

The Role of Student Cooperatives in Education in Poland in the 21st Century

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Abstract: Consumerism and globalization characterizing 21st century societies restrict the freedom of choice of the consumer and the citizen. These phenomena, however, did not deprive people of the desire to influence their own lives and to follow the values of self-help and solidarity with one's neighbour. The cooperative is a proven tool for realizing the idea of civil society. In particular, student cooperatives in Poland have demonstrated their impact on education and youth upbringing, entrepreneurial attitudes and participation in democracy at the beginning of the 20th century. At present, this phenomenon revives. In spite of the prevailing attitudes of rivalry and individualism in schools, actions common to the good of the public are promoted. The aim of the article is to identify the role of student cooperatives in the 21st century in education and upbringing, the shaping of entrepreneurial attitudes and the value of work and democracy in Poland. The objective was achieved through a survey conducted in primary and secondary schools in Podlaskie Voivodeship. An analysis was also made of the data from the following websites: Foundation for Development of Student Cooperative, National Cooperative Council and Civic Education Center. Literature and results of student cooperative research were also reviewed in order to get acquainted with current state of knowledge on this topic and to identify important gaps in student cooperative research in Podlaskie voivodship. The results of the research confirm the historical experience of student cooperatives in Poland as a tool in education in general and education of youth in the 21st century. The activity of students in a cooperative contributes to the absorption of market principles, the basics of marketing, and this market orientation facilitates their later start in the labor market. A cooperative shape a civic attitude by indicating that the goal of the action is the good of the community, the action in the group, the sense of community, responsibility, a sense of trust in others. The involvement of teachers as cooperative careers, who are close to cooperative ideas, determines the creation and development of student cooperatives. The lack of regulation in this area despite the support of the "adult" cooperatives is a barrier to the activity of student cooperatives in Poland.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, student cooperative, volunteering, democracy, Poland, school education.

Introduction

The modern education system prefers shaping the attitudes of competition and the pursuit of material success. On the other hand, school teaches teamwork, shows the value of work, entrepreneurship and activates democratic attitudes although we still can see "rat race" as dominant attitude. At present however, student cooperatives movement which in Poland dates back to 1900 at present revives.

Cooperative work is a common work for common interests. Historian of the Rochdale Pioneers, G.J. Holyoake wrote, "They put principle first and profit second, believing, that principle was the foundation honourable profit, and only honest source of it... Like Diogenes, they went in search of honest profit by light of principle, and they found it in honest co-operation" (Holyoake, 1918, 184). Cooperatives are associations of people who combine their resources and organize an enterprise to meet their needs. Cooperatives are managed by ordinary people and operate for the benefit of ordinary people. They must be organized in such a way, so that their members can easily understand and control them. Simplicity should be a key feature of any organization, unnecessary complexity should be avoided (Parnell, 2014). "Not for profit, not for charitable purposes, but for services" is a concise and accurate descriptor for the entire cooperative sector (Lund, 2013, 4). In the 21st century, globalization influences the functioning of cooperatives (Novkovic, Sena, 2014). In the twenty-first century, cooperatives are a response to political capitalism, colonial capitalism - globalization of profit, exclusion and indifference - decrease in the resources of social capital. The globally organised corporate world in conjunction with the local problems of producers and consumers, in the latter evokes efforts to create alternatives to the current dominant manner of production and consumption. Just as in the nineteenth century, an alternative is presented by food co-operatives (Zimnoch, 2016). Recent years have witnessed a new interest in co-operative organisations, especially as a consequence of their transformation and expansion in new fields of activity. In particular, the capacity of cooperatives to assume a number of forms consistent with

the socio-economic environment in which they are situated deserves special attention, as well as cooperative identity and the organisational and legal frameworks so far developed as a result of cooperative evolution (Borzaga, Spear, 2004). Current economic cooperative theories alone are insufficient to define all aspects of cooperation's substance and advantages. Therefore, it is necessary to propose new, interdisciplinary research (including a comprehensive theoretical overview) on cooperation's substance and emphasise the importance of gathering insights across the social sciences, using the results and common findings of economics, law, marketing, financing, organisational studies, management sciences ("hard" sciences), and also some elements of philosophy, psychology and sociology ("soft" disciplines). This would be based on a positive (economic-analytical) scientific approach. It would differ from the ideological normative approach toward cooperatives, since it would preserve its scientific character and neutrality, untainted by political and social designs (Szabo, 2006).

