
More or Less Pro-Liberal? A Comparative Analysis of the Attitudes of Young People Entering the Labour Market

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Abstract:

Purpose: This publication compares the attitudes of young Poles entering the labour market with regard to the economic system and social issues. The attitudes were diagnosed on the basis of a set of views reflecting the pro-liberal or non-liberal stance. Attempts were made to determine whether the changing attitudes are in line with the direction that was postulated – from the point of view of political transformation in Poland “towards liberalism”.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research was carried out with a multi-criteria method using critical literature analysis, logical construct method as well as statistical research. The empirical research was conducted four times, in 2003 (325 persons), in 2008 (379 persons), in 2013 (368 persons) and in 2018 (371 persons).

Findings: The assumption that each next generation will accept, to a greater extent, the principles of the free market economy and will show understanding towards the limitation of the welfare and intervening function of the state proved false. Pro-liberal attitudes did not intensify “from survey to survey” and more complex patterns were observed. Their indicators were in many cases relatively higher in 2008 and 2018 and lower in 2003 and 2013.

Practical Implications: The analysis of society’s attitudes is of great practical importance. The attitude of people to political changes is an important factor affecting their course and effectiveness.

Originality/Value: In the four-stage studies described above, attitudes towards free competition and the independence of the private sector from the state and foreign capital investment were considered. The researchers as well elaborated on the views of the respondents towards the consequences of the introduction of market relations, free market in the sphere of employment, unemployment, differentiation of society in the economic dimension and limitations imposed by the state on welfare system.

Keywords: Political transformation, attitudes towards economic freedom, attitudes towards state.

JEL codes: P10, Z0, Z13

Paper type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

The transformation of the political and economic system in Poland began in 1989 and aroused hope for the rapid implementation of high living standards. This hope was soon confronted with the real situation, which resulted in the crystallisation of certain views of society. The process of political transformation turned out to be more long lasting and more complex than originally assumed. It required taking into account many factors, economic development, shaping democratic institutions, obtaining political freedoms, agreeing on moral principles governing social relations in the state, institutional and individual dimensions (Bartkowski and Jasińska-Kania, 2002; Czerewacz-Filipowicz, 2016; Czerewacz-Filipowicz and Konopelko, 2017; Marszelewki and Piasecki, 2020; Kinal, 2020). The effects of the transformation also proved controversial on the account that conditions were created for the development of individual entrepreneurship, but at the cost of losing individual security and increasing social inequality (Wnuk-Lipiński, 1996; Grygieńć, 2015; Romportl and Kuna, 2017).

Understanding the phenomenon of transformation requires considering knowledge of human beliefs and, above all, the attitudes that guide the interpretation of political changes (Golczyńska-Grondas, 2019). Collecting information on this subject will bring an answer to the questions on how the “old” and “new” reality is perceived and valued, and whether the presented attitudes are consistent with the adopted direction of the transformation. The analysis of society’s attitudes is of great practical importance. The attitude of people to political changes is an important factor affecting their course and effectiveness. The effectiveness of structural transformations, as Jerschina (1999) noted many years ago, is – to some extent at least – a function of attitudes dominating in a given community which may accelerate or delay the process of systemic transformations. The study of attitudes is important from a management point of view. It refers both to the issues of changes of organisation (Fløvik *et al.*, 2019; Chugumbaev and Chugumbaeva, 2020), leadership (Gong *et al.*, 2009; Pieterse *et al.*, 2010; Szydło and Widelska, 2018; Van Dijke, 2020; Torelli *et al.*, 2020), entrepreneurship (Audretsch, 2007; Moczyłowska and Szydło, 2016; Shahid *et al.*, 2018; Baluku *et al.*, 2019), creating organisational structures and cultures (Sułkowski, 2012; Büschgens *et al.*, 2013; Szydło, 2018a; 2018b, Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho, 2020), and to generally understood organisational behaviours (Scott and Bruce, 1994; Pathak *et al.*, 2020; Benson *et al.*, 2020).

This article will present the results of a 4-stage study. This will enable a comparative analysis of attitudes which were diagnosed in a 5-year cycle, i.e., in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018, namely 14, 19, 24 and 29 years after the change of the economic system in Poland. The objective is to answer the question whether the approval of liberal solutions in the economy is increasing. This question is of particular importance in the current situation, when the idea of a “strong state” is emphasised with the government both declaring and implementing social schemes (e.g., “Family 500+”, payment of additional pensions). They stand in opposition to the promoted neoliberal

slogans from the beginning of the political transformation. According to them, the role of the state and social policy should have been limited, while the development of the free market, individual entrepreneurship, and individual responsibility for one's own fate should have been stimulated. Or perhaps – in the opinion of the respondents – the state should be responsible for social issues, spend money on social goals, foster a sensible division of labour, reduce social inequalities, and ensure security. The conflict between the two visions of the country is still visible in Polish society, the “liberal” and the “solidary”. The former accepts the rules of a free market economy and the principle of individual responsibility for one's own fate without limitations, while the latter approves of the implementation of the rules of a free market economy, but on the other does not release the state and society from responsibility for social issues and the fate of individuals (Ziółkowski, 2006; Miszewski, 2020). Discussions on the vision of capitalism – whether “thrown in the face” or “having a human face” – took place especially at the beginning of the transformation processes (Parenti, 2004).

