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An impact of the European Union on the Polish education system in 2004-2013 on the Lower Silesian example

Abstract

The area of this thesis is in political science, a sub-discipline of which is the European study. In European culture there are many values which are important for integration. All the phenomena related to the wide sense of education are located in the area of the social policy, so they are also the subject of study in political science.

Thus, sectoral policies of the EU, to which it belongs, the social policy and also its sub-discipline, which is the educational policy, are located in political science. A special political category is the European integration. In integration processes there occur many phenomena, typical for the politics. The European Union has a political system and policies, even if it is not a state. The term "system" is mostly understood in the wider sense, sometimes also metaphorically, as "everyone, a more or less clearly separated layout of related social elements". One of the most important and most common terms related to education is – in the area of pedagogics and educational policy – the term "system of education". The first chapter "Europeanization – research trends, theories, definitions, examples" is especially dedicated to the Europeanization, as a source category of many new theories, and also to integration and to cohesion policy of the EU in the light of selected political theories and concepts. Europeanization is explained by the wide and narrow sense, and its differences are shown. Next, the author discusses the Europeanization of the public sphere, administration, and sectoral policies in the member countries – and a probable impact of their policies to other countries and to the EU. Finally, the last subsection is concentrated on Poland and its processes and levels of Europeanization. These processes are necessary to understand the essence of impact of the EU on the Polish educational system between 2004 and 2013, and also in the pre-accession period.

The second chapter „Objective: the knowledge-based economy. Legal acts and the EU documents, which have impact on the national education systems” deal with the definition, and discussion about the most important objectives of education, according to the European Union. The analysis of sources of EU law, as in primary law (treaties), as in

executive acts, takes the first part of the chapter. In each treaty the author shows every possible element responsible for the impact of the EU on national education systems. It is worth noting that with time, more and more of them appeared, what proves the importance of that question. In strategic documents, education has already been indicated as one of the key elements for achieving the Union's development goals. The third sub-chapter discusses other documents which have impact on national education systems, including The Charter of Fundamental Rights and The Bologna Declaration. Next, in the second part of the chapter, the author deals with the issue of social policy in the EU with its national and regional models, and also with the education systems in Europe. Afterwards, the second chapter raises the question of European initiatives, like The Europass or The Lifelong Learning concept.

The third chapter "The Polish system of education and its reforms" is focused in detail on the Polish education system and in defining its basic concepts. The author is analyzing national law acts which have an impact on the education system, and so changes and reforms, which have taken place since 1989 and are still continuing. In this chapter the author is also analyzing the financial system for education in Poland and its reforms, so the issues related to appearance and working of the three-level local administration system – the local authorities in the country. The third chapter shows also the working of the education system at particular levels, and the responsibility of local authorities for an implementation of educational tasks. This system has been created on the basis of the Constitution and the principle of subsidiarity of the European Union. Finally, the author discusses the main assumptions of education and administration reforms, as closely related changes, and so the introduction of the three-level school education system, and an information about the three-level higher education system, derived from The Bologna Process, described in chapter II. Even if higher education is not the main subject of this thesis, it is the inseparable element of the state's education policy, and as such is the object of the EU's interest, due to institutions seeking to raise the education index of citizens and also due to its impact on the national education systems in member countries.

Chapter IV "Poland and Lower Silesia facing the challenges of education posed by the European Union, and its changing reality" is the summary of numerous studies carried out so far on the impact of European funds on the changing reality in Poland. The author used the available ministerial, and regional reports, and the existing research results, while also conducting her own calculations, using the tools available on the websites of institutions according the EU grants. The data which was collected as a result proves that

the financial impact of the EU on the Polish education system – also on Lower Silesia - was unquestionable.

The dissertation is completed with a summary and an annex, which shows the achievements of the EU funds in the area of economical and social cohesion policy in Poland, with figures and diagrams. It shows the improvement of Poland, and its regions (provinces), especially Lower Silesia, in relation to other European countries, and regions.

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