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Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach, Wydział Sztuki i Nauk o Edukacji

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Introduction

The research into intercultural education has been part of the Polish social discourse on the issues of multiculturalism, sense of identity (national, civic, ethnic, religious, cultural one) and relations between people of different nationalities and cultures for over three decades. Social experiences and everyday life practice confirm, on the one hand, the constant need to open up to other communities and their cultures, and thus – the need to implement reliable intercultural education. On the other hand, one can see a return to multicultural education, in which minority groups once again focus on the continuation of their own culture, and researchers once again increasingly focus on a selected culture or a selected minority group. The field of studies, research and educational practice has therefore been limited and significantly impoverished.

The current problems and directions of research in the field of intercultural education are also an attempt to capture areas of permanence and changeability in typical behaviours in multicultural communities. These issues are noteworthy for both cognitive and practical reasons – including their usefulness in shaping contemporary intercultural education. In this context, it is worth conducting a critical analysis of the concepts of social, cultural and educational policies formulated in Poland and in various countries, which make very different solutions within education in multicultural societies accepted in social practice. The relatively long traditions of various types of multicultural education, as well as contemporary experiences, indicate that this education – by protecting a selected culture – gives rise to many problems. The failures of various types of multicultural education are

clearly evidenced by conflicts in countries that are models of democracy – in the USA, France, and in some other democratic countries. Isolation of large social groups, manifestations of exclusion, stigmatization, poor living conditions, social dissatisfaction, a sense of discrimination – are partly perpetuated by multicultural education functioning alongside the mainstream of life (Lewowicki, 2013, pp. 19–37).

The analysis of many studies and of the social research addressing this issue (Nikitorowicz, Ogrodzka-Mazur, Kwadrans and Namiotko, 2021, pp. 103–115) indicates the occurrence of two different approaches to the assessment and consequences of the ongoing changes, namely:

- the pessimistic perspective, assuming – as a result of the ongoing changes – a crisis of multicultural education;
- the optimistic (reflective) perspective, according to which the changes testify to its new image, adequate to the social changes and characteristics of the (post)modern society.

Adopting the reflective perspective – as opposed to the radical pessimistic approach – seems to be the right direction of studies and pedagogical research on contemporary intercultural education. The multisided approach of theoreticians and researchers to this issue, as well as the ongoing modifications in its goals, tasks and functions, allow one to see and understand the problems and shortcomings of multicultural education and to find paths leading to positive solutions and appropriate actions (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2018, pp. 65–82).

The ideas and practice of intercultural education – in the approach promoted in our country – deserve wider dissemination outside Poland. This is already happening to some extent, yet – the messages of intercultural education should reach other societies. It is necessary to work for this education – with the awareness that this will be a difficult and long-term process, but with the belief that it will bear good fruit.

The current, twenty-seventh volume of “Intercultural Education” – a quarterly edited since 2012 by the staff of the University of Silesia in Katowice, the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science in Cieszyn, the Institute of Pedagogy – contains articles and theoretical dissertations, texts on intercultural education in Poland and worldwide, research reports and descriptions of practical activities in the area of intercultural education. It ends with two reviewing articles. In this issue, due to the fact that the authors are representatives of various scientific disciplines, such as: pedagogy, philosophy, sociology, psychology and political sciences, the collected texts are most often

interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary in nature. The volume presented to the Readers contains studies that are diverse both in terms of the addressed problems – references to theories and theoretical concepts, and in terms of the analyzed categories, methodological perspectives or a multifaceted view of the issues subjected to research analysis. It was developed thanks to the involvement of 29 Polish and foreign authors who prepared 15 texts – individually or as co-authors.

The introductory article, included in the section *Articles and Treatises*, was prepared by Inetta Nowosad, who examined – in the social, political and historical context – the transformation of citizenship education in Singapore. The author emphasizes the importance which citizenship education has been assigned to within the country's educational policy and the discussion on the currently implemented approach developing the idea of the lifelong learning society. She presents in detail the *Character and Citizenship Education (CCE)* program updated in Singapore in 2021, which does not only cover citizenship education lessons but permeates all school activities, becoming a part of school life both in and outside the classroom. The next article, prepared by Tomasz Bajkowski and Łukasz Kwadrans, introduces the Readers to the idea of intercultural education as an element of universal design of the university's social space. The authors show how contemporary Universal Design (UD), and especially Universal Design for Learning (UDL), relate to the idea of intercultural education, or rather stem out of it. The study also contains important guidelines and recommendations for both those designing future activities and those implementing ready-made solutions or for theoreticians who try to organize their knowledge in this area.

The section *Intercultural Education in Poland and Worldwide* presents Canadian, Israeli and Polish experiences in the implementation of multicultural and intercultural education. Mirosław Kowalski and Łukasz Albański discuss the cultural rules of education among the Indigenous people in Canada, with particular emphasis on traditional practices, their current adaptation in the context of the collective experience of the trauma of colonialism. The basic categories of the undertaken analyses were cultural connectivity and the cultural development of the child in relation to the Indigenous understanding of the role of their autonomy, agency, discipline, spirituality, building relationships and a community in Canadian Indian communities. The next study, prepared by an international team consisting of Małgorzata Chojak, Ela Luria and Maya Shalom, presents comparative research on the attitudes of Polish and Israeli teachers towards neuromyths in education,

i.e. theories or methods with unclear theoretical foundations and unproven effectiveness. The section ends with a text by Ewa A. Sowa-Behtane and Agnieszka Knap-Stefaniuk, presenting selected problems of immigrant integration in Poland. Their respondents were asked, among other things, about encountering discrimination/hostility from Poles, about the importance of religion and tradition for adapting to life in our country, about freely practicing one's religion and accessing places where it can be practiced (churches, temples, mosques, etc.), about making and maintaining friendships/relationships or about choosing Poland in a situation where one could make the decision to choose the place of residence again.

The section *Research Reports* comprises three cognitively interesting texts. The first one, prepared by Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur, assumes that a qualitative study of the linguistic image of the value of friendship appreciated by students from the Polish-Czech borderland, creates the possibility of treating language as a source of knowledge about the way (ways) they understand the world, anchored in their own experience and culture. In analyzing the educational context of the value of friendship presented by children at early school age, some assumptions were adopted from the field of linguistics and sociolinguistics (the perspective of the cultural context in linguistic research), social and cultural anthropology (with particular emphasis on its anthropo-centric-cultural trend), axiology (its phenomenologically oriented aspects) and cognitive psychology (applying its cognitive-developmental theories). The text by a Ukrainian educationalist Ludmyla Khoruzha is a result of her research on personal values and the meaning of life of Ukrainian youth in the current instability. The author points out that the changes in Ukrainian society related to the war create, on the one hand, a situation of constant existential uncertainty for Ukrainian youth, and on the other – crystallize certain social and individual values and meanings of life that are important for the development of society (freedom, unity, integrity of the state or the European future). A specific supplement to this issue is the last co-authored article in this section prepared by Danuta I. Wosik-Kawala, Ewa Sarzyńska-Mazurek, Mariusz Korczyński and Halyna Bevz. It presents the Ukrainian version of a questionnaire for measuring intercultural sensitivity along with its psychometric properties, constructed taking into account the specificity of the Ukrainian culture. The text comprises a questionnaire with the key enabling the conducting of the research, its analysis and interpretation.

The section *Forum of Intercultural Educators* consists of two texts. The aim of the first one, co-authored by Dorota Mroczkowska, Agnieszka Jeran,

Maja Brywczyńska, Agnieszka Nymś-Górna and Barbara Jankowiak, was to determine the key competences useful in future professional work in the opinion of students of humanities and social sciences from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The next article prepared by Urszula Klajmon-Lech is a continuation of the previous text published in the journal “Intercultural Education”, which concerned the theoretical foundations of multiple discrimination and a review of research conducted in the intersectional paradigm. The currently presented study focuses on the experience of discrimination among mothers of children with disabilities/illnesses, perceived as Others and therefore often excluded, marginalized or disfavoured.

The section *Educational Practice* opens with a text by Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, which is aimed at analyzing how the 2015 European refugee crisis is presented in Polish textbooks for geography and social studies – two subjects that include contemporary socio-political events in their curricula. Agata Strzelczyk has prepared the next study, in which – on the basis of the narratives contained in books and textbooks created for the needs of D&D games – she analyzes the changes that have occurred in the last few decades in the perception of the Roma culture. The author emphasizes that the Vistani presented in these games, a fictional ethnic group inspired by and based on the Roma, reproduces practically all stereotypes related to the image of Roma in popular culture. The section ends with a co-authored article by Krystian Tuczyński and Tomasz Warchoł, showing the possibility of implementing intercultural education using information and communication technologies (ICT). The use of these technologies allows for personalization of the teaching process, adapting it to the individual needs of students and supporting the development of their intercultural competences. In addition, the study comprises an analysis of the importance of virtual reality (VR) and distance learning in the context of stimulating intercultural situations and global cultural exchange.

The section *Reviewing Articles* contains two texts. The first, prepared by Urszula Lewartowicz, concerns the latest, interdisciplinary collective work edited by Grzegorz Piekarski: *Dyskursy (o) edukacji równościowej [Discourses (on) equality education]*. The book is both an important voice in the broadly understood field of equality education and a step towards irreducible difference – which is the foundation of not only the community, but also identity. The next reviewing article was prepared by Anna Szafrńska in relation to the book edited by Przemysław P. Grzybowski: *Śmiech z edukacji. Komiczny obraz edukacji w polskiej literaturze i kulturze popularnej*. T. 1. *Założenia*,

idee, analizy [Laughter at education. A comic image of education in Polish literature and popular culture. Vol. 1. Assumptions, ideas, analyses]. Without a doubt, in the field of pedagogy (including intercultural one), P.P. Grzybowski has become one of the most important authors dealing with laughter in the space of education. The reviewed monograph is a result of many years of the author's work – his pedagogical and gelotological explorations.

* * *

On behalf of the Editors and the Scientific Council of the journal “Intercultural Education”, we would like to thank all the authors of the prepared texts for their creative contribution to the development of articles, and thus to the development of multicultural and intercultural education. The publication of this issue of the journal was possible thanks to the constant favour and help of the academic authorities of the University of Silesia in Katowice, its Institute of Pedagogy and the Adam Marszałek Publishing House.

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Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur and Anna Szafrńska

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Articles and Treatises



Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in Singapore. On the way to a learn-for-life society

Abstract: The article highlights changes in Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in Singapore. In response to the country's current and future needs, the government has been introducing various mandatory programs aimed at integrating ethnic groups and developing human resources through education. The aim of the article is to recognize the importance attributed to CCE in educational policy and to discuss the currently implemented approach. The diagnosis takes into account the broader social, political and historical context of the country, in which CCE is embedded.

Keywords: Character and Citizenship Education, Singapore, moral education, educational policy

Introduction

Singapore (*simha* – lion and *pura* – city) is a city-state which has transformed a former British colony into the most economically developed country in Asia. Having shifted from the third world to the first within the span of a single generation, Singapore epitomizes one of Asia's success stories. In other words, it is an example of an extremely successful transformation of a small country into a big world (Naisbitt, 1994, p. 254). However, the beginnings were not easy, as racial conflicts at the beginning of the country's independence were extremely difficult to overcome.

Investment in human capital, seen as an inherent feature of the government policy, constitutes one of characteristic features of the changes that have been taking place in Singapore. Paradoxically, right at the outset, the country turned its limitations into success by investing in its society as the only avail-

able natural resource. When shaping the foundations of modern Singapore, the first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew assumed that the survival of the nation depended on the resourcefulness of its human capital and investment in education.

As an immigrant, multi-ethnic (Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Eurasian) and multilingual country, from the very beginning Singapore responded to its ethnic diversification through the educational system. This approach explains how the country's demands have shaped educational policies and practices, and how the development of human capital has become closely linked to the progress of the Singaporean society. Hence, multiculturalism and the promotion of social cohesion, as well as the value of education and citizenship have always been important (Ikeda, 2023).

The aim of this article is to analyze the main educational policy programs, changes in Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), along with their justification within the government's strategy to ensure the development and economic competitiveness of the country. The effectiveness of the adopted strategy was assessed in the context of Singapore's political culture. During the preparation of the article, methods appropriate to social sciences were employed. A reconstruction of the discourse on CCE within educational policy was undertaken, which structured the text from the period of independence to the present day, together with its response to contemporary challenges. The arguments and evidence presented in the study are primarily based on an analysis of documents from the Ministry of Education of Singapore (MOE), as well as their evaluation by researchers in this field.

From the fight for survival to the learn-for-life society

Since gaining independence, the government has adhered to the principle that the best investment is to equip its citizens with knowledge and skills for the current and future needs of the country's economy. Over the years, this relationship has been interpreted differently and there is a visible shift from an instrumental approach that indicated "templates" of expectations from future citizens towards highlighting innovative solutions reinforced by the importance of a critical approach in creating change. This is a departure from showing the society the direction of change, including preparation to fulfill predetermined social roles, towards investing in young generations as future change creators and preparing them to set trends. Following this, Singapore's education system has undergone numerous reform programs to prepare the young generation

for the demands of the “VUCA” world. Ultimately, a graduate educated in the Singapore educational system is to be a self-confident person, an active collaborator and a concerned citizen, who is also capable of self-education.

Singapore’s specific circumstances have meant that Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) has always been at the heart of the educational system. Obtaining independence reinforced the importance of the concept of citizenship in the country’s educational policy, which was later important in every period of reforms or implementation of a new orientation of the country’s policy. It is through CCE that Singapore’s students have been learning of their responsibility towards their family and community, and as a result, of their role in shaping the future of the nation. While maintaining this priority, the government’s educational policy has also been adapting to the requirements of the changing world. In this context, Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) has moved to the forefront of educational policy, providing an integrated approach to cultivating students’ values, character, socio-emotional well-being, and citizenship (Tan, 2023, p. 3). It has evolved from mere preparation of the workforce towards a more profound focus on the flourishing of individuals and the society as a whole. In the latest phase of the process, CCE has now become a foundation of the Learn for Life philosophy.

Even before independence, in 1959, “MOE published a syllabus for Ethics that aimed to inculcate ethical values and lay the foundation to nurture students into self-respecting individuals and good citizens” (Cheng, 2023, p. 10). As Loh Wee Cheng (2023, p. 10) further notes, “After Singapore’s independence, Civics replaced Ethics in 1967 as a compulsory subject. As a young nation, it was apt for us to focus on patriotism and civic consciousness then.” The Ministry of Education’s programs were aimed at three main goals: (1) cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional rootedness in Singapore, (2) developing national cohesion, especially given the multi-racial and multi-religious nature of the society, (3) cultivating the instinct for survival as a nation and increasing students’ faith in the future of the nation (MOE, 2013). These goals were present in MOE’s messages about the nation: “Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong”; “We must preserve racial and religious harmony”; “We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility”; “No one owes Singapore a living”; “We must defend Singapore ourselves”; and “We have confidence in our future” (MOE, 2018). After decades of reforms, from the survival-driven phase and nation-building, various programs and initiatives were implemented by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which contributed to the development of character and citizenship dispositions, and students’ life skills.

Table 1. Evolution of citizenship education in Singapore

Citizenship Education Initiatives	Year	Phases of Singapore's Education	Characteristics
Ethics	1959	Survival-Driven	The two decades since independence were characterized by social cohesion and nation-building
Moral Education and Civics Training	1966	Efficiency-Driven	The late 1970s and 1980s were focused on improving the system, with the introduction of standardized curriculum and industry-relevant skills
Education for Living (interdisciplinary)	1974		
Review of Moral Education	1978		
Good Citizens (Primary)	1981		
Being and Becoming (Secondary)	1981	Ability-Based, Aspiration-Driven	With Singapore transitioning into a knowledge-based economy in the late 1990s, there was a shift in focus to developing a broader range of skills, e.g., critical thinking and creativity, and providing for a wider variety of students' interests and aptitudes
Social Studies (Primary)	1981		
Religious Knowledge	1984		
Civics and Moral Education	1995	Student-Centred, Values-Driven	The aim was to equip students with values, character and competencies to meet the challenges of the future
National Education	1997		
Social Studies (Upper Secondary)	2001	Learn for Life	In 2020, the Ministry of Education launched a refreshed Character and Citizenship Education syllabus (CCE2021)
Character and Citizenship Education (introduced to primary and secondary students in 2014, and pre-university students in 2016)	2011–2019		
Values in Action	2012		
Values in Practice	2016		
Character and Citizenship Education	2020 – onwards		

Source: Thaiyalan, 2020, p. 44; Singteach, 2023, p. 6.

Singapore's search for answers to the questions of how to equip their students with solid values, knowledge and life skills and how to develop students' good character and prepare them to be citizens rooted in Singapore and playing an active role in improving the lives of others, remained a constant feature in its educational landscape (Cheng, 2023, p. 10). The answers to these questions revealed tensions in the process of transforming the country. As Li-Ching Ho notes, they resulted from emphasis on two contradictory principles of rootedness, i.e. one that ensures the cohesion of the nation, and another that introduces "global life" requiring young people to prepare to survive in the constantly evolving, interdependent and globalized world of the 21st century (Ho, 2009, p. 289). Balancing these tensions gave rise to the emergence of an approach known as "cosmopolitan nationalism" (Nielsen, 1999), which at the school level is expressed as efforts to "promote internationalization and a global view" and which at the same time responds to locally defined markets and national educational policy programs (Hameed, Lingard and Creagh, 2023, p. 467).

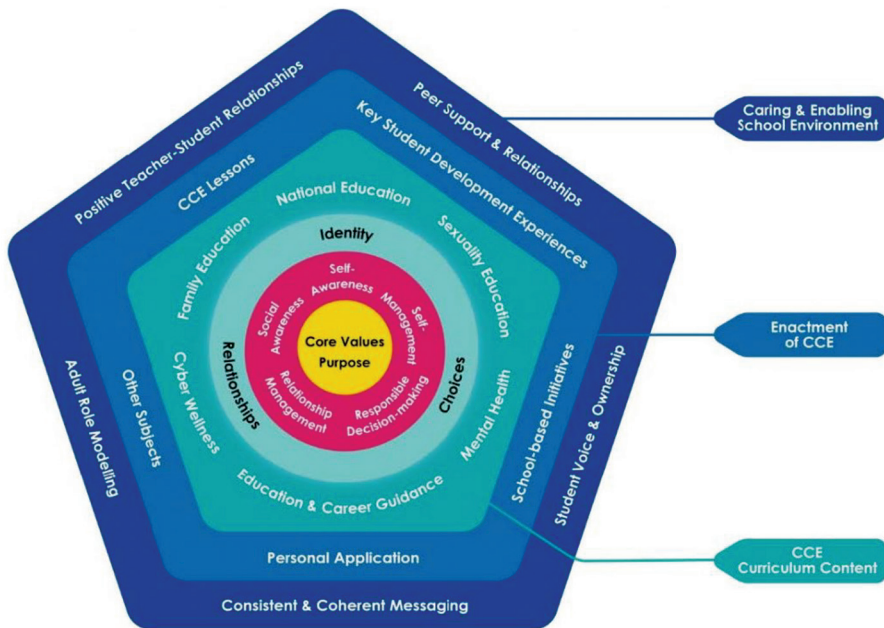
Learn for Life and CCE

Already in 2015, education policy began highlighting the value of lifelong learning through a movement called *Skills Future*. "With the changing landscape of social media and demographics, it is timely to re-think and reset education. As Oon Seng Tan explains, "In Singapore, whose people have thrived on pragmatism and balancing the best from East and West, education has now entered a new phase of values-driven and student-centred development" (2023, p. 5). Greater importance is assigned to the development of students' self-awareness, interests, talents and aptitudes as well as nurturing the virtues of care, respect, harmony and plurality (Tan, 2023, p. 5). The latest phase of the educational policy which conventionally began in 2020 continues the previously initiated shift (away from an overemphasis) on academic achievement towards the strengthening of students' well-being:

- schools are encouraged to develop programs that are focused on students' physical, mental and social health;
- the Socio-emotional Learning (SEL) framework has been developed and made a mandatory component of the national curriculum;
- the CCE program now also includes career education and guidance, sexual education, cyber wellness, mental health, family education and national education (Kwek, Ho and Wong, 2022, pp. 6–7).

In the field of civic education, in 2020 the Ministry of Education launched a refreshed Character and Civic Education curriculum, CCE 2021, the aim of which is to “anchor our students on a strong foundation of moral values, good character and resilience” as well as “encourage them to play a more active role as citizens of Singapore” (Tan, Koh, Chan, et al., 2017). The Framework for 21st Century Competencies (21CC) (Singapore Framework for...) has also been rebuilt. The new approach aims to enhance clarity on how the core values are linked to the social-emotional competencies, and how they are internalized and lived (MOE, 2020, p. 6). As a result, citizenship education has become even more important than before (Lee, 2015) (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1. CCE 2021 Curriculum Frame



Source: Office of Education Research (National Institute of Education), Character and Citizenship Education in Singapore, SingTeach, 2023, p. 86. <https://singteach.nie.edu.sg/2023/10/11/character-and-citizenship-education-in-singapore/> (10.02.2024).

The central place in the revised CCE program is still occupied by *The 3 Big Ideas*: identity, relationships, and choices, which express the six core values of respect, responsibility, harmony, resilience, care, and integrity (Suwalska and Nowosad, 2023). They are core concepts in the syllabus and they anchor the

development of such social-emotional competencies as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management and responsible decision-making. It can be assumed that in the current interpretation of the strengthening of students' self-direction and responsibility, a lot of emphasis is placed on students' understanding of their sense of purpose. "It is about discovering how one's values, strengths, talents, and interests can be meaningfully applied so that one feels a sense of personal significance within one's sphere of influence and beyond it. (...) With a sense of purpose, an individual is more likely to live out the core values that make up the foundation of their character, and meaningfully apply the learnt social-emotional competencies" (Ibid, p. 10).

Six areas (CCE Curriculum Content Areas) have been introduced to the CCE program (Ibidem, pp. 12–13):

- National Education (NE). NE in CCE aims to be empowering and aspirational, allowing for individual sense-making, so as to nurture engaged citizens, who are socially aware, adept at critical thinking, and informed about local, regional, and global issues.
- Sexuality Education (SEd). SEd enables students to understand the physiological, social, and emotional changes they experience as they mature, develop healthy and rewarding relationships including those with members of the opposite sex, and make wise, informed and responsible decisions on sexuality matters.
- Mental Health (MH). Mental health is about having a balance in various aspects of life, learning values and social-emotional competencies to cope with life's situations, to relate to others and to contribute to the community. Due focus on MH in CCE at the secondary level helps students to strengthen their resilience and wellbeing; differentiate between stress, distress (overwhelming stress), and illness; enhance help-seeking efficacy; as well as destigmatize mental illness.
- Education and Career Guidance (ECG). Through ECG, students explore their strengths and abilities, examine their life's purpose, and develop qualities of proactivity, adaptability, and resilience to prepare themselves for the 21st century.
- Cyber Wellness (CW). CW focuses on the well-being of students as they navigate cyberspace, on equipping them with the knowledge and skills to harness the power of ICT for positive purposes, to maintain a positive presence in cyberspace, and become safe and responsible users of ICT.

- Family Education (FE). FE is based on the nation’s shared value of family as the basic unit of society. Students learn about being responsible family members, and being grateful for the role their families play in shaping who they are and who they become (Ibidem).

MOE’s assumption is that the emphasis on students’ understanding of their goal makes it possible for them to deepen their learning processes and help them direct online interactions. This way, students distinguish at a basic level what they read and share on the Internet, learn to respect each other and take care of their privacy. The older ones learn to engage in online discussions on the principles of respect and appreciation of different points of view (MOE, 2023). Moreover, parent involvement activities complement the CCE program. Especially at the primary level, in the implementation of the program, parents “accompany” their children in recognizing values in various life environments.

Other changes are related to the approach to global citizenship, highlighted by Mitsuhiro Ikeda (2023, pp. 203–214). Singapore, as an English-speaking society, generally adopts global citizenship more readily than ASEAN citizenship, which was reviewed in 2020 with the introduction of three areas: “Enhancing CCE,” “Knowing Asia,” and “Strengthening Digital Literacy”. The new CCE curriculum is now refined for a deeper understanding of Asia, including ASEAN, and the contents of Social Studies, Geography, History and Economics have been expanded. These changes can be read as a sign of fostering global awareness through learning about Asian development. However, in the light of recent changes, it is still difficult to assess the effectiveness of the undertaken initiatives.

The implementation of CCE is carried out through several integrated learning platforms, on which CCE is enacted with intentionality (Enactment of CCE). These include CCE Lessons during curriculum time, Key Student Development Experiences (SDEs) outside of the classroom, school-based initiatives, teachable moments during other subject lessons, and learning opportunities outside of school (MOE, 2020, p. 14). The essence of these integrated interactions is to move away from understanding CCE as an additional subject or teachers’ work profile, towards something that permeates all students’ experiences at school. It is present in the overall functioning of every school and every teacher. The implementation of CCE assumptions is to be carried out on 5 different Learning Platforms: (1) CCE Lessons, (2) Key Student Development Experiences, (3) School-based Initiatives, (4) Other Subjects, 5) Personal Application in the form of various student activities (MOE, 2020, 14–16).

- 1) CCE Lessons: • understanding emotions and how to regulate them, learning how to manage relationships, learning about sexuality, developing a sense of purpose in life, • knowing and understanding the functioning in real-world contexts, • discussions on contemporary issues to enable students to grasp current realities in our national, regional, and global contexts, reflect on their national identity, develop civic consciousness.
- 2) Key Student Development Experience (Key SDE) are programs and activities that ensure students' holistic development in the following areas: physical, aesthetic, intellectual, moral and social. Each of these programs and activities has its specific CCE Learning Outcomes. These activities are based on experiential learning pedagogy, including dialogue, discussion and reflection, as well as intentional application of values, social-emotional, and civic competencies. Examples of classes: Co-Curricular Activities (CCA); Cohort Learning Journeys (LJs); Education and Career Guidance (ECG) Experiences; National Education (NE) Commemorative Days; NRIC Presentation Ceremony; Outdoor Adventure Learning (OAL) Cohort Camps; Student Leadership Development (SLD) Programs; Values in Action (VIA).
- 3) School-based Initiatives. These activities take into account the different context of each school and students' specificity, their needs, interests and abilities. These initiatives also refer to learning outcomes.
- 4) Other Subjects. Due to the diverse context and specificity of schools, programs must take into account their students' needs and interests. These activities are reinforced by learning English and the native language, whereas Physical Education (PE) makes it possible for students to learn sportsmanship and take responsibility for a healthy lifestyle.
- 5) Personal Application. The process of learning to reflect on their character growth as a lifelong process. Students can develop the habit of self-reflection and gratitude.

The virtue of caring and enabling the school environment permeates all guidelines of the new CCE program. Schools are supposed to be authentic, safe and valuable places for students and, in the future, for the society. In the new paradigm, needs are to be met in the conditions of building a caring community and positive relationships between teachers and students, based on mutual respect, care and support. The aim is also to strengthen students' bonds with school and their motivation, which means that school environment needs to support their dispositional development. Through

CCE, schools make efforts to involve their students in planning new experiences in order to make them more authentic and meaningful in their lives, first as young people and then as adults.

Summary

Educational transformations in Singapore point to two key functions that schools are meant to perform, i.e.: economic stability and social cohesion. Hence, CCE reform projects and programs have been necessarily responsive to maintaining social cohesion, which is a fundamental issue for any small multiracial nation-state¹. The importance of social cohesion has been crucial not only because of the emerging stage of the young country, but also because of the wide ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of its society. The formation of social cohesion and Singaporean identity has been strengthened by the policy of bilingualism (English and native languages, including Malay, Tamil and Chinese). Changes in CCE programs show the processes of Singapore “adapting” to the use of both Eastern and Western cultures; of preserving the “Asian core” as a move towards establishing social cohesion and a common identity, and of developing young people’s global view in the constantly changing world. Character and Citizenship Education in Singapore is not only a key component in maintaining social cohesion and Singaporean identity, but it also serves as a platform for building shared values across the country. This is complemented by other programs that instill values through community involvement. It is extremely important for the government to apply these values practically and integrate them into the new, unknown challenges facing the constantly evolving landscape of Singapore.

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¹ Singapore’s policy for multiracialism has shaped many major national policies, from education, to housing, and also to politics. It also means that it is crucial to ensure social harmony among the races. To promote cultural empathy and integration, it is important that people of different backgrounds have sufficient opportunities to interact with each other (Global-Is-Asian Staff, 2019).

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Idea of intercultural education and universal design of the university's social space

Abstract: This study is a review (content analysis of the literature) supplemented with actual indications and a proposal for a project that can be implemented by researchers representing universities from several countries. The aim is to show how universal design and broadly understood accessibility relate to the idea of intercultural education, or how they rather stem from it. Additionally, it will be important to develop these ideas within the thinking about the changing university – open and accessible to everyone as much as possible. Due attention will be drawn here to important issues from the point of view of the priorities and prospects of the European Union's policy, also because of the obvious need to change the social reality towards the frequently mentioned inclusion. The ending will comprise the guidelines and recommendations for those designing future activities, those implementing ready-made solutions, as well as for theoreticians who try to organize their knowledge in this area.

