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ROCZNIKI NAUK SPOŁECZNYCH
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MARIUSZ ZEMŁO

SOCIAL ROLES IMPACT ON OUR PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD

The sociology of knowledge focuses, among other things, on discovering different factors that are a part of social existence and determine human consciousness. By providing the evidence that confirms this relationship, the literature on the subject describes a few notable ideas; the active role of: social classes (Marx, Scheler), political parties, generation (Mannheim), social circles (Znanięcki), collectives (Fleck), customs, rituals (Durkheim, Levi-Bruhl), tradition (Habermas, Sphere), history (Geiger), relations of domination (Foucault, Bourdieu), worldview and world perspectives (Scheler, Weber), and the development of civilization (Berger). In this text we will place a little, although, as it seems, convincing piece of information confirming the power of the influence a social role plays on the shaping of subjective reality. Before we get to this point, however, we will briefly recall the category of a social role with regard to the chosen aspect (of perceiving the world).

Dr. habil. MARIUSZ ZEMŁO – Head of the Sociology of Knowledge and Education Department of the Institute of Sociology of the John Paul II University of Lublin, address: Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: mzemlo@gmail.com

This text is a modified version of the paper: M. ZEMŁO, *Odbiór świata przez pryzmat roli społecznej*, in: *Style życia, wzory osobowe i normy jako czynniki współistnienia społecznego ludzi. Od lokalności do globalności*, red. J. Baniak, Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza 2010, s. 101-113.

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Among the significant thoughts related to the issue of a social role in the context of the processes of consciousness are those written by Florian Znaniecki. They belong to the general theme of issues of individuals' participation in certain social systems associated with appropriate knowledge systems. By raising these issues the author of *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* sensitizes the reader to the necessity of taking into account two socialization contexts – primary and secondary – experienced by every individual in their lifetime. The primary context introduces an individual into the so-called universal roles, general, commonly performed that do not require any special personal predispositions or specific expertise. An individual learns them easily when he participates in various projects of actions implemented in daily practice or in activities integrated into the standards of the present. They are related to, e.g. being: a member of a community, a student, a supermarket client, a football fan, a recipient of media messages and the like.

The secondary socializing context should be associated with the introduction of the participants of social life in specialist roles. This requires special preparation which takes place during narrowly defined training procedures and with appropriate predispositions of the people involved. These roles are identified by Znaniecki primarily with exercising specific professions which emerged in the course of social division of labor. The main idea of the proposed approach is connected to the thought that the effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of all professions, e.g. a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, a teacher, a shop assistants etc. require proper knowledge relating to the range of subjects connected to the matter, which the role performer ought to fulfill (the so-called matter of fact tasks), as well as the rules, activities, conventions connected with this basic dimension of the acted role. This is the knowledge of professionals to which, with great trust in their competence, refer those in need of specific support and professional help¹.

It should be noted that Znaniecki points out that any system of knowledge corresponding to the professional role has its own cognitive style. One is connected with a theoretical and the other one with a practical approach; one requires concrete thinking and the other abstract thinking; one forces invention and creativity and the other one imposes strict adherence to the rules in force;

¹ Cf. F. ZNANIECKI, *Spoleczne role uczonych*, Warszawa 1984, p. 305, 530-531; F. ZNANIECKI, *Ludzie terazniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości*, Warszawa: PWN 2001, p. 112.

one requires visible expression and the other one calls for restraint and full control².

Znanięcki's considerations are a classical exemplification of connecting professional roles with the appropriate stock of knowledge systems, whereas the stock of knowledge must be identified with the competence that allows for successful accomplishment of the tasks that society delegates to the performers of specific roles³. At the level of an overall reflection on the proposed perspective, the author has made some key findings. They refer to: the conditions that must be met for the role to be played well in terms of actors' knowledge and other personality features; the way experts in various subject areas emerge; the criteria for the validity of the existing systems of knowledge; the functions performed by scientists in terms of knowledge; the roles that emerged among scientists in the course of historical development. In the adopted convention of research the sociological analysis was conducted on a grand scale; it was complex and conducted on various levels. It shows a broad spectrum of issues within the proposed perspective.

