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# On Security Education in Poland. The Essence and Content of the Subject of Education

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### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to highlight the essence and content of teaching this subject, which was introduced in Polish schools on 1 September 2009. To achieve this goal, the importance of education and, specifically, security education is discussed. The essence of security education is then presented, and it replacing the currently implemented defense adaptation is explained. Subsequently, the educational content of security education was discussed. The aim of the study was based on theoretical research methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, and inference.

The conclusion encourages further reflection on this subject because education is an important area for ensuring security; hence, education in security from pre-school education to adult education can be found in Polish education.

The tendency toward change testifies to broader cognitive perspectives, especially in the area of personnel and structural security of individuals and social groups. It also testifies to the understanding of the essence and importance of education itself.

**Keywords:** education, security, security education, civil defense course

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### 1. Introduction

The need for security has always accompanied humankind. Earlier, security referred primarily to the capability to counter external threats, which generally were associated with military activities. However, the modern-day development of civilization and the resulting new challenges have seen the meaning of security broaden and not only associated with armed forces (Pieczywok 2011, p. 466, Wiśniewski 2011, 2017, Drabik 2018, Waever 2008). Today, “one can assume that it is the primary, existential and supreme value and need of every human being, conditioning the survival and development of the individual and social groups. In order to strengthen the sense of security, people unite (associate) and establish the state as the highest organizational form, guaranteeing safety” (Skrabacz 2012, p. 26).

Because of changes in all areas of human life, the subject of security has assumed a new meaning. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the capability to deal with multifarious threats that do not have the nature of classical external threats is much more substantial (Bachmann 2012, Millet and Perez 2005). In addition, the development of science, technology, civilization and industry has meant an increase in the number of factors directly threatening human health and life. Moreover, the progressing deterioration of the natural environment has generated serious ecological threats (Siegel 2015). Developing skills to deal with these changeable conditions has recently become a major task for authorities, national security institutions, the education system, and individual citizens too (Pieczywok 2011, pp. 466–467).

This article looks at issues related to security education with regard to safety as a significant human, universal, humanistic, and educational value. The purpose of this article is to highlight the essence and content of teaching this subject, which was introduced in Polish schools on 1 September 2009. The aim of the study was based on theoretical research methods, such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, and inference. To achieve this goal, the importance of education and education for security is discussed. The essence of education for security is then presented, and it replacing the currently implemented defense adaptation is explained. Subsequently, the educational content of education for security is discussed. The analysis carried out in this way allowed conclusions to be reached in summary.

## 2. Education and security education – understanding of concepts

Security – understood as a state of peace, certainty, freedom from threats, fear of attack – is the supreme need and value of human social groups, as well as the most important goal of existence. The essence here is not only survival, integrity or independence, but also the security of development, which is to ensure protection and enrich the identity of individuals and of the nation (Pokruszyński 2010, p. 6, Wodak 2009).

The opportunity for shaping a sense of security lies in education. It is one of the basic ways of shaping human security because it affects its attitudes, values, messages, and skills that are necessary for preventing and dealing with threats and removing their consequences (Pieczywok 2012, p. 65).

Education is all interactions that serve to form (change, develop) human life abilities. The total impact means both institutional and individual, conscious and unconscious impacts, etc. These impacts may be systematic, unsystematic, contingent, planned, etc. Systematic and planned educational activities take place, for example, at school. Non-systematic and contingent activities occur in peer interactions, among other things, and are hidden in the messages of culture, e.g., works of literature. Human life abilities may refer to many areas of its functioning: intellectual, emotional, interpersonal, motivational, physical, etc. (Rubacha 2005, p. 25).

Education is carried out through the educational system and it consists of two basic processes: education and training. In the history of thought about upbringing, there were pedagogues, such as Georg Kerschensteiner, Sergiusz Hessen, and Antoni Bolesław Dobrowolski, who identified upbringing with education. Another position was equally popular – represented by Heliodor Muszyński and Krzysztof Sośncki, for instance, which consists in a radical separation of education from upbringing. Contemporary theory is increasingly moving away from the position that places an equal sign between upbringing and education (*ibidem*).

Education is deliberately organized social activity based on an educational relationship between a ward and an educator, whose aim is to induce intentional changes in the personality of a ward (Okoń 2004, p. 25). These changes include the following dimensions:

- cognitive-instrumental, associated with the cognition of reality and the ability to influence it;
- emotional and motivational, consisting in shaping the attitude of an individual to the world and people, their attitudes and beliefs, the hierarchy of values, and purpose of life (*ibidem*).

