

Critical and postcolonial perspectives on global education:

THE CASE OF POLAND

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Keywords: Global education, postcolonial pedagogy, Poland, semi-peripheral country, coloniality

- Global education is shaped by factors of supranational and local/national nature.
- Global education needs reconceptualisation to be more inclusive and embrace diverse experiences.
- Exploring Polish “triple coloniality” helps to recognise the limitations of Western approaches.

Purpose: This paper aims to contribute to the academic debate on postcolonial perspectives on global education problematising the context of global education in Poland, a former Second World country that does not fit to Global North-Global South dichotomy.

Approach: The article explores global education in Poland from a critical and post-colonial perspective. It examines both supra-national factors shaping global education nowadays (like migrations, cosmopolitan turn, growing right-wing populism, the culture of measurement) and specific Polish context as a country not only “in-between”, but with the experience of “triple coloniality”.

Findings: I argue that taking into consideration this complexity and multilayeredness of the Polish situation, together with more general, not country-specific factors, can offer new insights and understandings of global education in Poland. It is a necessary step to decolonise global education and make it more inclusive.

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1 INTRODUCTION

I will not exaggerate saying that the recent decade has been a time of growing importance of global education which manifests in UNESCO and European Union policy documents (Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, DEAR within EuropeAid), adopting national strategies of global education in subsequent countries or increasing

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academic interest in global citizenship and global citizenship education (Goren & Yemini, 2017). Along with these developments and the wider presence of global education, there is more and more criticism, especially this informed by critical and postcolonial theories, of mainstream global education understandings for disregarding local context and ignoring the demands of global education heterogeneity. Several scholars have warned us about the risks and consequences of standardisation and homogenisation of global education (Abdi, 2011; Mannion, Biesta, Priestley, & Ross, 2011; Reynolds, 2015).

However, these critical voices tend to focus on neglecting the perspectives of the Global South. Global North-Global South dichotomy has monopolised the attention of most global education literature, overlooking the complex and unobvious position of what used to be called the Second World (the former Soviet bloc: the Soviet Union and its satellites). This paper contributes to the academic debate on postcolonial perspectives on global education problematising the context of global education in Poland – a country difficult to count as the Global South or the Global North.

The ideas of learning for world citizenship and global dimension in education appeared in Polish pedagogical literature as early as at the beginning of the twentieth century when the Polish educationalists related to the New Education Movement looked at the ways to include topics of international understanding and world peace in education. Shortly after the Second World War, Polish educational researcher Bogdan Suchodolski called for educating citizens to be responsible both for the Polish state and the globalising world and cultivating a sense of world community (Suchodolski, 1947). However, except for sham Communist internationalism imposed on Central and Eastern European countries, global education did not develop in Poland neither theoretically nor practically until the 1990s, when it was imported from Western European countries by Polish non-governmental organisations (more in Kuleta-Hulboj, 2020).

In this paper I explore global education in Poland seen through a critical and postcolonial lens, paying attention to broader socio-cultural conditions shaping global education nowadays and factors specific to the context of Poland as a country double "in-between", with a unique experience of "triple coloniality". Drawing on the works of scholars who explored the possibility of application of postcolonial theories to the Polish condition (Mayblin, Piekut, & Valentine, 2016; Zarycki, 2010; 2017), I argue that taking into account this complexity and multilayeredness of Polish context, together with more general, not country-specific factors, can offer new insights and understandings of global education in Poland, its developments, condition, and challenges; and it is a necessary step to make global education more inclusive. However, it should be stated at the very beginning that thinking Poland postcolonially may lead to a trap and paradoxes: as Nowicka-Franczak (2017) warns us, conclusions depend on the researcher's initial perspective and point of departure. Being aware of this, I focus on the implications of postcolonial reading for global education.

First, I briefly discuss more general phenomena and processes that have implications for how global education is conceptualised and approached. These include a cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences, migrations, radicalisation of attitudes, increase in xenophobia and securitisation discourse; recent phenomena affecting education in the world – the culture of accountability and measurement as well as striving for evidence-based education. I also outline their consequences for global education.

Second, I examine the Polish context of global education, focusing on Poland's perspective as a semi-peripheral country (as a former aid recipient and now Official Development Assistance donor, a country without a colonial legacy which itself has an experience of totalitarian oppression) (Starnawski, 2015) and its complex experience of "triple coloniality". Together with a Polish paternalism and expansionism towards Eastern neighbours dating back to the 16th century, recent political changes related to the rule of Law and Justice conservative turn and right-wing populism, it creates significant challenges for global education.

