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***Co-production in Poland:
from recognition to research?
Some preliminary evidence***

Summary

The aim of this paper is to investigate reasons hindering the proper recognition of co-production in public policies and its implementation to current research in Poland. The study elaborates on three theses: existing a veneer form of co-production instead of co-production par excellence, limiting the recognition of co-production to the theoretical concept and its underestimation in empirical studies, and limiting co-production to cutting or freezing public expenditures on public services instead of regarding it as an instrument involving citizens into public policies.

The paper is divided into the sections including: the overview of the foreign findings on co-production, presenting the reasons of co-production's poor recognition in Poland, analysing chances of co-production's utilization in research and public policies, and — finally — showing some preliminary evidence from education policy in Poland.

The study is based on theoretical analyses of the literature and statistical data, and preliminary empirical evidence from authors' science project.

Key words: co-production, education, third sector, Poland

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Introduction and theoretical frameworks

The concept of co-production was introduced by Elinor Ostrom in the late 1970s (Parks et al., 1981). She discovered a strong relation existing between the quality of public services on the one hand, and the involvement of users into delivery of the services they receive, on the other hand. In this relation, the mixture of activities undertaken both by public service agents and citizens for the provision of public services exist. Nevertheless, Ostrom's findings have not been popular since the late 1990s. In Alford's (1998) opinion, the lack of interest in co-production can be accounted for by the fact that the concept of new public management was brought into general use (ibidem). Levine (2008), on the other hand, stresses the generic stage of relations between citizens and public administration, which could be put to use in a more democratic way, considering an active role in planning and delivering services, instead of being only passive recipients.

At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the potential of co-production was rediscovered, largely due to the need to create new means, instruments and directions for the reconstruction of welfare states such that their effectiveness, in times of increasing new social policy risks and harsh public budgets constraints, could be enhanced. Moreover, the increasing interest in co-production was due to a stronger readiness on the part of citizens to play a more active role in public policies. Since then, the concept of co-production has been widely employed in studies on different research fields, including economy, sociology and management (Brandsen, Pestoff, 2006), and has subsequently been given several conceptualizations, including Ostrom and Parks (1999), Rich (1981), Bovaird (2007), Alford (2009) and OECD (2011). The concept of co-production has also been increasingly used in the studies on the transformations of European welfare states (Bovaird, 2007; Alford, 2009; Brandsen, Pestoff, 2006; Pestoff, 2009, 2012).

Scholars researching the European welfare mix usually split the process of co-production into various stages. Probably the most popular distinction is made between co-governance, co-management and co-production by Brandsen and Pestoff (2006) and Pestoff (2008, 2012). Their definition has been utilized in this text. There are also other distinctions, which are less or more developed in comparison to the one mentioned above (i.e. Bovaird, Löffler, 2012; Vaillancourt, 2009). It should be noted that according to Brandsen and Pestoff (2006), co-production and co-management take place on the output side of the welfare state. This means that they are connected to the implementation of public policies, and refer to an arrangement of the delivery of public services. In particular, co-production creates a situation of a growing diversity of providers of public services, while co-management is used to refer to the process of managing this growing diversity. Co-governance, on the other hand, can be found on the input side of the welfare state. It refers to the situation in which the growth in the diversity of services and service providers is situated within a more democratic framework. It is made by the creation of various decision bodies, according to which all providers are represented and given the right to decision-making and the planning of public services. Thus all providers, including

in particular citizens and third sector organizations gathering citizens, participate actively in public policy formulation.

The discussion around co-production has also focused on its function. Co-production may serve only as an instrument to increase the effectiveness of public institutions (e.g. OECD, 2011, or Ostrom's first works). In this approach, it corresponds to the public debate on possible ways of rebuilding the traditional welfare state in times of harsh public budgets constraints. According to others, co-production is the instrument employed to introduce radical social change (e.g. Pestoff, 2008), owing to the fact that the delivery of public services by the third sector contributes to the enhancement of the political activity of citizens. Currently, the problem of participatory reforms appears to be far more visible in the public debate. For example, the reconstruction of welfare states in Western European countries that has been taking place since the 1990s, has taken into account the increasing interest of the third phase of democracy. It is defined as constructing those mechanisms of participatory democracy that take into consideration the role of citizens and third sector organizations. This may indicate that the traditional ways of participatory democracy are exhausting their frameworks. This is evident in the decreasing activity of citizens in political elections at different levels, and a decrease in the membership of political parties. On the other hand, as Pestoff (2008) states, citizens seem to make attempts to search for new participatory channels existing in the fields of sub-policy. These are ones connected to a focus on the participation of citizens at the level of the production of public services. As a result of new participatory channels, 'co-production provides one missing piece of the puzzle for developing and renewing democracy and the welfare state' (Pestoff, 2008, p. 175).