Keywords: intercultural education, inclusion, universal design, accessibility, special needs, disadvantaged groups

Introduction

Among the fundamental human rights recorded in the contemporary national law and international conventions, the right to education is one of the main axes. In terms of access to education for people with disabilities or people with diverse needs, for national and ethnic minorities, for people from refugee backgrounds, there are basically no formal and legal barriers under the law in force in Poland. However, the available statistical data indicate a still alarmingly low percentage of disabled people undertaking higher education.

The 2011 census contains the data concerning 7.6% of disabled people with higher education, compared to 17.5% for people without disability certificates. On the basis of the data from the Central Statistical Office, one can observe an increase in the disproportion between these groups in recent years, respectively 9% for people with disabilities and 26% for people without disabilities. The presented statistics, obviously, do not reflect the actual population of students with disabilities, nor do they do so in the case of students with diverse needs. The Central Statistical Office reports include only the students who reported to the university that they have a certificate of disability, and it is known, not all of them do this. It is also important to pay attention to the percentage share, not absolute numbers, because one cannot ignore demographic changes and the decreasing number of students in general. In addition, there are many students who have special needs due to temporary or permanent damage to their physical or mental health, but do not apply for a certificate (Gorczycka, Kanasz, 2014, p. 18). This indicates the need to introduce solutions supporting the participation of people with diverse needs in higher education (Mikrut, 2013, p. 53). An additional justification is the growing number of foreign language students from other countries and the group of representatives of various minorities, people from refugee backgrounds that should be necessarily taken into account.

The answer to the problems of people with special needs who function in the university space is the implementation of the idea of intercultural education, and currently also of Universal Design (UD), and more specifically Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This study is a kind of conceptualization of the method of implementing universal design to create projects in the field of intercultural education (content analysis of the literature). It is a result of the analysis of the theory and concept of UDL and of confronting its contents with the concepts and theories of intercultural education. The text is developed on the basis of experience in creating and implementing educational projects related to the promotion of the idea of universal design, primarily in the field of social accessibility.

Idea of intercultural education

Jerzy Nikitorowicz (2017, p. 23) pointed out that the duty of an academic teacher is to inspire reflection on the role of a guardian, educator, teacher in multicultural conditions to explain the complex problems of multiculturalism, and the position and role of a human being in these conditions. He ap-

peals that one cannot fail to notice and address the complex problems of the modern world, because this is the duty of university and each school in the educational system. Intercultural education is not about absorbing differences, but about building bridges of understanding, making people sensitive to the Other, integrating, stimulating attitudes of tolerance and acceptance. This remains particularly important in the context of current events in the world, in Europe, and in Poland, which affect educational processes and the formation of intercultural relations. These difficult experiences emphasize the importance of education that promotes understanding, tolerance and cooperation between different cultures.

The process of intercultural education is comprehensively captured by Jerzy Nikitorowicz's Holistic Concept of Intercultural Education (Nikitorowicz, 2005, pp. 200–232). It defines its levels of implementation, goals and content. The task of the concept is to explain the process of intercultural education in connection with the environmental and cultural conditions, the own activity of the learners and the institutions undertaking educational activities.

What is indicated in plans, strategies, concepts and directions of educational changes are the problems, phenomena and processes that will be a subject of interest in the coming years. Due attention should be paid, among other things, to the protection of individual identity as a consequence of adopting subjective criteria of belonging to a national or ethnic group – the identification with a group, perceived as a state of consciousness, without proving or calculating some indicators (of multicultural, intercultural, transcultural identity). Phenomena that are in opposition to each other remain important, such as monopoly of power and citizenship, Europe of regions, homelands and Europe of separatisms. The subjects often undertaken in intercultural studies are the situation of children and youth from minority groups in Polish schools, the identity of youth and their system of values. The research into the consequences of changes in the educational system in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after joining the European Union remains relevant as well. The catalogue of problems, challenges, areas of interest of intercultural education remains open. Thus, the presented text is aimed at drawing attention to the connotations of its idea with universal design, which seems necessary for conducting contemporary research, analysis, and scientific exploration (Nikitorowicz, Ogrodzka-Mazur, Kwadrans and Namiotko, 2021, pp. 111–112). The words of Tadeusz Lewowicki, indicating opportunities for change in the difficult social reality, are still significant. He notices and recom-

mends thoughtful and intensified educational efforts, hoping that teaching and education based on humanistic ideals, universal values and conducive to the development of wise, good, critical people will protect humanity from cataclysms caused by those who are hungry for power and wealth. According to Lewowicki, this is largely a task for the community that understands the message of intercultural education (Lewowicki, 2017, p. 185).

Intercultural education provides a chance for a conflict-free and fruitful encounter with the Other, without giving up one's own traditions. Being rooted in a local, ethnic culture allows one to accept universal values and at the same time protects individuals from blurring their identity. Understanding the opportunities created by intercultural education and accepting the applied educational practices, of course, require time, as well as genuine involvement of many social groups that have a great influence on shaping people's attitudes. Despite various difficulties and the special time of war, it is worth making efforts to make use of the aforementioned opportunities (Lewowicki, 2015, pp. 24–33; Nikitorowicz, Ogrodzka-Mazur, Kwadrans and Namiotko, 2021, p. 112).

Idea of universal design

Universal design is a strategic approach to planning and designing the social environment in such a way as to ensure equal access for all its participants. Does this not correspond to the ideals of intercultural education? It should be noted that it does not entail only eliminating architectural barriers, but also involves digital, communication and social accessibility, which is an additional justification for promoting this idea. The concept of universal design takes into account all participants of social life, not only people with disabilities, but all those whose functioning is limited in some aspect, such people as seniors, pregnant women, people with diverse needs, minorities, people from refugee backgrounds.

Universal design is a philosophy of “designing products and environments so that they are accessible to all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Benek, Labus and Kampanka, 2016, p. 8). This concept was created by the American architect Ronald Lawrence Mace and initially referred to architectural design. Facing his own limitations in the university space, he created the first University Design Centre. Mace argued that universal design should encompass creating not only a physical environment, but also a cultural one, enabling people of various

abilities to safely and comfortably undertake everyday activities without unnecessary limitations and obstacles (Gawron, 2015, pp. 125–144).

Universal design is a relatively new concept, which, with its catalogue of solutions, goes beyond the technical conditions and their guidelines for designing public spaces for people with disabilities and the current understanding of the accessibility of buildings for the disabled. The principles of universal design can also be applied in other areas of design, such as industrial design, or the design of computer interfaces or computer services, and above all in education in the broad sense. It should be added that one cannot expect to meet the expectations and needs of all users, one can only strive to expand the group of recipients. Universal design should be treated more as a direction and way of thinking, than a method that ensures specific results. In general, the idea is to design in such a way that, by assumption and without emphasizing that it concerns people with disabilities, spaces (services, programs, etc.) are accessible to everyone. The barriers and difficulties encountered by people with disabilities are the basic challenge of universal design. These include: architectural, social, active, passive, relative and absolute barriers.

What is worth mentioning are the basic principles (e.g.: Connell, 1997; Konieczna-Woźniak, 2020) that guide universal design, including: fair use, flexibility of use, simple and intuitive operation, noticeable information, error tolerance, low physical effort, accessible and usable dimensions and space, and perception of equality.

Following the above-mentioned principles not only includes people with special needs in the partnership functioning in the network of social relations, but also makes life easier for all other participants of social life, becoming a platform of universalism while respecting one's own individuality.

It seems worth observing how universal design solutions have been implemented into the surrounding social reality. Solutions such as: audiobooks, e-books, audio descriptions in museums and monuments, ramps, driveways and other transportation facilities, vertical and horizontal markings increasing the field of information for customers of public places, buses or low-floor trains or subtitle mode on TV, were originally invented with disabled people in mind. Each of these facilities has come into common use and improves the lives of the entire population. This is an absolute advantage and an effect of a change in the way of thinking towards a certain mental "architecture" compliant with the assumptions of universal design (Bajkowski, 2022, pp. 153–171) – so close to intercultural pedagogy.

Universal design in education

Universal Design for Learning is an approach to organizing inclusive education based on inclusive values, such as: recognizing the diversity of all students, cultivating equal rights for all, creating conditions for full participation, and creating community relationships. This approach is not focused on particular students, but on all entities of the educational process and it recognizes their cognitive, intellectual differences, diversity of interests and learning styles (Hymel and Katz, 2019; Lee, 2019). Considering the diversity of cognitive processes in people, it can be said that “universal design for learning is a framework for improving and optimizing teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how people learn” (Meyer, Rose and Gordon, 2014, p. 3). This approach to education postulates taking into account such variables as neurological processes, curricula, teaching methods and resources. The effect of universal design of learning processes is the implementation of inclusive education for the broad educational community in accordance with the idea of intercultural education.

The idea of universal design was transferred to the field of education by the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST), whose specialists developed three basic principles of UDL (quoted in: Chomicz and Prokopiak, 2021, pp. 28–38):

- providing many ways of presenting knowledge (emphasis on **WHAT** one teaches/learns);
- providing many ways of action and expression (emphasis on **HOW** one teaches/learns);
- providing many ways of engagement (emphasis on **WHY** one teaches/learns).

The UDL principles presented above allow students to develop greater control over their own learning process, and consequently greater control over their lives and the choices they make (Salem, 2011, p. 15).

The Commission for Equalization of Educational Opportunities operating at the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (KRASP) also addressed the problem of accessibility of higher education institutions. The results of their work were reflected in the recommendations (principles) of educational support for students with disabilities, which can be read in the Resolution of the Executive Committee of the KRASP (principle of individualization, principle of subjectivity, need to develop the potential of a disabled

person, principle of rationality, principle of adjustment). The need to maintain academic standards is also indicated. This means searching for solutions that do not have the nature of a privilege for a disabled person, but in a rational way would equalize their chances in terms of possible implementing the educational process considered optimal in a particular class or course. Finally, the principle of equal rights and obligations is indicated, manifested in ensuring the rights and equal treatment of all students, regardless of their ability level, as well as in enforcing the fulfilment of student obligations (Annex to Resolution 52 of the KRASP, 2016).

Good practices, proposals for actions, changes, functionalities

Many universities have been trying to implement the idea of universal design and ensure equal access to higher education for all potential and current students for at least several years. Universities have experience in implementing projects related to this, but there is still a lot to be done and the standards vary. Some academic centres have undergone audits and implemented changes, others have not done them yet. Such diversity exists both in our country and in other European countries that joined the EU with Poland or a few years later.

A large part of the initiatives, both at the level of developing procedures and everyday service for people with diverse needs, are implemented by authorized representatives for people with disabilities together with employees of the student and teaching departments. They introduce solutions that facilitate service for all students in a way that takes into account their individual predispositions and capabilities, but at the same time – in a way that does not stigmatize people with diverse needs. Such solutions obviously take into account not only students, but also the staff, who, due to various types of limitations (including those related to their disabilities), require procedures that facilitate functioning, but are implemented in a universal way.

Changes in the attitudes of students, academic teachers and administration are facilitated by projects aimed at expanding knowledge in the field of universal design. They should be preceded by comprehensive (architectural, digital, communication and social) accessibility audits prepared by experts in the field of universal design. They provide a basis for determining the directions of actions modifying development plans. Using the recommendations included in the audit report, architectural modifications can be made on an ongoing basis, including: installation of additional elevators, modification of

parking spaces in car parks, installation of handrails by the stairs, marking rooms in Braille, purchase of equipment and software that meet the accessibility requirements for all users, etc.

Universal design is a frequently undertaken topic of scientific, research, development and implementation projects, the authors of which are groups of scientists from various academic centres. They often assume the introduction of intercultural education and intercultural communication into the curricula of students of all fields of study, especially pedagogy. This is because the idea of shaping attitudes of tolerance and respect for diversity fits perfectly into the trend of universal design in education. The implementation of subjects in the field of universal design and broadly understood accessibility should take place in most fields of study. These are just a few examples of the possibilities of implementing the idea of universal design in the university space. The willingness of a large group of students, academic teachers and administration to join design proposals in this field, examples of which can be observed at many universities, is a sensitization to the issue of universal design of the entire academic community.

Suggestion for an exemplary project implementing the idea of universal design

The proposed project would be aimed mostly at increasing the accessibility and inclusiveness of curricula implemented at the level of higher education in several EU countries through mutual transfer of knowledge and experience. Its specific objective will be to increase the awareness of employees, students and the social environment from these countries (partners) of the importance of universal design in working with people with diverse needs, taking into account the European dimension.

Within the project, research and analytical activities will be conducted, as well as the activities related to eliciting the outcomes and then their testing and implementation in several European countries. The innovation would be to include in the implemented activities (publications, model curricula, research analyses) the requirements of the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2019/882 of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements of products and services.

The main result would be an increase in consciousness and competences (among staff, students and the environment from partner countries) of the importance of accessibility, universal design and intercultural awareness in

the educational process and in other areas of social life related to working with people with diverse needs. The exchange of experiences and knowledge transfer would contribute to the implementation of the internationalization strategy in all academic centres covered by the project. The project should promote equal opportunities, equal access, social inclusion, diversity and justice in all its activities and stages of implementation. The project would comprise the individual approach to social inclusion and diversity, taking into account the potential and experience of each partner, as well as the needs of societies (both in relation to the academic community and in a broader perspective regarding local communities).

Such an approach is in line with the provisions of the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) of 22 October 2021 on the framework for measures for inclusion in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programs for the years 2021–2027. The project would include transnational and national initiatives related to the transfer of knowledge and good practices in activities for the inclusion and involvement of participants with fewer opportunities in their implementation. Such activities directly fit into the political priority of the program, i.e. creating higher education systems that support social inclusion, and specifically fit into the indicated actions of the priority, i.e.: a) supporting the education of refugee students and staff and supporting the efforts of institutions and staff of host countries in this regard, b) improving the indicators of access, participation and obtaining a diploma for people with fewer opportunities, including underrepresented groups. The proposed project also fits into the additional priority, i.e. integration and diversity in all fields of education. The following scheme of action was planned within the project: diagnosis – > research stage – > report on diagnosis and research – > work on the preparation of training programs focused on universal design and accessibility (including interculturality, diversity) – > training pilotage – > final products – > dissemination.

The diverse nature of the partnership, which includes several European countries and various partners: higher education institutions, business partners and third sector organizations (social environment), allows for a bigger degree of dissemination of the project's results and impact on the priorities. To the main "driving force" of the project indicated above, there are other to be added, no less important ones, such as: the need to significantly increase the internationalization of educational processes (this applies to all academic centres); another impulse is the lack of model training programs in the field of universal design at the academic level in the public space, taking into ac-

count the transnational and transdisciplinary dimension; no less important factor and motivation for cooperation may be the local experiences brought by the partners (this is a platform for increasing intercultural awareness and acquiring new competences).

The project can have the strongest impact on the educational sector at the level of higher education. Yet, the programs and teaching methodology developed within the project, compliantly with the principle of accessibility and universal design, can be implemented without additional expenses on lower levels of education.

In order to popularize the products developed within the project and to build synergy between different educational sectors and different institutions within the educational sector, information about the project and the developed products will be transferred to existing innovation centres within Erasmus+ InnHUB. The project places particular emphasis on taking into account synergies between different educational sectors in terms of support for people with fewer opportunities, also in regard to diversity and interculturalism (this applies to people whose access to equal participation in education is difficult: people with disabilities, educational difficulties, economic obstacles, cultural differences, health problems, people discriminated against on the basis of gender, age, ethnic origin, etc.). In addition, the products developed in the project will be useful not only for its partners, e.g. through the publication on the project website and on the websites of partner organizations of the developed products as open educational resources, based on the free Creative Commons license – in various languages, so that their dimension is both European (at the same time fulfilling the objectives of the ERASMUS+ program in the field of promoting multilingualism) and strongly international, due to the activities undertaken within the project.

The addressees will also include other organizations that specialize in the specifics of accessibility and universal design, including: a) universities from the countries covered by the project and from outside these countries due to the European dimension of the results generated in the project and their multilingualism; b) teaching and research staff interested in the subject of accessibility and implementation of the idea of universal design at the level of education and other public policies (users of the developed products), the key role will be played by people holding management positions in academic centres; c) non-governmental organisations working for people with diverse needs; d) entrepreneurs (including SMEs) obliged to apply the European Accessibility Act (EAA); e) local community – in terms of changing the “mental

architecture”, i.e. changing social attitudes, and consequently changing approaches and reducing stereotypes regarding people with diverse needs.

Conclusion

The presented examples of implementing the principles of Universal Design are just the beginning of the work, the effect of which should be not only the creation of conditions for optimal learning for students with diverse needs in the university space, but above all mental changes, the exemplification of which would be the development of attitudes of acceptance of the entire academic community and its social environment towards broadly understood otherness, diversity and universal educational accessibility. Implementing the idea of intercultural education and the principles of Universal Design in Education will allow for the creation of an inclusive educational environment for students with diverse needs, avoiding the processes of excluding them from equal access to the implementation of curricula, creating and developing teaching materials or helping in freedom of activity (Green, 2009, pp. 36–47). In times of universal mobility, including academic mobility, it is worth taking care of the exchange of ideas and experiences that increase the comfort of life for everyone, in particular socially disadvantaged groups. Therefore, the aim is not only to develop these ideas locally, but also to transfer them to other academic centres, to exchange good practices and experiences from many countries, especially Scandinavian ones, and to implement them in academic environments.

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**Intercultural Education
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Significance of child rearing and the principles of cultural child development in the tradition and contemporary practice among Indigenous people in Canada

Abstract: The aim of the article is to carry out a literature review concerning the principles of cultural child rearing among Indigenous people in Canada as regards traditional practices and their contemporary adaptation in the shadow of the historical trauma of colonization. The main categories of analysis are cultural connectedness and cultural child development related to Indigenous understanding of child autonomy, discipline, spirituality, building relationships and community in Canadian Indigenous societies. In the first part of the article, the focus is on the importance of cultural connectedness and five areas of connectedness crucial to a cultural framework by which Indigenous knowledge is transmitted, preserved and promoted. In the second part, the principles of traditional child development in contemporary Indigenous practices with some examples such as the “Four Hills of Life” are explored. In conclusion, there is a brief reflection on Indigenous ways of child rearing in the context of its barriers and opportunities.

Keywords: child rearing, principles of cultural child development, cultural connectedness, Indigenous people, Canada

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to offer an insight into the Indigenous perspective on child rearing. Indigenous ways of knowing the cultural practices concerning child development presently are contributing to a broad spectrum of academic interests in Canada (Muir and Bohr 2019; Ball and Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Freborn et al. 2023). Despite the fact that Indigenous ways of knowing

are usually depicted in the literature as the traditional knowledge transmitted from one generation to another, it must be also understood that a large portion of Indigenous knowledge has been lost because of past years of forced assimilation pressure from the Canadian government, and therefore some tradition and practices are revived by Indigenous communities, while others have to be invented because of the lack of reliable information on their proper descriptions (Gmerek 2016; Kowalski and Albański, 2022). Some Indigenous scholars prefer to use the term “celebrating survival” (Simard and Blight, 2014). As Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2002, p. 145) explains in her influential book “Decolonizing methodologies”, celebrating survival “accentuates not so much our [Indigenous] demise but the degree to which Indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity.” In other words, the philosophy of celebrating survival is deeply ingrained in Indigenous teachings and pedagogies. Moreover, the word “celebrating” has its importantly symbolic meaning to Indigenous understanding of the manners in which a person or community lives. Gregory A. Cejete (1994, p. 72) wrote that “celebrating is a natural outcome of spiritual sharing and it too can take a diversity of forms. It is an individual and communal process that celebrates the mystery of life and the journey that each of us takes. Celebration is a way of spreading the lights around.”

The historical trauma of residential schools, cultural genocide and forced assimilation, as well as possibly significant misinterpretations of traditional Indigenous ways of parenting are likely responsible for overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the foster care system in Canada (Caldwell and Sinha 2020). Some scholars argued that the abuses experienced in residential schools and severed ties with their own families and communities had a strong negative impact on capacity to parent on Indigenous people in affected generations (Bombay et al., 2020). In addition to past traumatic experiences, there is a significant gap in research examining factors associated with child rearing practices and child-care arrangements within Indigenous communities. The lack of relevant information on such critically important issues means that child welfare policy and programming decisions that affect Indigenous communities are often based on enquiries referring to populations that are not typical of the experiences of families in these communities (De La Sablonnière-Griffin et al., 2023). It is not surprising that members of Indigenous communities believe that Indigenous research methodologies and designs will produce better outcomes for Indigenous people (Ball and Benoit-Jansson, 2023). Moreover, in 2015, the Truth and Reconcilia-

tion Commission of Canada released Calls to Action deal with the goal to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in government care. The Commission established a broad social consensus that quality services to Indigenous children and families should be delivered within specifically Indigenous cultural frameworks.

Cultural connectedness

The body of Indigenous knowledge is holistic, spiritual and community oriented, with an appreciation of ancestral wisdom. The keyword that helps getting a better understanding of the main idea of Indigenous knowledge is connectedness. Indigenous knowledge can be defined as “a way of life, an experience-based relationship with family, spirits, animals, plants, and the land, an understanding and wisdom gained through generations of observation and teaching” (Ball and Benoit-Jansson, 2023, p. 38). In other words, Indigenous ways of knowing are place-based, social and relational. Jessica Saniguq Ullrich (2019) describes five areas of connectedness to embrace the framework by which Indigenous knowledge is transmitted, preserved and promoted:

- Intergenerational connectedness is a fundamental construct in the development of identity, because it includes participating in ceremonies and learning the language and stories, embedded within a distinct family, clan, community and ancestral land. Storytelling evolves with the purpose to transcend knowledge and bring about value-based learning. The storytellers are grandparents or other elders who pass knowledge and teaching to younger generations. Intergenerational storytelling is not strictly limited to past experiences and traditions, but it often includes many useful tips and problem solving for present purposes.
- Family connectedness involves relationships with immediate and extended family, and other community members, as well as relationships to the land of one’s ancestry. The relational model is secured through the natural protective network principle (Simard 2009). Relationships begin with family, but also exist through the holistic definition of community, including forms of enhanced family connectedness, such as kinship care and customary adoption. Kinship care defines the practices of extended family and community members taking care of children until parents are able to accept or continue their role as primary caregivers. Customary adoption refers to alternative parenting arrange-

ments (usually permanent) in order to address the needs of children in Indigenous communities, especially when children are in danger of severing relationships with family or transferring custody outside the community.

- Community connectedness is enriched through the sharing of cultural values and norms, ceremonies and spiritual guidance. At the core of community connectedness is the building of abilities in self-development for the pursuit of roles and functions within a community. Each member of the community has a sacred responsibility in the sustaining of a sense of self-development for a child. Ceremonies play an important symbolic role in celebrating community connectedness, including a series of formal and traditional actions such as: promoting a sense of belonging, acknowledging a particular life phase or accomplishment, assigning a task or challenge to be overcome, and invoking the spirit of collective wisdom and love. For children, ceremonies mark changes and growth within their families and reinforce community connections for subsequent stages of child development.
- Environmental connectedness recognizes the profound importance of connecting Indigenous people with their land. Child activities often come together with storytelling associated with particular place-based knowledge of each Indigenous community. Moreover, becoming physically close to nature is a highly regarded aspect in the Indigenous culture, because the values are learned through a relationship with nature. As a result, nature is an instrumental part of a child's upbringing concerning clan totems in which animals are viewed as value-based teachers.
- Spiritual connectedness means that everything within the universe is spiritual, everything has spiritual forces and these spirits have the power to influence results. Spiritual connectedness promotes the idea of finding balance and harmony in relationship with all of the creation. Therefore, child development is believed to be a spiritual process based on connecting to oneself and finding balance.

Connectedness is defined as the process of acquiring knowledge from the ancestral traditions and experiences within the Indigenous community, and using this knowledge for the betterment of the community (Ball and Benoit-Jansson, 2023). It builds on the sacredness of teachings and culture within an Indigenous population by using the protective network around a child (Simard, 2009). The protective network is a principle of family, extended family and community, contributing to the successful development of the child.

Traditional principles of child development in contemporary Indigenous practices

There are some fundamental beliefs and customs across all Indigenous peoples in Canada that apply to children. One of them is the view that children are a sacred gift, and thus they are perceived as an integral part of the universe, because the child's life begins before conception (Simard and Blight, 2011). It comes from creation stories, which suggest that people were spirits prior to their human experience during the lifespan. This further implies that once people leave this world, they will return to the original spirit. Additionally, this puts a strong emphasis on the significance of the protective network (Simard, 2009). Every Indigenous child is born into a natural protective network. It is based on the principle that children are placed at the centre of a community and symbolize the renewal and preservation of life. Instant relationships and inherent network of support provide children with a concrete understanding of community life due to their close contact with family, extended family, clan family and other members of the community (Greenwood, 2016). Another belief is that attachment creates a direct spiritual force, where bonds begin, develop and maintain for the child. Attachment also means the deep connection between the child and their spiritual connection to creation through their access to ancestral knowledge (Greenwood, 2016). Indigenous people share a cultural belief that the genetic memory of their ancestors exists (Peltier, 2017). Moreover, there is a relationship between memory and spirit, which states that active and living memory inspires connection to the spirit (Simard and Blight, 2011).

The development of the spirit and identity formation are inextricably interwoven. Hilary N. Weaver (2001) explained three dimension of identity including self-identification, community identification and external identification. First of all, however, it must be highlighted that Indigenous people have always recognized belonging by kinship, ancestry and relationship to the land and clan. As Weaver (2001, p. 247) notes, "given the strong emphasis on the collectivity in indigenous cultures, it is problematic to have an individual who self-identifies as indigenous yet has no community sanction or validation of that identity." Therefore, Weaver defines self-identification through the creating process of self-perception. In her own words, "it progresses through developmental stages during which an individual has a changing sense of who he or she is, perhaps leading to a rediscovered sense of being Native"

(Weaver, 2001, p. 244). Community identification is based on the premise that Indigenous identity is always connected to a sense of peoplehood inseparably linked with shared ceremonies, rituals, storytelling, practices and activities. As Weaver (2001, p. 245) further claims, the sense of membership in a community is so strongly associated with a sense of one's own identity that Indigenous people can identify themselves by their reservations or tribal communities. Moreover, it is important to notice that in their own views, a person who is away from their homeland may experience significant problems with their identification (spirit) that can only be remedied by returning to their roots for the restoration of spiritual connection. External identification is not exactly a way of Indigenous identification, because Weaver (2001, p. 248) argues that "while it makes sense that a community should define its members, it does not make sense for an external entity to define Aboriginal people." However, it must be also understood that Indigenous identity is not a cultural monolith, and therefore, it is affected by the current Indigenous images, governmental policies and stereotypes that exist in the Canadian society. Some Indigenous scholars maintained that external identification led to internalized oppression among Indigenous people, especially in the light of the historical trauma of forced assimilation and colonization as well as contemporary issues of Indigenous people who lost their connection or have not a knowledge of their community, because of their child experience of foster care, adoption and residential school (Sinclair, 2016). Notwithstanding painful memories of cultural uprooting, Indigenous communities are fully aware of the importance of developing their knowledge, skills, and understanding in at least two cultures – their own and larger society.

On the basis of traditional teachings of Ojibwa elders known as *the Four Hills of Life*, Estelle Simard (2009, p. 55; Simard and Blight, 2011, pp. 43–44) elaborates the milestones of cultural development concerning childhood (*Abinoojiwin*), youthfulness (*Oshkinigiwin*), adulthood (*Nitawigiwin*) and seniority (*Kitisiwin*). Childhood (0–11 years) is a time of developing trust and making connections within the community. The ceremonies that facilitate the completion of developmental tasks during the childhood period are: Welcoming, Naming, Clan Identity Ceremony. Youthfulness (12–15 years) is a time of learning to understand the physical, emotional and spiritual needs connected to one's own being. A critical task that needs to be accomplished in youth is the attainment of the vision related to one's own aim. The young must learn essential life skills and other family members begin to prepare them to become fully functioning adults in the community. The ceremonies

that make task completion easier are: fasting and initiation (for instance, into the medicine lodge) ceremonies. Adulthood (15–50 years) is a time of experiencing a sense of both collectiveness and independence. The tasks of adulthood are learning self-reliance, parenthood, and leadership skills. Adults are obligated to participate in traditional ceremonies and learn to conduct ceremonies and healing. Seniority is a time of sustaining the generational window. Seniors are the keepers of ceremonies, customs and the language. The tasks of seniority are the promotion of the knowledge and wisdom related to the community, the protection of family system within the community and the spiritual guidance to other community members in their responsibilities.

Each life stage is associated with tasks and responsibilities which need to be accomplished, otherwise people may not feel happy and satisfied with their lives. For instance, if one does not accomplish their tasks, a child will have difficulty in trusting others, and a young person may experience physical aggression, emotional and mental arrest, inability to cope, hesitating behavior, and spiritual emptiness. An adult can suffer from dependency or addiction and can lack self-confidence. A senior may not achieve the sense of life fulfillment. Special teachings are distinct in regard to girls and boys (Simard and Blight, 2011). Traditionally, it is believed that women are the keepers of water, whereas men are the keepers of fire. Women have their special connection and reverence to water due to the childbirth. A baby is protected in the womb within the waters and these waters come out into the world before the baby is delivered. Therefore, a woman always leads a prayer for sacredness of water.

