

# A POLICY AT A STANDSTILL: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL EDUCATION IN THE POLISH NATIONAL CURRICULUM

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**Abstract:** This article contributes to the academic debate on global education (GE) policy in national contexts. Recently, there has been growing attention on GE in educational systems internationally and several scholars have examined national policies and documents for the presence and shape of GE (Swanson and Pashby, 2016; Cox, 2017; Tarozzi and Inguaggiato, 2018). However, there is a lack of analysis of global education in a Polish policy context. To focus on this topic, we begin by introducing the reader to the Polish national context through a discussion of the significant challenges for GE, such as a neo-conservative trend in politics, and an historical outline of GE policy in Poland. We then offer a concise description of the mode of cooperation between Polish ministries and the actors involved in implementing GE in Poland (Tarozzi and Inguaggiato, 2018).

The emphasis of this article is on the Polish national schools' curriculum. We employ qualitative analysis to examine the presence of GE and how it is framed. The study is informed by a theoretical framework rooted in critical and postcolonial perspectives in global education theory (Andreotti, 2011; Jefferess, 2008; Swanson and Pashby, 2016). Drawing on the results of the analysis, we argue that GE is downplayed in Polish educational policy, and the curriculum's current frame serves Polish nationalistic sentiment to the detriment of Polish students.

**Key words:** Global Education; National Curriculum; Poland; Nationalism; Global Education Policy.

## **Introduction**

GE has recently gained significant popularity in numerous countries and has become an educational policy priority internationally. It has been actively

promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), since the introduction of the Global Education First Initiative in 2012 (United Nations, 2012), and was included in the 2030 United Nations (UN) Global Goals agenda (United Nations, 2015). The European Union (EU) reinforces GE through its Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme (European Commission, 2017), and the Council of Europe through North-South Centre (Council of Europe, 2017) activities. Many countries have developed national strategies to introduce or strengthen GE in formal school systems. Progressive advancements of GE policies in various states are more forceful than before, but in some countries seem superficial or insufficient (Chou, 2020; Cox, 2017; Günel and Pehlivan, 2015; Sung, Park and Choi, 2013). Poland is one of the few countries where GE has been included in the core curriculum, but in the absence of a GE national strategy.

As in many countries, the national curriculum (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji, 2018) plays a central role in educational policy in Poland. It is a document with a high legal rank, universally binding in all schools. It sets out the criteria of students' educational achievement and assessment including exam requirements. It defines what should be taught, indicates the conditions of implementation, and determines the number of teaching hours allocated to different subjects. Regional Education Authorities, as part of the government's educational administration, evaluate and control its implementation at school level. Therefore, we can conclude that an analysis of the national curriculum can demonstrate the kind of educational framework that the government authorities prioritise (Swanson and Pashby, 2016; Kosińska, 2018).

National curricula and other educational policy documents have been critically reviewed not only for the presence of GE, but also for the way they are framed (Sung, Park, and Choi, 2013; Swanson and Pashby, 2016). In their study of the core curricula of Alberta and Scotland, Swanson and Pashby (2016) showed that when GE curriculum discourses focus on national interest and economic contributions, it weakens the possibilities of transformative and

critical learning. Similarly, Sung, Park, and Choi (2013) explained how the national curriculum standards for global high schools in South Korea subordinate GE to national interests, particularly global competitiveness and national pride.

Since there is a scarcity of research literature pertaining to GE in the national curricula of Central-European countries, this study attempts to address this gap in relation to Poland. Taking into consideration the complex and ambiguous status of Poland in relation to the global South-North dichotomy and postcolonial condition, this analysis contributes to the debate about how national policies interact with GE.

### **Setting the scene: The Polish context for global education**

Few Polish scholars have discussed GE in the Polish context. The lack of colonial legacy has resulted in limited interest in global issues as part of public discourse (Witkowski, 2012) and contributes to a common tendency to ignore the connection between Poland and the global South (Jasikowska, 2015). Despite a few anecdotal historical attempts, Polish colonial aspirations were never fulfilled (Jasikowska, 2018). While in former colonial powers, people from the global South have become an integral part of societies, following the atrocities of the Second World War, Poland became culturally and religiously homogeneous. Poland has only recently experienced an influx of immigrants, primarily from the Ukraine (Polish Immigrant and Migration Services, 2020).

Despite the lack of former colonies and not being formally colonised itself, Poland could be considered as particularly entangled in colonial relations. Reading Poland through a postcolonial lens enables the identification of a triple relationship: as a quasi-Soviet colony and its connection to Russia; as a former coloniser of Eastern European nations (considering the 15th-17th century attempts at colonisation and the cultural remnants of these efforts); and in the current context of the Western alternative ‘hegemons’ (Mayblin, Piekut and Valentine, 2014).

The colonial aspect leads to Poland's semi-peripheral status. Starnawski (2015), drawing on the World-System Theory of Wallerstein (2004), argues that Poland is seen as primarily Eastern and later European. On the one hand, Poland, as part of the EU, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), is playing an integral role in international politics, while, on the other, as a post-socialist country it is still playing catch up and is dependent on foreign capital and technology. In Poland, the binary division between East and West is more familiar than North and South. Starnawski calls the global South/North division as 'an imported cognitive-ethical tool that will not be comprehensible in a country without imperial pasts' (Ibid: 51).

Another aspect is the continuous political shift towards the right-wing, neoconservative direction that has echoes in the Polish education system. The increase in populism, xenophobia and ideological polarisation within the nation has pushed GE out of the educational policy discourse (Kuleta-Hulboj, 2020). The neoconservative shape of education, embedded in Catholic tradition and values, enables the Catholic Church to have a strong position in Polish schools, for example through: Catholic religion classes as the only religion taught in schools, alternative ethics classes introduced in the 2014-15 school year, and a religion diploma that is included in grade averages (Balsamska et al. 2012; Rudnicki 2015). The teaching of family life education instead of sexual education classes and the introduction of a recent citizen project introduced to parliament advocating penalties for delivering any sexual education to minors suggests the strength of conservative values in the school system. Neoconservative trends were echoed in particular in the 2017 educational reform process. This reform was critiqued by teachers, academics and parents for a lack of real social participation; and adaptive, regressive changes and the subordination of the curriculum to the ruling party's ideology (Śliwerski, 2019). An adviser to the President, Professor Andrzej Waško commented:

“this reform supports primarily long-term national interest. [...] It concerns first of all history education in Polish schools in such range,

in such form and content which is in line with Polish educational tradition and a spirit of Polish culture” (Waško, 2017, cited in Śliwerski, 2019: 807).

The neoconservative trend in Poland intertwines with the potent influence of neoliberalism on the Polish educational system (Cervinkova and Rudnicki, 2019; Mendel and Szkudlarek, 2019). This tendency is seen in the use of neoliberal economic language with reference to the educational system, or commodification of the learning process through parametrisation and standardisation (Rudnicki, 2015). In line with other scholars, Jasikowska (2018) argues that the neoliberal framing of education shifts the role of the teacher towards clericalism and pushes the students through standardised educational processes to produce workers and consumers for a global market. Together with growing right-wing neo-conservatism this hinders the Polish educational system, limiting it to a Eurocentric or even a nationalistic vision.

### **A brief history of GE policy in Poland**

Since its beginnings, GE in Poland was implemented mainly by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Their actions were neither structural nor long-term, but NGOs played a vital role in popularising development issues (Witkowski, 2011). In 2004, after Poland entered the EU and GE became an obligatory educational component of development cooperation, NGOs continued to be the leading GE actors. European and Polish funding enabled NGOs to commit to more complex and long-term activities. Government actions and policies regarding GE were responsive, primarily because of the multitude of tasks connected to entering the EU (Jasikowska, 2018). GE was not a priority.

Two milestones in GE policy occurred soon after EU membership. In 2008, the Ministry of Education started preparations for broad curricular reform. GE was named one of the Ministry’s educational priorities and NGOs participated in developing the curriculum, which resulted in GE being introduced into the national curriculum. This reform, positively evaluated in the Global Education Peer Review Process (GENE, 2009), was followed by a

multi-stakeholder process culminating in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Strengthening Global Education (Grupa Zagranica, 2011a) and developing a common GE definition. According to the Memorandum, GE is:

“the part of civic education and upbringing, which broadens their scope through making a person aware of the existence of global phenomena and interdependencies. It’s key aim is to prepare the recipients to face the challenges related to all humankind. By interdependencies, we understand the mutual links and penetration of cultural, environmental, economic, social, political and technological systems” (Ibid).