Despite the existing approach regarding co-production, the majority of authors agree with the statement that co-production may improve both the quality and quantity of public services. As a result, co-production provides advantages to both the welfare state and citizens. It seems that the statement made by Warren et al. (1982) is still relevant: co-production can lead to cost reductions, higher service quality and expands opportunities for citizens to participate in public policies. This is the basic reason explaining rising interest in co-production from academics, policy makers and citizens in the times, when the potential of reforms grounded in new public management have been exhausting their frames. As a result, since its first recognition in the late 1970s, the concept of co-production has been so far utilized in various fields. Vamstad (2015) numerates in particular housing (Brandsen, Helderman, 2012), social work (Brown et al., 2012), local governance (Dezeure, de Rynck, 2012) and public education (Porter, 2012). Also research in childcare (Vamstad, 2007; Ciepielewska-Kowalik, 2016) and health care (Pestoff, Saito, Vamstad 2017), has already been conducted.

In Poland, the recognition of co-production is still in its initial phase. Neither has co-production been introduced to any public policy, nor properly implemented to current research. The aim of this paper is to investigate the reasons of such situation. It elaborates on three main findings. Firstly, a veneer form of co-production has been observed in Poland. It means that citizens' engagement in public policies is limited to

the implementation phase, while it is underestimated in public policies' formulation. Secondly, except for some limited data in detailed public policies, including education, co-production is a theoretical concept and lacks empirical studies. Thirdly, co-production in Poland seems to have -in the first place- pragmatic character. Thus, it is expected to cut, or at least freeze, public expenditures on public services. Seldom is co-production regarded as an instrument which encourage citizens to create public policies.

The study is based on the most recent Polish research results on the third sector, including both quantity and quality dimensions (e.g. data from Central Statistical Office of Poland and governmental documents and strategies). It also presents some preliminary analyses of the author's own research conducted in 2016–2017².

In search for a place for co-production in Poland: An investigation that has not yet been accomplished

A rising interest in co-production in many western European countries and the USA, has not transformed itself in a similar process in Poland. Neither has co-production received a proper recognition from scholars, nor from citizens, nor policy makers. Only a few Polish academic studies (e.g. Kaźmierczak, 2012; Sześciło, 2015, 2015a; Ciepielewska-Kowalik, 2013, 2016; IPISS, 2015) has already less or more utilized a concept of co-production. None of governmental strategies and other public administration documents which consider roles of citizens and the third sector in public policies, has yet analyzed co-production.

The reason of a poor recognition of co-production in Poland should, in the first place, be attributed to the fact that, similarly to Western European countries, the organization of public service delivery is directly linked to the ways of reforming welfare states³. In the case of Poland, only recently have been taken into account some limitations of privatization and market-oriented practices which existed for years as pillars of transforming post-socialist welfare state. They, nevertheless, excluded other solutions for the reconstruction of the welfare state, in particular those appreciating blooming third sector organizations.

The situation started to change in the late 1990s, when first harbingers of a change in the delivery of public services' organization, and hence a shift in relations between public administration and third sector organizations, emerged. One of which was linked to the highest legal act which is the Constitution of the Republic of Poland from 1997 and other legal acts regulating detailed public policies⁴ that opened a space for a wider participation of the third sector in the delivery of public services. A turning point took place in 2003 when the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work was enacted.

² Within the framework of the project *Co-production of welfare services: education and social assistance in Poland after 1989* (2015/19/D/HS5/00514), financed by National Science Centre, Poland.

