![FORUM PEDAGOGICZNE]

ALICJA SKIBICKA-PIECHNA[1]
The Mazovian University in Płock, Poland
ORCID 0000-0003-4949-4059

EDUCATION FOR PEACE AS A PRESSING TASK FOR SCHOOLS UNDER CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

WYCHOWANIE DO POKOJU JAKO PILNE ZADANIE SZKOŁY W WARUNKACH ZMIANY SPOŁECZNEJ I EDUKACYJNEJ

Streszczenie: Edukacja dla pokoju jest głęboko zakorzeniona w procesach globalizacyjnych, w których kluczowe znaczenie mają zjawiska migracji, różnorodności kulturowej oraz pluralizmu społecznego. Dla współczesnej pedagogiki kluczowe jest budowanie pokoju poprzez kształtowanie świadomych i refleksyjnych postaw obywatelskich. Odpowiedzialność za to zadanie w znacznym stopniu spoczywa na szkole, ponieważ edukacja może stanowić konstruktywną odpowiedź na zjawiska destabilizujące i zagrażające bezpieczeństwu społecznemu, które cechują współczesny świat. Edukacja jest podstawowym narzędziem rozwijania i utrwalania postaw pokojowego współistnienia od najmłodszych lat. Wymaga ona starannego planowania jako proces długofalowy, którego realizacja stanowi wyzwanie zarówno dla współczesności, jak i dla przyszłych pokoleń.

Słowa kluczowe: zmiana społeczna, globalizacja, pokój, szkoła, edukacja

Abstract: Education for peace is deeply rooted in globalisation processes, where migration, cultural diversity, and social pluralism have become key concepts. For contemporary pedagogy, building peace through the development of conscious and reflective civic attitudes is of fundamental importance. This responsibility largely lies with schools, as education can provide a constructive response to destabilising phenomena that threaten social security and characterise today's world. Education serves as a primary means of fostering and instilling habits of peaceful coexistence from an early age. This process requires careful long-term planning, as the implementation of educational activities aimed at sustaining peace is both a challenge for the present and a responsibility towards future generations.

Keywords: social change, globalization, peace, school, education

---

1 **Alicja Skibicka-Piechna**, dr.; Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Computer Science, The Mazovian University in Płock. E-mail address: a.skibicka-piechna@mazowiecka.edu.pl.

Introduction

The effect of constant change has consequences in the form of emerging socio-educational issues. Next to what is known, new phenomena that require consideration, diagnosis, and research appear. Moreover, these already recognised situations, due to the influence of various conditions, may once again change, which can be connected, among others, to the general economic and political situation in society, cultural changes, the popularisation of education, the dynamics of changes in educational aspirations of society, etc. (Kwiecińska, Łukasik 2012). Today's world is not a world that is clearly organised, stable, or with a clearly defined perspective. According to Zbigniew Kwieciński (2021), it is the opposite: the modern world, especially our Polish reality, lacks stable confines of social life, is plunged into a chaos of norms and rules, and presents us with a guaranteed lack of clarity about our future. The changes, occurring at great speed, bring many threats to human health, life, and safety, radically transform people's living conditions and lifestyles, and completely modify perceptions of the long-term perspective. Without a doubt, they impact the whole existential situation of individuals as well as their awareness and their sense of the meaning of life (Szymański 2016). Current living conditions are incredibly challenging to describe due to complicated mechanisms and social rules (Szempruch 2022). On the one hand, the world is full of challenges, and the results of scientific and technological advances are not always found to be beneficial to humans. Issues and crises emerge which significantly interfere with effective and efficient functioning. Among them are internal or international conflicts, military conflicts, human rights violations, violence, intolerance, and disregard for important social problems, which contribute to the escalation of tensions and misunderstandings between people, both on a micro- and macro-social scale. This makes constant and undisturbed peace seem practically impossible. Tensions, misunderstandings, conflicts, ambivalent emotions, and tendencies are inherent in human existence; they are its crucial part, and it is hard to even imagine that they could stop existing at some point in time (Piejka 2021). Observed and experienced changes undoubtedly create a significant educational challenge.

Social and educational change

In the 20th century, especially in its second half, the tempo of changes accelerated rapidly in all aspects of life. That period was marked in world history by many significant events and momentous social processes. As a result, it has been described in various ways, for example, as "The Age of Extremes" (Hobsbawm 1994, p. 24), "The End of History" (Fukuyama 1992, p. 23), and "Visible Darkness" (Golding 1986, pp. 10–15), with each of these names highlighting its groundbreaking nature and uniqueness.

It has been widely discussed, with different aspects of these transformations being emphasised. Sudden change became an inherent attribute of social life, described by representatives of various scientific fields and disciplines (Nowak-Dziemianowicz 2017). It is even claimed that the most constant feature of modern social life is the ongoing occurrence of abrupt change (Szymański 2021b). The term *social change* appears in numerous theoretical and empirical works, including those within the social sciences. It most often refers to the creation, disappearance, or transformation of specific elements of social life. It is understood as the difference between the state of a social system at one point in time and the state of the same system at another. Consequently, it involves a transition from one state to another, with these states potentially differing in many observable aspects (Sztompka 2009, pp. 427–438).

The explanation of this concept refers to perceptions of multiple inevitable processes determining the transition of society to new stages of development, during which new forms of social life emerge that better correspond to changing conditions, needs, and expectations (Szempruch 2012). Change is considered a fundamental characteristic of society, driven by various factors, including political, economic, and technological developments. These circumstances require modern, globalising societies to respond to the inevitability of continuous social fluctuation and to attempt to adapt to dynamically changing conditions. Societies face the task of self-definition in situations marked by uncertainty, risk, fragmentation, and ambiguity (Cybal-Michalska 2010).

The concept of change involves transformation, loss, or the creation of something new. However, it does not specify whether such change is positive or negative, to what extent it is accepted, or how much it is met with resistance or protest. It is not possible to evaluate a change in advance without knowing its nature and consequences. It is important to recognise that change can have both immediate and delayed effects. The dynamics of change influence how noticeable it becomes. Slow and seemingly insignificant changes may go largely unnoticed, whereas abrupt changes to the conditions affecting individuals and institutions are more likely to be perceived as sudden and disruptive.

In times of rapid change, depending on their ability to adapt to new realities, some individuals or groups gain prominence, while others are suddenly marginalised or lose their status (Szymański 2021a). Modern individuals often experience difficulties in finding their place in new realities, facing doubts about their role in society, struggling to navigate social spaces, and feeling uncertain when making decisions or choosing life paths. The unpredictability, spontaneity, and situational nature of current conditions contribute to feelings of anxiety and concern (Szymański 2010). Suspicion and distrust are becoming dominant feelings among citizens.

These challenges lead to many adverse consequences, such as mental health issues, social maladjustment, loss of life purpose, lack of motivation, and even withdrawal from professional and social life, resulting in personal destabilisation.

In such complex and demanding circumstances, individuals often feel the need for support and actively seek it. This is a crucial aspect of modern life, as people face new forms of external risk that are becoming increasingly common and widespread (Cybal-Michalska 2013). Individuals need assistance in restoring a sense of security, improving their ability to adapt to new conditions, developing the capacity to respond flexibly to different situations, mitigating disorders, and optimising personal development and prevention.

The new profile of civilisational risk defines a new "ascriptive fate of risk", from which there is no escape, as it represents a "civilisational orchestration of nature" (Cybal-Michalska 2013, pp. 16–19). A series of existential challenges related to social functioning result from the complexity, speed, and transitory nature of socio-cultural reality, as well as the growing demands placed on individuals in all areas of life.

Global context of social change

Currently, one of the main reasons for intensification of social change is globalization. At the same time, it is hard to describe and explain all factors and mechanisms causing its existence. It should be assumed that it is driven by unprecedented in the history of humankind, dynamic, even revolutionary, advances in technology, communications, telecommunications, and the internet, which have resulted in the compression of time and space and contributed above all to the vision of a world called the 'global village' (Tchorzewski 2003, p. 35). In these circumstances, hopes for better conditions for human existence and development are arising; at the same time, new conflicts, divisions, or fears are revealing themselves, and unfavourable phenomena are intensifying, having a great impact on the condition of individuals and whole societies. Globalisation is a source of both progress and disruption. The intertwining of complex processes of change with scientific and technological developments, along with some Central and Eastern European countries' specific processes of structural transformation and European integration, causes rapid, often unexpected facts and phenomena. They have an impact on transforming the living conditions of the young generation and adults, affecting changes in social awareness and the popularization of previously unseen lifestyles and unknown life orientations (Szymański 2021).

