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PEDAGOGY STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON EDUCATION IN POLAND

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Abstract: *The aim of this article is to present the results of a survey on students' opinions about the Polish education system. The survey was conducted in December 2016 and January 2017. The questionnaire was filled by 443 students. The survey results indicate that have mostly negative opinions on Polish education. More than 80% of students agreed with the statements "Polish education system needs reform", "The way of teaching at school means that students often get bored during the classes" and "School is too often a source of excessive stress for students". More than 50% of students agreed with the following statements: "Knowledge which is taught at school is not very useful in adult life", "School is an institution which does not fit the modern world", "Students cannot express their point of view in class" and "Teachers do not develop their competences in a sufficient way". More than 50% of students disagreed with the statements "Polish education works well", "In Poland, the teaching profession enjoys social prestige" and "In a typical Polish school, young people receive a decent education". Less than 30% of students agreed with the statements "Students in Polish schools feel safe", "In a typical Polish school there is a good atmosphere", "Polish education is changing for the better, the changes are going in the right direction" and "School thoroughly prepares young people for life in adulthood".*

Keywords: *opinions about education, student's opinions*

1. Introduction

The study of human attitudes is important in terms of explaining and predicting the actions of individuals or social groups. They can be both dependent variables, when we try to explain their cause, and independent variables when they influence human behavior [1]. In the literature we can find different definitions of attitudes. The most popular and the most accurate from a psychological perspective seems to be the three-dimensional definition. It presents attitude toward the object as relatively stable beliefs and opinions (cognitive element), emotions and feelings (affective component) and the behavior and actions (behavioral component). It targets a particular object or phenomenon and is subjective. In this article we focus on beliefs, that are a part of the cognitive element of students' attitudes towards education system" [1].

Education is undergoing both top-down and bottom-up changes. An example of the first one may be the latest education reform which eliminated the existing middle schools and restored the eight-year elementary school, which caused various opinions of education representatives. Experience shows that such rapid changes made in such a short time are often badly socially perceived [2] [3] or withdrawn very quickly. Sudden decision about compulsory education for six-year-old children met with great parents' reluctance and was withdrawn a year later [4]. Not only primary schools are faced with such problems. The obligation to pay for the second course of study introduced in 2011 together with the amendment of the Law on Higher Education was abolished along with another amendment in 2015. These types of changes are stressful for people and undermine their trust in the constancy of the applicable law. In extreme situations, these conditions might even lead to protests, such as the action "Visible Hand", where

hundreds of parents expressed their objection against six-year-old children's compulsory schooling. This moves responsibility for education from the Ministry of Education experts to ordinary people. This trend can be seen in a growing number of schools implementing programs of alternative education.

From the foregoing, we can see a picture of destabilization and high social anxiety in the subject of Polish education. We have attempt to investigate general education students who take a special place here because of the close relationship between their planned career and Polish education system. Many of them can become not only teachers but also specialized advisors for legislative authorities in our country. The need for change within Polish education system has been previously discussed [5]. Such problem as dissatisfaction with education system was identified. The aim of this paper is to present the results of a survey on students' opinions about the Polish education system.

2. Methods

Participants. A total of 443 students from University of Gdańsk took part in the study, 420 women (94.8%) and 17 men (3.8%), 6 persons (1.4%) did not report gender, with mean age of 21.63 years ($SD = 4.40$). All participants were from Faculty of Social Sciences. Students were from different courses of study: 184 persons (41.53%) from general education (pedagogy), 87 persons (19.64%) from pedagogy of early childhood education and 171 persons (38.60%) from special education. 1 person was a student of both Pedagogy of early childhood education and special education (0.23%). 393 persons (90.14%) were full-time students and 43 persons (9.86%) were extramural students. 176 individuals (40.37%) were first-year students 85 individuals (19.50%) were sophomores, 22 individuals

(5.05%) were third-year students, 119 individuals (27.29%) were fourth-year students, 34 individuals (7.80%) were fifth-year students.

Measures. A self-report, 14-item original measure of opinions about Polish education: *Questionnaire opinion on Polish education (primary, secondary and upper secondary education)*. Questionnaire was written in Polish and was called *Kwestionariusz opinii o polskim szkolnictwie (podstawowym, gimnazjalnym i ponadgimnazjalnym)*. Opinions about Polish education were measured by question: “Please, check how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about Polish education.” With 7-point response scale, from 1 – “Strongly disagree”, 2 – “Disagree”, 3 – “Rather disagree”, 4 – “Neither agree nor disagree”, 5 – “Rather agree”, 6 – “Agree”, to 7 - “Strongly agree”.