Although increasingly criticised, this definition is still used by the main stakeholders. In 2011, the Polish government passed the Act on Development Cooperation (Strona główna Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2011), which made the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for coordination of GE. This legislative document, although concentrated on development cooperation, acknowledges GE and establishes the official ‘primacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (Tarozzi and Inguaggiato, 2018).

Today, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education are the most relevant governmental actors responsible for GE implementation. However, in the Multiannual Development Cooperation Plan issued periodically by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a GE chapter amounts to one page and the content is repeated with slight changes each time. The national funds for GE are amongst the lowest per capita in Europe (CONCORD, 2018). The Centre of Education Development, a national teacher training institution managed by the Ministry of Education, offers GE teacher professional development courses and training. But this Centre relies on NGO support in terms of knowledge and expertise, otherwise the training offered might ‘sustain stereotypes on the Global South’ (Ibid: 94).

In a sense, Polish GE implementation fits within the framework proposed by Tarozzi and Inguaggiato (2018): in-service teacher education is available; multi-stakeholder cooperation is present; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides financing. Yet, upon closer inspection, deficiencies are evident. GE is not a government priority, and the leadership sits with the non-governmental development organisation (NGDO) platform, Grupa Zagranica (Jasikowska, 2018; CONCORD, 2018). There is a need for a vertical and horizontal approach (Tarozzi and Inguaggiato, 2018) that would lead to substantial involvement by the Ministry of Education and local authorities with responsibility for education (Jasikowska, 2018).

### **Theoretical and methodological framework**

This study is informed by a theoretical framework rooted in critical and postcolonial perspectives in GE theory (Andreotti, 2011; Jefferess, 2008; Swanson and Pashby, 2016). Critical global education addresses systemic reasons for inequalities and exclusions. It involves a pedagogical discourse into complex and uncomfortable issues to raise critical consciousness, support discussion and advance the way to global justice (Andreotti, 2011). It engages learners in critical enquiry and equips them with the tools to question the assumptions of perspectives and knowledge systems so that they can take an informed, critical stance and act responsibly and ethically (Ibid.). It should encourage dialogue, self-reflection, personal and social transformation (Bourn, 2015), and imply informed, ethical engagement in action towards global social justice, as opposed to mere charity (Jefferess, 2008; Andreotti, 2011; Swanson and Pashby, 2016).

By employing a critical analysis approach, we investigate the Polish national curriculum for the presence of GE and how it is framed. The method used is a qualitative thematic analysis, using some of the procedures from Critical Discourse Analysis. The research is framed by the question: is GE present in the Polish core curriculum, and if so, how it is framed? The specific research questions are: what content, goals and outcomes refer to GE? What is the distribution between global and national dimensions? And, does the core curriculum present multi-perspectivity reflecting different worldviews, values

and ways of understanding? We operationalise the concept of GE using the multi-stakeholder definition (Grupa Zagranica, 2011b) supplemented by UNESCO's most recent definition (UNESCO, 2015). This approach is justified by the prevalence of these definitions in school practice and policy documents.

We focus on the second stage of primary education (10-15 year olds) and select three curriculum areas for analysis - history (marked as HIS in references), citizenship education (marked as CE) and geography (marked as GEO) - because, as other studies have shown (e.g. Świdrowska and Tragarz, 2017), they accommodate the most content and goals related to GE. The national curriculum is one document divided into different subject areas, and we refer to each subject area as subject curriculum. Each subject in the curriculum is structured in the same way: it is preceded by the same preamble (marked as P), including the rationale and the goals of general education; they include the main core curriculum for individual subjects, containing learning goals and outcomes. Then, a brief description of the conditions for implementation follows. The versions of curriculum we chose for analysis, authored by the Ministry of Education and the Centre of Education Development, additionally contain the authors' commentaries describing the general premises and justification of the changes to previous versions.

