



Capabilities in the Context of Education and Whole-Day Schooling: The Situation in Poland

Maria Mendel and Tomasz Szkudlarek, University of Gdansk, Poland

1 The Topics and Framework

The project: *Capabilities in the context of education and whole-day schooling* co-ordinated by the University of Bielefeld, which this expertise is prepared for, is aimed at:

- discussion of different models of integrating education (*Bildung*),
- bringing together formal education (school), nonformal education (youth work, etc.) and informal education (parents, peers, etc.).

The thesis behind it is that:

- a modern approach to education should not only focus on school objective knowledge, but try to integrate the other fields of education (as in the above), too
- the above can happen in form of modern school organization but it can also happen in an independently organized form e.g. in the afternoon.

The topic and the framework for my expertise is composed of my attempting to respond of the following key questions in the light of my study of the current situation in Poland:

- How far, in the situation of Poland as a transforming society, does this issue involve a cooperation or a joint organization of school and non-school education and institutions, and who would be in charge (if at all), of this combination
- Do pupils in Poland stay at school till lunchtime or in the afternoon too, and what they do there; or have the pupils the possibility to join activities in the area of nonschooling education, for instance youth clubs etc.
- Is there a connection between these fields, or are they still separate?

2 Legal Basis

In Poland, four types of education are usually distinguished:

- formal, or school education, which comprises all stages of schooling, studies, and institutional training. This process is usually based on structured and organised learning and is completed with various diplomas or certificates.
- nonformal education, which usually takes place along the formal process of education or training, but it rarely leads to formal diplomas or certificates. This kind of learning

takes place in the workplace, or in activities related to various activities of the civic society (in non-governmental organisations, youth organisations, sports clubs, trade unions, etc.). Those activities may be initiated by learners themselves.

- informal education, which may be described as an on-going, life-long process of formation of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills on the basis of experience and as a result of the educational influence of the social and cultural environment (family, friends and acquaintances, working environment, plays and market places, media etc). The examples can comprise for instance educational competitions, films or multimedia shows, video or RPG games and other types of *edutainment* that a particular person is engaged in
- incidental education, taking place in every-day ad hoc situations; they are incidental, have not been planned as learning situations, but nonetheless they are the source of significant knowledge or experience.

Education Act of 1991, with subsequent amendments, addresses these dimensions of education. However, its main focus is on formal education. It is visible in the list of tasks that the state should undertake to provide for education of its citizens. They are listed in Article 1, where we read that

In particular this system should provide:

- implementation of the right of each citizen of the Republic of Poland to education and the right of children and youths to be educated and cared for;
- support of the family's educational role;
- possibility for various entities to establish and run schools and institutions;
- adjustment of the contents, methods and organisation of education to pupils' psychological and physical abilities, and the possibility of taking advantage of psychological and pedagogical support and of special forms of teaching;
- possibility for the disabled and socially maladjusted children and youths to be taught at all types of schools;
- care for the seriously disabled and socially maladjusted children and youths through individual teaching, use of individual curricula and participation in remedial classes
- care for particularly gifted pupils;
- common access to secondary schools;
- possibility for adults to complete general education;
- diminishing educational inequalities between particular regions of the country, and especially between urban and rural areas;
- creation of safe and hygienic conditions for pupils at schools and other institutions;

- dissemination of environmental education;
- particular care for pupils in a difficult financial situation and having poor living conditions;
- adjustment of education to the labour market needs.
- provision of career guidance to pupils¹

The Act identifies the subjects that form the system of education in Poland. Article 2 lists among them:

- kindergartens, including those with integration classes adapted for children with special needs and special kindergartens;
- primary schools, also including special schools, integration schools, sports schools;
- gymnasias (lower secondary schools), also including special, integration, bi- and multilingual, sports and work-skills oriented ones;
- upper-secondary schools, including also special, integration, bi- and multilingual, sports, agriculture and forestry schools; arts schools;
- educational institutions, also including school hostels, serving cultural and recreational interests and providing leisure activities;
- life-long education institutions, general and vocational; practical training and in-service training centres;
- art centres
- psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, including career and job planning services
- youth education and correction centres, including sociotherapy, special education and special needs correction centres
- care centres for students learning outside their permanent residence
- Youth Work Organisation
- teacher training and in-service training centres
- pedagogical libraries
- social work colleges

¹ Translation into English from http://www.european-agency.org/nat_ovs/poland/1.html

The system - with all above mentioned institutions - is to be "supported by non-governmental organisations, including scouting organisations, and by legal persons conducting their activities in the domain of education and upbringing" (Art. 2a.1). Schools and educational institutions are "obliged" to co-operate with such organisations.

It means that the Polish education law refers to the rhetoric of "cooperation", "support" and "obligation to cooperation" between all possible subjects dealing with education in the country, explicitly creates foundations for the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education. The tasks pertinent to education are to be realised, according to the law, in conditions of mutual relations and reciprocity between the subjects in terms of the goals and forms of their work.

3 The Way Educational System Works More Flexibly

3.1 "Small Kindergarten"

The recent amendments to the 1991 Act maintain this tendency. For instance, since 2008 a new meaning of "the kindergarten", significant for the aim of this analysis, has been introduced into the Act. According to this amendment, a new form of pre-school education called "small kindergarten", as well as other alternative forms of education at this level, have been recognised. They must employ qualified teachers, but other requirements, for instance those pertaining to building facilities, may be less rigorously observed as it is in the case of typical kindergartens.

Such institutions may operate in a far more elastic manner. The obligatory curricula may be realised in whole or partially, and the subjects who run them may comprise e.g. non-governmental institutions. This should be understood as a step towards further integration of formal, informal and non-formal education, and as an effort to solve the problems of pre-school education in Poland. This stage of education is a responsibility (an own task) of local governments, which means that maintenance of pre-school institutions and employment of teachers must be covered from own resources of those governments. Financial restrictions common to many local communities in Poland resulted in closing 30 % of kindergartens between the years 1990 and 2001.

For several years, many small kindergartens (often part-time, with one teacher travelling between several communities) have been created to repair for this loss. They are often supported by EU funds. Presently there are ca. 800 such institutions, and they enroll ca. 9000 children. Those alternative forms of pre-school education are actively organised by the Comenius Foundation and Federation of Educational Initiatives.

In the light of the 2008 amendment, local governments gain rights to support such forms of organisation of pre-school education and to increase the number of children having access to education at this stage. Presently, the rate of schooling for children aged 3-5 in Poland is the lowest in the EU and amounts to 30 % (for the sake of comparison, it is 100 % in Hungary, Belgium or Ireland, and over 90 % in Czech Republic, Italy or Switzerland)².

² After: Nauka w Polsce,
http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/palio/html.run?_Instance=cms_naukapl.pap.pl&_PageID=1&s=stronaGlowna.eng&lang=&_Checksum=-1783759132

3.2 Parental Involvement

Other recent amendments to the Education Act involve those pertaining to the role of parents in education of their children and in the functioning of the schools. As we read in an Eurydice report,

“As of the 1st of September 2007 the following changes were introduced in the primary schools and lower secondary schools: the obligation to set up the parents’ council in each schools. The councils comprise the elected representatives of parents. They have the right to submit opinions and requests to the schoolhead, school running body and superintendents (regional educational authorities). The parents’ council together with the teachers’ council will define the school preventive programme and school education and care programme. They will give opinions on the programme and timetable of the school performance improvement, as well as on the financial plan submitted by the schoolhead”³.

