

International Implications: Are Polish Higher School Learners in Favour of Darwin's Theory of Evolution Being Taught in Primary and Secondary Schools?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss if Polish higher school learners are in favour of Darwin's evolutionary theory being included in the primary and secondary school curriculum. Thirty three students at AGH University of Science and Technology, Poland were surveyed, and the authors found that all of them are in agreement with it. The theoretical framework for this article is provided by the general idea of the school as an organization and social institution.

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Introduction

Poles are committed to the notion of compulsory education and public (state) schooling. Poles start school at age 7 and can leave at 18. There are guarantees in Poland for private schools and special education.

Purpose of the Article

This article is motivated by the Polish Government's, call on October, 2006 for a discussion about the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in schools(http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20061014/sc_afp/polandeducationsciencereligion_061014145504). They are of the opinion that the 19th century British scholar's view is false.

The theoretical framework for this article is supplied by the general idea of the school as an organization and social institution.

Significant Changes Introduced by the Polish Ministry of National Education

In September 1999 the Polish Ministry of National Education introduced significant changes into the primary and the secondary school system of education ((Kucińska, 23 February, 2000; Ministers two Edukacji Narodowej, 1999, 3-72; Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 1999, 3-80; Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 1999, 3-48). The number of years of primary schooling was reduced from 8 to 6 years; 3 year junior secondary schools (gymnasiums) were created. Starting in September 2001 students (depending on their academic ability) began their studies in either 3 year academic senior secondary schools (specialized lyceums) with the possibility of earning a school leaving certificate (the matura) or 2 year vocational senior secondary institutions (Bogaj et al., 1999, 70).

The Ministry hopes that junior secondary schooling will lead to an increase in the number of pupils entering secondary school due to the fact that these institutions will be better staffed and equipped than many primary schools (Kucińska, 23 February, 2000, Ministry of National Education, 2000, 12-13). Poland's rural dwellers will most likely significantly profit from this particular change. A UNESCO report entitled "Republic of Poland Education For All: The year 2000 assessment" indicates that 35% of the urban adult population have finished secondary school whereas somewhat less than 15% in rural areas have done so.

The new system involves: 1) integrated skills teaching for the first three years, 2) block instruction for the next three and 3) teaching by subject throughout junior secondary school. In the old system, instruction by subject began in the second grade. Since it is thought that children have difficulty differentiating between subjects at an early age these changes in teaching practices are an attempt "to make the school fit the child" (Kucińska, 23, February, 2000).

Research Question

Are Polish higher school learners in favour of Darwin's evolutionary theory being taught in primary and secondary schools? The predicted answer was "yes" because evolutionary theory is important.

Student Responses and Results

On 23 October, 2006, the authors asked 33 of his students at AGH University of Science and Technology to indicate by a show of hands what they thought about Darwin's inclusion in the school curriculum. All of them agreed to it. Therefore, the predicted answer to the research question was confirmed.

Concluding Remarks

It is recommended that more scientific research be carried out involving a larger sample size and in more institutions.

Interview

Kucińska, Teresa, (MA), Deputy Director of the Department of Post-Primary Training and Permanent Education, Ministry of National Education in the Republic of Poland. Interviewed: 23 February 2000 in Cracow.

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