In coding the curriculum document, we draw on the studies of Cox (2017) and Kopińska (2017; 2018) and distinguish three domains of learning: cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural. Within the cognitive domain, we distinguish four categories:

- global and international structures, systems, institutions and relations with particular reference to the global South;
- global issues and challenges, including statements referring to: migration and refugees, sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change, global inequalities and poverty, world peace, conflicts and security, global health and diseases; and human rights;



- perception and understanding of global interdependencies, including references to the mutual influence of individual and global processes, and the world as a complex and dynamically changing system;
- multiple perspectives (multi-perspectivity), including all references to non-dominant narratives and perspectives, e.g. from the global South.

Our attitudinal domain consists of three categories:

- dealing with difference and diversity, including references to cultural sensitivity and respect, reducing stereotypes and prejudices, empathy, dialogue and openness;
- multiple dimensions of identity;
- key values for global learning (dignity, justice, solidarity, equality, peace, freedom).

Within the behavioural domain we distinguish three categories:

- willingness to act individually and collectively on global issues;
- willingness to take responsibility for actions and decisions;
- willingness to act ethically on global issues.

Our critical analysis process involved researcher triangulation with both authors conducting separate coding and analysis, then coming together to discuss and reconcile our interpretations (Gibbs, 2011).

## **Results: downplaying global education**

### *Content and learning goals related to GE*

The preamble, duplicated in each subject curriculum, does not explicitly refer to GE. Among thirteen goals of general education, we found only four we can consider as implicitly referring to GE. These include one cognitive domain goal: ‘equipping students with knowledge and skills that allow them to understand the world in a more mature and structured way’ (P:5); three goals relating to attitudinal domain, e.g. ‘developing an openness towards the world

and other people’ (P:5); and one goal from the behavioural domain stating that general education in primary school aims at ‘developing active attitudes in social life and actions towards the community’ (P:6). Elsewhere in the preamble, we identify more references to ‘acceptance and respect for other people’, and one mention of ‘disseminating knowledge about sustainable development, motivating to action for environmental protection and developing interest in ecology’ (P:7). Evidence points to the fact that the preamble creates space for GE, but without the desired specificity.

According to the citizenship education curriculum, its primary goal is to develop civic and ‘pro-community’ attitudes. However, by analysing the text more deeply, we argue that these attitudes are specifically understood. Firstly, the cognitive domain prevails (student describes, enumerates, explains, etc.). Regarding the attitudinal domain, just a few learning goals refer to the categories like dealing with difference and the multiple dimensions of identity. Interestingly, even these goals are described in terms of cognitive abilities and skills: ‘student explains the significance of citizenship activity’ (CE:10), ‘deepens the various dimensions of his [the curriculum language is androcentric, not gender-sensitive] identity’ (CE:18). Furthermore, we identified few references to the behavioural domain, like ‘taking responsibility for one’s own choices and actions’ (CE:16). All this indicates the dominance of the cognitive aspect and a curricular imbalance, which allows us to argue, in line with Kopyńska (2017), that the Polish citizenship education curriculum is cognitive-oriented.

Second, although there are perfunctory mentions about the world, in references to ‘respect for world heritage’ or ‘[being a part of] an international community’, the citizenship education curriculum lacks learning goals that refer directly to developing a global outlook. It should be noted that the term ‘global’ does not appear in the whole document; instead, the term ‘international’ exists. The core curriculum is structured according to the idea of the layers of students’ social environment: from the closest (family) to the most distant (international). The latter enjoys the least attention.

The main thematic areas relating to GE include topics such as human and children's rights, selected international issues, multiple dimensions of identity and 'traditional' citizenship education content (civil society, civic attitudes and activity). However, the way these are framed precludes recognition of these topics as GE. Although broad-ranging human rights content is dominated by knowledge about international and national documents and institutions, which does not leave much room for exploration of how human rights apply to students' everyday lives. Similarly, a dearth of examples from outside Poland means little opportunity for consideration of human rights in other contexts. Regarding values traditionally associated with citizenship education, the curriculum refers to these extensively, but the focus is on the local or national milieu. This manifests in relating specific content, such as civic participation or migration, to the closest social environment: school, local community or nation. Only outstanding Poles exemplify civic virtues, and any mention of global civic initiatives is missing.