Those tendencies to broaden the scope of societalization of the school and transforming it towards a shared value of the community can be seen as well corresponding to the process of democratization of social life. Opening the school for parents and local communities contribute to the integration of the different forms of education as well. The school that offers learning possibilities together with the parents begins to involve whole families and communities not only as subjects, but also - to some extent - as "targets" of education. It is education "with" the community and "for" the community, where formal, informal, non-formal and accidental aspects of learning may merge; it has a chance of becoming a significant factor in the life of the community, contributing to individual development of its citizens and to its development as a whole.

Such schools may easily form local partnerships. Linking all local environments, it creates school – family – local community partnerships and many institutional joint-ventures linking all types of education: formal, informal and non-formal.

Such school, family, and community partnerships seem to be evoking prospective possibilities of changing societies towards more community-like ways of life. Teachers, who are responsible for developing those partnerships, may therefore become key figures in inverting the tendencies that undercut community lives. Their approach to the issue of school-family-community collaboration may directly influence the quality of relationships between the potential partners. (Mendel, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2007). Unfortunately, talking of Poland as transforming society one could say that these approaches are grounded in former system and make barriers in building bridges between school and families.

The selected results of a study in which prospective teachers, studying in a Polish and an American university, were asked about their ways of understanding school, family, and community partnerships tend to suggest that both groups are deeply involved in discursive practices that reproduce power relations in their respective countries, which brings a question of their ability to play the role of agents of social change in their future work [Mendel, 2001]. The results show a tendency of school teachers in Poland to dominate over the sphere of local activities by excluding parents from school and community life (a trace of the communist heritage). On the other hand they disclose a discourse of professional expertise as an American version of similar domination.

³ www.eurydice.org – National Summary Sheets on Education System in Europe and Ongoing Reforms: Poland

Most Polish students (85%) perceive parents “as a trouble” as something common. The American group did not see this role as dominant (no indications on the right side of the scale). Seeing parents as “a trouble” implies, on the one hand, a tendency to avoid them, and on the other a notion that “something should be done about it”. Polish students feel that they have to do “something” about parents, most likely they should master them. They take a position “above” parents, in an unequal relationship that cannot be identified as partnership. A teacher who feels professional in the way that was presented earlier, who sees not a real parent but a “problem” instead, will probably use procedures of control, manipulation, and management called “practices of repartition” in Michel Foucault’s writings (1977, p.211).

Thus a discursive power/knowledge structure becomes visible. Teachers’ knowledge about parents translates itself into power over parents who become objects of discursive practice.

Polish professionalism of prospective teachers originates from the *ethos* of teachers’ service to the society in general (unfortunately, rather than a local community). It expresses itself in the feeling of mission to improve the world and mould reality into expected, ideal forms. The lack of expert knowledge on school, family, and community partnerships (there are no courses on this topic) is compensated for by the emphasis on legal issues and the dominant position of the teacher that is guaranteed by the law.

Basing on empirical studies and common observations one could say that teachers in Poland prefer limited parents’ involvement and resort to the law (their *status quo* as well educated graduates who obtained the MA degree) if their relationships with parents are not fully satisfactory (Segiet, 1999; Mendel 1998, 2000).

Perhaps more attention should be paid to parents, namely to the possibilities of the animation of their parenting culture that could generate leaders of social change rather than merely speakers active in situations of school conflicts. Here we come to the universally controversial issue of parental education.

It is typical, also in well-developed countries, that parental education is not supported by public funds. One can hear of local initiatives in this area, but they are scarce⁴. Parents are, thus, perceived as an important part of the system of education, but this recognition is not translated into financial initiatives. We do not perceive the problem of parental involvement in economic terms, and it is not practically connected to the ideas of life-long learning (generally seen, due to the pressure executed by the world of work, as part of economic rationality⁵) or to ideas of investing in human and social capital, well recognized in diagnoses of social policy⁶.

There clearly seems to be a lack of systemic solutions that would enable parents' or parents-teachers' associations to share the responsibility for running schools. There is no system of recruitment of parents to the bodies that decide on the functioning of education. There is no parental representation in the system – beginning from the school level, through the local to

⁴ Miejsce i rola rodziców w polskim systemie edukacyjnym (2000): Wydawnictwo STO, Warszawa

⁵ Mrówka B. (1999): Kształcenie ustawiczne a doskonalenie umiejętności profesjonalnych, *Studia Europejskie*, nr 3

⁶ Denek K. (1998): Ku szkolnictwu wyższemu XXI wieku, *Kultura i Edukacja*, nr 2; Tadeusiewicz G.(1997): *Edukacja w Europie*, PWN, Warszawa-Łódź; Teichler U., Kehm B. (1996): Ku nowemu rozumieniu relacji między szkolnictwem wyższym a światem pracy, *Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe*, nr 7

the national one. The legal framework that makes it *possible* for parents to form Educational Councils, together with representations of teachers and students, at all these levels, remains empty. In spite of the efforts undertaken by various organisations, like the Civic Educational Association (Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe – STO), it mostly groups parents involved in non-public schooling) which has introduced Poland into European Parents' Association and has remained the sole representative of Poland there – no organisation capable of representing all Polish parents, regardless the type or location of the school. We do not have anything that would match, for instance, the Parents-Teachers Organisation in England or the Swedish *Hem og Skola* (Home and School) that gather parents from all kinds of schools and represent them on all levels of the system (from school, through local and national, to European) and who elect their leaders in clear democratic procedures. The Polish STO, which started as a broad social movement who played a vital role in linking education to local communities after 1989, nowadays itself runs ca. 200 non-public schools and it is mostly composed of parents whose children attend them⁷. Therefore it cannot be considered a proper representation of all Polish parents.

The present situation is dramatically different from that before 1939, when there was a strong self-governmental movements of parents. School councils that operated on all levels of the system, were supported by two national parental associations: the Union of Parental Associations and the Grouping of Parents connected to a political organisation called „Zręb”, and School Patronages or Committees of Parental Care operated in a vast majority of primary and secondary schools. The Parents' Committees called “Parental Threes” acting in current reality in Poland could remind them. But in order to perceiving them as quite similar, one should foster the contemporary ways of parents' influence of school life. As Krzysztof Jakubiak says, those organisations operated according to their own, legally registered statutes, and they strictly co-operated with school managers and pedagogical councils⁸.

3.3 Socialization of the school

It is impossible to state how the above tendencies would develop if it had not been for the Second World War and the subsequent Soviet domination over Poland. The pre-war achievements in this area were undoubtedly significant, but the post-war ideas of "societalization of the school", of "open schooling" or "community schools", in spite of noble intentions of their proponents, invariably led to further subordination of the school to the socialist state⁹. Therefore it was only after 1989 that those ideas gained new impetus and started to have some influence on the democratization of the educational reality.

The present Polish law, although it does create real foundations for the partnership between parents and schools, seems to remain in the realm of declarations. What is still missing are broader organisational solutions that would let the parents actually feel involved in the system of education. Even though the Education Act of 1991, and the bill that set the blueprint of

⁷Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe: oświata – wychowanie – edukacja obywatelska, Informator 2005/2006, Wyd.STO, Warszawa 2005, p. 4

⁸Jakubiak K. (1995): Problem relacji domu rodzinnego ucznia i szkoły w polskiej pedagogice przełomu XIX i XX wieku oraz w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej [W:] Pedagogiczne relacje rodzina – szkoła. Dylematy czasu przemian pod redakcją A.W.Janke, WSP Bydgoszcz, s.80

⁹Winiarski M. (2000): Rodzina – szkoła – środowisko lokalne. Problemy edukacji środowiskowej, Wyd. IBE, Warszawa

educational reform in 1999 consider parents as "rightful members of the school community", "partners", etc., the every-day reality shows a totally different picture.

A serious obstacle to the full implementation of the idea of "societalization" of the school, of turning it into a real "community education" institution, including the involvement of parents in the every-day functioning of the school and integration of various forms of education and learning, is the lack of parental leaders and a stereotypical image of the parent represented by all actors on the educational scene.