A significant role in child upbringing is played by grandparents who provide knowledge and guidance within a relationship of unconditional love (Simard, 2009; Greenwood, 2016). In fact, they are significant others who teach children essential physical tasks such as crafts and at the same time, they give value-based stories that go with each task. Simard and Blight (2011, p. 45) maintain that there is a clear difference between stories and legends. The latter are only allowed to be told in the winter and sometimes it takes days to end up a legend. As a result, legend telling is an exercise that increases patience and respect for the cultural heritage. Legends often include puzzles that help in problem solving and in enhancing spirituality. Storytelling is a traditional method of teaching on everyday routines and familiar environment (Greenwood, 2016). However, while some teachings are carried on throughout the entire childhood, others are limited to specific time, gender and clan belonging.

Conclusion

Canadian mainstream concepts of child rearing will not fit into traditional child development principles in respect of Indigenous ways of knowing. One of the major barriers is that they do not acknowledge the holistic vision of the world with its principal part of self – the spirit. As the article has tried to show, it is an essential part of Indigenous ways of learning, parenting and communal life sustaining in child development. Although Indigenous scholars aim to re-introduce the spirituality into social service practices provided for Indigenous children and families, it seems that still there is a little understanding of how to incorporate them into child and family services. However, since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released 94 Calls to Action in 2015, there has been a growing public consensus that Indigenous children and families should get an access to child welfare support system that recognizes the cultural distinctiveness of Indigenous heritage.

On the one hand, Indigenous ways of knowing have become a cultural framework for the revival of cultural practices around child rearing and developing across the First Nations in Canada. On the other, there are Indigenous voices that indicate the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare systems in Canada, which resulted from another wave of cultural oppression. The clash between the parenting norms in Indigenous communities and those of mainstream groups is evident. In addition to cultural differences, one should not forget about the historical trauma of injustices concerning residential schools, forced assimilation and foster care, which still exists in the collective memory and has an impact on family systems in many affected Indigenous communities.

Although the restoration and preservation of child rearing is usually perceived in the context of Indigenous wellness and identity, some Indigenous principles of cultural child development may be worth spreading over non-Indigenous parenting. One of them is the principle to understand child development through the balances and imbalances in the child's relational world. It is allowed to see and accept complex (sometimes illogical) interrelationships that can be influenced by entering the world of the child and by manipulating the balance contextually, cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. It means that nothing in a person's existence can change without all other things changing as well. Another thing is that the richness of histories and heritages provide anchors for identities. They are strong protec-

tive factors that promote resilience and serve as buffers that mitigate negative impacts of life misfortunes and injustices. After all, storytelling is one of greatest teaching resources for communicating identity, values and role models. Moreover, it often revitalizes a sense of belonging to the community.

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A comparative study of Polish and Israeli teachers' attitudes toward neuromyths in education

Abstract: Recently, there has been an intense increase in interest in brain research findings among education professionals. In response to the needs of teachers, a number of proposals have appeared on the market, which are in fact so-called neuromyths, i.e. theories or methods, with an unclear theoretical basis and unproven effectiveness. Despite this, they are widely used in many countries. The purpose of the article is to check whether the obtained results will be related to the specific socio-economic situation of a given country. The study included 171 teachers from Poland and Israel. Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire that had already been used for this purpose in other countries. The results indicate that the factor significantly differentiating the studied groups, was the place of residence. Polish teachers scored better on questions about facts of brain structure, but were more likely to believe false claims involving eating sweet things, brain neuroplasticity or the need to drink water. Israeli teachers, on the other hand, were more likely to accept as true false claims related to bilingualism, to simultaneous stimulating both the left and right hemisphere, to giving children a lot of educational toys, doing multitasking and using media. This may be a result of socioeconomic and cultural differences, concerning, among other things, the use of scientific publications, media or university subjects.

Keywords: Poland, Israel, neuroeducation, neuromyth, teachers' attitudes

Neuroeducation is a multidisciplinary research field that combines education and neuroscience to bridge the gap between researchers in the lab and teachers in the real world (Torrijos-Muelas et al., 2022; Bowers, 2016). However, the successful transfer of neuroscientific insights into the field of education is closely linked to teachers' knowledge of the brain and its impact on teaching and learning processes (Devonshire, 2010). This is among the prerequisites

for mutual cooperation to result in reliable evidence that could be used in schools or kindergartens.

Difficulties in realizing this bring about the formation and spread of the so-called neuromyths, a term introduced by Crockard (1996) to describe false beliefs about the brain prevalent in medicine (Howard-Jones, 2014). However, it was quickly implemented into other scientific disciplines and research areas. Among them, there are pedagogy or psychology. In the context of education, the OECD defined the neuromyth as “a misconception, misunderstanding, misreading or misquoting of scientifically established facts (through brain research) to justify the use of brain research in education and other contexts” (OECD, 2002, p. 111). An example of the described process is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of neuromyths that have arisen through misinterpretation of scientific research

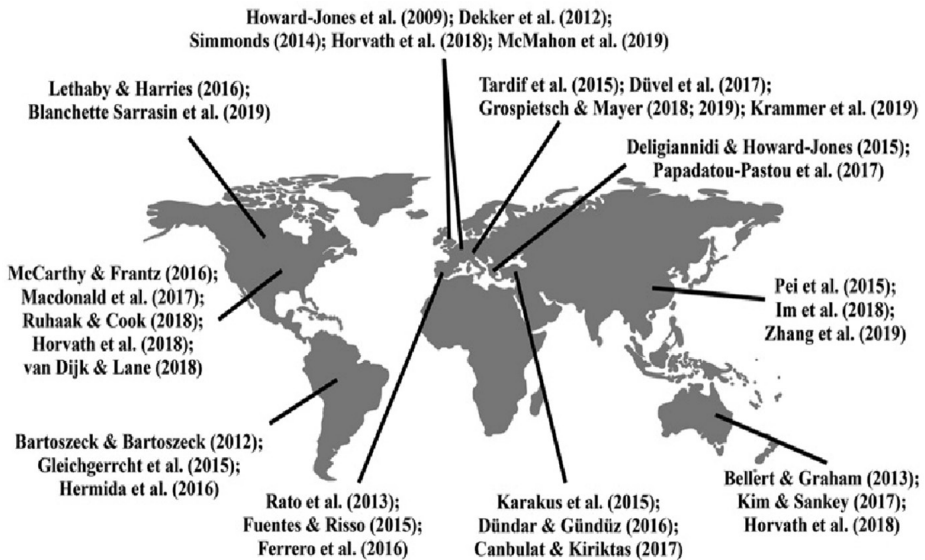
Scientific kernel of truth	Neuromyth
<i>Perception preferences</i> Learners exhibit preferences for receiving information in a specific mode.	<i>Existence of learning styles</i> Individuals learn better when they receive information corresponding to their learning style (e. g., auditory, visual, haptic, or intellectual).
<i>Crossover in neural pathways</i> Neural pathways link the left brain hemisphere to the right side of the body and vice versa.	<i>Effectiveness of Brain Gym</i> Coordination exercises (e. g., cross-body movements) can improve the interaction between the left and right brain hemispheres and thus learning and/or intelligence.
<i>Existence of cortical regions</i> The cerebrum is made up of different cortical regions subject to a functional division of labor.	<i>Specific storage locations (hard drive)</i> The brain works like a hard drive. Information is stored in specific locations (e. g., in the center for math).
<i>Hemispheric dominance</i> One brain hemisphere is more strongly involved in a certain cognitive process than the other.	<i>Differences due to hemispheric use</i> Each person uses their left and right brain hemispheres to different degrees, which explains differences between learners. This hemispheric dominance needs to be taken into account.
<i>Brain development</i> Neural cell connections enormously increase in the first years of life.	<i>Best learning before age 3</i> Learners are most receptive to learning processes from birth until age 3.
<i>Hemispheric asymmetry</i> Two cerebral hemispheres exist that are not completely identical, both anatomically and functionally.	<i>Logic on the left/creativity on the right</i> Creative thought processes engage the right brain hemisphere, while logical thought processes engage the left. Deliberate effort must be made to equally engage both brain hemispheres.
<i>Sensitive phases in child development</i> There are sensitive phases in childhood during which certain things can be learned more easily and in which isolation from stimuli can lead to irreversible damage (e. g., language acquisition).	<i>Critical time periods for learning</i> Children must be presented with as many good stimuli as possible during this time window that then closes irrevocably so that their learning will not be impaired throughout their life, as this cannot be corrected through education.
<i>Brain activity</i> Imaging techniques make it possible to measure which brain regions are involved in a mental or physical activity.	<i>Only use 10% of the brain</i> We only use the 10% of our brain regions highlighted in images (e. g., fMRI) and thus only a fraction of our mental capacity.
<i>Consolidation</i> Nighttime restructuring processes can lead to the gaining of new insights during sleep.	<i>Learning while you sleep</i> Completely new content can be learned during sleep via the acoustic channel (e. g., audio recordings of vocabulary lists).

Source: Grospietsch, F. and Mayer, J. 2020. Misconceptions about neuroscience – prevalence and persistence of neuromyths in education. *Neuroforum*. 26, pp. 63–71.

Neuromyths have gained a lot of popularity, the effectiveness of measures such as adapting teaching to learning styles, performing educational kinesiology exercises, and organizing work using multitasking has not been proven (Davies, 1999; Wiseman, 2010).

Studies conducted in various countries (see Figure 1) have shown a high level of belief in neuromyths, which persists regardless of the socioeconomic situation, the quality of the educational system or other demographic and psychological factors (Ferrero et al., 2016; Khramova et al., 2023).

Figure 1. Countries where studies have been conducted on the belief in neuromyths



Source: Grospietsch, F. and Mayer, J. 2020. Misconceptions about neuroscience – prevalence and persistence of neuromyths in education. *Neuroforum*. 26, pp. 63–71.

Among the studies conducted so far, no attempt has been made to directly compare the results of two countries with different cultures, socio-demographic or religious situations. Therefore, an attempt has been made to supplement previous researchers' findings concerning the aforementioned issues.

Research methodology

Research group

This study was conducted among 171 teachers from Poland and Israel. 85 of the participants were Polish teachers from schools in the vicinity of Lublin and Warsaw, and 86 of the participants were Israeli teachers from schools in the vicinity of Tel Aviv and Kfar Saba. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

Instruments and procedures

The subjects of the study were recruited from schools and university in selected regions of Poland and Israel. An online Demographic questionnaire and Neuromyths questionnaire were sent to the management team at the schools, with a request to send it to the employed teachers. They were informed that the goal of the study was to collect information on their current state of knowledge and attitudes toward neuroscience and learning, and that the anonymity of their data would be ensured via a coding system. The authors strictly handled teachers anonymity and ethical issues.

Table 2. Distribution N, (%) of teachers-subjects, according to Personal Characteristics

N		Poland		Israel	
		%	N	%	N
Gender	Women	82	96.5	78	90.7
	Men	3	3.5	8	8.3
Age	Under 30 years old	15	17.6	33	38.4
	30-40 years old	31	36.5	16	16.3
	40-50 years old	20	23.5	22	25.6
	over 50 years old	22	22.4	15	19.7
Work experience	Under 5 years	28	32.9	48	55.8
	6-10 years	9	10.6	10	11.6
	11-15 years	17	20	4	4.7
	16-20 years	10	11.8	8	9.3
	Over 20 years	21	24.7	15	18.6
Number of courses taken in neuroscience	none	11	12.9	86	100
	1-2	50	58.8	0	0
	3 and more	24	28.3	0	0

Source: own research.

Table 3. Claims made in the questionnaire used in the study

No.	Claim
1	Children must acquire their native language before learning a second language. If they don't, no language will be fully mastered (F).
2	Children have many types of intelligence (F).
3	Children are less attentive after eating sweet drinks and/or snacks (F).
4	Children from stimulus-rich environments have a better developed nervous system (F).
5	When an area of the brain is damaged, other parts of the brain can take over its function (T).
6	If students don't drink enough water (= 6–8 glasses a day), their brains will shrink (F).
7	When we sleep, the brain turns off (F).
8	Using media does not change the structure of the brain in children (F).
9	Short exercises in educational kinesiology can improve the integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain (F).
10	People can learn new information, such as new languages, while they sleep (F).
11	Human memory works like a tape recorder or video camera and accurately records the events we've experienced (F).
12	The brain of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is over-stimulated (T).
13	The brains of boys and girls develop at the same rate (F).
14	People learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style (e.g. auditory, visual, kinesthetic) (F).
15	Positive emotions increase the amount of dopamine in the brain and children achieve better academic results (T).
16	The learning process takes place through the modification of brain neurons (T).
17	Differences in the structure of the boys ,and girls' brains may explain why dyslexia or autism are more common in boys and depression in girls (T).
18	Differences in the dominance of the hemisphere (left / right) can help explain individual differences between students (F).
19	Sleep is important in science, because during this dream phase we consolidate what we learn (T).
20	Learning difficulties related to differences in brain development cannot be corrected by education (F).
21	We use only 10% of our brain (F).
22	There are critical periods in childhood regarding the learning of different skills. If the child does not master them at that time, then it will be impossible (F).
23	Multitasking increases work efficiency (F).
24	Making new connections in the brain can last until death (T).
25	Mental abilities are hereditary and cannot be changed by the environment or experience (F).
26	It has been scientifically proven that fatty acid supplements (omega-3 and omega-6) have a positive effect on academic achievement (F).
27	Regular drinking of caffeinated beverages reduces mindfulness (T)

Correct answer: T-true, F-false

The online Neuromyths questionnaire contained 27 statements (20 neuromyths and 7 neurofacts). It was prepared on the basis of two publications (research reviews): Torrijos-Mueaus et al. (2020) and Ferrero M. et al. (2016). Most of the neuromyths that were used in the questionnaires of all or most countries participating in this type of study were selected. Claims 7, 8 and 15 were prepared by one of the authors on the basis of recent publications in this area of interest. The selection of each neuromyth was consulted with the Israeli partner. As a result, only those were left that the authors felt would be understood by subjects from both countries. Regarding the neurofacts: three of them (items No. 24 and 27, 12) were taken from the aforementioned publications, where they were listed as neuromyths to which the researcher should give a positive answer. The remaining statements were prepared by the authors. The number of neuromyths was based on the questionnaires used so far, which most often contained between 17 and 20 statements. The number of neuromyths was decided by the authors taking into account the length of the questionnaire.

The original questionnaire was prepared in English. Translation into Polish and Israeli took place during an online meeting attended by the authors and professional translators.

Respondents completed the questionnaire online. The questionnaire consisted of a three-option answer format “correct”, “incorrect” or “I don’t know”. In addition, information on sociodemographic data (age, gender, field of study, years of study/training, enrollment in university courses on neuroscience and learning) were collected for all participants (see Table 3).

Data analysis

The dependent variables were the percentage of the above-mentioned responses to neuromyth statements (where a higher percentage of adverse responses reflects more faith in myths) and the percentage of the above-mentioned responses to factual statements (where a higher percentage of correct answers indicates a higher level of knowledge). The alpha coefficient for myths was 0.49 and the alpha coefficient for measured facts 0.43. In the current study the validity and reliability were found to be significantly high. The internal consistency of neuroscientific facts was $\alpha=0.44$ for the Israeli group and $\alpha=0.42$ for the Polish group. The internal consistency of neuromyths was $\alpha=0.47$ for the Israeli group and $\alpha=0.5$ for the Polish group. This is below the acceptable levels (<0.70).

The data was analyzed using the Social Sciences Statistics Package (SPSS) version 26.0 for Windows. The statistical threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$ was used in all

analyses. Independent Chi-square tests were carried out to investigate the differences (independent variable) in the level of belief in neuromyths and the level of knowledge of neurofacts (dependent variables) as regards countries. Chi-square tests were also conducted to check whether respondents' answers were differentiated by the distributions of the categorical variables: age, seniority, and sex.

Research results

Differences/similarities in the beliefs in neuromyths as regards countries 9 of the 21 myth statements were believed by more than 50% of the teachers. The most prevalent of these myths were: "People learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style" (PL:98.8%, IL:93%), "Positive emotions increase the amount of dopamine in the brain and children achieve better academic results" (PL:94.1%, IL:86%), "Short exercises in educational kinesiology can improve the integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain" (PL:94.1%, IL:60.5%) and "Children have many types of intelligence" (PL:91.8%, IL:95.3%). Less than 10% of respondents in both countries believe that "When we sleep, the brain turns off" (PL:2.4%; IL: 3%), "Cognitive abilities are hereditary and cannot be modified by experience" (PL:8.2%; IL:5.8%) and "Excessive media use does not alter the structure of children's brains" (PL:9.4%, IL:5.8%). Significant differences across the countries were found between the following neuromyths. Israeli teachers are more likely to believe that "Child must first learn their mother tongue and then a second language" (PL:5,9%, IL:29,1%) and that "Children from stimulus-rich backgrounds have a better developed nervous system" (PL:38,7%, IL:60,5%). Israeli teachers were less likely to give correct answers and were more often uncertain about the truth of 4 neuromyths: "Children must drink 6–8 glasses of water daily" (PL:50,6%, IL:38,4%), "Excessive media use does not change the structure of the children's brain" (PL:84,7%, IL:61,6%), "The education process cannot correct the developmental disorders of the nervous system" (PL:72,9%, IL:57,0%) and "We use 10% of our brain" (PL:35,3%, IL:16,3%).

On the other hand, among Polish educators, the belief is more common that "Children are less attentive after drinking sweet drinks or eating sweets" (PL:65,9%, IL:2,1%), that "Short kinesiology exercises can improve interhemispheric integration" (PL:94,1%, IL:60,5%), that "The domination of one hemisphere can explain individual differences between children" (PL:78,8%, IL:48,8%) and that "Multitasking increases effectiveness" (PL:56,5%, IL:22,1%).

Statistical analyses of the obtained results showed that the country significantly differentiated the respondents' responses in 10 out of 22 neuromyths (see Table 4).

Table 4. Means and chi-square of the two groups of study, Poland and Israel, with respect to neuromyths

Neuromyths PL (%)		Correct		Incorrect		I don't know		χ^2	P
		IL (%)	PL (%)	IL (%)	PL (%)	IL (%)			
1.	When we sleep, the brain turns off.	90.6	93.0	2.4	2.3	7.1	4.7	0.45	0.79
2.	People learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style (e.g. auditory, visual, kinesthetic).	0.0	4.7	98.8	93.0	1.2	2.3	4.42	0.19
3.	Children must acquire their native language before learning a second language. If they don't, no language will be fully mastered.	75.3	55.8	5.9	29.1	18.8	15.1	15.92	0.01
4.	Children have many types of intelligence.	1.2	0.0	91.8	95.3	7.1	4.7	1.49	0.47
5.	Human memory works like a tape recorder or video camera and accurately records the events we've experienced.	29.4	39.5	55.3	48.8	15.3	11.6	2.03	0.36
6.	Children are less attentive after eating sweet drinks and / or snacks.	16.5	51.2	65.9	22.1	17.6	26.7	35.45	0.01
7.	Children from stimulus-rich environments have a better developed nervous system.	37.6	16.3	38.8	60.5	23.5	23.3	11.28	0.01
8.	If students don't drink enough water (= 6–8 glasses a day), their brains will shrink.	50.6	38.4	17.6	8.1	31.8	53.5	9.16	0.01
9.	The brains of boys and girls develop at the same rate.	72.9	58.1	4.7	12.8	22.4	29.1	5.36	0.06
10.	Excessive media use does not change the brain in children.	84.7	61.6	9.4	5.8	5.9	32.6	19.6	0.01
11.	Short exercises in educational kinesiology can improve the integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain.	0	0	94.1	60.5	5.9	39.5	27.49	0.01
12.	People can learn new information, such as new languages, while they sleep.	22.4	33.7	36.5	30.2	41.2	36.0	2.75	0.25
13.	Positive emotions increase the amount of dopamine in the brain and children achieve better academic results.	1.2	3.5	94.1	86.0	4.7	10.5	3.15	0.20
14.	Differences in the dominance of the hemisphere (left / right) can help explain individual differences between students.	5.9	10.5	78.8	48.8	15.3	40.7	16.95	0.01
15.	Learning difficulties related to differences in brain development cannot be corrected by education.	72.9	57.0	10.6	8.1	16.5	34.9	7.58	0.02

Neuromyths PL (%)		Correct		Incorrect		I don't know		χ^2	P
		IL (%)	PL (%)	IL (%)	PL (%)	IL (%)			
16	We use only 10% of our brain.	35.3	16.3	36.5	44.2	28.2	39.5	8.24	0.01
17	There are critical periods in childhood regarding the learning of different skills. If the child does not master them at that time, then it will be impossible.	43.5	52.3	38.8	33.7	17.6	14.0	1.36	0.5
18.	Multitasking increases work efficiency.	16.5	65.1	56.5	22.1	27.1	12.8	41.98	0.01
19.	It has been scientifically proven that fatty acid supplements (omega-3 and omega-6) have a positive effect on academic achievement.	9.4	5.8	48.2	48.8	42.4	45.3	0.81	0.66
20.	Mental abilities are hereditary and cannot be changed by the environment or experience.	82.4	77.9	8.2	5.8	9.4	16.3	2.03	0.36

*PL – Poland, IL – Izrael; statistically significant results are bolded

Source: own research.

The categorial factor “age” was found to be statistically significant in determining the belief in neuromyths among teachers. The neuromyth “Children must acquire their native language before learning a second language” ($\chi^2=16.83$, $df=6$, $p=0.01$) is believed by most people under the age of 30. However, people between the ages of 31 and 40 showed a low belief in this statement. People over the age of 50 showed the greatest belief the neuro-myths: “Human memory works like a tape recorder or video camera and accurately records the events we’ve experienced” ($\chi^2=14.37$, $df=6$, $p=0.02$) and “Short exercises in educational kinesiology can improve the integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain” ($\chi^2=13.53$, $df=3$, $p=0.01$). People under the age of 30 showed a low level of belief regarding this neuromyth. Age also differentiated the respondents’ belief in the myth “We use only 10% of our brain” ($\chi^2=13.68$, $df=6$, $p=0.03$). The highest percentage (45%) of adverse responses occurred among people between 41 and 50 years of age.

The categorial factor “seniority” was found to be statistically significant in determining the belief in neuromyths. Seniority of 16–20 years of teaching showed a high percentage of belief in the following Neuromyths: “Short exercises in educational kinesiology can improve the integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain” ($\chi^2=11.2$, $df=4$, $p=0.02$), “People learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style” (54%), and “Regular drinking of caffeinated beverages reduces mindfulness” ($\chi^2=24.41$, $df=8$, $p=0.01$). The categorial factor “gender” was found to be statistically insignificant in determining the belief in neuromyths.

Neurofacts as scientifically proven knowledge about the functioning of the nervous system

With respect to the general statements about the brain, a difference between countries was found. Polish teachers had higher scores on general knowledge ($M=86\%$ correct, $SD=5.6$) than the teachers from Israel ($M= 56\%$ correct, $SD=16.7$) in 3 out of the 6 statements. Israeli school teachers were more likely to give answers “incorrect” to the following statements: “When some area of the brain is damaged, other parts of the brain can take over its function”, “Learning occurs by modifying the neural connections in the brain” and “Sleep is important in science, because during this dream phase we consolidate what we learn” (see Table 5).

Table 5. Means and chi-square of the two groups of study, Poland and Israel, with respect to neurofacts

Neurofact PL (%)		correct		incorrect		I don't know		χ^2	P
		IL (%)	PL (%)	IL (%)	PL (%)	IL (%)			
1.	When an area of the brain is removed, other parts of the brain can take over its function.	65.9	43.0	12.9	20.9	21.2	36.0	9.01	0.01
2.	The brain with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is overstimulated.	71.8	74.4	9.4	10.5	18.8	15.1	0.43	0.8
3.	Learning occurs through the use of modifications to the neural connections in the brain.	62.4	39.5	3.5	7.0	34.1	53.5	8.99	0.01
4.	Differences in the structure of the boys and girls' brains may explain why dyslexia or autism are more common in boys and depression in girls.	48.2	34.9	12.9	11.6	38.8	53.5	3.88	0.14
5.	Sleep is important in science, because during this dream phase we consolidate what we learn.	87.7	51.2	1.2	18.6	11.8	30.2	27.96	0.01
6.	It may take until death for new connections to be made in the brain.	62.4	58.1	10.6	8.1	27.1	33.7	1.02	0.59
7.	Regular drinking of caffeinated beverages reduces mindfulness.	37.6	27.9	18.8	30.2	43.5	41.9	3.53	0.17

*PL – Poland, IL – Izrael; statistically significant results are bolded

Source: own research.

The categorial factor “age of respondents” was found to be statistically significant in determining the belief in neurofacts among teachers. However, this was only true for one statement: “When an area of the brain is damaged, other parts of the brain can take over its function” ($\chi^2=12.57$, $df=6$, $p=0.05$).

The highest percentage of answers “incorrect” occurred among people under the age of 30. The scores on knowledge did not vary with the teachers' seniority. Furthermore, there were no differences between genders.

Discussion

This study examined the knowledge about the brain and prevalence of neuromyths. It was also an attempt to check whether cultural conditions will differentiate the results.

The results indicated that, overall, teachers believed half of the presented myths. 9 of the 21 myths were believed by more than 50% of the teachers in both countries. The most prevalent myths were the belief that individualizing instruction based on preferred learning style would increase the effectiveness of education, that positive emotions increase the amount of dopamine in the brain so that in a stress-free atmosphere information would be absorbed faster, and that short exercises in educational kinesiology could improve the integration of the left and right hemispheres.

Some detailed analyses showed that there are significant differences between the investigated countries. In Israel, what turned out to be more frequent was the belief in myths related, on the one hand, to the high positive importance of a stimulating environment (including the media) in a child's development and, on the other, to the limited possibility of correcting developmental difficulties in the teaching process. Teachers from Israel were also more likely to believe that teaching two languages at the same time hinders mastery in the native language. In Poland, on the other hand, respondents significantly more often believed that individualization of education should be based on hemispheric dominance and its effectiveness will not be reduced by multitasking, but drinking sugary drinks.

These results are in line with previous studies, which not only indicate that the listed myths are the most popular in most of the surveyed countries (see Figure 2). Yet, their authors point out that belief in neuromyths has remained consistently high over the past 10 years, ranging from 27.3 to 84.5% (Torrijos-Muelas et al., 2021). This situation persists despite the lack of evidence for the effectiveness of neuromyths, despite efforts to “debunk neuromyths” through national newspapers, education trade journals, online blogs/electronic media for a wide audience, and popular books (Rousseau, 2021). Numerous authors also question the effectiveness of introducing information, regarding neuroscience in the course of college teaching

Figure 2. Belief in neuromyths in different countries



Source: Ferrero, M., Garaizar, P. and Vadillo, M.A. 2016. Neuromyths in Education: Prevalence among Spanish Teachers and an Exploration of Cross-Cultural Variation. *Front. Hum. Neurosci.* **10**, p. 496.

(Kowalski and Taylor, 2017), or in the form of various forms of further education (Grospietsch and Mayer, 2018).

Among the reasons cited for the described phenomenon, there are low access to scientific sources for teachers and low skills in using such information (Pasquinelli, 2013). Strong marketing regarding certain neuromyths (Tovazzi et al., 2020) and the misinformation that goes along with it also play an important role (Roskies, 2008).

Similar results were obtained in the studies described in the article. The belief in neuromyths was widespread in both countries; however, closer analysis highlighted some trends.

Israeli teachers believed more in the myths regarding the positive impact of new technologies or the need to stimulate children by constantly providing them with teaching aids. In all likelihood, it can be concluded that they considered both of these elements important for child development. In Poland many publications have indicated recently that new technologies are harmful and social relationships are more important than educational toys. This may be one of the reasons for the inconsiderable belief in the aforementioned myths. On the other hand, among Polish teachers, there is an apparent belief in the high effectiveness of multitasking and the negative cognitive effects of the access to, for example, sugary drinks. Israeli teachers gave different answers in this regard. On the basis of the analysis, it can be concluded that among educators from Israel there may be a widespread belief in myths, which in Poland have lost their importance due to, among other things, various educational activities (campaigns) pointing out their negative effects. On the other hand, a high level of belief in certain neuromyths is still evident in Poland, despite the spread of knowledge described above (unlike in Israel). This may be related to the very large marketing that exists regarding certain products.

This raises the question of what can be done to lower the level of believing in neuromyths. Basing the considerations on the results of the present study, it can be concluded that some myths are dispelled by the possibility of accessing a knowledge of neuroscience (conveyed in an accessible way), while others are dispelled by social media campaigns of wide reach and long duration. However, the effectiveness of both of these processes is diminished by the profit-oriented branding that companies gain from the popularity of neuromyths. A response to the situation may be the research on critical thinking skills (Bensley et al., 2014). Its participants, who scored high on tests of critical thinking skills, endorsed fewer misconceptions about neuromyths and other messages given to them among other things.

The research presented here suggests that effective interventions aimed at lowering the belief in neuromyths should focus not only on activating rational thinking by providing evidence of their wrongfulness (training, courses, literature, subjects within studies, implementation of scientific research), but also on mitigating the so-called intuitive thinking, which involves the ability to look sceptically at proposed products, i.e. therapies, methods or teaching aids (Bensley and Lilienfeld, 2017). Perhaps combined with individualization (i.e., targeting the capabilities and limitations of individual countries), the synergy of the indicated activities will contribute to lowering the level of belief in neuromyths (and the associated frequency of use) in the international space.