The term “capitalism thrown in the face” is a metaphor for a neo-liberal approach, i.e., one that seeks to absolute economic indicators, but fails to take into account the social consequences of economic reforms, creates conditions for the development of the free market and private entrepreneurship, but limits the role of the state and social policy. “Capitalism with a human face” refers to the so-called social market economy in which the increase in economic efficiency is combined with a fair distribution of the effects of the developing economy (Kołodko, 2008; Mitrovits, 2010; Habarta, 2018). This limits the growth of social inequalities, promotes a sensible division of labour and justifies expenditures on social goals. At the same time, it should be stressed that problems related to various forms of inequality, poverty and hunger, the crisis of the welfare state, the labour market crisis and the ethical dimension of the social order are of interest to the representatives of social sciences at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (Fitoussi and Rosanvallon, 2000; Sen, 2000).

2. Research Problem and Hypotheses

As indicated earlier, the article presents a comparative analysis of attitudes towards the economic system and social issues. The analysed data covered was collected during four – organised in a 5-year cycle – surveys, i.e., in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018. The authors were interested in finding an answer to the question whether the approval of free market order is growing in such aspects as, independence of the private sector from the state, free competition between companies and opening the market for foreign investments. At the same time, the researchers sought information on whether the approval of the social consequences of economic liberalisation is growing. This means “coming to terms” with such facts as unemployment, dismissal of inefficient workers, income differentiation according to the criterion of qualifications and productivity, stratification of society in economic terms and limitation by the state of

its welfare function. It was hypothesised that in each subsequent survey (2003, 2009, 2013 and 2018) the percentage of respondents accepting free market principles and approving of the social consequences of economic liberalisation would increase, while the percentage of respondents formulating expectations towards the state in terms of its intervention into the economic and social sphere would decrease.

The results of the 2003, 2008 and 2013 surveys were published earlier (Czerniawska, 2010; 2011; 2016). Due to the fact that the analysis is of a comparative nature, the information (description of the research problem, research results and excerpts from the text) contained in the indicated publications was used in order to allow for describing changes in the obtained indicators.

3. Methodology

Research group: The survey was conducted among 1,443 people, of whom 325 (22.52%) in 2003, 379 (26.26%) in 2008, 368 (25.50%) in 2013 and 371 (25.72%) in 2018. Four groups were characterised by similarities in terms of gender, age, education, and professional plans. However, they differed in the quality of experiences related to functioning in new political conditions. The members of the first two groups were born before 1989, the members of the last two after 1989. The survey was anonymous.

Research tools: Attitudes are subcategories of the belief system. Beliefs are identified with information people have about themselves, their physical and social environment, ideas, laws, ideologies (they include a person's knowledge, perceptions and beliefs about a given object). Explicit beliefs are considered to be direct determinants of the attitude towards an object (attitudes usually stem from beliefs). Positive attitudes are formed when most beliefs associate desirable characteristics with an object, negative attitudes are formed when beliefs with undesirable characteristics dominate (Ajzen, 2001; Wosińska, 2004).

Although there is controversy over the way attitudes are defined, most often (according to psychology classics) they are understood as a permanent assessment – positive or negative – of people, material objects, ideas, views as well as own and others' behaviours. They are, therefore, an effective way of valuing. Valuation can be expressed through various types of reactions affective, cognitive or behavioural, verbal and non-verbal (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Olson and Zanna, 1993; Manstead, 2001; Gerrig and Zimbardo, 2009).

In four studies, attitudes were diagnosed on the basis of the same set of views towards the economic system and social issues. Respondents referred to 7 pairs of two opposing statements. The task of the respondents was to assess these views, i.e., to choose one of the two options, the one that better reflects the individual's beliefs about the analysed problems. Everyone, even if they are not able to describe themselves in

terms of their preferred ideology or to express themselves on economic and social issues (which requires extensive knowledge in this area and the formation of appropriate concepts), is able to respond to a number of specific problems, i.e., formulate beliefs at a detailed level. For instance, they can state whether the economic system should be based on an equal distribution of goods or limited access to them, or whether the social system should be based on equality or dependence (Jakubowska, 2005; Kossowska, 2005; Czerniawska, 2010).