We still think of parents along the lines set in the previous political system. A way to overcome this inhibition is education.

However, as we said before, political declarations are rarely translated into financial obligations. Definitely rarely in Poland. The Ministry of Education clearly works towards the change of school by way of its societalization (that was the main target of the Education Act of 1991), but, on the other hand, it uses public money first of all to support teachers, then the students, while parents and other adults are totally omitted in the distribution schemes. We may put it sharply and provocatively that the Polish system of education excludes parents, and other adults in general, from the field of its interest. Ministry of Education in Poland is oriented towards children and teachers, and the money devoted to education is almost entirely used for schooling children and supporting their teachers.

4 Local communities and "local education"

The Education Act defines the system of education in the macro scale. In the above description we tried to show a broad picture and the tendencies of change in the system which, as we tried to present, aim at the model that integrates formal, non-formal and informal education. It should take place mostly through the activation of local self-government, and main conditions that are created by law include the increasing decentralisation and the growing power ceded down to *gmina* (*gemeine*, local community). Local governments are becoming the main agents in the system of education. They have been burdened with the task of financially maintaining school and pre-school education by a 1996 bill. They decide on the employment of headteachers, and they take initiative in various local educational actions. We may say that it is *gminas* that are to the largest extent responsible for the functioning of Polish education nowadays. The way they manage this responsibility can be seen as that aiming at integration of various types of education, and using the school infrastructure for purposes far extending those restricted to schooling: for the sake of all local citizens.

To support this thesis, somehow contradicting what we have said about the unfulfilled „institutional revolution” initiated by the 1991 Education Act, we will present two examples. The first one comes from Gdansk and it is called *The Model of Gdansk Self-Government Education: The Citizen of Gdansk 2020*. It has been approved by the City Council of Gdansk on May 27th 2004. The second one is called *Educational Policy of the Capital City of Warsaw 2008-2012* and has been approved there on October 18th 2007¹⁰.

¹⁰ We were invited by the respective meres of the cities to evaluate both these documents

4.1 “The model of Gdansk self-government education: the citizen of Gdansk 2020”

In 2020, „the citizen of Gdansk” is supposed to be a happy person enjoying a good psycho-physical condition. The document that is meant to describe the desired condition of education (sic!) concentrates – in its large part - on *leisure time*, as we can see in the following passage:

The possibilities of active recreation are provided in Gdansk by numerous clubs and sports centres: The City Sports Hall and OLIVIA Sports and Entertainment Hall, fitness clubs, snooker and bowling clubs, swimming pools and gymnasiums, two horse-riding clubs and golf clubs situated nearby the city. The city quickly expands the network of cycling roads, already stretching over 30 km. The effort of the city to promote cycling has been appreciated internationally and in 2002 the city, as the second town in the world, gained a 1 million dollar grant to build cycling roads from the UN Global Environment Facility Fund. In the summer, the main attraction of the city are sea beaches on the Gdansk Bay. The amateurs of water sports may enjoy the facilities of the Gdansk Bay, on Motlau River perfectly fit for kayak trips, or on numerous lakes surrounding the city. The very centre of Gdansk hosts a sailing marina capable of mooring 85 yachts. Between may and september 2002, 714 sailing and motor yachts visited the place.

In 2002, Gdansk was classified sixth out of [...] 732 gminas in the national youth sports competition¹¹.

This, and many similar passages of the document show that education in the city means various forms of activity being part of the system of formal education, but also – and that is strongly emphasised in the document – other than formal, diversified activities of leisure, family life, clubbing, sports and entertainment. Education seems to be understood here, after some of the leading pedagogues in contemporary Poland, as „the whole of factors that form life capabilities of the human¹²” and, as such, it cannot merely take place in schools. Not schools, but the whole community becomes the place of individual and collective self-creation practices. The title of the document – *The Citizen of Gdansk* – seems significant in this context.

The document contains numerous examples that illustrate this way of understanding education and of political decisions that result from it. Political goals are defined through the lens of education. The description of the strategic goals of *The Model...* starts with the following sentence:

The aim of educational policy is to create proper educational conditions that will make young people able to participate in public life, in social and cultural activities. The fundamental strategic goal is higher quality and unrestricted access to education. (...) The obligation of the state in the area of education has been declared as preparing young people to adult life, and to vocation in particular. There is a need of connecting education with the demands of the job market, and of inspiring motivation to permanent learning adaptation to the changing world in young people. Therefore it is necessary to act towards increasing the access to higher education, to create conditions for life-long learning and to promote distance learning¹³.

¹¹ Gdańszczanin 2020..., p.9-10

¹² Kwiecinski Z. (1997): Socjopatologia edukacji, Wyd. Wolna Wszechnica Mazurska, Olecko

¹³ Gdańszczanin..., op.cit., p.10

Further can we read about ways to achieve those goals, clearly integrating formal education with in- and non-formal ones. For instance:

The possibilities of sports activities in schools are not satisfactory. Modern facilities are scarce. Promoting intellectual development of children and youth must be accompanied by caring of their physical growth. Therefore the sports infrastructure of the city must be developed, and proper funds must be devoted to extracurricular sports activities and rehabilitative gymnastics. Obligatory swimming lessons should be introduced in all schools.

The organisation of leisure time of children and youth should follow the diagnosis of their needs based on their own demands, as well as those articulated by their parents and teachers. The data concerning participation of the young in social life show that too rarely is leisure time used for the enhancement of intellectual, emotional and physical growth. Action should be taken towards increasing the access to various forms of recreation in the place of living, as well as increasing mobility of the young in recreation.

The shift from the so-far dominant model of leisure organisation to the one of leisure animation, commonly accepted in Europe, will make it possible to increase the number of young people involved in extracurricular and extra-school activities, particularly in sports and culture, including those with social problems.

The next important task is promotion of healthy lifestyle and freedom from addiction. Health promotion should be connected with the City's programme of popular sport and physical education.

The success in realisation of the strategic goals depends on how we tackle the activities aimed at children and youth. It is necessary that we prepare teachers and educators for this purpose¹⁴.

The focus on preparing professional educators in the last paragraph maybe seen, on the one hand, as a sign the City aims towards an integrated model of education, but, on the other, it may show that local politicians tend to take total responsibility for quality of education in their place of living. Educational priorities of the City seem to support this view:

Gdansk self-government is the subject of educational policy running schools and other educational institutions. Therefore it is responsible for the creation of optimal legal and organisational conditions to realise the goals of public access to education, instruction and care for children and the youth, as well for creating conditions for life-long education of the adult citizens. This responsibility demands that the following priorities are observed:

- 1. The establishment of local educational standards, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of educational services*
- 2. Organisation of assistance for dependant persons from poor and culturally deficient environments and for handicapped people*
- 3. Creating conditions for the optimal development of gifted students*

¹⁴ Ibidem, p.11-12

4. *Providing funds and material resources for extracurricular and extra-school activities, and for life-long education*
5. *Increasing the moral education capabilities of the school*
6. *Creating conditions for the schools to become strong centers influencing their social environment*
7. *Improving educational management, first of all by providing for more independence for school and educational institutions managers and by executing responsibility for decisions taken*
8. *Securing financial means for the realisation of educational tasks, especially those defined in local educational standards and schedules*
9. *Creating local law defining methods and forms of action towards the provision of equal educational opportunities of the citizens of Gdansk*
10. *Building on the strengths of local and national education and their correlation to educational policies in other European Union countries”.*

Those priorities undoubtedly define education as learning taking place „always”, in a life-long span of time, and „everywhere”, in a life-wide setting. On the other hand, all forms of learning are seen as possible to integrate, organisationally coherent, broadly open to local environments and connected with educational goals of the City. Undoubtedly it is a rational and economically sensible way of designing education.

