



Article

## Securitisation in citizenship education in Poland: Critical analysis of the discourses linked with the changes in core curricula following the Russo-Ukrainian War

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**Keywords:** citizenship education, core curriculum, securitisation, Russo-Ukrainian war, Poland

- After the Russo-Ukrainian war, Poland introduced defence education in its school curriculum.
- The introduction of defence education was prompted by the threat arising from the war in Ukraine.
- A critical analysis of the discourse linked with the change reveals its hidden political dimension.
- The removal of topics from health education due to this change was mitigated by securitising actors' discourse.
- Securitising actors apply 'ministryplaining' changes to the audience.

**Purpose:** The research aimed to critically analyse the changes that have occurred in the core curricula of general education in Poland following the Russo-Ukrainian war from the perspective of the securitisation process.

**Methodology:** The research involved analysing 366 texts spanning various genres. These texts were produced by both securitising actors and recipients of the change. The research employed content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, following the approaches of Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl.

**Findings:** The research revealed that the securitising actors advocating for changes in the core curricula have been identified as a threat directly linked to the war in Ukraine. However, the discourse surrounding these changes also exhibited several features that indicate a hidden political dimension. Further, the analysis emphasised the use of 'ministryplaining' towards the audience involved in education, who formulate critical remarks.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Following the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the sense of threat among the Polish population amplified. A public opinion survey conducted in March 2022 revealed that 85% of surveyed Poles believed that the war in Ukraine posed a threat to Poland's security (CBOS, 2022a). Although the sense of threat had decreased marginally a month later, it remained significantly high at 79% (CBOS, 2022b). Over 2 million people crossed the Ukrainian–Polish border within the first month of the conflict (KGSG, 2022). This, coupled with the geographical and cultural proximity of Ukraine, firsthand contact with people fleeing the war, the proximity of Russia, and historical memory associated with the issue, substantially shaped the public mood in Poland. The statement 'If Ukraine fails, we will be next' (Stepaniuk, 2022) further highlighted the gravity of the situation in the country. Beyond the impact on the population's sentiments, the Russo–Ukrainian war necessitated specific actions in internal and international politics. However, it is important to acknowledge that all wars, crises, and unrest throughout history have often introduced a policy of violence and exclusion, which are then "normalised," considered necessary, and accepted (Krzyżanowski et al., 2023). While addressing the threat is crucial to ensure security, it is imperative to recognise that the measures taken may pose a threat to individual groups and to democracy as a whole, particularly when considering the spatial and temporal dimensions. The gradual discursive "normalisation" of certain social practices that extend beyond what is actually associated with a perceived threat can also apply to education, especially in the realm of school citizenship education. In light of these considerations, it is interesting to study the relationship between various types of threats present or created within the social space and their impact on school curriculum. This article considered the changes that unfolded in Poland following the Russo–Ukrainian War. The primary objective of this research was to critically analyse this transformation in the context of securitisation. However, it is important to note that this study has not glorified securitisation. Rather, the intention was to present how a specific threat was recontextualised and integrated into a specific area of the social sector – education. Further, this study aimed to explore the "extraordinary" measures proposed in response to the abovementioned threat. Moreover, it sought to illustrate the change in the concept of citizenship within the realm of school education in Poland.

The concept of securitisation arose from ideas about external existential threats (war) but has moved into areas of internal/ transboundary threats (e.g., migration, climate policy). However, its application in the educational field is considered a novelty. We firmly believe that using the securitisation approach in educational policy analysis is justified for various reasons. First, educational policy is an integral part of state policy. Second, it is not just about educational policy in general but specifically about the part that contributes to the process of "making citizens", who are constructed under the influence of threats and labelled with the concept of security. Thus, it is significant in the context of security issues (Buzan et al., 1998). Consequently, the analysis focuses on the relationship between state policy and the intended form of citizenship education introduced in schools.

Moreover, it is worth highlighting that citizenship education in this article is understood as a cross-curricular theme. In Poland, although citizenship education is implemented as a stand-alone subject (*wiedza o społeczeństwie* [knowledge about society]) (Kopińska, 2019), learning outcomes related to citizenship competencies are present in early childhood education (Stek-Łopatka, 2023) and in further education – in many school subjects, primarily history, Polish language, geography, physical education, and safety education (Kopińska, 2019). In the analyses presented in this article, we explore the subject of safety education (hereinafter SE) and its newly incorporated changes.

The case of Poland is interesting for at least three reasons. Firstly, Poland belongs to the former Eastern Bloc countries, which means that after the fall of communism, the country had to undergo decommunisation and partial demilitarisation, which also impacted the education field. Secondly, reconstructing the education system after 1989 was not easy, as the transformation process itself is complicated. It requires changes not only in the legal and structural sphere but also in institutional functioning. In Poland after 1989, there has never really been an in-depth public debate on what direction education should take. Changes to education are introduced and then withdrawn by the next governments, which in turn draft their own legislation or entire reforms. As a result, education is unstable and ‘cadential’. Thirdly and finally, Poland was ruled from 2015 until December 2023 by right-wing populists from the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* party [Law and Justice] (PiS) and coalition parties. The change to the core curriculum described in this article occurred while this government was still in power. One of the most characteristic features of Polish right-wing populism is the constant creation of enemies, and the number one enemy in foreign policy is Russia. If we add to this an appeal to the emotions and sense of harm that Poles have experienced from Russia in various historical periods (including the not-so-distant communist era), we can better understand the sense of threat generated by Russia’s attack on Ukraine.

## 2 THE CONCEPT OF SECURITISATION

Securitisation is a widely recognised and applied concept in the field of security studies, particularly by researchers of international relations. It is a fundamental approach of the so-called Copenhagen School, which defines securitisation as an intersubjective process (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 30). This process, which constitutes the highest level of politicisation, combines four components: a securitising actor, a threat, a referent object, and an audience. The securitising actor (or actors) plays a crucial role in identifying and labelling a specific problem as a threat to a specific referent object, i.e., an entity that requires protection against this threat; the securitising actor seeks the acceptance of a particular audience for the application of extraordinary measures that are a response to the identified threat (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 40–41). According to the Copenhagen School, securitisation occurs when the audience accepts specific extraordinary measures. Conversely, if the audience does not accept these measures, it is only considered a securitising move rather than securitisation itself (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 25).

Such an approach to the securitisation process was later subjected to scrutiny, which concerned, among others, the definition of securitisation as an “act of speech,” unclear relationships between the securitising actor, context, and audience, as well as the Eurocentric nature of this concept (Kaunert & Yakubov, 2017; Léonard & Kaunert, 2010; Wilkinson, 2007). In response to these concerns, Balzacq (2005) proposes to treat securitisation not as an act of speech but as a sustained strategic practice. This approach involves the securitising actor leveraging the target audience’s existing knowledge to convince them that a specific problem poses a significant threat, demanding immediate remedial actions to mitigate its potential effects.

Securitisation is better understood as a strategic (pragmatic) practice that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction. A discourse's strategic or pragmatic action differs from a speech act on at least one essential count — if the strategic action of discourse operates at the level of persuasion and uses various artefacts (metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, gestures, silence, and even lies) to reach its goals, the speech act seeks to establish universal principles of communication, the value of which is to be functional regardless of the actors' context, culture, and relative power. (Balzacq, 2005, p. 172)

In addition, the measures implemented in response to a threat need not be extraordinary (Balzacq et al., 2016). Notably, the audience acceptance of these measures may primarily concern a narrow group of political elites. In reality, the broader audience may not play a significant role in securitisation, unlike when it comes to security practices (Jaroszewicz & Grzymiski, 2021, p. 262).

