In the contemporary world, modernising at an incredible pace, an increasing importance is being placed on education, which is supposed to prepare communities for this acceleration. A few areas can be separated during discussions on education: among the others it is the issue of competencies indispensable on the labour market of the future as well as values and global education. Such issues are also a starting point for the authors of the publication issued in English “Responsibility – Participation - Conscious Citizenship – The Dilemmas of Global Education [Klaudia Śledzińska (ed.), Martyna Kawińska, Olga Kotowska Wójcik, Marta Luty – Michalak, Katarzyna Rychlicka – Maraszek, Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Sociologiczne, Warszawa 2017].

Global education – as it is the main subject matter of the publication - was implemented into Polish system of education in the school year 2009/2010 (it was placed in the core curriculum of general education). Prior to this, in 2002 in Maastricht European politicians developed Declaration of Global Education which put forward systemic solutions in this area. The significance of education in the world of multiculturalism and globalization was stressed out long before by researchers indicating the need to focus on such issues and prepare
communities for the challenges of postmodernity. It emerges that after more than a dozen years of implementing and practicing global education there is still a need to intellectually deal with this difficult and complex notion. Real practice has revealed a number of areas which still are and will long continue to remain a challenge both for researchers and practitioners.

The aim of the publication, edited by Klaudia Śledzińska, is to provide an answer to the question not so much about the essence of global education in Polish educational practice but rather about its axionormative dimension and values implemented in various social dimensions. The axis for deliberations undertaken by the authors is based on such values like responsibility, committed participation and social engagement. It is education – as observed by the editor in the introduction – that is supposed to “enhance the awareness and reflexive cognition of phenomena, social processes, interrelations between people and places, as well as to foster stronger social engagement” [s.8]. It should also contribute to better understanding of mutual interrelations and the permeation of cultural, environmental, economic, social, political and technological systems. This, however requires a basic consensus regarding the understanding and interpretations of the values essential in education as well as their transmission methods.

The publication is composed of three parts: the first two make an attempt to put in order the notions and conceptualize the categories of responsibility as well civic participation and civic society and akin ideas of a social bond and social capital. Part three deals with selected concepts of social life and experience, wherein we can discern the very essence of responsibility, participation and process towards conscious citizenship. Thus, presented are those aspects through which “we can appreciate the significance of educational actions towards the formation of responsible civic attitudes, notably work according to a corporational model, employee - volunteering, insurance reciprocity, horizontal and vertical gender segregation in scientific milieu as well as lifelong learning and activation of older people” [s.11].
It is worth emphasizing several significant issues emphasized by the Authors and related to the notions related to global education, especially in the context of transformations of contemporary societies. One of them is a crucial issue present in public and academic discourse and dealing with the division of the world into global North and South, the impact of which is mostly “felt” by the countries of a global South. Global education which was supposed to increase sensitivity to the problems of inequality and bring closer or tame “the Other” has become an element of a specific symbolic violence and imposing on poor countries the civilizational and economic model incorporated in the countries of the North. Klaudia Śledzińska in her chapter focuses on a “hidden programme” of global education, thus a Europocentric, stereotyping model of creating a global awareness, taking no consideration of the specificity and local conditions, which the countries of the North “offer” to the global South. Another manifestation of organizing the world according to old post-colonial principles is “educational disease”, that is “forcing by the rich North the only vision of the development of the deprived regions, in both individual and group dimensions, by means of formal education towards achieving a high social status” [s.43]. Thus, paradoxically the present task of global education is to deconstruct itself and include/ take into consideration other perspectives and discourses, including the ones put forward by minorities. It is teaching responsibility, creating a strong personal subjectivity, stressing out respect to subjectivity of “the Other”, learning “out of Others and from Others” [s.47]. Only such attitude where “personal subjectivity of “you” appears through “I” (and vice versa) (…) and thereby secures relationships which no longer carry the features of exploitation, injustice or dominance” [s.47].

In their publication, the Authors indicate and emphasize the significance of numerous citizen-making mechanisms, practices and strategies, which they place in the context of education, making it possible to disseminate and enhance them. Both the employee participation in companies, employee volunteering, pro-social activity on community portals but also more increasingly a common activity of women, the elderly not only on the labour market but also in the social sphere contributes to building a mature civic society. Nonetheless, it will not be lasting unless education provides substantial foundations based on commonly developed values. The proposal of the model of education offered in the publication means “focusing on teaching a pupil/student – not as an uprooted citizen of the world, but as a citizen endowed with his own unique identity, socially enrooted in concrete local contexts and capable of
making rational choices” [s.52]. This statement - though perhaps controversial - gives the publication Authors- proprietary feature. It reveals that the recently depreciated locality and identity, built around universal values such as responsible partnership still remains valid. In the first chapters of the publication a certain nostalgia for the return of the “culture of character” instead of the currently functioning culture of personality is clearly seen (from the perspective of one of the authors, a crucial moment for an axio-normative shift and understanding responsibility took place in the early 20th century). It “was a shift from the culture of character to the culture of personality, from internal to external values” [1]. “The culture of character was associated with the notions of, e.g.: citizenship, obligation, democracy, labour, honour, reputation, morality. The culture of personality, in other words, the culture of “making a good impression on others” and “standing out from the crowd” refers rather to the categories of: fascination, attractiveness, bewilderment, creativity, domination, strength, power or determination” [s.20].

Even though the publication is not easy to read and requires an attentive and careful reader, it is a great contribution to the discussion on the essence and directions of global education development, especially in its axionormative character. It is recommended not only for researchers but also non-academics who are committed to the idea of the world continuously improving but also learning from its own mistakes.

References: