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Political culture of the Polish society versus civic education

Colloquium nr 3, 61-70

2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE POLISH SOCIETY VERSUS CIVIC EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The author of the article, in its first section, describes overall theoretical assumptions concerning political culture, its basic concepts and definitions. The object of the analysis is primarily the picture of political capture of the Polish society. In the second part of the article, the concept of civic education is presented. The author points to various important aspects concerning constructing a civic society through a system of civic education¹.

Keywords:

political culture, civic education.

In order to establish the role and meaning of political culture in a society, it is important to present the problem of political culture, what it is and which areas of our lives it embraces. Afterward, some chosen perspectives will be presented from the literature on the subject, illustrating classic and modern dimensions of political culture in a society. The above analysis, juxtaposed to examples of how the system of civic education influences the construction of political culture in a society as well as of challenges facing the system of civic education at the beginning of the 21st century, will allow to answer the question formulated in the topic.

Political culture was a common technical term used in political science during the behavioural revolution, which then lost its popularity in academic circles, to regain the analytical importance at the end of the 20th century. It embraces the totality of ideas and attitudes related to authority,

¹ Article *Political culture of the polish society versus civic education* was presented as the lecture on a scientific conference "Trends and Issues in Adult Education", 02.09.2013, Masaryk University, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Brno, Czech Republic.

discipline, duties and rights of the government, as well as to patterns of cultural transmission, such as the education system or even family life. The importance of these factors lies in the ability to create a general profile assessing people's reactions in political matters. The term of political culture relates to everything, from systems of school discipline to patterns of upbringing children in Burma. Nobody has ever succeeded in defining this terms precisely enough to be able to distinguish a general set of attitudes on the nature and functions of government and power in all societies².

Political culture determines the totality of values, norms and patterns of behaviour fixed in consciousness of subjects taking part in political actions³.

Political culture is knowledge, patterns of behaviour and systems of values, according to which everybody acts, and which, to a larger or smaller extent, influence the exercise of state power⁴.

American creators of the concept of political culture, Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, have presented an interesting view on the subject of political culture.

In 1956, G. A. Almond published the article 'Comparative Political Systems', in which he postulated to concentrate on behaviour of social groups and psychological orientations of citizens towards politics in the analysis of political systems. Almond has created an academic definition of the term 'political culture' and has made it an analytical category. Afterward, with S. Verba, he adopted the concept of political culture to extensive empirical research conducted together in five countries: the United States of America, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Mexico⁵.

As a result of the above research, a classical work about political culture has been written, 'The Civic Culture', which proved that some societies seem to convey a general lack of trust toward power and politicians, while

² D. Robertson, *Kultura polityczna*, [in:] *Słownik Polityki*, Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa 2009, p. 206–207.

³ M. Chmaj, M. Żmigrodzki, *Wprowadzenie do teorii polityki*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1996, p. 102.

⁴ K. B. Janowski, *Kultura polityczna*, [in:] *Wprowadzenie do nauki o państwie i polityce*, B. Szmulik, M. Żmigrodzki (ed.), Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010.

⁵ J. Garlicki, *Kultura polityczna społeczeństwa*, [in:] *Społeczeństwo i polityka. Podstawy nauk politycznych*, K. A. Wojtaszczyk, W. Jakubowski (ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA- JR, Warszawa 2007, p. 57–58.

others teach their citizens that their voices have an influence on politics and that politicians can be trusted⁶.

POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE POLISH SOCIETY

On the ground of Polish science, 'political culture' emerged in journalistic writing during the revolution of 1905. The term culture was then used in a familiar way. It meant political temperance, restraining from extreme actions⁷.

The term appeared also during the interwar period. Jozef Siemienski used it, defining political culture as the possessions of the nation in the area of institutions constituting the law⁸.

The following research on political culture were performed in the 1960s. Kazimierz Biskupski was the first author writing about this subject. After him, many scholars took interest in the analysis of the term 'political culture': Wladyslaw Markiewicz, Teodor Filipiak, Jerzy J. Wiatr, Bronislaw Golebiowski, Czeslaw Mojsiewicz and others.