A different point of view on the social role considered in the context of the sociology of knowledge was offered by Ralph Linton. He noted that the configuration of behaviors that constitute a social role (assimilated by an individual as a complex) may be an explanation of the reaction accepted by an individual with regards to specific situations. In other words, having an appropriate position in the social structure affects behaviors corresponding to this position, which – as marked by Linton – makes the reactions of individuals associated with the same position remarkably similar⁴. According to the scholar, maintaining the right behavior stems from the universal tendency “to develop at least some sense of category solidarity, based on a community of knowledge and interest. With this is associated at least a rudimentary ability to act as a unit in cases where all members feel themselves threatened”⁵. Any elements of behavior to which they refer are not arbitrary constructs, but they stem from specific cultural patterns to which a community refers, and which are the subject of social remittance. What is more, specific patterns and the corresponding remittance are directed to certain categories of individuals –

² F. ZNANIĘCKI, *Spoleczne role uczonych*, p. 526-528.

³ Ibidem, p. 304; F. ZNANIĘCKI, *Relacje społeczne i role społeczne. Niedokończona socjologia systematyczna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2011, p. 409-411, 427 et seq.

⁴ R. LINTON, *Kulturowe podstawy osobowości*, Warszawa 2000, p. 40-41; cf. F. ZNANIĘCKI, *Ludzie terażniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości*, p. 97.

⁵ R. LINTON, *Age and Sex Categories*, “American Sociological Review” 1942, vol. 7, no 5, p. 590.

those who aspire to become members of a specific group, which is the carrier of these patterns. Therefore they adopt corresponding qualities. They consist of, among others: mental preparation, knowledge (including secret knowledge), rituals, duties, privileges, commitment and social activity, independence in action, the ability to affect others and the range of possible behaviors⁶.

So, Linton sees the impact of the roles on shaping appropriate attitudes of individuals who play these roles. He sees in them the power which imposes conformism, albeit in other terms – an obligation to perform certain activities⁷. In the case of this author's views, this is the „model of rule-governed behavior”⁸.

Linton's statements on the specified topic sensitize all parties to the specific recognition of the category of a role and open up the research perspective whose development is extremely important from the perspective of the understanding of the relationship between social being and consciousness. In this study we follow in his footsteps, testing the power of influence of social roles in imposing perceptual quality on the individuals who perform them. As the point of reference we chose the opinions of teachers and students from middle schools (gymnasium) and high schools, which were obtained in empirical studies carried out in 2005 (students) and in 2007 (teachers) in Białystok – a city in northeastern Poland with a population of about 300 000. In the first case the research sample was 1563⁹ and the other one was 1348¹⁰ people. A research questionnaire was used which contained blocks of identical questions, that allowed for a comparison and contrast of the results¹¹. The questions were related to three thematic areas; firstly, the school normative system responsible for consolidating the common state of collective consciousness of the people who function in the school environment. During the diagnosis spe-

⁶ Ibidem, p. 590-591, 594-595; R. LINTON, *The Study of Man*, New York: Appleton-Century 1936, Chapter 8.

⁷ R. LINTON, *Age and Sex Categories*, p. 601; cf. E. GOFFMAN, *Spotkania. Dwa studia z socjologii interakcji*, Kraków: NOMOS 2010, p. 68-69.

⁸ Cf. R.A. HILBERT, *Toward an Improved Understanding of "Role"*, "Theory and Society" 1981, no 10, p. 208 et seq.

⁹ This represented about 5% of the total population of students in the age group chosen by the researchers.

¹⁰ This represented about 40% of the total number of teachers who worked with young people in the age group and in the school institutions that were the subject of the research.

¹¹ The author of the research participated in both projects and was responsible for the blocks of questions discussed in this text. Precise information on accepted research methodology, sampling and characteristics of the respondents is in: M. ZEMŁO, *Role społeczne a postrzeganie szkoły*, Białystok: Urząd Miejski 2009.

cial attention was devoted to: a) the views of teachers and students on the existence of clear rules of conduct in educational institutions, b) the evaluation of educational activities conducted by teachers among their students c) the assessment of educational assets and means available to the school, which can be applied in instances of undesirable students. Secondly, the following types of students' behaviors were studied: students' behavior in relation to their peers, students' behavior in relation to their teachers and students' behavior related to the use of drugs and the use of abusive language in a school environment. Thirdly, the sources of deviant behaviors, which are frequently encountered by young people in their life experience, were also analyzed.

