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Mirosław J. Szymański
Edukacyjne problemy współczesności,
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The latest publication of Professor Mirosław J. Szymański, the outstanding teacher and sociologist of education, with unprecedented achievements in the field of educational and social sciences, is a collection of Author's thoughts, arising out of research conducted over the last few years. The subjects of his discussion are key issues related to modern education, because in the twenty-first century the role of education has been changed – it becomes an opportunity to meet the emancipatory hopes and aspirations of individuals, associated with their educational way, but sometimes also, under certain conditions, does not lead to equality and social justice, and it becomes a tool for maintaining divisions and social inequality deepens (p. 10). Therefore, there is a need to analyze the social phenomena that have the greatest impact on the form of modern education. In the introduction the author hopes that the considerations presented in the publication will stimulate discussions on educational problems in Poland, and will encourage the development of projects for effective reforms in education.

The publication includes twenty-four texts, that are connected to common problems, which focuses mainly on social change and its impact on the education of the twenty-first century in Poland. Part of the texts included in the volume released in studies published in scientific journals or books prepared under the editorship of many authors, some of them are papers presented by Professor at national and international conferences. Due to the high dispersion of texts and the fact that these considerations are a valuable source of inspiration for students, teachers and academics, there was a need for recognition of studies into a coherent whole, which took the form of a book.

As it was already mentioned, canvas for considerations placed the publication, is a social change and its educational implications. The volume is opened by the text “the social and educational change”, in which the Author explains basic terms such as: change, development, progress and concrete it (talks about

social change, change in education and learning, development of education and learning also defines what is progress in education). The Author states that education, being a function of social and economic life, must respect the needs of a developing society, including contemporary politics, economics, culture” (p. 24). Educational institutions must therefore adapt the content of education, methods and forms of teaching and learning to changing social environment, because “Society, during the period of rapid change, therefore forces necessary or desirable due to the nature of these changes modifications of school as an educational institution and transformation of different areas of its work” (p. 24).

In the following chapters Mirosław J. Szymański raises issues that have become challenges for contemporary education. So we find reflections on *Individuated and social disparities in the period of late modernity*. Social distinctions as a result of the social changes are the subject, which in this publication Author often returns in different contexts, for example in relation to educational opportunities. Similarly repeatedly analyzed is the issue of personal identity in late modernity. Professor talks about *Identity as a task* and addresses the issues of *Constructing human identity as an educational problem*. Building one’s own identity in a world of “liquid modernity”, which is characterized by “continuous variation”, is particularly difficult. This is extremely important in the context of subjectivity student and pupil. Formerly identity used to be “given” and because in the modern world nothing but change is not certain or given once and for all, identity has become “asked” and must be constantly updated and reconstructed. In this sense, the constructing the identity of young people is an educational challenge of twenty-first century.

Particular attention in this volume deserves the already mentioned text *Individuated and social disparities in the period of late modernity*. Individualism should be considered as one of the “difficult problems of modernity”, which will have to face all teachers and pedagogues. Indeed individualization, giving new opportunities for the emancipation of the individual, it also has side effects: decline in social stability and the emergence of new forms of standardization the aspirations and desires of man. Late modernity, stressing the importance of individual stories of each person, encourage to seek success and happiness of all people. Unfortunately, it does not provide a chance of achieving this for everyone. The role of the school and the teacher in this process is that to educate a man for himself, prepare him to take responsibility for himself (p. 30). Also in this volume, author raises the issue of values of the people living in a changing society. In the text *Education as a value in terms of rapid social change* education process is presented as a factor affecting individuals and social groups, and therefore one that has to become a national priority. Education should be the subject of treatment from the authorities (not only educational), institutions and individual people.

The author devotes a separate discussion *Education of Man in the changing reality*. Upbringing in a world of rapid change becomes another challenge for the twenty-first century education. The author focuses his reflections mainly

around one of the most visible social change – globalization. It is “the one of the characteristic phenomena of our time” (p. 121). Its impact is so large that it affects and changes the education. The author asks the question: “What’s so different than it used to constructed the world can do education?” and is trying to find answers to this bothering issue.

The question posed above may be prompted to reflect on the recently conducted in Poland education policy – the author attempts to identify its problems in the texts: *The democratic dilemmas of educational policy* and *Between freedom and standardization. Balancing the state educational policy from one extreme to the other*. The subject of Professor’s consideration also becomes the pedagogy itself – as an interdisciplinary science (text *Pedagogy – an integrated social science and humanities*). The author emphasizes interdisciplinarity as an advantage of modern science education.

An important issue raised by Professor Mirosław J. Szymański is the role of teacher educators and their methods and forms of work and teaching aids used. These issues are devoted to two studies: *Teacher training in the face of changes* and *Educational Leadership. The teacher’s role in shaping the academic scientific elite*. The author notes that “The quality of education and the effects achieved in higher education is the index of the level of education throughout the school system. Analysing the quality of the preparation and training of students, enables to get lots of information about the state of the whole education” (p. 203). For this reason, the changes that are taking place in higher education, are interesting for not only specialists, but also for wide circles of public opinion (p. 203). The author completes his reflections by *A few notes about the prospects for teacher training*. His remarks are particularly valuable, because as a longtime university teacher educating generations of teachers, educators and pedagogues, Professor is a person with very considerable experience and an expertise in this field.

The culmination of all the work are two articles that can be an inspiration for further research. The author is looking for new horizons for research in pedagogy. He proposes turn in the area of pedagogical interests the interdisciplinary category of everyday life (in the text: *The problems of everyday life in social and pedagogical studies*), which enjoys growing interest from sociologists, philosophers and in pedeutology. He notes progressive, in recent decades, expansion of quantitative research in the social sciences and suggests to do pedagogical research in the paradigm of qualitative. This kind of research will help to discern this, what is often overlooked in quantitative research (text *The need to conduct qualitative research in pedagogy*). This is the last text forming part of the volume. It is an incentive to conduct own research, finding the area of interest in pedagogy, which is an interdisciplinary science, constantly expanding the scope of its problems, opening to new inspiration and ideas.

The publication *Edukacyjne problemy współczesności* is an extremely important voice in the social discourse on education. Its high scientific value is mainly evidenced by the authority of the author, his experience, high competence and outstanding scientific achievements in the field of social sciences,

which can not be overestimated. Raised in the publication issues are important not only for professionals in the field of education and upbringing of young people, practitioners and theorists of education and education, but also for the whole society. Issues that are analyzed by the author, become the challenges for the modern education, which academics, employees of educational institutions and teachers must face in their everyday work. Proposed by the author suggestions to solve them should inspire teachers, educators, pedagogues and teaching staff for the future. Despite the large variety of issues covered by the author, the publication contains a clear message referring to the impact of social changes and their consequences in the form of changes in education, which are the main problems of the research interests of Professor Miroslaw J. Szymański. The style used by the author, makes that even difficult issues become affordable for the reader. The author treats the problems of education in the twenty-first century as interdisciplinary, and so turns to his consideration issues related to sociology, philosophy, history or politics. *Educational problems of the present* therefore provides inspiration for researchers dealing with issues of education and upbringing in the modern world and can help people just getting to know the problems of modern education in the understanding of the key issues.

Publication structure and themes of each chapter are composed in a coherent manner, so that subsequent texts, although originally issued at different intervals and places, that they are their logical consequence.

I think that the position: *Educational problems of the present* should be read and thought about by all those who occupy or will deal with issues related to modern education, as well as all those who care about good education and upbringing of successive generations.

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