Within the questionnaire respondents were asked to assume an attitude to 14 various statements about Polish education: 1. “Polish education system works well”, 2. “Polish education system needs reform”, 3. “In a typical Polish school young people receive a decent education”, 4. “Knowledge which is taught at school is not very useful in adult life”, 5. “In Poland, the teaching profession enjoys social prestige”, 6. “Polish education is changing for the better, the changes are going in the right direction”, 7. “The way of teaching at school means that students often get bored during the classes”, 8. “School is too often a source of excessive stress for students”, 9. “School is an institution which does not fit the modern world”, 10. “School thoroughly prepares young people for life in adulthood”, 11. “In a typical Polish school there is a good atmosphere”, 12. “Students cannot express their point of view in class”, 13. “Students in Polish schools feel safe”, 14. “Teachers do not develop their competences in a sufficient way”.

Procedure. Data collection used opportunistic sampling. Students were invited to participate anonymously in the study during lectures or classes. More than 90% of all present students agreed to do so. All participants filled in ‘paper and pencil’ questionnaires.

Statistical analysis. Frequencies calculated with SPSS Statistics 24.0.

3. Results

29 people (6.61%) agreed with the statement “Polish education system works well”. 3 people marked “Strongly agree”, 5 people “Agree” and 21 “Rather agree”. 321 people (73.12%) disagreed with the statement. 83 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 149 “Disagree” and 89 “Rather disagree”. 89 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 1).

Polish education system works well (N=439)

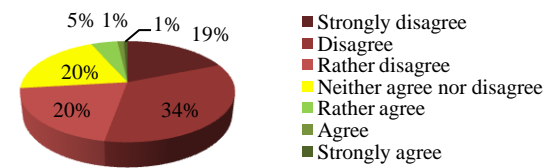


Figure 1: Polish education system works well (N=439).

386 people (88,13%) agreed with the statement “Polish education system needs reform”. 128 people marked “Strongly agree”, 146 marked “Agree” and 112 marked “Rather agree”. 22 people disagreed with the statement. 5 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 5 people “Disagree” and 12 people “Rather disagree”. 30 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 2).

Polish education system needs reform (N=438)

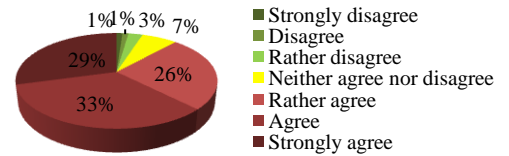


Figure 2: Polish education system needs reform (N=438).

80 people (18.26%) agreed with the statement “In a typical Polish school young people receive a decent education”. 1 person marked “Strongly agree”, 14 people “Agree” and 65 “Rather agree”. 234 people (53.42%) disagreed with the statement. 41 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 96 people “Disagree” and 97 people “Rather disagree”. 124 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 3).

In a typical Polish school young people receive a decent education (N=438)

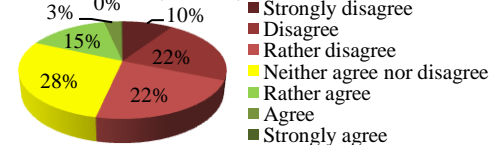


Figure 3: In a typical Polish school young people receive a decent education (N=438).

322 people (73.68%) agreed with the statement “Knowledge which is taught at school is not very useful in adult life”. 91 people marked “Strongly agree”, 145 “Agree” and 86 “Rather agree”. 50 people disagreed with the statement. 11 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 10 people “Disagree” and 29 people “Rather disagree”. 65 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 4).

Knowledge which is taught at school is not very useful in adult life

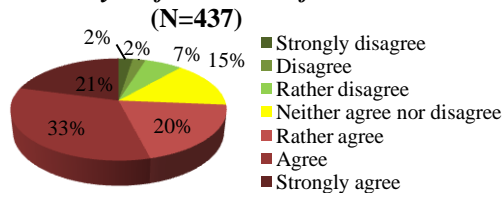


Figure 4: Knowledge which is taught at school is not very useful in adult life (N=437).

63 people (14.38%) agreed with the statement “In Poland, the teaching profession enjoys social prestige”. 1 person marked “Strongly agree”, 12 people marked “Agree” and 50 “Rather agree”. 277 disagreed (63.24%) with the statement. 56 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 128 people “Disagree” and 93 people “Rather disagree”. 98 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 5).