The comparison of the views the representatives of both groups have on the topics listed above allows for making some basic observations about the importance of the roles for the people who play them. It allows the researchers to determine to what extent the role impacts their perception of the world and to indicate certain regularities. All these will be presented in the text.

1. TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' GENERAL OPINION ABOUT SCHOOL INSTITUTION

In all the analyzed issues concerning the functioning of school the picture of educational institutions constructed by teachers was more favorable than the one constructed by students. School staff gave better grades to almost all the aspects related to their workplace, profession and behavior of pupils. In the case of opinions on the current regulatory system in educational institutions the percentage of the response of educators and pupils in each category was as follows: a) the aspect of awareness of the existence of clear standards of what a student is allowed and what he is not allowed in a school environment – 67.10% to 60.30%; b) the aspect of teachers' educational involvement – the lack of consolidation of educators – 32.7% to 50.9%; c) the aspect of educational effectiveness of the measures available to the school in terms of: persuading students to execute teacher's commands – 38.90% to 20.20%, preventing violence among students – 50,80% to 33,20%, taking measures against vulgarization of language on school premises – 16.20% to 11.00%, preventing alcohol use in a school environment – 50.70% to 22.40% and taking measures against smoking in a school environment – 15.40% to 8.10.

The relationship between the teachers' and pupils' views on the universality of (the categories of: "very frequently" or "frequently") the occurrence of undesirable behavior on the school premises were as follows: making fun of good students – 21.40% to 46.90%, physical violence – 24.80% to 26.90%, pupils refusing to follow teacher's instructions – 16.60% to 63.20%, disrupting a teacher during a lesson – 44.60% to 74.80%, treating a teacher in a negative manner – 8.80% to 62.90%, conducting grade conversations with teachers – 21.10% to 82.50%, students' use of vulgar language (there was an exception) – 72.10% to 70.70%.

The described state of affairs is explained by the social position of the participants of the research project. Teachers, who in the school organizational structure represent the roles that are more important, are more responsible for the condition of the school than it is in case of students' roles, and thus try to make the performance in which they participate more real and authentic. With their answers they try to reassure others, but also themselves, that single scenes in this play are true and real. This manifests itself in a better evaluation of the whole picture of which they are co-creators. Even if there are some shortcomings, errors, improper poses, false tones, or even large slip-ups, when the performance is not given in accordance with social expectations and all assigned functions, they show that all the elements that make up the whole match perfectly and that the course of events remains in correct order so that the resulting image corresponds to the adopted scenario. In this way, teachers hide from all the interested parties the facts which are inconsistent with the whole and deviating from the general expectations of the proper state of affairs (for example such as: the weakness of the school's institutional basis, lack of discipline in classes, lack of proper relations between teachers and students, pathological behavior in schools etc.).

Students, however, because of their position – subordinate and dependent, are not required, as strongly as teachers, to build and maintain a positive image of the show, hence they present more critical opinions on the tested aspects of the functioning of educational institutions. It should be noted that this criticism and low assessment did not relate solely to the objective facts (e.g. the condition of the school normative system), but also to improper or even deviant behavior of young people. Their views on the universality of certain activities in a school environment are reflected in the data: physical violence between pupils – 26.7%, making fun of good students – 46.9%, treating a teacher in a negative manner – 53.9%, disrupting a teacher during a lesson –

74.8%, students' use of vulgar language on the school premises – 69.9%¹². Consequently, the picture of school painted with the opinions of the young people does not match the assumptions of the scenario to be implemented – the one of a school that educates rather than corrupts; a school that develops positive role models, manners, high standards of students' manners, and a school that does not strengthen behaviors that arouse society's disapproval and critical assessment.

2. THE GREATEST DISPROPORTIONS OF TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON SCHOOL

The greatest differences between the positions of the researched groups were noted in the case of opinions concerning the student – teacher relationship which exerts immediate influence on the social position of educators. It should be emphasized that the sphere of facts was equally accessible to representatives of both groups playing their roles in society. According to the literature, positions occupied in the social structure are often associated with different access to events that take place in the sphere of collective action as well as with different temporal, spatial, technical etc. conditions, which becomes the source of different cognitive abilities and finally, the source of incompatible knowledge resources¹³. However, there is no doubt that in the presented case, the representatives of both compared social roles had the same chance of experiencing the studied matter – because it concerned the reality in which both groups were direct participants.