In our analysis, we adopt the definition of securitisation as revised by Balzacq (2005, p. 172). We assume that securitisation is a specific strategic practice that occurs within a certain context. In this context, the securitising actor(s) identifies a specific threat to the referent object and proposes and, consequently, undertakes specific actions to protect the object. These actions are justified by appealing to the “psycho-cultural dispositions of the audience”. However, we acknowledge that securitisation can be a normatively regressive process (Paterson & Karyotis, 2022, p. 107) under democratic conditions. Securitising actors can employ their power to create threats and, consequently, justify the special measures implemented for protection. Populist governments often utilise securitisation to justify their actions. On recognising the problematic nature of this process, scholars refer to the contestation of securitisation, desecuritisation, and counter-securitisation (Paterson & Karyotis, 2022). These processes shed light on the act of fabricating threats, prompting researchers to reflect, among others, on desecuritisation strategies (Huysmans, 1995; Paterson & Karyotis, 2022) and methods to contest securitisation (Cavelty & Balzacq, 2017). In our analyses, however, we shift the focus from the issue of threat to the recontextualisation of threat for educational grounds. Specifically, we explore the “response” to this threat, i.e., the construction of measures to prevent the consequences of the threat.

We assume there are mutual connections between educational policies at both the international and national levels (Wahlström, 2016). Additionally, we observe a specific translation of international educational policies into national solutions (Tröhler, 2016).

### 3 THE HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

After World War II, Poland was in the communist bloc, which meant dependence on the USSR. The overthrow of communism in 1989 posed challenges to Polish society, such as decommunisation, desovietisation, partial demilitarisation and reform of state institutions (Blicharz & Chabska, 2016). Poland was no longer dependent on the USSR, but it did not mean an immediate change. The USSR has tried to influence the security policy in Poland for a long time. Initially, the problem was focused on the signing of a new treaty between the states and the withdrawal of Soviet armies that were stationed on Polish territory (Ochyra-Żurawska & Ochyra, 2022, p. 33). After the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the formation of the Russian Federation, the contentious issues mainly concerned NATO-Russia and EU-Russia relations and Poland's policy towards Russia within these structures (Stolarczyk, 2016). Other events were also significant. For example, Poland's support of the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 generated threats to cut off gas supplies to Poland (Ochyra-Żurawska & Ochyra, 2022, p. 34). Subsequent events that were of relevance to Polish-Russian relations were primarily the plan to locate a missile defence system on Polish territory, Russia's intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Ochyra-Żurawska & Ochyra, 2022, p. 35) and Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022. The latter event constantly generates threats against Poland and anti-Polish propaganda in Russia.

In the post-Cold War period, the dominant position in Polish foreign policy practice was that Russia was seen as the main threat to Poland's security (Stolarczyk, 2016, p. 253). As Stolarczyk (2016) writes, the threat to Poland from Russia was more potential than real, and the motives for making various types of decisions, such as Poland's aspiration to become a member of NATO or to build a missile defence system on Polish territory, were primarily political. It was, therefore, not a matter of realistically assessing the security situation and taking steps that would be adequate to this threat (p. 253-254).

It is worth adding that relations between Russia and Poland are also influenced by differences in interpreting the common past, the impact of historical memory, and the nature of the two countries' historical policies (Stolarczyk, 2016, p. 252). At the beginning of the 21st century, there was much more anti-Russian resentment in Polish society and among Polish political elites than anti-German resentment (Stolarczyk, pp. 260 - 261). A characteristic feature of right-wing populism is, among other things, exclusion, which consists of fencing off one's own national, cultural, and religious identity from others, understood both externally (other nations, emigrants, minorities) and internally (those thinking differently at home) (Moroska, 2009, p. 133). This is very visible in Poland. PiS, while first in opposition and then in power, constantly created some enemies. These were both internal enemies, such as 'gender ideology', 'LGBT ideology' or 'leftism' in general, but also external

enemies, such as Germany and, above all, Russia. Right-wing populists in Poland used the feeling of threat from Russia, which has been present in some Poles. They further strengthened this threat by appealing to prejudices, feelings of injustice and resentment (Stolarczyk, 2016, p. 278). It can be said that Russia as an enemy became the basic constitutive element of the identity of right-wing populism in Poland (Stolarczyk, 2016, p. 281). An enemy is a common goal around which action can be mobilised. In this perspective, Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022 corresponded perfectly with the policy of the PiS party, which was the ruling party at that time. In some way, it confirmed that the threat was real, which gave legitimacy to introducing extraordinary measures in foreign policy and international relations and other areas of state action, including education.

In the research presented in this article, following Yuval-Davies, we acknowledge that emotional components of identity generally become more central as individuals feel increasingly threatened and insecure (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 202). As a result, we assume that the threat to state security is a crucial point that may offer new insights into implementing political ideas in citizenship education. This is evident not only in how war is represented in education and war-related pedagogy (Vesterdal, 2023) but also in broader changes in citizenship education influenced by these threats (Poznyak et al., 2022). In the context of Poland, where the government of populist *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS) [the Law and Justice Party] held power, the perceived threat may lead to the infiltration of further elements of nationalist policies into citizenship education (Kopińska, 2022), thus rendering the threat more acceptable due to securitisation.

#### **4 THE CORE CURRICULA AND SAFETY EDUCATION IN POLAND**

To understand the analyses presented in this article, it is imperative to consider the significance of the core curricula (hereinafter: CCs) in Poland, which are published as a universally binding document. Schools must implement these standards fully, as they are subject to the supervision of the regional education authority – a body subordinate to the Minister of Education and Science (Kopińska, 2022). Furthermore, the CCs formulate highly detailed learning outcomes, even listing the specific number of hours allocated to each subject. This leaves teachers with limited opportunities to implement anything not explicitly stated in the curricula.

Besides, the core curriculum has also been a recurring topic of political dispute since PiS took power. Interestingly, these are not changes to the concept of the document. These changes generally consist of deleting or adding specific learning outcomes.

After the overthrow of communism in Poland, the first changes relating to education content were aimed primarily at eliminating elements of political indoctrination. Teaching Russian as a compulsory language was also abandoned, and other foreign languages were introduced. The 1991 Education System Act also extended the possibility for individuals and legal entities to establish and run schools (Dabrowski & Wisniewski, 2011). However, a major change in content did not occur until 1999, when the first CCs in democratic Poland were introduced on the occasion of the reform of the school structure. Subsequent

years brought changes to CCs, but the most significant change came in 2008. The language of the CCs changed. They no longer operated on content but on learning outcomes. The PiS election win in 2015 marked another big change in the education structure and CCs. In the 2015 election campaign, PiS announced a return to the 'old' school structure (8-year primary school + 3-5-year secondary school), which appealed to a general nostalgia for the 'good old days'. When the party won the elections, it quickly reversed the earlier reforms, ignoring negative opinions from academics and local authorities and protests from parents and teachers (Wisniewski & Zahorska, 2020). In the 2015 PiS programme, in the field of education, the strengthening of national identity was announced - which was later translated into the core curriculum. Changes towards an exclusive national identity were introduced through, among other things, the exclusion of the negative evaluation of nationalism, changing the relationship between the number of outcomes referring only to the national context and going beyond it to the benefit of the former, changing the proportion between the learning outcomes related to Polish history, law, and politics and those related to Europe and the world to the benefit of the former; changing the discourse on European integration - excluding the issue of 'further integration' and including the costs and negative effects of integration (Kopińska, 2022).

The changes in the field of citizenship education in Poland, resulting from the Russo-Ukrainian war, are most noticeable within the framework of SE. This subject has been implemented in Polish schools since 2009 (MoNE, 2009). Previously, under communism, education in this field was part of a militarized system that controlled the entire society (Blicharz & Chabska, 2016). Initially, it was Military Preparation, and since 1967, Civil Defence Training was introduced for school students and general self-defence for the population (UMSA, 1959). This subject was implemented from the eighth grade of primary school, with the main goal of preparing students for compulsory military service. The students were also required to attend summer camps as well as classes in sports shooting and parachuting training (Włodarczyk et al., 2018, pp. 50–53).

Civil Defence Training has been a mandatory subject since 1989 when, under the influence of political transformations and systemic changes, alterations were also made in the formal education sector. The subject was taught in secondary schools, covering topics such as self-defence and health and life protection. Shooting, field orientation, and map reading became optional topics chosen at the teacher's discretion. In the subsequent years, a proposal was suggested to reintroduce practical classes and training camps related to civil defence, rescue operations, field orientation, map reading, communication, and sports shooting. Over time, the topics changed – the ministries responsible for education gradually moved away from military themes and training, shifting towards addressing threats during peacetime (Włodarczyk et al., 2018, p. 60–67). In 2002, a core curriculum was introduced, specifying the learning of mandatory thematic content, including the subject of civil defence training (MNES, 2002). The curriculum specified two objectives for this subject:

- 1) Equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for rational and effective behaviour in the event of individual and collective threats; and
- 2) Preparing students for active participation in defence-related activities.

With the introduction of this CC into schools, topics related to shooting, field orientation, and map reading were temporarily reintroduced. Based on the 2008 regulation (MoNE, 2009), civil defence training was replaced by safety education (SE), which is still in effect today.

Since 2017, SE has been implemented in Polish primary schools (in the eighth grade) and secondary schools (MoNE, 2017; 2018).

## 5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As indicated above, the research presented in this article aims to critically analyse the change of Polish CCs in the context of securitisation. To achieve the research goal, we asked the following research questions:

- 1) What changes occurred in the Polish CCs due to the Russo–Ukrainian war outbreak?
- 2) What discourse accompanied this change?
  - a) What discourse was constructed from the position of securitising actors? How was it nominated, predicted, and justified? What was the perspective on which instances of predication and argumentation were formulated? Were the statements intensified/mitigated?

In this case, the securitising actors are the Minister of Education and Science, other persons representing the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter: MES), members of the government, and persons representing the ruling party.

- b) What discourse was constructed from the position of this change's target audience? How was it nominated, predicted, and justified? From what perspective were instances of predication and argumentation formulated? Were the statements intensified/mitigated?

In the case of the research presented in this article, the focus was on two groups of audiences:

- 1) The first audience consists of organisations participating in the legislative process at the stage of opinions, which formulated their official positions, subsequently published on the Rządowe Centrum Legislacji's [Government Legislation Center] (hereinafter: GLC) website;
- 2) The second group comprises teachers who are the direct recipients of this change. The focus was on teachers of a specific subject – SE – where the analysed changes occurred.



## 6 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research analysed 366 texts from various genres, such as legal instruments<sup>1</sup>, explanatory statements of draft legal instruments, documents produced during the legislative process, website content, social media posts, comments on posts, and statements for radio and television. The selection of materials for the analysis was purposive. The primary selection criterion was the thematic criterion. Given that the war in Ukraine led to the change in CCs pertaining to the subject of SE, all legal instruments related to the “old” and “new” CCs for this school subject were analysed. In addition, all documents available on the GLC website, which were related to the legislative process leading to the introduction of this amendment, were included in the analysis. To further refine the selection, a time criterion was applied to the remaining material. It was established that all materials from the MES website, as well as from other state representatives and their social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter) related to the analysed issues, published between February 24, 2022, and August 31, 2022, would be included in the research material. Furthermore, all posts and comments related to the change that were published in the Facebook group for SE teachers between March 2022 (when the minister initiated the discussion regarding potential changes) and the end of the first semester of the 2022/2023 school year (when the change came into effect in January 2023) were included in the analysed material. For a comprehensive understanding of the materials, a detailed list of texts that were analysed to seek answers to specific research questions is presented in Table 1 (Appendix 1).

The study's analysis employed content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) following the approaches of Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl: Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005). Research questions 2a and 2b indicated that the application of discursive strategies was explored. The discursive strategies are “a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices including discursive practices, adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological and linguistic aim” (Wodak, 2016, p. 33). Wodak listed the following discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, and intensification/mitigation (Wodak, 2016, p. 33).

## 7 FINDINGS

### 7.1 Defence education instead of health education in the core curricula of general education

Due to the Russo–Ukrainian war outbreak in 2022, changes were introduced to SE's core curriculum (MES, 2022a; 2022b), replacing health education with defence education. The comparison of educational objectives in the CCs before and after the changes is presented in Table 2, highlighting those that have been altered.

**Table 2. Educational objectives in safety education included in the “old” and “new” core curricula.**

Educational stage	Educational objectives included in the “old” CCs	Educational objectives included in the “new” CCs
Primary school (grades 4th–8th)	I. Understanding the essence of state security II. Preparing students to act in emergency situations (disasters and mass casualty incidents) III. Developing basic first aid skills IV. <i>Fostering individual and social health-promoting attitudes</i>	I. Understanding the essence of state security II. Preparing students to act in emergency situations (disasters and mass casualty incidents) III. Developing basic first aid skills IV. <i>Fostering defensive attitudes</i>
Secondary school (level 1 vocational school)	I. Knowledge of the structure of national defence system II. Preparing for threat situations III. Mastering the first aid principles	I. National security II. Preparation for rescue operations in emergencies (mass casualty incidents and disasters) III. First aid basics. IV. <i>Defence education</i>
Secondary school (high school and technical high school)	I. National security II. Preparation for rescue operations in emergency situations (mass casualty incidents and disasters) III. First aid basics IV. <i>Health education; Individual and collective health; Health-promoting behaviours</i>	I. National security II. Preparation for rescue operations in emergencies (mass casualty incidents and disasters) III. First aid basics IV. <i>Defence education</i>

Source: Authors’ elaboration based on: MoNE, 2017; 2018; MES, 2022a; 2022b

In the revised CCs, the topics related to first aid were significantly expanded, especially those about times of armed conflict (e.g., III.19: “knows the first aid principles in situations involving the use of conventional weapons”). However, with the removal of health education from the core curricula, teaching content related to topics such as civilisation-related diseases, physical activity, nutrition, and mental health disappeared. Instead, since the school year 2022/2023, defence education has been implemented in schools, which consists of topics such as field orientation, map reading, cybersecurity, shooting, and reacting in the event of a threat of war. Here, there was a clear return to the topics covered in civil defence training (except cybersecurity), which, in its essence, was designed to prepare students to participate in warfare. Introducing the obligation to conduct shooting training in the CCs posed an extremely challenging task for Polish schools that had not previously carried out such activities. They were tasked with independently organising spaces, equipment, and, above all, personnel competent in this area. The detailed learning outcomes in defence education are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Learning outcomes related to defence education included in the “new” core curricula for safety education**