Third, I outline some recommendations for global education that may help it face these challenges. I call for such a conceptualisation of global education that would embrace diverse experiences and local contexts and would decolonise it.

2 SUPRANATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING GLOBAL EDUCATION NOWADAYS

The shape, scope, and content of global education – like any other education – have been the subject of a variety of determinants and influences (economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, etc.). One of them, very conducive to the development of global education, is the cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences (Strand, 2010). By cosmopolitan turn I mean the growing interest in cosmopolitanism and global citizenship; a widely acknowledged vision of mutual interdependence on a global scale; rising numbers of the theories of global citizenship and cosmopolitan democracy. It is related to emerging calls for cosmopolitan vision, e.g. Ulrich Beck (Beck & Grande, 2010) called for a cosmopolitan turn in sociology, similarly, Gerard Delanty (2008) advocated a critical cosmopolitanism as an alternative for nationalism and globalisation.

The cosmopolitan turn manifests in the popularity of global education in many countries, its high profile within European education policies, its presence in the United Nations Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. There are calls for global citizenship education in the higher education sector, and numerous global education programmes led by non-governmental organisations. The concept of global citizen – although ambiguous and criticised – is widely used in academic, non-governmental, political and educational discourse in many countries, including the UK, the USA, Canada, and Japan (Bourn, 2014; Fujikane, 2003; Goren & Yemini, 2017; Schattle, 2008; Shultz, Abdi, & Richardson, 2011). Global competence has been included in The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA research and is being measured, which raises a lot of controversies (Scheunflug, 2020).

In Poland, the cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences is also visible. There has been some growing interest in global education; the concept of global citizenship is also used (Kuleta-Hulboj, 2016; Wonicki, 2010). Global education was included in the national curriculum in 2008 as a cross-cutting issue (MEN, 2008), although neither teachers nor future teachers are still much aware of that (Ocetkiewicz & Pająk-Ważna, 2013; Świdrowska & Tragarz, 2017).

One may say that it is a great time for global education almost worldwide. However, that is only one side of the coin. There is another one, and they are inextricably linked.

In recent years, global migrations have been an important phenomenon which has significantly contributed to the cosmopolitan turn. They are as old as humanity – human history is a history of migration. But in the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of migrants globally (according to International Organization for Migration 2018: 153 million in 1990, 173 million in 2000, 258 million in 2017) and locally in Europe. Migrations have become an important political, ethical, social, and educational issue. The recent so-called "migrant crisis", when high numbers of people from outside Europe were arriving in the European Union, has resulted, among other things, in many global education initiatives undertaken by non-governmental organisations or non-formal groups. Some examples are: "Let's talk about refugees" launched by one of the biggest educational non-governmental organisation in Poland – The Centre for Civic Education, CEO; or "Uchodźcy.info" media platform created by non-formal group "Chlebem i Solą" to raise public awareness, disseminate reliable knowledge about the refugees and various forms of involvement and help, and encourage active engagement. This website was awarded the Intercultural Achievement Award 2017 by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA, 2017). Smaller, local initiatives include educational workshops, storytelling, outdoor activities ("In search of a new home - stories about refugees" run by Galicyjska Fundacja Rozwój i Edukacja; "So much world in our city" conducted by Polskie Forum Migracyjne)

or e-learning course for teachers and educators “Different and Equal” run by Fundacja “Edukacja dla Nas”).

However, the “migrant crisis” resulted also in something else. Regardless of whether it is treated as a conservative, cultural backlash or as a phenomenon caused by economic factors, both Europe and some non-European countries have experienced the development of right-wing populism. It relates to an increase in xenophobia and the rise of nationalism (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Right-wing populist parties have also strengthened by fuelling social fears related to Islamist terrorist attacks in the first decades of the 21st century and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Initially compassionate and friendly attitudes of several European societies have been replaced by fear and reluctance towards immigrants and asylum seekers (Heath & Richards, 2019).

Its part in this had a securitisation discourse. I understand the process of securitisation as “constructing a shared understanding of what is considered and collectively responded to as a threat” (Buzan et. al., 1998, in Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010, p. 78). According to this approach, security threats are regarded as socially constructed through a discursive process that creates some phenomena, groups, or processes a threat to national, cultural, or economic security. An excellent example could be a phrase “to combat irregular migration”, as the word combat encourages extreme measures and relates to the military sector.

