УДК: 373:316.74 (438)

MAŁGORZATA BOGAJ
м. Кельце, Польща

**SOCIAL IMAGE OF THE CONTEMPORARY
SCHOOL IN POLAND**

**СОЦІАЛЬНИЙ ІМІДЖ
СУЧАСНОЇ ШКОЛИ В ПОЛЬЩІ**

Установлено, що соціальний імідж сучасної школи Польщі зумовлений численними факторами. Першочерговими визначено оцінювання та громадську думку стосовно різних галузей її функціонування, сформульовану різними соціальними групами, зокрема учнями та батьками. З'ясовано важливість оцінювань та опитувань, які базуються на наукових дослідженнях польських та міжнародних дослідницьких програм. Охарактеризовано становлення соціального іміджу польської школи на основі аналізу її досягнень після 1990-х років, опитування дорослого населення Польщі та діяльності школи як потенційного простору соціального відчуження.

Ключові слова: польська школа, оцінювання, соціальний імідж, соціальне відчуження.

Установлено, что социальный имидж современной школы Польши обусловлен многими факторами. Первостепенными определены оценивание и общественное мнение относительно разных отраслей ее функционирования, сформулированное различными социальными группами, в частности – учениками и родителями. Установлена важность оценивания и опроса, которые обосновываются на научных исследованиях польских и международных исследовательских программ. Охарактеризовано становление социального имиджа польской школы на основе анализа ее достижений после 1990-х гг., опроса взрослого населения Польши и деятельности школы как потенциального пространства социального отчуждения.

Ключевые слова: польская школа, оценивание, социальный имидж, социальное отчуждение.

It has been determined that the social image of Polish school is shaped by numerous factors. Assessments and opinions concerning various fields of its functioning, formulated by various social groups, primarily parents and students, have been outlined as the main factors. The importance of taking into consideration assessment stemming from scientific studies carried out within Polish research programmes and international research to make the social image of school a specific «resultant» of

these assessments, opinions and postulates has been stressed. The formation of the school image in the result of school achievements' analysis after 1990, surveying adult Poles and analysis of school as the potential social exclusion area has been characterized.

Key words: school of Poland, assessment, social image, social exclusion.

Contemporary school achievements. School achievements can be assessed basing on various ratios. Reference works enumerate the following: ratios of promotion at various education stages, form repetition ratios, ratios of dropout and sifting, results of exams at consecutive stages of the schooling system, education generality ratios, education ratios at various education levels, expenditure for education and, last but not least, ratios describing educational aspirations of children and adolescents or ratios concerning social expectations of the Poles with respect to the Polish school functioning etc.

Each and every of these ratios can be used for assessing various types of educational efficiency of school. One of them are connected with the so-called internal results of its functioning, determined by the curriculums' requirements (e.g. promotion, form repeating, dropout, sifting, exam results) while the other describe the so-called external efficiency of school, referring to functioning of students graduating from various schools types in social an professional life [1, p. 123].

I shall base the assessment of contemporary school primarily on the data provided by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) and opinions of adult inhabitants of Poland selected in a representative way [14, p. 89].

In this assessment the priority must be given to the clear educational advancement of the Polish society which took place after 1988. At the threshold of the new political regime only 1.8 million Poles could boast about having a university degree (6.5 % of all citizens above 15), whereas in 2002 university degree was held by 3.2 million (11.3 %), and in 2005 – 4.7 million [19, p. 108]. Currently, the education level of the Poles has become comparable to the education of people in leading EU countries.

Another favourable phenomenon was the continuous increase in the educational aspirations of the society, including education value.

The analysis of the research carried out by CBOS in 1993–2007 reveals that after a peculiar «drop» of education in the eighties among the most appreciated values [3, p. 19], its significance went up in the system of values. This was significantly enhanced by the social and economic development of Poland and integration with the European Union. Education, which is stressed by numerous research authors, has ceased to be solely autotelic values, and become an utilitarian one, a basis for the professional career. The correctness of this thesis is confirmed by the increase in the Poles' conviction that it is worth learning now: from 76 % of records in 1993 to 93 % in 2007 [16, p. 12].

This conviction depends primarily on the respondents' education level (the higher it is, the higher the conviction of people from large cities).