The statements (or their fragments) presented in Table 1 come mostly from the work edited by Reykowski (1993) *Wartości i postawy Polaków a zmiany systemowe* [Values and attitudes of Poles versus political transformations]. Morawski's publication (1991) proved helpful in construing attitudes 1 and 5. It should be emphasised that the statements used in the study are modified (although to varying degrees) in terms of content (Czerniawska, 2011; 2016).

4. Research Results

The data obtained in the four measurements (2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018) was used in diagnosing the extent to which students accept free market principles in the economy, and the extent to which the state intervenes and performs a welfare function towards citizens. The authors also determined whether these attitudes are subject to change in subsequent 5-year studies.

Table 1. *Attitudes towards the economic system and social issues - comparative analysis of research results from 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018*

| No | Attitudes towards economic system and social issues | | Year of research: | | | | Results of statistical analysis - comparison of indicators obtained in: | | | | | |
|----|---|---|-------------------|------|------|------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | 2003 | 2008 | 2013 | 2018 | 2003 | | | 2008 | | 2013 and 2018 |
| | | | | | | | 2008 | 2013 | 2018 | 2013 | 2018 | |
| 1 | 1 | The private sector should be completely independent from the state since free competition between enterprises provides a basis for economic development | 196* | 259* | 245* | 263* | $\chi^2=4.93$ p=0.026 | $\chi^2=2.93$ p=0.087 | $\chi^2=8.64$ p=0.003 | $\chi^2=0.26$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.58$ n.s. | $\chi^2=1.60$ n.s. |
| | 2 | The economic freedom of enterprises should be restricted and companies experiencing difficulty should be helped | 129 | 120 | 123 | 108 | | | | | | |
| 2 | 1 | We will not get out of poverty ourselves and we must create all incentives for foreign capital to invest in Poland on a large scale | 106 | 224 | 151 | 147 | $\chi^2=49.29$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=5.24$ p=0.022 | $\chi^2=3.68$ p=0.055 | $\chi^2=24.39$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=28.46$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=0.15$ n.s. |
| | 2 | What is really dangerous is the priceless sale of our national assets to foreign capital. We | 219 | 155 | 217 | 224 | | | | | | |

| No | Attitudes towards economic system and social issues | Year of research: | | | | Results of statistical analysis - comparison of indicators obtained in: | | | | | | |
|----|--|-------------------|------|------|------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | | 2003 | 2008 | 2013 | 2018 | 2003 | | | 2008 | | 2013 and 2018 | |
| | | | | | | 2008 | 2013 | 2018 | 2013 | 2018 | | |
| | can descend into a colony of foreign capital | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 1 Choosing and getting a job is a private matter for every citizen. The state is not obliged to provide work | 96 | 161 | 124 | 162 | $\chi^2=12.05$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=1.38$ n.s. | $\chi^2=14.82$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=6.11$ p=0.013 | $\chi^2=0.11$ n.s. | $\chi^2=7.74$ p=0.005 | |
| | 2 The state should ensure that every citizen is provided with work that matches his or her education and qualifications | 229 | 218 | 244 | 209 | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 1 Unemployment is a natural thing in a healthy economy (part of a market economy). Inefficient workers should be made redundant as this will teach them to respect work | 32 | 98 | 75 | 123 | $\chi^2=29.79$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=14.67$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=54.37$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=3.15$ p=0.076 | $\chi^2=4.80$ p=0.028 | $\chi^2=15.37$ p=0.000 | |
| | 2 Unemployment is a misfortune and a social scourge, it entails poverty and demoralisation of people | 293 | 281 | 293 | 248 | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 1 How much people earn should vary depending on qualifications and efficiency | 223 | 248 | 243 | 270 | $\chi^2=0.80$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.52$ n.s. | $\chi^2=1.45$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.03$ n.s. | $\chi^2=4.73$ p=0.030 | $\chi^2=3.96$ p=0.047 | |
| | 2 Income disparities should not be too great so that there is no division into the poor and the rich. Above all, income generated by the best earners should be limited | 102 | 131 | 125 | 101 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 1 The state should first and foremost promote the interests of private business. The development of the country depends on this | 96 | 127 | 115 | 116 | $\chi^2=1.27$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.24$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.24$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.43$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.43$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.00$ n.s. | |
| | 2 The state should first and foremost protect the standard of living of disadvantaged families and prevent from the generation of fortunes | 229 | 252 | 253 | 255 | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 1 The system of universal free health care and free education must be rejected. The state cannot afford everything for everyone | 9 | 34 | 28 | 40 | $\chi^2=11.73$ p=0.001 | $\chi^2=8.00$ p=0.005 | $\chi^2=16.99$ p=0.000 | $\chi^2=0.45$ n.s. | $\chi^2=0.69$ n.s. | $\chi^2=2.23$ n.s. | |
| | 2 A necessary condition for a fair system is to guarantee the right of every citizen to free health care and free education at all levels | 316 | 345 | 340 | 331 | | | | | | | |