Limitations

The main limitation of the study is the small sample size. In addition, it is very diverse in terms of metrics (age, gender, seniority). The determinants of the belief in neuromyths (related to religion, culture, education, etc.) were not analyzed here as well.

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Integration of immigrants with the host society (the case of Poland)

Abstract: This article presents the problem of immigrant integration in Poland. The research objective was to analyze the degree of integration of the immigrants with the host (Polish) society. The authors adopted the concept of 5 dimensions of integration as the theoretical basis for their research.

The studies were carried out using a survey questionnaire. They lasted from November 2022 to March 2023 and were carried out via the Internet. 224 immigrants took part in the research. The condition for participation in the study was residence in Poland for at least 2 years.

The respondents were asked, among other things, about free practice of one's religion, access to places where one can practice religion (churches, temples, mosques, etc.), making and maintaining acquaintances, encountering discrimination/hostility on the part of Poles, importance of religion and tradition in adapting to life in Poland, the choice of Poland in the event of the possible re-deciding on the choice of residence place or a possible change of residence place.

The analysis of the indicators revealed that the vast majority of the respondents (61%) had integrated with the host society to a great extent. However, a large group of immigrants (39%) who had problems with integration was also identified.

Keywords: integration, immigrants, Poland, host society, integration indicators

Introduction

Poland is traditionally treated as a country of emigration. Recently, however, it has changed from a typical emigration country to an immigration country, mainly as a result of its membership in the European Union. In recent years immigrants began to play an important role in the Polish labour market,

which creates an additional challenge for Polish immigration policy. The obligation to undertake integration initiatives is indicated by the European Union regulations on immigration policy. These regulations are also in force in Poland. However, the spectrum of activities aimed at integration of immigrants in Poland is not as extensive as in Western Europe. In Poland the largest number of integration activities are undertaken by non-governmental organisations and by the families of immigrants. This article is focused on the process of social integration of immigrants with Polish host society.

Integration of immigrants in Poland

Lots of authors have been dealing with the problem of integration for many years, analyzing in their research and publications various issues related to integration, both from the perspective of the host society and immigrants (e.g. Becker, 2022; Cavjan, 2020; Dollmann, 2021; Grzymała-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2022; Klarenbeek, 2021; Knap-Stefaniuk and Sowa-Behtane, 2020).

The term integration comes from the Latin word “integratio” – unification, merging, creating a whole from parts. In relation to nations, it means a process encompassing social, cultural, economic and political life, aiming at the creation of a larger, supranational community. It is supposed to be a community of states and nations, heterogeneous, multicultural, united around common values. It guarantees the cultural identity of individual ethnic groups and nations that constitute it (Stępnia, 2003). Integration is also defined as the social coexistence that brings about racial desegregation, equal opportunities regardless of race and cultural origin. The nature of the process is quite complex and may appear in many aspects (structural, cultural, social etc.) affecting both immigrants and the receiving society.

“Integration can be defined as a state or process in which different – from the point of view of ethno-cultural characteristics (identity, religion, culture) – individuals or groups are included in the host society and participate in various areas of its life. This refers not only to immigrants’ contacts with the society of the new country, but also to their adoption of the basic norms, values and institutions of the host society” (Piekut, 2008, p. 248). “Integration – is the result of both the desire to maintain one’s own cultural identity and the desire to maintain contact with a new culture” (Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 2000, p. 18).

In order to study the phenomenon of integration, its factors must be determined. The most frequently mentioned factors include:

- the attitude of the majority society towards the immigrant group;

- social relations with the sending society;
- social relations with the host society;
- participation in social organizations.

The conditions of the integration process have been included in the “integration map” (Castles, Korac, Vasta and Vertovec, 2002). The decisive factors here are those influencing the socio-economic and political situation of the migrant in the country of origin; the category of migrants; their legal status; demographic, cultural and social characteristics of immigrants and the same characteristics of the ethnic community; conditions in the host society; openness to immigrants; type and scope of state policy; housing availability; the extent of ethnic segregation; the situation on the local labor market; accessibility of education; the history of the same ethnic group in a given country; stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and racist behavior towards migrants; cooperation between different ethnic groups.

The native division of factors was made by Aneta Piekut (2008), who distinguished: demographic, cultural, psychological, social, economic, political, spatial and macrostructural factors. Integration may be different for different dimensions, e.g. good integration in one area may be accompanied by lack of integration in another. The most important dimensions of integration include: economic, social, cultural, identification, legal, institutional and spatial ones.

The other theoretical concept is 5 dimensions of integration (Łotocki, 2009):

- the structural (institutional and legal) dimension, i.e. the acquisition of basic rights and gaining access to valued social positions for immigrants and their children. Integration indicators may include: the residence status of immigrants, their use of social services, as well as the participation of immigrants in the political system of the host country;
- the cultural and identity dimension, i.e. the level of language proficiency of the host society, knowledge of the cultural patterns of this society, as well as the immigrant’s sense of belonging and identification with the host society;
- the social dimension, i.e. personal social relationships established by immigrants in the host society and membership in formal and informal social groups, marrying representatives of the host society;
- the economic dimension, measured by the difference in income between migrants and permanent residents of the host country, the percentage of migrants working for the minimum wage, as well as the level of unemployment among immigrants;

- the spatial dimension, i.e. the degree of segregation or ghettoization of immigrants.

Research methodology

The concept of 5 dimensions of integration was adopted as the theoretical basis for the research. In this article, a closer look will be taken at the social dimension of integration, which is understood here as establishing relationships at individual levels of the social structure, starting from the smallest groups, such as family and marriage, neighborhood groups and groups of friends, to larger ones, such as associations, social classes, and ending at the level of the entire society and its attitude towards the immigrant group (Massey 1986).

The aim of the study was to answer the question: How is the process of integration of immigrants in Poland proceeding?

In this publication (due to the limitations) the following detailed problems will be described:

- Is it possible for the surveyed immigrants to practice religion freely?
- Do immigrants have access to places where they can practice religion (churches, temples, mosques, etc.)?
- Do immigrants make and maintain friendships and with whom?
- Have immigrants experienced discrimination/hostility from Poles?
- What is the importance of religion and tradition for their adaptation to life in Poland?
- Would immigrants choose Poland if they had the opportunity to choose the country of immigration again?
- Do the surveyed immigrants intend to change their place of residence to another country?

224 immigrants living in Poland took part in the research conducted from November 2022 to March 2023 with the use of a diagnostic survey. The research was conducted using an online questionnaire among the group “Migrants and migrants – we support each other!” and among the group “Mixed relationships – foreign partners”. The condition for participation in the study was living in Poland for at least 2 years. Participation in the research was voluntary and the questionnaire was prepared in English.

The study involved 144 women (64.3%) and 80 men (35.7%). Most respondents lived in big cities, over 100,000 inhabitants (124 people – 55.3%) and medium-sized cities (76 people – 33.9%), and only several in villages (24

people – 10.7%). The respondents were aged between 21 and 43, and at the moment of the study they had stayed in Poland from 2 to 13 years, so the level of their integration should hypothetically be highly differentiated.

The group of foreigners included: Ukrainians – 136 people (60.7%), Indians – 26 people (11.6%), Turks – 24 people (10.7%), Slovaks – 14 people (6.2%), Egyptians – 8 people (3.5%), Nigerians – 5 people (2.2%), Algerians – 4 people (1.7%), Italians – 4 people (1.7%) and French – 1 person (0.4%). Their education level ranged between higher and vocational: higher – 64 people (57.1%), incomplete higher – 8 people (7.1%), post-secondary – 20 people (17.8%), secondary – 8 people (7.1%), vocational – 10 people (8.9%).

Discussion of the results

The first studied factor of integration was free practice of religion. Immigrants staying in Poland are able to practice their religion and beliefs freely – this is what nearly 85% of the respondents stated. There was no significant ($p > 0.05$) correspondence between free practice of religion and gender, place of residence, age or nationality. However, access to places of worship where they could practice their religion (churches, mosques, temples, etc.) was not so widespread: nearly 70% of the respondents claimed that they did not have access to places where they could practice their religion. Four people declared themselves Catholics, and these people definitely had no problem with access to religious places. The remaining people declared the following religions: Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Orthodox Christianity. Since these religions are culturally distant from Poland, there is an obvious difficulty in access to houses of prayer, especially in small towns and villages. The detailed data are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Free practice of immigrants' religion

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Definitely yes	124	55.4
	Rather yes	68	30.4
	I do not know	8	3.6
	Rather not	20	8.9
	Definitely not	4	1.8
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

Table 2. Access to places in which immigrants can practice their religion (churches, temples, mosques, etc.)

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Definitely yes	0	0
	Rather yes	68	30.4
	I do not know	0	0
	Rather not	28	12.5
	Definitely not	128	57.1
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

Another factor important for integration is immigrants' participation in social networks, i.e. maintaining relations with Indigenous people. 55% of the respondents initiated and maintained contacts with a mixed society (Poles, their compatriots and foreigners). A highly significant ($p < 0.01$) correspondence was found between the answers to the question about the possibility of practicing religion and the question about making and maintaining acquaintances. This means that the answers to these two questions were consistent with each other, and the respondents who did not report any problems with practicing their religion had no problems with making new acquaintances. The detailed data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Making and maintaining acquaintances

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	With all nationalities	124	55.4
	Mainly with Poles	24	1.,7
	Mainly with my compatriots	40	1.,9
	Mainly with other nationalities	36	1.,1
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

A very important factor which may hinder integration of immigrants is their being discriminated against by indigenous people. The respondents were asked whether they encounter discrimination/hostility on the part of Poles: 57% of them had never experienced it. Other people reported such experiences: some rarely, some once, and some frequently. A highly significant ($p < 0.01$) correspondence was found between experiencing discrimination

and the gender. In 90% of cases, the people discriminated against were men. There was no significant ($p > 0.05$) correspondence between experiencing discrimination and place of residence, age or nationality. The detailed data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Experiencing discrimination/hostility on the part of Poles

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	128	57.1
	Once	20	8.9
	Seldom	56	25.0
	Often	20	8.9
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

For 71% of the respondents religion and traditions in which they grew up were important for their adaptation to life in Poland. As many as 25% of them did not know whether their upbringing in another country influenced the process of integration with the host society. There was no significant ($p > 0.05$) correspondence between the importance of religion and tradition for adaptation to life in Poland and gender, place of residence, age or nationality. For the remaining respondents these factors were not important – see: Table 5.

Table 5. The importance of immigrants' religion and tradition for their adaptation to life in Poland

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Definitely important	132	58.9
	Rather important	28	12.5
	I don't know	56	25.0
	Rather not important	8	3.6
	Definitely not important	0	0
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

An important element of the integration process is the perception of a given country by immigrants and their opinion on this country. Pleasant or unpleasant situations which have been encountered by immigrants at the ini-

tial stage of their stay in a given country may affect their opinion and attitude towards it. The respondents were asked whether, if they could choose their place of residence again, they would still decide to settle in Poland. Nearly 84% of respondents would made the same decision. There was no significant ($p > 0.05$) correspondence between choosing Poland if able to choose a place of residence again and gender, place of residence, age or nationality. Their answers to this question are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Choosing Poland if able to choose a place of residence again

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Definitely yes	128	57.1
	Rather yes	60	26.8
	I don't know	4	1.8
	Rather not	16	7.1
	Definitely not	16	7.1
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

The respondents were asked about their life plans connected with Poland. The study revealed that almost half of the respondents did not have any departure plans, while the other half planned to leave Poland. The respondents were also asked why they wanted to change their current place of residence. The most frequent answers included poor living conditions in Poland (low wages, lack of tolerance for cultural or religious differences, racism) and easier life in another country. A significant ($p < 0.05$) correspondence was found between potential change of a place of residence and gender. In the vast majority of cases, women did not want to leave Poland. Table 7 presents their answers to the question about a potential change of their current place of residence to another country.

Table 7. Potential change of a place of residence

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No departure plans	108	48.2
	Planned departure to the home country	32	14.3
	Planned departure abroad	84	37.5
	Total	224	100.0

Source: own research.

The aim of the study was to answer the question: How is the process of integration of immigrants in Poland proceeding?

The study revealed that almost half of the respondents did not plan to leave Poland. Immigrants staying in Poland were able to practice their religion and beliefs freely – this was the opinion of almost 85% of the respondents. However, the access to places of worship where they could practice their religion (churches, mosques, temples, etc.) was not so widespread: nearly 70% of the respondents claimed that they did not have access to such places. This could be explained by the fact that Poland is a country inhabited mostly by Christians, so, obviously, Catholic churches constitute the majority of places of worship in Poland.

55% of them initiated and maintained contacts with the mixed society (Poles, compatriots and foreigners). Nearly 84% of the respondents stated that if they had a possibility to choose their place of residence again, they would still decide to live in Poland.

The analysis of the indicators examined in the study revealed that the vast majority of the respondents (61%) integrated with the host society to a great extent. However, a large group of immigrants (39%) who had problems with integration was also identified.

Conclusions

The obtained research results are similar to those obtained by Anita Brzozowska and Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska (2014), who also examined the social integration of immigrants (only from Ukraine) into Polish society. The research conducted by these authors shows that immigrants from Ukraine focused not only on maintaining relationships with Poles, but also on deepening them. Most Ukrainians mentioned Poles as their closest and trusted friends (78%), which proves that they develop strong bonds with representatives of the host country. The conducted analyses showed that Ukrainian immigrants settled in the Masovian Voivodeship develop their bridging capital not only by using strong marital ties with Polish spouses, but also through strong ties with unrelated representatives of the host country, as evidenced by the volume and density of the social networks in which they participate. The strategy aimed at accumulating the bridging capital and developing strong ties with Poles is typical not only of Ukrainian immigrants who entered mixed marriages, but also of those who entered marriages with other Ukrainian citizens.

Poland is one of the countries experiencing an international flow of people, which is why Poles must strive for a dialogue with immigrants who have settled on the territory of Poland. Polish people must manage diversity, build integrating environments together, combat social distance between groups, and prevent prejudice and discrimination. In order to achieve this goal, social integration becomes a key tool which allows social groups of different nationalities, cultures and religions to be included in the host society.

Thus, adequate integration policy is needed. First of all, this translates into recognition of the need for proper planning and implementation of activities leading to gaining and spreading knowledge of the phenomena of migration and integration, their dynamics and related processes, including group processes. Secondly, both migrants' situation before they arrived to the host country and their current functioning in it should be taken into account. Finally, it should be remembered that by supporting immigrants Poles also help to build their own daily living conditions. If immigrants are left to their own devices, it will probably have an impact on the quality of Poles' everyday life, which, looking into the future, will certainly become more and more multicultural.

Therefore, aiming at creating successful immigration policy in Poland, one must learn multiculturalism and allow immigrants to actively participate in the social life as agents within the dominant culture. Intercultural education is more than education adapted for the phenomenon of multiculturalism. "Multiculturalism is treated as a fact, whereas interculturalism is a task and an educational challenge" (Nikitorowicz, 1999, p. 25). It is all about increasing one's awareness of existing differences as well as learning about and accepting the elements of different cultures (Lewowicki, 2000). It is a lifelong cognitive and practical experience of every human being an individual unit as well as a member of society (Szcurek-Boruta, 2009).

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Research Reports



Value of friendship in children's experience – towards the phenomenology of the world experienced in cultural borderlands

Abstract: The theoretical and methodological framework of the undertaken considerations is determined by the basic conceptual categories – the linguistic image of the world, culture and values. In the analysis of their educational context, some assumptions were adopted from the field of linguistics and sociolinguistics (the perspective of the cultural context in linguistic research), social and cultural anthropology (with particular focus on its anthropocentric-cultural trend), axiology (its phenomenological orientation) and cognitive psychology (its cognitive-developmental theories). At the same time, the assumption was made that the study of the linguistic image of the value of friendship appreciated by learners from the Polish-Czech borderland enables treating language as a source of knowledge (anchored in their own experience and culture) about the ways they understand the world.

In the analysis of qualitative empirical material, a reductive and expansive method of data processing was used, as well as the assumptions of the interpretative approach to the analysis of the statement meanings in the context of: understanding the respondents' thoughts, critical common-sense understanding and theoretical understanding. In preparing a full description of the linguistic image of the value of friendship preferred by children, a phenomenological approach was also used, consisting in moving from individual textural-structural relations of meanings and the essence of the respondents' experiences to a synthesis in the form of a description of their axiological experiences.

Keywords: values, friendship, phenomenology of the experienced world, axiological education, early school age children, Polish-Czech borderland

Values and experiencing them by children – theoretical and methodological contexts

The period of early school education is an important stage in the life of every individual, in which their attitudes towards the world are shaped, a sense of their own identity and values are formed, and the foundations of interpersonal relationships are built. In this process, values are a key issue for education. They appear in it as a system of norms that condition the actions of both teachers and learners. During education, one refers to values that learners can accept and identify with. Values are a source of both inspiration and directives for education. In the process of education, a student should have the opportunity to learn, understand, accept (or reject), and also include values in the structure of their own experience (Klimek, 2007, p. 108; Lovat, Toomey and Clement, 2010; Karcz-Taranowicz, 2018, pp. 157–166; Chałas and Winiarczyk, 2018, pp. 143–157).

The pedagogical concept of values adopted here is considered compliantly with the objectivizing standpoint. It refers mainly to phenomenology with its three basic ideas – the person, values and the relationship of responsibility that binds the two in the name of the moral ideal, subordination to objective truth and freedom. This concept is represented, among others, by Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and in Poland by Roman Ingarden (Scheler, 2022; Węgrzecki, 2015, pp. 44–55; Galarowicz, 2019; Brejda, 2022; Czerniak, 2023). The common distinguishing feature of the adopted theoretical standpoint is, above all, the openness of the individual to experience, because:

- what is originally given to the subject essentially means experience – the fact that it is always a subject experiencing something,
- what is subjective is an immanent property of experience – experience and subjectivity always constitute an indivisible whole, and what differentiates them is the object: once understood psychologically as the state of the experiencing subject and the second time – objectively as the content of what is given to experience,
- each conscious experience of the subject is characterized by a cognitive or conative (volitional) objective representation, consistent with their beliefs and desires (Dziamski, 2002, pp. 170–171).

In the analysis of phenomenological investigations into values, the undertaken discussion focuses on three fundamental areas: experiencing values, their ontological status and the relationship between the subject and values (Borowska, 2007, pp. 21–36). An individual is a certain teleologically orient-

ed whole, possessing values within itself and, moreover, participating in the world of existing values. One cannot obtain any basic knowledge about the nature of values if one does not first feel them emotionally and then experience them. However, the whole difficulty of axiology lies in the fact that “the experience of values felt by someone in the form of emotional perception of their meaning is structurally complex, very rich in contents both on the side of valuable objects and on the side of the experiencing subject, and is also changeable and diverse” (Siemianowski, 1993, p. 30). Therefore, a person cannot limit themselves only to one type of values, but must be open to all phenomena of life in which they appear. Phenomenology of the experienced world is – in M. Scheler's approach – a special type of research approach to phenomena, characterized by the complete directness of their cognition through experience. This cognition – at the same time also abstracting from existence – is primarily focused on the contents (essence) of the studied phenomenon (Buczyńska-Garewicz, 2003, pp. 184–187).

“Emotional *a priori*” is also the central category of Scheler's theory of values, according to which the qualities that constitute the subject of an emotional *a priori* insight are values, and their direct cognition is achieved through phenomenological reduction. It enables, by omitting real mental processes, reaching their essence as ideal qualities. As Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz emphasizes, thus “the essential connection between values and emotional experience indicates the inseparability of the issues of the phenomenology of feelings and the theory of values. The ontology of values constitutes the other side of examining the essence of emotional experiences” (2003, p. 189). Moreover, this results in an important fact, which is also significant for educational theory and practice. On the one hand – it is difficult to establish specific principles regulating the experience of values, and therefore, when analyzing the value-person-experience relationship, one always touches upon the sphere of broadly understood individual freedom in the scope of the individual's personal experiences. On the other hand – using the phenomenology of the experienced world as an effective methodological approach to studying children's axiological preferences, expressed through the linguistic image of the world of values and evaluative orientations, creates the possibility of constructing specific axiological-educational situations in order to teach values and educate for values. This enables students to learn and understand various qualities (modalities) of values that are the object of their intentional emotional experiences.

The category of experience seems to be an interesting proposal for relating values to the relationship between the subject and the world revealed in experience, and at the same time for departing from the traditional axiological standpoint – the subjectivist and objectivist concept. Krystyna Starczewska considers experience to be “a contact that occurs between the subject and the world thanks to subjective activity; experience is therefore the perception – of something, and thinking – about something, imagining – something, and thinking in relation – to something, as well as emotional and even purely somatic reaction to something” (1994, pp. 232–233). In this way, the revealed values, signifying the meaning of human experiences, generally define the type of criteria according to which the child evaluates objects, phenomena, human actions and their products, created in a specific cultural reality.

Observing the development of a child, from birth to full personal maturity, one can see how the child gradually grows into an independent being, increasingly better oriented in the surrounding reality and able to act in it and influence it in a purposeful and rational way. The early school age, in which the child develops their cognitive structures, which at the same time create a conceptual-logical representation of the perceived social and cultural reality and the own Self, is of fundamental importance for “building” a general concept of oneself and for striving to define one’s own identity. It will be useful in this respect to distinguish between the procedural and declarative representation of the social and cultural world, allowing the child to formulate the primary Network of Values (Przetacznik-Gierowska, 1993, p. 78). What becomes increasingly important as the child matures are: the modelling process, developing the own experience and internal motivation. These factors contribute to the differentiation of cognitive structures, and then to the complexity and differentiation of the world of values. Therefore, development becomes primarily a function of experience, which is different in different areas (cf.: Stemplewska, 1992, p. 74; Segiet, 2011; Liberska, 2017, pp. 113–115).

Friendship in the linguistic image of the world of values preferred by children living in the Polish-Czech borderland

The linguistic image of the world of values preferred by children constitutes – in addition to the ordering of values and thus the expression of a knowledge about them – an important cognitive-experiential aspect of axiological competence¹.

¹ The issue of axiological competence acquired in cultural borderlands and of the

Its reconstruction outlined in this study, as well as the analysis and pedagogical interpretation based on the example of the value of friendship, makes it possible to indicate the possibilities of practical applications in education for the choice of values by learners at early school age living in the Polish-Czech borderland.

The theoretical and methodological framework of the undertaken problem is determined by the basic conceptual categories – the linguistic image of the world, culture and values. In analyzing their educational context, the assumptions were made from the scope of (1) linguistics and sociolinguistics (the perspective of the cultural context in linguistic research), (2) social and cultural anthropology (with particular focus on its anthropocentric-cultural trend), (3) axiology (its phenomenological orientation) and (4) cognitive psychology (its cognitive-developmental theories). At the same time, the assumption was made that studying the linguistic image of the world of values appreciated by learners creates the possibility of treating language as a source of knowledge about the ways a child understands the world, anchored in their own experience and culture.

What was taken into account to a greater extent in the analysis of children's linguistic determinants of the meaning and significance of the values of friendship was the semantic and pragmatic dimension of language, which in the cultural context most fully and most expressively conveys the way of perceiving reality by a given community in the form of its specific linguistic behaviours (Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska and Fleischer, 2000, p. 35). For this purpose, the rules of cognitive semantics were applied, which – according to Ryszard Jedliński – contains the cognitive content recorded in language and ways of structuring it, and additionally allows for a “natural” categorization of concepts and their multisided interpretation. It also enables the reconstruction of points of view, interpretational perspectives and reaching cultural determinants of the names of values (2000, p. 6; Krzyżyk and Synowiec, 2001, pp. 107–113; Bartmiński, 2004, pp. 325–331). It is therefore a specific way of understanding language, which involves treating it consciously, thanks to which the world experienced by an individual constitutes a certain taxonomically and axiologically structured whole.

In the undertaken research activities, the methods of qualitative data collection and analysis were used, with particular focus on the specificity of

linguistic image of the world of values is outlined in detail in the study by Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2007, pp. 33–49.

research conducted individually with a child. In relation to this research, the basic assumptions formulated in the methodology draw attention not only to the empathetic attitude of the researcher towards the research object – the child, but also to the aspects of research ethics, to the knowledge concerning the level of reflexivity of the child as a partner in the interview, as well as to the methodological competences of the researcher (Köpp and Lippitz, 2001, pp. 158–160). Moreover, as Wojciech Morszczyński emphasizes, phenomenological study of the linguistic aspect of the child's experienced world requires the suspension of the researcher's own preliminary judgments and convictions about the validity of the normative order of conversation that allows for fundamental indeterminacy. This also allows for invalidating the presupposition of fullness characteristic of an adult and the project of understanding typical of adults. Fulfilling these conditions makes it possible to recognize and analyze, in an unbiased way, the components that constitute the world of a child entering school, and thus determine the initial state of a dynamically changing educational situation. A necessary supplement must be the disclosure of the axiological dimension of this situation, encompassing the understanding, selection, and hierarchy of values that determine duties in the child's microcosm (Morszczyński, 2005, pp. 211–212).

In the analysis of the empirical material, the reductive and expansive method of data processing was used, as well as the assumptions of the interpretative approach to the analysis of the meanings of statements in the context of: understanding the respondents' thoughts, critical common-sense understanding and theoretical understanding (Kvale, 2004, pp. 213–231; Urbaniak-Zajac and Kos, 2013). In preparing a full description of the linguistic image of the values of friendship preferred by children, the phenomenological approach was also used, consisting in moving from individual textural-structural relations of meanings and the essence of the respondents' experiences to a synthesis in the form of a universal description of axiological experiences, representing the group (groups) as a whole (Moustakas, 2001, pp. 147–149; Embree, 2006).

The basis for determining and familiarizing with the content and structure of the linguistic image of the world of the values of friendship appreciated by learners from lower grades of primary school was a comparative analysis of the statements of 281 children from the Polish-Czech borderland, diversified in terms of form and content, collected in the years 2002–2024².

² Systematic studies of the linguistic image of the world of values preferred by early

During an individual conversation, the child's task was to answer the initiating questions that regarded: (a) understanding the word defining the value of friendship, (b) justifying why they consider the value of friendship important in their life, (c) providing synonyms that may constitute linguistic equivalents of the characterized value of friendship³, and (d) supplementing the characterized value with their own proposal, which constitutes an individual selection of the appreciated values.

The interpretations of the notion of friendship made by learners from grades I–III who live in the borderland express a diverse and multidimensional understanding of this value, related to:

- **descriptive categories of the name of friendship** (used most often – by 59.3% of students):

friendship is a feeling

Friendship is a feeling that connects people and children too (girl, I, Cieszyn)⁴

This is a feeling towards a friend, it is kindness and goodwill (boy, III, Cieszyn)

Friendship is a mutual feeling between people close to each other (girl, III, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is a feeling towards another person who you like and respect. If you have a friend, you can ask them for help (boy, II, Czech Cieszyn)

school learners from the Polish-Czech borderland have been conducted by the author of the article since 2002. In the years 2002–2004, 117 students from grades I–III took part in the study (60 girls and 57 boys), in the next stage of the research in 2012–2014, 89 children (48 girls and 41 boys), and in the last cycle in 2022–2024, 75 children (40 girls and 35 boys). The value of friendship was also a subject of research by participants of the master degree seminar conducted by the author. See: A. Wieczorek: *Attitudes of early school age children towards friendship*. Cieszyn 2017, UŚ and K. Derlich: *Trust and respect – understanding of values by students from lower grades of primary school (exemplified by the urban and rural environments)*. Cieszyn 2017, UŚ. Unpublished master degree theses defended at the Faculty of Ethnology and Educational Sciences, University of Silesia..

³ The basic questions (a, b, c) initiating students' free statements on the subject of understanding and interpretation of the value of friendship referred to the proposed questions included in the survey developed by R. Jedliński. Cf.: Jedliński, 2000, p. 278.

⁴ In this study, selected quotes from students' statements are written in italics and marked with the following symbols: I, II, III – first, second and third grade, respectively.