³ Detailed analyses on the ways of public service delivery in different models of public administration see Sześciło (2015), Ciepielewska-Kowalik (2016).

⁴ Social assistance (2004), social and vocational rehabilitation of the disabled (1997), labor market (2004), education (1991) and culture (1991).

What about present situation?

After 25 years since the beginning of transformation, co-production may be regarded as a promising instrument of the reforming current Polish welfare state facing new demographical, societal and economic dilemmas. One can state that the Polish welfare state, that has for many years utilized neo-liberal reforms and new public management, has exhausted its frames. Neither have they lead to an increase of access and an improvement in the quality of many public services, and nor they reduce public costs involved. Moreover, implemented reforms, along with a communism legacy, have even deepen a problem with poor participatory democracy in Poland.

In Poland, the engagement of third sector organizations in policy formulation and implementation is not very popular. This situation, except for the domination of NPM in reforming post-socialist welfare state, is attributed to the specific type of recognition of roles of third sector organizations in policy formulation and implementation as well as to the inter-sectorial relations according to the 2003 Act of Public Benefit and Volunteer Work. According to this act (article 5), public administration authorities shall perform public tasks in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other “public benefit organizations”, including social cooperatives. As a result, the Act theoretically creates a vast opportunities for third sector organizations to participate in policy formulation. According to it, joint (public administration — third sector representatives) consultative and initiative bodies can be created by the offices of public administration on each administrative level. Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (2014) states that more than a thousand bodies of this kind existed, while the average number of bodies per one public administration office was 3.9 in 2013.

In reality however, the existence of such joint bodies guarantees only the possibility to voice for third sector organizations but with no reference to their real influence on the decisions made by public administration authorities. Moreover, further data analysis reveals that even consultative process is not very developed in Polish public administration. In 2013 only 38.1% of public administration authorities consulted normative acts and strategic documents with third sector organizations, while the number of consulted documents was very low and did not exceed 12% (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2014).

Taking into account administration level one can state that there are almost no institutionalized forms of relations between nonprofit organizations and public institutions that could be classified as co-governance par excellence at the national level. In fact, such institutionalized forms that have decision-making power exist only in a few detailed public policies, including education (as described later). In majority cases, at the national level, relations between the third sector and public administration are developed ad hoc, if needs for an exchange of information and opinion regarding new drafts of legal acts emerge. In these cases we can observe a kind of a veneer form of co-production, which means that it is limited to the delivery of public services with no reference to co-governance.

Theoretically, due to a strong decentralization process that has been implemented in Poland since the beginning of transformation, co-governance may be expected to

be more common at the local level. This assumption is justified by data provided by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (2016) showing that the lower level of public administration, the more intensified cooperation between public administration and third sector organizations. Consequently, only every fifth organization declared collaboration with public administration at the central level. In the contrary, 72% organizations declared cooperation with units of local self-governments. It is worth mentioning that the inter-sectorial cooperation was the most common between third sector organizations and communes. Cooperation with districts and provinces was much less intensified (respectively 26% and 20% third sector organizations declared cooperation with these units of local self-governments) (*ibidem*).

According to Celiński et al. (2011), nonprofit organizations may be in particular involved in drafting three types of documents at the local level. These are: the Cooperation Program with Non-governmental Organizations, the Municipal Development Strategy and the Municipal Strategy for Solving Social Problems (*ibidem*). These documents are designed by every unit of self-government which means that they function in provinces, districts and communes. The first document sets the rules for cooperation between a municipality and nonprofit organizations, defines the objectives of these relations and designate financial resources for this purpose. A municipal development strategy sets the main objectives of municipal policies and a municipal strategy for solving social problems describes major social problems at a municipality and ways of their resolutions. Therefore nonprofit organizations take part in the process of shaping their own relations with municipalities as well shaping major local policies. However, their real influence on municipal policies is very limited. They usually have opportunity to voice their opinion on draft documents but have no chance to influence their final versions (Nałęcz, Leś, Pielniński, 2015, p. 2374). In fact, this is public administration authority who makes in an authoritarian way final decisions of the shape of local public policy. In other words, at the local level, similarly to the national level, nonprofit organizations are treated by the public administration authorities rather as consultants than decision makers.