As far as Poland is concerned, for a long time it used to be a country of emigration. Only recently it has also become a country of immigration (mainly from Ukraine, Belarus, Germany, Vietnam, and India). Poland is characterised by a small ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity (in comparison to the pre-war period); the society is largely homogeneous in this respect¹. And although since the 1990s the country has been taking in refugees, predominantly from Chechnya, most of them (nine out of ten) treat Poland as a transit country, going – whenever possible – further to the West. Therefore, it does not contribute to the greater diversity of society.

Right-wing populism and securitisation discourse are the case also in Poland. The conservative and nationalistic trend manifests in orientation towards national values in public life, increasing xenophobia and playing on nationalistic sentiments by the ruling party. It has been particularly noticeable since the parliamentary elections in 2015 won by right-wing, conservative Law and Justice (PiS). When the election campaign was in progress, the “migrant crisis” in Europe began. As in some other European countries (e.g. the UK, Austria, Hungary, or the Czech Republic), right-wing populist parties politically used the migration issues and made them an important element of the electoral struggle. Fuelling the fear of “a flood of culturally foreign immigrants” who want to create “sharia controlled zones” in Poland became the dominant topic of the last stage of the election campaign. Migrants, refugees, and Muslims were discursively constructed as a threat to Polish identity, culture, and catholic faith, while Law and Justice party – as the only hero able to defend the Polish nation. This discourse proved effective: public opinion towards refugees and migrants transformed within a year (in May 2015 72% of Poles supported taking in refugees from conflict zones, in April 2016 – only 33%) (CBOS, 2016). An international comparative survey by Pew Research Centre around that time shown similar results – Poles were among the nations that were the least positive about the consequences of greater diversity (Global Attitudes Survey, 2016). And Law and Justice won the elections.

From the beginning newly elected United Right government, led by the Law and Justice party, along with the authorities in Hungary and the Czech Republic, consistently refused to take in refugees. Subsequent prime ministers argued that Poland could not accept immigrants and asylum seekers because of the security reasons and exaggerated potential threats. In 2019, again before elections, migrants and refugees were replaced by LGBTQ people.

Although surveys show that after a period of decline in liking for other nations the last two years have seen a rise in liking and a decrease in disliking for them, at the same time hate speech against migrants, racial and ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ people and hate crime rate has increased in Poland (CBOS, 2019; 2020; Winiewski et al., 2017). It is sometimes promoted by

mainstream Polish politicians and government members in the public or social media – and contributes to feeding xenophobic attitudes in the country.

Additionally, Polish society is strongly divided into hostile camps. This division dates back to 2010, when a plane carrying Poland's President Lech Kaczyński, the First Lady Maria Kaczyńska, and other 87 senior officials crashed near Smoleńsk in Russia. All passengers and seven crew members died. While the majority of Polish people thought it had been a tragic accident, many Law and Justice supporters believed in conspiracy theory assuming it was an assassination in which Russia took part. Since then, the division has strengthened – Polish society lives in almost isolated, separate bubbles; within them, people watch different TV news programmes, read different newspapers and websites, rarely contact each other, have conflicting views on many issues, e.g. Poland's position and role in Europe or immigrants in the country. Even global education found itself on the front line of the struggle between these two camps. In the current climate, in which we face “the shrinking space of civil society” (Bodnar, 2020), all non-governmental organisations not sharing Law and Justice's views on issues like immigration, the environment, and women's rights are treated with suspicion or even are subjected to serious pressure (funds reduction, unjustified inspections, interrogations, and slanderous media campaigns). Organisations that deal with sexual, anti-discrimination, intercultural or global education have difficulty operating in schools because head teachers are afraid of parents and local authorities' reactions and of accusations of promoting “leftist ideology”. These factors create serious challenges for global education and make it even more important.

Another challenge and risk of supranational-local nature is a culture of accountability and measurement, as well as focus on evidence-based practice, whose effectiveness is confirmed by scientific research. There are pros and cons to that. For example, it may develop the quality of education or initiate some improvements, as Annette Scheunpflug (2020) comments: “Searching for evidence may strengthen an educational field. It helps to identify relevant knowledge for the implementation of concepts. It supports the professionalisation of people working in the field of global learning. It enhances educational practice. It supports decision-making concerning the implementation of innovations and the efficient use of financial and human resources” (p. 41). However, at the same time there is growing criticism towards these trends. Gert Biesta (2009; 2012) asks: do we measure what is worth measuring, what we value, or what is easy to measure? Previously cited Scheunpflug (2020) warns us that in the case of global education the evidence is very problematic and needs careful operationalisation of content, learning aims and outcomes. Evidence will not help answer the question about the aims of education, because this is a normative issue. To answer it, we need to engage with ultimate values about the aims and social purpose of education.