In Poland, the teaching profession enjoys social prestige

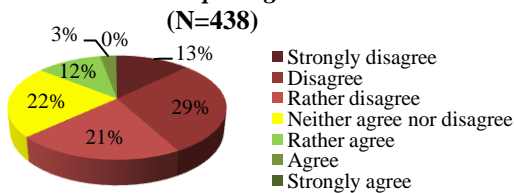


Figure 5: In Poland, the teaching profession enjoys social prestige (N=438).

47 people (10.73%) agreed with the statement “Polish education is changing for the better, the changes are going in the right direction”. 1 person marked “Strongly agree”, 8 people “Agree” and 38 people “Rather agree”. 264 people (60.27%) disagreed with the statement. 76 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 109 “Disagree” and 79 “Rather disagree”. 127 people (29.00%) marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 6).

Polish education is changing for the better, the changes are going in the right direction

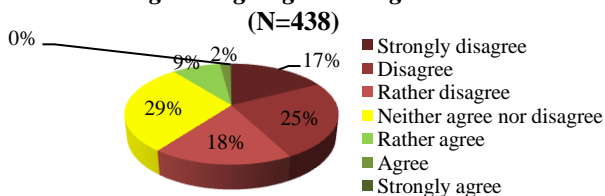


Figure 6: Polish education is changing for the better, the changes are going in the right direction (N=438).

391 people (89.47%) agreed with the statement “The way of teaching at school means that students often get bored in class”. 158 people marked “Strongly agree”, 146 people “Agree” and 87 people “Rather agree”. 16 people (3.66%)

disagreed with the statement. 6 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 4 people “Disagree” and 6 people “Rather disagree”. 30 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 7).

The way of teaching at school means that students often get bored in class

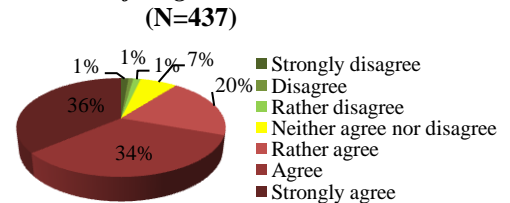


Figure 7: The way of teaching at school means that students often get bored in class (N=437).

375 people (85.62%) agreed with the statement “School is too often a source of excessive stress for students”. 124 people marked “Strongly agree”, 157 “Agree” and 94 “Rather agree”. 30 people (6.85%) disagreed with the statement. 3 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 12 people “Disagree” and 15 people “Rather disagree”. 33 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 8).

School is too often a source of excessive stress for students

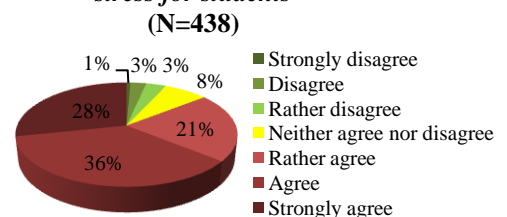


Figure 8: School is too often a source of excessive stress for students (N=438).

258 people (59.04%) agreed with the statement “School is an institution which does not fit the modern world”. 69 people marked “Strongly agree”, 100 people “Agree” and 89 people “Rather agree”. 64 people (14.65%) disagreed with the statement. 9 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 16 people “Disagree” and 39 people “Rather disagree”. 115 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 9).

School is an institution which does not fit the modern world

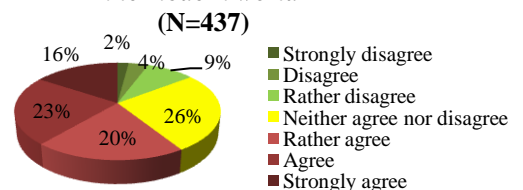


Figure 9: School is an institution misfit to the modern world (N=437).

31 people (7.11%) agreed with the statement “School prepares well young people for life in adulthood”. 3 people marked “Strongly agree”, 4 people “Agree” and 24 people “Rather agree”. 322 people (73.85%) disagreed with the statement. 82 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 117 people “Disagree” and 123 people “Rather disagree”. 83 people (19.04%) marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 10).