Cooperatives played a great role in preserving Polish property and national consciousness during the Partitions of Poland. Polish theorists and cooperative practitioners emphasized in particular its socio-educational role, manifested in cooperation, mutual assistance, social awareness and self-management. Cooperatives opposed egoism and the pursuit of profit, taught social work, solidarity and created favourable conditions for the poorest social strata, cooperatives pursued systematic educational and propaganda activities, promoted self-education in general and self-education of cooperative members, and contributed to raise of the socio-cultural standard of living of people.

After regaining independence in 1918 by Poland, the cooperative movement had the great support of Polish politicians, representatives of the world of science and culture. The law created favourable conditions for the cooperatives. Especially the educational law of 1932- which put special emphasis on education and economic education as one of the elements of state education. This law has created favourable conditions for the development of student co-operatives and introduced new content related to economic education and cooperative education to curricula. One of the ways to fulfil the indications contained in educational law was student cooperative (Magiera, 2011, 109).

The development of cooperative societies was a time when the pedagogical ideas of new education were transferred to Poland from Western Europe and the United States of America. These ideas supported all educational measures aimed at stimulating students' activity and preparing them for practical life. One of the conditions for the development of student co-operation in Polish Secondary Education was the cooperation of families and schools (Brzozowska-Wabik, 2015). Publications and pedagogical literature of the interwar period devote much space to the cooperation of the family and the school, emphasizing the need for mutual respect, trust, kindness, leaving the parents of the initiative. It was in the student cooperatives that J. Dewey's recommendation was made, saying that the school should be a real active life rather than being preparation for life (Dewey, 1909, 11).

By the outbreak of World War II there were about 8,000 in Poland student cooperative. They were in about 30 % of all schools. The German occupation period has survived only a dozen of them. Others were liquidated following the mass closures of schools by occupation authorities. After II world war, in the aftermath of the new socio-political situation, the cooperative movement has rapidly revived, including the activities of student cooperatives. At after war years, the ruling communists at first did not create many obstacles in this area of social action, treating them as "progressive" grassroots initiatives of the "masses". In 1947 the process of self-government and autonomy of the cooperative began, and then they were liquidated in subsequent years. In the years 1950-55, the state took over the property and liquidated most of the cooperatives operating there, including more than 14 thousand of students' cooperatives. At the time cooperative societies accounted for about 1.5 million members.

After the Second World War, the communist authorities in Poland and other Soviet satellites used the cooperative idea to expropriate farmers and pre-war cooperatives. They expropriated their property and reduced the freedom of individuals. These actions had nothing to do with the cooperative paradigm. It was only after the political changes in 1956 that the cooperative movement began to revive again, and the cooperative activities also resumed. In the 1970s, Polish student cooperatives, beside French, British, Swedish and Danish, were among the most active and best organized. In this period, numerous publications were published in the form of instructors for the students and tutors of the cooperative. Within the student cooperative were binders, hairdressing salons, photographic studios, toys and wicker plants, and even tailor and knitting. The School Savings Accounts educated the habit of saving, and they

were transformed into Cooperative Cash. A significant event for Polish young cooperatives became their participation in the UNESCO-organized International Symposium on School Cooperatives in December 1979 in Paris. Cooperation in Poland was also a form of rehabilitation and education for the disabled. Scientific literature on Polish rehabilitation school is vast. The International Labour Organization (ILO) entrusted the Association of the Cooperatives of the Disabled in 1974 and 1977 to organize seminars aimed at acquainting participants with the Polish model of solving the problem of employing the disabled in the form of cooperative enterprises. The result of these seminars was the publication of 'Cooperatives of the disabled: organization and development' (Cooper, 1979).

Systemic transformations initiated in 1989 did not favour the development of cooperatives, including the student cooperatives. In the beginning of the 90's among 18 thousand recorded as active in the previous years, there survived only 3,000 as working cooperatives. In the transformation period, student cooperatives, like all cooperatives, were viewed as connected with compulsory collectivization. The legacy of communism has had a profound impact on the public perception of the cooperative sector in Poland, and it continues to weigh heavily on the position and prospects of the cooperative movement in the country. The Polish cooperative movement, in spite of its long-lasting and successful history, became totally discredited in public opinion at the beginning of the 1990s. This included not only co-operatives as existing organizations, but even the notion of 'cooperation' (Piechowski, 1999). The neo-liberal ideology adopted during transition has favoured market led economic reforms and commercial privatization over other forms of property, including a cooperative type of ownership. Although since 1989, formally, the cooperative sector has become a part of the private sector, it has not received political recognition, except for credit cooperatives (Les, 2004, 194).

Due to financial problems in the regional associations of cooperatives of the "Samopomoc Chlopska" (Peasant Self-help) and PSS "Spolem" (Universal Cooperative Grocers), the positions of employees responsible for the activities of the student cooperative and their care were removed. In order to prevent the collapse of this kind of activity and to support the Cooperative Student Initiative, the Foundation for the Development of Student Cooperative, based in Cracow, was established in 1991 under the patronage of the Ministry of National Education and Sport and the National Cooperative Council. The Foundation raises ideas and cooperative values among all kindergarten students. It represents the interests of student cooperative activities, takes action to obtain interpretations of laws and regulations.

In Poland in the year 2011, over 5000 student cooperative societies in primary and post-primary schools were active, primarily in Malopolskie, Shlaskie, Shwietokrzyskie, Mazowieckie and Warmia-Mazurskie Voivodeships. There are about 300,000 students participating. In student cooperatives, the same rules apply to the selection of self-government bodies as in other types of cooperatives. Statutes of Cooperative Societies are based on Cooperative Law and international cooperative rules. The functioning of Cooperative Societies is based on the great social involvement of many cooperative activists, cooperative care specialists and student cooperative instructors. There are no formal and legal solutions for this type of cooperative. Student cooperatives do not have a separate legal entity. They work in school structures in accordance with the Education System Act - art. 56 (*International Cooperative Alliance*, 2017).

Cooperatives are a material base to preserve values. These are the values that are universal, because they constitute the basis for joint action. They are explicitly reflected in cooperative principles. And because it is not only writing, but a daily implementation; the cooperative paradigm of development performs a construction of civil society. Cooperative democracy, by giving each member one vote equally, preserves respect for human, his values and goals. Democracy in a cooperative allows being a free man in economic life, the sovereign of one's own life and the co-sovereign of a joint life (Mazur, Zimnoch, 2017, 156). Authors writing today about cooperatives explain values in which members of a cooperative believe, based on tradition of their founders: ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others (MacPherson, 2004, 39).

The aim of the study is an indication of the role of student cooperatives in the 21st century in education and upbringing, shaping entrepreneurial attitudes and values of work and democracy in Poland. The author depends in particular on the role of cooperatives in the activity of schools in the Podlaskie Voivodeship

Methodology

In the Podlaskie Voivodeship operate 630 primary and secondary schools. The study was conducted in schools with the largest number of students. An online survey was sent to the management of 220 such schools. The results of the survey came from 61 schools. The questionnaire was sent via e-mail with a link to the internet system where the tool was placed. The question was asked: what kind of activities have been used by the school in activating entrepreneurship and democracy, and whether the educational work of the school should be intensified and whether school have working student cooperative or school savings scheme or school shop. The study was conducted from 1 to 30 June 2017. The respondents gave 43 basic schools, 13 junior high schools and 5 upper secondary schools. The respondents indicated 57 % of responses from urban schools and 43 % of responses from rural schools.

An analysis was also made of data from the following websites: Foundation for Development of Student Cooperative, National Cooperative Council and Civic Education Center. The literature review and the results of the student cooperative research were reviewed in order to get familiar with current state of knowledge on the topic and to identify important gaps in student cooperative research in the Podlaskie Voivodeship. The results were also referred to research in other countries.