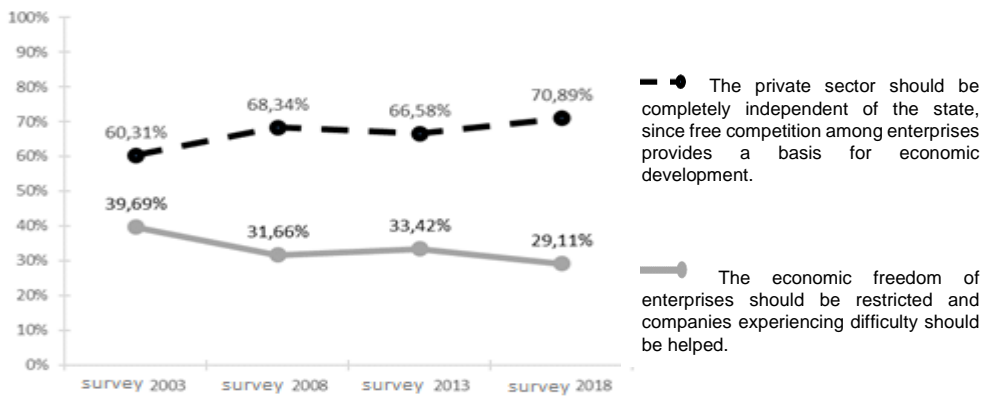
Note: * number of interviewees n.s. – $p \leq 0.1$

Source: Own elaboration.

4.1 Acceptance of the Principles of Free Market Economy versus Acceptance of the Principles of State Interventionism in the Economic Sphere

Liberal ideology is dominated by a belief is that competition is a clearly positive phenomenon. Therefore, state interventionism should be minimised, and companies should be allowed unlimited freedom of operations.

Figure 1. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 1

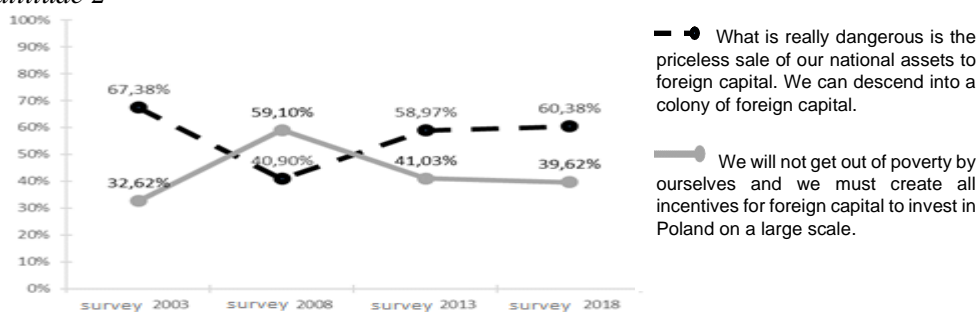


Source: Own elaboration.

More than 60-70% of respondents in four research groups (2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018) advocated independence of the private sector from the state (60.31%, 68.34%, 66.58% and 70.89% respectively) and about 30-40% – state interventionism in the form of aid to less prosperous enterprises (39.69%, 31.66%, 33.42% and 29.11% respectively, Figure 1). In making a comparative analysis, it should be noted that in relation to the first group (2003) – in each of the remaining groups (2008, 2013 and 2018) – a higher percentage of respondents (differences between subsequent comparisons amount to: 8.0%; 6.3%; 10.6%; the second of the indicated differences is on the verge of statistical significance, Table 1) considered that the basis for economic development is free competition among enterprises and thus accepted unlimited market rights. At the same time, it should be stressed that the attitude to the discussed issue has not changed significantly since 2008.

According to liberal rules, the so-called “capital xenophobia” is unfounded. Therefore, foreign investments are allowed, even those that lead to the acquisition of control over the company. However, most often – especially in the early stages of the transformation – this was associated with the sale of national assets. Can such actions create – in the opinion of the respondents – an opportunity to execute the economic interests of society?

Figure 2. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 2



Source: Own elaboration.

More than half (59.10%) of respondents in 2008 indicated a positive role of foreign capital in the economic development of Poland. In the other surveys, however, such indicators concerned a smaller proportion of respondents (2003 – 32.62%; 2013 – 41.03%; 2018 – 39.62%;). Lack of approval towards foreign investors and fears related to the sale of national assets were most often expressed by persons participating in the first survey (2003 – 67.38%), and least frequently – in the second (2008 - 40.90%). In the last two studies these indicators amounted to about 60% (2013 – 58.97%, 2018 – 60.38%, Figure 2) and did not differ at a statistically significant level. As it can be observed, investments of foreign capital were relatively more often considered a source of threats in 2003. Five years later, these attitudes changed radically (difference 26.5%) and became more positive. On the other hand, ten and fifteen years later, criticism towards foreign capital investments increased but it did not reach the level achieved in 2003 (differences from the first measurement are 8.4% and 7.0% respectively). When comparing indicators from the last three studies, one can see that the criticism is stronger in 2013 and 2018 in relation to 2008 (differences in relation to 2008 are 19.0% and 19.5% respectively). The found dependencies were at the required level of statistical significance (Table 1).

