



## NEWS BREAK

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**REVIEW ON THE MONOGRAPH  
“EDUKACYJNE PROBLEMY WSPÓŁCZESNOŚCI”  
 (“EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT TIME”)  
BY MIROSLAW J. SZYMAŃSKI**

At the end of last year, the publication of this monograph became a remarkable event in scientific and pedagogical environment of Poland, foreign countries and, in particular, Ukraine. It was written by Mirosław Szymanski, the ordinary professor of Warsaw Institute of Pedagogy of the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, a famous scientist – teacher and sociologist of education, a member of the Presidium of the Committee on Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, an expert of the Polish Accreditation Commission and a member of scientific boards of many Polish and foreign journals and other publications. With pleasure and gratitude I would like to note that Professor is an active member of the Polish-Ukrainian scientific forums. He makes great efforts preparing and holding such events at high levels of professionalism, humanity and spirituality.

Why am I, as the author of review on the monograph, enumerating various achievements and different levels of Professor’s recognition? First of all, the idea of creating such a book, its conception, structure and most importantly the depth of the contents are impossible without high philosophical-pedagogical critical thinking, extensive experience in scientific and experimental work, basic knowledge, and profound comprehending of international and national documents as well as methods of comparative pedagogical research. There is no doubt that these qualities are inherent in Professor M. Szymanski.

The author’s conceptual idea of this unique work encompasses a wide range of philosophical and pedagogical problems that affect the quality of education and its impact on the innovative development of Polish society in the context of globalization and integration processes. In Foreword of the monograph it is highlighted that “life activity greatly helps us to shape attitudes, beliefs and principles, to construct our identity. We are subject to public education and to some extent affecting others we ourselves become teachers. The sooner we approach to the model of the knowledge-based society, the more the need for intellectualization of other life activity forms increases” (p. 9–10).

Attention is drawn to the conclusion that a new role and mission of education in all its possible forms concern not only individuals, but also a society as a whole. This opinion is confirmed by bright theses in the report of E. Faure and others, the Club of Rome Report under the title “Uczuć się bez granic”, as well as a report to UNESCO of the International Commission of Education for the XXI Century, chaired by Jacques de Laura, namely “Edukacja – jest w niej ukryty skarb”.

To make at least a brief analysis of the contents of structural units in this valuable scientific work, let us turn over its pages.

First, at interdisciplinary level M. Szymanski addresses the problem of the connection between social and educational changes. He performs a detailed semantic analysis of terms “change”, “increase”, “progress” etc. Social change is regarded as one of the important components of changes. According P. Sztompka, in the monograph main directions of social change are



singled out, namely a change in system components, a change of its structure and functions, a change of system borders and a change in the system environment (p. 16).

Considering the changes in education and schooling (zmiana w oświacie i szkolnictwie), the scientist logically turns to “Procesy zmian i innowacji” by R. Schulz (Warszawa; PWN 1980). According to the scientist’s conception he concluded that the development of education and schooling occurs when:

- changes are long-term, do not have incidental nature, are not limited to short-term waves and are not opportunistic;
- changes are characterized by duration and logic thoroughness of further steps;
- changes are related to institutions and persons operating within the system (schools, centers of parallel and continuous education, helper and educational areas, teachers, pupils, students, parents, school administration and staff of psychological-pedagogical consultations);
- efficiency of changes has a stable nature and odds for longer duration;
- the most significant sources and impulses of changes are in the system itself (for example, new theories and pedagogical experiments, teacher innovation, teaching progress, parent communities activity, expectations of pupils and students);
- the results of the development positively influence the quality of training at different levels;
- informal education and self-education acquire significant importance as well as the formation of social value system (p. 21–22).

“Indywidualizacja i zróżnicowania społeczne w okresie późnej nowoczesności” – this subunit includes a set of topical modern issues related to individualism, its special nature, and the increase of social opportunities.

Of considerable scientific interest are the Professor’s reflections on changes of values in the society that is dynamically transforming. Spirituality is defined by the scientist as a specific feature of an individual, which he considers in a variety of contexts, in particular, homo sapiens, homo ludens, homo faber, homo creator, homo viator, homo construens, homo destruens, homo inquietus, homo sentimentalism, homo festivalus.