Primary school (grades 4th–8 <sup>th</sup> )	Secondary school (level 1 vocational school, high school, and technical high school)
<p>IV. Fostering defensive attitudes</p> <p>1. Field orientation and map reading; The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) knows the basics of orienteering, including the ability to indicate cardinal directions using tools, such as a compass and GPS, and navigate terrain using distinctive landmarks;</li> <li>2) can use different types of maps for orientation in the field.</li> </ol> <p>2. Cybersecurity in the military context; The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) knows the essence of cybersecurity;</li> <li>2) can comprehend, create, and present moderately complex statements regarding the role and place of military cybersecurity in the national cybersecurity system.</li> </ol> <p>3. Preparation for shooting training; The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) knows the principles of safe and effective use of small arms;</li> <li>2) knows the component parts of small arms;</li> <li>3) can assume firing positions;</li> <li>4) can adequately align aiming devices, regulate breathing while preparing to shoot, and release the trigger smoothly.</li> </ol>	<p>IV. Defence education</p> <p>1. Responding to a threat of warfare situation; The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) understands the limitations of the human body related to lack of sleep, water, and food, as well as the impact of atmospheric factors on survival capabilities;</li> <li>2) can explain the phenomenon of panic and discuss ways to counteract it;</li> <li>3) knows survival tools and understands how to use them to increase chances of survival;</li> <li>4) knows methods of sourcing water and food available in the natural environment.</li> </ol> <p>2. Cybersecurity in the military context; The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) knows the principles of identifying fundamental cybersecurity threats;</li> <li>2) knows and understands selected definitions of cybersecurity as outlined in the Act of July 5, 2018, on the National Cybersecurity System (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1369, of 2021 item 2333 and 2445 and of 2022, item 655) and NATO documents;</li> <li>3) can identify the division of roles during the cooperation of the military system with non-military entities;</li> <li>4) can comprehend, create, and present complex statements regarding the role and place of military cybersecurity in the national cybersecurity system.</li> </ol> <p>3. Shooting training; The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) knows the principles of assembling and disassembling weapons;</li> <li>2) can perform shooting exercises using firearms, pneumatic weapons, replica firearms (ASG), virtual shooting ranges, or laser systems.</li> </ol>

Source: MES, 2022a; 2022b

Furthermore, in the past, the CCs for primary and secondary schools (high school and technical high school) recommended organising meetings with psychologists. However, after the changes were enacted, this practice was substituted with visits to military facilities. The transition is clearly illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4. Proposed forms of supplementing classes with alternative methods – A comparison in the “old” and “new” core curricula for safety education**

Before the changes (MoNE 2017):	After the changes (MES 2022a):
<p>“Classes can be supplemented with alternative methods, among which the following can be mentioned:</p> <p>1) visits to emergency response institutions;</p> <p>2) meetings, lectures, and talks with police officers, municipal guards, paramedics, veterans, ecologists, psychologists, etc.”</p>	<p>“Classes can be supplemented with alternative methods, among which the following can be mentioned:</p> <p>1) visits to emergency response institutions, <i>military units, uniformed services, or pro-defence organizations, as defined in the Homeland Defence Act of March 11, 2022 (Journal of Laws, items 655 and 974);</i></p> <p>2) meetings, lectures, and talks with police officers, municipal guards, paramedics, veterans, etc.”</p>

Source: MoNE 2017; MES 2022a

This was particularly alarming, as it seemed that mental health issues, once replaced, were not placed elsewhere in the curriculum, potentially leading schools to discontinue their implementation. On one hand, mental health-related topics were removed from the CCs despite their significance during armed conflicts. On the other hand, the Polish Parliament granted Ukrainian refugees a range of rights, including essential psychological support during this period (Firlit-Fesnak, 2023, p. 124), which seems contradictory.

In the rationale for the changes in the CCs, the ministry argued that removing health education was justified due to its inclusion in other subjects, such as biology, physical education, history, and family life education. However, upon analysing the CCs, it became evident that topics directly related to mental health were addressed in a limited manner. In the CC for primary schools (grades 4th–8th), apart from detailed requirements regarding the use of psychoactive substances (applicable to all educational levels), three specific aspects related to mental health were emphasised:

- 1) knowledge about society (V.1: “recognises behaviours related to physical and mental violence, including verbal abuse towards oneself and others; lists individuals and institutions that should be notified in such situations”);
- 2) physical education (VI.9: “discusses the causes and consequences of stereotypes and stigmatisation of mentally ill and discriminated individuals, such as those living with HIV/AIDS”); and
- 3) family life education (I.16: “knows what institutional support for families entails in situations of illness, addiction, poverty, unemployment, risky behaviours, pedagogical, psychological, and legal problems”).

In the level 1 vocational schools, mental health requirements appeared in:

- 1) family life education (V.6: “knows where to seek information about psychological, medical, and legal assistance centres; understands their

significance; V.7: understands that abortion can pose a threat to mental and physical health”); and

- 2) physical education (VI.9: “discusses the reasons and effects of stereotypes and stigmatisation of individuals with disabilities, those suffering from mental illnesses, and those subjected to discrimination”).

The last-mentioned requirement was reiterated in the high school/technical high school curriculum, serving as the sole reference to mental health. These topics revolved around three school subjects: physical education, family life education, and knowledge about society. It is worth noting that Family Life Education is not a compulsory subject in Poland, so those who do not attend those classes get to know these topics to an even lesser extent.

## 7.2 Discourse of securitising actors

The analysis of texts and utterances produced by securitising actors (refer to Appendix 1: Table 1, item 2a) revealed that labelling the change in the CCs for SE is primarily subjective. Only 19% of the identified fragments demonstrated a neutral characterisation, where a nomination strategy was observed. This tendency was chiefly observed in documents produced during the legislative process, although evaluative descriptions of this change also appear. Consequently, the discourse of securitising actors was dominated by a method of determining changes to CCs directly or indirectly linked to their evaluation. Three basic ways of naming this change were distinguished: expanding/new content in the subject, “supplementing” existing content/educational goals, and “returning” to the content related to civil defence training present in Polish education in the 1990s. Each of these naming approaches was positively evaluated. The terms “expansion” and “supplementation” highlighted the deficiencies of the previous CCs, while “return” referred to sentiments associated with education in the past. The latter naming approach was characteristic of securitising actors’ statements on social media, radio, and television broadcasts.

(1) From September 1st, we are significantly changing the safety education, which is in school in the 8th grade [in primary school], in the first grade [in secondary school], and introducing those elements that are familiar to us from civil defence training of previous years. One I experienced in high school included shooting at the shooting range and getting acquainted with weapons. (MSEmedia2)

(2) From September 1st, within the framework of safety education, the essential elements of civil defence training will be reintroduced: shooting range, defence knowledge, and first aid skills. (MSE\_sm1)

Furthermore, the change was described broadly to encompass various aspects, including civil defence training, pro-defence education, pro-defence and military safety education, defence component, shaping pro-defence attitudes, or those emphasising shooting training, such as shooting and handling firearms, and practice at shooting ranges. The implementation of the predication strategy concerning the shooting training involved

several key steps: 1) specifying this part of education as a key component of civil defence training, important issues for all citizens; 2) emphasising its necessity and indispensability; 3) focusing on changes in the CCs for SE primarily related to shooting training (e.g., safety education has been supplemented with a new area of topics related to defence education, including shooting training (website1)); 4) reinforcing statements by expressing a firm stance (I would like there to be as much shooting practice as possible [MES\_sm12]).

In all the texts gathered in this group, where the use of argumentation strategies was identified, the primary focus revolved around security threats. This applied to both documents related to the legislative process and the analysed utterances for radio or television. In the case of explanatory statements for the draft amendments of the CCs for SE both at the primary and secondary school levels, the argument of the threat of war was the only one present in this document:

(3) The tragic experiences of World War II and the ongoing geopolitical changes following its end did not lead some countries to abandon the use of war as a means of resolving conflicts. The increasing threat to the state's security requires supplementing the educational goals and teaching content of the subject safety education with issues related to state defence, acquiring shooting skills, and preparing students to cope with threats caused by wartime actions, as well as teaching them the basics of rescue operations. (Doc1.1.; Doc2.1.)

(4) According to the proposed change in the core curriculum for safety education, the classes should emphasise the specifics of acting in situations of war threat. (Doc1.1.)

It appeared as the only argument in documents related to the assessment of the impacts of the proposed regulations:

(5) Additionally, given the current geopolitical situation, it is necessary to supplement the educational goals and content of the subject safety education with issues related to the state's defence and prepare students for situations of threats related to wartime activities. (Doc1.2; Doc2.2.)

(6) The expected outcome of the change should be the preparation of 8th-grade elementary school students and students of the level 1 vocational school to respond appropriately in situations threatened by wartime activities. (Doc1.2.)

In these documents, a mitigation strategy was also applied regarding the elimination of the existing section related to health education in the CCs for SE:

(7) The elimination of the section related to health education in the current safety education curriculum will not negatively impact this area of education. This is because the content in this regard is also widely covered in the curriculum of other subjects such as physical education, biology, or family life education. Additionally, these topics are included in the schools' educational and preventive programmes. (Doc1.1.; Doc2.1.)

The analyses presented in the section 7.1. demonstrated that this argumentation gave the impression of being substantive. While there were requirements in other subjects within school education, including those indicated by the MES in the explanatory statements for the draft amendments, related directly or indirectly to health education, they were unable to replace these requirements assigned to the existing CCs for SE.

In fragment 6, it is evident that the assumption behind introducing the amendment to SE is to solve the problem, identified here as a lack of preparation to react to warfare threats. This method of constructing argumentation is also apparent in the statements of securitising actors for radio and television broadcasts.

(8) Getting acquainted with weapons actually to make Poles be able to defend themselves in a situation with such a real threat. (MESmedia2)

This is an *argumentum ad populum*. Additionally, securitising actors constructed an inconsistent discourse that seems to depend on the recipient of a given statement. In response to the criticism regarding the essence of the change, namely the introduction of shooting activities among primary school students (Opinion3.4), a mitigation strategy was employed, indicating that it only applied to the final year of primary school and that the proposed change (...) for primary schools only involved preparation for shooting training (Doc1.3.). Further, it was stated that:

(9) The requirements above primarily involve theoretical preparation. The justification for the explanatory statement for the draft regulation indicated that activities in this area should be conducted mainly theoretically, gradually introducing practical elements. (Doc1.3.)

With regard to the need to gradually introduce practical elements related to behaviour in situations of threats during peacetime, the MES emphasised that the proposed curriculum incorporated clear recommendations indicating:

(10) That it is essential to emphasise the acquisition of practical skills, repeated as often as possible, especially in the areas of first aid, orienteering, and shooting. (Doc1.3.)

Although, in the ministry's opinion, quoting this fragment justified conducting exercises related to first aid, it is impossible not to notice that the quoted statement also pertained to shooting. The statement of the Ombudsman for Children, who acts as a securitising actor, was similarly inconsistent. On one hand, he presented the idea of changes in the scope of SE as a solution that guarantees security; however, on the other hand, he stated:

(11) I see it as supporting children, their ability to be safe or to use or even touch that thing called a weapon, precisely to feel safe. (OC)

This statement suggested that the focus was not on practical self-defence skills but rather on an illusory sense of security derived from interacting with firearms. Moreover, this statement exposed the political perspective of the constructed discourse. The war in Ukraine, due to its proximity, seemed to conveniently serve as justification for promoting

the militarisation of education. This was evident in both the statements of the Minister of Education (fragment 12) and the Ombudsman for Children (fragments 12–13).

(12) Today, the approval for the return of civil defence training, specifically with shooting and knowledge about firearms, and first aid, and so on, is significant. Everyone can see what is happening. I believe that even 5 or 6 years ago, or even 3 years ago, if we had announced something like this, we would have faced intense criticism from the opposition. (MESmedia2)

(13) Let me repeat myself – absurd pacifist movements did not contribute to enhancing the security of our country. (OC)

(14) Believe me, painting colourful flags on the sidewalk does not improve security because someone else who understands that such things are possible elsewhere is standing on the border and guarding our security or flying over us by plane or helicopter so that we can feel safe. (OC)

In fragment 12, there is a reference to the argument of universal consent regarding the introduced changes. This argument is closely tied to the war in Ukraine (“because everyone can see what is happening”). Furthermore, the following sentence reveals that this decision has a political dimension. The “we” mentioned here referred to the ruling party, and the minister was aware that the proposed change in SE would not align with the agenda of other parties in opposition under different circumstances. Conversely, the Ombudsman for Children directly revealed the political perspective of the introduced change. He expressed a clear negative evaluation of the activities of pacifist movements. He belittled, even ridiculed, the importance of peace education, referring to it as “painting colourful flags on the sidewalk”. Simultaneously, he highlighted the significance of militarised SE (fragments 11, 15).

(15) I absolutely disagree with those who claim that teaching someone to handle, operate, and safely use weapons builds some kind of a criminal atmosphere. Definitely not. Switzerland, for example, is armed to the teeth because almost all citizens have weapons, and we don’t consider them a criminal country; instead, we see them as a safe country because everyone fears them. And we have to bring it back. So I think this safety education will be very important. (OC)

Apart from the argumentation related to the threat of war and the effectiveness of militarising SE, two other types of arguments also emerged in this context. The first one was associated with the concept of patriotic education: a “moral and patriotic formation” that is combined with a “military ethos” and “synergy of military activities”, which is reinforced by references to Poland’s history (website2). The second type of argument concerned the increasing interest in pro-defence topics among the youth, as claimed by securitising actors. This argument lacked specific data to support their claims; instead, they relied on the personal opinions of the speakers or presented general statements:



(16) I am convinced that students also see this need. They would also like to familiarise themselves with those elements of safety knowledge that will benefit them in the future if they were in any kind of emergency. (MESmedia2)

(17) For several years, there has been a growing interest among young people in both studying in uniformed classes and participating in other programs related to pro-defense education. (website2)

The analysis of the discourse constructed by government representatives, the Ombudsman for Children, and individuals representing the President of the Republic of Poland allowed us to identify several perspectives used in statements concerning the proposed change. These perspectives included state-oriented, political, didactic-organisational, and educational-developmental points of view.

The state-oriented perspective, when adopted by securitising actors, signified the recognition and advocacy for the introduced changes through the prism of state security.

As detailed in this analysis, the political perspective unveiled the party interests underlying the introduction of changes to the CCs in the field of SE.

On the other hand, the didactic-organisational perspective, constructed by individuals professionally engaged in education, employed didactic and legal language, specifically the language used in legal instruments related to the teaching-learning process. It also encompassed the organisational aspects of this process, such as teachers' competencies, accessibility of materials, the necessary infrastructure for the introduced changes, and the funding required. The arguments used in this perspective appeared substantial but can only be evaluated by individuals professionally involved in education and its organisation. The discourse that emerged in response to negative opinions during the opinion-forming process displayed elements of lecturing and manipulation. The lecturing was constructed using the imperative mood, mitigated by employing the first-person plural. Responses to comments formulated by the opinion-giving entities always began with the phrase "let us notice" (Doc1.3; Doc2.3), followed by references to existing or proposed regulatory frameworks. The purpose of this statement was to undermine the credibility of the opinion-giving entities, demonstrating that they were mistaken due to their lack of knowledge or understanding of the legal framework, rendering their comments baseless. The manipulation in these responses can be observed in 1) emphasising specific parts of the regulations or statements by bolding the text, thereby mitigating the significance of other sections, and/or 2) creating an illusion of a substantive response by presenting legal arguments that, however, fail to address the core of the opinion-giving entity's comment. Additionally, it was a typical practice to deflect negative comments from the opinion-giving entities (the ministry did not take any comments into account), making schools, local government units, or even teachers responsible for implementing the change.

The developmental-educational perspective involved constructing opinions and arguments from the standpoint of individuals who deeply understand what is essential in the upbringing of children and adolescents. Within the analysed group of statements, this perspective primarily focused on valuing a specific vision of citizenship education while

simultaneously revealing the political interest behind it.