In the indicated context the disproportions of teachers' and students' opinions occurred in the case of: a) treating a teacher in a negative manner – fifteenfold for the answer “very frequently” (the ratio of votes was 2.0% to 29.6%), fivefold for the category “never” (44.4% to 9.3%), b) conducting grade conversations with teachers – sixfold (for the answers “very frequently” – 4.1% to 23.7%), threefold for the answer “never” (17.0% to 5.1%), c) refusing to follow teacher's instructions – sevenfold for the answer “very frequently” (3.5% to 23.7%), threefold for the answer “never” (18.5% to 5.1%), d) disrupting a teacher during a lesson threefold for the answer “very often” (13.1% to 34.1%), twofold for the answer “never” (5.3% to 2.3%). In the

¹² These issues were thoroughly discussed in: M. ZEMŁO, *Szkola w stanie anomii*, Białystok: Urząd Miejski 2006.

¹³ M. ZIÓLKOWSKI, *Wiedza, jednostka, społeczeństwo*, Warszawa: PWN 1989, p. 198.

quoted answers there are great discrepancies between the opinions of teachers and pupils, since the questions were about the evaluation of the teachers – the subjects directly interested in building a good image of themselves as performers of the role of educators. They know it perfectly well that authority is an indispensable attribute of this role. Without this attribute the basic tasks that are within the teachers' as well as young people's guides' responsibility would not be accomplished properly. Therefore, in their answers they tried to hide the facts that undermined their position and revealed their failure in influencing and creating their pupils' attitudes. The fact that such a procedure was adopted by the teachers not because they cared about their good name, regardless of their social position, was proved by the answers provided by young people. In their case, there were no similar attitudes. As it was already mentioned, young people were always more strict in evaluation of their own, reprehensible behavior than were their teachers, and even if they tried to present their image in a good light, they did not do it as explicitly as their teachers did. Therefore, it can be inferred that the opinions given by the employees of educational institutions were influenced by the "high status" factor.

Considerable differences between the positions of the representatives of different social roles were also reflected in their opinions on the sources of deviant behavior. Teachers – playing the roles connected with education – created a broad range of determinants of students' reprehensible behavior, assigning crucial importance to the media, family and peer groups. They carefully downplayed the role of educational institutions in shaping the attitudes mentioned above, although they usually noticed the undesirable behaviors in their own area: students' use of vulgar language ("very frequently" – 27.60%, "frequently" – 45.50% the level of prevalence 73.10%), smoking ("very frequently" – 18.90%, "frequently" – 42.20% the level of prevalence 61.10%), negative relationships between pupils ("very frequently" – 3.10 % "frequently" – 27.60% the level of prevalence 30.10%). Despite the clear record of alarming events which occurred at school, the teachers were seeking the causes of such behavior in socialization outside the school and did not want to admit that for some young people this was in the school environment where they encountered these behaviors for the first time in their lives, and because they spent some of their time in this environment they got familiar with a completely new set of behaviors.

In order to build an accurate image of the institution in which they are employed and thus of the qualities that it should maintain, teachers smoothly transferred a large part of their responsibility for the formation of young peo-

ple's undesirable attitudes onto other agencies (media, family, peer groups). According to their responses, one of the major sources of these behaviors is in family which is, in their opinions, the driving force behind students' misbehavior. They also eagerly adopted a way of thinking which tries to acknowledge that these are the families that do not bring up their children properly – pathologies can be extrapolated to most, if not all home environments. School – as they see it – however, in no way exhibits an image of an institution which socializes in behaviors that do not win social approval. If teachers did not use such logic and if they tried to see the devastating effects educational institutions have on young people, the performance in which they play a key role would take the form of a masquerade, which becomes such moreover because of them, as they cannot live up to the expectations set by the director and viewers. Then teachers – the main roles – should be dismissed. They would have to be replaced by new performers, more effective than the former ones, and following the scenario more effectively and credibly.