When considering co-management and co-production which encompass the role of nonprofit organizations in implementation of public policy, it should be said that the 2003 Act of Public Benefit and Volunteer Work regulates the extent and forms of joint cooperation. These are provision of support and entrustment of public task⁵. In the case of provision of support, a public institution helps a nonprofit organization in its public benefit activities. Therefore, when a nonprofit organization applies for public support, it should document that it has its own resources for the purpose of a public activity. In the case of entrustment of a public activity by a public institution, a nonprofit organization does not have to use its own resources. Since a public institution entrusts a nonprofit organization one of its obligatory public benefit activities, it has to secure resources for realization of this activity. Data provided by Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (2012,

⁵ More about co-production, in particular co-governance and co-management, in the light of the 2003 Act see also Kaźmierczak (2015).

2014) reveals that public administration authorities prefer support over entrustment. As a result, at least for some of third sector organizations, the real engagement in realizing public tasks may be highly difficult or even impossible due to the lack of the appropriate level of public funds devoted to the public tasks transferred to the third sector.

The interesting fact is a gap between the declaration of public administration authorities and third sector organizations when considering the engagement of the latter in the realizing public tasks. According to CSO (2016a), 9 out of 10 public administration units declared contracting out public tasks to third sector organizations; while only 4 out of 10 third sector organizations declared engagement in realizing public tasks. This poor incidence of the use of realizing public tasks by Polish third sector organizations is also proved by small funds transferred to these organizations when considering their share in the overall costs of administration units. The average share of funds transferred in this case did not exceed 1.3% of the overall budgetary expenditure of the units of public administration (*ibidem*).

Does co-production have any chance to be utilized in Polish research?

There is also one additional issue that should be discussed when speaking of weak implementation of co-production in Poland. It is its very poor utilization in the Polish research. It is due to the fact that since the time when the 2003 Act of Public Benefit and Volunteer Work was enacted, the dominant term which is employed by the researchers to describe relations between third sector organizations and public administration is cooperation. Usually, if there is any kind of relation between third sector organization and public administration, it is referred to as cooperation. According to the 2003 Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, two types of cooperation are distinguished: financial and non-financial cooperation. As a result, the majority of the Polish research uses the 2003 Act terminology, including the results of the leading research centers and academics such as: Klon/Jawor Association (e.g. Przewłocka, 2009; Gumkowska, 2006; Gumkowska, Herbst, Wygnański, 2005; Herbst, 2008) and the Institute of Public Affairs (e.g. Olech, 2012; Makowski, 2007; Kasprzak, 2007; Niewiadomska-Guenzel, 2007; Rymśa et al., 2007). Moreover, the subordination of the research perspective to the language from the 2003 Act has assumed various dimensions. It is clear in the analysis of the relations between third sector organizations and public administration in social policy (as in the case of the above-mentioned authors), as well as in detailed public policies (e.g. Arczewska, 2011). It can also operate at various levels, including both the national level (e.g. research by the Institute of Public Affairs and the Klon/Jawor Association mentioned above) and at the local level (e.g. in Małopolska Province — Handzlik, Głowacki, 2012; in Warsaw — Przewłocka, 2013; Przewłocka, Adamiak, 2013). It should be said that, in Polish research, the term ‘cooperation’ is sometimes supplemented or substituted by the term ‘participation’; for example in the research conducted by Olech (2012). In general, however, in the Polish literature, as well as in documents of the Polish administration, the term ‘cooperation’ prevails.

Despite its evident inspirations for analyses of the role of the third sector in policy formulation and implementation, at least several limitations of the Polish research perspective grounded in the 2003 Act of Public Benefit and Volunteer Work can be observed. First, the Polish approach mentioned above focuses on the role of the third sector in the public service delivery, but not on management. Moreover, this research usually disregards the participation of the third sector in decision-making and the planning of public services. They only consider the consultative role of third sector organizations, so they measure whether, and how often, consultations with participation of third sector organizations are made. In this case, no reflection on the influence of third sector organizations on decisions made by public administration is visible. As a result, they — in fact — investigate a veneer co-governance. Only Olech (2012) considers the way, in which citizens may have an influence on local law. However, this study is not focused on third sector organizations and utilizes a concept of participation. From the analytical point of view, the concept of co-production is not a synonym of participation, even if the first is taken from the same theoretical background as the second, in particular Arnstein's participation ladder (1969) or Likert's four-stepped category of workers' involvement in management in enterprises (1959). These limitations of existing Polish research on the roles of third sector and inter-sectorial relations have a chance to be overcome by introduction research on co-production. The use of co-governance considering participation of third sector organizations in both planning and decision-making regarding public services, enables the investigation of their real roles as agenda setters instead of being only consultants for public administration. As a result, only co-governance but not non-financial cooperation described in the 2003 Act, can show the influence of third sector organizations in the democratization of the Polish welfare state.

Secondly, Polish research rooted in the 2003 Act push investigation of roles played by third sector organizations in public policies in rigid frameworks created by Weisbrod's public goods theory. This is because the role of third sector organizations is considered only from the perspective of the delivery of public services commissioned by public administration. Their participation in decision-making process considering public services, as well as management of these services, is not taken into consideration. As a result, third sector organizations which realize public tasks commissioned by public administration, are simply perceived as playing only supplementary or substitutive role to the state. In the contrary, a use of co-production could break the majority of failures in relations between third sector organizations and public administration which are pointed in the economic theories of the emergence of the third sector, such as information asymmetry (trust theory) or the role of the so-called median voter (public goods theory). The concept of co-production is also associated with theories of democracy in considering the need of supplementing the mechanisms of representative democracy by direct third sector's involvement in decision-making and planning public services. This is why co-production supplements theories of polycentricism (as in Ostrom, 2008) or derives from other theories considering participatory reforms by Hirst (1994), Sorensen (1998), Walzer (1988) or

Scharpf (1997). All this comprehensive theoretical background provided by co-production could not be used if the domination of the perspective of the 2003 Act on Public Benefit Work was not broken in the Polish research.

Co-production in education: is it really a best practice? Some preliminary evidence from education policy in Poland

The increase of the third sector in policy implementation in education is evident just after the breakthroughs of 1989. In the 1990s it was thanks to the democratization of the public sphere and the grassroots pressure of teachers, parents and other social activists gathered around the Civic Educational Association (Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe). Those two parallel processes resulted in breaking the state's monopoly in the delivery of education services. In education policy, as one of the first public policies established in the post-socialist welfare state, the freedom of existing and equal financing (since 2001) of both third sector organizations and private for-profit enterprises, was decreed. As a result, non-public (or private) schools, in particular at the primary and secondary stages, found their place in the education system in the 1990s. Consumers valued their education level, curricula and well-educated staff. Nevertheless, this phenomenon was typical for the larger cities such as Warsaw, Wrocław and Łódź, and owed much to the high level of tuition fees which opened access only for better-off families.

The other factor supporting the role of third sector organizations in education policy is attributed to the second wave of decentralization (in 1999), and the change in the financing of education, which was linked to the number of pupils (in 2000). As a result of a decline in population and a lack of pupils in the late 1990s and the beginning of 2000s, communes in Poland decided to close down about two thousand primary schools. In order to maintain access to education services, the grassroots movement supported by The Federation of Educational Initiatives (Federacja Inicjatyw Oświatowych) started taking over some of those schools. In 2000–2005 local associations and foundations started running 250 primary schools, mainly in rural areas.

The admission of Poland to membership of the European Union in May 2004 opened new possibilities for the third sector in education, thanks to European guidelines in education and European funds dedicated to education. For example, a lack of activities undertaken by communes in order to fulfill a deep institutional gap in pre-primary education, resulted in the activity of the third sector. In 2005–2008 the pilot European program administered by the Ministry of Education resulted in the establishment by third sector organizations of more than 800 so-called 'alternative pre-primary preschools'. Those institutions were attended by more than 10.000 children between the age of 3–5 in rural areas. Moreover, in 2007, they were put into the act of education and they now exist as so-called pre-primary education groups and pre-primary sections of primary schools. This change was a result of lobbying activities undertaken by third sector organizations. By placing new pre-primary institutions within the Polish legal framework, third sector organizations provided them with a stable financial support from communes

instead of their having to rely on unstable funds from various education projects. After eight years of existing, more than 2.181 pre-primary groups and points offered nearly 50.000 educational places for more than 3% children attending preschools (data from 2014/2015 school year). Particularly important is the fact that those pre-primary points and groups, which were initially established by the third sector, are now run by the public administration and private for-profit enterprises as well. Moreover, the share of providers is almost the same if the type of the sector is considered.

Another interesting examples of influence of third sector organization on formulation of the educational policy at the national level are successful lobbying activities undertaken by the third sector in order to simplify the procedure of taking over small public schools (those attended by no more than 70 pupils) by subjects coming from both for-profit and the third sector. This step, taken in 2009, simplified the procedure of running small schools and preschools by institutions other than communes. However, due to the diversified economic and social situation of teachers from those social schools, this mechanism is perceived as one of the most controversial articles in the Polish education system. That is why the public debates with the participation of teachers' trade unions, which are considering the transferal of education institutions to other subjects, often contain some accusations of social services being privatized in secret. In fact, some situations have since proved that these accusations are well founded. Probably from this reason, article 5, paragraph 5g the Education System Act which regulates the mechanism of transversal of education institutions to non-public entities, has been constantly appealed by teachers' trade unions. Moreover, this article should be seen as a bargaining chip used by various political parties in order to increase their political capital. For instance, in 2016 and 2017, when forcing reform eliminating lower-secondary schools which was extremely unpopular among teachers, the current government formed by Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* — PiS) (2015–2019) limited the mechanism of transversal of education institutions to non-public entities.

Probably the best known example of co-governance in education is the activity undertaken by the Ombudsman for Parents' Rights Association and the Foundation (*Stowarzyszenie i Fundacja Rzecznik Praw Rodziców*) with respect to the reform lowering the age of entry into primary education from seven to six. As a consequence of their activities, the new education act from 2009 took into account some of parents' demands: the implementation of the reform was to start in 2012 instead of 2009, and a transitional period was extended for the years 2009–2014, during which parents were to decide on their child's entry into primary education. Just after elections in 2015, PiS revoked this reform which took place without any sufficient recognition of the current situation in pre-primary and primary education, and with no consultative process involving local governments or nonprofit organizations other than the Ombudsman for Parents' Rights Association and Foundation.

In the period of Polish transition, the inter-sectorial relations existing between the third sector and public administration in education have been very dynamic. They appeared to be more benevolent in the early 1990s, especially in 1989–1993, when the public policy

towards for-profit and third sector organizations in education was created by politicians with their roots in the social sector and Solidarność social movement. The inter-sectorial relations became more complicated at the time of the coalition of left wing parties led by Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej — SLD) in 1994–1997. In those days, some centralization and unification ideas in education, as in other fields of the social sphere, were revived. The years 1997–2001, when center-right parties were in power, can be called the ‘time of wasted chances’ in terms of the development of inter-sectorial relations. The education reform of 1999, which was one of the four reforms aiming at transforming the welfare state, did not pay any attention to the third sector. The new social order in education, as in other public policies, was based on a neoliberal approach with a special interest in new public management. However, decentralization and education reforms awoke the social activities. The engagement in education was tangible in the increasing numbers of schools run by the third sector, even if the process of taking over those schools from the communes was a kind of a side-effect of decentralization and education reforms, rather than the result of any intentional decision taken by public administration. The fact was that local associations and foundations began running primary schools in those parts of the country where the demographic and economic situation was not clear.

