

A Few Remarks on Sustainable Development of the Education Sphere. Postulated and Factual Improving of Education

**Kilka uwag o zrównoważonym rozwoju sfery edukacji.
Postulowana i faktyczna poprawa edukacji**

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Abstract

The article contains the author's remarks about the sustainable development of the sphere of education in our country and in similar ones. The starting point is the *Agenda 2030*, in which the postulate of improving the quality of education and the goals to achieve it were formulated. The author focuses on the alliance between sustainable development and education, which on the one hand consists in teaching more than before about the sustainable development, and on the other hand, on the use of education to promote the idea of sustainable development. Comparison of the postulated state of the sphere of education with the factual state leads to the conclusion of a large and growing discrepancy between them. In addition, the implementation of these postulates encounters more and more difficulties in the present. In the ever more endangered world by natural phenomenon and by military conflicts, one has first to care for survival and not for the condition of education.

Key words: education sphere, sustainable development, *Agenda 2030*, ecological education, education for sustainable development, condition of the education sphere

Streszczenie

Artykuł zawiera uwagi autora na temat zrównoważonego rozwoju sfery edukacji w naszym kraju i podobnych. Punktem wyjścia jest *Agenda 2030*, w której sformułowano postulat poprawy jakości kształcenia oraz cele do jego osiągnięcia. Autor skupia się na sojuszu zrównoważonego rozwoju i edukacji, który polega z jednej strony na nauczaniu o zrównoważonym rozwoju więcej niż dotychczas, z drugiej strony na wykorzystaniu edukacji do propagowania idei zrównoważonego rozwoju. Porównanie postulowanego stanu sfery edukacji ze stanem faktycznym prowadzi do wniosku o dużej i narastającej rozbieżności między nimi. Ponadto realizacja tych postulatów napotyka w teraźniejszości coraz większe trudności. W świecie coraz bardziej zagrożonym zjawiskami naturalnymi i konfliktami zbrojnymi należy przede wszystkim troszczyć się o przetrwanie, a nie o stan edukacji.

Slowa kluczowe: edukosfera, rozwój zrównoważony, *Agenda 2030*, edukacja ekologiczna, edukacja do rozwoju zrównoważonego, kondycja edukosfery

In the modern world, the implementation of the postulate of sustainable development of education is facing to increasing difficulties

1. Introductory words

My reflections result not only from my theoretical and book knowledge, but also from sixty-two years of professional practice as a teacher working in the years 1955-2017 in various types of schools, the longest – 51 years – at universities. My rich life experience in the turbulent times of the second half of the twentieth century also contributed to them. As a student of primary school, high school and a student, I lived in the fascist system during the Nazi occupation and in the socialist system during the Stalinist period. As a teacher, I lived in the socialist system during the post-stalinist period and political system transformation in Poland, and then in the capitalist system. I have experienced many education systems, its takeover by the ruling party as well as a few reforms of the education systems. In the article, I refer to the best known by me examples from my country, but you can also find them in other similar countries in the world.

2. The sphere of education

The notion *education sphere* is understood differently depending on whom, when and for what purpose as well as in what social and cultural context it is used. Most often, it is defined as a component of the social environment where teaching and upbringing processes occur, as a complex of behavioral behaviors and expectations, and as specific tasks grouped around education. It is defined too as a set of social, physical, psychological and pedagogical contexts in which educational processes take place and which affect on learning, upbringing, achievements and attitudes of students or pupils. I understand the sphere of education as a relatively autonomous sub-domain of social activity consisting of various subjective and objective elements and conditions of education. The subjective elements are teachers, parents, tutors, students, pupils, school administration employees and various educators who are involved in education and on whom education functioning and condition of education depends. Objective elements are educational institutions, facilities and organizations, educational infrastructure and social, economic, political and cultural conditions in which education is realized. The most important are teachers who transfer knowledge, skills and competences to students and play – apart from parents – an important role in raising them to be decent people and citizens. The condition of the sphere of education is determined by all other sub-domains of social activity, but most it depends on the spheres of economy, politics and ideology with which it is connected through various relations and interactions. The condition of the sphere of education determines the intellectual, social and emotional development of young people and, consequently, the general progress of society. No wonder that care for the sphere of education should be a priority in every country.

3. The postulate of sustainable development of education

The starting point for the sustainable development of education is the assumption on the interdependence of social, economic and environmental factors and taking this fact into account in the context of general and specialist teaching.

Following principles are central for this development:

1. Access and equality. Sustainable education promotes equal access to education, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity or geographic location. It focuses on ensuring inclusivity and reducing disparities that still exist here and there.
2. High-quality education. Sustainable education emphasizes the provision of quality education that equips students with the necessary knowledge, skills and values. The point is to enable them to actively participate in the life of society, contribute to its sustainable development and lead a satisfying life in it.
3. Permanent learning. Sustainable education recognizes that learning is an ongoing process in human life and encourages people of all ages to learn continuously. It supports formal, non-formal and informal organizations in meeting the various educational needs of people of all ages.
4. Environmental awareness. Sustainable education promotes the rise of awareness about current environmental issues. Therefore, it fosters the development of knowledge about the state of the environment and its protection. It also encourages behaviors responsible for the condition of the environment now and in the future.
5. Integrating sustainable development issues into curricula and learning processes. This helps develop critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making skills to address local and global sustainability challenges.
6. Partnership and cooperation. The success of sustainable education requires cooperation between governments, educational institutions, communities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. This allows better use of knowledge resources, sharing best practices and promoting innovation in education.
7. Professional development of teachers. The sustainable development of education requires increasing investment in the professional development of teachers. It is about equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills and pedagogical approaches that help them to integrate sustainable development topics into their subjects.
8. Monitoring and evaluation. Sustainable education requires regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of education systems and programs.

Sustainable development of education is multifaceted. Firstly, it can be considered, among others, as education about the balance existing in the geobiosphere and the sociosphere and between these spheres, as well as about the balance between the educational environment and the natural, social and cultural environment. Secondly, as education supporting the promotion and implementation the concept of sustainable development.

4. Education about sustainable development

There is a lot of talk in schools about protecting the environment, but only about nature's environment, which is called *natural*, as if social, cultural, axiological and spiritual environments were not natural to people who are social beings. There is a lot of talk in schools about protecting the environment, but only about environment of nature, which is called *natural*, as if social, cultural, axiological and spiritual environments were not natural to people who are social beings. These environments are no less important than the environment of nature. Probably teachers do not know about this. And after all, the social environment degrades faster than the environment of nature with the civilization progress. Therefore, one should respect and protect it and care for it against progressive devastation. Schools should shape the habits of reverence and protection of the entire human environment, not just the natural one. In addition, they should educate about respecting the balance between the natural and social environment. Otherwise, the gap between the condition and development of the natural environment and the social, cultural, axiological and spiritual environment will widen. Sustainable development education includes environmental, global and intercultural education, as well as education for world peace and human rights. Its task is to provide knowledge about the complex relationships between the environment of nature and sociosphere and the economy, society and culture. Never before has human existence been as fragile as it is today. Therefore, the most important goal of education on sustainable development is to educate individuals and humanity to survive in a world increasingly threatened by the natural and social environment. It is about answering the basic questions: *How to live to survive?*, *How to live so that future generations can grow up in an environment that is still suitable for life?* and *How not to live at the expense of people living in poorer parts of the world?* It is about answering the basic questions: *How to live to survive?*, *How to live so that future generations can grow up in an environment that is still suitable for life?* and *How not to live at the expense of people living in poorer parts of the world?* These questions seem like simple, but there are complex problems behind them, that make you rethink your consumption and lifestyle habits in rich countries.

An important condition for the effective implementation of the idea of sustainable development is world peace. Wars contribute to the growth of imbalance. Therefore, the task of education on sustainable development should be to educate for peace. In the 78 years since the end of the World War II, people have become accustomed, especially in Europe, to living in peace. Although there has been a *cold war* between the superpowers for many years since its end, there have been no *hot wars* because there have been fears of an apocalypse caused by the possibility of using nuclear weapons. Pacifist movements, especially the international Peace Defenders Movement, also played a significant role in preserving peace. Recently, as a result of cretinopoliticians' lust for world domination, the situation has changed radically. More and more often, there are more and more severe and dangerous armed conflicts in various parts of the world, terrorist attacks, coups, coups, etc., in which more and more countries are involved. Some people assess the current situation in the world as a renewal of the *cold war* between the superpowers (USA and Russia), as they already informally started *creeping* World War III. Terrorist actions carried out by various organizations and states are particularly dangerous for world peace. This forces us to care for peace, which is not a gift from heaven, but the work of people. Meanwhile, in our schools, the very important issue of education and upbringing to peace and to care for it is omitted. Education for peace aims to detect in advance the seeds of conflicts and structures that promote violence in time, and to teach how to solve international and internal conflicts in order to prevent wars. The point is to overcome wars already in their embryonic state, starting from the correct assumption that wars are born in the sick minds of great leaders. Teaching about peace should address questions about the concept of peace, about the causes of peace disruption, about violence, about the role of aggression, of social and political contradictions in violating peace, and about how to achieve and maintain peace.

The idea of sustainable development is best implemented in a democratic system. That is why, for some time now, a project of educating to democracy has been implemented in some countries. Although the issues of democracy are included in the curriculum of the subject *History and the Present*, implemented in our schools, the problems of tolerance towards ethnic groups, migrants, races, minorities and sexual differences should be emphasized more. The more so that nationalism, fascism, hatred of foreigners and aggression against oppositionists are spreading more and more. We also need to teach that democracy gives people freedom, but not arbitrariness, but freedom limited by a sense of responsibility and security. The greater democracy and freedom, the greater the threat to social order and security of citizens. The greater must be the responsibility for order and safety. Ensuring both requires control by appropriate state institutions, i.e. limiting civil liberties. Thus, in a democratic system, one faces a dilemma: extreme freedom or maximum security. Attempts are made to settle it on the basis of the golden mean, i.e. to limit freedom to the extent that security requires it. Only, how far can freedom in a democracy be

limited, so as it not transforms into totalitarianism at some point. Education about sustainable development promotes critical thinking, the ability to solve problems independently, interdisciplinary thinking and developing the ability to synergistic cooperation. It is implemented in various sectors of formal education in primary, secondary schools and universities, and in non-formal education in various educational institutions, NGOs and social projects. It emphasizes the holistic aspect of this education – cognitive, practical and emotional.

The general objectives of sustainable development education are

- Promoting environmental awareness.
- Strengthening the position of the individual in society.
- Promoting sustainable consumption and production.
- Respecting cultural diversity.
- Promoting social justice.
- Strengthening participation in democratic processes.

In 2015, the leaders of 192 countries signed the UN Resolution *Agenda 2030*, which included seventeen specific goals for sustainable development of the world (UN, 2015). They should be achieved by 2030 inclusive. The point is to ensure that the signatories of the Agenda undertake comprehensive actions aimed at meeting the most urgent challenges of the modern world, such as the eradication of poverty and inequality, preventing climate warming and stopping the degradation of the natural and social environment. These goals can be achieved by implementing the idea of sustainable development as a result of joint efforts of government, civil society, the private sector and individuals. The ultimate goal is to build a sustainable future for all people in the world. The fourth objective of this Agenda is to guarantee free, inclusive and equitable quality, free (primary and secondary) education for all, to promote lifelong learning opportunities and to improve the quality of education in educational institutions and make them more inclusive. After eight years, it is sad to say that each of these goals has remained on paper and one not known when and to what extent it will be achieved. Many current events indicate that their implementation is getting more and more distant in the hierarchy of importance and more and more distant in time.

Appropriate actions have also been taken in countries like Poland to achieve the goals of education on sustainable development, such as:

1. Including sustainable development issues in the curricula of various subjects in primary and secondary schools. For this purpose, content related to environmental protection, health care, tolerance, gender equality, etc. is introduced.
2. Encouraging schools to participate in environmental education projects and programs and to promote a sustainable lifestyle.
3. Developing at students social and civic competences by programs, which promote empathy, cooperation, social responsibility, and active participation in public life (Schabikowska, 2020).
4. Promoting the cooperation of schools with non-governmental organizations, such as foundations and ecological associations, thanks to which students have the opportunity to participate in workshops, projects and practical activities that broaden their knowledge of sustainable development.
5. Promoting pro-ecological attitudes and taking them into account in the everyday life of students and the school community (including waste segregation, energy saving, care for environmental cleanliness and encouraging a sustainable lifestyle).
6. Balancing the school infrastructure by installing photovoltaic systems, reclaiming rainwater and developing green areas.

Education is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competences and ethical values that are necessary for the proper functioning of individuals in society. It should be emphasized that the set of skills includes, among others, the ability to analyze, reason and creatively solve problems that arise in the modern world. In this set is also the art of constructive, critical and creative thinking that goes beyond the limitations imposed by the usual paradigms, stereotypes, schemes and algorithms. These skills are developed and improved thanks to theoretical knowledge acquired earlier in schools and practical knowledge acquired later in workplaces. Environmental education plays a significant role in shaping and developing these skills.

5. Creative thinking

In the modern world, mostly those individuals standing out from others and are above average have ensured work, social career (professional, political and business) and the comfort of life. They are usually forerunners, leaders, inventors, explorers who shock with their ingenuity and innovation. Just it is not enough simply to be or to live, but one must be someone and live dynamic. Meanwhile, our schools educate students to something quite different – to conformism, submissiveness, mediocrity, indistinguishability and passivity. A good student is one who is obedient, passive, polite, and non-objectionable. And in the didactic process, situations and social problems are not simulated that would give students a chance to show their *I* – innovation, individuality, inventiveness and originality of solving them. Probably, because it requires more effort from teachers and exceeds their intellectual competence and imagination. As a result, schools educate life losers, unprepared for active life. That is why, at the

very beginning of their independent life, school graduates are in a bad position and only a few of them – ambitious and persistent – manage to make up for the neglect of school education. Therefore, for the sake of youth, society, the state and the economy, it is educate creative individuals, prepared not to avoid difficult problems, but to boldly face them, engage in solving them and, thanks to creativity, ensure survival in increasingly difficult times. Creative thinking is the ability to generate original and innovative ideas and approach problems. It is thinking beyond the established framework, creating new connections and combinations between various phenomena and exploring unusual perspectives. It is a process, in which the brain generates new ideas, solutions or approaches in an original, innovative and unconventional way. It is a skill, that everyone can develop and use in various life situations, both at work and in everyday life.

Here are some essential features of creative thinking:

- Flexibility of thinking: A creative person is able to change perspectives, think outside the usual patterns and look for alternative solutions.
- Connecting different fields: Creativity comes from combining ideas or solutions from different areas of life. In this way, new connections and patterns are created.
- Allowing yourself to make mistakes: It is important to accept the possibility of making mistakes in thinking and experimenting as this can lead to discovery and innovation.
- Associative Thinking: Looking for unexpected connections between phenomena leads to creative ideas.
- Asking questions: Asking *Why?*, *What if?* questions is key. and *What happens when...?* They are conducive to opening up to different possibilities.
- Mind mapping: Using mind maps or diagrams to visualize the relationship between different ideas and concepts helps to discover new connections.
- Active observation: Careful observation of the surrounding environment, observing people and phenomena provides inspiration and interesting ideas.
- Spending time in creative activities: Regularly engaging in artistic, writing, musical or other imaginative activities helps foster creative thinking.
- Collaboration: Sharing your ideas and collaborating with others leads to synergy and mutual inspiration.
- Openness to change: Being ready for change and accepting new approaches to problems leads to the discovery of innovative solutions.

It should be borne in mind that each person has his own style of creative thinking. Therefore, it is important for him to discover his methods that best suit his personality. Regular practice of creative thinking allows you to develop this skill and brings satisfaction from discovering new ways to solve problems and creating something new.

Following recommendations can help to develop creative thinking:

- Explore a variety of fields: Gain a broad knowledge and explore various fields such as art, science, literature, and technology. By bringing diversity to your world, you stand a better chance of generating unique connections between different fields.
- Keep an open mind: Try to avoid rigid thinking and clichés. Be willing to consider new ideas and approaches, even if they seem unusual or unobvious.
- Combine different perspectives: Seek different perspectives, both internal (your own) and external (others'). Often the inspiration for creative solutions comes from combining different points of view.
- Practice creative thinking: Ask yourself questions that provoke thinking and require unusual answers. You can also engage in tasks such as written creative exercises, puzzle solving, and imagination exercises.
- Take time to reflect and calm down: Sometimes the best ideas come when you have time to think calmly and focus. Take time for yourself to reflect, meditate, or simply engage in relaxing activities that allow your mind to create freely.
- Be open to risk and experimentation: Creativity often requires the courage to try new things and take risks. Do not be afraid of failure and experiment with different ideas. Sometimes even seemingly, unsuccessful attempts can lead to valuable discoveries.
- Remember that creativity is a skill that can be developed through regular exercise and intellectual challenges.