Friendship is a feeling towards my closest friend, she is close to me and I trust her (girl, II, Czech Cieszyn)

True friendship is a feeling that lasts a lifetime. It is worth having such friends from the heart (girl, III, Cieszyn)

friendship is companionship

Friendship is when you have a friend who helps you when there are problems (girl, I, Cieszyn)

Friendship is when one boy is friends with another. Then he does not feel lonely (boy, II, Czech Cieszyn)

We are friends with someone who likes and understands us and with whom we ourselves want to be friends. Everything would be indifferent if we could not be friends (girl, III, Cieszyn)

Friendship is taking care of friends. Without good friends, it is sad (boy, I, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is being friends, making friends with other children. Adults need friends as well (girl, II, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is when we are friends because we want to be and we like each other. In the future, when I am an adult, I will definitely have friends (boy, II, Cieszyn)

Friendship is my friend Ada. She is warm and kind. She helps me and always understands me (girl, II, Cieszyn)

Friendship is when we are friends and we can always count on each other (boy, I, Czech Cieszyn)

friendship is a bond

Friendship is a bond between people, between me and my closest friend (girl, II, Cieszyn)

It is often said that friends understand each other without words. I have such a friend and I am very happy (boy, III, Cieszyn)

Friendship for my friend gives me a sense of security and joy (girl, II, Czech Cieszyn)

If there were no friendship, the world would be empty and people very lonely (girl, III, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is the feeling that I am needed by others (boy, II, Cieszyn)

When you have a friend, you are close to other people (girl, II, Czech Cieszyn)

When we are friends, we can meet other people and help them (boy, III, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is important and necessary for everyone. It's worth having true friends (boy, II, Cieszyn)

I have a friend since childhood and she has never disappointed me (girl, III, Czech Cieszyn)

You have to like everyone, but there is something special between me and my friend (boy, I, Czech Cieszyn)

I can tell my friend all my secrets and he will always understand me (boy, II, Czech Cieszyn)

friendship is spending free time together

I like playing with my friend the most after school. We can't part then. Sometimes we sleep over at each other's place (girl, I, Cieszyn)

Thanks to my friend I am interested in various games. After school we like to play Lego City together. Secret agent (boy, III, Cieszyn)

During the pandemic I could play board games with my friend and meet him (boy, III, Czech Cieszyn)

I like sleepovers, then I can invite my favourite friends over and play with them (girl, II, Cieszyn)

I can always talk honestly with my friend and play Lego together (boy, II, Cieszyn)

- **axiological categories of the name of friendship** (used by 16.8% of children):

Without friendship, life would be sad. It is loving and helping others (girl, I, Cieszyn)

Friendship is associated with trust, honesty and good (girl, II, Cieszyn)

I can't imagine life without friendship and my only friend. The world is better then, and people do less evil (girl, III, Cieszyn)

Friendship is very important in life. And I understand the proverb now: a friend in need is a friend indeed. In fact, I am happy because I have a true friend who always helps me (boy, I, Cieszyn)

It is important to show others friendship, to tell them the truth. Then you are always happy (boy, II, Cieszyn)

Without friendship, our life really has no meaning. You have to be friends and then you can communicate better (boy, III, Cieszyn)

Because it is better to live when you have a friend. When they respect you and you respect others. Friendship gives us good (boy, III, Cieszyn)

Friendship is mutual trust. It gives good, happiness and a sense of security. Everyone should be friends and have a true friend in life (boy, III, Cieszyn)

Everyone is created for friendship, which gives pure good and joy (girl, I, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is necessary for everyone in life. Without friendship, people would be bad and unhappy (girl, II, Czech Cieszyn)

Friendship is the best thing on earth, because without friends, a person is lonely (boy, III, Czech Cieszyn)

– **multicategorical conceptualizations** (used by 16.1% of students):

Owing to friendship you can help other people you love, like and want to meet and spend time with (girl II, Cieszyn)

Friendship gives you faith in the people you meet and are friends with. It is important and necessary in every person's life (girl, III, Czech Cieszyn)

It is a feeling to other people. It is very important for all people to be friends. Without friendship the world would be empty (girl, III, Cieszyn)

Friendship is when someone loves or likes someone very much. It is showing goodness, warmth and affection. If people could not be friends, the world would be bad (girl II, Cieszyn)

True friendship and friendship with others are important in my life. We are connected by common fun, games, we can visit each other after school and spend time together (boy, II, Cieszyn)

If you have a true friend, you are not alone in life. Everyone needs friendship and happiness (boy, II, Czech Cieszyn)

I can't imagine not having a friend to confide in, tell what I think and feel, help each other. A friend is always needed and important to us (girl, I, Czech Cieszyn)

– **words of the same or nearly the same meaning** (used by 7.8% of children):

synonyms: *companionship, feeling, bond*

semantic terms: *closeness, attachment, chosen companionship*

adjectival terms: *accepting, selfless, most important, devoted, helpful, needed, true, cordial, important, supportive, understanding, mutual, kind*

terms referring to the names of values containing positive connotations: *acceptance, closeness, safety, being important to someone, good, voluntari-*

ness, appreciation, responsibility, caring, dedication, truthfulness, joy, liking, respect, sincerity, happiness, taking care, honesty, trust, courtesy, faith, understanding, mutual kindness, trust and negative connotations (anti-values): being a liar, suffering, false friendship, conflict, misfortune, insincerity, distrust, loneliness, sadness, evil.

The learners' conceptualizations of the notion of friendship result from their personal and positively marked emotional attitude to this particular value. The children from the Polish-Czech borderland feel friendship as an important value in their lives, which is primarily related to fulfilling their needs: of bonds, identity and self-fulfilment, as the basic motives for familiarizing with the world and learning at early school age.

(Re)construction of learners' experiences of the value of friendship

Friendship, being a friend or having a friend is an important psychological need, manifested by every person throughout their life and fulfilled in the processes of (1) symbiosis (close fusion and unity with the closest environment – a sense of bond, closeness and acceptance from others that conditions the sense of security in the world; (2) separation (gradual emergence of the Self from the symbiotic unity – a sense of identity, enabling the construction of the boundaries between the Self and other people; (3) individuation (development of internal autonomy of the Self – a sense of self-fulfilment, exploration of the environment, independent activity, which express one's Self (Małkiewicz, 2002, pp. 16–19; Szczepańska and Gawęł-Luty, 2010; Koźmińska and Olszewska, 2015, pp. 175–188). The need for friendship is most often formed between people of the same age and similar interests, and it can also develop in personal relationships, strongly emotionally charged, such as parent-child or teacher-learner. Childhood friendships as a specific type of social contact and at the same time a cognitive category became a subject of studies by Piagetian-oriented psychologists in the last century, and in the 1970s they were also inspired by Lev S. Vygotsky's concept of acquiring semiotic tools introduced into group activity. On the one hand, they allowed for explaining the phenomena of temporariness, egocentrism and conflict in children's friendship, and on the other hand – the durability of playmates' preferences, reciprocity of partners and independence from physical determinants (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2010, p. 428).

In profiling the concept of friendship by the surveyed learners, one can clearly grasp its cognitive character as an emotional intentional experience in which there are particular values. The descriptive and axiological categories used by children from grades I-III, as well as their multicategorical conceptualizations enriched with numerous synonyms of friendship, reflect two basic relations: one's *own friendship* – shaped and felt in contacts with the closest people to the child, and *friendship towards others*. One's own friendship, felt primarily by students from grades I and II, is related to the typical attitude of egocentrism still manifested in this developmental period (the turn of the pre – and early school stage). At the same time, it has a significant developmental significance – it is needed by the child both in the process of building the image of oneself (separating and confirming one's own Self) and in shaping individual identity (building and defending the boundaries between the Self and Others) (Małkiewicz, 2002, p. 17; Dunn, 2008; Karwowska-Struczyk, 2011, pp. 374–376; Szczepańska, 2014, pp. 231–250).

The children's use of the conceptualization of friendship as one of the most important human values, which for them means affection, companionship, bond and spending free time together, and their frequent use of the formula *it is when...*, refers to the semantic explication of ideal friendship, proposed within syntactic semantics by Anna Wierzbicka. According to it, *X wants Y to know what is happening in X, and Y wants X to know what is happening in Y. Moreover, Y really wants to know what is happening in X (and therefore is really interested in X, wants to know about X, and not just reveal themselves to X), and X is really interested in what is happening in Y* (1971, p. 81; 2015, pp. 166–194). It is complemented by drawing attention to the emotional and volitional dimension of friendship, i.e. treating it as a feeling that is an expression of emotional involvement.

The sociocultural knowledge of children from the Polish-Czech borderland about friendship includes the following components: (1) scientific (school), (2) media (coming from television programmes, advertisements, magazines and the Internet), (3) literary (referring to generally known fairy tales, fables and stories about true and false friendship), (4) societal (social – related to attitudes, and especially their emotional component and actions) and (5) cultural one (conditioned by the specificity of the border region, which is a sphere of transformation of students' experiences). These experiences are characterized by: • *openness* as experiencing the Self (sense of subjectivity) from the perspective of otherness in the situation of everyday contact with representatives of other cultures; • *complexity* – understood as

recognizing the consent for the functioning and coexistence of ambivalent evaluative orientations (judgments) that do not oppose each other as alternatives, • *polyphony* (multi-voicedness) as experiencing a dialogical, multidimensional relationship in the situation of contact with other cultures, with otherness, • *being in culture* (multiculturalism) as an experience of the limits of one's own agency and the possibility of making choices in the sphere of values and valuation. (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2007, p. 65).

The learners' judgments about friendship formulated in this respect contain various types of valuations according to different criteria:

- criterion of knowledge sources (cognitive aspect), where the following can be distinguished:
 - *direct* valuation – referring to children's individual experiences (situations and individual events in the family, school, peer environment) and consisting in assigning importance (meaning, significance) to friendship or its lack for oneself and the closest people;
 - *indirect* valuation – conditioned by acquired scientific (school) and popular knowledge about cultural reality and related – in the form of statements that friendship is an objective good for someone – to specific other people, their needs, interests and situations;
- criterion of the emotional relationship (emotional-evaluative aspect) allows one to indicate:
 - *positive* valuation – expressed in adopting one's own attitude marked positively towards friendship and friend (friends),
 - *negative* valuation – defining one's own attitude axiologically marked negatively towards friendship and at the same time showing a critically valued attitude towards oneself and other people;
- criterion of behaviour (actional aspect) – allows for a division into:
 - *individual* valuation – in which the judgements formulated – independently of the beliefs of others – translate into one's own, internally justified (devoid of ambivalence) actions, conducive to the realization and implementation of friendship,
 - *social* valuation – determined (sometimes also forced) by external factors in the form of evaluatively heterogeneous beliefs, adopted from other significant people and/or from mass media.

The opinions and judgments about friendship formulated by the surveyed children changed the most in the last stage of the study, which falls in 2022–2024. This change was primarily due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the Polish-Czech borderland since 2020 and the need for students to study

remotely at home and due to a significant reduction in peer contacts on both sides of the border. The value of friendship and peer relationships became mainly virtual during this period, contributing at the same time to an increase in the sense of loneliness among children.

The types of games preferred by children as forms of free time spent together with friends and schoolmates have also changed in the last two decades. Computer games have been included in this field on a larger scale, especially among boys. The greater awareness shown by first-grade students of the need to invest time in getting to know another person also draws attention now, as well as calling someone a friend that can take place after just a few days of closer acquaintance. The occurrence of such changes is also confirmed by the results of other studies on childhood friendships, which indicate that for most children at early school age “there are two basic reasons for entering closer relationships with another person. The first is the reluctance to being lonely, which is especially important for seven-year-old children, as almost all the respondents noted its importance. On the other hand, making friends in order to avoid loneliness is important for almost every second third-grader. The second basic reason for making friends is the need to spend time with peers. Every second first-grader and the same number of third-graders indicated this as the basis for entering closer interpersonal contacts” (Szewczuk, 2016, p. 108; see also: Prusiński, 2017, pp. 23–46; Morska, 2018, pp. 257–266; Czechowski, 2020, pp. 59–76; Olbrycht, 2022, pp. 122–132).

In the free statements of children from grades I-III, negative connotations (anti-values) of friendship were also revealed, such as: *suffering, false friendship, being a liar, conflict, misfortune, insincerity, distrust, loneliness, sadness, evil*. Although they rarely experience such unfavourable feelings and situations directly in their lives, learners are able to connect them with friendship. The source of the negative valuation of friendship displayed by the surveyed children is probably cultural and everyday knowledge, passed on in the family and school environment, as well as individual observation and anticipation of the reality surrounding students (including the media) in which they experience friendship.

In the final reflections, the analysis of children’s statements allows for stating that the value of friendship as a specific ethical knowledge is precious and important for learners at early school age. Its diverse and multidimensional profiling by the respondents refers primarily to psychological, social and cultural categories. The content and structure of the image of friendship

consolidated in the students' language simultaneously expresses their attitude – knowledge, emotions and behaviour – similar to semantic and phenomenological analyses of this value. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing – referring to the accurate and still relevant opinion of Katarzyna Olbrycht, formulated over a decade ago – that “if knowledge, and thus the path to it, i.e. learning and education, are important values of the child, their culture, then their implementation must be governed by stronger laws and mechanisms than acquiring useful skills and knowledge instrumentally. If school is to trigger positive motivation for the effort of learning, overcoming difficulties, it must refer to something more than pragmatic usefulness in everyday life. In this case, it must refer to the child's authentic cognitive curiosity, as well as to satisfaction from their own perceived progress, development, success – to an increasingly better understanding of the world, increasingly better relations with others, a sense of self-esteem and being needed. In this context, the child's acquisition of specific competences that will be needed “someday” for “something” is a goal that is understandable and convincing mainly for adults. One needs to create a situation in which these are also the child's goals” (Olbrycht, 2010, p. 92).

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Personal values and life meanings of Ukrainian youth in the conditions of instability

Abstract: The article comprises a static scientific-analytical review of the values and life meanings of Ukrainian youth in the conditions of war. The instability of the situation is characterized by the life circumstances that continue for a long time and significantly go beyond the social and natural norms in which people are used to living. In this social context, the value paradigm of a person is changing. On the basis of statistical data, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the problems that concern Ukrainian youth today was carried out, the types of their social activity, life priorities and meanings, dominant factors that influence the process of personality formation were determined. It is also stated in the study that the formation of the young people's value foundations during the war is influenced by their emotional and psychological state, which in most cases is not stable and has a contradictory and changeable character. Extremeness and categoricalness in assessments, frequent changes in emotional moods and priorities in young people are a result of the experienced stress. Some important generalizations are made regarding the restructuring of the value sphere of young people under the influence of such a tragic socio-political phenomenon as war.

Keywords: values, social experience, meaning of life, Ukrainian youth, conditions of instability and uncertainty, emotional and psychological state, restructuring of the sphere of values

Introduction

The war in Ukraine completely changed people's lives, affected their needs, goals, plans, life strategies. The set of social, economic, technological, ecological, organizational, mental, and psychophysiological factors that have appeared in this situation significantly deviate from their usual, everyday

indicators and negatively affect the life of an individual, social groups, and the entire society. A characteristic feature of an individual's life in the conditions of war is uncertainty, imbalance, disorder and confusion in feelings and thoughts, instability of values. Moreover, war is a battle of the values of freedom and the principles of democracy against violence and authoritarianism.

In conditions of instability, a person's life reactions are not reduced to only emotional ones. A person includes other components of personal potential, tries to cope with themselves, to understand on a broader scale their place in the system of social relations, to evaluate what is happening around them, to re-evaluate the acquisition of their experience. In connection with this, the individual has internal semantic conflicts, a restructuring of their personal and value identity is taking place. After all, as noted by V. Frankl and I. Yal, the meaning of life stimulates the development of personality, affects its orientation, life choices, etc. (Frankl, 1990, pp. 38–39).

Research methodology

The purpose of the article is to present a descriptive analytical review of the value orientations and life meanings of modern Ukrainian youth, which are changing in the conditions of the war in Ukraine. A statistical analysis is presented of surveys based on the results of sociological studies of youth during the war "The impact of war on youth in Ukraine", which were conducted by the NGO "Cedos Analytical Center" and the research agency Info Sapiens on the initiative and with technical and organizational support of the Representation of the United Nations Fund in the field of population, the UN Development Program in Ukraine and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, as well as with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark at the end of 2023. 2,064 respondents from different regions of Ukraine were involved. The research method is a face-to-face interview at the respondent's home.

As it is widely known, the values of an individual play the role of a life compass, serve as the basis of their needs, behaviour, etc. The psychological nature of values is considered by scientists from different perspectives: psychodynamics of drives (Z. Freud, K. Jung), identification with needs (A. Maslow), personal meanings (H. Allport), support of human abilities for life (E. Fromm), beliefs (M. Rokeach), etc. The problem of values and life meanings of the individual has always been a subject of study by both Ukrainian and Polish scientists. The topic of moral values, uncertainty of values, and axiological orientations

of a person are raised in works by well-known Ukrainians: V. Andrushchenko, I. Bekh, V. Kremen, V. Ogneviuk, P. Saukh, S. Sysoieva and others, as well as Polish scientists: Z. Kwieciński and M.M. Urlińska (norms and values that regulate the social life of young people, the dynamics of changes in these values); T. Lewowicki (humanistic and anthropological foundations of the spiritual development of the individual, their moral values); E. Ogrodzka-Mazur (values of intercultural education; social values of youth in critical conditions (Ukrainian-Polish discourse), J. Urban (the role of values in the self-fulfilment of an individual), J. Szczepański (social mechanisms of the influence of values on social life) and many other researchers.

For example, the Ukrainian scientist I. Bekh believes that the objective properties of many existing phenomena, objects, and events are defined as value if they are fully identified by a person. According to I. Bekh's interpretation, "the concept of 'personal values' relates to the mastering of social values by particular individuals, and therefore, the significance, personal meaning for a person of certain objects, events, phenomena, etc., is attached to them" (Bekh, 1998, p. 6).

At the same time, the famous Polish sociologist J. Szczepański noted that values are important factors in an individual's behaviour. Everyone has a certain hierarchy of values that they value to a greater or lesser extent. The researcher emphasizes the social mechanism of influence of values on social life. After all, they are regulators of human aspirations and actions, they allow to evaluate the actions of others, act as a basis for assessing the social suitability of group members and, thus, determine the principles of social hierarchy and outline the foundations of common life (Szczepański, 1969, p. 40).

The current situation can be characterized as uncertain, with constant social turbulence. Therefore, value orientations acquire individual and social properties and are actively formed under the influence of social factors. The situation in Ukraine today, when a full-scale war has been going on in its territory for the third year, has such an active influence on the personality.

This problem does not cease and is exacerbated in conditions of uncertainty and constant social turbulence. After all, the main characteristic of the crisis situation in which the majority of Ukrainians are now is that a value-unstable personality must be integrated into a value-unstable society. Under unstable social conditions, one can understand such life circumstances that continue for a long time and significantly go beyond the social and natural norms in which people are used to living.

The most active response to the unstable military situation in the country was the youth as a mobile and able-bodied part of the population, an accelerator of the implementation of new ideas, initiatives, and new forms of life. Part of the younger generation went abroad in search of a new life and prospects; others are fighting the enemy at the front and dying for the independence of Ukraine, some are working, studying, getting an education. Yet, for all categories of the young generation, the leading task is the adaptation and reconstruction of their personal and value identity, the opportunity to orientate in new value coordinates, align them with their needs and living conditions and perspectives of personal development.

Therefore, the system of values of the youth is not homeostatic, the values of the youth are transformative and different from the values prevailing in the society. Young people always change the contours of traditional social values, especially in such a difficult time as war.

Values as life guidelines of a young person

Values are the most important regulators of young people's behaviour and choice of life orientations. They are defined as a person's choice of certain material and spiritual landmarks as objects that determine their purposeful life activity, the whole way of life. People's life experience accumulates in value orientations, they are a kind of indicator of the hierarchy of preferences that a person gives to material or spiritual values during their life. The personality always focuses on those values that are actualized by one's needs and experience. They are classified in different ways, depending on what types of needs they will satisfy, what role they will perform, in which field they will be used, in particular by: *the object of assimilation* – material, material and spiritual; *the purpose of assimilation* – selfish, altruistic; *the method of manifestation* – situational, persistent; *the role in human activity* – terminal, instrumental; *the content of the activity* – cognitive, subject-transformative; *belonging* – personal (individual), group, collective, public, national, universal.

As the researchers point out, “during the period of radical changes in society, value contradictions sharply intensify. The so far formed mechanisms of socialization and orientation towards certain values contradict the general dynamics of social development. The content side of the new value orientating in such cases often ignores the priority of universally recognized values in real individual and social practice” (Mykhalchenko, 2013, p. 10). The conditions of war create for a person a situation of constant existential uncertainty,

characterized by collisions of intermittent and continuous, rational, and irrational, the possibility or impossibility of personal self-fulfilment, satisfaction of needs, requests and fulfilment of dreams. If before scientists associated the overcoming of “uncertainty of personal values” and other similar conditions with education and upbringing, then the factor of war was added to this, which greatly complicates their influence. It should be added that education is perceived by today’s youth as an instrumental value. Young people believe that education makes it possible to get a profession and make a career, to become educated, and that it helps to prepare for an independent life and is a tool for self-affirmation.

Impact of war on youth in Ukraine – sociological dimensions

The survey of youth during the war “The impact of war on youth in Ukraine”, which was conducted at the end of 2023, involved 2,064 respondents from different regions of Ukraine and those who had left the country (Vološevych, Kogut, Zheryobkina and Nazarenko, 2023, pp. 15–28). The study showed changes in their terminal (vital) values. Among these values, the following turned out to be basic: health, benefit to the country, peaceful life, family, education.

In contrast to 2021 (the pre-war period), the concern of young people for their health (their own or that of their loved ones) has increased significantly – 50% versus 35% in 2021; and mental health concerns increased as well – 22% versus 11% in 2021. Table 1 shows the most important problems that pertain to young people in Ukraine.

Table 1. The most important problems that concern Ukrainian youth today (%)

Mental health (anxiety, depression, low mood)	54%
Own health and health of the loved ones	47%
Lack of possibility of self-, self-development	33%
Lack of friends, difficulties in communicating with others	27%
Inability to get a job, loss of relevance of acquired profession	23%
Physical safety	21%

Source: own research.

Despite the difficulties of wartime, young people have more clearly defined optimistic senses of life and priorities. After all, the meaning of life is an independent, conscious choice of those values that orient a person not

to have (an attitude to possession), but to be (an attitude to the use of all human possibilities). Self-realization and striving for certain achievements are a criterion for choosing certain life meanings. Table 2 presents the most significant answers of young people to the question: “What would you most like to achieve in life?”

Table 2. Answers of young people to the question: “What would you most like to achieve in life?” (choosing the meaning of life)

№	Statement	Youth in Ukraine, %	Youth abroad, %
1.	Family happiness	71	69
2.	Health	62	60
3.	Making a career	56	51
4.	Fulfilling one's own talent and abilities	49	49
5.	Making benefit to your country	37	57
6.	Achieving fame	4	4

Source: own research.

It should be noted that what is constantly examined in Ukrainian scientific research are various directions of the individual's meaningful sphere, related to the worldview, self-awareness, a person's idea of the meaning of life, life goals, value orientations, the creativity of the individual, the idea of himself (the image of “I”) in relationships with other people, etc.

Meanings of life are directly related to expectations as a socio-psychological state anticipating self-image in the world. Therefore, in this context, the process of socialization of youth is important. Today, it is complicated by the reevaluation of traditions, norms, and values. Before young people relied on the experience of previous generations, now they must create new social experience, relying mainly on themselves. What should be noted is the growth of social activity of young people, the strengthening of patriotic sentiments and social cohesion, unity in the vision of the conditions for peace and the future of Ukraine. Table 3 shows various aspects of youth's social activity in relation to the processes taking place in Ukraine today.

Table 3. Types of social activity of Ukrainian youth

№	Type of activity	2023, %
1.	Volunteering	42
2.	Support of territorial integrity of Ukraine	82

№	Type of activity	2023, %
3.	Support for Ukraine's accession to the EU	84
4.	Joining the recovery process in one's own community	72

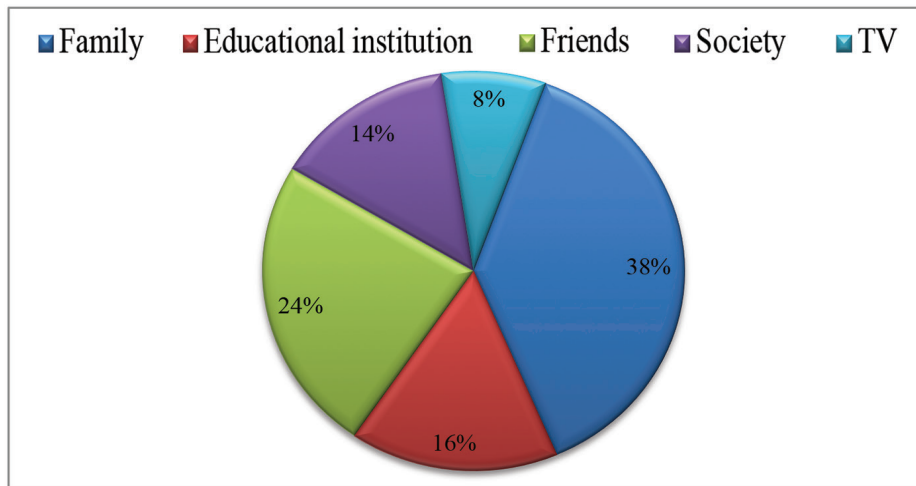
Source: own research.

There is also an increase in the number of young people who do not want to leave Ukraine: from 49% in 2021 to 66%. At the same time, 76% of young people who went abroad because of the war have a persistent desire to return to Ukraine. 64% plan to return to their settlement where they used to live, and only 2% – to another (the rest are undecided). It is noteworthy that 57% of young people abroad noted being useful to Ukraine as one of their most important goals in life.

On the basis of the research, it was determined that the family has the greatest influence on the formation of value orientations of young people – 38%; the next rank as regards this influence is occupied by friends – 24%; then – an educational institution (youth realizes itself in life) – 16%; then the society (skills of independent search for solutions to certain problems are inculcated; establishment of values in the community, principles of responsibility) – 14%; and also TV – 8%. All components of the life process affect the political, spiritual, and moral development of the individual (What worries Ukrainians at the end of 2023 – the results of a sociological survey, 2023). This is shown in Figure 1.

The process of the formation of a personality and its value foundations during the war is influenced by the emotional and psychological state. In most cases, it is not stable, has a contradictory and changeable character, extremeness and categoricalness in assessments, frequent changes in emotional states and priorities, which are result from stress. One of the consequences of this may be some changes in behavioural and customary household practices. The research data show that almost two-thirds of the population (60%) can significantly limit themselves in activities usual for peacetime – entertainment or cultural events. There is a minimization of needs, which significantly affects the worldview, the formation of broad scope of interests, and the spirituality of the individual.

Figure 1. Factors influencing the formation of a young person's personality



Source: own research.

What is more, interesting data on the prospects and intentions of Ukrainian youth in Ukraine and abroad are contained in a study conducted by the Info Sapiens company and the Sociological group Rating “Dream and Act” Study of youth in Ukraine and Poland. Key findings (2023).

The implementation of terminal (vital) values largely depends on the formation of dominant moral and universal human values among young people. In the process of content analysis of written creative works of modern students, their main values were analyzed. Freedom and dignity, humanity and mercy are of priority today. Most people associate the movement to victory with such values as faith (not losing faith), believing in the future. The majority notes that the key to this is the unity of the people, the basis of which is cohesion and indivisibility.

“Love” as a basic moral value in the conditions of war also acquires its own meanings and colours. One of the students wrote: “Now I will say more often to my dear people: ‘I love...’ War teaches that you should not postpone life for later but live every moment” (Khrystenko, 2022, p. 102).

Conclusion

The transformations in the Ukrainian society associated with the war create, on the one hand, a situation of constant existential uncertainty for Ukrainian

youth, and on the other hand, crystallize certain socio-individual values and life meanings that are important for the development of society (freedom, unity, integrity of the state, the European future, etc.).

Thus, the obtained sociological results in general confirm the positive attitude of Ukrainian university youth to the highest fundamental human and national spiritual values. However, the conditions of instability and uncertainty adjust the value-meaning map of modern Ukrainian youth. The restructuring of the value sphere of young people under the influence of such a tragic socio-political phenomenon as war allows one to make some important generalizations:

- Value orientations and life meanings of a person are closely related to their problems and challenges of the time, which act as the main determinants of their behaviour and needs.
- Today, young people are creating new social experiences, relying mostly only on themselves.
- Terminal (vital) values and life meanings of an individual are largely related to survival and safety in war conditions.
- Vital resources and universal human values are formed and crystallized more effectively in socially useful and creative affairs.
- Freedom, dignity, mercy, faith have become the dominant human values.
- There is a process of minimizing the needs of the individual, both material and spiritual ones, which negatively affects the formation of young people's scope of interests and their worldview.
- "Value" can be used only for naming what helps.

Therefore, the personal moral values of Ukrainian youth and their transformation in conditions of instability, act as a guideline, help to fill a person's life with some meaning, to define the purpose of their existence, in other words, to set before themselves a certain life task and prospects.

The further direction of research is related to the analysis of changes in the value world of young people in modern Ukrainian realities and to tracking certain positive and negative trends.

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Ukrainian adaptation of Chen and Starosta's Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

Abstract: The situation in Ukraine caused by war since 2014 and the intensification of hostilities from 2022 have led many Ukrainian citizens to emigrate. Living in other countries requires the need to adapt to often different cultural conditions. Intercultural sensitivity is an important dimension of intercultural communication competence that determines if individuals effectively adjust to a new reality. This study aims to adapt the most widely used tool for measuring intercultural sensitivity, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (2000) by Chen and Starosta, to Ukrainian conditions.

This article comprises a presentation of a Ukrainian version of the questionnaire for measuring cross-cultural sensitivity, along with its psychometric properties. The obtained results showed that Chen and Starosta's five-factor model of intercultural sensitivity (IS) did not fit the Ukrainian cultural context. A confirmatory factor analysis of the previous adaptations of IS, showed that the best model for the present study was the Serbian model. Therefore, we created a four-factor IS model containing 15 items (α -Cronbach's 0.841). These factors, along with the items included in the Ukrainian version of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, were based on the 24-item Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) formulated by Chen and Starosta. This study contains a proposal of an alternative model of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale that is better suited to Ukrainian culture.

The questionnaire with a key is attached to the article for other researchers to use in their studies.