K. Biskupski originated the term of political culture from the construct of culture itself as the possession of human beings in the area of satisfying biological, psychic, social and cultural needs. In this picture, he isolated science, technology, art, morality, law, religion, customs, upbringing. Political culture, thus defined by Biskupski, described the ability to fulfil one's needs in the shape that is being inherited by generations⁹.

W. Markiewicz understands political culture of a society as those elements of global culture which apply to values accepted and required by a group and which apply mostly to the system of state authority¹⁰. To this culture belong criteria according to which society has usually assessed politics of its country and, as a result, sympathized with it or confronted it. Aspects of this culture and the level of its assimilation are expressed by the place determined politically by a given collectiveness, by the relation to vari-

⁶ G. A. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture*, Princeton University Press, New York 1963.

⁷ K. Wasiak, *Świadomość polityczna i kultura polityczna – analiza relacji pojęć*, „Studia Nauk Politycznych” 1992, 2, p. 84–85.

⁸ J. Siemiński, *Kultura polityczna wieku XVI*, [in:] *Kultura Staropolska*, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1932, p. 121.

⁹ K. Biskupski, *Problemy ustrojoznawstwa*, Wydawnictwo UMK, Toruń 1968, p. 24.

¹⁰ W. Markiewicz, *Kultura polityczna społeczeństwa*, [in:] *Socjologia i służba społeczna*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 1972, p. 321.

ous political institutions, by the relation to forms of political activity, by the relation expressing various attitudes and reactions. Components of culture in this view are: historical awareness, political attitudes and behaviour, political leadership, rules of political game and rules of political pedagogy¹¹.

T. Filipiak defined political culture as norms, principles, values and patterns of behaviour which serve to achieve certain goals through classes, social groups or individuals and relate to the structure and mechanism of state authority. Among its elements he lists: doctrines, political and legal ideas, influence of political leaders on beliefs of groups, individuals and social classes, civic behaviour according to norms of social life in the state, maximal development of human activity and self-critic thinking about social and institutional matters¹².

J. J. Wiatr includes knowledge about politics, assessment of political phenomena, emotional side of political attitudes and patterns of political behaviour accepted in a given society as parts of political culture¹³.

B. Gołębiowski defines political culture as 'linkage of a system of political values, knowledge about politics, learned patterns of behaviour and proven systems of action of individuals and groups in a given social system'¹⁴.

Cz. Mojsiewicz understands through political culture 'knowledge by the society of norms, rules, laws governing social development and politics, enabling the evaluation of progressive or regressive character of politics and powers creating and realizing a given politic'. In his opinion, political culture can be seen in the way of political behaviour, in the extent of participation in political life as well as in forms of realization of state or group interest in a given historical period¹⁵.

As a result of analyzing historical events of modern societies, three major types of political culture can be distinguished: bourgeois, totalitarian and authoritarian, political culture in a civic society. The bourgeois political culture is marked by acceptance of basic rights of freedom and democratic

¹¹ W. Markiewicz, *Kultura polityczna a rozwój społeczny*, [in:] *Markszm i procesy rozwoju społecznego*, W. Wesołowski (ed.), Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1979, p. 194–195.

¹² E. Zieliński, *Nauka o państwie i polityce*, Wydawnictwo Elipsa, Warszawa 1999, p. 252.

¹³ J. J. Wiatr, *Socjologia stosunków politycznych*, PWN, Warszawa 1977, p. 309.

¹⁴ J. Garlicki, *Kultura polityczna młodzieży studenckiej*, PWN, Warszawa 1991, p. 23.

¹⁵ Cz. Mojsiewicz, *Problemy kultury politycznej społeczeństwa socjalistycznego w dobie rewolucji naukowo-technicznej*, „*Studia Nauk Politycznych*” 1974, 1, p. 104.

liberty (broadened currently by the term 'human rights'), recognition of a free game of political powers and an important economic and political diversification of a society. The totalitarian and authoritarian political culture is characterized by elimination of democratic civic rights and fundamental freedom rights, as well as a total politicization of social life. Political culture in a civic society concerns a group of norms, values and attitudes of democratic and humanistic standards¹⁶.

