational reforms. As of today, stressed is the necessity that the school should depart

from the care of knowledge and instrumental skills of a pupil/ student in favor of an active attitude of a young man towards the world, supporting him in multiplying their own skills and life opportunities. In other words, today's school must not only abandon shaping a pupil/ student in line with the model of homo faber, but also to shift their actions towards the model of homo creators. A support for a student/ pupil in the development of their own key competencies should constitute the foundation for their preparation for further, successful development and for playing various and diversified roles in the adult life. The pivot of those competencies is personal and social competencies. The model of educational objectives should be of 'core' nature, viz. where the main objectives are subjective.

For the development of a subject, the elementary education is acknowledged as fundamental for the preliminary shaping of personal and social competencies of the individual. (J. Delors, 1998, P. Silcock, 1999). (In relation thereto, in the structure of educational objectives the central place should be occupied by objectives oriented towards autonomy, independence (of thinking, experiencing an action, making a choice etc), molding one's self-confidence, creativeness and imagination of a pupil / student, their skills of communication and co-operation. The school should develop skills, abilities and behavioral patterns aimed at managing one's own development and life-long education. The elementary education is a specific 'passport to life'; this is the time in which molded is the school career of a pupil / child and their future social status. In the time of elementary school, the child/pupil will be taught how to accomplish the feat of choosing good values which will set the direction towards 'negotiating with the world' and with oneself.

The category of subjectivity included as the fundament for the educational objectives will be decisive for the semantic and quality range of all elements of the educational system, it will change their understanding and the construction of practical educational actions adopted by a teacher. It is impossible to perform the assumptions of the subjective paradigm if predominant is the instrumental educational model based upon shaping [molding] Man. Education based upon the subjective paradigm rests mainly on the self-creation pattern and on supporting a young man in constructing their own subjectivity in social relations.

In Poland, the subjective paradigm and resulting key competencies constitute the foundation for a gradual reforming of education. The main objective of the reform implemented in 1999/2000 is :

- a change in the philosophy of education and teaching – switching from the positivist and instrumental concept of education and teaching towards the creative-and-subjective concept;
- a change to the learning contents – viz. departure from encyclopedic learning towards the development of individual potential of each pupil, development of their key competencies in order to be successfully involved in the social life;
- Promulgation of secondary and university level education;
- Extension of compulsory education;
- Equal educational opportunities for young generation;
- Improvement of the quality of teaching education;
- Promulgation of pre-school education
- Change to management procedures – decentralization, a large number of competencies pertinent to management and performance of educational programs should be handed over to schools.

The aforesaid objectives can indicate profound structural and platform transformations within the entire educational system, first implemented after the socio-political conversion in 1989. Another structural and platform reform of education was taken up in 2009. It is aimed at further equalization of educational opportunities of children, bringing the compulsory education age down to six years and at improving the educational performance. The expected effects were presented in educational documents as key competencies and resulting requirements of each level of education; especially, they constitute the foundation for the comprehensive elementary school education. Therefore, it is stressed that from the very beginning of education, attention must be paid to develop

in pupils attitudes which will be helpful in their further individual and social development, viz. honesty, reliability, responsibility, perseverance, self-esteem, regard for other people, cognitive interest, creativity, entrepreneurship, good manners, readiness for participation in culture, taking initiatives and group work. If a young man has acquired the aforesaid attributes, this should promote the development of social capital and democratic attitudes

Be also underlined that platform changes commence the expected change to educational practice, viz. a transformation of the teacher work and a change to the quality of everyday teachers' activities. (J. Bałachowicz, 2009). A departure from instrumental education in favor of subjective, constructivist education based upon the cooperation entails many assiduities and much work from teachers themselves. Only when teachers have overcome 'past time barriers' and have assimilated a new style of educational operations, will it be possible to evaluate the adopted guideline of supporting young people in mastering key competencies.

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### **PARTICIPATION OF PUPILS FROM GRADES 1–3 IN GROUP WORK – REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS BASED UPON OBSERVATIONS**

Each of us participates – during his/her life – in a large number of different groups. Carol K. Oyster even claims that we 'are born to live in group, and we exist in various groups until we die'.

A specific feature of the present time is the necessity of frequent participation in group actions with concurrent performance of different tasks. According to D. Gołębiak : 'on one's own it is impossible to perform anything which results from working together ". It happens so because while working with other people, we have an opportunity to avail ourselves of synergy, viz. intensified group energy, which favors the accumulation of involvement and invention. R. Fisher underlines that 'no other creature but Man has achieved that much, since he managed to combine flexibility and brilliance of individuals with the productivity of joint efforts'.

Acting in group will also favor learning with others, which takes place through discussions, problem solving, performing tasks and producing various works. J. Uszyńska-Jarmoc writes : 'A multitude of opinions teaches one to make both agreements and to find contrasts, tolerance and responsibility for one's own viewpoint, cooperation's and collaboration'.