Keywords: intercultural sensitivity, Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, research instrument adaptation, confirmatory factor analysis, exploratory factor analysis

Introduction

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has been going on since 2014, and since February 24, 2022, there has been an escalation of this conflict and an open invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops. This situation has caused many Ukrainian citizens, mostly women and children, to emigrate mainly to the European Union countries to seek haven there. European countries granted Ukrainian migrants (refugees) temporary protection with the right to work in the EU, access to health care, education, and social benefits. The influx of war refugees from Ukraine to the countries that provide them with assistance has many economic, financial, social, and cultural consequences. Extremely important elements of migrants' cultural capital are: their linguistic competence, recognized norms and values, and readiness for social integration. The competence of intercultural communication plays a special role in this regard, enabling people from different cultures to communicate effectively and appropriately. Intercultural sensitivity plays a significant role in this context since it involves recognizing cultural differences and a willingness to modify one's behavior as an expression of respect for people from other cultures (Bhawuk and Brush, 2004).

Developing intercultural sensitivity is so important because people with high intercultural sensitivity display a greater willingness to learn, recognize, and accept cultural differences, and are able to interact more effectively with people from other cultures (Chen and Starosta, 1997). With high intercultural sensitivity, Ukrainian expatriates can more easily find their way in both the educational systems and the labour market of the countries in which they are living (Gómez Yepes, Etchezahar, Albalá Genol and Maldonado, 2023). A prerequisite for the effective development of intercultural sensitivity is reliable and accurate diagnosis. Information obtained in the diagnosis can help teachers construct educational programs aimed at strengthening the intercultural sensitivity of participants of the educational process, and thus also their chances for satisfactory social integration.

In the context of research on cross-cultural sensitivity, Chen and Starosta's approach is the most popular. According to them, intercultural sensitivity means "an individual's ability to develop emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication" (Chen and Starosta, 1997, p. 5). Since intercultural sensitivity is dynamic, interculturally sensitive people must mo-

tivate themselves to understand, appreciate and accept differences between cultures as a result of intercultural interactions. According to the authors, cross-cultural sensitivity is related to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of cross-cultural interactions.

The cognitive aspect denotes intercultural awareness and is manifested in the ability to understand cultural similarities and differences. The behavioral aspect stands for intercultural proficiency and refers to the ability to achieve communication goals when interacting with people from other cultures. Intercultural sensitivity, on the other hand, mainly concerns the affective aspect and refers to an emotional desire to understand, appreciate, and accept cultural differences (Chen and Starosta 1997). Following this approach, Chen and Starosta built a model of intercultural communication competence consisting of three dimensions: intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural proficiency. Intercultural sensitivity, which is the affective component of this competence, plays the most important role in this model (1997). To assess intercultural sensitivity, they created the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) (Chen and Starosta, 2000). This scale consists of 24 statements rated by using a 5-point Likert method: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. The scale can be used to calculate the total score of intercultural sensitivity and it scores on 5 dimensions: Interaction Engagement (items: 1, 11, 13, 21, 22,23, 24), Respect of Cultural Differences (items: 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, 20), Interaction Confidence (trust in interaction) (items: 3, 4, 5, 6, 10), Interaction Enjoyment (items: 9, 12, 15), and Interaction Attentiveness (items 14, 17, 19). The total score is obtained by adding up all the items. For items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20 and 22, the scoring needs to be reversed. High scores reflect high cross-cultural sensitivity (Chen and Starosta, 2000).

This scale is often used in diagnosing cross-cultural sensitivity in various settings. However, researchers point out the need to adapt Chen and Starosta's model to the cultural conditions of a given country (Fritz, Möllenberg and Chen, 2002; Fritz, Graf, Hentze, Möllenberg and Chen, 2005; Tamam 2010; Petrovic, Starčević, Chen, and Komnenić, 2015; Wu, 2015; Korczynski and Majerek, 2021; Bahar-Ozvaris, Güçiz-Dogan, Konşuk-Ünlü, Sanver, Susuz, and Sullivan, 2022). This is what the ISS authors pointed out as well. A country's social, political, economic, and cultural context can be important for the application of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.

The presented research is aimed to adapt the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale to Ukrainian culture. The adaptation work began with translating the

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen and Starosta, 2000) from English into Ukrainian, following the principles of linguistic equivalence. Two translators translated the 24 statements of the scale from English into Ukrainian, and then after the individual statements were agreed upon (after ambiguities were clarified), another translator re-translated the scale from Ukrainian into English. The next step was to compare the translated version with the original. The finished questionnaire was subjected to professional proofreading and linguistic review.

The research was carried out between December 31, 2022, and June 6, 2023. Residents of Ukraine from all regions were invited to participate. The largest group were residents of the Khmelnytskyi region (163 people – 14.8%) and the city of Kyiv (123 people – 11.2%). A total of 1101 people participated in the study, including 866 women (78.7%) and 235 (21.3%) men. This disproportion is due to the situation in Ukraine, as it is mainly men who are involved in activities related to the ongoing armed conflict and therefore their participation in the survey was significantly limited.

The study group consisted of students between the age of 15 and 30, and the average age of the respondents was 22, SD 7.23. The study was conducted in an online asynchronous format – the respondents could take the survey at their convenience. Participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous and was not rewarded with any benefits. Given the situation of the ongoing war, conducting research using traditional methods proved to be extremely difficult, hence the decision to implement the study using an online survey created on a web platform. Respondents were selected using the snowball method, which involved participants recruiting other participants¹.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale – a model for Ukraine

Most of the studies devoted to cross-cultural sensitivity have used exploratory (EFA) or confirmatory (CFA) analysis, hence the significant differences between the obtained research results on the number of factors that make up cross-cultural sensitivity models (Wu, 2015). Exploratory factor analysis is used to search for the structure of the data when the researcher does not

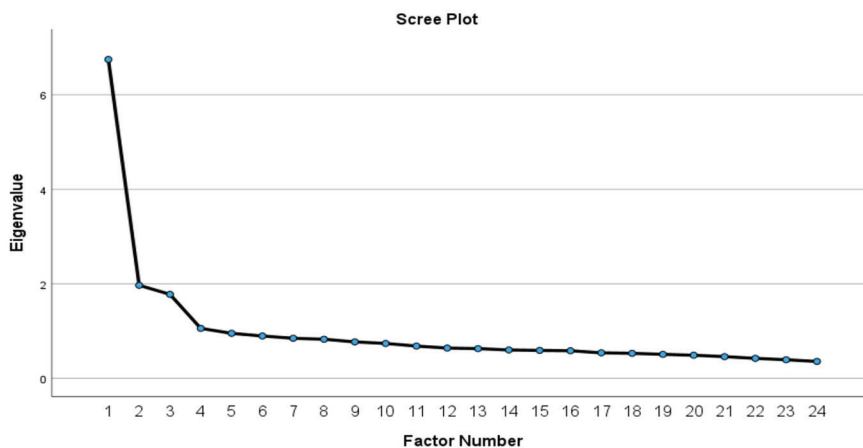
¹ Special thanks for Prof. Maria Chepil PhD (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Ivan Franko Drohobych State Pedagogical University) and Natalia Matijash, M.A. (Andriy Yurkevych Ternopil School No. 13, Ternopil, Ukraine) for their assistance in conducting the research.

have assumptions about that structure, as opposed to confirmatory analysis, which is based on theoretical assumptions about the structure of a given model (Bedyńska and Cypryńska, 2013). In this study, both exploratory and confirmatory analyses were used.

Exploratory factor analysis

The first step in the search for the factor structure of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) was the exploratory factor analysis of the collected data. The KMO coefficient value = .927 indicated that the factor model is suitable for explaining the structure of a given correlation matrix, and this is also confirmed by Bartlett's test of sphericity – 7621.233, $df = 276$, $p < .001$. The principal axis method (PAF) was used to examine the factor structure, following the procedure used by Chen and Starosta (2000). This study identified four factors with eigenvalues above 1 (see Figure 1). These factors explained 37.79% of the variance. Therefore, the number of factors is smaller than in the analysis done by Chen and Starosta, who distinguished five factors.

Figure 1. Scree plot



Source: own research.

On the basis of the data in the scree plot, four factors can be adopted for further analysis, which also confirms the Kaiser's criterion.

Varimax orthogonal rotation, which gives clear and stable results (Gorniak, 1998), was used to identify item loadings on each factor. It was assumed that the minimum value of factor loadings included in the analyses

was .4. Table 1 shows the item loadings in the rotated solution that obtained a value above .4. Thus, items that did not achieve the indicated minimum value of factor loadings were removed from the model; and these were 1, 11, 19, 20, 22.

Table 1. Four-Factor Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Item	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
M3 I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	.713			
M4 I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.	.538			
M5 I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	.623			
M10 I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	.774			
M2 I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.		.424		
M6 I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.		.629		
M7 I don't like to be with people from different cultures.		.518		
M8 I respect the values of people from different cultures.		.570		
M18 I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.		.440		
M13 I am open-minded to people from different cultures.			.480	
M16 I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.			.567	
M17 I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.			.580	
M21 I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.			.506	
M23 I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.			.402	
M24 I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.			.482	
M9 I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.				.446
M12 I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.				.430
M14 I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.				.505

Item	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
M15 I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.				.426
Percentage of variance explained	10.70	10.07	9.68	7.32

Source: own research.

The results of the exploratory factor analysis showed that the five-factor structure of Chen and Starosta's model was not reproduced, hence confirmatory factor analysis was proceeded (CFA).

Confirmatory factor analysis

In this study, the confirmatory analysis was performed using AMOS 28 software. The same procedure in testing the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was used by Fritz, Mollenberg, Chen (2002); Fritz, Graf, Hentze, Mollenberg, Chen (2005); Tamam (2010); Petrovic, Starcevic, Chen, Komnenic (2015); Wu (2015) and Korczynski, Majerek (2021). Several models were tested: the American, Polish, German, Taiwanese, Malaysian and Serbian. The method of generalized least squares (GLS) was used as the estimation method in the analyses. Several indicators of the right fitting of the empirical data to the tested models were adopted (see: Table 2).

Table 2. Rightness of fit indices in the CFA models of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

Model	<i>df</i>	χ^2	χ^2/df	Hoelter's N	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI
A	242	753.544***	3.114	433**	.044	.900	.876	.562
B	199	670.342***	3.369	408**	.046	.900	.873	.514
C	59	269.900***	4.570	356**	.057	.921	.878	.700
D	167	593.093***	3.551	394**	.048	.885	.855	.542
E	84	245.900***	2.928	524**	.042	.938	.911	.758

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; χ^2/df – adjusted χ^2 by degrees of freedom; RMSEA – root mean square error of approximation; GFI – goodness-of-fit index; AGFI – adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI – comparative fit index

Model A – American model by Chen, Starosta (2000), Polish model by Korczyński and Majerek (2021); Model B – German model by Fritz, Möllenberg, and Chen (2002); Model C – Taiwanese model by Wu (2015); Model D – Malaysian model by Tamam (2010); Model E – Serbian model by Petrovic, Starcevic, Chen, and Komnenic (2015)

Source: own research.

Considering that the χ^2 index is sensitive to the sample size and often reaches statistically significant values, the value of the index adjusted by the χ^2/df degrees of freedom was used. The recommended value of the good fit index should not exceed 3.0. Another indicator is the Steiger–Lind RMSEA (root mean squared error of approximation of the sample to the ideal population). The model is assumed to be well fitted to the data when the index value is $< .5$. On the other hand, Hoelter’s critical N (CN) informs for how large a sample (considering the achieved fit) there would be no grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis about the equality of the empirical and theoretical distribution. When Hoelter’s CN value is greater than 200, the model can be considered well fitted. The next analyzed indices of right fitting are: GFI (goodness of fit index), AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index) and CFI (comparative fit index), which should have values $> .9$ (some recommend even $> .95$) (Niezabitowska and Poprawa, 2020).

In the first tested model (A), a 5-factor structure was adopted, which was consistent with the original version of the ISS by Chen and Starosta (2000) and with the Polish version by Korczyński and Majerek (2021). 24 items were analyzed following the model of Chen and Starosta, confirmed by Korczyński and Majerek. It was assumed that all factors of intercultural sensitivity were correlated. For model A, the following fit indices were obtained: $\chi^2 = 753.54$, $df = 242$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.114$; RMSA = .044; GFI = .90; AGFI = .876; CFI = .562. The values of the χ^2/df and CFI indices were below the recommended values. All factors of cross-cultural sensitivity were significant ($p < .001$) and positively correlated with one another. The qualitative analysis of model A showed that not all items significantly loaded the corresponding factors. Three factors had factor loadings below the assumed value of .4. This model turned out not to be a good fit.

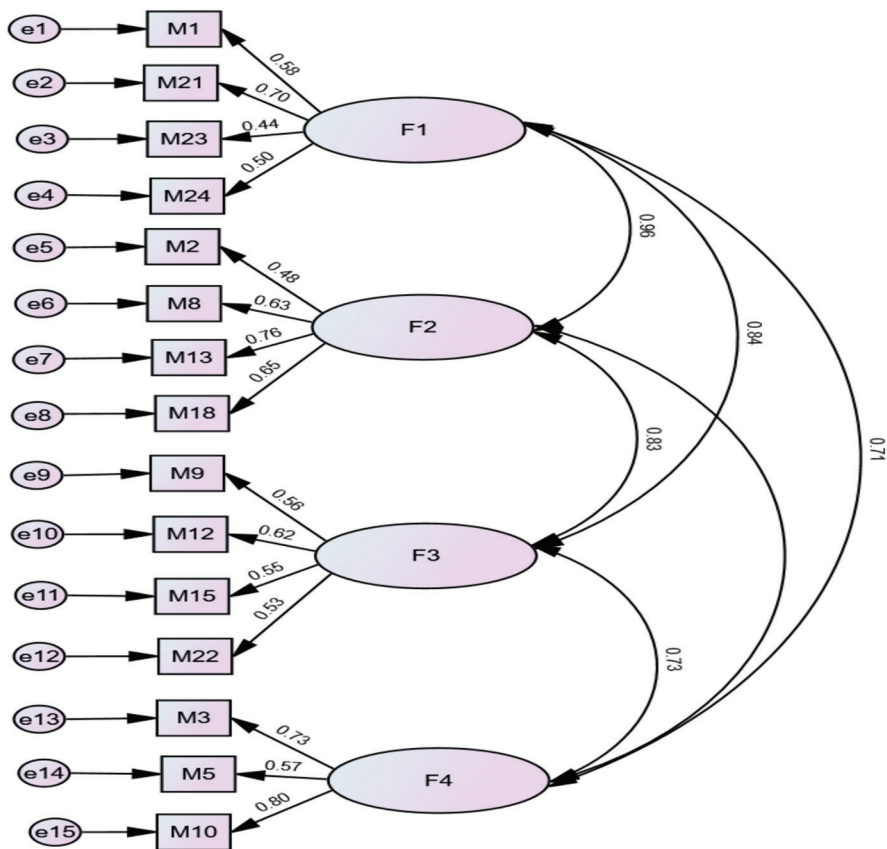
The next tested model (B) was a 5-factor German model with 22 items. The fit indices in this case were: $\chi^2 = 670.34$, $df = 199$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.114$; RMSA = .046; GFI = .900; AGFI = .911; CFI = .514. All factors were positively and significantly correlated ($p < .001$). Three values of factor loadings were below the recommended value of 0.4. Therefore, this model did not meet the conditions of a good fit.

The next tested model (C) was the four-factor Taiwanese model with 13 items. The values of fit indices obtained in this case: $\chi^2 = 269.9$, $df = 59$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 4.57$; RMSA = .057; GFI = .921; AGFI = .878; CFI = .700 did not meet the criteria for a good fit.

Model D, on the other hand, is a three-factor Malaysian model with 20 items. The fit index values obtained in this model were as follows: $\chi^2 = 593.093$; $df = 167$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.551$; $RMSA = .048$; $GFI = .885$; $AGFI = .855$; $CFI = .542$. These values, as in the case of the models tested so far, were not satisfactory, and therefore this model was not considered a good fit.

The best fit model turned out to be the Serbian model (E). The fit values were: $\chi^2 = 245.9$, $df = 84$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.928$; $RMSA = .042$; $GFI = .938$; $AGFI = .911$; $CFI = .758$. The obtained values of factor loadings were considered satisfactory (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2. Model of Intercultural Sensitivity adopted in this study or Estimation of Structural Equation Model; F1 – Interaction Engagement; F 2 – Respect for Cultural Differences; F 3 – Interaction Enjoyment; F 4 – Interaction Confidence



Source: own research.

The conducted analyses suggest an alternative model of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale to the model developed by Chen and Starosta, which is better suited to Ukrainian culture. This model, based on the Serbian adaptation of the Intercultural Sensitivity scale, contains 15 items forming four factors (see: Figure 2): Interaction Engagement, items 1, 21, 23, 24; Respect for Cultural Differences, items 2, 8, 13, 18; Interaction Enjoyment, items 9, 12, 15, 22; and Interaction Confidence, items 3, 5, 10. Therefore, the Interaction Attentiveness factor, present in the model proposed by Chen and Starosta (2000), was not included in the model adapted for Ukraine.

The values of standardized factor loadings for each of the distinguished subscales are acceptable (see: Table 3).

Table 3. The value of the reliability index (Cronbach's α) for the Ukrainian model

Subscale	Cronbach's α
Interaction Engagement	.609
Respect for Cultural Differences	.708
Interaction Enjoyment	.658
Interaction Confidence	.772
Intercultural Sensitivity Scale	.841

Source: own research.

The reliability indices of Cronbach's α obtained in the study are bigger than .6, which means that the reliability of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale tested for the Ukrainian conditions and its components are satisfactory.

Discussion

Intercultural sensitivity is an important communicative competence widely diagnosed in various cultural contexts. The basic tool for examining this competence is the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) developed in 2000 by Chen and Starosta. This tool, consisting of 5 factors covering 24 items, was designed for research in the United States. On the basis of this conceptual model, many researchers have tried to adapt this scale to their own cultural context (Fritz, Möllenberg and Chen, 2002; Fritz, Graf, Hentze, Möllenberg and Chen, 2005; Korczyński and Majerek, 2021; Bahar-Ozvarıs, Güçiz-Dogan, Konsuk-Unlü, Sanver, Susuz, and Sullivan, 2022). Frequently, how-

ever, the developed models differ from the original version of the ISS both in the number of factors and the number of items (e.g. Wu, 2015; Tamam, 2010).

This study has reinterpreted the ISS by Chen and Starosta and proposed a four-factor model based on the adaptation of the ISS by Petrovic, Starčević, Chen, and Komnenić (2015). The conducted exploratory and confirmatory analyses recommend using four factors for the study of Intercultural Sensitivity in Ukrainian culture. On the basis of the conducted analyses, a 15-item model of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was developed for research conducted among Ukrainian citizens. The proposed items included in this model were based on the values of standardized factor loadings. The conducted analyses indicate that it is a reliable and accurate tool for diagnosing intercultural sensitivity, which is the main component of communicative competence.

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Шкала міжкультурної чутливості (Г.-М. Чен та В.Я. Староста), адаптована Д. Восік-Кавала, Е. Саржинською-Мазурек, М. Корчинським та Г. Бевз

Нижче подається ряд тверджень щодо міжкультурної комунікації. Немає правильних чи не правильних відповідей. Будь ласка, працюйте швидко і запишіть своє перше враження, вказавши, наскільки ви згодні або не згодні з твердженнями. Дякуємо за співпрацю. Оцініть своє відношення за шкалою: 5 – повністю згідний, 4 – згідний, 3 – не визначено, 2 – не згідний, 1 – зовсім не згідний.

- Я отримую насолоду від спілкування з людьми з іншої культури.
Я вважаю, люди інших культур мають вузьке мислення.
Я досить впевнено почуваюся під час спілкування з людьми інших культур.
Я завжди знаю, що сказати у розмові з людьми з інших культур.
Поважаю цінності людей з інших культур.
Легко втрачаю рівновагу під час розмови з людьми з інших культур.
Я відчуваю себе впевнено у спілкуванні з людьми з іншої культури.
Я некомфортно почуваюся себе в оточенні людей інших культур.
Я відкритий/відкрита до людей інших культур.
Відчуваю свою меншовартісність у спілкуванні з людьми інших культур.
Я Нетолерантний/нетолерантна до думки людей інших культур.
Як правило, позитивно налаштований/налаштована до співрозмовників іншої культури
Я намагаюсь уникати контактів з людьми інших культур.
Я часто показую людині з іншої культури своє розуміння за допомогою вербальних або невербальних сигналів.
Задоволений/задоволена культурними відмінностями мене і моїх колег.

Ключ до підрахунку

Для пунктів 2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13 поміняйте місцями бали. Загальний бал за шкалою міжкультурної чутливості підраховується шляхом додавання всіх 15 пунктів.

Підшкали (виміри) міжкультурної чутливості:

Залучення до взаємодії (Interaction Engagement) – 1, 12, 14, 15.

Повага до культурних відмінностей (Respect for Cultural Differences) – 2, 5, 9, 11.

Приємність взаємодії (Interaction Enjoyment) – 6, 8, 10, 13.

Довіра до взаємодії (Interaction Confidence) – 3,4, 7.

Forum of Intercultural Educators

Dorota Mroczkowska
Agnieszka Jeran
Maja Brywczyńska
Agnieszka Nymś-Górna
Barbara Jankowiak

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Job-relevant competences from the perspective of students of humanities and social studies at three European universities. Research findings of the project “Enhancing Quality Teaching of Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education for 21+”

Abstract: The text addresses the key competencies of the future relevant to the labour market from the perspective of students of the humanities and social sciences. It is based on the research carried out in three universities: in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (a total of 603 students were surveyed) in 2022 as part of the Erasmus+ project grant KA220-HED. Research results indicate that students perceive critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication skills as the most important for future work, given that creativity is ranked in the middle of the three universities by students. Students ranked low emotion management, time management skills and digital competencies in the labor market. In terms of gender in the 4Cs, there are differences – for men, critical thinking is more important than for women, while communication and cooperation are more important for women. There are no differences in assessing the importance of creativity – this reflects the stereotypical image of differences between occupations perceived as more male and female.

Keywords: students, labour market, social sciences, humanities, future competencies, job-relevant competencies

1. Introduction

Society has moved away from the commodity and physical labour-based economy towards one grounded in information and highly trained human capital (Dede, 2010; Jara et al., 2015; Levy and Murnane, 2004). Employees must be both adaptable in their skill acquisition and ready to change positions. Thus, the most pressing issues in today's debates about the changing labour market are the functioning of the educational system, the development of its participants' competencies, and the future of teaching and learning, particularly in the context of the life-long learning concept (e.g., Allen and Velden 2001; Jenkins et al., 2010; Kwiatkowski, 2018; Moczydowska, 2021). According to Fadel (2014), there should be an overall consensus that future active citizens must be adaptive because one cannot predict what technology will dominate our future learning and work environments and how this will be done. Furthermore, in today's world, continual education is necessary, and university studying is only the beginning of a lifelong process of acquiring new knowledge and experiences.

Among the skills included in 21st century competency models, four are consistently mentioned: creativity, critical thinking, communication, and cooperation, forming what is known as the 4Cs model, which is gaining acceptance in scientific, educational, and professional circles alike. The fact that these are cognitive skills that allow for greater adaptation to specific situations in real time appears to be critical to its acceptance. As in 2017, the World Economic Forum (2023) believes the 4Cs to be a set of critical skills for progress in the modern economy, in line with suggestions from the education and research community. According to the literature, the 4Cs (OECD 2022) will influence students' future achievement, which are especially significant in social science and humanities.

Critical thinking abilities include the ability to discriminate between ideas and facts, to ask probing questions, and to evaluate the strengths and flaws of potential solutions. It refers to the ability to think critically and skilfully in order to determine what knowledge or communication is important in a specific setting (Gut, 2011). Communication skills are crucial in the growing service sector since they relate to the ability to discuss, negotiate, and resolve conflicts in a group setting. Communication competence is multidimensional, encompassing both general and specialised communication skills (Riem, 2007). Specialised, interdisciplinary, and knowledge-based work is becom-

ing prevalent. Because individuals cannot possess all knowledge and abilities by themselves, the complexity of work requires employee collaboration (Wang, 2010). Creativity is defined as the ability to solve problems in innovative ways and develop new ideas on a specific topic or in a particular setting. Since it is seen as an imperative for long-term organizational success (DiLiello, Houghton, 2008), employee creativity emerges as a critical talent for organizations to lead or adapt to change.

In addition to the 4Cs, other competences were included in our project, such whose importance is emphasized in the literature models of future competencies. Employees require domain-specific problem-solving skills since the workforce is increasingly confronted with difficult and non-recurring scenarios (Autor et al., 2003). Competence related to the management of one's emotions refers to individual differences in the identification, understanding, expression, and regulation of one's own and others' emotions. It is a necessary life skill that helps one effectively both perform relationship management and attain the objectives (Serrat, 2017). Setting and prioritizing goals, planning tasks, and monitoring progress are all aspects of time management (Peeters & Rutte, 2005). Because of the abundance of available information and data, often coming from multiple sources, employees in nearly all sectors of the economy must be able to search, evaluate, and organize it (Silva, 2009).

These skills, however, are not always clearly identified by teachers and students and, in consequence, are not further developed. Insufficient integration of practice throughout university education has been recognised as the most significant challenge to face, along with the urgent need to develop digital skills, highlighted starkly by the epidemic.

As a result, our study focuses on the nine fundamental skills supported by ICT: 4Cs: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills, Emotional Management Competence, Time Management, and Technical and Digital Competencies.

The following research problems were formulated in this project:

- perception of competencies' relevance to labour market expectations from the student's perspective (How do students perceive their competencies in terms of labour market expectations?),
- relationship between university and perceiving the importance of the 4Cs competencies for future careers (Do students from different universities assess the importance of the 4Cs competencies for future careers differently?),

- perception of competencies' relevance to labour market expectations from the gender perspective (Does gender affect students' perceptions of labour market expectations?).

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design and ethics

The research project was carried out within the framework of the Erasmus+ grant KA220-HED – Cooperation Partnership in Higher Education, 'Enhancing Quality Teaching of Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education for 21+' (Registration number: 2021–1-CZ01-KA220-HED-000031122), which responds to the key objective set by the European Union and national ministries to improve and modernize higher education in the area of competencies crucial to 21st century's life and practice. To achieve this objective, an empirical study was conducted at universities in three countries using an online survey (supported by in-depth interviews): Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan (AMU), Poland; Hradec Králové University (HKU), Czech Republic; and the University of Konstantin the Philosopher in Nitra (UKF), Slovakia. The survey involved measurement using a mixed strategy, combining quantitative (carried out as CAWI) and qualitative (IDI) surveys, targeting both students and academics. The findings presented below are based on the quantitative survey (CAWI) of students.

The Research Ethics Committees of all three universities involved academic units granted ethical approval for the study. The project was designed for adult participants. Participation in research was voluntary, and the study's purpose was known to the participants. Informed consents were included in the instructions to the CAWI questionnaire, informing potential respondents about the purpose of the survey, recruitment criteria, approximate time needed to complete the survey and their rights as participants. In order to proceed to complete the survey, all the outlined terms had to be accepted by pressing the 'Next' button. CAWI survey data are stored on the server of the Faculty of Sociology of Adam Mickiewicz University, in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and the free flow of such data.

2.2. Study participants and organization of research

603 students participated in the study: 128 from the Czech Republic, 404 from Poland, and 71 from Slovakia, including 73.63% females, 23.71% males, and 2.65% of persons with another gender identity. The average age among participants was 22.2 years (min. 18, max. 53); male and female participants were studying for the following degrees: bachelor's 59%, master's 15.7%, and master's in unified 5-year-long studies 25.3%.

The IDI research was carried out in the first quarter of 2023, while the survey research was carried out at the onset of the winter term of the 2022/2023 academic year. This enabled the collection of study material in the context of consistent time and place. The interviews were conducted with students and faculty members from various disciplines of study (humanities and social sciences) to capture their unique characteristics. During the interviews, the findings obtained from the survey were discussed with the respondents. Both the survey and interview questions covered five areas: flexible forms of education, informal learning, psychological determinants, labour market and virtual mobilities.

2.3. Operationalization of variables

Dependent variables: The study used a list of the nine competencies indicated above, as well as their synthetic, authorial descriptions, to provide research participants with a grasp of the meaning of each competency. These were generated by integrating definitions from the expert literature and the insights from discussions among project research team members. Participants in the survey were asked to rank competencies vital to their future careers in descending order of importance.

Independent variables: gender, university (UAM, HKU, UFK).

2.4. Statistical analysis

Exploratory and verification procedures were used in the analysis, including: description of the distribution of variables (determination of averages for each rank) and significance tests of differences (Mann-Whitney analysis and Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks with the Bonferroni method post-hoc test to check differences between students of particular

universities). A significance level of 0.01 was used as a cut-off. The collected results were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28 software.

3. Results: competencies of the future – perceived usefulness for future work

The study referred to the nine key competencies described in the methodology section. The full rankings for the three universities are displayed below (Table 1), along with the average rank (the lower the value, the more important a particular competency is according to students). The ranks arranged by students in the question referring to their predicted importance in future work vary slightly between universities, but the 4Cs competencies remain among the top five most important.