Table 1

Social image of the Polish school[*]

№	Do you think that at present Polish schools usually:	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		IV 1998		VI 2001		V 2007	
		Percentage					
1	provide religious education to students	89	6	84	10	86	6
2	have qualified teaching staff	71	20	72	18	79	9
3	provide high level of education to students	68	26	58	32	74	18
4	cooperate with students' parents	62	28	68	23	69	17
5	encourage independent thinking	50	40	57	33	63	22
6	teach patriotism and love for the motherland	62	27	52	37	62	23
7	develop interests	55	36	57	33	62	24
8	care about physical development of students	48	46	50	42	60	30
9	perform pedagogic functions	–	–	–	–	58	25
10	teach team work, cooperation while solving problems	34	52	41	44	52	29
11	provide appropriate health care to students	46	45	37	53	46	39
12	provide equal opportunities to adolescents with various social background	–	–	28	61	43	39
13	provide safety to students, protect them against drug abuse	32	58	36	54	42	45
14	prepare to active participation in the life of their local community	36	49	35	50	38	36
15	prepare to active participation in social and political life of Poland	30	52	29	54	36	39
16	prepare to the family life, marriage, raising children	34	54	37	49	36	42
17	teach how to cope with problems brought about by modern life	29	61	34	54	38	46

[*] The «hard to say answers» were not included. The answers «definitely yes» with «rather yes» and «definitely no» with «rather no». In grey fields – results proving clear prevalence of positive or negative assessments.

Source: *Czy warto się uczyć, komunikat z badań // Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej. – 2007.*

The successes of the Polish school include also the fact that starting from 1998 the social image of school has been improving slowly. This is corroborated by CBOS research carried out in 1998, 2001, 2007, so in the period when the education system reform started to be implemented.

Social image of the Polish school. The general assessment of the Polish schooling system was a bit worse in 2007 than in 1998. If we took into consideration only the opinions «definitely good» and «rather good» together, in 1998 the percentage of such an assessment was 58 %, in 2001 – 43 % and in 2007 – 51 %. The percentage of negative assessments («rather bad», «definitely bad») was 31 %, 42 % and 36 % respectively. This shows that in consecutive studies positive assessments prevailed to a smaller or greater degree over the negative ones [4, p. 20].

The image of the Polish school and educational reality after 1998 was diversified in terms of particular areas of its functioning. It has been improving steadily but it does not come up to the social expectations.

The assessment distribution in CBOS research (1998–2007) indicates that the assessment has undergone change for the better in eleven out of seventeen areas included in the study (see table 1).

The functions and tasks which are best implemented by the school include religious education (86 % of positive answers), teaching staff qualifications (79 %), high education level (74 %), cooperation with parents (69 %), encouraging independent thinking (63 %), teaching patriotism and love for motherland (62 %), fulfilling pedagogical functions (58 %), introducing team work (52 %). It is possible to draw a conclusion that the Polish schools ensure their students the indispensable conditions for mental development (high qualifications of the teaching staff, high education level, and more extensively, school achievements, cooperation with parents, independent thinking encouraged, interests shaped) and spiritual development (religious and patriotic education).

The other functions and tasks got, unfortunately, less than 50 % of positive answers. This means that the social image of these functions and tasks' fulfilment is not satisfactory and in certain cases it is highly critical or even negative.
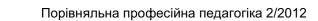
The tasks criticised (despite a negligible prevalence of positive answers) were health care and equalizing opportunities of children and adolescents with various social backgrounds.

The excessively low assessment of health care in schools stem probably from low health and medical care standing in Poland. Its shortcomings get transferred to the school. They shall influence it until we manage to improve health care significantly.

The second from the tasks mentioned, that is equalising opportunities, is one of the priorities of the education policy worldwide. That is why its fulfilment by our school must give rise to significant social objections (only 43 % positive answers), on the other hand, however, it is comforting that since 2001 we have witnessed a significant improvement of opinions in this field (from 28 % to 43 %) in 2007. The most criticised and worst assessed function is the basic social function of school, namely preparation of the young generation to contribute to the civil society creation. It is popular knowledge that it is the objective to be met by civic education in schools. Its major task is to develop active citizenship, consisting primarily in shaping and encouraging social, civil, patriotic attitudes, democratic values mainly through discussion, dialogue and discourse which give vent to emotions and experiences, which develop and enrich the mind, and also are aimed at creating the ethos of duty and civil awareness of students [2, p. 16].

Little wonder that the active participation in the life of local communities is the task assessed favourably by only 38 % of those surveyed by CBOS in 2007, with 36 % negative answers. The fulfilment of this highly important task of the civic education in the form of preparing to participate in social and political life of Poland is definitely negative (39 %) with fewer positive answers (36 %).

Let us look at the results of the research quoted, taking into consideration the improvement in the respondents' opinions in 1998-2007. They can indicate certain relatively stable directions of change for the better in the Polish school functioning.

The improvement of opinions is visible with respect to 11 tasks (see table 1). It is most visible primarily in connection with team work, and also cooperation while solving problems (increase by 18 percentage points since 1998), equalising opportunities for adolescents from various social backgrounds (increase by 15 points). Other positive changes include increase (by 13 points) of the respondents' belief that schools encourage independent thinking of students and that they take care for their physical development (increase by 12 points).

Among the issues noticed more and more frequently are: care about students' safety (increase by 10 points), teachers' qualifications (increase by 8 points) and cooperation of school with parents (increase by 7 points) or school shaping students' interests (increase by 7 points). However, it is impossible to state whether these are relatively stable changes, especially when it comes to the care about students' safety [3, p. 19].

Improvement in the child safety in school will depend on the social policy of government, education policy, and on the schools, local authorities and parents.

Little wonder that the majority of social postulates refer to upbringing (36 % of CBOS respondents, 2007). These include:

– making the discipline at school stricter and increasing requirements for students (reducing their arbitrary decisions, introducing liability for their offences, imposing obligations – 25 % records);

   – increase in the personal safety of students;
   – eliminating violence and aggression;
   – ensuring substance abuse prevention;
   – extending training scope;
   – managing free time of students [4, p. 20].

Another area of social expectations includes curriculums and also testing and evaluating students' knowledge (30 % records). The most frequent among the postulates include: increased stress on foreign languages, computer science (2 % of records), making the curriculums less extensive, introducing uniform books (7 %), possibility to use them for a couple of years, changing the methods of testing and evaluating knowledge (6 %), including the rules of the «matura» exam, reducing the number of exams, tests etc. [7, p. 78].

School as the area threatened with social exclusion. Social exclusion today is one of the most urgent and difficult problems. The sources and causes of these phenomena are multiple. The greatest significance is ascribed to the so-called third industrial revolution and globalisation accompanying it. According to F. Mayor, these are factors subjecting contemporary societies to the logic of deterioration, uncertainty, instability, and on the other hand to the logic of selective choices, exclusive groupings and divisions [13, p. 14; 15, p.78].

He was also correct to claim that the contemporary school is also subject to such logic of divisions, exclusive groupings and splitting. This is corroborated, as F. Mayor says, by high percentage of students not promoted, with a simultaneous increase in the

«isolation» of children from richer environments in «good schools»: «good secondary schools» and «good universities» which are expected to ensure maximum opportunities. At the same time, social division and poverty scope increase, leading to strengthening inequalities, and to the deprivation of needs, marginalisation and exclusion of both individuals and various social groups, including primarily children and adolescents. F. Mayor calls this process in a very blunt way, namely «the scandal of poverty and exclusion» [13, p. 67]. In Poland the scales of this phenomenon is especially drastic and alarming in various areas, as it strikes primarily the most susceptible ones, so children and adolescents.

In certain countries the risk of child poverty is lower than the EU average and reaches: Denmark and Finland – 10 %, Slovenia – 12 %, Cyprus – 11 %, Germany – 12 %, Belgium – 15 %. However, in most countries the risk of poverty exceeds 20 % (mean value for EU), and it takes the extreme values in Italy, Lithuania, Hungary and Romania – 25%, whereas it is highest in Latvia and Poland – 26 % [20, p.29].

This is undoubtedly alarming and should be reflected not only in the official education policy, but also in the activities of the Polish school.

This is confirmed by studies carried out in Poland.

The research in the conditions of the Polish inhabitants' life, carried out by GUS within EU – SILC programme, revealed that also the income level becomes more diversified. It showed that the income of the 20 % of those with the highest income are 6.6 times higher than the income of the 20 % of those with the lowest income [19, p. 108].