In other words, education is the purposeful influence of mature people, or educators, mainly on children and adolescents, or foster children, in order to cultivate specific concepts, feelings, attitudes and aspirations in them. Hence, the educational activity includes caring, providing entertainment and culture, physical, mental, moral, aesthetic, social, and ideological education, along with teaching, training, and preparing the ward for performing various tasks. The educational activity is socially organized and takes place through and within the framework of the life of particular social groups that act as educational institutions, such as family, school, youth organizations, workplaces, theatres, and museums (Kunowski 1993, p.19). Education is, therefore, a conscious and deliberate pedagogical action aimed at achieving relatively constant effects (developmental changes) in a juvenile's personality (Rubacha 2005, p. 26).

On the other hand, the term education can be understood as a system of activities aimed at making the learner aware of the world, preparing themselves to change the world, and shaping their own personality. It is primarily a process leading to education and one that applies to the entire human personality. Education is a system of actions aimed at enabling a learning unit or a set of individuals to enable:

- learning about the world that nature has created and what we owe to culture, including science, art, and technology;
- preparing to change the world by developing physical and mental qualifications, abilities and talents, interests and passions, needs and self-education skills;
- shaping individual personality by developing creative attitudes and personal relation to moral, social, cognitive, artistic, and religious values (Okoń 2004, p. 200).

The process of education, the subject of which is a given to an individual or a group, can be organized by institutions, mainly by a school, university, and family, by various institutions, workplaces, and individuals, especially teachers. It can also be taken by the individual or group spontaneously when it takes the form of self-education or self-reliance. On the other hand, the process of upbringing is conducted by people and institutions responsible for education, such as parents, teachers, schools, social, cultural, and religious organizations (Okoń 2004, p. 200).

Security education is, therefore, the process of educating the human being, and hence educating him/her in order to ensure his/her sense of security. According to the definition, security education is proposed by Bogdan Rudnicki (1994, p. 62) to be all educational processes aimed at preparing young people and adults to act in situations threatening the existence of people and the functioning of the state.

In turn, following Ryszard Stępień (1999, p. 11), it can be stated that security education is a definite didactic-educational system of the family, school, army, mass media, youth

organizations and associations, workplaces as well as state and local government institutions focused on shaping the system of values, dissemination of messages and shaping of skills important for ensuring national security. In terms of subject, education for security concerns three basic dimensions (Kitler 2006, p. 16):

- the security of a person (individual) equipped with a system of social values and norms that are specific to them, which also apply to their imperatives related to individual security;
- the security of a group of people who want to feel safe in different social (interpersonal) situations;
- legal formalized security, state, and international structures, such as the municipality, powiat (county), state, or group of countries which, due to their territorial scope, are respectively local, national, and international security.

Summing up the theoretical considerations concerning the essence and areas of meaning of the term security education, it can be concluded that it is a continuous process encompassing a series of activities, including (Pieczywok 2012, p. 67):

- transferring knowledge about the occurrence of threats;
- shaping “safe” behavior and attitudes;
- motivating actions to ensure safety;
- dissemination of necessary knowledge and skills in the field of countering threats;
- raising awareness of the scale and type of needs in difficult situations;
- developing a sense of responsibility for taking specific actions;
- developing appropriate habits (behavior) in emergencies;
- caring for values in relation to human life and health.

On the other hand, from the point of view of practical needs, education for security fulfills the following functions (ibidem):

- implementation – education for security adapts people to social and professional life as well as skillful team activities;
- corrective – education for security makes it possible to correct attitudes and behavior in accordance with accepted social requirements and norms;
- socialization – education for security shapes and improves prosocial values, attitudes, and behavior;
- stimulative – education for security aims to develop the habit of optimal involvement in the implementation of various projects, effectively eliminating threats;
- personality-generating – education for security manifests itself in the continuous development and improvement of personal and professional qualities related to the development of personality and improvement of skills related to safety in the professional work of a given individual.

Security education is an important element in the process of shaping security in general (Igbuzor 2011). If the creation of desirable conditions of survival and development (certainty of life) of a human being meets the stipulations of the definition of security, then education for safety is one of the methods (methods) of this creation.

### 3. The essence of security education

Having in mind mentioned above premises Keeping the above in mind and, consequently, the need to reevaluate the content of school instruction – omitting areas that are less important and detailed, with the focus on areas that are most important for security – the Ministry of National Education, in agreement with the Ministry of National Defense, introduced a new subject – education for security in the core curriculum of the lower and upper secondary schools (changing the previous one – civil defense course). The main core of the subject is a comprehensive approach to security issues with the focus of educational activities on the issues of threats to peace e.g. armed conflict (Żakowska 2018, pp. 219–247), as well as types of behavior in crisis situations at any place and time (Hargreaves 2003, Urych 2013, p. 385). “Security education in dangerous times” (Pieczywok 2018, pp. 7–22) is very necessary for contemporary school (Drabik 2018, pp. 23–37). In these classes, topics are discussed that relate to current problems disrupting various dimensions of state security, such as migration (Domalewska 2018, Domalewska and Żakowska 2019, pp. 3–14) and health security threats (Urych 2013, pp. 384–407).