In Poland, these discourses of accountability, measurement and evidence-based practice are also present and dominate, being additionally entangled in national(istic) and populist discourse on education². They have implications for how global education is conceptualised and approached. When they enjoy a dominant, privileged position, their problematic consequences and aspects are ignored. I will come back to that later.

3 GLOBAL EDUCATION AND THINKING POLAND POSTCOLONIALY

The most often quoted definition of global education in Poland is the one developed in the multi-stakeholder process on global education and agreed upon by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Education and Grupa Zagranica (the Polish platform of non-governmental development organisations) in 2011. Although increasingly criticised, it is commonly used in teaching practice, in the MFA “Global Education” grant competition and non-governmental organisations' educational and teacher training activities.

According to the definition,

global education 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. Its main objective 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. Some of the current global challenges are:

- providing peace and security in the world;
- improving the quality of life in the countries of the Global South;
- human rights protection;
- providing for sustainable development;
- building partner economic and social relations between the countries of the Global North and Global South. (Grupa Zagranica, 2011)

The multi-stakeholder process begun in 2009. Its origins are linked to the curricular reform launched in December 2008, which introduced global education into the core curriculum, and to the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) report "Global Education in Poland" (O'Loughlin & Wegimont, 2009), which recommended developing a common, multi-stakeholder process of curriculum transformation and partner efforts to strengthen global education in the formal education system in Poland (more in Jasikowska, 2018; Jasikowska & Witkowski, 2012).

Although since school year 2009/2010 issues related to global education should have been taught during history, geography, civics, biology, and other lessons, this has not happened on a large scale. Surveys show that the most common way for teachers to deal with global education is to introduce single topics or short activities during a subject lesson (Czaplicka & Lisocka-Jaegermann, 2014; Ocetkiewicz & Pająk-Ważna, 2013; Świdrowska & Tragarz, 2017). The presence of global education in schools is rather superficial and has weak foundations. All the more so because nine years later the Law and Justice government carried out a new curricular and structural reform of the educational system. It brought a lot of controversy and confusion not only among teachers, students, and parents but many experts (e.g. academics). The new curriculum, prepared in a hurry, was widely criticised as inconsistent, anachronistic and overloaded, as polonocentric and reinforcing nationalistic sentiments (Dzierzgowska & Laskowski, 2017; Grupa Zagranica, 2017; Komisja Dydaktyczna Polskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego, 2017; Rada Języka Polskiego, 2017). Finally – it has marginalised global education. This claim, in line with a CONCORD report (2018), draws on Aleksiak's and Kuleta-Hulboj's (2020) analysis of learning content and goals of three curriculum subject areas (history, geography and citizenship education), which has shown that these curricula are limited to a national dimension. A scarcity of global education-related content, almost complete absence of a global dimension, lack of interdependencies and multiperspectivity lead authors to the conclusion that not only global education in the recent Polish national curriculum is marginalised but also global education policy in nowadays Poland is superficial.

Little presence of global education in schools does not help to increase interest and knowledge about global issues. As surveys point out, although the Polish people are generally supportive of development co-operation and humanitarian aid – 52% would support an increase in foreign aid to developing countries, with a median of 53%, at the same time 65% agreed that "our country should deal with its own problems and let other countries deal with their own problems as best as they can", with a median of 56% (Global Attitudes Survey, 2016). They are not interested in global problems, nor do they know much about them. For example, according to Eurobarometer 2016, only 33% of Poles have ever heard about Sustainable Development Goals. For comparison, in Portugal – 47%, in Finland – as many as 73% (European Commission, 2016). This weak interest hardly helps to increase the popularity of global education among teachers, parents, and

students. Together with the ruling party's scepticism and reluctance to global education, it creates a vicious circle.

Besides, there is not much interest in global education among the researchers – rather scarce literature, few empirical research, a low profile in academia – which results in under-theorised and under-researched global education (more in Kuleta-Hulboj, 2020). It started to change, but it takes time, and it is a slow process.

This relates to the next country-specific issue – a complex and ambiguous status of Poland in relation to the global dynamics of power and postcolonial condition. Usually, analysis of Poland's position focused on the experiences of socialism and the exploration of post-socialist condition. They investigated an "inbetweenness" – a status of being in between East and West (Chimiak, 2016). In recent years, researchers increasingly have been applying postcolonial theory to the situation of the Second World countries, including Poland, and analyse its usefulness for studying a post-socialist world. Some argue that, despite all limitations, thinking Poland postcolonially can bring a fresh perspective and provide with a deeper understanding of Polish national identity, attitudes towards otherness, and today's processes taking place in this country (Mayblin, Piekut, & Valentine, 2016; Zarycki, 2010; 2017). In concordance with these studies, I develop a similar argument stating that exploring global education in Poland through a postcolonial lens offers new insights and understandings of its developments, condition, and challenges.