Throughout the document, there are scattered references to dealing with difference, e.g. the need to respect different points of view or to fight xenophobia, racism and antisemitism, but these are vague and - again - cognitive-oriented: 'student recognises manifestations of xenophobia, including racism, chauvinism and anti-semitism, and justifies the need to oppose these phenomena' (CE:14). cursory attempts to include global issues in the citizenship education curriculum are most noticeable in the last outcome: 'Student forms opinions on selected social issues of today's world; student considers ideas for actions towards improving the life condition of people around the world' (CE:15). Not only is the outcome themed as 'international affairs', where predominantly global North entities are present, but nowhere else in the document is there any other reference to knowledge of global issues. The subject curriculum provides no space for students to learn about the lives of people, why they would need improvement and how students can act in solidarity. We can only wonder how a student can form opinions and propose actions on global issues without greater global understanding.

The geography curriculum contains text suggesting the great potential of including GE in the national curriculum, and some of this text is consistent with the GE multi-stakeholder definition: ‘Geography should allow the students to understand today’s world, including noticing regional and global connections, explaining dynamic economic and social changes and understanding its causes and effects’ (GEO:10). As we can see, much attention is paid to interdependencies, both in regard to goals and outcomes. Different sections of the document, primarily commentaries, emphasise the need to focus on complex interdependencies in and between the environment and humanity as well as in the economy and socio-cultural life. However, the curriculum formulates learning goals and outcomes in a way that may reduce interdependencies into cause-and-effect relationships. Furthermore, regarding the learning goals, it is difficult to identify direct references to GE. But the geography curriculum has many goals linked to dealing with diversity, respecting others and developing positive attitudes towards the world, such as: ‘Shaping positive - emotional and spiritual - ties with the immediate surroundings, the home country, and the entire planet Earth’ (GEO:12).

Most GE-related content is evident in the following thematic areas: international affairs, socio-geographical regions of different continents, and environmental destruction and protection. The geography curriculum additionally contains other topics like indigenous populations, natural disasters and military conflicts. Although there is a learning outcome considering ‘the features of megalopolis in North America and causes of slum formation using the example of South America’ (GEO:20), inequalities and injustices are beyond the scope of the geography curriculum’s interest. However, the only opportunity to present the learning content to students is through the local/national lenses. Summing up, GE in the geography curriculum does not adequately address global education due to the limited scope of global issues and the lack of appropriate global dimension of issues such as migration or climate change.

Given the aforementioned criticisms of the 2017 educational reform, it is perhaps not surprising that the history curriculum is the most limited in

GE content and learning goals, with Polish national history and interests taking extraordinary precedence over all other issues. The history curriculum includes learning goals that relate to developing critical thinking, interdependencies and multiple perspectives, what we classify as linked to GE, that is ‘Explaining cause-and-effect relationships, analyzing historical phenomena and processes’ (HIS:11); and ‘Recognising the need to learn about the past in order to understand the processes occurring in present’ (HIS:11). Analysis reveals that even these modest goals in no way correspond with the content and learning outcomes in the history document. They are merely declaratory.

To some extent, the curriculum includes content related to international affairs and knowledge of the world’s past, such as: ancient civilisations, medieval ‘Arab expansion’, European explorations during the colonial period; and the ‘World after the Second World War’. This content refers to three analytical categories: international structures, systems, institutions and relations; world peace, conflicts and security; and interdependencies. Regarding the first, there are just a few stereotypical references to the global South, limited to colonialism and decolonisation. When it comes to the latter, there are plenty of topics concerning international conflicts, some relating to the non-European world, but the majority concern the Second World War and the Cold War. Content in the third category almost exclusively takes the form of cause-and-effect relationships. Additionally, the non-Western world only appears four times in the document, almost exclusively referencing Europeans’ presence outside the West.

What is most striking about the history curriculum content is not so much what is present, as what is missing. It lacks emancipatory movements (feminism, workers or civil rights movements) apart from the Polish national-liberation movements and ‘Solidarity’. There is no mention of slavery (!), although one learning outcome refers to the American Civil War. Terms like apartheid, racism, anti-Semitism, migration, and refugees do not appear. Social and economic history, history of any oppressed group (except the Polish nation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) or micro-history are almost

non-existent. The curriculum privileges geopolitical and military dimensions of historical knowledge.