Results and Discussion

The principle of education, expressed in rules guaranteeing a provision of funds to invest in human capital, demonstrates the cooperatives' socially responsible dimension (*Recent evolutions of the Social...*, 2016, 26-27). Education on cooperatives should start as soon as possible, at the primary school, and should be recognized by the educational system of each country in order to be effective. Likewise, education on cooperatives should be related to the real world of cooperative enterprise, providing students with the possibility of doing an internship in a cooperative, for instance (*Cooperative entrepreneurship and education...*, 2013).

For several years in Poland there has been an increase in interest in student cooperatives. This is also confirmed by government actions. The government approved in 2014 a strategic document - the National Program for the Development of Social Economy. According to this document, in 2020, student cooperatives should operate in at least 10 % of schools in Poland (Brzozowska-Wabik, 2015).

For comparison the percentage of German schools running a school firm is estimated at about 12 %. There are virtually no school firms at primary schools, which means that about a quarter of all secondary schools have a school firm (Von Ravensburg, 2017, 6). In Norway the percentage of schools running a cooperative is 42 % (Odegard, 2007, 16).

Pupils' cooperatives are special school firms, modelled on the German real world cooperative modus including quasi-registration, annual audit and partnership with real-world coops. The waiting list of School firms wanting to become Pupils' cooperatives is long, but the promoting cooperative federations usually limit the numbers newly accepted each year. In most cases, a Regional Cooperative Federation initiating pupils' cooperatives in their territory does so from the wish to popularize the cooperative form of organization. Since the German cooperative system is strictly member oriented and governed bottom up, it needs to convince its member cooperatives. All participating primary cooperatives in turn have to engage themselves with money as well as manpower. A substantial number of them think it worthwhile, and the number of pupils' cooperatives has increased exponentially over the years (Von Ravensburg, 2017, 32).

A student co-operative, as a student organization operating on a school premises, may conduct activities in the various areas specified in the Model Statute Foundation for Development of Student Cooperative (*Fundacja Rozwoju Spoldzielczosci...*, 2017):

- production of didactic aids for the needs of the school and other interested cooperatives, the collection and completion of natural specimens, the pursuit of small-scale production and the provision of uncomplicated services,
- crop and livestock farming,
- actions for ecology and the environment,
- organizing collective forest fleece collection, and recycling of materials,
- organizing the purchase and sale of goods, especially school supplies, textbooks and sports and tourism equipment,

- providing financial assistance or providing materials and school supplies to members of cooperatives who are in difficult financial,
- run a cooperative school savings bank as a cooperative unit.

Similar types of activities have cooperatives in German schools. Examples of Pupils' cooperatives business ideas are making string puppets and performing with them, felting sheep wool, bee keeping, the making of apple juice, breeding of mushrooms, building steel barbecues, running computer courses for senior citizens, catering, event management and so forth. Business ideas thus are not much different to those of other school firms focused on Education for Sustainable Development. The attractiveness of the cooperative form seems to be linked to initiators believing that the cooperative way of organizing is particularly conducive to Education for Sustainable Development (Von Ravensburg, 2017).

The functioning of student cooperatives is varied. Important factors determining the development of cooperatives are organizational preparation, ingenuity and resourcefulness of teachers. Internal factors also include the type of educational institution and the age and number of members involved in the creation and development of activities. Cooperatives are places where young people can learn and acquire practical knowledge in economics, since the statutory purpose of the initiative is to conduct business (commercial, service, manufacturing). Analysis of the data collected as a result of the study indicates that the dominant activity of the student cooperative is commercial activity (Brzozowska-Wabik, 2015).

Cooperatives learn to investigate and respond to the needs of other students (clients) and tailor their activities accordingly to their needs, and to properly manage their resources and funds. As a result, it contributes to the absorption of market principles and the basis of marketing, while market orientation facilitates their subsequent start in the labor market. That is why student cooperative is much more than a school shop - it is a tool for shaping civic and democratic attitudes and a great school of entrepreneurship, resourcefulness and responsibility. The characteristics of student cooperatives are shown in Figure 1.