When thinking Poland postcolonially, the country could be treated as both, the former coloniser and colonised. Clare Cavanagh in her article "Post-colonial Poland" (2004) calls it "a double coloniality". However, as aforementioned scholars argue, the picture is even more complicated.

Poland has never had formal colonies which sometimes results in a sense of moral superiority over former colonial empires. But one needs to mention the Polish ruling classes pre-war dreams of hegemony in the East, expansionism, and paternalism towards its Eastern neighbours. In fact, in the past, until the 18th century, Poland was an imperial power in this part of Europe. It was the imperialism of language, culture, and religion – the territories annexed to the Polish state by successive unions or conquests were subject to gradual, though not necessarily forced, colonisation and "catholicisation". To this day we may find traces of orientalist discourse³ towards Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, or Belarus. The sense of cultural superiority towards them is noticeable in Poland (Zarycki, 2010). It manifests in public and private discourse, numerous jokes about Poland's Eastern neighbours and contemptuous terms like "Rusek" or "kacap" (ethnonyms referring to Russian). As Zarycki (2010) states:

"A negative attitude towards 'Easternness', defined in a variety of ways, can be spotted in several dimensions of political discourse in Poland including that of the mainstream Polish national identity discourse. A deep-rooted stereotype of the 'East' (defined both as the Eastern part of Europe as well as the Eastern party of the country) as a backward social world lagging behind European 'normalcy' still persists among many Poles." (p. 73)

In Lithuania in Vilnius region, the traces of the Polish presence (like inscriptions, street names) are to these days treated as remainders of a former coloniser, because of the past conflicts and competing claims. There are still some tensions between Poles and Lithuanians in the border region. It all adds up to the coloniser's status.

But at the same time, there are some arguments in favour of Poland's colonised position. For decades, the country has depended on other countries (during the partitions in the 19th century, after the Second World War and during the communist regime). Poland has extensive experience of totalitarian oppression. It constitutes its colonised condition in relation to Russia as the former real hegemon, but, as some scholars argue, it is not a typical relation between coloniser and colonised. In contrast to the classical model of colonial relations, "this quasi-colonial relationship is now read as the 'anti-civilization mission' of the barbarian colonizer towards societies that

rather consider themselves in close proximity to Western Europe". (Nowicka-Franczak, 2017, p. 255). In its auto-stereotype, which the nationalists use particularly eagerly, Poland has a special historical role in Europe. It is a bulwark against the barbaric, wild East, "antemurale christianitatis" (more in Marung, 2012). Therefore, Poles do not feel inferior to Russia, on the contrary, they orientalise Eastern neighbours and feel culturally, morally, and civilisationally superior, as being more Western. But at the same time, there is a feeling of inferiority to the West. During the communist regime, everything of Western European origin was perceived as much better, more developed, and more prestigious than Polish (be it music, clothes, food, etc.). Quoting Jan Sowa, Marta Grzechnik (2019) characterises this position as "eternal imprisonment in the logic of catching up and escaping': catching up with the West ('we want to be like Germans, Austrians, Italians, French') and escaping the East ('we are not like Russians, Ukrainians, Turks, Asians') (Sowa, 2011, 18)" (p. 4).

In addition, although Poland for many years enjoyed the image of a country of the most advanced and successful transformation from socialism to capitalism (e.g. Echikson, 2018; Follath & Puhl, 2012; World Bank, 2017) and relatively quickly increased its economic status⁴; although it has been an Official Development Assistance donor since 2013, many Poles still regard themselves as aid recipients rather than donors. They think they are poorer than in reality and consider themselves a poorer cousin of Western Europeans. Global education with its Global North-Global South dichotomy does not fit the Polish self-image well.

Speaking of political and economic transformation started in 1989, one needs to point out that although developed by the democratically elected elites and accepted by a majority of Poles, it was to a large extent of an imitative nature, based on Western patterns and solutions. Its high social costs (huge unemployment, deep economic inequalities, increased poverty, etc.), as well as fast and far-reaching liberalisation done in neoliberal mode, were not a subject of thorough discussion and consideration of alternatives. The elites were insensitive to the needs of the lower classes and – despite numerous strikes in 1992-1993 – ignored their deteriorating socio-economic situation. The government at that time constructed an image of no alternative to the implemented path.