It is worth noting that the dominance of specific perspectives within which the change in the CCs for SE is named, valued, and argued is differentiated by the type of analysed documents. Consequently, the state-oriented perspective is emphasised in documents related to the legislative process. Its emphasis lies in presenting the “increasing threat to the state’s security” and the “current geopolitical situation” as the first and primary argument for the introduced change. However, due to the nature of these documents, the dominant perspective here is the didactic-organisational one. This perspective was identified in 86.96% of all fragments coded as perspectivation in this group (n = 92). The situation emerged differently in the case of statements made by securitising actors for radio and television. In this case, the state-oriented perspective was dominant (39.47%; n = 38), but the political and educational-developmental perspectives were also strongly present (26.32% and 21.05%, respectively). This demonstrated the difference in the arguments tailored depending on the potential audience.

### **7.3 Discourses of the audience**

#### **7.3.1 Discourse(s) of opinion-giving entities**

The analysis of the texts in this group revealed that when naming the changes introduced to the CCs in SE, a neutral approach predominated over other types (over 80% of the fragments coded with nomination were assessed as cases of neutral naming). The change was formally described as an amendment to a specific regulation but also semi-formally, such as a proposed change, modification to CCs for SE, a draft, or a proposed draft. In several fragments of the analysed opinions, the term enrichment/supplementation of content appeared often; notably, this naming approach was always associated with a positive evaluation of the change or its specific part. It is worth drawing attention to the fact that three opinions were entirely positive. The rest, however, evaluated the detailed provisions of the draft regulation. The retention of first aid skills in the CCs was positively valued. However, the changes introducing elements of shooting training (Opinion3.4; Opinion3.3.), guidelines regarding the implementation of the training itself (Opinion1.1), as well as the overall approach to defence education (Opinion3.4; Opinion3.3.) were negatively assessed. Furthermore, the insufficient emphasis on skills related to civilian behaviour in life-threatening situations during peacetime was negatively evaluated (Opinion1.1.; Opinion3.2.). A similar criticism concerned the issue of cybersecurity, where there was a reproach for excessive emphasis on theoretical knowledge at the expense of acquiring specific skills (Opinion3.4). Moreover, there was negative feedback on abandoning the existing section related to health education (Opinion3.3).

The positively evaluated changes were described as justified, valid, meaningful, and significant, with their positive assessment being argued based on the new geopolitical situation and current threat. Therefore, such evaluations and arguments were constructed

from a state-oriented perspective. On the other hand, changes in the CCs for SE that received negative evaluations were deemed unattainable for both teachers and students, described as yielding unfavourable results, being impractical, causing concern, generating costs, and raising doubts. Several arguments supported such evaluations:

1. The potential negative consequences of the introduced regulations on students' future behaviour;
2. Students' developmental needs;
3. Individual educational needs of specific student groups (individuals with physical disabilities, multiple disabilities, or mental health disorders);
4. Inconsistency between learning objectives and outcomes;
5. Lack of adequate teacher qualifications and teaching aids and inadequate infrastructure;
6. Costs that were not included in the document assessing the impact of these regulations; and
7. Concerns regarding the politicised interpretation of certain provisions.

Therefore, in the analysed discourse of opinion-giving entities, several perspectives emerged: state-oriented, educational-developmental, didactic-organisational, specialised, and political. The state-oriented perspective was associated with a positive evaluation of the change and acceptance of the securitising discourse constructed by the government. Within this perspective, the war in Ukraine was perceived as a threat, and the proposed change in the CCs for SE is seen as a "measure" aimed at protection. The remaining perspectives were used in negative evaluations and their associated arguments. The didactic-organisational and educational-developmental perspectives were defined similarly to those in the discourse of securitising actors, with the latter also comprising knowledge about the socio-moral development of children and the youth. It encompassed standard and individual developmental needs, addressing specific individuals and groups. On the other hand, a specialist perspective involved constructing statements from the perspective of individuals with specialised knowledge in a specific field. In the analysed group of documents, the specialist perspective was present in the opinion of Fundacja Powszechnego Dostępu do Defibrylacji w Polsce [the Universal Access to Defibrillation Foundation in Poland]. This foundation advocated for introducing a specific learning outcome (the ability of students to indicate the location of a publicly accessible automated external defibrillator [AED] in the nearest vicinity). They constructed a substantive argumentation supported by specific knowledge (Opinion3.2). Finally, the political perspective entailed that the proposed change be evaluated in terms of the potential risks associated with its exploitation by those in power to fulfil agendas that were not directly specified (for instance, concerns about schools being mandated to collaborate with particular organisations that lack broad social acceptance). The analysis of materials in this group indicated that two

perspectives dominate: the didactic-organisational and educational-developmental perspectives, constituting 36.59% and 21.95%, respectively, of all fragments coded as perspectivation. Additionally, each of them was found to be present in three out of the seven analysed opinions.

### 7.3.2 Teacher Discourse

In the analysed material (posts and comments in a Facebook group for SE teachers), the strategy of nomination regarding changes in the subject was identified in 11 fragments of utterances. Most (63.63%) consisted of comments on the posts rather than the posts themselves. The event was simply called a change in the core curriculum in three fragments. In two other fragments, this change was broadly described as a shift from SE to civil defence training (thus signalling a return to what it was) while also noting a certain semblance of action:

(18) Something removed, something replaced, and something added.  
(FB9.08.22com)

Using the word “something” as an anaphora implied not only the superficiality of the change but also its minor significance. The other terms used to describe the change that occurred in SE had an evaluative character. Some nouns used were related to perceiving the change as a mistake (error, unknown, confusion). Other terms, enriched with irony, referred to the authors of the introduced change (their clever plan, the ministry’s invention, and the minister’s idea).

The analysis of predication strategies revealed that negative evaluation is dominant in the analysed sample – as much as 96.88% of the fragments in which predication strategies were identified in relation to the change ( $n = 32$ ) belonged to this group. These statements were formulated from the didactic-organisational perspective, i.e., by individuals implementing the changes planned by the ministry in educational practice. It appeared significant that its audience did not focus the evaluations on the change itself but rather on its consequences for teachers, students, and the teaching process. Assessing negatively evaluated statements in conjunction with the argumentation strategy allowed for identifying several groups of these evaluations in the analysed texts.

**Table 5. Groups of negative evaluations of the change, along with examples**

Group of negative evaluations	Definition and example
Lack of infrastructure and teaching aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No shooting ranges in schools and access to shooting ranges; no educational materials to be used in lessons;</li> <li>• "I'll wait for educational materials for theoretical pistol handling first because currently there's no budget in my school for dummy guns" (FB24.08.2022com);</li> <li>• "(...) Not to mention, small schools have slim chances of having access to a shooting range..." (FB9.08.2022com).</li> </ul>
Untrained staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of training refers to shooting-related issues;</li> <li>• "We'll see how it turns out because, as mentioned by previous speakers, a problem will be training the staff" (FB26.05.2022com).</li> </ul>
Danger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This group refers to the danger resulting from shooting lessons for participants of the learning process;</li> <li>• "(...) Is the Minister considering how many accidents involving weapons and children might occur?" (FB18.08.2022com).</li> </ul>
Insufficient number of hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This refers to the insufficient number of teaching hours of SE for the implementation of the newly introduced issues;</li> <li>• "And there's not enough time... how are we supposed to do it with just one hour per week?" (FB18.08.2022com).</li> </ul>
Underfunding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understood as the authorities' lack of concern for financing the conditions for implementing the newly introduced topics;</li> <li>• "...and I wonder who will finance the training; after all, no one will provide access to the shooting range for free, will they? (so students will have to pay)" (FB19.07.2022kom).</li> </ul>
Shifting the responsibility onto the teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This concept refers to burdening the teachers with the consequences of the introduced change, leaving them to deal with it on their own;</li> <li>• "It will be as usual, meaning teacher figure it out on your own" (FB5.08.2022com).</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' elaboration

Negative predications are reinforced by rhetorical questions, exclamations, and irony:

(19) This is crazy... Is the Minister considering how many accidents involving weapons and children might occur?? (FB18.08.22com)

(20) Great! (FB18.03.2022com)

(21) Since the ministries are not familiar with the realities of schools and approve changes after choosing textbooks, what am I, a poor 'undereducated' teacher, supposed to do? (FB24.08.2022com)

Of the fragments concerning the evaluation of the change, 15.63% had a negative tone, and the applied mitigation strategy indicated ignoring the significance of the introduced change:

(22) Give it a rest; the curriculum will change again at some point anyway. (FB7.06.2022com)

Here, a mitigation strategy is evident, suggesting the likely temporary nature of the changes and, consequently, the lack of reason for major concerns related to their implementation.