Works within the facility educational	It sets the minimum 10 students	Students - union associates. The members of SC are its members
SC carries on teacher – tutor	The organization operates on the statutes	The organization takes action specified in the statute
It works through its organs statutory -The General Meeting, Supervisory Board, Management Board	Within the statutory bodies only SC members are active	Teacher - the supervisor monitors and directs SC's activities

Figure 1. The characteristics of student cooperatives (SC).

source: on the basis of information Foundation for Development of Student Cooperative (Fundacja Rozwoju Spoldzielczosci..., 2017).

In the program of schools above the basic (above the junior high school) is carried out an object called the basis of entrepreneurship. Student cooperatives perfectly fill the practical side of this education. Membership in cooperative improve their mathematical and mathematical skills, first economic experience, first decision making and consequences, time and resources management, economics in practice, market orientation, and marketing fundamentals (Foundation for Development of Student Cooperative).

The cooperative shapes civic attitudes by indicating that the goal of the action is the good of the public. Cooperative is a group action, a sense of community, responsibility, a sense of trust in others, the development of social competences, including communication, the inculcation of pro-health and pro-ecological ideas, diligence and honesty in action, democratic values.

In Poland, cooperative pupils are most active in the Malopolskie and Slaskie Voivodeships, with over one hundred of them in each. In Podlaskie Voivodeship, school cooperatives play a negligible role in the schools' operations. The research of the author shows that this is the result of not observing the role of cooperatives in education and upbringing by the directors and educators in the studied schools. The question of what forms of action are taken at school in order to activate entrepreneurship and democracy, the respondents mentioned primarily school self-government (97 %), competitions (89 %), sports (84 %), social work for schools and the environment (70 %), meeting with people of success 56 %.

Student cooperatives were listed only once (1.64 %). Other forms of activism were also given: occupational counselling and social studies classes, educational hours, meetings with successful school graduates, educational projects, visits to workplaces (Figure 2).

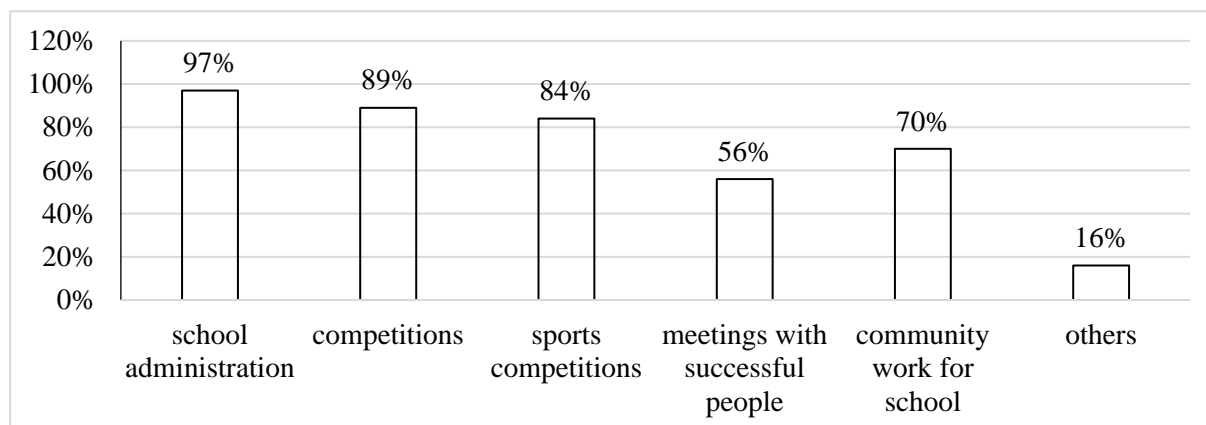


Figure 2. Activities of the school stimulating the enterprise.

Stimulating entrepreneurial and democratic activity requires teamwork. The schools when asked about the forms of teamwork answered: 92 % circles of interest, 87 % sports, 75 % volunteering. (Figure 3). Among the applied forms of teamwork were also mentioned: scouting, chorus, equalizing classes, community room.