### *Global dimension in the subject curricula examined*

Having interrogated the content and goals of the primary level citizenship education, geography and history curricula in Poland for GE, we explore the global dimension in these documents. As mentioned earlier, the preamble contains no explicit reference to GE, nor does it mention the word ‘global’. Nor is there any reference to ‘global’ in the citizenship education curriculum. When talking about the world, the supra-national dimension is understood as ‘international’. The introduction to the curriculum emphasises the importance of the international dimension. Nevertheless, later on, the document becomes inconsistent. The global perspective is overlooked in goals referring to structures, systems, institutions and relations with references mostly to global North entities like NATO and the EU. Where themes related to global issues are presented, they lack the requisite global dimension; for instance, references to migration and refugees are framed in a national Polish context only.

The curriculum frequently mentions multiple dimensions of identity. Interestingly, the local or national dimension is always present whereas European or international dimensions are sometimes omitted, for example, in the preamble. However, there seems to be no pattern to usage. A commentary footnote states: ‘in today’s world different levels interconnect and because of that - where it is essential - the student will become aware of interdependencies of social processes’ (CE:17). The importance of multiple dimensions could be a hint for the presence of the global dimension. However, it is not consistent with the citizenship education curriculum goals and outcomes. Nor is there a link to the wider world in the behavioural domain, even though its goals refer to counteracting intolerance towards minorities.

In the geography curriculum, the global dimension is the most observable, but not coherently presented. For the most part, the cognitive domain refers to particular countries using stereotypical framing, for example: ‘student identifies from the source text the causes and effects of malnutrition

in Africa, using the example of Ethiopia' (GEO:19); 'student explains causes and effects of a massive food waste using the example of USA' (GEO:20). What is striking is the commentary where the curriculum authors argue:

“It is also extremely important that by showing a given phenomenon or geographical process on a well-selected, illustrative example, not to limit its occurrence to this one place, but make an often so-called transfer, that is, searching and pointing to other places where it also occurs. It will also prevent so-called stigmatisation of places and erroneous, stereotypical thinking” (GEO:21).

This comment creates confusion as stereotypically named examples do deepen the potential for stigmatisation of given places. We read it as an attempt to avoid being accountable for perpetuating stereotypical viewpoints in geography, especially in textbooks. Nonetheless, the presence of global issues is either limited to stereotypical framing or at best a European dimension, such as 'student evaluates socio-economic and cultural consequences of migrations in Europe' (GEO:14).

The global dimension is also unusually presented in the attitudinal domain in the curriculum document. When referring to multiple dimensions of identity in geography we found that identity is not considered on international or global levels. Any reference to the world is filtered through the national lens:

“grounded self-worth, own roots and territorial identity, shaped in the process of knowing the geography of own region and home country is the foundation of understanding different nations and cultures without concern to lose own identity” (GEO:10).

The national focus is also present in the behavioural domain in the geography curriculum. Although more extensive than in other subjects, the behavioural domain also lacks explicit references to the global dimension. Every goal and outcome focuses on local, regional or national levels, for example: 'student is

responsible for the state of natural environment of Poland' (GEO:16). Even though the curriculum presents the interdependence of the natural and human world, in the behavioural domain the focus is at the national level alone.

The minimal presence of world history in the history curriculum is consistent with the main principle underpinning the latest reform, that is a strong national focus: 'world history remains an important element, however, it should be treated as a back story and it should bring out the facts that were influential to Polish history' (HIS:23). The cognitive domain gives prominence to Poland and, to some extent, to a selection of few European countries, while the attitudinal domain explicitly focuses on Poland with an observable emotional emphasis. Patriotic education is at the core of the history taught in primary schools, whose role it is to build strong national identity and sentiment:

“the new core curriculum, unlike the previous one, presents such a concept of teaching history that awakens love of the homeland and builds historical awareness by developing respect, attachment to tradition, the history of one’s nation and its achievements, culture and national language” (HIS:27).