6. Education for the implementation of sustainable development

At the United Nations Environment Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, an idea emerged to use education to disseminate and implement the concept of sustainable development in all spheres of social reality. It was called *education for sustainable development*. This education allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future (Plymouth University, 2014). It founded that a wide participation of a society highly educated in the field of ecology is necessary to solve global environmental and development problems. It founded also that education as a key tool for promoting sustainable development and it

can significantly help in the active and responsible construction of a future globalized and sustainable world. Education for sustainable development includes ecological and sozological education, global education, intercultural education, education for peace and education on human rights. Its task is to provide knowledge about the complex relationships between the natural and social environments and the economy, politics and culture. It promotes the ability to independently solve problems, develop the ability to cooperate as well as critical, interdisciplinary, holistic and prospective thinking. Thus, education for sustainable development is education for the future, based on which it is possible to better predict future events, prepare for them properly and prevent undesirable phenomena and processes, and take them into account in planning and decision-making. Education for sustainable development is implemented in various sectors of formal education in schools and universities, as well as informal education in other educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and social projects.

It turned out that the education of the twentieth century is of little use to meet the greatest challenges of the present and future, which are the consequence of the hitherto unsustainable or insufficiently sustainable development. It does not sufficiently equip people with the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to tackle environmental and social crises such as global warming, species extinction, hunger, poverty, global economic inequality and war the more, because the sphere of education degrades faster and faster (Sztumski, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to transform immediately the present education into an even more pro-ecological education, i.e. into eco-education based on knowledge about the environment of nature and the social environment as well as into sozo-education based on knowledge about the protection of the environment of nature and social environment. Education for sustainable development plays an important role in this transformation.

The concept of education for sustainable development bases on eco-philosophy and sozo-philosophy. It includes, among others, elements of *philosophical environmentalism*, which is a version of ecophilosophy created by me (Sztumski, 1997). It proclaims ecocentrism, biocentrism, carrying for the environment of human life, the reverence for the life of all beings, prospective thinking, rational management of natural and intellectual resources, tolerance, empathy, synergistic cooperation for the common good, non-antagonistic social development, preservation of peace in the world and concerning for survival of the human species. Education for sustainable development is addressed not only to children and youth, but also to adults, mainly politicians, businesspersons and financiers who have a large impact on the fate of the world. Its overall goal is to develop the skills and competences to make the right decisions and concrete actions for sustainable development, and to encourage people to get involved in building a more sustainable world (Sztumski, 2020).

This general goal includes following specific goals:

- Taking into account the local and global perspective in the implementation of the 17 Sustainable development goals included in the *Agenda 2030*.
- Enabling development at various levels of education.
- Holistic approach to problems.
- Acquiring new knowledge, emotional involvement and acting for the implementation of sustainable development.
- Learning on three levels: cognitive, emotional and behavioral, i.e. involving head heart and hand.
- Shaping responsibility for the present and future condition of one's local and the global human environment.
- Applying what one has learned about sustainability to your life.
- Developing creative competences – openness to the world, readiness to accept new perspectives, showing empathy, dealing with risk, uncertainty and contradictions, motivating oneself and others to take specific actions in response to the challenges of sustainable development.
- Promoting ecological awareness, because of which *Homo consumens* – a product of the ideology of consumerism - will transform into *Homo ecologicus*, for which the survival of our planet and humanity is the highest value.
- Strengthening the position of an individual in a quasi-democratic society.
- Promoting sustainable consumption and production.
- Respecting cultural diversity, which is particularly important in times of mass transmigration of the population.
- Promoting social justice.
- Strengthening citizens' participation in democratization processes.
- Education systems should foster social values such as equality, tolerance, respect for cultural differences and respect for human rights. Promoting them in schools contributes to building a society based on sustainable development and supporting good relations between individuals.
- Education should support economic development based on the sustainable use of resources and the creation of economically healthy communities. Curricula are to cover issues related to entrepreneurship, social innovation and responsible management of resources.
- Sustainable development of education should promote social inclusion, which ensures that no one is left out of the education system and that the needs and development prospects of all social groups are taken into account, including those with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LBGT and people from poor families.

7. Factual condition of the sphere of education

The current state of the educational environment differs from the postulates of the *Agenda 2030*, which by the way does not take into account the specificity of the sphere of education in individual countries, resulting from social, historical and cultural conditions. The sphere of education is a sub-domain of the social system, which is in appropriate relations and interactions with other sub-domains of this system. It is most closely related to economics, politics and ideology. If there are any perturbations or pathologies in these spheres, they reflect almost immediately in the sphere of education.