Somehow in the background there is „a must” that all these activities are preformed within the limits of the budget, which is a prerequisite of local governments' responsibility.

This economic rationality and ethics is ideologically supported and it bears marks of the transforming social thinking, where market liberalism (everything „must be profitable”) meets some form of „Christian liberalism” which once was defined by Jozef Tischner in terms of „the miserable gift of freedom” that hit Poland after 1989. *Free people are what they are. They do what they do* – says Tischner. Freedom in Tischner, and freedom in the educational bills of Gdansk self-government, is not merely a freedom of choice, but also the power of acquiring goods and making one's life healthy, brave and hopeful.

In the pages of the document, as well as in many debates in the council¹⁵, a strong role is played by the rule of subsidiarity. It seems to be strictly observed by the city authorities, who seem not to notice that in many respects it contradicts the goals written in „The Citizen of Gdansk 2020”. For instance, the idea of equal access to education is sometimes questioned by the councillors in their debates, even though it is absolutely fundamental for the realisation of the goals of the strategy. The understanding of subsidiarity as narrowly limited interventionism is in a stark contrast with the presumption of the „Model”.

¹⁵ As a member of the Gdansk Council of Education we have an opportunity of listening to the debates in the City Council and to evaluate their educational initiatives.

The awareness of this conflict reflects in some debates, where ethical issues are subordinated to economic rationality in the name of political responsibility. For instance, one of the councillors says that „Gdansk cannot afford unrestricted access to pre-school education”, even though she had signed the document saying that *The basic strategic goal is providing for higher quality and accessibility of education (...) Early years are the most important in the development of the child. Therefore pre-school education is of great importance. All children should have equal chances of harmonious development of skills and talents*¹⁶”.

Interestingly, the rhetoric of economic rationality, of „husbandry” imposing stinginess in the conditions of permanent lack of sufficient resources and making proper use of the assets of the place, in more or less coherent way present at the local level, is almost completely absent in national policy documents of the Ministry of Education, the state Centre of In-Service Teacher Training, etc. It is characteristic only of the local declarations, documents and plans where education „for ourselves”, of „our children” in „our place” is discussed. It explicitly shows that it is only at the local level, where – in the conditions of Poland – lies the burden of supporting educational facilities (the state provides only for the money covering teachers' salaries), that a model integrating formal and less formal dimensions of educating may emerge.

The reason behind such integration is merely that it „works” and „pays”, and therefore local governments will be emotionally attached and devoted to the idea of using all possible resources. In a way, what plays here an important role is the increasing *social* capital of local communities expressed in emotional attachment to the *Heimat*, and strict awareness of economic limitations. Anyhow, it seems possible to answer the key question of this report saying that under the present circumstances in Poland, it is only at the local level where integration of education, understood in terms of broadening its scope behind the walls of the school and opening it to social forces in the community, is possible.

Another question addresses the issue of forms and the scope of extracurricular activities of the school and its openness (or its lack) to forms of non-schooling education.

In the Gdansk document we read that *The number of extra-curricular activities will be gradually increasing, beginning in September 2005, so that in 2008 it amounts to 2 hours a week per class (2005- 0.5 hour; 2006 – 1 hour; 2007 – 1,5 hour)*¹⁷ This means progress in comparison to the situation from the beginning of the political transformation in early 1990s, when schools were pushed into poverty and forced to survive in extremely harsh market environment. The extracurricular offer was then based on tuition and almost entirely directed towards gaining extra funds, which meant that they were only accessible to students of good financial standing. The present policy means a retreat from that condition and a planned, systematic return to the idea of open accessibility of extracurricular work of the school.

The possible scope of activities within this form of educational work can be seen, for instance, in the section on physical education, where the following requirements have been identified:

¹⁶ op.cit., p. 10-12

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 15

11. *Building new, and modernising the existing sports facilities, so that in 2015 all schools have proper infrastructure*
12. *Opening the existing facilities to students from other schools and to childrens' sports clubs*
13. *Providing support of physically gifted children*
14. *Securing free access to swimming pools [not owned by the school] for children during physical education classes*
15. *Promoting additional recreation, sports and tourism activities in schools*
16. *Maintaining the existing classes in rehabilitation gymnastic in primary schools, and supporting them in pre-school education*¹⁸

What we can see here is that the will to open educational facilities to non- and informal forms of education is subordinated to the needs of curricular work of the school. It seems that an elastic approach, different from standard forms of work, is still difficult to imagine for the economically cautious councillors and overwhelmed by the scope of changes of teachers. Why not seeing schools as dispersed places where various activities of the city take place, and why not seeing the city as a community that realises its various cultural, social, educational and recreational activities in schools?

So far we can see that the mutual connections between the different forms of education hardly take place in schools' extracurricular work. Still, the document is somehow promising a tendency to connect those forms, to create a complex network of social activities, here illustrated on the example of sports and recreation.

Paragraph 2 in the above fragment, where we read of „queuing” to sports facilities in the schools, may be an example of this tendency. It addresses one of the problems in the present functioning of schools – the insufficient recreational infrastructure on the one hand, and financial shortages experienced by schools on the other make them rent gym halls to closed groups of users in the evening hours, which makes the facilities closed for the school community in the leisure time of children and parents.

This way of integrating formal and informal education is a mark of poverty rather than educational mission, and interest in sponsoring rather than communal life.

4.2 The Warsaw educational policy

The Warsaw *Educational Policy*, like *The Citizen of Gdansk*, is an element of a broader liberal-democratic discourse in which the basic tenets, well represented in the text, are:

- the idea of equal opportunities and participation in social life (in individual and collective dimensions, with a clear appeal to marginalised groups and diversified social environments - parental groups, neighbourhoods, etc)

¹⁸ Ibidem, p.19

- the idea of life-long learning linked to the postulates of social activism (non-government organisations and their animative role), concern about the quality of formal and informal education understood in terms of developmental opportunities of people, and education in intercultural dialogue and communication.

In the light of those categories, the whole document is marled by a certain lack. It is not entirely clear to whom and about whom it speaks. In many places we read of "diversified" addressees of the educational offer, nowhere can we read that education proposed in the text is addressed to *all* citizens of Warsaw, regardless their age, socio-economic status, cultural capital or rank in social hierarchies. Even though one of the sections (Chapter Four - Extra-School education and Life-long Learning) clearly refers to "different" subjects, it does not seem to put the issue of accessibility strongly enough. Reading the text, one has an impression that in spite of scattered references to diversity, what is really in focus is formal education taking place in various types of schools, and non-formal, extra-school education - but both of them are mostly addressed to children and school-age youth together with their teachers.

Educational Policy of the Polish capital city seems to hardly notice the families, and local neighbourhoods. Perhaps sociological diagnoses that gave ground to this document did state a lack of such communities, which in a large city like Warsaw may be a fact. But also in that case, it seems crucial that politics of education *should address the problem of communities*. It is through education, provided that it links its formal, informal and non-formal aspects, that such communities can be *created* - even if we start in a "concrete desert" of a large city; people live in certain neighbourhoods, and it is some form of education that may turn those formal areas of residence into active communities. Who are, after all, those mobile people, who often come to Warsaw on a temporary basis - if while living in Warsaw, they do not have a place they could call theirs, they have no local space that is a condition of being a *citizen*, of forming an identity of someone belonging somewhere?

Another group of addressees, briefly mentioned in the document, are self-help groups. The idea of self-help is, in general, hardly present, or marginalised in the text. And that is a valuable idea: self-help is a vehicle of social cohesion, and an opportunity to learn how to solve problems collectively. Self-help can easily be integrated with formal education, where, for instance, teachers can invite parents of children with special needs to work together in the school setting.

The similar can be said about pre-service and in-service teacher training concerning teachers' community work, also almost absent in the document. Co-operation of schools with local communities, and training teachers' abilities for this co-operation, should also be understood as vehicles of social cohesion and links between various aspects of social life. We can read of teacher training in the report, but nowhere can we see references to the goals defined in terms of educational partnerships; not much on communication between teachers and parents, on learning to bridge schools with social forces present in the school's environment. It seems that there is a need for a very deep re-orientation of teacher training policies, and it concerns Poland in general, not just Warsaw and the document we are referring to now.

Another issue is social inequalities. *Educational Policy* sets the goal of providing for equal educational opportunities, but it does not say anything systematically how to bridge the rapidly expanding gap between the social strata. There are declarations that it should be done, but there are no hints of concrete directions or actions to be taken. For instance:

The Warsaw Educational Policy refers to several fundamental values. As the most important ones we see the creation of the open school that is friendly and creative. The Warsaw self-governmental school should be an autonomous and creative community aware of its responsibilities in the area of growth and development of children, youth, teachers and parents, and providing for the highest possible quality of education. The school will use the state-of-the-art achievements of science and technology and will educate in the values of civic society, in the awareness of national history and in the openness to the world. The Warsaw school is the place of on-going debate on the questions important in the life of its students. It is also a place where children with special needs and threatened with social exclusion will find support. It is also a school that supports the gifted, talented and highly motivated students. We acknowledge the diversity of the Warsaw schooling system a value. Aiming at promoting quality, we appreciate more than instruction results. As equally important we see the results of moral education, social activism, and the achievements in other domains of school activity. (p.3)

If Warsaw was in fact to take up those activities, we believe it should consider education as an integrated activity taking place *in the community* rather than merely in schools; it should see it as a system of criss-crossing spheres of formal, informal and non-formal education. Then it could be possible to reach a situation when education becomes a process of building reciprocity and liquidation of labels that segregate people according to their place of residence and geographic location of the school. As the above fragment says, and as many researchers maintain, the main factor that determines school success is the PLACE where children live and learn. The passages in *Education Policy* that refer to this issue (p.41, about forms of work towards preventing social exclusion) do not seem to address the problem sufficiently. The same can be said about numerous references to special educational needs, where we cannot read anything about marginalisation or social exclusion. "Special needs" people in Warsaw are pre-schoolers and students with developmental disfunctions. This clearly positions special needs education within the rigid framework of the school, and addresses it to just several of the many cases where "special" approaches (that is, extending the standard mode of teaching "everybody the same stuff") are needed. Again, this remark pertains to Polish educational practices in general rather to the Warsaw document specifically.

We can read nothing about systemic solutions of the problem of reproduction of social marginalisation on the grounds of place of residence ("bad" districts, streets, pubs, etc) or education ("bad" schools, kindergartens, and even higher education institutions) in the chapters on budget provisions. Interestingly, also in that document can we see that education considered in terms of *place* shows its integrated nature. "Bad places" universalise both formal and non / informal aspects of education, and the socially constructed distinctions between these domains. It may be perhaps difficult to envisage *positive* incarnations of the ideal of integrated domains of education (formal / informal /non-formal plus accidental learning), but when we encounter a "bad place" we can immediately see how all these domains interact in a vicious circle of *total impossibility*, how they *fully integrate* in a significant learning experience that fixes and immobilises the identity of the person *in the place*. It is intriguing to ask why we do not use this knowledge in designing strategies of inclusion while we can see it work in the "non-strategies" (marked by inaction rather than purposeful action) of exclusion. In these experiences we can see that the *locus* of education automatically integrates all its forms: one can learn *anyhow*, but not *anywhere*. The forms of learning give way to its places. This observation may, however, be extrapolated to places far extending not only Warsaw, but Poland and Europe as well.

Owing to the "extensive" nature of these conclusions, easily overcoming the local character of the document, we will present the following analyses of the Warsaw policy in a broader context. It seems worthwhile that in Warsaw, as well as in Poland in general, attention is paid to the "disquieting subjects" in the process of educational planning. Those subjects are always rhetorically displaced, or "moved" in the policy planning, while in practice they tend to be condemned to stay where they are. Those subjects are: students and their families, teachers, schools - and politicians as advocates of change.

Students and families

They are segregated according to their differences based in socio-economic statuses (i.e. income and education level of the parents) and place of residence. The latter is significant not only in terms of the distance between the place where the student actually is and that of the potential source of knowledge and competence, but also in terms of the cultural value of the place itself (for instance Orunia in Gdansk or Praga in Warsaw are hardly ever associated with intellectual achievements).

Another criterion of educational stratification is cultural (ethnic) background. According to the Warsaw *Educational Policy* children from ethnic minorities have right to education that takes into account their cultural background. There are numerous references to this issue in the document (e.g. p.41). However, those references ignore the question of education of children and parents, of migrant *families* in general. It seems that focusing on the *children of migrants* who attend schools in a city like Warsaw that already has thousands of minority families as its citizens, is a mistake. By the way, in the Gdansk document the issue of ethnic minority education has not been mentioned at all. It seems that, again, integration of formal and in/non-formal registers of education could bring significant results in this area.

Teachers

Those teachers who work very hard for the change of the status of their students, remain outside the tracks of professional promotion. The promoted teacher should have students that have "olimpic" achievements. Those working hard with students from impoverished and marginalised environments stand little chances of being noticed by their authorities, unlike those who make profit on the high cultural capital of their students. In a result those who are recognised as "best teachers" are not those who work for the inclusion of "forgotten" masses, but those supporting students and their families of privileged backgrounds. In the Warsaw document we can read explicit diagnoses of this situation and declarations that it should be changed, and the suggested way is through changing criteria of evaluation of teachers' work so that not only instructional results are recognised (p.3). In Gdansk, in a similar manner, a think-tank dealing with equity issues was called to blueprint "the Gdansk model of education", where intentions of changing the present situation and the factors that contribute to its reproduction have been expressed. In the light of the following procedures (or, indeed, of the *lack* of following procedures - no concrete bills or regulations have been voted) all that seems to be merely apparent attempts at changing the situation of excluded communities of Warsaw or Gdansk and their teachers. It is also possible that the missing link between political declarations and practical solutions is a result of inadequate diagnoses that generate a constant lack of adequacy of the proposed changes. It is possible that the diagnoses do not fully use the potential of practitioners' perspectives. We have heard from classroom teachers that they are notoriously ignored as source of information, and that the learn of political debates concerning their work when ready to apply packages arrive at their schools. This was the case of privatisation of kindergartens in Gdansk: their teachers learnt about the decision of

the City Council from their headteacher. We believe that the voice of the teachers should be legally secured in political debates on education.

In this context, the assumption that schoolmasters should exercise more autonomy in order to provide for better budget balance and better quality of education (in Warsaw *Educational Policy*) can be considered risky if not dangerous. We are afraid that this is an ideological statement informed by a neo-liberal vision of market regulations as the universal solution to all problems that are difficult to solve. This ideology has informed educational policies on the national level for many years, and nowadays it is being strengthened and secured by regulations at local levels. According to this policy, the schoolmaster, empowered by the decisions of local authorities, becomes a competitive manager of the school whose main tasks should be defined in terms of financial efficiency. He or she should reduce the costs and invest limited resources in "safe" initiatives that are bound to bring "good" results that count in the procedures of evaluation of the "quality" of education, thus securing the position of the school on the educational "market". It is obvious that this style of management promotes big and strong players who are able to dominate the ones who are formally in position to influence decision-making processes (in the school setting these will be teachers' councils, self-governing bodies of the students, parental committees, etc). On the one hand, this style of management will hamper democracy and participation in educational activities, which in fact undermines the very social nature of education. On the other, through the focus on competition, it will worsen the situation of "bad" schools, districts and students; they are marginalised now, and their marginalisation will deepen in a result of this variety of "quality management". Competition will eliminate those players that have to tackle with most difficult problems, and in result of promoting "quality" (which they obviously lack) they will be deprived of whatever resources they still have. This is, of course, an exaggerated picture, but we have to remember that behind the neo-liberal rationality there is a Darwinian notion of extinction of "ineffective" ways of life.