Globalization is undergoing careful analysis by representatives of many scientific disciplines. Explaining global processes that are changing the world is carried out from two perspectives: as an improvement in humanity's standard of living and as a source of world problems. Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska points out an extremely important fact, which is a connection between global issues and the fate of individuals. As she notes, such a bilateral relation flows bidirectionally: from "person" to "planet" and from "planet" to "person" (Cybal-Michalska 2006, pp. 67-68). The actions of individuals contribute to what is known as global-scale problems,

and – contrarily – the reality of the modern world establishes the conditions of the existence of individuals. This dependency arises from the definition of globalization made by Anthony Giddens (2007, p. 97): "it's not only a process that means tightening relations and increasing interdependence on a global scale, but also a world in which others are affected by our actions, and we are affected by global problems".

It is especially important in the context of any negative phenomena, such as marginalization, social and cultural exclusions, terrorism, overexploitation of natural resources, etc. These consequences of globalization create the need for adopting new models of lifestyle, which have regard to "global awareness" (Cybal-Michalska 2006, pp. 67–68), which concerns the duties and responsibilities that we bear for one another. In these conditions, it is of great importance to choose between undisguised individualism, a nearly exclusive focus on self-interest, and solidarity and pro-community, that is, traits that are very necessary in times of rapid social change but are not particularly well publicized and promoted.

In the context of globalization in the modern world, it is necessary to look differently at goals of education. Especially important is the aspiration for people to live in harmony in all aspects of their lives and the restoration of the meaning and value of life that have been lost in consumer societies. The passing on of universal values and the shaping of enduring attitudes in young people should be a conscious and purposeful action to preserve peace.

Education for peace in the face of social change

In the face of many new, challenging, and disturbing phenomena, both on a global and local scale, which we observe today and experience in almost every aspect of our lives, the task is to build individual awareness and the capacity to make decisions about one's own future. Subjective liberation from dependence, rejection of oppression, crossing boundaries, and defending against compulsion are, in a sense, features of the everyday life of modern people, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, education, or worldview.

Therefore, it is necessary to prepare younger generations for life in a reality that is changeable, dynamic, full of tensions, marked by significant civilisational progress, and rich in complexities and dangers. Particularly important in this regard is the formation of a system of values and attitudes of kindness and respect among children and adolescents towards others, enabling them to cooperate in overcoming the various threats to peace found in individuals, as well as in the social and political realities of Europe (Suchodolski 1990).

Society's concern for the attitudes of young people towards others and towards national and international issues, their orientation, views, and motivation to work for peace, is determined by pedagogical activities focused on building and strengthening peace in the world and within people. The implementation of the idea

of educating for peace is especially urgent given the current state of modern society. However, this is not an easy task, nor can it be achieved immediately, particularly in an age of intensifying global political, ethnic, and religious conflicts. Aggression and cruelty are entering people's consciousness more and more subtly, causing them to become more aggressive and ruthless, which poses a danger to public order and threatens the inner peace of individuals (Leek 2014, p. 255).

Education for peace is one of the most important tasks of both the present and the future, as it depends on many aspects of living in the contemporary world. This is due to actual social phenomena, which are currently highly complex and marked by contradictions and ambivalence. The increasing migration from economically disadvantaged countries, the unprecedented wave of refugees from war-torn regions, the threat of terrorist attacks, the multicultural composition of societies, and the simultaneous tendencies towards isolation and closure alongside globalising integration pressures are just some of the factors justifying the thesis that schools have a crucial role in preparing society for peaceful coexistence, the preservation of peace, and its consolidation as essential to a more secure future.