Currently, two more types of political culture are distinguished: democratic and autocratic. The democratic type occurs in two instances: conservative-liberal and liberal-democratic. In the first one, the most important values are civic liberties and rights, while rejecting the socio-reformative aspect of political culture. In the second one, the most basic values and attitudes typical of parliamentary democracies are accepted and social reforms are expected. On the other hand, the autocratic type is antidemocratic, it embraces commanding, military and totalitarian regimes¹⁷.

The political culture of a society fulfils roles deciding about the potential development in terms of political system. The most meaningful roles are: socializing, integrating, regulating. The regulating function concerns subordination and unification of political actions. It influences political behaviour of citizens in order to take specific accepted forms. It gains special meaning in political systems of democratic types, where customs and traditions influence, to a substantial degree, the regulation of political life. It concerns creating and solidifying norms and institutions which define norms of functioning of a political system and human relations in terms of political activity. The socializing function reflects the process of political acculturation, which is, of gaining knowledge about the political system, creating beliefs and attitudes, shaping hierarchies of political values. The integrating function relates to creation of attitudes of coordinating political actions and cooperation or to cooperation of individuals and groups in pursuit of specific values and goods. It consists in motivating and validating the righteousness of existing institutions, political norms and rules of organizing and functioning of political systems¹⁸.

The political culture of a given society is thus one of the factors which substantially influence formulation of political beliefs and attitudes of the

¹⁶ T. Filipiak, *Typy i funkcje kultury politycznej*, [in:] *Spółczesność i polityka. Podstawy nauk politycznych...*, p. 69–71.

¹⁷ J. Mielecki, *Kultura polityczna*, [in:] *Podstawowe kategorie teorii polityki*, Wydawnictwo AR, Wrocław 1979, p. 63.

¹⁸ M. Chmaj, M. Żmigrodzki, *Wprowadzenie do teorii polityki...*, p. 102–103.

entire society and specific groups and individuals within it, especially in their relation to the political authority. The state of political culture, its content and form, reflects the social and political activity of a given society and the degree of its engagement in realizing goals and tasks given by political authority¹⁹.

CIVIC EDUCATION

Building a civic society would be impossible without an active participation of aware citizens. Transforming an old government into a new one — parliamentary democracy, also requires essential changes in humanistic education. Hence the important role of civic education in shaping political culture of citizens²⁰.

An ideal civic culture is one, where political ideas and values of the totality of citizens are in harmony with political equity and participation and where the government is perceived as trustworthy and acting in the interest of the public. This idea is similar to the classical understanding of the Greek 'polis' and Aristotle's term of the human being as 'political animal'²¹.

Civic education in its general understanding relates to upbringing a human being into life in a civic society and prepare him to perform the role of a citizen.

Civic education is to show how a democratic society functions, teach political activity, invite to take part in the adult political life, convey knowledge about what is the essence of democracy and of what elements a democratic political system is made of, what is self-government in all of its forms with the special treatment of a local government²².

Civic education and its role consists both on pointing to positive examples and manifestations of political culture and on showing negative phenomena which reflect negative results of a lack of political culture²³.

In the Polish political life, positive manifestations of political culture are among others: departure from an authoritarian system into a democratic

¹⁹ F. Ryszka, *Nauka o polityce (rozważania metodologiczne)*, PWN, Warszawa 1984, p. 204.

²⁰ G. Piwnicki, *Wynik badań kultury politycznej kadry zawodowej marynarki wojennej RP w okresie transformacji ustrojowej 1980–2000*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Opolskiej, Gdynia 2004, p. 15.

²¹ D. Robertson, *Kultura Obywatelska*, [in:] *Słownik Polityki...*, p. 206.

²² G. Piwnicki, *Wynik badań kultury politycznej...*, p. 15.