With the time being, the criticism grew louder and the benefits and costs of transformation have become an important topic, not only among trade unions and in the right-wing conservative press but also in liberal newspapers like "Gazeta Wyborcza" (e.g. Szahaj, 2011). The former started to use postcolonial lenses to describe and explain a new dependency relationship in which Polish elites, suffering from postcolonial syndrome after the communist regime, were involved. This point of view draws from the works of Ewa Thompson (n.d., 2014), American-Polish professor of comparative literature. According to Thompson, "the West" (which means Western Europe and the United States) became a surrogate hegemon dictating neoliberal reforms and colonising the discursive field e.g. through imposing foreign political and cultural standards, political correctness or gender mainstreaming. The Polish elites, admiring the mythical West, are characterised by a postcolonial mentality that results in submissive attitudes and self-colonisation, then transferred to the Polish society. The aforementioned feeling of inferiority towards the West together with "[...] the habit of emulating the 'more cultured' is a by-product of being colonized", Thompson (2014, p. 71) claims.

This relation to Western hegemons adds next layers to Poland's position and makes it even more complex, as Mayblin, Piekut, and Valentine (2016) conclude:

"There is, in fact, a triple relation apparent: the relation to Russia (complex in itself as this was not an example simply of another colonialism), and then there is a countervailing relation to 'the West' as an alternative ideological hegemon, the discourse around which draws on themes of western superiority, on orientalism. Then, there is the relation to eastern and third world 'others', including those living in the pre-war Polish territories in the near East, who are often viewed in civilisational terms.

Poland's position within this discursive framing is not simply an 'inbetweenness' (in between East and West), as some scholars have argued (Galbraith, 2004; Janion, 2011), it is something much more complex. These three axes operate in parallel, and the outcomes of competing discourses, spheres of influence, racial and social hierarchies, distinctions between 'insider' and 'outsider', the 'self' and the 'other' manifest themselves in complex and contradictory ways." (p. 63)

Thus, depending on what is our point of departure, whom we consider to be a coloniser and who – colonised, which part of this triple relation we take into account and focus on, our postcolonial interpretations of Poland will differ. In her discourse analysis of a speech by Olga Tokarczuk, a well-known Polish writer and literary Nobel Prize winner, Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak (2017) warns us about two competing understandings of postcolonialism in Poland, conservative and right-wing versus left-liberal, and concludes: "The researcher is put either in the role of 'defender of the good name of Poles' or in the role of critic, not so much colonial relations as categories of nation and Polishness." (p. 14). It should be noted, however, that although she confirms other understandings falling between these two may exist, she does not elaborate on that and remains with the simplifying dichotomy.

In the light of conservative postcolonial reading, current nationalistic revival may be interpreted as freeing from dependence, freeing the colonial mind. The ruling Law and Justice party and its supporters use the phrases "getting up from our knees"⁵, "liberation from the dictate of Berlin and Brussels"⁶ regarding international politics and relations with the European Union. It is an important part of the populist and nationalist discourse which also applies the postcolonial theory to the situation of Poland.

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

To sum up, how do all these phenomena affect global education? What are their implications and risks for it?

4.1 Reductionist and simplifying approaches to global education

As I point out in the introductory part of the paper, several interlinked factors contribute to the growing popularity of global education, including migrations, cosmopolitan turn, and the importance given to global education in OECD, UNESCO and European Union policy. An increase in global education projects and activities should enjoy but has also its drawbacks. It may result in superficial and reductionist approaches, limited to benevolent charity, or in neglecting the educational dimension and focusing on action, as Vanessa Andreotti (2011), Douglas Bourn (2014), and Annette Scheunpflug (2020) warn us. Such approaches do not touch systemic and structural determinants of injustice and inequalities, nor they focus on transforming social relations. This is the case also in Poland. Although global education is not something extremely popular, interest in it gradually increases, e.g. among non-governmental organisations and groups of teachers who strive to make global education a part of school educational practice. However, research shows that they also fail to introduce a critical, transformative approach to global education in schools; "soft" and transmissive global education prevails (Jasikowska, Pająk-Ważna, & Klarenbach, 2015). This relates not only to global education: with some exceptions, reflection, criticism, and challenging the status quo are generally absent in Polish schools, especially after the recent educational reform.