Taking inter-sectorial relations into consideration, one can state that, between 2005 and 2007, third sector organizations had to fight for their place in the system, since education policy had become further complicated by some ideological influences emanating from the government coalition of right-wing parties consisting of PiS, the Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland (Samoobrona RP) and the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin — LPR). In fact, and despite this, the third sector decided to go ahead, and it was successful in positioning pre-primary points and pre-primary sections of primary schools within the education system. The next period, since 2007, which can be divided into two sub-periods, i.e., the first (2007–2011) and the second (2011–2015) government of the coalition between the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska — PO) and the Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe — PSL) is also a multi-faced time in inter-sectorial relations between third sector organizations and public administration. The openness in inter-sectorial dialogue depends on the problem. On the one hand, for eight years the government of PO-PSL continued to ignore the presence of some third sector organizations, connected with parents protesting against lowering the school age. This is clearly visible in rejecting three civic projects opposing this reform submitted by Rzecznik Praw Rodziców. On the other hand, in 2011–2015 one can observe a gradual process of co-governance in education policy. This manifested itself in establishing by the Ministry of Education a new consultative and advisory body consisting of the public administration and delegates of the third sector organizations. Nevertheless, a decision-making power of this body has gradually decreased over last years, in particular since PiS took over. Poor impact of this body on the formulation of education policy, including the most important issues such as financing or consulting the reform eliminating lower-secondary schools from the education system to be implemented 1 September 2017, as well as its entanglement in the conflict between the governments and teachers’ trade unions in order to make the

governmental face more friendly to society, leads to a question of whether the Parents' Forum could play an actual role in the formulation of education policy, or whether it would rather be a tool in the government's hands? Such a situation may create a feeling that only a veneer form co-governance exist at the national level. It means that some inter-sectorial bodies may be used as a type of a smokescreen for particular decisions and activities taken by the governments.

Last steps undertaken by PiS proved that, similarly to previous governments regardless their roots, Polish political elites engage particular (selected according to their preferences) third sector organizations in formulation education policy in order to legitimize their political decisions.

The last important fact that should be mentioned when speaking of co-production in education, is linked to the overuse a concept of co-production in terms of economy and financing. Co-production is, in some cases, regarded only as a possible way of freezing the costs of education at the local level. Transferring education tasks to third sector providers is an instrument by which the municipalities could free themselves from their financial commitment obliging them to employ teachers on the basis of the Teacher's Charter. As a result, co-production meets a strong objection from teachers and their trade unions, and is treated by them as a hidden way of privatization. Due to lobbying activities undertaken by teachers organizations, such an opinion is also shared by the majority of parents. Consequently, implementing co-production par excellence seems to be highly difficult in Poland.

Summary

Despite the fact that the Polish welfare system is nowadays in the state of constant transformation, which can be observed in searching for new ways of improving the quality of public policies, co-production still remains an underestimated concept. Moreover, its omission in the creation and implementation of detailed public policies seems to have constant character, even if the reforms rooted in new public management that have been developed since the beginning of transformation in 1989, have been gradually exhausting their frames. This situation is a result of a complex understanding of inter-sectorial relations between public administration and third sector organizations as well as the understanding of the role of the latter in public policy formulation and implementation. Both issues are regulated in the 2003 Act of Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, which — to some extent — can hinder the integration of co-production in academic considerations and practice. Fortunately, there exist some lonely islands in the ocean of public policies in Poland, where co-production seems to be enhancing its meaning. It is so, even if this process faces some serious obstacles in the form of a strong resistance from parents, teachers and their trade-unions.

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***Koprodukcja w Polsce: od rozpoznania do badań?
Rozważania wstępne***

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza czynników utrudniających rozpoznanie koprodukcji w politykach publicznych i jej wykorzystanie w badaniach naukowych w Polsce. Studium koncentruje się na trzech głównych tezach, tj. założeniu istnienia fasadowej formy koprodukcji w miejsce koprodukcji właściwej, ograniczenia koprodukcji do ram teoretycznych, przy

jej słabym wdrożeniu w badaniach naukowych, oraz traktowania koprodukcji w sposób pragmatyczny, czyli jako narzędzia ograniczania wydatków publicznych, ale nie jako instrumentu zwiększającego udział obywateli w realizacji i stanowieniu polityk publicznych.

Artykuł został podzielony na kilka części, w których dokonano przeglądu tła teoretycznego koprodukcji w literaturze zachodniej, zanalizowano powody słabego rozpoznania koprodukcji w Polsce i szanse na jej umocnienie w badaniach empirycznych oraz przedstawiono zastosowanie koprodukcji w polskiej polityce edukacyjnej.

W studium wykorzystano analizę literatury i dostępnych danych statystycznych oraz zaprezentowano wyniki badań autorki w zakresie koprodukcji w polskiej polityce edukacyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe: koprodukcja, edukacja, trzeci sektor, Polska