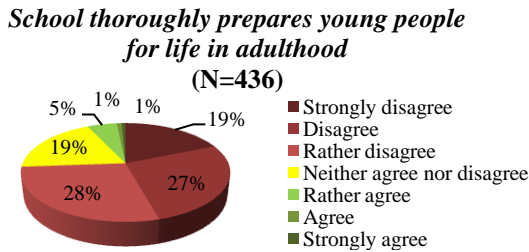


Figure 10: School thoroughly prepares young people for life in adulthood (N=436).

82 people (18.81%) agreed with the statement “In a typical Polish school there is a good atmosphere”. 5 people marked “Strongly agree”, 12 “Agree” and 65 “Rather agree”. 197 people (45.18%) disagreed with the statement. 31 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 74 people “Disagree” and 92 people “Rather disagree”. 157 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 11).

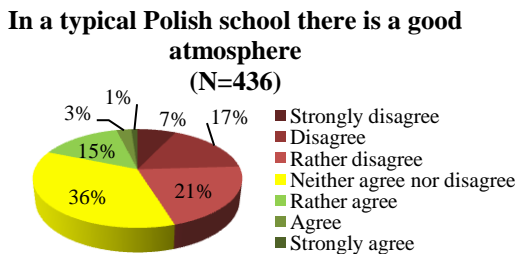


Figure 11: In a typical Polish school there is a good atmosphere (N=436).

244 people (56.35%) agreed with the statement “Students cannot express their point of view in class”. 63 people marked “Strongly agree”, 86 “Agree” and 95 “Rather agree”. 95 people (21.94%) disagreed with the statement. 11 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 35 people “Disagree” and 49 people “Rather disagree”. 94 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 12).

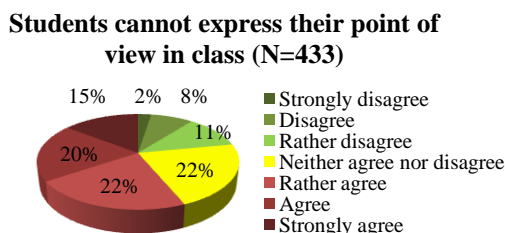


Figure 12: Students cannot express their point of view in class (N=433).

127 people (29.13%) agreed with the statement “Students in Polish school feel safe”. 4 people marked “Strongly agree”, 22 “Agree” and 101 “Rather agree”. 135 people (30.96%) disagreed with the statement. 22 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 37 people “Disagree” and 76 people “Rather disagree”. 174 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 13).

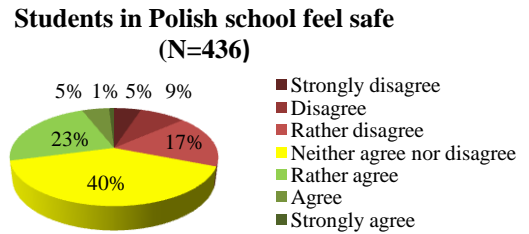


Figure 13: Students in Polish school feel safe (N=436).

244 people (55.96%) agreed with the statement “Teachers do not develop their competences in a sufficient way”. 34 people marked “Strongly agree”, 94 “Agree” and 116 “Rather agree”. 72 people (16.51%) disagreed with the statement. 7 people marked “Strongly disagree”, 25 people “Disagree” and 40 people “Rather disagree”. 120 people marked the answer “Neither agree nor disagree” (Fig. 14).

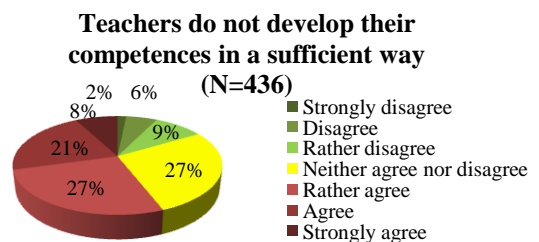


Figure 14: Teachers do not develop their competences in a sufficient way (N=436).

4. Discussion

The results of the study showed that the general education students, special education students and early childhood education students have mostly negative opinions on Polish education. The majority of students believe that the Polish education system needs reform. On the other hand, most people do not believe that the changes taking place in Polish education are going in the right direction. Particularly large percentage of students pointed out that school is a source of excessive stress for students, and that students are bored in school. Both of these problems indicate that Polish students often experience negative emotions in school, and so they feel bad. Students expect changes in education, but we do not know what changes they would like. It is necessary to examine what kind of changes in education are expected and required in students’ opinions.

It is debatable why general education students have such negative opinions about education. Perhaps students have very high expectations of education. Possibly students expect profound changes in education including model of

teaching in school. This issue should be examined in subsequent studies.

Acknowledgements

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