It should be noted that in this sphere the opinions of students effectively unmask the educators' logic. They take a large part of the responsibility for improper children's character formation off the family – family was mentioned as one of the least likely sources socializing to undesirable behaviors: violence against peers – 1.2%, disrespect for teachers – 1.2%, using vulgar language – 7.9%, drinking alcohol – 11.7%, the use of drugs – 3.0%, smoking – 14.3%. Moreover, students more often sought the sources of deviant behaviors in school: violence against peers – 38.5%, disrespect for teachers – 77.9%, using vulgar language – 63.5%, drinking alcohol – 13.1%, the use of drugs – 13.2%, smoking – 54.1%. In the presented part students did not retain any appearances making the play seem real. Instead of playing the necessary role effectively, they performed more of those destructive functions, revealing the fictitious nature of the show in which they actively participated.

This state of affairs is perfectly explained by the role theory. Young people, not of their own will, but because of social assignment, take the role of students (using the services of educational institutions is obligatory) and treat it as adult pressure. This state is not fully accepted by students, because it does not come from their inner conviction and free choice. In such conditions, students' identification with the role is little, and, what is more, it is frequently contested by young people who act in accordance with their own plan

which is independent of the official scenario. The guidelines for the role they play are then ignored¹⁴.

In summary, individuals occupying positions responsible for a specific area of activity will evade their responsibility for the state of affairs, if it is not compatible with the qualities attributed to that role and universally recognized.

3. THE LEAST SIGNIFICANT DISPROPORTIONS OF TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON SCHOOL

The smallest differences between the positions of both researched groups were noted in the case of opinions concerning the school normative system (clarity of norms for students, effectiveness of educational and disciplinary measures).

Assessed feature	Teachers		Students	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Are there clear norms telling you what is allowed and what is not in your school?	67.1%	29.5%	60.3%	38.8%
Are there effective measures preventing students from:	15.4%	82.8%	8.1%	91.8%
– smoking				
– drinking alkohol	50.7%	41.9%	22.4%	76.7%
– using vulgar language	16.2%	80.6%	11.0%	88.1%
– using violence against peers	76.7%	14.3%	33.2%	65.0%
– disrupting a teacher during a lesson	38.9%	57.2%	20.2%	78.9%

The disproportion between the analyzed positions ranged from several to several dozen percent, but were not expressed by a ratio higher than 1 : 2. De-

¹⁴ Cf. J. SZMATKA, *Konflikt uczeń – nauczyciel w świetle teorii roli społecznej*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego". Prace Socjologiczne 1973, No. 1, p. 52.

spite great distances between the major differences in the responses, these distances were not as large as in the cases of those described in the preceding paragraph.

The condition of the normative system is not directly related to the performance of the roles by teachers and pupils. Its quality depends largely on the institution which delimits the framework for school functioning and equips it with the right tools: the powers, sanctions, protection, legal and financial support etc. The discussed area is therefore, to a certain degree, neutral from the perspective of the image of both studied subjects, as well as from the perspective of their personal responsibility for the effects of the tasks they perform. This may explain the slightest differences of opinions of the representatives of the two social groups. This may also prove that in the field whose functioning and quality does not depend on the actions of individuals who play different roles, the study subjects presented more or less objective views. Therefore, it can be gathered that in this aspect the fact of holding different social positions did not impact as much on the expressed opinions as it did in other areas of the schools' functioning – though it must be remembered that the teachers finally gave significantly higher marks also to this dimension of the functioning of educational institutions.

4. THE DEGREE OF THE RESPONDENTS' IDENTIFICATION WITH SCHOOL VERSUS THEIR EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

People who strongly identify with the performed role give higher marks to the institution to which they are connected through this role. In our study, in the case of a teacher, this identification was measured by the level of satisfaction he/she derived from the performed functions. The teachers who were satisfied with their profession treated the spectacle (but not necessarily the reality) entitled "school" more seriously. This was reflected in their strong belief that the accepted scenario is played out correctly; that the course of action is consistent with its guidelines. If the assumption is made that school educates, then in teachers' declarations it actually accomplishes this task; if educational measures, as it is intended, are supposed to shape the behavior of young people – then, in their opinions, they are relatively effective; if school is a place where obscene behaviors are avoided – these are generally the

educators who argue that behaviors of this kind are not present in its territory, etc.¹⁵

In the conducted study a clear tendency was revealed: the greater the teacher's job satisfaction, the higher the assessment of various aspects of the functioning of educational institutions. The issues were presented in the context of opinion on the school normative system.