Efforts to build peace, encourage young people to coexist harmoniously, promote cooperation and synergy, and advance peaceful values gain particular importance in light of the great anxiety inherent in contemporary society, functioning in an unstable and excessive reality. Educational projects usually do not bring immediate changes in people's attitudes (Lewowicki 2014, p. 32). Therefore, activities aimed at educating the younger generation for peace should be conducted systematically (not only in reaction to real threats), thoughtfully, critically, and responsibly. Only such an approach can ensure the effectiveness of the undertaken initiatives. Building peace requires bold decisions and creative action in constantly changing situational contexts (Piejka 2024, p. 23).

Schools should continuously support young people in exploring the changing and complex social, natural, scientific, technical, and informational realities, as well as the trends shaping these realities both internationally and within the communities in which they live. In this process, education can and should be the key to addressing the many challenges posed by modern reality.

The pioneer of education for peace, Maria Montessori, considered the education of younger generations in the spirit of a culture of peace as an educational priority. Agnieszka Piejka (2014 p. 66) defines this as "a way of thinking and acting pedagogically that focuses on the educational tasks and challenges that result from concerns about the world and human beings in the world, and whose goal is to build and strengthen peace in the world and in people".

Today, peace is a value materialised in social consciousness through various observable indicators, including concepts such as fraternal understanding between nations, the absence of armed conflict, the provision of mutual aid, unity and solidarity among national groups, cultures of coexistence between countries, and the exchange of scientific, cultural, and economic ideas (Kawula 1980). Additionally,

numerous factors support the promotion of peace and the recognition of its importance. These factors generate the need to educate the younger generation in an atmosphere of respect for peace and in the belief that it is necessary not only to declare one's attitudes but also to actively participate in creating a culture of peace.

Fostering belief in the value of peace and a willingness to take action for its development and preservation is an important educational task because peace is a value whose content and realisation become the goal of consciously shaping attitudes and educating society. Crucially, peace is not something achieved once and for all; rather, it requires continuous responsibility and active efforts to find more effective ways to reduce the threat of conflict and war, improve the quality of human life, and build a humanity united across divisions and differences.

Education may offer a constructive response to the disturbing and dangerous phenomena characteristic of contemporary reality. According to UNESCO, it is primarily an activity aimed at promoting a culture of peace recognised as a value to be instilled in children and young people, developing in them the attitudes and behaviours needed to resolve conflicts through dialogue and cooperation. When formulating the definition of education for peace, it was emphasised that building the foundations for peaceful coexistence requires attention to individuals and sensitivity to their situations, not just concern for improving international relations (Delors 1998).

This is yet another argument for recognising education as essential to building peace. It is part of long-term strategies for addressing the human condition in the world and requires time and the involvement of a broad range of individuals, institutions, and communities. It is as necessary as political action. Neglecting educational efforts risks reducing peace to nothing more than a temporary pause between wars (Piejka 2015).

In education for peace, various themes and issues arise, including how to develop in children and adolescents specific predispositions and essential skills (Piejka 2014), such as critical thinking, civic attitudes, openness to others, and creativity. These are necessary for engaging in cooperation and dialogue aimed at peaceful coexistence and for fostering in young people a readiness and openness to new challenges. Education for peace requires ongoing attention to the cognitive, emotional, and moral development of individuals. Central to this process is encouraging the individual's ability to change and transcend – surpassing their current state and understanding of who they are (Piejka 2024, p. 23).

It is essential that contemporary approaches to building and maintaining peace include reflection on the human being, their role, and their potential in this process:

- A person is not merely a passive recipient of what happens in the surrounding world. While undoubtedly shaped by their environment, they also have the capacity to change and co-create it.

- Human nature encompasses both good and evil tendencies: the ability to act empathetically and altruistically, as well as the capacity for aggression and destruction. Each person's experiences and the many factors that influence them create a unique and evolving internal dynamic.
- Education has the power to shape individuals, stimulate their development, and guide their personal transformations. Its potential lies in making people more self-aware and more capable of recognising their agency and responsibility, not only for their personal future but also for the future of the world.
- Education is thus "a human matter in the world". It requires attention to the individuality, uniqueness, and distinctiveness of every human being, as well as consideration of the local and global phenomena and interdependencies that shape contemporary life.
- One of the most pressing human challenges remains the building of peace, which is particularly urgent in today's globalised world. Global interdependence makes it impossible to view local conflicts as distant or irrelevant, even from afar.
- Building peace should be regarded as one of the most important educational responsibilities, requiring thoughtful strategies, diverse methods, and continuous updates on emerging threats (Piejka 2015, pp. 118–119).