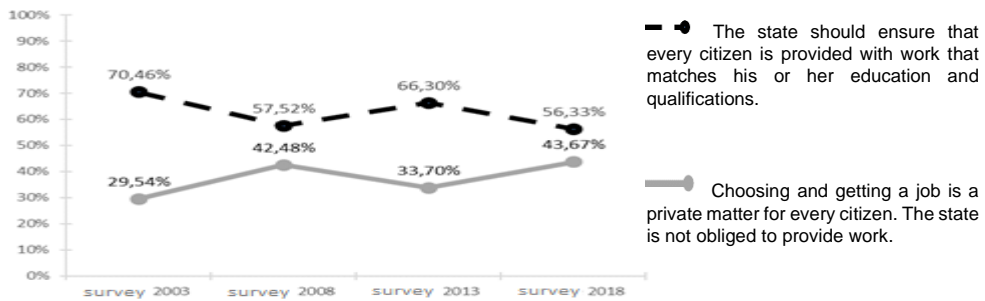
4.2 Attitude towards Unemployment and Free Market in the Employment Area

The introduction of the principles of economic liberalism has limited the state's interventionism in the sphere of employment. Therefore, they were not obliged to provide citizens with work in accordance with their education and qualifications. People became personally responsible for the development of their professional career.

The majority of respondents in each survey indicated the obligations of the state in the field of employment (2003 – 70.46%, 2008 – 57.52%, 2013 – 66.30% and 2018 – 56.33%), while a smaller part of them – expressed a belief that choosing and getting a job is a private matter for every citizen (29.54%, 42.48%, 33.70% and 43.67%, respectively, Figure 3). The first option – indicating the legitimacy of state intervention – met with higher acceptance in 2003 in relation to 2008 (difference

12.9%) and 2018 (difference 14.1%). At the same time, “the 2013 respondents” were more often convinced of its legitimacy in comparison with “the 2008 respondents” (difference 8.8%) and “the 2018 respondents” (difference 10.0%). In other words, non-liberal views on this issue were presented by a relatively higher percentage of respondents in 2003 and 2013 than in 2008 and 2018. The differences discussed above are statistically significant (Table 1).

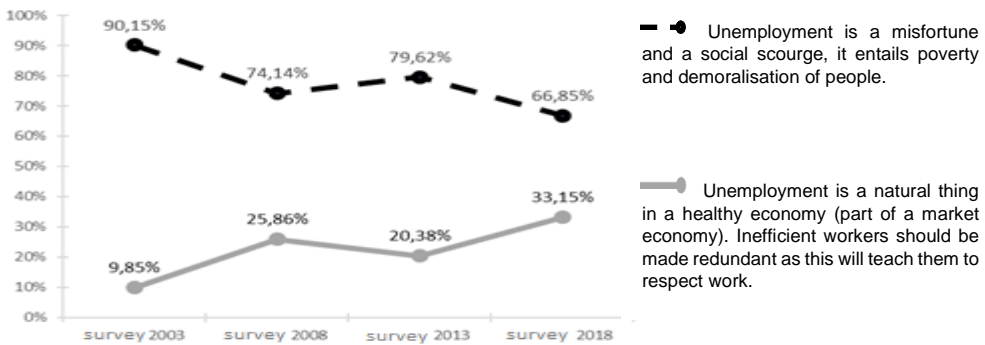
Figure 3. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 3



Source: Own elaboration.

The introduction of a free market economy – based on the principle of economic efficiency – has resulted in increased unemployment. Did this fact raise expectations that the state will create new jobs and counteract social pathologies associated with unemployment?

Figure 4. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 4



Source: Own elaboration.

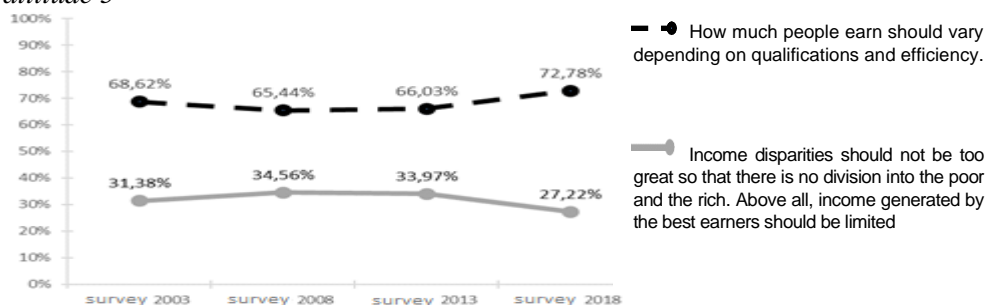
Unemployment can be treated as an element of a market economy, and the fact of having a job is linked to the effectiveness of the employee’s actions. This view was shared by a much smaller proportion of respondents (2003 – 9.85%, 2008 – 25.86%, 2013 – 20.38%, 2018 – 33.15%). A vast majority of respondents saw unemployment as the cause of poverty and demoralisation (90.15%, 74.14%, 79.62% and 66.85% respectively, Figure 4). Thus, one can speak of a critical attitude towards the free