Democratic changes taking place in Poland and in many countries around the world require active, conscious participation of people in social and economic life. As it is noted in the book, it always presupposes the need for educating a new personality. Referring to T. Lewowicki and D. Reisman, Professor draws attention to the “self-concept” and the problem of “samosterownosc”, i.e. when a person who is used to working according to the instruction, performing routine work, not thinking and not developing their creative potential. Therefore, of particular importance is the necessity of forming critical thinking, determination and active implementation of their life plans, the ability to “fit their biography in the realities of employment and development of their professional careers ...”. It is also about the ability of everyone to use their competences and qualifications in order to self-determine their life strategies (p. 60–61).

Quite naturally the monographer considers education as a value in terms of dynamic social and economic changes in post-capitalist society by P. F. Drucker.

In this context it is necessary to mention the importance of M. Szymanski’ singling out main key values of education based on the profound analysis of the abovementioned Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century, as well as the works of U. Becka (Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności, przet. S. Ciesła, Warszawa: Scholar 2002), Z. Bauman (Globalizacja. I co z tego dla ludzi wynika, przet. E. Klekot, Warszawa: PIW 2000), J. Modrzewski (Socjalizacja a uczestnictwo społeczne. Studium socjopedagogiczne, Poznań: Wyd. Nauk. UAM 2004).



Thought-provoking is an alternative classification of generations, according to the concept of B. Fatyga: gold, white, gray and black legend of generations (p. 70).

We believe that quite valuable are reflections of the author on “person identity as tasks and factors of its formation, realization of creative projects aimed at self-development of person’s identity as a problem” (p. 88). The content of the monograph consists of innovative ideas for person’s education in the context of globalization challenges.

Addressing dilemmas and contradictions in the implementation of democratic education policy the author objectively analyzes complex issues of social inequality in general, and education inequality in the world that will lead to the exclusion of a person in modern society. Not accidentally the scientist anxiously formulates rhetorical question: Is an equality of educational chances a real educational purpose or another utopia? It should be noted that this rhetorical question to the reader expresses deep pain of the scientist, a patriot of his motherland, and at the same time his social responsibility for present and future generations of Poles. Critical thinking and scientific honesty of the scientist do not allow him formally, quietly and indifferently observe and analyze the causes of social inequalities in education and in other areas of human activity at the beginning of the XXI century.

In our opinion, the names of the monograph’s subunits also confirm the profundity of the Professor’s reflections and efforts to find answers to the challenges of globalization and integration processes. They are:

- “Fasadowe obrazy polskiej oświaty w III RP”;
- “Miedzy wolnością a standaryzacją”;
- “Balansowanie polityki oświatowej państwa od jednej skrajności do drugiej”;
- “Szkoła w obliczu demokratycznych przemian”;
- “Tożsamość szkół jako edukacyjnej wspólnoty”;
- “Szkoła wyższa wobec wyzwań demokracji i rynku pracy”.

I am sure that the contents of these subunits unwittingly provoke readers’ need to compare the reality in implementing the national education policy in their province, city, district or village.

The final part of the monograph deserves high praise too, where special attention is paid to analysis of the higher education teacher role (nauczyciela akademickiego) in the training of the scientific elite. At high methodological level the author reveals interdisciplinarity as an “attribute” of sciences about education. Certainly, the “attribute” is a figurative definition. The point is the foundation of sciences about education.

“Pedagogy is an integrated social and humanistic science” (Pedagogika – zintegrowana nauka społeczna i humanistyczna” (p. 271–280). Professor M. Schimansky refers to the classification of pedagogical subdisciplines proposed by ordinary Professor, Doctor habilitated Zygmunt Wiatrowski, a foreign member of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine. He proves the exceptional importance of increasing attention to the development of pedagogical sciences system, as well as the need for qualitative research in pedagogy.

Also I would like to highlight scientific culture of monograph’s issuance, compiling bibliography subject index and index of last names.

There is no doubt that the monograph of Professor M. Szymanski is the result of long-term work of the famous brilliant scientist. Its contents have accumulated intelligence, high moral and ethical level, the innovativeness of the scientist who deservedly belongs to the intellectual elite.

Such books do not die. The book “Educational problems of the present day” will live long and contribute to the education of new generations of scientists.