Taking these points into account is crucial for shaping public attitudes toward peace and building a secure future.

Conclusion

Development, which is a necessity for the changes occurring in the modern world, at the same time requires constant efforts for peace. Rapid change renders many previously used states of affairs and solutions obsolete, dysfunctional, outdated, and unfashionable. With the development of information technology, an ageing population, globalisation, and climate change, modernity brings new forms of social problems. These phenomena are so complex, multidimensional, and dynamic that their minimisation requires the involvement of many people and institutions. One of these is the school, as well as the teachers working within it.

Transformations that occur with great speed and clarity reveal the pressing need to constantly redefine the problems and challenges that shape modern society. In these circumstances, consideration of the category of peace is important and highly advisable. From the Polish perspective, it is especially relevant and urgent due to the fact that we are a frontline country (Kowzan 2023, p. 148). The unstable political situation in many countries and shifting governmental policies generate the need for intensive efforts in educating societies for peace, for recognising and upholding human rights, for authentic democracy in social life, for intercultural understanding, tolerance, and cooperation. Education for peace can eliminate

ignorance and fear, offer hope to future generations, and ensure the well-being of society.

Globalising tendencies in the modern world, marked by low predictability and multidimensional, permanent change, undoubtedly affect the lives of individuals and societies. Social change means the emergence of new generations that grow up in new living conditions. The more rapid and radical this change becomes, the more the world experienced by young people differs from the one in which their parents and grandparents lived. Clearly, this is related to the fact that some values are gaining in importance, while others are losing their previously prioritised position. This situation requires the introduction of educational measures that shape humanistic and social values within the axiological system of children and adolescents.

In today's world, there are numerous circumstances that support the spread of awareness about the importance and value of peace. Particularly significant are the deeply rooted beliefs in our collective consciousness about the increasingly destructive consequences of war for modern civilisation and culture (Kawula 1980, p. 101). Naturally, the value of peace for nations is shaped by their historical experience. The tragic experiences of war in our own nation make peace, and education for peace, especially important and necessary in light of the armed conflict taking place just across our eastern border.

All educational efforts for peace should aim to ensure that the value of peace – regardless of social, political, or economic context – is consistently regarded as necessary and meaningful in the lives of young people, deserving of attention and care. In today's world, a sense of security constitutes the highest axiological value, and education for peace is a vital tool for fostering and stabilising habits of peaceful coexistence grounded in universal values. It is necessary that all educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness and responsibility among children and adolescents be continuous, interdisciplinary in character, and connected to real-life issues arising in various spheres of individual and collective experience.

References

Cybal-Michalska A. (2006). *Tożsamość młodzieży w perspektywie globalnego świata.* Poznań: PWN.

Cybal-Michalska A. (2010). *W stronę globalnej cywilizacji przyszłości – o potrzebie twórczego dialogu z przyszłością.* „Ars Inters Culturas", no. 1, pp. 11-21.

Cybal-Michalska A. (2013). *Społeczeństwo globalnej zmiany i kondycja współczesnego człowieka – przyczynek do dyskusji nad ideą homo explorens.* In: B. Jankowiak (ed.), *Socjoterapia jako forma pomocy psychologiczno- pedagogicznej. Teoria i praktyka* (pp. 15-31). Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.

Delors J. (1997). *Edukacja – jest w niej ukryty skarb. Raport dla UNESCO Międzynarodowej Komisji do Spraw Edukacji XXI wieku.* Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Oświatowców Polskich.

Fukuyama F. (1992). *Koniec historii.* Warszawa: Zysk i S-ka.

Giddens A. (2007). *Socjologia.* Warszawa: PWN.

Golding W. (1986). *Widzialna ciemność.* Warszawa: Czytelnik.

Hobsbawm E. (1994). *Wiek skrajności. Spojrzenie na krótkie dwudziestolecie.* Warszawa: Politeja.