Table 1. Perceived usefulness in the labour market in regard to the place of study

Structure of the ranking of competencies according to their perceived usefulness in future work			Average rank		
HKU (CZ)	AMU (PL)	UKF (SL)	HKU (CZ)	AMU (PL)	UKF (SL)
1. problem solving	1. problem solving	1. critical thinking	2.84	3.12	2.55
2. critical thinking	2. critical thinking	2. problem solving	3.05	3.31	3.08
3. communication (general)	3. communication (general)	3. communication (general)	4.27	3.51	4.08
4. creativity	4. cooperation	4. creativity	5.03	4.54	4.51
5. cooperation	5. creativity	5. cooperation	5.23	5.17	5.61
6. managing oneself in time	6. specialised communication	6. specialised communication	5.33	5.19	5.62
7. specialised communication	7. management of emotions	7. managing oneself in time	5.97	6.16	6.06
8. management of emotions	8. managing oneself in time	8. management of emotions	6.48	6.83	6.56
9. digital competencies	9. digital competencies	9. digital competencies	6.80	7.17	6.93

Source: own research.

The importance of the problem-solving competency, which is not included in the 4Cs list, is of particular relevance in this compilation, just like the 4Cs competencies.

With the limitation to the competencies in group 4Cs after using the Kruskal-Wallis test, it can be seen that the differences in beliefs about the usefulness of the selected competencies concern primarily students from Po-

land (UAM) and occur in relation to three competencies, with the exception of creativity, which students from each university ranked similarly.

In terms of critical thinking, there is a statistically significant difference between AMU and HKU students (Kruskal-Wallis test, corrected significance 0.004). Polish students attribute significantly less importance to this competence. In the case of communication, there is a significant difference between AMU and HKU students (Kruskal-Wallis test, corrected significance 0.001). AMU students attribute a much higher value to communication. In the case of cooperation, there is a statistically significant difference between the perspectives of students from AMU and HKU (Kruskal-Wallis test, corrected significance 0.006), as well as UKF (Kruskal-Wallis test, corrected significance 0.006). AMU students rank this competence significantly higher than students from the other surveyed universities.

Table 2. Perceived usefulness in the labour market in regard to gender

Structure of the ranking of competencies according to their perceived usefulness in future work		Average rank	
Female	Male	Female	Male
1. problem solving	1. critical thinking	3.04	2.66
2. critical thinking	2. problem solving	3.35	2.97
3. communication (general)	3. communication (general)	3.60	4.08
4. cooperation	4. creativity	4.69	4.77
5. creativity	5. cooperation	5.15	5.28
6. specialised communication	6. specialised communication	5.24	5.75
7. management of emotions	7. managing oneself in time	6.23	6.50
8. managing oneself in time	8. digital competencies	6.42	6.51
9. digital competencies	9. management of emotions	7.27	6.48

Source: own research.

The most valuable competencies, according to the respondents, are problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication (general), with a difference in the first two: problem-solving is more important in the opinion of the surveyed female students, while critical thinking is more important in the opinion of male students. Simultaneously, it is worth noticing that the mean values of the ranking established by women are more closer to each other than in the case of men, who place the first two competencies similarly, while communication receives significantly less priority (a higher mean). A com-

parison of the averages (Mann-Whitney U-test) shows a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for problem-solving (significance < 0.001) and general communication (significance 0.023). Thus, despite the analogous ranking, male and female students rate the future importance of this competence differently. In the case of problem-solving, on the other hand, the situation is reversed – despite the different ranking, the average importance rating is not significantly different.

The next three competencies are creativity, cooperation and specialist communication. Collaboration is more important for female respondents, while creativity is more important for male respondents. However, a statistically significant difference in mean ranks applies to cooperation (significance 0.003) and specialist communication (significance 0.012) – similarly ranked but more highly valued by women (a lower mean).

The surveyed male and female students rank the last three competencies differently. For women, emotion management is the most important, followed by time management, and digital competencies are ranked as the last. In contrast, emotion management is ranked last for men, and time management and digital competencies are more critical for their future work. A statistically significant difference in mean rank values applies only to digital competencies (significance < 0.001).

4. Discussion and conclusion

As regards individual competencies, it appears that students in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia regard critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication skills as the most important for future work, which is consistent with the growing need described in the literature to strengthen these competencies for effective professional functioning (Bakshki et al., 2017). Taking into account that creativity ranks in the middle of all three universities' competency rankings based on student responses, it appears to be a cross-cutting competence capable of enabling flexible thinking, discovering new possibilities, and developing new ideas, concepts, or products, as well as allowing the expression of one's individuality, passion, and unique point of view (important for all 'European Citizens'). In general, communication and cooperation (fundamental for group work and discussions) appear to be more important for AMU students than for students at other universities, which may reflect differences in perception of future (imagined) professional tasks or academic teachers' approach to

teaching techniques. Social sciences and humanities courses often require an interdisciplinary approach since social issues are complex and demand a broad spectrum of knowledge and perspectives. Interdisciplinary methods can lead to unexpected connections and exchanges of ideas. In these kinds of activities, cultivating the 4Cs competencies is essential for collaboration as well as for building strong relationships with customers, business partners, and other interested people. Additionally, it fosters a greater sense of flexibility and adaptability in young people, which is highly valued in the job market.

It's noteworthy that students give the importance of digital competencies in the labour market the lowest priority. The question is whether they consider digital and technical skills an obvious complement to the essential competencies that a student pursuing a degree in the humanities and social sciences should possess, or if they rank them lower because of the "non-technical" nature of their studies and subsequent professional work. Importantly, digital skills are required at all levels of higher education and are an essential component of successful professionalisation (Herrmann et al., 2021). Similarly low-ranked in our study were emotion management and time management skills.

Previous studies have supported the importance of time management for efficient professional functioning (di Gregorio 2019) as well as the role of emotional competence in enhancing professional adaptability (Coetzee and Harry, 2014), making it an important psychosocial resource in personal and environmental interactions (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012). Consequently, the low significance assigned to these skill groups in our study should encourage the surveyed universities to think about emphasizing and improving these skill sets in their study programs, as well as linking them to other critical competencies that students acquire in a variety of courses. Additionally, the curriculum should emphasize not just the development of competencies but also the improvement of students' understanding of the importance of these competencies for their future employment in the labour market.

There are gender disparities in the 4Cs: women place greater value on cooperation and communication, while men place greater value on critical thinking. There are no disparities in evaluating the significance of creativity in the context of future work. This appears to reflect the stereotypical perceptions of differences between occupations considered more masculine or feminine, with the latter favouring cooperation and emotional labour over rivalry and competition. This interpretation is confirmed by the different po-

sitioning of the competence related to managing one's emotions among men, perceived as the least important for future work (although the average rank of this competence is still higher than digital competence among women). Taking into consideration the characteristics of the studied academic disciplines – all respondents studied social sciences and humanities – this is rather perplexing. Still, among respondents there were no students of technical or natural sciences, so only occupations that explicitly mention social competencies are included in the scope of anticipated careers.

Significant practical implications come from the project for each of the participating universities. The partner country, Slovakia, is about to undergo a major reform of its educational system. As a result, the internationally applied research methodology and the obtained data may help in remodelling the SSH curriculum to meet the highest standards. The Czech and Polish partners are constantly improving their educational offers available for students and potential candidates (both domestic and international). The project's findings can be applied to design specific courses and improve both new and current study programs.

The project's strengths include:

- understanding social processes in the academic environment;
- considering cultural and educational contexts (what cultural factors influence educational processes, what values are transmitted, how culture influences expectations towards students);
- triangulation of research methods.

The weaknesses of the project include:

- limited representativeness;
- poor comparability.

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Experience of discrimination among mothers of children with disability/illness. An intersectional perspective

Abstract: The phenomenon of exclusion, marginalization and disadvantage is experienced by many social groups, especially the – culturally, nationally or religiously – Others. The article is a continuation of an earlier text published in the journal *Edukacja Międzykulturowa [Intercultural Education]*, which concerned the theoretical foundations of multiple discrimination and a review of the research conducted in the intersectional paradigm. In this text, the focus is primarily on the analysis of research on multiple discrimination against mothers of children with disabilities. The research was aimed at learning about their experiences and answering the question: Do the surveyed women feel discrimination? And if so, does this unfair differentiation affect them because they belong to more than one group? To obtain an answer to these research questions, in 2023 I conducted six narrative interviews with mothers of children with profound disabilities. The analysis of their narratives made it possible to conclude that they experience differentiation by others due to more than one criterion. In their case, the first factor of discrimination is gender – the female one, which intersects with another (or others): woman – a mother of a child with disability; woman – a person who does not work. The narrators share their experience of being stigmatized due to their appearance (too well-groomed, and therefore not sufficiently devoted to the child), educational and caring competences (responsible for the child's behaviour that is inconsistent with social norms) and due to the abandonment or limitation of their professional career.

Keywords: discrimination, narrative, mother, multiple discrimination, intersectional perspective

Introduction

The phenomenon of exclusion, marginalization or disadvantage is experienced by many social groups, especially by the – culturally, nationally or religiously – Others. In the article, the exclusion felt by mothers of children with profound disability is presented. An analysis of their biographies made it possible to distinguish the category of multiple discrimination. That is why this issue is described from an intersectional perspective here and there are references to intersectionality, which is considered by me an important research paradigm for intercultural education. The article is a continuation of the earlier text (Klajmon-Lech, 2023) that concerned the theoretical foundations and analysis of the studies adopting this perspective and useful for intercultural education. In this text, the focus is primarily on the analysis of the conducted research with the use of the narrative interview method regarding the experience of multiple discrimination among mothers of ill/disabled children.

Theoretical assumptions

Intersectionality as a research paradigm enables a critical analysis of exclusion and discrimination, previously perceived mainly from the perspective of the needs and views of majority groups. Michał Skóra (2011) points out that this perspective, by covering many contradictory and overlapping human experiences, enables a critical analysis of the areas of exclusion and discrimination, which involves moving away from common institutional, performative, constructionist analyses and discourse analysis – as ineffective in showing mechanisms of oppression in the form of racism, sexism and exclusion. Intersectional analysis, characterized by the emancipatory approach, is a chance to present the true face of excluded people, because it gives them a voice.

Intersectionality stems from the feminist movement and the studies on social systems of oppressing women. It is currently used in social sciences as an effective tool for presenting the multiplicity and diversity of people's experiences regardless of gender. This category is presented as a theory (Brown, Caballero and Gershon, 2021; Traister, 2010; Beltran, 2013) and as a phenomenon in popular culture (Oleksy, 2014). In pedagogy, it was used as a method to investigate the phenomenon of peer violence (Stuve, Scambor and Fischer, 2017), as well as to show the interdependence between age and disability (Wlazło, 2019).

The basic category of the described paradigm is multiple discrimination, also called double, triple marginalisation/discrimination), intersectional discrimination, intersectional subordination), intersectional vulnerability, compound discrimination, cumulative discrimination, multidimensional discrimination and interactive discrimination (Makkonen, 2002; Cieślukowska and Sarata, 2012).

The basis of this concept is the assumption concerning the complexity and transformation of an individual's identity. As R. Coomaraswamy (2002) points out, identity – as the awareness of one's own "I", self-concept, self-esteem – does not have a permanent status. It is often subject to automatic reconstruction, also in response to changes in ideology or under the influence of life experiences. One of the key assumptions of intercultural education is recognizing the multi-aspect nature of human identity and the postulate of supporting the creation of an open, non-exclusive, diverse society. Adopting the principle of the complexity of the human "I", a person's belief in different values, admitting to different personality traits and manifestations, and belonging to different groups, is the key perspective for understanding the concept of multiple discrimination. Therefore, in my opinion, multiple discrimination is an extremely important category in intercultural education.

Discrimination should be understood as the experience of non-objective, unfair differentiation of people based on their belonging to one of the groups, such as the gender, age, disability or ethnic origin group. Yet, multiple discrimination is a form of oppression that affects a person due to this person's belonging to more than one group. "Criteria converging at one point, e.g. gender, race, age (gender + race + age) are at the same time an expression of hierarchies functioning in the society, which, captured in the metaphor of intersecting road arteries, make it impossible for an individual to leave the zone of this unfavourable impact" (Domańska, 2019, p. 136).

Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American researcher (1989), describes a situation in which people belong to many minority groups at the same time and therefore experience specific, multiple forms of unequal, worse treatment – multiple discrimination. Importantly, the experience resulting from combining several different criteria is, in her opinion, not a simple result of "summing up" various exclusions, but a qualitatively different type of discrimination, based more on synergy than on addition (Cieślukowska and Sarata, 2012). Gender as the second criterion (next to the criterion of ethnic origin) included in multiple discrimination is the female gender. A woman who is additionally "burdened" with black skin is a subject of many studies conducted in the United States of

America as part of women's studies or gender studies (Domańska, 2019). As Dominika Cieślukowska and Natalia Sarata (2012, p. 5) emphasize, "each of the minority identities that constitute grounds for discrimination may overlap with another and may result in a specific experience of discrimination. For example: at the same time, a person of Roma origin (ethnicity) may be a woman (gender), who may be a lesbian (sexual orientation), who may be disabled (ability), who may be older (age), who may live in the countryside (place of residence), and who may be poor (material status). Individuals may experience the marginalizing effects of intersectionality separately (e.g. a woman with disability), but one person may also meet all of these conditions simultaneously. If unequal treatment involves belonging to more than one group, the general category of multiple discrimination is dealt with".

Methodology

The undertaken research was aimed at learning about the experiences of mothers of disabled children pertaining to the way they are perceived by their immediate and distant surroundings. My aim was to answer the question: Do the surveyed women experience discrimination? And if so, does this unfair differentiation affect them because they belong to more than one group?

To answer the research questions formulated in this way, in 2023, I conducted six narrative interviews with mothers of children with profound disabilities. The narrators were aged 42 (Woman 1 and Woman 2 – W1/1 and 2), 40 (W3), 34 (W4 and W6), 36 (W5). Interview lengths ranged from 55 minutes to 3 hours. They were recorded on a dictaphone and then transcribed. Each interview had the same structure, according to Fritz Schütze's narrative interview methodology (Kos, 2013, pp. 98–104). In the course of the analytical procedure, I divided the texts of individual narratives into smaller thematic parts. After making the division, I moved on to the structural description, aimed to determine the processes resulting from the narrative. This included: determining the narrator's situation, identifying biographical advisors and significant others, as well as determining their importance in the respondent's life. The biographical processes of each statement are outlined below (Każmierska, 2016, pp. 69–70). The final stage of interpretation was to perform analytical abstraction. What was identified in the biography were breakthrough moments, turning points and critical events. The most important effect of this part of the analysis was the identification of categories common to most of the narratives in the text. Such categories included

the experience of multiple discrimination from the environment in the lives of the surveyed mothers. This problem is presented below, with focus exclusively on the statements of the respondents.

Research results and discussion

The narrators recall the experience of stigmatization resulting from others' stereotypical view on mothers of ill children:

Everyone thinks I'm doing great because I'm such one that I don't show it. I always dress nicely – that's how I am. I am annoyed by the frequent judgments of others. (...) Once I was going to a parents' meeting dressed nicely and I overheard one of the mothers saying to another: "Look, this one has an ill child, and she's all dressed up!" Jesus, I thought I was going to see red. No, we are not allowed to live. You have to go around and whip yourself because you have an ill child. You can't be happy, you have to be a regular poor guy. This is terrible for me. (W 1)

Sometimes I feel guilty about buying something nice for myself or going to a beautician to get my nails done, because what will people say? After all, she has a disabled child, so she shouldn't spend the money on herself, but on the child. (W 3)

The narrators clash with the expectations of the environment resulting from the stereotypical view of mothers of ill/disabled children as not caring about their appearance due to their economic situation and involvement in child care. Social expectations also concern total dedication to the child and the belief that such motherhood cannot give a sense of happiness. Mothers' reports show that such stereotypical views apply exclusively or usually to mothers (not fathers) of sick children. The two quoted statements are an example of the experience of stigmatization, but coping with it is different in both cases. In the first case (W1), the woman clearly fights against the stereotypical view, rebelling against it, accusing people who stigmatize her and the mothers' environment. The narrator strives to maintain her status as a woman. In this case, she is primarily a woman, and the status of the mother of an ill child recedes into the background. In the second case (W 3), it seems that the socially stigmatized person begins to believe that the attributes assigned to her by society are true, which is why she feels remorse. The stigma of a mother sacrificing herself for her child at the expense of taking care of herself is somehow adopted by her, she agrees with it. Researchers interpret such behaviour by claiming that social stigma has deep consequences in an

individual, causing a state in which the person is unable to cope with the “label” that society has attached to them. A stigmatized person may also feel threatened, anxious, alienated, which results in lower self-esteem and lack of self-confidence (Kowalewska, Krajewska-Kułałak et al., 2010).

The experience of lack of acceptance from the environment due to the difficult behaviour of children with profound intellectual disabilities is often recalled by the narrators.

And, for example, if I was walking down the street and my behaviour was short and concise, for example, or in a bar, I went with my husband and my eldest son and he behaved badly there, moved, fidgeted and something like that. And I gave him short commands, like: “Don’t touch!” The kind that he would understand and hear. I knew he could understand it. And someone at the next table heard me talking to him, well, almost like I was talking to a dog, and he said to me: “You know, I would take you to the Social Welfare Centre, how are you behaving here! You should control yourself!” Someone has already classified me, judged me and rated me and now he has already passed a sentence on me and there is nothing to do but shoot me. (W 3)

I don’t feel like I have any stigma for having a disabled child. Only maybe... well, yet with strangers, I have such an impression. When we go somewhere – to a restaurant or for a pizza, when P. shouts, it seems that people go cross-eyed, they look at us. At Biedronka [a popular chain of shops in Poland, author’s note] not long ago, we were arguing because he wanted another sweet croissant. I say: “You can’t!”, because he has already been eating something, “You can’t eat that much”. Well, the people around me, some of them, would have gone cross-eyed, looking at me like that. Well, it’s so sad, that looking out of the corner of your eye, for example in a restaurant. Someone looks at me and thinks that my son has a bad upbringing, not that he is ill, but that he has a bad upbringing, and that it is my fault. How can he behave like this? Well, no one literally has told me that, but that look is enough. (W 5)

The narrators present themselves as particularly discriminated against due to the role and responsibility assigned to them as mothers. According to the society, it is the mother who should control her son’s aggression and antisocial behaviour. Effective and proven ways of addressing a disabled child are immediately noticed by those around them and negatively assessed if they do not meet the accepted standards of “good behaviour”. In public places, not only a child is criticized, but above all their mother, who is considered responsible (much more than the father) for the child’s unacceptable attitudes (Maciarz, 2004; McKeever and Miller, 2004; Kościelska, 2011; Niedbalski,

2020). The narrators' adoption of the status of a disabled child's mother puts them in a situation of testing relationships and mutual trust in the social environment. "Focusing on 'relationships with the environment' will be a credit of trust given to the environment by the mother who expects support. Yet, "the relationship of the environment towards the mother and her child" will confirm the capital of trust that every individual counts on in a difficult life situation. The most common way to test this capital is to search for and confront the opinions of others" (Konieczna, 2021, p. 92). In the described situations, the narrators show a loss of trust in the social environment. Analyzing the biographies of mothers of children with intellectual disabilities, Ewelina J. Konieczna (ibid.) describes the narrators' assessments of social expectations towards them (which are similar to my narrators' opinions). They claim that their behaviour, care, and even financial management are very critically assessed. They attract particular attention in public places.

The motif of professional career (understood as an individual's biography determined by education and professional path; cf. M. Szumigraj, 2010) appears in all narratives. Most frequently, women had to give up or limit it after giving birth to a child or after receiving a diagnosis of a serious illness.

(After the diagnosis) Our life has completely changed. It has reversed dramatically. Currently, my husband works professionally, I run my own company, but I also have to, unfortunately, limit this to some extent. Unfortunately, I had to give up some of this – my dreams, my professional passion, I had to give it up completely to have time for care and rehabilitation. I am a domestic and foreign tour guide and a food technologist by profession, so I had to give this up completely because they are two different worlds. My husband could sacrifice himself, but I don't want him to sacrifice himself, because one of us needs to have a more stable job. (W4)

When I entered this school (pharmacy technical school) for my first classes, I was convinced that I was where I should be. I found myself doing great. I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I liked it, I found fulfilment in it, it gave me a lot of fun. I had a good time at work. (...) After B's birth, my husband was still studying, he managed to do it. I said: "Look how many good things you have done thanks to this marriage, you finished your studies." I came back from work and stayed with B., my husband went to university on weekends. He graduated. And me – home, children. There was no time or energy for anything else. (...) I have a great greed for knowledge, I would like to have a master's title before my name one day. For now, it is what it is. I have secondary education, I am a pharmacy technician and I do not work. (W 6)

In both examples, the narrators are people for whom a professional career is an important aspect of life, it is the fulfilment of dreams, it gives a sense of happiness and agency, and defines them as fulfilled and needed women. The education they obtain and their subsequent professional work also gives them the opportunity for self-fulfilment, increased self-esteem and a better position in the family and marriage. Therefore, the need to sacrifice for a child with disability and to abandon or limit their professional work still evokes their regret and the feeling of lack. The narrators – due to their greater involvement in child care and the related sacrifice of their own professional and personal ambitions – experience a kind of dissonance. Małgorzata Karwowska (2007) calls it a sense of pejorative otherness. The intensity of this feeling depends on the mother's personality dispositions and the degree of the child's disability. Importantly, the factor that influences the experienced dissonance is the mother's relationship with the environment and the attitudes towards her and the child. The sense of pejorative otherness is reinforced by the child's sense of lack of acceptance in the kindergarten or school environment.

One of the mothers of children with profound disabilities (W2) works full-time as a kindergarten teacher. After her maternity leave, she took a year's parental leave and then decided to return to work despite problems with arranging a caregiver for her son. Professional work was a kind of treat for her and a way to distance herself from educational problems with her son, who is aggressive. It was supposed to make it easier to live with the trajectory of suffering and allow her to set boundaries between her personal, professional and family life. However, the teaching profession is a job at risk of burnout. The narrator admits that after a week of working with children, she looks forward to her days off, but she does not rest at home, but struggles with her son's difficult behaviour. She experiences permanent physical and mental fatigue, which can be identified as parental burnout. The factors of the syndrome include the feeling of being overloaded with constant child care, loneliness and lack of help, inability to achieve significant life changes, hopelessness of the undertaken efforts, exclusive responsibility for the child's fate, feeling of being disrespected by institutions, and other people and the negative assessment of the atmosphere at home (Pisula, 1994; Sekułowicz and Kwiatkowski, 2013). The woman uses the help of specialists – a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist. She admits her helplessness and the experience of not being able to change the situation. She finds no understanding from her relatives – her parents, her husband, or from her colleagues at work, who do not accept her lack of involvement in additional activities or social life.

An important thread, a subject of the trajectory of suffering (Schütze, 2012) of the narrators, is their experience of being misunderstood by others and of the negative assessment of their motherly function. The environment – neighbours, friends – expects them to be fully committed, dedicated and focused on the ill child and the other children. These social expectations often collide with the expectations of mothers themselves, who fight for their own identity, for free time for themselves, and for fulfilment in other roles of: a woman, a wife, a working person. As they confess, they live under constant pressure not only from their surroundings, but also from significant others – their husband, parents. Their lives have been marked by the child's illness/disability, but they undertake activities that involve taking control of the trajectory of suffering and they try to change it from a downward trend, which involves being subjected to social evaluation, to an uplifting one based on liberation from the role assigned by the environment (Konieczna, 2021). They oppose the judgment of others and want their recognition of the right to fulfil other roles than just parental ones. This change in viewing the women – mothers of children with disabilities must first take place within themselves, which is why some of them undertake the mission of convincing other mothers to take care of their own well-being and personal development. There are many ways to do this. One is to provide themselves with time that mothers want to devote only to themselves. One of the mothers (W1) regularly meets with her friends as part of the “Club of mothers of ill children” for various classes, e.g. aerobics, handicrafts. She emphasizes that “you need to have time for yourself. I tell everyone this all the time because otherwise you would go crazy. Afterwards, we have the strength to continue working.”

The narrators also make attempts to normalize their life situation. Normalization of life is most often understood as striving to transform the environment to enable the normal functioning of the individual. In this sense, it includes a number of institutional and non-institutional activities that determine the ways and possibilities of functioning of disabled people, their families and their participation in various forms of social life (Krauze, 2000; Żółkowska, 2011). Although this term is used in relation to people with disabilities themselves, in my opinion, it is valuable and justified to use it as well in relation to mothers whose lives are connected with ill/disabled children. Normalization of the lives of the surveyed mothers is based on reorganizing the functioning of their family and their own lives in order to find space for autonomy and self-reflection. One mother, summarizing her life with an ill child, says:

(After the childbirth) The world turned upside down completely. It became more important for me to have fun with S. Dishes not washed-up, no big deal. (...) So for now I am satisfied. S. is healthy. It was very difficult in the beginning. When I found the calendar from S's year of birth, I couldn't believe that we had survived it: every day there was a doctor, rehabilitation, and there were two small children – it was a shock for me that we survived this. Really. But a person gets this strength and does what needs to be done. S. had such low immunity that he was hospitalized for bronchitis four times during the year. And these hospitals – all the time. I had to be there with him. And there was nowhere to sleep, only on the floor. How I complained then. But I saw a mother there – pregnant, in the ninth month, also lying on the floor. Then I thought to myself: "God, woman, what are you complaining about?" Mothers make enormous sacrifices. And then I said, "No more complaining!". And I think it would be very different. Life would definitely be different, maybe even worse, I don't know. But for today it's fine, I'm not complaining at all. It seems to me that everyone who complains like that has no purpose in life. Yet, for today it's fine, I'm not complaining at all. It seems to me that everyone complains and doesn't know what the sense of life is. I don't think about what will happen later. That's what everyone says: "What will happen when S. is older? How will you cope? Will you give him back" – because S. is very aggressive – I'm afraid of that, but somehow I put it aside, even though I have to think about it. (W 1)

The narrator reflects on her life and personal identity in the context of her child's disability, thus carrying out biographical work. This topic is one of the central threads in the concepts of experiencing illness by Kathy Charmaz and Anselm Strauss and colleagues (Charmaz, 1997; Corbin and Strauss, 1987; Skrzypek, 2011). In their opinion, an important element of the experience of disease by the patients themselves (but also, in my opinion, by their relatives) is the need to develop a compromise between the disease and personal biography, to negotiate a new version of the biography. It is necessary to "reformulate one's biography" so that it takes into account the burdens associated with the illness. The patient's mother reconstructs personal identity by asking herself the questions: "Who am I?" and "Who will I be?", working through her own biography so that it is integrated with the illness/disability experienced in the family.

Conclusions

The analysis of the narratives of mothers of children with profound disabilities made it possible to conclude that they experience multiple discrimina-

tion, that is, they are unfairly differentiated by others into more than one group. In their case, the first criterion of discrimination is gender – the female one, which intersects with another (or others): woman – mother of a child with disability; woman – a person who does not work. The narrators share their experience of being stigmatized due to their appearance (too well-groomed, and therefore not sufficiently devoted to the child), educational and caring competences (responsible for the child's behaviour that is inconsistent with social norms) and due to abandoning or limiting their professional career.

Summarizing the obtained research results on the experience of stigmatization due to more than one criterion in the case of mothers of children with profound disabilities, I would like to emphasize that the women with whom I had the honour to talk are extremely strong and take up the fight against unequal and worse treatment by others. They take control of their trajectory of suffering, freeing themselves from the role assigned to them by the environment, proving to themselves and others that they can act as a mother, caregiver, and rehabilitator of a disabled child, and at the same time take care of themselves and fulfil other roles – of a women, a wife, a working person.

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Educational Practice



Confusing ignorance? The European refugee crisis in Polish textbooks

Abstract: The European refugee crisis of 2015 had a profound impact not only policies, but also narratives related to migration. The article is aimed to analyse how the European refugee crisis was narrated in Polish textbooks on geography and civics – two subjects that cover contemporary socio-political events within their curricula. It looks at the textbooks not only as a source of information but also as a political and pedagogical mirror that reflects the ongoing discussions in society. The article builds on the vast scholarship on how the refugee crisis was narrated in Poland and investigates whether and to what extent the same patterns are reflected in the textbooks. Mixed methodology is used in the article to identify the main narratives and themes in the samples of Polish textbook. According to the study the narrations are less extreme and explicit than in the public discourse, they are also often incoherent and inconsistent, and hardly human-centred. While they are not explicitly politicized, they often replicate the main narrative frames from the media discourse.

Keywords: textbooks, Europe, geography, refugee crisis, civics

Introduction

The European refugee crisis of 2015 has already been widely studied and discussed in Europe and worldwide. In Poland, the bulk of the research was dedicated to the narratives surrounding the crisis and the unprecedented (mis)use of migration for political gains (Baider and Kopytkowska, 2017; Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017; Krzyżanowski, 2020). As a result, the anti-migrant discourse has gradually become normalized, often with racist and radical extremes that are now perceived as mainstream opinions (Krzyżanowski, 2020, p. 505). The case of Poland was not only specific to the rise of anti-migrant discourse but also to its transplanted nature (Horolets et

al., 2019, p. 13). While other European countries were affected by the crisis, Poland was neither a target country for refugees nor even a transit one.