The concept of education for security emerged in the process of research on the security system of the Republic of Poland, conducted at the National Defense Academy<sup>1</sup> in the years 1993–1995 (Stępień 1994). In those years, there were significant changes in the interpretation of defense education of society as traditionally viewed, which made it possible to replace it with the term education for safety. This term has an extensive range of content because it is associated with patriotic, civic, moral, and defense education. As a component of education, it aims to direct and consolidate these educational efforts that foster the formation of patriotic and defensive attitudes. Education for safety is associated, in particular, with politics, the education system, the state, power, and the whole system of its exercise, and its issues are essential for the whole of society as well as for individual units (Stępień 1999).

It is worth mentioning that the subject of education for security, which was introduced in the Polish education system on September 1, 2009, completely replaced the subject that had been previously implemented, namely the civil defense course. It is possible to understand this date as preparing society, with particular reference to the education system of secondary school children, to perform humane tasks in order to minimize results and the liquidation of effects of breakdown, disasters, natural disasters and warfare (Siuda and Zaczek-Zaczyński, 1994, pp. 98–99).

The essence of this was mainly issues in the field of self-defense in the event of an outbreak of war and the principles of operation of nuclear weapons, content related to self-defense, sanitary training, and preparation for the performance

<sup>1</sup> Based on Article. 3. the Act of May 20, 2016, on the establishment of the War Studies University on May 30, 2016, the National Defence University in Warsaw was abolished on October 1, 2016. The War Studies University was created (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 906).

of basic military service. Students also acquired basic team skills for peace, danger, and war. They also shaped ideological and patriotic attitudes. Post-secondary school students were prepared for the roles of junior commanders in self-defense formations and learned about the tasks of third-party workplaces. During the summer, school students participated in obligatory military and defense preparation camps, where they expanded the theoretical knowledge acquired during the implementation of the subject curriculum and acquired and perfected practical skills.

Numerous changes to the youth defense preparation programs were carried out in 1971, 1974, 1982, 1986, and 1989. The amendments aimed at streamlining the programs by issues and content useful in modern society, e.g., increasing the number of hours of sanitary training. Since 1987, changes have been introduced to the defense education program, giving up typical military content, the number of civil defense course hours, as well as funding, has been reduced. Despite many changes applied to the content of the civil defense course, its essence in the national security structure was underestimated. Subsequent analyses of the military preparation programs and subsequent defense adaptations, which were in force in 1952–1990, show how unstable the content of the education was (Siuda 1996, p. 158).

The socio-political transformations in Poland, which took place after 1989, caused further changes in the goals and content of defense education of school children; one of the manifestations of these changes is the cessation of military preparation of school youth. In addition, in 1990, the civil defense course was withdrawn from primary schools, which instead introduced issues in the field of universal self-defense, the implementation of which turned out to be illusory and ineffective. This was caused by the lack of proper legal regulations, proper organization, teachers' cooperation, and supervision by school directors. On the other hand, new defense-improvement programs were introduced in secondary schools, the content of which referred only to the protection of health and life against various threats to peace (Kaliński 2005, p. 30).

The basis for the creation of a new defense education system is the assumption (supported by past experience) that the most rational, effective, and cheapest way to generally prepare a defensive society is defensive education of young people. As a consequence, the formula of education for safety was adopted (Kaliński 2000).

The requirement to implement education for security is imposed by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in Art. 5, in which we read that the Republic of Poland ensures the security of citizens and Art. 166 of the Act of November 21, 1967 on universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 60), which states that pupils of primary and secondary schools, i.e., general and technical secondary schools and vocational schools, with the exception of adult school students, are subject to education for safety.

One of the subjects in the primary education plan is education for safety (Regulation of the Minister of National

Education of 28 March 2017 on framework teaching plans for public schools). It is intended to prepare students for proper behavior and appropriate reactions in situations that pose a threat to health and life. This subject covers various items in the area of state security, content regarding the organization of rescue operations, health education, and first aid.

#### 4. Course contents of education for security

In 2009–2017, the content included in the core curriculum for the subject of education for security in middle school was oriented to developing skills in situations of various threats, such as fires, floods, accidents, road disasters that may occur in the nearest future in the student's environment, as well as the ability to provide first aid in these situations. Complementing this content is the issue of the functioning of the state defense system (Makowski 2012).