market in the sphere of employment. Such an interpretation was relatively more prevalent among respondents diagnosed in 2003 as compared to respondents diagnosed in 2008 (difference 16.0%), 2013 (difference 10.5%) and 2018 (difference 23.3%). However, it should be noted that although attitude indicators changed “from survey to survey”, but not in the same direction. Pro-liberal attitudes were much more characteristic of the last research group than the three previous ones (further differences 23.3%, 7.3% and 12.8%), but they were also more typical of the group diagnosed in 2008 – compared to the group diagnosed five years later (difference 5.5%).

4.3 Attitude to Remuneration Principles

The consequence of the introduction of a free market economy was a change in the principles of goods distribution, i.e., meritocratic norms, and not egalitarian ones, were considered to be right. Social inequalities increased, while the low economic status affected (and still affects) a significant part of society. There arises a question as to what income disproportion is acceptable, even if one considers the meritocratic point of view.

Figure 5. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 5



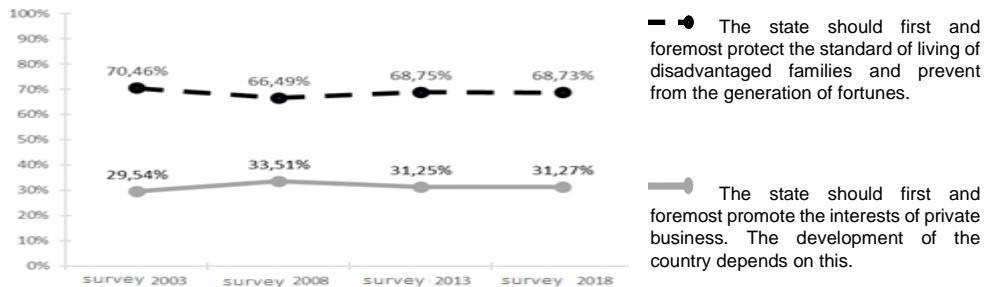
Source: Own elaboration.

A smaller percentage of respondents in four research groups (31.38%, 34.56%, 33.97% and 27.22% respectively) were in favour of egalitarian standards. They were against the excessive economic differentiation of society and pointed out the need to reduce the income of the best earners. The majority accepted meritocratic norms (68.62%, 65.44%, 66.03% and 72.78%, respectively, Figure 5). These norms are based on the conviction that man deserves as much as he deserves thanks to his education, qualifications, efficiency, and effort. The obtained indicators differed at the required level of statistical significance when comparing “the 2018 students” with “the 2008 students” (difference 7.3%) and “the 2013 students” (difference 6.7%) (Table 1).

4.4 Attitude to the Model of Welfare State

According to the ideology of liberalism, the individual is responsible for satisfying his or her needs. The role of the state, however, is limited to ensuring freedom and guaranteeing equal rights (Konieczna, 2002). However, reductions in spending on such goals as social aid, education and health care may escalate critical attitudes towards those in power. In this study, the respondents expressed their opinion whether the state should prioritise the interests of private business over the protection of the standard of living of the less successful part of society. Hence, should the model of the welfare state pass into oblivion?

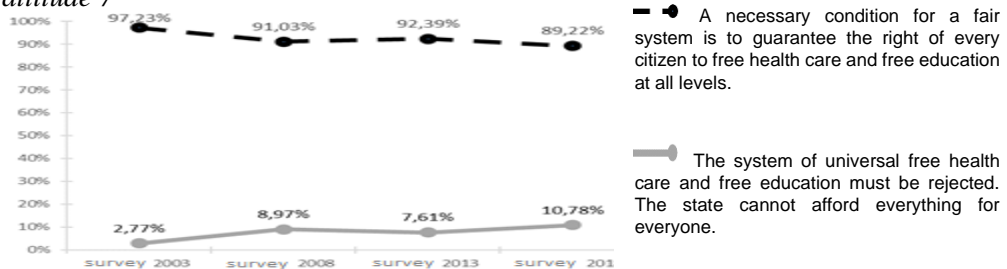
Figure 6. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 6



Source: Own elaboration.

