

II. RECENZJE I NOTY

AGNIESZKA GROMKOWSKA-MELOSİK, *Educational tests. A study of the dynamics of selection and socialization*, Adam Mickiewicz University Press, Poznań 2017, pp. 202

Why do we test? Why do some countries use tests more often than others? Is it a general tendency nowadays to test everyone and everything? What can tests measure and what is still unmeasurable? Why are they so important in terms of selection and socialisation? The newest publication by Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik will try to give you reasonable answers to those questions. *Educational tests. A study of the dynamics of selection and socialisation* is the most complex study based on the most recent data and the author's experience.

Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik's book concentrates on the critical approach to tests and its controversies in terms of the youth identity and modern school realities. This is widely described in the introductory chapter. Author is a professor at Adam Mickiewicz University (Faculty of Educational Studies) in Poznań. Her main research focuses on the problem of equality and inequality of access to education, sociology of education and culture and gender studies. She is in charge of the Multicultural Education and Social Inequality Research Department at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. For the last three years she has been a member of the National Committee of Education which belongs to the Polish Academy of Sciences. She has published numerous articles in Polish and foreign academic journals. She is also an author and co-author of many scientific papers dedicated to her research interests. *Educational tests. A study of the dynamics of selection and socialisation* is surely based on her long term experience and educational observations around the world.

The book starts with an introduction which mentions previous publications and research in the field of selective and enculturative functions of education. It also describes the motives and reasons for writing this particular piece. Apart from the introduction, there are also five chapters, the summary and extensive bibliography. Each of the chapters is full of author's personal experience which builds a new educational perspective. The first chapter is focused on various controversies related to using tests in contemporary education. Chapter Two describes the PISA tests deployment and usage. The next chapter is about English language tests – paradoxes and the present-day role in the selection processes in

education. The following part is focused on Chinese “gaokao” examinations and their essence. The final chapter is devoted to the British paradox of the selection in terms of A-level examinations.

According to the author herself the fundamental aim of this title is to “reconstruct the problem of ideological, social and cultural controversies related to the growing significance of tests in determining the boundaries of the contemporary, neoliberal school environment and pupils’ identity.”¹

The introduction is very clearly divided into several indentions. In the beginning, Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik explains what was the reason for her to write this book. How it happened to be so complex and interdisciplinary. She defines word “test” and points to a common “testology” phenomenon in the worldwide education. The author also mentions how tests indicate the school reality of a young generation. It is worth to mention that the impact of being tested can be life-long. Present paragraph about testing and its role in the present education is obviously related to the huge selective mechanism. What is more, the scores they achieve can determine their life chances, often the author calls them a “one-time act”. Language of the introduction is inviting and precise, which creates a smooth connection with the following chapter.

The main idea of the first chapter is to present in a very detailed way the controversies related to the use of testing in the modern society and connected with the selection and socialisation process. The author’s stance is supported by educational authorities quotes including G. Bracey, P. Hubert, M. Hauserem, M. Foot, R. Phelps, Z. Melosik, P. Sack and many others. The conclusion of these views leads to a very bold statement that testing is interfering with the process of raising a responsible citizen, the one characterised by critical thinking. The assumption is that tests test the ability to take tests. Additionally, the author pays close attention to a teacher’s attitude and the “test artifice” phenomenon. The reader will find numerous examples from the USA explaining the test strategies in this particular educational system. The writer’s line of thoughts is very structured and well-presented in this chapter. It is also a fundamental part of the book, which makes a perfect spotlight on the testing process in the world.

The second chapter is devoted to the PISA tests, which can be called “a form of exported western epistemology and knowledge”, which is compared with the Third World countries to classify nations into specific types of evaluations methods. The main point is to analyse and describe the essence of international tests. The most known of them is the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) which started in 2000. The author puts great emphasis on ideological and cultural controversies, mainly in regard to PISA. A lot of newest data is presented in this chapter, which makes the quoted examples more clear and daring. There is also a very real-life passage about Finnish education and its views on global testing. Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik draws a very clear and at the same time critical conclusion.

¹ A. Gromkowska-Melosik, *Testy edukacyjne. Studium dynamiki selekcji i socjalizacji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2017.

The third section is focused on various paradoxes related to English language tests. The author's careful analysis of their role in the selection process in education is mostly based on Asian and far east countries. The research is much more complex and the discussion refers to 'cultural confrontations' and reconstructing national and individual identity. Again, the constructive criticism of writer's view on testing English through worldwide known tests builds this chapter. She describes "testing industry" which is extremely popular in Japan. Widely presented case of Asian countries the current educational situation of which is compatible with Bourdieu's linguistic imperialism theory.

The penultimate chapter is dedicated to Chinese "gaokao" examinations and their dark side. It can be described as the most important exam which allows the Chinese youth to enter higher education. This part incredibly illustrates how the essence of these tests create social identity of young people in terms of stratification success. There are numerous examples of real life stories of people who decided to take up this "high-stakes" test. The newest data and interesting reflections allows reader to feel the pressure and huge effort taken by young generation in China. The author also gives a comprehensive insight to the structure and sample questions from the original "gaokao". Honestly, it all makes this part the most compelling to me.

Last but not least, the section is devoted to the reflections about British A-level examinations. They are clearly essential for entrance to various universities (including the top ones; as Cambridge, Oxford, etc.). Its major role is to treat tests as inherent part of examination range. The Author also refers to her previous works and knowledge about Britain's social elite realities. The chapter is very vast and considered which makes it goes beyond the testing topic. Numerous references and relevance to the dynamics of the selection and socialization emphasise author's way of thinking.

Educational tests have a transparent and presentable structure. Each component of the monograph is measured and coherent by its content and language. The reader might be under the impression on writer's scientific reflectiveness. The conclusion should be counted in for ongoing discussion about the changes planned in higher and elementary education. Especially in terms of selection and socialisation. The topic of this book is also an answer for this very global question: should we test or rather work on critical and creative education? The problem is real and serious and the solution is exactly somewhere between those pages.

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MAŁGORZATA DUDA, IZABELA RYBKA, HUBERT KASZYŃSKI (RED.), *Etyka pracy socjalnej w filozofii spotkania i dialogu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie, Kraków 2017, ss. 254

W roku 2017 w Serii: Praca Socjalna w Teorii i Działaniu, jako tom 4. ukazała się książka pod redakcją Małgorzaty Dudy, Izabeli Rybki i Huberta Kaszyń-