In 2023, the second *Report on the state of education in Poland* was published, which showed in which extent was successful achieve the goals of the *Agenda 2030* until 2022 (In the first Report from 2018, there was nothing about education). Here are some important points of this Report:

1. Educational system: The Polish system includes a compulsory 8-year primary school, a 4-year general high school, a 5-year technical high school, a 3-year first-level sectoral school, a 2-year second-level sectoral school, a 3-year special vocational school and post-secondary school.
2. An education reform was introduced in primary schools to focus more on developing students' skills and creativity. Appropriate curricula for both general and vocational education are available in secondary schools.
3. Examination results: In recent years, Poland has seen an improvement in the results of external examinations, such as the eighth grade exam and the Matura exam. However, there is still a marked discrepancy in the results between different regions of the country.
4. Investment in education: The Polish government has systematically increased spending on education, trying to improve the quality of teaching and school infrastructure. However, there is still a need for further investment, especially in the area of kindergartens and schools in smaller towns and rural areas.
5. Teachers: Poland places high demands on teachers' qualifications and offers them professional development programs. Nevertheless, there is still a shortage of teachers, especially in the areas of science and foreign languages.
6. Technology in education: In recent years, Poland has been increasing its involvement in the use of technology in education. School computerization programs have been introduced to provide access to computers and the Internet for students and teachers. E-learning and digital resources are also being developed to support the learning process.
7. Challenges: Despite progress, the Polish education system faces several challenges. These include differences in the quality of teaching between urban and rural schools, the need to further increase access to kindergartens, the fight against early school leaving and the need to adapt curricula to the needs of the labor market and acquire new skills (Ministry..., 2023).

There are many statements in this Report, which raise concerns about their veracity.

- 1) It states: *Poland achieves the best results in access to high-quality education* and at the same time *Good quality education remains the biggest challenge for Poland*. It means that there is the best access to quality education, which does not exist. Something is wrong. And it is true that the quality of education has been declining rapidly in recent years, primarily as a result of its popularization, deliberate lowering of evaluation criteria and negative selection for the teaching profession resulting from embarrassingly low salaries.¹ How can we talk about high quality of education, when the criteria for students' assessments, even the secondary school-leaving examination, are deliberately lowered. Now it is enough to answer correctly only 30% of the questions in the questionnaire, and yet 15% of graduates fail.
- 2) It states that *Many investments have been made in Poland to modernize school infrastructure. Many schools have been renovated, equipped with modern teaching aids, and equipped with access to new technologies, such as computers and the Internet*. It is true that more and more schools are equipped with (old generation) computers and that students have easy access to the Internet. On the other hand, the situation is worse with the renovation of schools and equipping them with modern teaching aids, which most schools cannot afford, mainly those whose principals do not obey the authorities.
- 3) The Report mentions an increase in the level of education over the last few decades as an achievement. This is evidenced by the fact that many graduates of Polish universities have achieved success in Poland and in foreign countries. This statement is false, because the level of education has significantly decreased and will continue to decrease, among others. by shortening the school week to four days a week, shortening lesson time and disregarding humanities subjects allegedly useless in the age of digitization. This is evidenced by the decreasing knowledge and professional competences of graduates of primary, secondary and higher schools. Secondary

¹ Currently (February 23, 2023) the salary of a novice teacher, master's degree) is PLN 300 higher than the salary of a cleaner or janitor at a school (PLN 3,360 gross). The salary of a novice teacher is PLN 3,690 gross (PLN 2,846 net), an appointed teacher PLN 3,890 gross (PLN 2,982 net), a certified teacher PLN 4,550 (PLN 3,432 net). In comparison, in Germany, a beginning teacher earns between €3,979 and €4,643, and after 26 years of work, €5,400. (€1,00= PLN 4,48) And yet there is currently a shortage of 66,000 teachers there, mainly due to the low attractiveness of this profession and not the best working conditions.

school teachers complain about the lack of knowledge in the field of primary school, academic teachers – about the lack of knowledge about high school, and employers – about the lack of competence to perform the learned profession. The value of school-leaving diplomas (matriculation examination, bachelor's, master's, doctorates and postdoctoral degrees) decreased significantly. The malicious say that these diplomas are worth what it costs to print them, and in the future, they will be worth even less. Academic degrees, awarded at private universities of dubious value, especially to politicians of the ruling party, have also devalued, it is not known for what. It is true that everyone has access to schools, but to the weak and average, not to the good ones. Not everyone can afford high-quality education in reputable schools, especially outside the place of residence of their parents. Students, mainly part-time, manage by working for money, often full-time. But this has a negative impact on their learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness.² Academic teachers who have classes at part-time studies know this. They must give students positive grades out of grace to ensure the university adequate recruitment and not result in reductions in teaching staff or bankruptcy of the university. They have no other reasonable choice. They know that a few uneducated graduates can do little harm to a stupefied society, but more to their teachers and schools if their exams fail. By lowering the requirements, they consciously contribute to lowering the level of education. As a consequence, in each next recruitment for studies, there are worse candidates, but more demanding (Sztumski, 2022).

Demanding attitudes are largely the result of misunderstood stress-free upbringing, which educates to break all norms of social coexistence (prohibitions and legal and moral orders) in accordance with the principle *does what you want* – implicitly: not taking into account anyone or anything. The result is terrorism of children and youth, an extreme form of paedocracy. However, much less is said about the aggression of children and young people towards adults than about the aggression of adults towards children and young people, although there is more and more of it.

A propos stress. Stress is the body's natural response to a new or threatening situation. Thanks to it, the entire potential of the body – senses and mind is activated to quickly make a decision that allows you to adapt to this situation, or effectively oppose it. Stress affects the body, mind and soul. Usually you experience *bad stress* when faced with a threat you cannot deal with it, because, for example, you do not know how, or you do not have time to react. Therefore, any stress is assessed negatively. Then fear and uncertainty appear which constantly torment a person and cause harmful nervous tension. However, stress also has positive effects. It is called *good stress*. It is stress, the effects of which can be dealt with relatively easily and which helps in solving problems arising in new or difficult situations and motivates to the desired actions. An example of good stress is *eustress*, which is mild stress that stimulates a person to act. *Good stress* can also provide positive effects in the form of satisfaction that you managed to overcome it or perform some difficult task that caused it. Stress can be a health hazard if left unchecked for a long time. Research by the Dutch neuroscientist Ron de Kloet has shown that stress lasting for months can cause the death of nerve cells in the hippocampus (Groll, 2023). Unlike other cells, they do not reproduce. Therefore, prolonged stress irreversibly reduces the ability to remember and accelerates dementia. Therefore, as Tina Groll writes, *who experiences a lot of stress over the years becomes stupid* (Groll, 2020). This may somehow explain why people are stupid en masse in the modern world, full of long-term stressful situations. In turn, other studies have shown that stresses experienced in early childhood have a positive effect on a person's personality, because they increase their resilience, i.e. the ability to adapt to various life difficulties and cope with them. Thus, stress does not have to be something terrible that should be avoided at all costs, protect children from it and raise them stress-free. If schools are to educate to real life conditions, and they probably should, they must prepare students to live in stress and conflict situations. Due to the fact that our social environment, mainly in developed countries, dominated by the ideology of consumerism, economic factors, fierce competition and an increasingly faster pace of life, generates more and more contradictions, conflicts, aggression and stress. Pupils and school graduates should learn not how to avoid conflicts and stress, which is rather impossible (although it would be desirable), but how to get used to them and overcome them, or at least mitigate their symptoms and effects. The decline in the quality of education is caused by teacher evaluation by pupils and students, which is often unfair and determines the further career of teachers. It is known that the more demanding the teacher, the worse the students who want to take revenge on him will judge him. As a result, teachers are forced to lower the criteria for passing their subjects and to be submissive to students. The same Report acknowledged the failures of education in Poland. Low scores in international education rankings, the existence of some inequalities in access to education for those living in rural and poorer regions, and the lack of science teachers were mentioned. The list of goals of education for sustainable development includes, among others, empowering individuals, respecting cultural diversity, promoting social justice and strengthening participation in democratic processes. However, they cannot be implemented in countries that are democratic in name only, but in fact authoritarian, where injustice is widespread because of the politicization of the judiciary, where citizens are under surveillance, where the opposition is destroyed, where they are indoctrinated with the regime's media and where xenophobia is encouraged nationalism and neo-fascism.

² When I was studying (1951-1956) and was in my fourth year, the dean allowed me to work as a physics teacher in a general high school for only 10 hours a week. I was working illegally full time 18 hours a week plus tutoring a class.

It is true that a small number of graduates of Polish universities, mainly naturalists and technicians, achieved success abroad, but thanks to themselves, because they were ambitious, creative and had great working conditions there – good tutors, friendly research teams and well-equipped laboratories and libraries.

- 4) The Report states: *Reforms have been introduced to ensure equal access to education for people from different social backgrounds, minority groups and people with disabilities*. Unfortunately, there were as many reforms as there were ministers of education. Each of them mostly grossly incompetent, reformed education at the order of the party, government or *in his own way* with increasingly worse results for the quality of education.
- 4) The Report states: *Reforms have been introduced to ensure equal access to education for people from different social backgrounds, minority groups and people with disabilities*. Unfortunately, there were as many reforms as there were ministers of education. Each of them mostly grossly incompetent, reformed education at the order of the party, government or *in his own way* with increasingly worse results for the quality of education. These reforms were not intended to improve existing education systems, but to reject them overall. A new from seven pains minister wanted to show off something. The new systems were not fully implemented during the term of office of the ministers. As a result, there were moments of discontinuity in the development of education to the detriment of students and the quality of education. Worse yet, none of these ministers were held accountable for wantonly destroying education.

8. Final reflection

Our education system, as in many similar countries, is poorly adapted to the requirements of the modern world, and even less so to the future. Never before has this maladjustment been as great as it is now, in the period of formation of the knowledge society, when education one assigns a most important role and high hopes for a better future. The biggest disadvantages of this system are failure to meet pupils and students expectations, low efficiency of work and dysfunction of schools. Attempts to experiment and implement repair ideas fail. Firstly, it is so, because before any of them manages to be realized even partially, it becomes outdated in gallop changing social reality. Secondly, it is very risky to experiment with a living and sensitive social organism such as the sphere of education, in the present sphere of education, susceptibility to the influence of many external factors, as pathologies, erosion and degradation of other spheres of social life is increasing. Therefore, it is full of conflicts and internal contradictions in the relationship between children and parents, students and teachers, parents and teachers, teachers and educational authorities, and between the values and educational models implemented in schools and promoted by other educators, primarily by the mass media. One has already come to the point when the media count more in shaping the attitudes, lifestyle, way of expressing and thinking of children and young people than schools and parents. Increasingly and faster, the media take over the educational function of schools, and the Internet - the function of transferring the knowledge through them. The factual condition of educational environment differs from that postulated in the concept of sustainable development of education contained in the *Agenda 2030*, the disadvantage of which is that it does not take into account the specificity of the sphere of education of individual countries, of their social, historical, cultural and religious conditions. This sphere, however, is most closely related to the economy, politics and ideology. If any perturbations or pathologies appear there, they are reflected in the sphere of education almost immediately.

Educational problems are increasingly receding into the background in an increasingly dangerous world, threatened primarily by real and potential natural phenomena harmful to humanity, as well as by armed conflicts with the use of the latest generation of weapons of mass destruction³. In many countries, the financial outlays on education and science are twice as low as the outlays on armaments, and the warmongers – moronic politicians and oligarchs who get rich on armaments – demand even more. In addition, a part of the expenditure on education goes to finance research and to education for military purposes. While in Poland about 13% of all budget expenditures, currently amounting to PLN 693 billion, i.e. PLN 86 billion, one spends on military purposes, only 6% of expenditures, i.e. PLN 41 billion, are spent on education and science.⁴ In principle, outlays on armaments do not return and are unprofitable. Simply, this is money down the drain. Thanks to them, oligarchs – owners of armaments companies, producers of war equipment and arms dealers – get richer. On the other hand, according to estimates by the World Bank the increase in education spending of 1% of GDP increases GDP growth by 0.9%. There has never been such a great gap between the sphere of education postulated by sustainable development and the factual one. This is mainly caused by the stupidity of politicians, because they contribute to more and more numerous and more severe armed conflicts, economic and ecological crises, and global social contradictions, which destroy the balance and homeostatic mechanisms that maintain it.

³ I mean nuclear, bacteriological (pathogens, anthrax, combat mosquitoes, etc.), chemical (substances disrupting consciousness, artificial allergens) and psychological (psychosis of fear and vulnerability) weapon.

⁴ Actual defense spending is higher by PLN 40 billion from the Armed Forces Support Fund and amounts to PLN 140 billion. (<https://www.prawo.pl/samorzad/budzet-na-2023-rok,519515.html>; 02.08.2023).

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