On the basis of the collected data, it was found that the majority of respondents in each survey considered it desirable for the state to protect the disadvantaged citizens (the chronologically listed percentages are as follows: 70.46%, 66.49%, 68.75% and 68.73%). About a third of the respondents (29.54%, 33.51%, 31.25%, and 31.27% respectively) advocated the need to foster private business (Figure 6). No statistically significant differences were observed in the acceptance of attitudes (Table 1). In the presented study, an attempt was made to determine what the expectations of young people are in relation to state allowances towards medical care and education, i.e. in areas where serious economic problems are revealed.

Figure 7. Comparison of research results obtained in 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018: attitude 7



Source: Own elaboration.

The view that the state should provide free health care and free education was characteristic of the vast majority of respondents in each research group (97.23%, 91.03%, 92.39% and 89.22% respectively). A small proportion of respondents (2.77%, 8.97%, 7.61% and 10.78% respectively) stated that this system should be rejected (Figure 7). Respondents who participated in the first survey were more in favour of state allowances towards health care and education than the other three (further differences: 6.2%; 4.8%; 8.0%). However, no statistically significant differences were found when comparing survey indicators from 2008, 2013 and 2018 (Table 1).

5. Conclusion

In the four-stage studies described above, attitudes towards free competition and the independence of the private sector from the state and foreign capital investment were considered. The researchers as well elaborated on the views of the respondents towards the consequences of the introduction of market relations, free market in the sphere of employment, unemployment, differentiation of society in the economic dimension and limitations imposed by the state on welfare system. Attempts were made to determine what vision of the economic system is accepted and whether there exists a growing acceptance of successive “generations” of young people with regard to liberal ideology promoted since the beginning of the political transformation. According to this ideology, the so-called “minimum state” limits interventions not only in the economic but also in the social sphere. The analysis of the results was carried out in two dimensions, identification of dominating attitudes and characterisation of differences between them in terms of the timeline criterion, i.e., the year of the research (2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018). The authors expected that in each subsequent survey an increasing percentage of respondents would declare pro-liberal attitudes.

Respondents of the four groups presented pro-liberal attitudes (more than 50% of the participants in each study) when they referred to the issue of independence of the private sector from the state (attitude 1) and meritocratic remuneration solutions (attitude 5). They revealed non-liberal attitudes when considering the consequences of implementing a free market economy. They pointed to the legitimacy of the state’s intervention and its protective function in such areas as protection of national assets against the sale of foreign capital (attitude 2 only the group diagnosed in 2008 had different views), providing jobs to citizens (attitude 3), eliminating unemployment (attitude 4), protecting the standard of living of disadvantaged families and reducing excessive wealth differences (attitude 6) and providing free health care and free education (attitude 7).

Thus, young people were in favour of economic freedom and meritocracy – on the one hand, and the welfare and intervening state, ensuring social security and implementing employment policy – on the other. It is not difficult to notice that this is a model of the so-called social market economy, i.e., one which assumes

interventionism – especially socialism – and refers to social justice slogans. It stands in opposition to the neoliberal model – implemented in Poland after 1989 – which highlights the importance of the market economy but limits the role of the state in social policy (Czerniawska, 2010). Such liberalism, “unfettered” by the idea of a welfare state, however, was associated with enormous costs incurred by a significant part of society, especially at the beginning of the transformation process.

A different interpretative perspective emerges as a result of making a comparative analysis and assessing the obtained research indicators in relative terms. Such a procedure serves the aim of verifying the hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, in subsequent studies, the percentage of people who accept free market principles and approve of the social consequences of economic liberalisation should increase, while the percentage of people who formulate expectations towards the state in the scope of economic and social sphere interventions should decrease. However, these assumptions were not confirmed in case of the seven attitudes under consideration. Indicators of pro-liberal attitudes did not increase “from survey to survey” and more complex regularities were observed.

It turned out that for attitude 6 the indicators in the four measurements did not change. A similar and high percentage of respondents (about 70%) claimed that it is the duty of the state to protect the disadvantaged. This view is therefore strongly rooted in the mentality of young people in the period of fifteen years. The restriction of the economic freedom of enterprises (attitude 1) was relatively more advocated in the first survey than in the next three. Starting with 2008 (second survey), the views on this issue did not change and indicated a stable and high acceptance of free market mechanisms. Similar regularities could be observed in attitude 7, the approval of the rejection of the free health care and free education system was smaller in the first survey than in the three others. Since 2008, the attitudes have stabilised, but their rate was not high. Hence, the surveyed young people are both in favour of economic freedom of enterprises and state allowances for health care and education.