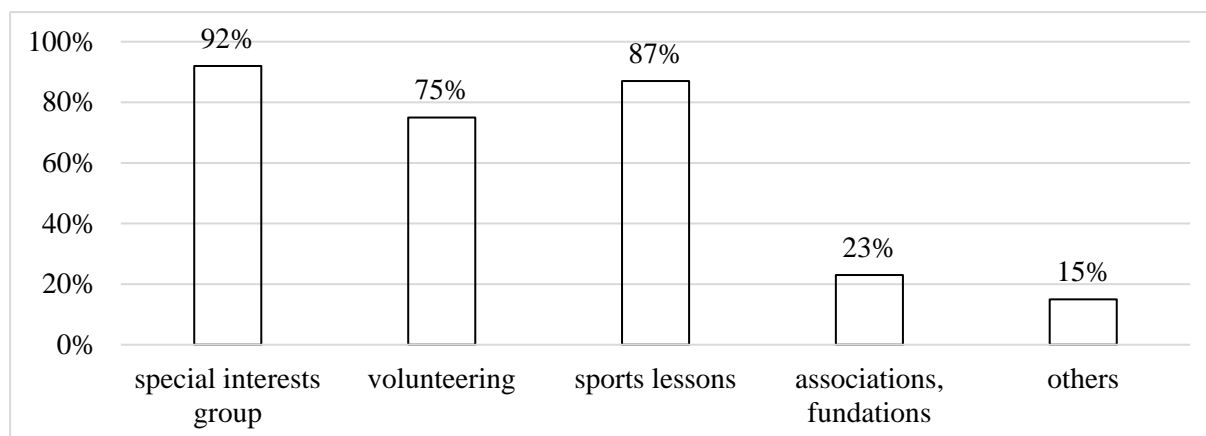


Figure 3. Forms of teamwork in schools.

It should be appreciated that 97 % of the schools surveyed advocated intensifying the educational work of the school. Only 3 % of respondents indicated that the role of the school was limited. In one-fourth of the studied schools there is a school shop, but only one school is run by a student cooperative. The shop is usually run by a private person not associated with school. School savings banks operate in 15 schools.

Authors writing about student cooperatives pay attention to several problems. It is about questioning the exclusive conceptualization of the pupils' firms as educational projects within school. Problem is their emphasis on providing business ideas and management skills. More reflexes are needed on the wider social and political implications around issues to do with pupils' autonomy and makes a case for preferred forms of self-determined and cooperative working (Liebel, 2009). Schools have to enter into binding relationships with a primary cooperative and the federation, both essentially outsiders to the school system. Being essentially bureaucratic organizations, many schools find it really demanding to accommodate cooperative school firm work. Among the challenges they face: timetables need to be altered to allow pupils of different classes to meet; pupils might have to be granted independent authority over resources like money or school rooms; parents have to be assured of the safety of their children even when outside of school or in periods without a teacher present; teachers must adjust to a coach-role not necessarily familiar so far, and more than half of them organize in content-centred teams, also a novelty for many; pupils need to embrace their new status as co-educators/co-producers of education (Von Ravensburg, 2017, 33).

Conclusions

Historical experience of student cooperatives in Poland as a tool in education and education of young people is confirmed by research in the 21st century. Entrepreneurship, respect for the values of work and democracy are shaped by student activity. The results of the study show the varied regional role of student cooperatives in school activities. The following trends may be mentioned:

- cooperative activity stimulates entrepreneurship, promotes respect for work and democracy;
- the members of the cooperative learn the economics and democratic management and the welfare of the general public;
- student cooperatives are most active in the south of Poland - Malopolskie and Slaskie Voivodeships;
- cooperative traditions in these regions date back to the 19th century;
- the formation and development of student cooperatives determines the involvement of teachers of cooperative teachers who are close to cooperative ideas;
- student cooperatives in their activities are supported by "adult" cooperatives - Cooperative Societies and Labor Cooperatives and the National Cooperative Council;
- the activity of student cooperatives in the northern and eastern voivodships – in Podlaskie is very low;
- in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, the schools pay great importance to volunteering and school self-government;
- the lack of regulations in this area is a barrier in the activities of student cooperatives in Poland in the 21st century.

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