Only in one fragment was a positive predication strategy identified:

(23) We have a 10 m shooting range at school and pneumatic rifles. I have shooting range supervisor qualifications. And I will gladly become a shooting instructor at the earliest opportunity. (FB19.07.2022com)

The statement reflected a simultaneous acceptance of a didactic-organisational perspective (the speaker is a SE teacher) and a specialist perspective (someone with qualifications related to shooting). To some extent, the speaker also assumed a privileged position – they work in a school that already possesses the necessary equipment to implement the revised content in the CCs, which was not the case for most schools in Poland at the time the changes were introduced. The didactic-organisational perspective, understood in the same way as in the discourse of opinion-giving entities, thus dominated the teacher discourse; and similar to the case of opinion-giving entities, it was associated (with one exception – see fragment 23) with a negative assessment of the proposed changes to the CCs. Admittedly, it was not clear how to evaluate the absence of other perspectives in the teacher discourse. It does not necessarily indicate that teachers do not have opinions on introducing changes to SE in the national, educational-developmental, or political contexts. Their evaluation stance, whether positive or negative, is not evident either. However, a discourse dominated by the didactic-organisational perspective suggested that this way of perceiving the introduced changes was interpreted as the most significant. It may imply that teachers primarily saw themselves as implementers of the introduced changes, focusing on the consequences of these changes for their role as teaching professionals. Such self-positioning may, in turn, result from the centralist way of Poland's educational policy functioning, the lack of legal stability in schools, and the low status of the teaching profession (inadequate remuneration, failure to consider the voices of teachers when designing changes, and simultaneously burdening teachers and schools with <didactic, organisational, and financial> responsibility for their introduction).

## 8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The war in Ukraine is an undeniable reality that undoubtedly necessitates the implementation of specific actions and measures aimed at strengthening Poland's security, both internationally and nationally. In light of this situation, certain questions must be addressed: What is the actual threat to security on both the national and international scales? And what necessary measures should be taken to minimise this threat or, in other words, ensure security? Both questions fall within the realm of national and international security policy. In this article, we critically examined the recontextualisation of this threat within the context of educational policy. To do so, we analysed changes in the CCs, specifically in the school subject of SE, which were introduced in response to the Russo–Ukrainian war.

What changes occurred in the Polish CCs due to the Russo–Ukrainian war outbreak? The answer is evident: defence education (in place of health education) has been implemented, which consists of topics such as field orientation, map reading, cybersecurity, shooting, and reacting in the event of a threat of war.

Furthermore, we analysed the discourses accompanying this change: the discourse of securitising actors and the discourse of the audience. Regarding the discourse of securitising actors, the analysis revealed that the threat identified by securitising actors is directly linked to the war in Ukraine. Official documents, primarily the justification for the draft regulation amending the CCs, point to the increasing threat to national security and the current geopolitical situation. The recontextualisation of this threat into the educational sphere necessitates “supplementing the educational objectives and content of the SE subject with issues related to the country’s defence and preparing students for situations of threats associated with wartime activities” (Doc1.2.; Doc2.2.); the intended outcome entails “preparing students (...) to respond appropriately in situations of threat related to wartime activities” (Doc.1.2.; Doc2.2.). This is the basic argumentation framework for the change in the CCs for SE. However, the analysis of the discourse created by securitising actors revealed that the change had a hidden political dimension. It is not about providing security; it is rather about populist management of danger (Stolarczyk, 2016), exploiting the situation, and appealing to the “psycho-cultural dispositions of the audience” (Balzacq, 2005). It is about militarising education when the emotional components of identity come to the fore (Yuval-Davies, 2006). This was evidenced by the arguments found in the statements of securitising actors for the media (e.g., fragments 12–15). We discovered that this political motivation also arose from other elements of the analysed discourse. Several characteristics of this discourse are presented below:

1) *Because everyone can see what is happening*

This characteristic of the discourse signifies presenting the changes introduced to the CCs as unquestionable in their essence. The argumentation relating to the war, as well as to the threat to the state, seems indisputable. This change is naturalised (Krzyżanowski et al., 2023) and labelled “a natural response” or “a preventive measure”. This manner of presenting the change has proven effective, as no one has questioned the essence of this change in the analysed discourse of the audience. However, this does not imply that this change is not being criticised. Nevertheless, the criticism pertains to specific components of the change rather than its fundamental essence. Interestingly, no one has asked how the introduced changes reduce the threat to national security? This may show, on the one hand, the effectiveness of populist practices in this situation, but on the other hand, it may also be a result of how education is managed in Poland. The audience knows it does not play a significant role in the change process (Jaroszewicz & Grzymyski, 2021).

2) *So that we, as parents, feel secure, knowing that our children are capable of appropriate behaviour*

This highlights the populist rhetoric that leverages fear and emotions associated with the Russo–Ukrainian war, including concerns about personal safety and the safety of children;

3) *So that Poles can defend themselves*

On one hand, this characteristic involves overestimating the effects of the change concerning the CCs themselves. A detailed analysis of the implemented learning outcomes, considered in the context of achieving all SE objectives in school, including the number of hours dedicated to this subject<sup>2</sup>, combined with feedback from teachers and entities, allows us to infer that achieving the outcome of “preparing students (...) to respond appropriately in situations of threat related to wartime activities” (Doc1.2; Doc2.2.) is difficult, one might even say impossible. On the other hand, the effects of the change are overestimated not only in the context of implementing the CCs. The discourse of securitising actors expands the audience by suggesting that the changes will lead to an eventual outcome where everyone’s safety and capability to defend themselves is ensured. Here, we are confronted with the illusion of taking control of the danger, suggesting that the introduced change is an effective antidote to the perceived problem (Balzacq, 2005);

4) *Painting colourful flags on the sidewalk does not improve safety*

This characteristic implies a direct or indirect valuation of a specific form of citizenship education. It not only devalues and infantilises the importance of education for peace while highlighting the militarisation in education but also demerits discernible cases of valuation, such as introducing defence education at the expense of health education (mitigating this change in legislative documents while simultaneously excluding the fact that health education has been eliminated from the media discourse);

5) Another characteristic entails the manipulation of arguments depending on the type of audience to whom the statement is addressed and based on the feedback provided by opinion-giving entities;

6) *Ministrysplaining*<sup>3</sup>

‘Ministrysplaining’ refers to the practice of depreciating the comments made by professionals and opinion-giving entities pertaining to the discourse of instruction while constructing seemingly substantive arguments supported by the legal framework to undermine the audience’s understanding of these provisions.

When it comes to the discourse of the audience, based on the analysed texts, it can be inferred that the majority of the audience does not accept this change. However, their role in this context seems insignificant as they did not influence the introduction of the change. In this case, acceptance at the governmental level was deemed sufficient (Jaroszewicz &



Grzymski, 2021). The CCs are published in legally binding documents, but the ones that are enacted by the minister. The argumentation framework, which proved effective, was utilised for a broader audience, namely public opinion. Securitising actors used their power to recontextualise the threat within the realm of education. It is worth noting that they did not create a threat but rather capitalised on an existing one. Introducing changes to the CCs, justified as a means of protecting someone from a threat, is, in fact, a form of managing insecurity (Muniz & Cecchetto, 2021) to pursue one's own party policy, specifically modifying the concept of citizenship education in schools. The potential consequences of using the concept of securitisation in education in this way are serious. It could significantly change young people's understanding of security and make a particular type of citizenship.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Polish: *akt prawny*, a law that has been enacted. Enactment is another English translation of this term.

<sup>2</sup> The subject is taught in the last year of primary school for 1 hour per week and in the first year of secondary school in the same weekly time frame.

<sup>3</sup> The term was coined by referring to the term mansplaining, which was created under the influence of Rebecca Solnit's essay "Men Explain Things to Me" from 2008.

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## APPENDIX 1

**Table 1. Comprehensive list of analysed documents (along with identifiers) in relation to specific research questions.**

Research question number	Analysed texts	Document identifier
1	Two regulations governing the previous core curricula (referred to as “old”)	MoNE, 2017; MoNE, 2018.
	Two regulations amending the core curricula (the so-called “new”)	MES, 2022a; MES, 2022b
2a	26 texts created by the MES, minister and vice ministers of MES, and other individuals representing the state: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 posts published on official social media profiles ( Facebook and Twitter, currently: X) of the MES, the minister, and vice ministers in MES: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1504779443625238529">https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1504779443625238529</a></li> <li><a href="https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1507362394233782277">https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1507362394233782277</a></li> <li><a href="https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1554452244648583171">https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1554452244648583171</a></li> <li><a href="https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1586984460234461185">https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1586984460234461185</a></li> <li><a href="https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1672168505116860416">https://twitter.com/MEIN_GOV_PL/status/1672168505116860416</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/CzarnekPL/posts/454868026429079">https://www.facebook.com/CzarnekPL/posts/454868026429079</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/ministerstwo.edukacji.nauki/posts/332888735535431">https://www.facebook.com/ministerstwo.edukacji.nauki/posts/332888735535431</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/ministerstwo.edukacji.nauki/posts/337267915097513#">https://www.facebook.com/ministerstwo.edukacji.nauki/posts/337267915097513#</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/ministerstwo.edukacji.nauki/posts/421671206657183">https://www.facebook.com/ministerstwo.edukacji.nauki/posts/421671206657183</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/DariuszPiontkowski/posts/488074236468876">https://www.facebook.com/DariuszPiontkowski/posts/488074236468876</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=366545092017526">https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=366545092017526</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.facebook.com/tomasz.rzymkowski/videos/558938669361358">https://www.facebook.com/tomasz.rzymkowski/videos/558938669361358</a></li> </ol> </li> </ul>	MES_sm1- MES_sm12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two texts published on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>official MES website: Co nowego w roku szkolnym 2022/2023? [What’s New in the 2022/2023 School Year?] August 31, 2022, <a href="https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/nowy-rok-szkolny-20222023">https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/nowy-rok-szkolny-20222023</a>;</li> <li>President of the Republic of Poland: October 28, 2022, Rada ds. Rodziny, Edukacji i Wychowania o edukacji dla bezpieczeństwa [Council for Family, Education and Upbringing about Safety Education] <a href="https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/narodowa-rada-rozwoj/aktualnosci/rada-ds-rodziny-edukacji-i-wychowania-o-edukacji-dla-bezpieczenstwa-.60446">https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/narodowa-rada-rozwoj/aktualnosci/rada-ds-rodziny-edukacji-i-wychowania-o-edukacji-dla-bezpieczenstwa-.60446</a></li> </ol> </li> </ul>	website1- website2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nine texts documenting the legislative process from the website of the GLC <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With reference to the draft regulation amending the core curricula for primary and level 1 vocational schools: <a href="https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360101">https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360101</a>: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explanatory statement;</li> <li>Regulatory Impact Assessment;</li> <li>Report on opinions and consultations.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Doc1.1.-Doc1.3.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With reference to the draft regulation amending the core curricula for secondary schools and level 2 vocational schools:: <a href="https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360100/">(https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360100/)</a>: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explanatory statement;</li> <li>Regulatory Impact Assessment;</li> <li>Report on opinions and consultations.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	Doc2.1.-Doc2.3.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For both drafts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments from the Ministry of Justice;</li> <li>Reply to the comments from the Ministry of Justice;</li> <li>Referring to the comments of the regulatory impact assessment coordinator.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	Doc3.1.-Doc3.3.



Research question number	Analysed texts	Document identifier
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two statements of the MES for radio and television:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sygnaly Dnia March 22, 2022, interview with Przemysław Czarnek, Polskie Radio, <a href="https://jedynka.polskieradio.pl/arttykul/2924767">https://jedynka.polskieradio.pl/arttykul/2924767</a>;</li> <li>Wolne Głosy March 17, 2022, Czarnek: Od 1 września do szkół wróci przysposobienie obronne [Czarnek: From September 1, Civil defence training is going to return to schools], <a href="https://youtu.be/1LMzoyzVfX4">TV Republika</a>, <a href="https://youtu.be/1LMzoyzVfX4">https://youtu.be/1LMzoyzVfX4</a>, fragment 12 min. 15 sec. – 18 min. 20 sec.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	MESmedia1- MESmedia2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One statement from the Ombudsman for Children for the radio: W otwarte karty, May 15, 2022, Mikołaj Pawlak o sytuacji dzieci z Ukrainy: konwencje są przepiękne tylko na papierze [Mikołaj Pawlak about the situation of children from Ukraine: conventions are beautiful only on paper], <a href="https://jedynka.polskieradio.pl/arttykul/2958638">https://jedynka.polskieradio.pl/arttykul/2958638</a>, Mikołaj-Pawlak-o-sytuacji-dzieci-z-Ukrainy-konwencje-sa-przepiekne-tylko-na-papierze fragment: 15min. 50 sec – 22 min. 21 sec.</li> </ul>	OC
2b	Seven opinions submitted by various organisations as part of the public consultation in the legislative process published on the GLC website:	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With reference to the draft regulation amending the core curricula for primary and level 1 vocational schools <a href="https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360101">https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360101</a>:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion of Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Praworządności w Szkołach: “Stowarzyszenia Umarłych Statutów” [the Association for the Rule of Law in Schools: “Dead Statutes Society”];</li> <li>Opinion of Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem [the Council of Dialogue with the Young Generation] of the 2nd term;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	Opinion1.1.- Opinion1.2.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With reference to the draft regulation amending the core curricula for secondary schools and level 2 vocational schools (<a href="https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360100/">https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360100/</a>):           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion of Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem [the Council of Dialogue with the Young Generation] of the 2nd term;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	Opinion2.1.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For both drafts:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion of Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich [the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland];</li> <li>Opinion of Fundacja Powszechnego Dostępu do Defibrylacji w Polsce [the Universal Access to Defibrillation Foundation in Poland];</li> <li>Opinion of Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe [Civic Educational Association];</li> <li>Opinion of Komisja Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności [the Commission of the Polish Academy of Skills] for the evaluation of school textbooks.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	Opinion3.1.- Opinion3.4.
	42 posts on the Facebook group for SE teachers called Safety Education ( <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/2589730678017104">https://www.facebook.com/groups/2589730678017104</a> )	FBdateofpost, for example: FB01.08.2022
	287 comments posted under these posts	FBdateofpostcom, for example: FB01.08.2022com

Source: Authors' research.