Criticism of the free market in employment (attitude 3) was stronger in 2003 and 2013 (no differences between 2003 and 2013) than in 2008 and 2018 (no differences between 2003 and 2013). Thus, one can observe a kind of “fluctuation” of attitudes rather than their regular change into a pro-liberal direction. The change in attitudes towards unemployment also seems interesting (attitude 4). The respondents considered unemployment to be the most destructive in 2003, and subsequently in 2013, 2008 and 2018 (all differences between the compared groups were statistically significant). Also, in case of this attitude, no changes in the indicators were observed from “survey to survey” in the same direction. It seems justified at this point in time to quote data on unemployment (according to Office for National Statistics, 2019).

In 2003 this indicator was about 20% in Poland, five years later (2008) it fell to 9.5%, i.e., more than half. In the same year, negative attitudes towards this fact were expressed by relatively fewer respondents. In 2013, the majority of the population

already experienced unemployment, i.e., 13.4%. Based on the results of the authors' own research, it can be observed that attitudes towards unemployment became more critical than in the previous study. The last survey was conducted in 2018, when the unemployment rate decreased to 5.8%. It turned out that a relatively smaller percentage of young people identified unemployment with "misery and social scourge".

As for the meritocratic principles of income distribution (attitude 5), differences were noted when comparing 2018 with 2008 and 2013. In the last survey – in relation to the two previous ones – a relatively greater proportion of respondents were in favour of differentiating earnings according to qualifications and productivity. There were no statistically significant differences in the analysed indicators between the first three surveys.

Finally, the authors elaborated on changes in the attitude towards foreign capital investment. Negative attitudes in this respect were revealed more often in the first study compared to the subsequent three. The year 2008 was exceptional since it was the time when this type of investment was more expressly accepted in relation to the three other measurements.

The assumption that every next generation of respondents will accept the principles of the free market economy to a greater extent and will understandably refer to the limitations of the welfare and intervening function of the state proved to be false. The acceptance of the system is not given "once and for all", neither is it progressive by nature. The attitude to its principles is probably largely dependent on the state's success in the economic field – and this changed over fifteen years. It should be noted that in 2001-2003 Poland was in recession (for 1999-2003 the average GDP ratio was 3.2, with the lowest in 2001 – 1.2 and 2002 – 2.0; GDP data – according to Worldbank, 2019). The feeling of threat was growing in most social strata, which certainly did not favour the acceptance of the system.

In the years 2004-2008, the GDP indicators increased and their average for the indicated period was 5.2. It turned out that, compared to 2003, respondents in 2008 presented relatively more often pro-liberal attitudes and the approval of the adopted direction of reforms in the economic field increased (attitudes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7). The period between 2003 and 2008 should be considered significant in terms of political transformations, for example due to Poland's accession to the European Union. The situation changed at the end of 2008 due to the global financial crisis, which had a negative impact on the economic condition of the country. The average GDP ratio for the period 2009-2013 decreased and amounted to 2.9, i.e., it was almost twice as low as in the previously analysed period (years 2004-2008). In case of three attitudes presented in the research (attitudes 2, 3 and 4), the critical attitude towards the principles of economic neoliberalism increased. The other attitudes did not change. Thus, in a more difficult economic situation, state interventionism in specific areas proved to be desirable. The years preceding the last study – 2014-2018 – were more

economically advantageous in relation to the past 5 years and the average GDP ratio was 4.0. 2018 was the year of more liberal attitudes towards the free market in terms of employment (attitudes 3 and 4) and meritocracy (attitude 5). Other attitudes remained stable.

However, is the acceptance of the economic system only connected with the possibility of pursuing one's own interests, getting a job and improving the financial situation of the family? Are we more homo economicus? Creating a worldview – which includes e.g., attitudes – requires integrating a lot of information. The values that constitute a deeper psychological cause of attitudes have a special status. The answer to the question whether the values and attitudes in this area are organised in a coherent system was provided in the previous publication (Czerniawska 2012; 2016).

Generally speaking, people with specific axiological characteristics cherish certain beliefs in the sphere of the economy. Clear and consistent relationships were found between individualistic orientation in the system of values (higher preferences of individualistic values) and liberal beliefs in the sphere of economy. This is expressed in support for the changes taking place in the economic sphere, e.g., consent to the independence of the private sector from the state and foreign capital investments. By accepting economic freedom, “individualists” accept social inequalities in the distribution of goods (devaluation of the principle of egalitarianism), free market in the sphere of employment and limitation of the universally understood welfare function of the state. A positive attitude to the idea of welfare state (protection of the standard of living of disadvantaged families, provision of free health care and free education) and the role of the state in regulating income and employment corresponded with a higher preference for collective values. Individualistic values favour effective functioning in “liberal Poland”. They are even a necessary condition for such a system as they stimulate the sense of personal responsibility, the need for personal achievements, readiness to compete and the desire to explore the world. Collective values, on the other hand, favour the functioning in “solidary Poland”, shaping concern for others, care for the weakest and aiming for cooperation and equality.

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