4.2 Convergence and “global competence education”

Including global competence into PISA research conducted in over 70 countries also brings significant consequences for global education on various levels. In some countries, PISA research and OECD education policy recommendations based on the PISA results are taken very seriously; critics talk about the “soft power” of PISA (Bieber & Martens, 2011; Sellar & Lingard, 2014). Taking it into consideration, we can argue that measuring global competence in PISA research may lead to policy convergence and cause homogenisation of global education (its contents, methods, and approaches). When alternative (e.g. critical) approaches hardly exist or they are weak, like in Poland, there would be no counterbalance to the dominant OECD “global competence education”. In the case of global education, it is particularly undesirable, because it should be adapted to local context, conditions, and experiences, to be meaningful and adequate to people’s needs and capabilities.

OECD’s definition of global competence lacks references to solidarity, global justice, or equality. It says nothing about the structural and systemic foundations of discrimination, racism, and social conflicts. Instead, it favours supporting employability or easier cultural adaptation, transfer of knowledge, and other skills useful on the global market and in intercultural relations. Its focus is on cosmopolitan intercultural understanding (Scheunpflug, 2020). This approach constitutes global education as an enhancer of global competitiveness, contrary to the critical global education approach.

Another risk associated with attempts to measure global competence refers to focusing on only one dimension of global education – competence. To be more precise, on the cognitive aspect, because this is measured (social skills are self-reported by students). Other dimensions, like socialisation or subjectification (Biesta, 2009), are neglected. This not only impoverishes global education and reduces it to the intercultural dimension, but also privileges Western epistemology and ignores other ways of thinking and being in the world. Global education is a multidimensional process – it combines knowledge, skills and attitudes, values and behaviour, action, and emotions. It encompasses intercultural understanding, global social justice, human rights, sustainability, global mindedness, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and much more (Bourn, 2014; Pike, 2013; Scheunpflug, 2020). Therefore, it requires a multidimensional approach.

4.3 Global education as a consumer self-satisfaction

The growing popularity of global education also raises new (and not so new) problems like voluntourism, celebrity activism, and “global education as a lifestyle brand”, as David Jefferess (2012) entitled his noteworthy article. Engaging in such activities provides a sense of (consumer) fulfilment, self-satisfaction with good deeds, and the feeling that one can bring about positive change in the world. But it rarely allows for critical reflection on how one is complicit in past and present harm and injustices. A significant body of critical literature has been raising similar concerns over the last decade, so I will not discuss it further here (Andreotti, 2011; Jefferess, 2012; Pashby, 2014; 2016).

4.4 Global education as a colonial imposition

From a different point of view, global education (not only in its OECD interpretation but in general) may be regarded as a new tool of colonisation. Global education in Poland has Western European roots. Transnational networks and international institutions (like North-South Centre Council of Europe, European Union) contributed significantly to its development (through funding, workshops, seminars for non-governmental organisations). In the beginning, 20 years ago, Polish non-governmental organisations imitated Western ideas, solutions, and initiatives. They learned global education from their Western counterparts. This may be interpreted as an

example of colonial dependencies or asymmetric ignorance, as depicted by Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992), which means that to succeed in academia, non-Western scholars should read and cite Western scholars but this does not work the other way round. In addition, few people in Poland recognise the need for global education: since Poland did not have any colonies, is a homogeneous country, and not rich enough to take care of others, then global education is irrelevant and even treated as a colonial or imperial imposition. There are reasonable arguments in favour of this thesis, including the aforementioned soft power of PISA and the risk of homogenisation of global education into one and only “global competence education”, or Western European global education roots and influences like the Global North-Global South dichotomy (see also Starnawski, 2015). However, nationalist discourse applying postcolonial theory to the Polish context brought it to the extreme. According to it, global education and other adjectival educations are Western inventions imposed on the Polish nation who should get up from its knees and stop blindly imitating the West.

For right-wing nationalists, cosmopolitanism and global mindedness are one of the clear symptoms of civilisational decadence. Tolerance and multiculturalism are signs of weakness and confusion. And “cultural relativism” is a symptom of a “spiritual crisis” (e.g. Janecki, 2016; Jezierski, 2019; ONR Podhale, n.d.; Ramus, 2015; Ruch Narodowy, 2016). This extreme discourse finds support in mainstream public debates. According to the dominant political narrative, Polish students should learn almost exclusively about Polish heroes and martyrdom, Polish culture, and values. This is a return to a very narrow understanding of national identity and citizenship. Thus, the rise of nationalism and right-wing populism contributes to the marginalisation of global education in some countries (Poland, the UK, Hungary) which I find undesirable. Under these conditions the implementation of global education is much harder, but at the same time more needed.