Teachers' opinions regarding:	Teacher's job satisfaction				
	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity of school rules	80.80%	69.50%	66.00%	42.30%	50.00%
Effectiveness of measures taken to prevent students from:					
– smoking	24.5%	15.6%	12.8%	3.7%	0.0%
– using violence among peers	65.0%	57.4%	44.8%	14.8%	0.0%
– using vulgar language	27.5%	17.1%	12.2%	11.1%	0.0%
– drug abuse	69.1%	57.9%	52.3%	25.0%	0.0%
– drinking alcohol	66.7%	55.7%	50.5%	20.0%	20.0%
– addressing a teacher in a negative manner	74.2%	60.2%	50.1%	23.1%	40.0%
– not following teacher's orders	70.6%	54.8%	40.9%	22.2%	0.0%
– misbehaving in class.	57.9%	44.1%	29.8%	29.6%	20.0%

1 – very satisfied, 2 – satisfied, 3 – satisfied and dissatisfied 4 – dissatisfied, 5 – very dissatisfied

In almost all the cases, the degree of satisfaction with one's profession influenced in a proportionate way the degree of assessment of separate components that constitute the normative system in educational institutions. It should be

¹⁵ Cf. E. GOFFMAN, *Człowiek w teatrze życia społecznego*, Warszawa: PIW 1981, p. 54-59, 89.

noted that the differences between “very satisfied” (1) and “very dissatisfied” (5) teachers reached several dozen percent. The least distances between these two extreme values ranged from 24.5% to 0.0% (the assessment of the effectiveness of educational measures intended to prevent students from smoking in the school environment – a strongly prevalent phenomenon in the school environment, to the existence of which teachers have already resigned themselves in many institutions) and the largest distances ranged from 70.6% to 0.0% (the assessment of the effectiveness of educational measures intended to urge students to follow teachers’ orders – one of the most important signs indicating that teacher's authority is, or is not asserted).

A similar regularity is noticed in the case of students. We associated students’ identification with school with the grades they obtained in the education process. Those young people who obtained higher grades also gave higher grades to the educational institution they attended. This relation is most clearly visible in their assessment of the normative system. If the clarity of school norms was confirmed, students’ opinions were as follows: “very good” students – 66.7%, “good” students – 63.5%, “average” students – 57.9% “weak” students – 56.6%. Similarly, evaluating the educational consolidation of teachers (the categories proving that “all” or “almost all” teachers ensure compliance with school rules) students gave the following answers: “very good” students – 56.2%, “good” students – 53.0%, “average” students – 45.2%, “weak” students – 39.0%. There was also the same order in the case of opinions concerning the effectiveness of school educational measures – e.g. introducing discipline into the classroom: “very good” students – 27.3%, “good” students – 25.7%, “average” students – 15.2 %, “weak” students – 14.6%, or preventing students from using vulgar language: “very good” students – 15.5%, “good” students – 11.9%, “average” students – 9.2% , “weak” students – 11.5%.

It should be added that the disproportions between evaluations of different aspects of a school’s ability to function made by students, who stronger or weaker identified themselves with the role they played, are not as pronounced as they are in the case of the teachers, whose degree of identification with the performed role is different. This regularity can again be explained by teachers’ greater commitment (especially those who feel satisfied with their role) to creating a positive image of the institution in which they hold important positions.

5. TYPE OF SCHOOL VERSUS RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS ON THEIR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the respondents' opinions on all the discussed aspects, private schools came out much better than the public ones. It should be noted that the differences between the positions of teachers and students in private schools are greater than the differences in the public schools. These results are presented in the table below:

Assessed feature	Type of school					
	Public			Private		
	Teachers	Students	Difference	Teachers	Students	Difference
Confirmation of clear rules existing in school	68.5%	60.8%	7.7%	83.7%	64.2%	19.5%
Consolidation of educational measures	51.4%	48.1%	3.3%	72.1%	56.8%	15.3%
Effectiveness of educational measures intended to prevent students from – disturbing a teacher during a lesson	39.8%	20.1%	19.7%	51.7%	25.3%	26.4%
– using vulgar language	14.5%	10.6%	3.9%	48.3%	20.3%	28.0%
– smoking	13.6%	7.1%	6.5%	48.2%	27.5%	20.7%
drinking alcohol	52.5%	21.8%	30.7%	86.6%	37.7%	48.90%

The differences between the teachers and the students of public and private schools concerning the evaluation of selected features related to the functioning of the school were as follows: confirming the clarity of school rules – 7.7% to 19.5%, confirming the consolidation of educational activities – 3.3% to 15.3%, confirming the effectiveness of educational measures intended to prevent students from disturbing a teacher during a lesson – 19.7% to 26.4%, confirming the effectiveness of educational measures intended to prevent

young people from using vulgar language – 3.9% to 28.0%, confirming the effectiveness of educational anti-smoking measures – 6,5% to 20.7%, confirming the effectiveness of educational measures intended to prevent students from drinking alcohol – 30.7 to 48.9%.