Kawula S. (1980). *Wychowanie dla pokoju i w warunkach pokoju.* „Studia Pedagogiczne", no. 6, pp. 99-107.

Kowzan P. (2022). *Przyczynek do diagnozy potencjału edukacji dla pokoju w kraju przyfrontowym. Polemika z artykułem Konrada Rejmana „Pedagogika i (nie)istnienie – pokój jako wyzwanie dla edukacji".* „Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja", vol. 24, nr 2(92), pp. 147-163.

Kwiecińska R., Łukasik J. (2012). *Człowiek w świecie zmiany.* In: R. Kwiecińska, J. Łukasik (eds.), *Zmiana społeczna. Edukacja – polityka oświatowa – kultura* (pp. 10-19). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego.

Kwieciński Z. (2021). *Nauczyciel na gruzach starego świata.* In: J.M. Łukasik, I. Nowosad, M.J. Szymański (eds.), *Szkoła i nauczyciel w obliczu zmian społecznych i edukacyjnych* (pp.175-179). Kraków: Impuls.

Leek J. (2014). *Pomiędzy porozumieniem a zrozumieniem. Wyzwania edukacyjne na rzecz pokoju.* „Studia Dydaktyczne", no. 26, pp. 247-257.

Lewowicki T. (2014). *Edukacja międzykulturowa – od lokalnych sukcesów ku globalnym przesłaniom i oddziaływaniom.* „Edukacja Międzykulturowa", no. 3, pp. 19-38.

Nowak-Dziemianowicz M. (2017). *Zmiana jako przedmiot i efekt społecznych badań jakościowych.* „Jakościowe Badania Pedagogiczne", no. 2, pp. 79-100.

Piejka A. (2014). *U źródeł szans i możliwości edukacji dla pokoju.* „Przyszłość. Świat – Europa – Polska", no. 1, pp. 66-74.

Piejka A. (2015). *Kształtowanie kultury pokoju w ludziach – perspektywa globalna.* „Pedagogika Społeczna", no. 1(55), pp. 115-128.

Piejka A. (2021). *Pomiędzy wojną i pokojem – przestrzeń budowania kultury i pokoju.* In: A. Piejka, I. Wojnar (eds.), *Humanistyczne ambiwalencje globalizacji* (pp. 41-54). Warszawa: PAN.

Piejka A. (2024). *Edukacja dla pokoju: odpowiedź na wojnę czy integralny obszar kształcenia człowieka?* „Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe", no. 1(45), pp. 13-25.

Suchodolski B. (1990). *Wychowanie mimo wszystko.* Warszawa: WSiP.

Szempruch J., Potyrała K. (2022). *School Transformation and Social Change.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprech unipress.

Szempruch J. (2012). *Nauczyciel w warunkach zmiany społecznej i edukacyjnej.* Kraków: Impuls.

Sztompka P. (2012). *Socjologia. Analiza społeczeństwa.* Kraków: Znak.

Szymański M.J. (2010). *Indywidualizacja i zróżnicowanie społeczne w okresie późnej dorosłości.* In: R. Kwiecińska, M.J. Szymański (eds.), *Nauczyciel wobec zróżnicowań społecznych* (pp. 8-26). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego.

Szymański M.J. (2016). Konstruowanie tożsamości w warunkach zmiany społecznej, In: Z. Melosik, M.J. Szymański (eds.), *Tożsamość w warunkach zmiany społecznej* (pp. 11-26). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej.

Szymański M.J. (2021a). *Socjologia edukacji. Zarys problematyki.* Kraków: Impuls.

Szymański M.J. (2021b). *Zmiana społeczna a edukacja przyszłości.* In: A. Karpińska, K. Borawska-Kalbarczyk, A. Szwarc (eds.), *Edukacja w przestrzeni społecznej – paradygmaty zmian* (pp.21-35). Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku.

Tchorzewski A. (2003). *Globalizacja jako źródło przesileń w edukacji.* In: A. Karpińska (ed.*), Edukacyjne problemy czasu globalizacji w dialogu i perspektywie* (pp. 30-36). Białystok: TransHumana.