5 Conclusions

Taking all these factors into consideration and drawing on the work of Marcin Starnawski (2015) I would advocate for several developments and reconceptualisation of global education that may be relevant not only to the Polish context but in general as well.

I will start with the easiest tasks. We need more research and interdisciplinary approaches. Many questions demand answers: how students in Poland understand their role in the world? How do they perceive local and global? How do teachers navigate tensions between global education and the current political agenda? How to develop a global outlook (Bourn, 2014) while avoiding the risk of imposing the only right point of view?

Furthermore, we need to resist the pressure of homogenisation and promote diversification of approaches, methods, and contents of global education. If global education is to mean something in people’s lives and be relevant for them, we should reframe its perspective and make further efforts to decolonise it. Paradoxically, it applies not only to the mainstream “soft” approach to global education but also to the postcolonial one. There is a bunch of global education literature rooted in postcolonial and critical theories undertaking this task in different contexts (Abdi, 2011; Andreotti, 2010; Pashby, 2016 – to name only a few) and calling for a recognition of situatedness, partiality, provisionality and contingency of any knowledge. However, most of them are trapped in the Global North-Global South binary opposition. Poland’s double or triple (as Mayblin, Piekut, and Valentine argue) coloniality makes implementation and development of global education, even in its critical postcolonial understanding, more complicated. Since Polish people are to analyse and recognise their complicity in harm, and they feel colonised themselves, then in what ways they should understand this complicity? There is a burning need for more theorisation of global education in Poland, especially given the complex (post)colonial position of the country. How to reframe global education to make it more inclusive and embracing diverse experiences? I do not intend to disavow critical, postcolonial approaches to global education. On the contrary, I am

convinced they could be the best answer. Critical and postcolonial global education is a process of learning, reflection and critical commitment to the ideals of solidarity and global social justice (see also Bourn, 2014); a process of developing the recognition and understanding of multiperspectivity; and finally a process of endorsing learning to “unlearn privilege”, “learn from below” and re-read the world (Andreotti & de Souza, 2011). As such, it has the potential to promote justice and equality, provided that, however, we make constant efforts to problematise it and make it more locally relevant. Much work has already been done and much remains to be done, as I have shown in this paper for Poland and possibly other Second World countries. If we will not succeed, global education in some local contexts may become a neo-colonial imposition, in line with the Thomas theorem that if a person defines something as real, then it is real in its consequences.

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ENDNOTES

¹ According to the latest national census of Główny Urząd Statystyczny (2012), 96 per cent of Polish citizens have been of Polish nationality and 85 per cent – the followers of Roman Catholicism. Until the Second World War, two-thirds of Polish citizens were Roman Catholic and 69 per cent were of Polish ethnic-national identity.

² For example, the results of the PISA research are used to highlight the merits of the Law and Justice government and its education reform although the students were educated in the pre-reform educational system. Nationalists use PISA research results to justify closing borders to immigrants: the title of the news article on the nationalistic website autonom.pl says „Immigrants lower the results of Swedish students” (<http://autonom.pl/?p=28978>).

³ The notion of orientalist discourse refers to Edward Said’s “Orientalism” (1978) and cultural representations of the Orient (or – in this article – the East) based on the assumption of an epistemological and ontological distinction between the Orient and Western world and the superiority of the latter. Discursively created knowledge, depicting the Orient as the complete opposite of the West (primitive, violent, ignorant, subordinate, backward) serves as a powerful instrument of domination.

⁴ It should be noted, however, that the dominant image of the Polish success story is overly idealised and ignores the complex dynamics of the transformation processes. I thank the anonymous Reviewer for drawing my attention to the insufficiently clear formulation of this issue.

⁵ Such phrase was used e.g. by Patryk Jaki, MEP, former deputy minister of justice in the United Right government, in his address at the European Parliament, January 15, 2020 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2020-01-15-INT-3-548-0000_PL.html); or on a front cover of “wSieci” magazine after President Duda’s official visit in the USA in 2015, <https://www.wsieciprawdy.pl/wsieci-polska-wstaje-z-kolan-pnews-2455.html>

⁶ For instance, a title on a front cover of “do Rzeczy” magazine was: “Dyktat Brukseli [Brussels’ dictate]” (6.01.2020): <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/125443/do-rzeczy-nr-2-dyktat-brukseli-komisja-europejska-i-tsue-probuja-ograniczyc-suwerennosc-polski.html> ; see also: “Berlin dictate” in “Glossary of radical rhetoric” led by Kultura Liberalna’s Public Debate Observatory: <https://obserwatorium.kulturaliberalna.pl/slowniczek/dyktat-berlina-2/>.