The position of private schools in Poland is not yet as firmly established, obvious and strong, as it is in case of public schools. Private school still need to take great care about their reputation and appreciation for their services in the market in which they still compete with a larger network of state institutions, especially that they offer their services free of charge. Private schools' seeking clients who put their children in the schools' care and pay a monthly tuition arouses in the schools, even subconsciously, the desire to improve the quality of their workplaces. Thus, the inclination to raise the schools' values may be found in their opinions.

It is possible that this state of affairs is also affected by private school teachers' knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the public school environment. Private schools were formed relatively recently (therefore, teachers could previously experience the conditions offered by public education). It should also be remembered that a considerable number of educators work in several institutions (in the conducted research 30% of respondents confirmed that they worked in more than one school), therefore, they often have the opportunity to confront states of affairs corresponding to both types of schools; what is more, opinions regarding the situation in different educational institutions circulate widely among teachers.

6. STUDENTS' POSITION IN THE SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND THEIR OPINIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL

In their opinions regarding undesirable behaviors in school young people, who were assigned to the role of pupils, clearly displayed their incompetence in acting these roles, and thus revealed the deficiencies in the spectacle in which they were involved. The way of addressing their teachers, relationships with peers, young people's manners significantly differed from the canons considered acceptable in the school environment. They can easily be considered as standing in contradiction to the requirements of the role of a student. Those who play this role are required to avoid insubordination in the above-indicated dimensions of activity, or at least, to be reserved in their attitude ("prim and proper"). Students, however, find inappropriate behaviors to a large

extent present in their daily practices. Refusing to follow teacher's instructions was reported: "very frequently" by 23.8% of the students, "frequently" – 39.5% (prevalence of the phenomenon – 63.4%); disturbing a teacher during a lesson was reported "very frequently" by – 34.1% of respondents, "frequently" – 40.7% (prevalence of the phenomenon – 74.8%); treating a teacher in a negative manner was confirmed: "very frequently" by – 20.6% of pupils, "frequently" – 33.3% (prevalence of the phenomenon – 53.9%); using vulgar language was mentioned "very frequently" by – 38.8% of students, "frequently" by 31.9% of them – prevalence of the phenomenon – 70.7%. Based on this data, young people playing the roles of pupils in the surveyed educational institutions, can be called – using Goffman's term – cynical actors¹⁶.

7. TEACHERS' POSITION IN THE SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND THEIR OPINIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL

People acting the roles of teachers adjusted their opinions on the functioning of school to a popular belief about school held by society. This is perfectly seen in the context of the views on students' turning to substance abuse on the school premises. In this case there is the regularity that: the more specific behavior is socially stigmatized the less teachers admit to its presence in the school environment. If the teachers' position is compared to the students' position the results are as follows: the opinions of the researched groups coincide with one another in the case of smoking – this is expressed by the ratio of votes confirming the occurrence of the phenomenon: 87.8% to 87.7% (difference – 0.1%), there was a divergence of views on the issue of alcohol drinking – 57, 5% to 63.7% (difference – 6.2%) but the greatest discrepancy was found for the response concerning drug abuse – 25.1% to 32.6% (difference – 7.5%). But these are not the voices confirming the existence of the phenomena that are the most convincing. The above statement acquires significance relating to the "I do not have an opinion" answer. The relationship between teachers and students presented the following ratio of votes: in case of smoking – 5.2% to 1.4% (difference – 3.8%), in case of alcohol drinking – 21.8% to 0.6% (difference – 21.2%) in case of drug abuse – 37.4% to 0.6% (difference – 36.8%). The more socially unacceptable a given behavior is, the more teachers pointed to this category, i.e. they were more likely to avoid taking a definite stand on

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 55.

the issue. In the case of students there were no such regularities. Regardless of the type of undesirable behavior taking place in the school environment they, in a similarly low level (not exceeding 1.5%), indicated the “I do not have an opinion” answer.