Schools

The analysis of statistical data provided in Warsaw's *Education Policy* (pp. 14-27) brings certainty as to the above relations: it is the schools from "bad" neighbourhoods that are the poorest in terms of the material provisions and that bring the "worst" educational results in external examinations. Praga in relation to Ursynow or Srodmiescie stands no chances at all, and all questions concerning the budget and its allocation have one and the same answer - that money should follow the students whose parents are free to choose best schools for their children.

In the present situation, in the ranking lists ("league tables" as they are called in England) of good schools those devoted to local communities are lost: they do not have "good" results in testing. They do not have students from well-educated and affluent families, because those have used their freedom to choose "better" schools. The mechanisms of this type of segregation have been analysed by R.Dolata, T.Szkudlarek, and others. Szkudlarek (2001, 2006, 2007) argues that subordinating schools to economic rationality in Poland means that the ethos of public schooling is withering.

Politicians, the Advocates of Change

Those who advocate equity of educational and life chances of those whom they represent in local political institutions, are doomed to failure in the contemporary conditions of Polish liberalism, at the same time stressing its Christian understanding of the value of personal life (Tischner, op.cit) and market ideology demanding that all initiatives are "self-efficient". In this context, in the light of the *foci* of this expertise, we can form the following postulates:

- We should promote an integrated system of education that bridges formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning, especially for impoverished and marginalised communities, including families with low socio-economic status. The precedence here might be the system of support designed for equity of educational opportunities of persons with disabilities and special educational needs - broadly and extensively described in the Warsaw document. Exclusion is not only a problem of individual students, but of complex social settings like neighbourhoods, families, town districts or even whole regions. There are "bad schools" and "bad districts" where it is "wrong" to learn or live, and where it is "stupid" to teach. Working there means that one is deprived of professional and financial promotion opportunities. The way to overcome this circle of impoverishment and impossibility could be turning such locations into places of intensive community life oriented towards the betterment of living and cultural conditions. This should be done by revitalisation programmes directed towards the *existing*, and not *desired* (after the evictions of the present inhabitants) communities; it should involve very intensive social and cultural animation work aimed at integration of the local community, and at the opening them towards different social spaces, bridging the gaps between stratified and mutually closed enclaves of cities and regions.
- So conceived system should integrate formal, nonformal and informal education. Local communities have at their disposal almost entire infrastructure of social, cultural, and educational facilities (Levitas, Herczynski 2001, 17), and they should make good use of this power. They should start with the perspective of social geography defining the directions of revitalisation stressing the importance of socio-cultural and educational animation of community co-operation (Mendel 2002, 2005). Community education is understood here in the perspective initiated by Helena Radlińska in the beginning of the 20th century. As W.Theiss and M.Winiarski claim, it is nowadays understood both too narrowly, as limited to non-formal education, and too broadly, when it is burdened with the hope of total systemic change (Winiarski 2001, 154). Integrated formal / non-formal and informal education could be understood as an optimal bridge between those perspectives of understanding community education.
- Educational policy, both at the local and national levels, should create legal foundations for fostering of these perspectives of social reconstruction. This is how the integration of formal / non- and informal education should be understood here: they should create a new systemic quality of educational policymaking. We may define it as "education-in-place", because it is the local dweller, the member of a given community rooted in a given place that is its subject. Here we are approaching the perspectives of place-based , or place-conscious education - and at the same time of the *pedagogy of the place* understood as purposeful reconstruction of places that are subject of local policies (Grunewald 2003, Mendel 2006).

5 Conclusions

Building the system of 'in-community education'.

Local governments as key figures: Opportunities and Threats

From the above analysis there emerges a conclusion that it is local governments that can play the key role in redefining the so-far separate domains of formal, nonformal and informal education. Once they have been granted power through the policies of decentralisation and deregulation, they may use it to *re-centralise and re-regulate*, on the local level, integrated systems of education for the betterment of social life. Integration stems here from the very logic of learning which cannot "take place" *without a place*. And *place* is what local authorities have in their command, what they can construct and reconstruct. They are *local* authorities, they are power structures of and over the *loci* of social life.

However, this kind of *in-community education* creating a unified, *communal* space of learning can be possible if *local* policy in the communities maintains the *communal* character of the local. In other words, if local authorities resist the economically (and *centrally*) enforced tendency to privatisation of public spaces. Under the circumstances prevailing in Poland this actually is the case: education, sports and cultural facilities of the *gminas* are subject to invasive privatisation policies. The dominant neo-liberal tendencies mean that "free market" becomes the ultimate solution to social problems, colonising political thinking in all spheres of social life. It leads to self-improvement of local communities who sell out their assets to private owners in order to balance the budgets, defined by the state policy in a way that makes it impossible to maintain the former infrastructure in communal hands. The responsibility for the practically entire scope of social life at their territories, with which they have been burdened by the state without adequate financial provisions, has become impossible to tackle without reducing their own property. Levitas and Herczynski, in the text that is attached to this report, say that 9 years ago, in course of decentralisation, local infrastructure has been entirely transferred to local communities and apart from primary schools and the majority of secondary ones, which had been transferred earlier, the *gminas* were forced to take over everything that used to be the responsibility of state administration before:

On January 1st 1999, virtually all remaining educational institutions were transferred to the new powiats [counties] and self-governing regions. The vast majority of secondary schools and almost all primary schools for students with disabilities were taken over by powiats. Powiats were also made responsible for most of the non-school educational institutions that had previously been administered by kuratoria, including boarding houses (110,000 places), Special Education Centers (32,000 places), various cultural institutions, sport facilities, and youth hostels, and most importantly, psychological and pedagogical l advisory centers. Meanwhile, the self governing voivodships [regions] were assigned responsibility for 272 medical high schools for nurses (26,000 pupils) and about 100 teacher colleges and in - service vocational training centers (16,000 users) (p.17-18).

The value of property of local governments is, thus, unbelievably immense. Practically all public goods at their territories are their property. However, the label of decentralisation practically translates itself into *privatisation*. In a result public goods become less and less accessible to the public, and the very idea of self-government becomes hampered when "the self" ceases to mean communities that are subjects of territorial power and becomes a *selfish* profit-oriented strategy of the few. The so-far *owners* of the services may still use them, if they pay; and usually they pay more and more. The reason behind this wave of privatisation is that the state delegated most of its functions, and property needed to their realisation, to local

governments. At the same time, however, it kept a lot of financial resources so far used by those services and did not decentralise the mechanisms of taxation. This is justified by the needs of secondary re-distribution aimed at levelling big differences between rich and poor regions of the country, and by the need to provide resources for these functions that have been kept as prerogatives of the state. Anyhow, local governments face constant problems with balancing their budgets. This is why they are quick to enter the logic of the market, to join partnerships with strong private corporations, and to get rid of expensive to maintain facilities by their liquidation or privatisation. *Gminas* in Poland close small schools and kindergartens on a massive scale. This is strikingly visible in small towns and in the countryside, where the network of schools becomes looser, with buses transporting masses of pupils between villages. The process is advertised in the rhetoric of public good: bigger schools can afford better qualified teachers and work towards equity of educational opportunities, and the process of privatisation (in case of pre-school education) is somehow controlled and monitored in terms of quality of new (private) provisions. However, when we consider the fact that education is usually the biggest position in *gmina's* budget spendings, liquidation and privatisation of schools is always welcome as *a gain*. It does not seem plausible to stop this process unless the relations between central and local budgets are changed. What is needed is either a return to the state as the agent of educational policy (unthinkable in many respects), or further de-centralisation of income (of taxation policies for instance). The latter will inevitably increase social differences between the regions.

We can see how these relations work on the example of the Ministry's of National Education and its relations with "the Nation". First, as we have mentioned, the Ministry does not support or organise education of adults; "the Nation" is thus strangely understood as deprived of adults, with the exception of teachers. Whatever the declarations, Ministry of National Education puts in focus only formal education institutions. A more general understanding of education and learning is still outside the scope of its interests, and it is only at the local level where education concerning all age groups and all forms of learning finds its way to social consciousness. Where is the function of the state here then? This issue, in general terms concerning the role of the state in the neo-liberal ideological setting, does not focus much attention in public debates in Poland. Problems of the nation and homeland are in Poland strictly connected with the notion of the state. Debates on "patriotism", initiated by the right-wing parties, imply therefore protection of the centralised institutional order. And that centralised level of organisation systematically withdraws from subsequent prerogatives of organising social life. The whole burden of integration lies on local institutions, which - very likely - will not succeed in solving all social problems and bridging the growing gaps.

6 If we were to sum up this picture with one statement, we should probably refer to the notion of *ambivalence*. Local communities are in a good position to integrate the various aspects of education. In a way, they have been *forced* to act in this direction by the politics of decentralisation and the subsequent shortages in their budgets, making them active in the search for „free” forms of educational work. But the same shortages, and the same policy of resorting to nonformal aspects of learning, may easily prove fatal to local social and educational policies and lead to immense social inequalities.

Defining the capabilities in the context of education and whole-day schooling

Identifying the various forms of education is not easy. There are relatively little doubts as to the *formal* aspect of education (that is, schooling), while the distinctions between the other ones (informal, non-formal, incidental) are blurred and do not lend themselves to clear classifications. Those "otherwise than formal" aspects of education easily merge and morph one into another. This feature, however troublesome for educational writers and researchers, can be understood as a very optimistic: it seems to show that in fact we have to do here with *one phenomenon*, and however we classify the distinctions, we speak of the varieties within the same.

In Polish literature on this issue there is a clear trait that refers to the heritage of Helena Radlińska, the founder of Polish social pedagogy. She introduced the notion of "life environments" (plural) to theoretical debates, and defined social pedagogy as focused on mutual relations between individuals and their life milieus (1961). Speaking of the dynamic nature of these relations, she also acknowledged the possibilities of "transforming the milieus with the force of human potential in the name of the ideal" (op.cit, 361)

We may say that this tradition reflects an ideal present in the intentions of this project and this report in particular. It can be illustrated with the words by Mikołaj Winiarski, one of the leading followers of Radlińska's: *In local environments managed by self-government the forms of formal and informal, or institutional and non-institutional education co-exist and mutually complement each other. The borders between them gradually disappear.* (Winiarski, 157). Winiarski calls this mode of education based on overlapping spheres *community education*. This notion refers to an understanding of education well-rooted in Polish debates (for instance, it was proposed in 1920s by Florian Znaniecki), speaking of processes that may take place in all spheres of social life.

This notion is taken up in such concepts as "community action" (*metoda środowiskowa*) proposed by Tadeusz Pilch (1995), "education in local milieu" "playground education", "integrated education" or "social milieu system" developed by other students and followers of Radlińska's (like R.Wroczyński, A.Kaminski, I.Lepalczyk, H.Izdebska, E.Trempala, W.Theiss, and others). In a similar way, S.Kawula sees education as a local community process. In an interesting way he links education to the creation of networks of social support, social work, socialization and family upbringing (Kawula 2001).

Another dimension introduced by Wiesław Theiss. It refers to the notion of "mała ojczyzna" ("little homeland", or *heimat*) understood after S.Ossowski. Kawula accentuates the informal character of this dimension of education. As he says,

Community education in general terms defines informal education of children, youth and adults linked to the fulfillment of their needs, aims and ideals present in their milieu or local community. These can both individual, group or collective needs, and they can involve economic, cultural, political, educational, etc. ones. So understood, community education is, first, subjective and pragmatic activity based on the resources of the milieu, on its forces and capabilities of change of the existing conditions reinforced by the capabilities of the broader social system, including policies and actions of local and state governments. Second, the key resources and forms of this kind of education is mutual understanding and co-operation, rather than schooling and instruction. Third, the field of this education lies between the poles of the individual, private and singular on the one hand, and the common, group and public on the other. In another dimension, this is a field that lies between natural, cultural and social

dimensions of the milieu. Therefore it involves the issues of ecology, culture, tradition, socialization and upbringing taking place in families and schools, and the ones of social engagement, activism, civic participation and self-government education. (Theiss 2002, 24-25).

Theiss links so understood education with *little homeland (heimat)* of which he says that it is a structure that is close, familiar and safe, through which "people feel at home" (p.20), but which is at the same time *a challenge*, as it creates goals, needs somebody to take charge of things, etc. In Theiss, '*little homeland*' is *simultaneously the target, terrain, and means of broadly understood social education in the local milieu.*

In the context of the above analyses and conclusions pertaining to the relation between self- and national governmental structures, it is interesting to see the threats defined by the author. Community education can be seen as a problem. *However, 'little homeland in this or other understanding is not and cannot be thought of as culturally and educationally self-sufficient organism. It seems that its developmental potential diminishes proportionally to the scale of social problems, including first of all those of poverty. Therefore it is the state and self-government that have to take up the tasks of supporting and reinforcing local development, and schools and families in particular. (op.cit, 25).* In spite of having reduced community education to its informal and non-formal dimensions related to the notion of *heimat*, Theiss sees it as systemically connected to formal education.

We can understand this view as another trait in Polish debates on community education, integrating the forms of education or - as in Theiss - stressing the informal dimension, but emphasising the necessary links to schooling in 'little homelands'.

Other approaches to the problem of connections between types of educations and ways of understanding them can be found in works in social pedagogy that focus on societalization of the school, and democratization of social life through animation and activation of the subjects (including local communities) that compose the field of education (Radziewicz, Sliwerski, Mendel), or accentuating the need of creating educational partnerships that link families, schools and local communities in cooperation (Winiarski, Segiet, Mendel). These approaches have been extensively used in the above analyses.

It is characteristic of Polish reality that the problems we speak about are best represented in the debates on *adult learning* and life-long education, also mostly conceived as pertaining to adults. As we have mentioned above, "education" is in political debates mostly connected to schools and children and youth in the schooling age (Ministry of Education is not indeed interested in adults). "naturally" then, any notion of education that is *not* connected to schooling seems to "automatically" imply adults as its subjects. This is how the common-sense knowledge of education is construed in Poland, although the degree of engagement of children in various forms of non-school education (usually commercially organised) is increasing (see the documents from Gdansk and Warsaw analysed above). Especially the strengthening of the middle class, eager to find its specific identity (*distinction* in Bourdieu's terms) and seeing credentials and qualifications as marks of a desired status, contributes to the growth in extra-curricular activities. Speaking of extracurricular and extra-school education of children in Poland we must say that it is extensive, but not equally accessible to the whole population of students. It is clearly marked with class segregation practices, and it often involves "overinvestment" of middle-class children with ambitions and desires of their upward-going parents.