CBOS research into the poverty scope in Poland, carried out in 2000 revealed among others that:

– 33 % of respondents obtained monthly income per capita not higher than the poverty threshold value defined socially, that is 378 PLN;

– from 33 % to 45 % of the society are threatened with poverty in Poland;

– 47 % of families obtain income not higher than the subsistence level value which in 2000 for a family with four members was 504 PLN according to the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs [20, p. 17].

The research carried out by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs in following years showed also that in Poland poverty is connected directly with the number of children in family. Families with many children (four and more) are the most exposed. Extreme poverty of these families increases steadily, in 2005 reached 44 % [19, p. 108], whereas in 1998 it was 20 % [17, p. 15].

The international EU – SILC studies mentioned above proved that the poverty threat ratio is highly diversified in Poland and correlated to the GDP variability per capita. The following voivodeships are most exposed to the threat of poverty: Świętokrzyskie (28 % osób), voivodeship of Lublin (27 %), Pomerania and Cuiavia & Pomerania (24 % each), whereas the ratios are the lowest for Upper Silesia (14 %), Mazovia (18 %), Lesser and Greater Poland (19% each). The poverty level among children obviously exceeds these ratios. According to the sociologists from the University of

Łódź, it is highest in Świętokrzyskie (over 40 %), and in the Sub-Carpatia, Cuiavia & Pomerania and Podlasie it reaches from 30 % to 40 % [21, p. 30].

It should be stressed that the most frequent causes of poverty revealed in the studies include:

– unemployment,
– changes of political system, economic and social policy;
– low earnings;
– situation of enterprises (privatisation, dismissals, liquidation etc.);
– authorities – official policy;
– fortuitous events;
– helplessness – inability to cope with changes;
– family problems – many children, divorce etc. [20, p. 21].

The after-effects of child poverty are equally important as the causes, as they limit correct development of the young generation and its opportunities in adult life.

The empirical data available indicate that the most important of those after-effects if the intergeneration consolidation of poverty in families threatened with it, but also inheriting poverty and recreating by the children of poor parents both their paths of life and also their social positions. This is supported both by the studies carried out by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs [18], Council for Social Monitoring [16], research carried out by sociologists [6] and education sociologists [10], as well as international research.

Other significant after-effects include the limited satisfaction of children everyday needs in the family environment, limitations and obstacles in the education of children and adolescents from families threatened with poverty, child labour, household duties of children from poverty-stricken families [18, p. 56].

According to S. Golinowska, it is impossible for the school to combat poverty and social exclusion unless it undertakes pedagogic and social functions with respect to children in difficult situations, regardless of the expenditure spent [8, p. 6].

The social image of school depends also on the inequalities in the access to education. Let us illustrate their scope, basing also on research.

The analysis of results brought by research carried out under the auspices of the Council for Social Monitoring and also GUS provides ground for numerous alarming conclusions, from the point of view of social exclusion threat [4, p. 20].

First of all, low availability of crèches and nursery schools is alarming, as only one in five children benefitted from this form of care in 2007. In this respect there are significant differences between cities and villages (the greater the city, the more significant the differences are). If we take into consideration solely 2007, it can be seen that twice as many children were covered with this kind of care in cities than in rural areas, which is obviously a drastic example of educational inequalities. It also evidences deep shortage of institutional care for children in rural areas. Secondly, there are no significant differences in the access to education for children aged 7–15 which

usually learn in public schools (primary and lower secondary schools). A similar situation took place in years 2000–2007 among adolescents aged 16–19 [12, p. 231].

Thirdly, there are significant variations among people aged 20–24 years. In this group it is clear that the education activity depends on the place of abode. In large cities (over 200 thousand inhabitants) the percentage of university students is almost twice higher than in other places, especially than in rural areas (in 2007 in big cities 80.23 % of young people aged 20–24 were university students, whereas only 49.23 % in rural areas). The increase in the scholarisation ratios in every category of place of abode in 2000-2007 should be assessed positively. This proves, on the one hand, the increase in the education aspirations of young people, and on the other the alarming fact, namely much lower educational activity in rural areas as this strengthens the high differences in education between urban and rural areas [11, p. 20].

Another alarming phenomenon, besides the ones mentioned above, is helplessness, and frequently also peculiar loneliness of students.

Helplessness is the opposite of resourcefulness, which is the basic strategy and attitude in life. Both these terms are used by contemporary psychology, sociology and pedagogics.