This state of affairs can be explained, with reference to Merton’s tradition, by greater force of social pressures affecting teachers (than students), because of teachers’ more intense involvement in social relations with representatives of other roles (parents, management, representatives of supervising institutions, opinion-forming institutions etc.)¹⁷. The category “I do not have an opinion” (or simply not responding to any category for the question) allows for avoiding conflicts that may arise as a result of unequivocal formulation of one’s opinion on inconvenient subjects. The choice of such category creates the impression that its author’s position is neutral or, sometimes it is an expression of the author’s loyalty to the assessed institution. This probably is the source of greater conformity of the units occupying higher positions in specific institutional contexts, while those occupying lower positions in the organizational hierarchy, and not so much involved in many social relationships may exhibit greater independence in expressing their views.

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The presented text demonstrates how, depending on their position, social actors perceive, interpret and evaluate reality that is available to them. The object of their reference is the same section of the world in which they function in their basic life contexts. This world is located in the same spatial, temporal and social dimensions; the world that has the same parameters, order, patterns of behavior, priorities, ethos; the world of the same actors having nobody but themselves to rely on, their whims, reactions, and strategies etc., and yet, in the reception of the representatives of different social roles the world is not only non-identical but also a very different place. It may even be said that the obtained disproportions between the opinions that differed from one another by up to a dozen times, allow us to conclude that these are different worlds (if we did not know that the subject of the conducted comparisons was the same reality, it would be difficult to believe that we were dealing with an identical reference). One and the same objective reality receives differing

¹⁷ Cf. P.M. BLAU, *Naciski strukturalne kompletu statusów*, in: *Elementy mikrosocjologii (wybór tekstów)*, ed. J. Szmatka, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 1979, p. 325.

from each other, subjective “reflections”. We are therefore dealing here with a clear exemplification and unambiguous confirmation of the basic thesis of the sociology of knowledge relating to the sphere of awareness corresponding to the social existence. The presented article may be treated as a modest contribution to the legitimization of the sociology of knowledge as an empirical discipline.

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ZNACZENIE SPOŁECZNEJ ROLI W POSTRZEGANIU ŚWIATA

Streszczenie

Prezentowany tekst pokazuje znaczenie roli społecznej w postrzeganiu świata. W pracy przyjęto zaproponowaną przez Ralpha Lintona koncepcję roli społecznej uznającą, że zajmowana pozycja w strukturze społecznej wpływa na interpretację doświadczanej rzeczywistości. Prezentowane opracowanie oparte jest na opiniach głównych aktorów funkcjonujących w środowisku szkolnym: uczniów i nauczycieli. Parametry, które były brane pod uwagę w zestawianiu opinii respondentów, pokazały, że wykazywali się różną wrażliwością na otaczający świat. Przy opracowaniu materiału

uwzględniono ich odpowiedzi w następujących kwestiach: po pierwsze – szkolnego systemu normatywnego, po drugie – zachowań uczniów w stosunku do innych podmiotów funkcjonujących w środowisku szkolnym, po trzecie – źródeł zachowań dewiacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: role społeczne; postrzeganie świata; środowisko szkoły; opinie uczniów i nauczycieli o szkole; socjologia wiedzy.

SOCIAL ROLES IMPACT ON OUR PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD

S u m m a r y

The following text shows the significance of the social role in the perception of the world. It works in accordance with Ralph Linton's proposed concept of the social role in accepting that a given position within the social structure, influences one's interpretation of the perceived reality. The research was concluded focusing on the main actors within the school environment: the students and the teachers, who were the sole participants in the research and form its basis. The parameters that were measured had differing views in the world that they perceive. A note was made on the opinions about; firstly, the school normative systems, secondly on the behaviour of students towards others in general and thirdly on sources of deviant behaviours. This spectrum of perception was measured and quantified between the two respected parties in the cases of the following independent variables: varying degrees of identification or belonging to a school environment and how school types (private or public) influence the results of both students and teachers, furthermore it attempts to shed light on the basis of their views.

Key words: social roles; the perception of the world; school environment; teachers' and students' opinions about school; sociology of knowledge.