Going back to adult learning, according to J.Kargul it involves formal, informal and non-formal settings (Kargul 2001, 7). After J.Lowe (1982), he defines each of those types as follows:

- formal education means teaching and learning in schools and higher education institutions, where students are 'listed and enrolled'
- informal education is a 'process that takes place through the whole life span of human life, owing to which individuals form their attitudes, define their values, gain knowledge and skills making use of everyday experience and and educational influences of their milieu, i.e. families, neighbours, work and entertainment, market places and libraries, and mass media'
- nonformal education, or extra-school education means 'any organised educational activity that takes place outside the defined system of formal schooling, taken up individually or as part of broader social action, with certain educational aims and possible to define groups of participants' (Lowe 1982, 31).

Adult learning, based on the notions of adult education (Pólturzycki, Wujek), life-long learning (Malewski, Kargul), biographic didactics (Czerniawska) is thriving in Poland, both as a field of research and as a field of educational practice. It worth to mention of a newer approach in this area proposed by Ewa Kurantowicz, who speaks of education of small groups integrated in local spaces, of "small learning communities" and "biographies of the place" (Kurantowicz 2007). It is an example of a reflection on the coherence of local education and its meaning pertaining to the feeling of agency and group identity.

To sum up, Polish literature devoted to the topic in question is concentrated in two domains: social pedagogy and adult learning theory. It says something of the directions of the debates about integrated forms of local education. It is connected either with the ideas of life-long learning putting adults in the centre of debate, or with partnerships of subjects active in a given milieu where education of children takes place, including social animation, social work and care institutions, etc. We can consider this to be a characteristic feature of current Polish discussions in this area.

Concluding, we may definitely state that there is a good ground for practices leading to local coherence in education. The analysed conceptions are rooted in reality, and they reflect the existing social conditions. Even though they seem to focus on adults, which clearly differentiates them from those produced in the time of socialist Poland (Wroczynski, Kaminski, Jundziłł, and others) and which limits their possible field of reference, they do identify certain structures that should be built in order to provide for education integrated on local levels and including all groups of age. Therefore we may suggest that there are fairly good prospects for a development of practices (and theories) of a learning society in Poland.

References

- Czerniawska, O.** 1997/1998: Biografie edukacyjne i ich zastosowanie w kształceniu andragogicznym, *Rocznik Andragogiczny*, Akademickie Towarzystwo Andragogiczne, Wyd.Adam Marszałek, Toruń
- Foucault, M.** 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London Penguin Press
- Giza – Poleszczuk, A.** 2005: Rodzina a system społeczny. Reprodukacja i kooperacja w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa
- Gruenewald, D.A.** 2003: Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education, *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 40, no. 3
- Kargul, J.** 2001: Obszary pozaformalnej i nieformalnej edukacji dorosłych [The areas of nonformal and informal adult education], Wyd.DSWE, Wrocław
- Kawula, S.** (ed.) 2001: *Pedagogika społeczna. Dokonania – aktualność – perspektywy*, Wyd.A.Marszałek, Toruń
- Kurantowicz, E.** 2007: O uczących się społecznościach [On learning communities], Wyd.DSWE, Wrocław
- Levitas, T. / Herczynski, J.** 2001: Decentralization, local governments and education in post-communist Poland, RTI International, Warszawa [PDFdoc]
- Lowe, J.** 1982: *Rozwój oświaty dorosłych*, Warszawa
- Mendel, M.** 1998: Rodzice i szkoła: Jak uczestniczyć w edukacji dzieci? [Parents and the School: How to Participate in the Education of Children?], Toruń Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek
- Mendel, M.** 1999: Edukacja społeczna jako odmiana myślenia o wczesnej edukacji, Wydawnictwo OSW „GLOB”, Olsztyn
- Mendel, M.** 2000: Partnerstwo rodziny, szkoły i gminy [Family, School, and Community Partnerships], Toruń Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek
- Mendel, M.** 2001a: Edukacja społeczna. Partnerstwo rodziny, szkoły i gminy w perspektywie amerykańskiej [Community Education: Family, School, and Community Partnerships in an American Perspective], Toruń Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek
- Mendel, M.** 2001b: Increasing Social Capital. Teachers about school, family and Community Partnerships .In: F.Smit, K. Van der Wolf, P.Sleegers (eds), *A Bridge to the Future. Colaboration between Parents, Schools and Communities*. University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, pp. 125-136
- Mendel, M.** (ed.) 2002: *Animacja współpracy środowiskowej*, Wyd.A.Marszałek, Toruń
- Mendel, M.** (ed.) 2005: *Animacja współpracy środowiskowej na wsi*, Wyd.A.Marszałek, Toruń
- Mendel, M.** (ed.) 2006: *Pedagogika miejsca*, Wyd.DSWE, Wrocław
- Pilch, T. / Lepalczyk, I.** (red.) 1995: *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa
- Radlińska, H.** 1961: *Pedagogika społeczna*, Ossolineum, Wrocław
- Segiet, W.** 1999: *Rodzice i nauczyciele. Wzajemne stosunki i reprezentacje*, Poznań
- Szkudlarek, T.** 2001: *Ekonomia i etyka: Przemieszczenia dyskursu edukacyjnego, Człowiek-Teraźniejszość-Edukacja*, numer specjalny, ss. 166-191
- Szkudlarek, T.** 2007: *Edukacja i konstruowanie społecznych nierówności. Nierówności społeczne w perspektywie humanistycznej* [W:] J.Klebaniuk (red.) *Fenomen nierówności społecznych*, ENETEIA, Warszawa

Szkudlarek, T. 2006: Parcelacje. Topografie społeczeństwa wiedzy [W:] M.Mendel (red.) Pedagogika miejsca, Wyd. DSWE, Wrocław

Śliwerski, B. 2001: Edukacja pod prąd, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, Kraków

Theiss, W. 1997: Radlińska, Wydawnictwo „Żak”, Warszawa

Theiss, W. 2001: Mała ojczyzna: perspektywa edukacyjno-uitylitarna [W:] Mała ojczyzna, W.Theiss (red.), Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, ss. 11-23

Theiss, W. 2003: Mała ojczyzna – w kręgu edukacji środowiskowej [W:] Ośrodek kultury i aktywności lokalnej. W poszukiwaniu modelu instytucji społecznościowej, S.Mołda i B.Skrzypczak (red.), Wydawca: Centrum Wspierania Aktywności Lokalnej CAL, Warszawa, ss. 18-33

Theiss, W. 2006: Edukacja środowiskowa – wprowadzenie [W:] Edukacja i animacja społeczna w środowisku lokalnym, W.Theiss i B.Skrzypczak (red.), Wydawca: Centrum Wspierania Aktywności Lokalnej CAL, Warszawa, ss. 12-35

Theiss, W. 1991: „Pogwarki węgrowskie”. Społeczna funkcja lokalnej historii [w:] B.Smolińska-Theiss (red.): Węgrów. Siły społeczne małego miasta, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa

Trempała, E. 1994: Szkoła a edukacja równoległa (nieszkolna). Poglady, doświadczenia, propozycje [School and nonformal education. Opinions, experiences and propositions], Wyd. WSP, Bydgoszcz

Winiarski, M. 2000: Rodzina – szkoła – środowisko lokalne. Problemy edukacji środowiskowej [Family – school – local community. The problems of community education], Wyd. IBE, Warszawa

Winiarski, M. 2006: Współpraca jako wymiar edukacji środowiskowej [W:] Edukacja i animacja społeczna w środowisku lokalnym, W.Theiss i B.Skrzypczak (red.), Wydawca: Centrum Wspierania Aktywności Lokalnej CAL, Warszawa, ss.35-55

Authors Adress:

Prof Dr Tomasz Szkudlarek / Prof Dr Maria Mendel
University of Gdansk
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Education
Email: pedts@univ.gda.pl / pedmm@univ.gda.pl

**Social Work
& Society**