Regarding the behavioural domain, as with other subjects, the history curriculum has no reference to the global dimension. We may justifiably conclude that the history curriculum is primarily Poland-centric, or at best, Eurocentric.

### *The national dimension*

The uneven distribution between global and national dimensions is most evident in the history curriculum. The words 'nation' and 'national' appear 53 times (particularly in the commentary) while 'civic' or 'citizen' only seven, and 'global' not even once. As demonstrated above, each of the subject curricula examined express a national focus. The geography curriculum highlights the significant role of geography in shaping patriotic attitudes, fostering feelings of national pride, identity and belonging. The citizenship



education curriculum, although to a lesser extent, does the same. However, it is in the history curriculum that one of the challenges of the most recent Polish curricular reform process manifests itself, that is, a subordination of almost all educational content and goals to the national needs and narrowly defined patriotic education. The identity function of school history diminishes any other function. Of course, a focus on patriotism or national identity are not necessarily always problematic. The issue of the 2017 reform process is that patriotism and national identity dangerously conflate with chauvinism and exclusionary particularism. The curriculum's nation-centred discourse not only offers limited to no space for a global dimension, but also constructs the national community in a narrow sense. Nation is discursively produced as a homogeneous ethnic, cultural and religious community, existing since the beginning of the Polish state, seemingly 'natural'. Students receive a distorted, biased picture of only Polish history, constructed around the myth of the innocent, oppressed nation.

All this mirrors a traditional, anachronistic, 19th-century approach to teaching history as transmitting factual knowledge of past events, heroes and victims, and struggles for independence. The curriculum designed in such a way makes it difficult or even impossible for students to understand the tensions and complexities of the contemporary world. It also paves the way for a belief that there is no history outside the West and gives students no tools to challenge the argument of historical inevitability. The past events and processes appear as something inevitable, that happened because they just had to.

### **Conclusions: a tribute to the myth of homogenous nation**

In this article, we presented the results of a study exploring the consideration of GE in the Polish national curriculum and its framing. The analysis of learning content and goals of three curriculum subject areas reveals a scarcity of GE elements, present in commentaries, but barely referenced in the goals and outcomes. We also easily noticed divergences between and within the curricula regarding GE content. It should be noted that the geography curriculum exhibits the most potential in terms of the exploration of the

concept of interdependence and global issues, but students' identity or engagement are limited to the national level in this subject. Similarly, since a much greater prevalence of GE could be expected in citizenship education, given the purpose of the subject, it proved to be the least satisfactory of all curricula from a GE perspective. By contrast, the history curriculum offers no GE-related content and focuses predominantly on national history. Patriotism conflates to nationalism as the main axis in all documents; however, in history this feature is intentional and in geography and citizenship education seems incoherent.

Patriotic inclinations mean that these curricula are largely limited to a national dimension. The almost complete absence of a global dimension in identity, global issues or interdependence closes the door on any conceptualisation of GE, even from the technicist-neoliberal perspective (Andreotti, 2011). This approach resulted in criticism by Polish teachers, academics and parents as the students 'cannot be prepared for global free market challenges' (Śliwerski, 2019: 808). These subject curricula are cognitively oriented, leaving little room for adequate skills and action transcending the national dimension, not to mention critical action towards global social justice.

The lack of multi-perspectivity of any kind leads to the conclusion that school education, in particular through history, becomes subservient to policy that silences the multitude of experiences and excludes all subjugated knowledge. The subject curricula create the impression of a homogenous, almost standalone Poland with no room for discussion about the world, shape of community or processes happening globally. To understand their wider world, students, left with no curriculum-centred choice, must turn either to teachers who are willing to go beyond curriculum mandated requirements or to the internet.

The curriculum determines what is taught in schools and its implementation is controlled. The scarcity of GE-related content, lack of global dimension and multi-perspectivity leads to a conclusion, in accordance

with a CONCORD report (CONCORD, 2018), that GE in the recent Polish national curriculum is seriously marginalised. Understanding the significance of national curriculum for educational policy we argue that GE policy in Poland is superficial. Additionally, the curriculum's current frame serves Polish nationalistic sentiment to the detriment of Polish students.

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