²³ G. Piwnicki, p. 15.

system with a democratic model of society, parliamentary democracy, construction of civic society and market economy²⁴.

Among negative manifestations in the Polish political culture are: verbal acclaim of democratic values of the western world, lack of abilities to make use of civic rights and democratic gains (democratic local governments have a lot of rights, but do not use them fully) by citizens, low voter turnout, lack of resolute and trustworthy political leaders and the fact that politicians and rulers of all fractions have a much greater influence on the state of political culture than the governed themselves²⁵.

What influence civic education is the mental and moral upbringing situating human beings in society and equipping them with attributes necessary to a useful participation in social and political life²⁶.

One can then distinguish between two elements of civic education. The first is the mental one, giving attributes of social, political, legal and economical knowledge. The second is the moral one, shaping civic and prosocial attitudes. The mental element constitutes the base for shaping the essential goal of civic education.

The specificity of civic education imposes special duties on schools and other educational institutions, especially on teachers and institutional pedagogues as responsible for shaping prosocial attitudes of children and adults.

CONCLUSION

Political culture is a group of attitudes, values and patterns of behaviour of people participating in political life. It consists of: a cognitive level — interest and knowledge of politics, knowledge of political facts; an axiological level — recognized and desirable values concerning political system and mechanisms governing its functioning; a level of evaluation — of political phenomena and judgments estimating political institutions; a behavioural level — recognized patterns of behaviour in politics and proven types of political actions.

Political culture in modern democratic Poland is an essential fact in public life. Its intensity strengthens the collapse of systems of values in use in 'the real socialism' and favours the development of new patterns of behav-

²⁴ Cz. Mojsiewicz, *Problemy edukacji obywatelskiej w procesie przemian ustrojowych*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń – Poznań 1993, p. 20.

²⁵ G. Piwnicki, p. 16.

²⁶ A. Skreczko, *Wychowanie obywatelskie*, „W Służbie Miłosierdzia” 2008, 6.

our in the relation government — citizens, new forms of behaviour in civic culture and political life²⁷.

The role of political culture in lives of individuals, groups of people and society consists of drawing conclusions from previous processes and accumulated individual and collective experiences, and comparing or confronting them with the actual or the required social reality, or with the system of values to be put into use.

Civic education plays a very important role in the above process. The main agents realizing civic education are school and other educational institutions. Educating citizens according to values as: equity, solidarity, social activity, tolerance and others is the basis for construction of a democratic, civic society.

It is also worthy to notice that in the last years, civic education has gained importance in core curricula all over Europe. All countries underline the concern of developing social and civic competences in their strategic documents and it applies to all levels of education.

A conclusion is possible to make — civic education is seen as the most essential tool in promoting an active civic attitude. Social and civic competences are listed as one among eight elements of key competences developed during the lifelong learning process (according to the definition of European Parliament of 2006). Promoting civic activity is also one of key goals formulated for European systems of education in the Strategy 'Education and Training 2020' (ET 2020).

The presented political culture is the result of participation in political life and civic education.

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²⁷ T. Filipiak, *Ład społeczny: kultura państwowa – elit politycznych i kultura obywatelska*, [in:] *Przywództwo polityczne*, T. Bodio (ed.), Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa 2001, p. 346.

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KULTURA POLITYCZNA SPOŁECZEŃSTWA POLSKIEGO A EDUKACJA OBYWATELSKA

STRESZCZENIE

Autorka artykułu w jego pierwszej części opisuje ogólne założenia teoretyczne dotyczące kultury politycznej, jej podstawowe koncepcje i definicje. Przedmiotem analiz jest przede wszystkim ujęcie kultury politycznej społeczeństwa polskiego. W drugiej części artykułu przedstawione jest zagadnienie edukacji obywatelskiej. Autorka wskazuje na ważne aspekty dotyczące budowania społeczeństwa obywatelskiego poprzez system edukacji obywatelskiej.

Słowa kluczowe:

kultura polityczna, edukacja obywatelska.