Studies carried out by M. Kwiecińska-Zdrenka revealed that only 60 % of our eighteen-year-olds are resourceful. They have high aspirations, actively strive to realise them, choosing appropriate measures, tend to seek the causes of failures outside and of successes – inside. These are primarily adolescents from higher social classes, children of parents with university degrees and working in prestigious professions. The helpless ones, on the other hand, are primarily adolescents from rural areas who are characterised with a pessimistic and fatalistic attitude, and various social and professional status of parents. Such an attitude can be changed if the structures being obstacles for such adolescents got transformed [9, p. 214].

These obstacles are primarily of a social, cultural and psychological nature. The social and cultural obstacles include the failure to appreciate education embedded at home, environmental patterns of professional career with no need to study, patterns of early self-reliance. The psychological obstacles include low self-esteem, no self-confidence and belief in one's own value [18, p. 56].

It can be stated that the contemporary school is perceived by the society as an institution with numerous achievements but also many difficult problems and tasks, not solved so far, primarily with respect to the social and pedagogical functions. They are alarming and should become subject of special care not only of teachers, but also the representatives of educational and social policy.

References

1. Bogaj A. Efektywność edukacyjna / A. Bogaj // Encyklopedia Pedagogiczna XXI wieku. – Warszawa : Żak, 2003. – S. 123

2. Bogaj M. Etyczne podstawy edukacji i świata pracy / M. Bogaj // Szkoła a rynek pracy / A. Bogaj, S. M. Kwiatkowski (ed.). – Warszawa : PWN, 2006. – S. 16–18.

3. Bogaj M. Przemiany aspiracji edukacyjnych młodzieży (1945–2004) / M. Bogaj // «Eduakcja». – 2005. – No. 3. – S. 19.

4. Czy warto się uczyć, komunikat z badań. – Warszawa : Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej, 2007. – S. 20.

5. Diagnoza Społeczna / ed. J. Czapiński, T. Panek // Warunki i jakość życia Polaków. – Warszawa, 2007. – S. 189.

6. Domański H. Hierarchie i bariery społeczne w latach dziewięćdziesiątych / H. Domański. – Warszawa : ISP, 2000. – S. 102.

7. Edukacja w Europie: różne systemy kształcenia i szkolenia – wspólne cele do 2010 r. // Komisja Europejska. – Warszawa, 2003. – S. 78.

8. Golinowska S. Dekada polskiej polityki społecznej. Od przełomu wieków do końca wieku / S. Golinowska. – Warszawa, 2007. – S. 6.

9. Kwiecińska-Zdrenka M. Aktywni czy bezradni wobec własnej przyszłości / M. Kwiecińska-Zdrenka. – Toruń : UMK, 2004. – S. 214.

10. Kwieciński Z. Wykluczenie / Z. Kwieciński. – Toruń : UMK, 2002. – S. 93.

11. Lewowicki T. Przemiany oświaty / T. Lewowicki. – Warszawa,1993. – S. 19–23.

12. Mathews G. Supermarket kultury / G. Mathews [Trans. E. Klekot]. – Warszawa : Spectrum, 2005. – S. 231.

13. Mayor F. Przyszłość świata / F. Mayor // Fundacja Studiów i Badań Edukacyjnych. – Warszawa, 2001. – S. 14–67.

14. Polacy o bezpieczeństwie dzieci, komunikat. – Warszawa : Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej, 2003. – S. 89–92.

15. Ścisłowicz M. Uczniowie o szkole swoich marzeń / M. Ścisłowicz // «Edukacja». – 1994. – no. 1. – S. 78.

16. Społeczny wizerunek polskiej szkoły, komunikat z badań. – Warszawa : Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej, 2007. – S. 12.

17. Tarkowska E. Ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne młodzieży / E. Tarkowska. – Warszawa : PiSS, 2000. – S. 15.

18. Tarkowska E. Ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne młodzieży / E. Tarkowska. – Warszawa : IFiSS, 2007. – S. 56.

19. Warunki życia ludności Polski w latach 2004-2005. – Warszawa : GUS, 2007. – S. 108.

20. Zasięg biedy i postrzeganie ludzi biednych w Polsce. – Warszawa : Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej, 2000. – S. 17–21.

21. Zasięg biedy i postrzeganie ludzi biednych w Polsce. – Warszawa : Centrum Badania Opinii Spolecznej, 2005. – S. 29–31.