However, in the fourth stage of education, i.e., in the upper secondary school, the curriculum of the subject education for safety included threats to peace, their sources, countering their formation, and their removal (Urych 2013, p. 384). These contents include contemporary health threats – civilizational diseases and contemporary health threats such as nicotine addiction, alcoholism, drug addiction, and aggression (Słoma 2012, Tomaszewicz et al. 2012).

In the area of program changes in the contents of the subject, education for safety has departed from security as traditionally understood and associated with the ability to counter external threats, usually identified with warfare. Nowadays, it seems more important to educate people to cope with many threats that do not have the characteristics of typical external threats. The direction of education has been transferred from the pro-defense content to general safety and preparation in the event of threats to life and health. This subject also does not include the subjects of shooting and topography training, and its subject scope refers to issues related to emergency medical services and behavior in crisis situations to a much greater extent. Therefore, the issue of threats to peace and ways of behaving in crisis situations, possible in any place and time, is emphasized.

In addition, in accordance with the provisions of educational law, the headteacher, during the creation of a set of teaching and educational programs, was required to perform tasks in the field of education for safety according to the current core curriculum and appropriate to the environment in which the student is brought up. Local security threats need to be taken into consideration.

On September 1, 2017, a reform of the Polish education system was introduced, according to which middle-school schools were abolished, and the time of education in primary and secondary school was extended (Anon n.d.). The education reform set new tasks for the school, revolving around the gentle introduction of children into the world of knowledge, preparing them to perform the duties of students, and for self-development. The school is to provide safe conditions and a friendly atmosphere for learning, taking into account the individual educational opportunities and needs of the student.

The reform also influenced the implementation of the subject of education for security, which was to be conducted not only in secondary school but also made obligatory in the eighth grade of primary school at one hour per week.

Learning objectives – general requirements in grade VIII (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on the core curriculum of pre-school education and the core curriculum of general education for primary school, general education for the industry-level school, general education for special education and apprenticeship school for post-secondary school):

- getting to know the essence of state security,
- preparation for emergency situations (catastrophes and mass accidents),
- shaping skills in the basics of first aid,
- shaping individual and social skills conducive to health.

It should be pointed out that the curriculum content of education for safety also occurs in higher education. In the field of education for safety, there are established courses of study, such as national security, internal security, security engineering, and European studies, which offer this type of knowledge to their students. Education for safety is also the subject of interest for many post-graduate studies (adult education), specialist and qualification courses (in-service training and continuing education), stressing these issues in the content and skills they teach. This subject also occurs during doctoral studies carried out in the field of security.

The contents of the subject: education for safety at various types of studies and courses for adults cover the whole spectrum of theoretical and practical elements of contemporary security, crises, and prevention. After completing this course, students have a significant amount of knowledge and skills in the field of security as broadly understood. They also acquire the skills necessary for planning, organizing, and managing people in states of danger. They also know how to act to counteract them well in advance of their appearance (Pieczywok 2012, pp. 167–179).

## 5. Summary

The purpose of this article was to highlight the essence and content of teaching the subject of education for security in the Polish educational system. The presented considerations lead to the formulation of a preliminary and demanding discussion of the conclusions.

1. On 1 September 2009, The Ministry of National Education, in agreement with the Ministry of National Defense in Poland, introduced a new subject to the core curriculum of the middle school and upper secondary school – education for safety. Thus, the previously conducted subject – civil defense course – was replaced. The essence of the change was the reorientation of threats of a typically military character to the concentration of educational activities on the issues of threats to peace, as well as behavior in crisis situations.
2. The consequence of identifying security not just with military aspects was the transition from a strictly defensive

education to education for security as broadly understood. In Poland, these transformations were accompanied by changes in the formulation of educational objectives, in which, apart from the issue of threats to security, the problem of challenges, i.e., new situations that may only turn into threats, is increasingly taken into account.

3. Education for security is a continuous process, encompassing a number of activities in the field of upbringing and education, especially for young people, including transferring knowledge, shaping attitudes and developing personality in order to function effectively in the event of various threats and to protect one's health.
4. The curriculum of the subject of education for security mainly concerns learning the essence of state security, preparing for emergency situations, passing skills in the basics of first aid, and shaping attitudes conducive to health. The curriculum of education for safety is currently carried out in primary and secondary schools, as well as during studies and specialist courses.

History and the present show that security was and is a great dream of humankind. Living safely – this is the motto that has influenced many human activities (Loranty 2012, p. 425). Education is an important area for ensuring safety, hence education in security in educational content from pre-school education to adult education can be found in Polish education. The tendency to change testifies to broader cognitive perspectives, especially in the area of personnel and structural security of individuals and social groups. It also testifies to the understanding of the essence and importance of education itself. However, the issue of to what extent the reforms of Polish education in the field of education for security are effective and sufficient should be subject to further reflections and thorough research.

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