For textbook authors, the refugee crisis posed a challenge. Both geography and civics courses are designed to provide students with up-to-date knowledge about the contemporary socio-political world. Therefore, authors needed to respond to cultural, economic, and geopolitical changes (Szkurłat and Piotrowska, 2018, p. 62). The European refugee crisis was an unprecedented and transnational event that had to be addressed in curricula. Textbook authors operated in a highly volatile environment, as migration became one of the most mediated and mediatized issues (D'Amato and Lucarelli, 2019, p. 4). Within limited space and time, they aimed at providing students with comprehensive information, enabling them to situate the refugee crisis in the relevant context and understand the complex processes unfolding nearby.

This article is aimed to analyze how the European refugee crisis was portrayed in Polish textbooks on geography and civics—two subjects that delve into contemporary socio-political events within their curricula. Beyond serving as mere sources of information, these textbooks also act as political and pedagogical mirrors, reflecting the ongoing social discussions (Zecha et al., 2016, p. 88).

Drawing from extensive scholarship on how the refugee crisis was narrated in Poland, the article is an attempt at investigating whether similar patterns emerge in the textbooks. To contextualize the research, two analytical tools are used: strategic framing and transplanted discourse. Horolets et al. (2019) discuss how certain contextual elements are foregrounded to shape the narrative surrounding the refugee crisis. When combined with strategic ignorance, this approach distances the discourse from reality and weakens its connection to the Polish context. Górak-Sosnowska (2011) highlights the transplanted nature of discourse related to Muslims in Europe. Such discourse, originating elsewhere, is imported into a different socio-political context without necessary adaptation.

Despite Poland's historical legacy of emigration and exile, coherent imaginaries of immigration have only recently emerged (Krzyżanowski, 2020, p. 512). Textbook authors faced the challenge of not only providing content but also developing relevant narrative frames. These frames equip students with tools to navigate the complex phenomenon of migrations in Europe. The article commences with a literature review, identifying the key narrative frames prevalent in Polish public discourse regarding the European refugee crisis. These frames will serve as reference points for analyzing data obtained

from the textbooks. In subsequent sections, my dataset and methodology will be presented.

Framing the crisis

The European refugee crisis garnered extensive coverage in Polish media, sparking unprecedented interest in migration (Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski, 2018). Prior to 2015, Poland lacked a coherent master narrative on immigration, largely due to the limited number of individuals willing to settle in this country. Remarkably, this situation remained relatively unchanged during the 2015 European refugee crisis. Yet, the crisis permeated local politics, strategically wielded as a tool within the ruling party's political agenda.

Across Europe, the refugee crisis generated strong anti-migrant claims and narratives, varying in intensity and reach (D'Amato and Lucarelli, 2019). Krzyżanowski (2020, p. 504) asserts that these narratives contributed to the electoral success and further political consolidation of the ruling party. Both D'Amato and Lucarelli (2019) and Krzyżanowski (2020) highlight the normalization of extreme and exclusionary discourse, which infiltrated Polish media. Consequently, refugees and migrants became associated with security threats and were essentialized as dangers (Mica et al., 2021). These essentialist claims found acceptance and rationalization within the discourse (Krzyżanowski, 2020, p. 505).

The discourse surrounding the European refugee crisis has been shaped by both internal and external factors. Internally, it intersected with political changes around 2014/2015, culminating in the Law and Justice Party's victory in the parliamentary elections. Narkowicz (2018) highlights the abrupt shift from a civic concept of the state to a nationalist one, reactivating old forms of racial othering while also giving rise to new manifestations. Additionally, this shift fueled anti-EU rhetorics by portraying the EU as inept in crisis management, contrasting Poland's stance against mandatory refugee relocation quotas and its reluctance to welcome refugees (Csehi and Zgut, 2021).

Externally, the discourse on the European refugee crisis was imported from abroad and legitimized within Poland, despite the country having very limited numbers of refugees arriving or passing through. Consequently, Poland's perspective on the crisis was doubly external: firstly, as Mica et al. (2021) argue, media narratives inadvertently transmit refugee experiences from an outsider's viewpoint; secondly, the European refugee crisis was narrated in a manner that positioned Poland neither as a transit nor a destina-

tion country. The resulting moral panic did not primarily stem from direct impacts on Poland but rather manifested as a broader rebellion against EU values (Pasamonik, 2017).

Within this discourse, anti-immigration rhetorics dominated. However, counter-narratives also emerged, portraying refugees as victims in need of humanitarian support (D'Amato and Lucarelli, 2019). The clash between these narratives resulted in a binary divide: on one hand, the 'real' refugees seeking protection, and on the other, 'bogus' migrants attempting illegal entry into Europe (Krzyżanowski, 2018, p. 87; Horolets et al., 2019, p. 13). This binary divide operates not only on the basis of ascribed motivations for entering but also shapes broader societal perceptions.

Data and methodology

In this article, Polish geography and civics textbooks that address the refugee crisis are analyzed. The sample includes 7 geography textbooks¹ (4 for grade 6 and 3 for grade 7 of primary school) and 9 civics textbooks² (5 for grade 8 of primary school and 4 for grade 1 of secondary school). These are the only textbooks that cover the refugee crisis. Except for one textbook (civics for secondary school – extended scope; Derdziak, 2019), the whole information about the refugee crisis constitutes from one paragraph up to three pages. This means that the textbook authors needed to provide students with knowledge and information on complex contemporary events only in a limited space. The textbooks were published between 2017 and 2021, thus only 2 to 6 years after the start of the European refugee crisis.

The textbooks underwent a dual scanning process: once as graphic files and again as only texts using OCR software. This approach facilitated a comprehensive analysis of both textual and non-textual content. Subsequently, the data was coded in MAXQDA software, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative examination. The coding process combined auto-coding based on a developed MAXDictio dictionary with thematic coding to reveal the context, semantics, and narrative patterns. Quantitative analysis enabled the

¹ Białek and Wnuk (2017); Figa et al. (2019, 2020); Głowacz et al. (2017); Lechowicz et al. (2019); Rachwał et al. (2019); Wers (2019).

² Derdziak (2019); Dobrzycka et al. (2021); Janicka et al. (2021); Krzesicki et al. (2021); Pacewicz and Merta (2018); Waśkiewicz et al. (2019, 2020); Smutek et al. (2021); Wojtaszczyk et al. (2021).

identification of primary patterns, while qualitative analysis delved into the narratives underlying these patterns.

My analysis draws upon the work of Narkowicz (2018) and Krzyżanowski (2018), both of whom map the Polish discourse on the European refugee crisis. Narkowicz (2018) discerned anti-refugee (nationalist) and pro-refugee (humanitarian) discourses, presenting the competing visions of social order – ethnic versus civic – and moral values – rational national egoism versus human solidarity. Yet, Krzyżanowski (2018, p. 84) outlined key topics that emerged in political discourse related to the European refugee crisis. These topics encompass the actions taken by the government, the influx of migrants, various migration types, (mis)management of migrant communities, and migration within the EU and selected countries, including Polish emigration.

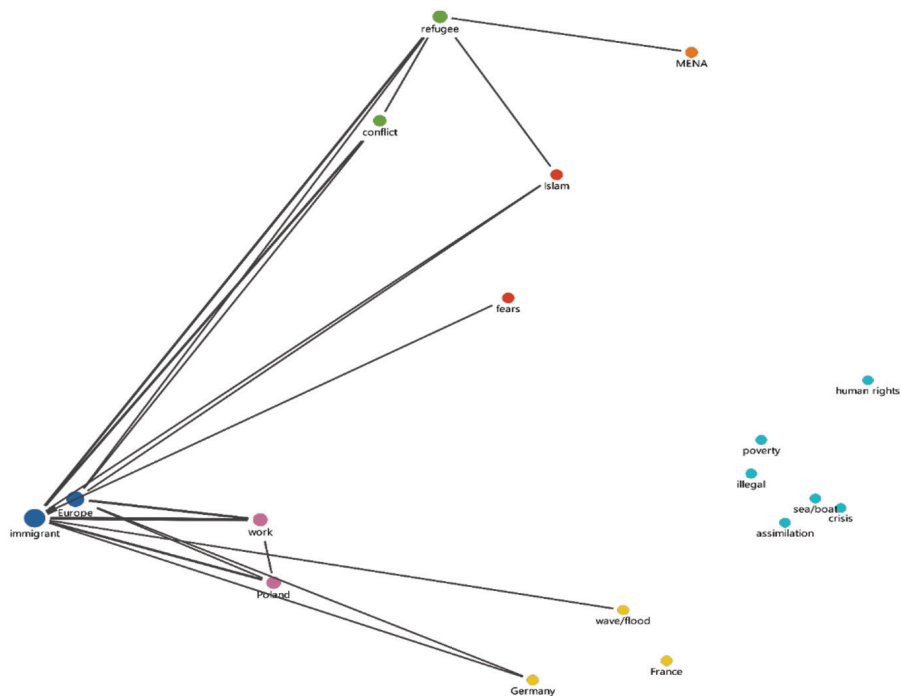
The European refugee crisis in Polish textbooks

The picture below (cf. Figure 1) presents the main thematic patterns of how the European refugee crisis is narrated in Polish geography and civics textbooks. For a better graphic presentation, only the major interconnections between the codes (of over 60 links) are presented.

Two central categories that build the main cluster are ‘Europe’ and ‘migration’. The word ‘crisis’ is positioned far from this main cluster. Thus, while the subchapters on the European refugee crisis are usually titled ‘European migration crisis’ this wording is infrequently used across the textbooks (unlike in the political discourse when the words ‘crisis’ and ‘immigration’ frequently interfered; Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski, 2018, p. 614). ‘Poland’ and ‘work’ build a second cluster and are closely linked to the first one. Thus, Poland is positioned as a part of Europe, and the refugee crisis is contextualized in terms of the labour market. The subsequent clusters are less frequent in the data set. ‘Refugees’ are linked with ‘conflict’ – often in a paragraph explaining the reasons for becoming a refugee. The term ‘refugee’ is also connected with the ‘MENA’ region and ‘Islam’. Refugees in Polish textbooks are mostly Muslim and come from MENA countries. Interestingly, ‘Islam’ and ‘fears’ form a cluster, yet they are not interrelated. They both are interrelated with ‘migrants’, while ‘fears’ – are additionally with ‘Europe’. Two European countries – Germany and France are combined into a cluster with words describing ‘waves’ or ‘flooding’ of migrants. The textbooks elaborated on migrants ‘waves’ that ‘flood’ Europe, mostly Germany. The subsequent cluster consists of not significantly related codes that cover ‘human rights’, ‘poverty’,

being ‘illegal’, ‘sea’/‘boats’ (often presented on pictures to the text), ‘crisis’, and ‘assimilation’. These codes are not frequently mentioned but are often used in the master narrative.

Figure 1. Code map and clusters



Source: own elaboration on MAXQDA.

The qualitative analysis identified the main narratives on the refugee crisis. The chapters use usually the same building blocks: they present definitions of migrants and refugees, list the causes of migration (economic and political), the process of migration to Europe (sometimes also in its historical context), and elaborate on the positive and negative sides of immigration. The textbooks are free from explicitly political statements – thus immigration-related topics have not been politicized unlike the public discourse (Krzyżanowski, 2018). However, the authors seem to replicate other narratives from the public discourse, but make them less emotionally loaded.

The migrants are coming to the EU and are labelled as ‘illegal’; they often travel by boats across the sea. Some textbooks underline that illegal travel is

risky and many migrants die on the route to Europe. Rachwał et al. (2019, p. 81) explain it in the following manner: “A significant proportion of immigrants arrive in Europe illegally via the Mediterranean Sea. Crowded ships sometimes have accidents. Despite the involvement of many people and organizations, not all people can be saved”. Lechowicz et al. (2019, p. 93) provide a more extensive elaboration:

The majority of illegal immigrants entering the European Union use the services of smugglers (...). Smugglers usually escort the boat with immigrants only to the zone of international waters and leave it there, often without the helmsman or even the engines. Refugees make the rest of the journey on their own or with coastguard vessels or rescue vessels rushing to their aid. Such tactics allow smugglers to reduce transport costs and reduce the risk of capture, but it causes the death of many people who will not be reached in time.

Both excerpts create an unambiguous image of people who are considered illegal, yet they are generously helped, but many die. These narratives are not even evoking generalized pity towards refugees (Mica et al. 2021), but rather inform about an illegal practice. This information is often accompanied by a picture of people on a pontoon or a boat wearing (or not yet wearing) orange suits. There are 10 such pictures in the whole sample of 16 textbooks.

The refugees are narrated differently. They are presented as those who legitimately fled their countries due to war, conflicts, and political or religious persecution. They come from Muslim-majority countries (Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia), but not only from there. Sometimes Ukrainians are also mentioned (the ones who fled Crimea in 2014) as people who arrived in Poland. The refugees are applying for asylum. They are only seldom smuggled or considered illegal. Derdziak (2019, p. 160) provides an example: “The military conflict in Somalia, which has been going on since the 1990s, has increased the number of refugees who, at all costs, often in inhumane conditions, try to get to the neighbouring, safe countries (...). For many of them, the journey ended tragically”. It is symptomatic that the two above citations (Rachwał et al. 2019 and Lechowicz et al. 2019) come from geography textbooks while the last one is from a civics textbook. Civic textbooks are more focused on refugees’ perspectives and their legitimate claims and do not mix ‘migrants’ with ‘refugees’ as sometimes it happens in geography textbooks.

The European refugee crisis – as presented in the textbooks – has the Polish and the European dimension. West European countries are presented as the destination countries for migrants and refugees, but also ones that

already have experiences with migration. The negative consequences are mostly related to the lack of 'assimilation' of migrants, the threat of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, or conflicts. These negative experiences are sometimes explicitly mentioned, and sometimes hidden. The first case is represented in Dobrzycka et al. (2021, p. 278) textbook: "However, it [migration] caused fears on the part of many Europeans that such a large number of refugees threaten Europe's cultural identity, undermines its Christian foundations and may cause terrorists to get to Europe". The textbook refers to the fears of 'many Europeans', not to the authors' opinions, yet it leaves these fears as they are.

The second case is illustrated by Głowacz et al. (2017): "...the recent atmosphere of reluctance and fear of the terrorist threat, which is often associated with an uncontrolled influx of immigrants, hinders assimilation processes. In Germany, France or Sweden, there are attempts to apply laws from other regions, which sometimes leads to violence against the local population". The description provides a mix of inconsistent information – on the one hand, the mainstream society is afraid and that is an obstacle to assimilation (not integration!). On the other hand, there are some attempts to install different legal systems that lead to violence. So are the fears justified or not? Moreover, it seems to be clear that the authors indirectly point at Islamist terrorism and the so-called Shariah zones without mentioning them.

In both cases, the refugees or migrants have been presented as culturally homogenous and at the same time incompatible with the European culture. In the context of the European refugee crisis, Poland is presented as an EU member country with its obligations (in terms of possible refugee relocation; Pasamonik, 2017). Some authors pragmatically stress that Poland needs economic migrants for its economy (yet those from Eastern Europe are better), or is not attractive as a destination country. Only one civics textbook by Pacewicz and Merta (2018) provided the historical context of Poland as a tolerant country and indicated Islamophobia that might impact the life of refugees. There are far fewer positive consequences of migration and they mostly refer to cheap and unskilled labour force.

The textbooks also offer a reflection on the European refugee crisis. Some of them indicate that refugees should be helped and supported, mostly by UNHCR. The available exercises invite students to discuss the pros and cons of immigration, evaluate traffic routes, or get updated information about the refugee crisis. The civic textbooks offer another type of exercise as well – one that is more refugee-centred: finding out which organisations help refugees,

mapping ways to support refugees, or learning about famous people who used to be refugees.

Discussion

The textbook analysis yields similar narrative frames as those in the public discourse around the European refugee crisis. Just as in the discourse: there are the ‘bogus’ (undeserving) migrants and deserving refugees; the European Union is trying to manage the crisis but without much success; the migrants ought to assimilate, but their existence is considered threatening (culturally and in terms of security); moreover, the category of migrant has been culturized by making migrants homogenous and embedded in the culture of their origin (with some cultures being more acceptable and some less). At the same time these narratives – while resembling the master narratives – are also significantly different.

Firstly, they are less strong, extreme and explicit. Even if some authors evidence that migrants are threatening, they do it indirectly, by referring to ‘general discussions’ that are supposedly taking place across the EU. Thus, they use the instrumental function of the narrative building by spreading certain beliefs and at the same time contextualizing them within the context of a broader worldview (D’Amato and Lucarelli, 2019) – one that builds on the existing master narratives taken from the public discourse. At the same time, the narratives are not explicitly politicized.

Secondly, many textbooks navigate the European refugee crisis inconsistently and incoherently. Even if they seek to use categorical fetishism (Mica et al., 2021) in terms of differentiating between migrants and refugees, they sometimes fail to do it by mixing these two categories. The distinction between these two types of people – immigrants and refugees – seems to fade away as soon as their definitions are presented. Sometimes migrants are presented as victims of smugglers (Lechowicz et al., 2019), and sometimes refugees are presented as a cultural threat (Dobrzycka et al., 2021). Both types of narratives – nationalistic and humanitarian – are intertwined or mixed.

Thirdly, with a handful of exceptions, the textbooks lack any human-centred perspective of the refugee crisis. Only rarely (e.g. Pacewicz and Merta, 2018) are stories of individual refugees presented. The dominant narrative of the refugee crisis is one through the lens of trafficking routes with refugees becoming ‘smuggling goods’. The accompanying pictures present a homogenous group of people travelling on a boat. While media or political discourses might naturally provide more space for projecting values and inciting emo-

tions than textbooks, it seems that the refugees are almost completely denied their subjectivity in these narratives.

When it comes to the European refugee crisis most of the textbooks focus on providing information about the crisis and migration, and try to do it as neutrally as possible. It seems to be a safe strategy since the refugee crisis was a highly politicized recent event. The task of providing a compelling and comprehensive text on the European refugee crisis proved to be a challenge. Frequently, it was hard to navigate within the abundance of media and political narratives, as well as the variety of individual experiences of migration. One can only hope that teachers use supporting materials not only to provide evidence-based knowledge but also to install some understanding of how complex migration processes are.

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The Vistani problem. Representation of the Romani culture in D&D games. Stereotypes and change

Abstract: The representation of the Romani culture in Western popular culture has long been based on stereotypes and prejudices of those who are not part of it. These stereotypes have shaped the common perception of the Romani. Cultural studies are focused on literature relevant in the postcolonial and critical discourse analysis. In the works created for the D&D games set in the fictional world of Ravenloft, one can find the Vistani, an ethnic group inspired by the Romani. What is shown here is how the portrayal of the Vistani coincides with the stereotypes pointed out by researchers in popular depictions of the Romani culture and how the viewers receive such characterizations nowadays. This exploratory study points out how the stereotypes and culture coding work in speculative fiction (namely fantasy genre) and how the portrayal of fictional culture could have real-world implications.

Keywords: Romani, social representation, fantasy, games, Dungeons & Dragons

1. Introduction

Western popular culture has a long and not very glorious tradition of stereotyping the representations of various minorities or of the “otherness,” of using cultures as decorations, of misrepresenting their characteristics, and of creating caricatures that later permeate into the general consciousness. The Romani culture has been treated this way for centuries – depicted in literature, film, and other media as exotic, semi-magical Others, as romantic nomads.

A lot was said about this topic. In one of her works, Grace Coleman lists the various prejudices and stereotypes present in the portrait of the Romani in popular culture. She writes:

Films, literature, and performance have often capitalized on non-Roma expectations of Romani culture through the recurring motif of the free-spirited but morally questionable, sexually promiscuous, and musically gifted “Gypsy” stereotype to draw on fantastical images and oversimplifications of Roma for the entertainment of Western audiences. (Coleman, 2017, p. 6–7).

Ian Hancock, in his article also points out the problem of representation. He writes:

In children’s literature, in Britain perhaps even more than in the United States, Romanies turn up with some frequency — never as characters who happen incidentally also to be Gypsies, but because they are Gypsies, and because they serve a specific purpose. This purpose has, broadly speaking, three manifestations: the Gypsy as liar and thief either of property or (especially) of non-Romani children; the Gypsy as witch or caster of spells; and the Gypsy as romantic figure. (Hancock, 1987).

Hancock also notes that similar stereotypes have not only been rooted in the collective perception — they are also difficult to erase because the Romani themselves do not have the right tools, and their voices are not heard enough.

In her article, Katharina Janoska recalls her experience of the dissonance she felt as a Romani woman interacting with literary representations of the culture. Among other things, she states emphatically:

The racist descriptions of Roma in literature encouraged exclusion, persecution and hatred of the minority; they created prejudices that have partly survived until today. These factors, in turn, had a major impact on Roma’s lives and development, and, in turn, on their own literature. (Janoska, n.d.).

The problem of Romani representation is well-researched and well-documented, with many examples from literature (such as the characters of Esmerelda from Victor Hugo’s “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”, Carmen from Prosper Mérimée’s novella, later adapted by Georges Bizet into the famous opera, or even “the gypsies” from the Gothic classic — Bram Stoker’s “Dracula”). However, in this study one more example is proposed to be added to this discourse.

In speculative fiction, in particular fantasy stories set in secondary worlds, the reader often encounters fictional cultures and societies based more or less on some real-world counterparts. Such culture coding is present in the example of the Vistani, mysterious and nomadic people created by the authors of textbooks for the D&D roleplay system.

D&D (abbreviation for Dungeons&Dragons) is one of the most popular systems of RPG (Role-Playing Games) – a type of tabletop game that combines strategy, improvisation, and group storytelling. It was created in 1974, designed to be a combination of a wargame and a fantasy story. Up to 2021, hundreds of different manuals and compendia of knowledge came out, collected in five official editions. There are different types of textbooks, some of them contain more instructions on the mechanics of the game, some contain descriptions of the fictional worlds, some are ready-made campaign scenarios, so in addition to the presented world and suggested adventures, they also have a plot, side characters, etc. As a form of speculative fiction, all of them can be analyzed in a way very similar to how classic narrative forms such as novels can be analyzed.

Three textbooks and two adventure modules will be used here, chosen because they are the main texts featuring the Vistani. The first is the textbook “Ravenloft. Realm of Terror” published in 1990 as part of the second edition of the game. In the same edition, five years later, “Van Richten’s Guide to Vistani” was released and then, in 1996 – the adventure module “The Evil Eye”. In addition to these three sources, I will also use two newer titles, the adventure module “Curse of Strahd” from 2016 (so no longer part of the second edition, but the latest, fifth one), and the sourcebook “Van Richten’s Guide to Ravenloft” from 2021.

The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate, how the fictional culture of the Vistani is coded as a Romani-counterpart, how its portrayal perpetuates the stereotypes often present in the literary depictions of the Romani and how this portrayal and its reception evolved from older editions to the second decade of 21st century.

2. Methodology

The research analysis was carried out primarily by means of descriptive analysis, discourse analysis and qualitative analysis. It was conducted on the basis of the literature – the textbooks mentioned above.

The first step was the selection of texts for analysis, as a result of which the aforementioned textbooks were selected. The next step was to familiarize and analyze their contents, specifically concerning the portrayal of the Vistani. In addition, a review of the existing literature and studies was carried out, concerning the problem of Romani representations, and on this basis the recurring, most common motifs were indicated (mainly based on the

concepts proposed by Coleman): nomads and wanderers, Romani women as exotic temptresses, musicians, thieves and child kidnappers, fortune tellers and witches. Then, a comparison was carried out and the verification whether these motifs also appear in portrayals of the Vistani. These findings made it possible to confirm the thesis that the Vistani are coded as Romani, with all the cultural implications.

3. Results and discussion

The analysis made it possible to show that the stereotypes with which the representation of the Romany culture in popular culture is burdened can also be found in the representations of the Vistani – a fictional culture coded and modelled after the Romani. Stereotypes and motifs were divided into five categories, which will be presented below along with selected quotes from the analyzed textbooks.

3.1. Nomads and wanderers

In her thesis, Coleman counts among the recurring motifs in pop culture the nomadic lifestyle of the Romani and its romanticization. It is presented as something intriguing and, at the same time, so different from the norm as to inspire distrust – while ignoring the fact that it has historically resulted not so much from choice as from necessity enforced by discrimination and social ostracism. As Ian Hancock wrote: “Romanies have travelled for centuries not to satisfy a romantic urge but because stopping has meant transportation, enslavement, and even death” (Hancock, 1976).

This is also connected with the portrayal of the Romani as an “exotic Other”, existing almost next to the reality, next to what is normal, civilized and familiar. “Viewers are provided an inside glimpse into the fantasy of a wild, free, and independent cultural realm, but one that is decidedly separate from their own established values and way of life” (Coleman, 2017, p. 44).

Paola Toninato writes about this phenomenon in her article “Romani nomadism: From hetero-images to self-representations”. In its first part, she analyzes representations of Romani nomadism in English literature and finds three types of its depictions – allegorical, romantic, and picturesque. They all lead to the same thing – distancing the reader’s perspective by emphasizing the otherness of the Romani, and using them as a general metaphor for homelessness, an element of the fictional landscape. The article does not

omit the real-world implications, noting that the “the contrast between the romantic, idealised images of nomadic ‘Gypsies’ discussed above and the harsh treatment of Roma by public authorities could hardly be more dramatic” (Toninato, 2018, p. 149).

In D&D textbooks, Vistani nomadism is an integral and often cited element of their characterization. In the manual “Ravenloft. Realm of Terror” they are described as vagabonds, and their lifestyle reported as follows: “... wandering from domain to domain, rarely pausing more than a week in any one place. Progress on the road is languid and unhurried. Children scamper beside the wagons, gleefully engulfed in their own clouds of dust” (p. 36).

“Van Richten’s Guide to Vistani” emphasizes this even more:

Do not believe that any Vistana (for that is the singular term, while Vistani is the plural) could be convinced to settle down and claim a permanent home: a spirit of freedom and wanderlust permeates every fiber of his or her being. In a very real sense, a Vistana who ceases to wander also ceases to be a Vistana. (Wise, 1995, p. 100).

Another quote from the same book:

The Vistani are, above all else, nomads. Nomadism literally defines their existence, so much so that a Vistana who ceases to wander loses all powers associated with his former people (...). He becomes mortu – the closest translation is “undead”, although the Vistani do not mean what you and I call undead. To the Vistani, life without movement is not living at all (Wise, 1995, p. 116).

Presented as something inherent, as a choice, nomadism is thus treated here without deeper examination of the necessary context – that is, of what circumstances cause a group of people not to find a permanent place of settlement. Instead, it serves as a decoration, a tool of othering, an exotic element of the depicted world.

3.2. “Exotic seductresses” – the portrayal of Romani women

Coleman also discusses the way Romani women are depicted in media. She writes about the “myth of the free gypsy woman, often as the forbidden and intoxicating love interest for gadjo man who admires her free spirit and the danger and mystery of her allure in comparison to traditionally conservative Western women” (Coleman, p. 44).

Perhaps the two most culturally ingrained examples of this motif are the titular character in the 1875 opera “Carmen” and Esmeralda from Victor Hugo’s novel “Notre-Dame de Paris”.

In the D&D adventure module “The Evil Eye” one of the main characters – and the main antagonists that the heroes must face is a Vistana woman named Gabrielle Aderre, ruler of Invidia, one of the domains of Ravenloft. Already in the introduction, one learns that Gabrielle abandoned her mother to death and was cursed by her. She is portrayed as a cruel and vain person, and these traits are also linked directly in the narrative to her sexual promiscuity. “She took many lovers from the small town of Korinna in her domain (...). She treated her lovers with disdain, enslaving them with her evil eye and discarding them when she eventually grew tired or bored, but none were able to comfort her terrible loneliness” (Kurtz, 1996, p. 7).

Demonization of female sexuality is nothing new, and as in many other cases, it is also later punished by the narrative. When analyzing her character, much can be said about the representation of the female antagonists and the literary tropes to which they are often reduced. For the purpose of this article, however, the main thing to note is that her portrayal fits negative stereotypes, both of Romani people in general – she is a cheater and liar, and of Romani women particularly – her promiscuity and predatory sexuality is emphasized.

Among other female Vistana that appear in *The Evil Eye* there are Eva and Marcella, members of a mysterious Vistani faction that player characters can ally with during the campaign. Eva is an old woman, respected among the Vistani for her wisdom and supernatural gifts, but Marcella, although also a seer, is young, so her beauty and charm are highlighted: “After a pause, the narrow portal opens and a young woman steps out, dressed in layered skirts of many vibrant colors and intricate patterns. Her narrow face is framed with night-black hair and her eyes burn like smoldering coals” (Kurtz, 1996, p. 48).

The same scene also features another Vistani girl named Gitana, who, however, plays no role in the plot other than to dance seductively around the campfire and please the eyes of those gathered:

A beautiful young girl rises and begins to dance around the fire, shaking a tambourine to the rhythm of the music. She spins and twirls her skirt round and round, until you are dizzy just watching her (...). Gently she sways before you, the slightest smile upon her lips. “Who will dance with Gitana?” asks a nearby man. “Hers is a rare invitation indeed!” (Kurtz, 1996, p. 47).

Twenty years after the publication of *The Evil Eye*, another adventure module set in the world of Ravenloft was published – a Gothic story *The Curse of Strahd*. One of the most crucial side characters there is a Vistani woman, Ezmerelda d’Avenir. Leaving aside her name, which since *Notre-Dame de Paris* in the general cultural consciousness seems to be closely associated with the Romani, Ezmerelda as a character breaks out of the stereotypes discussed here. First, although she is a young woman, she is not sexualized in the narrative. Unlike Gabrielle Aderre, she is also not a villain but one of the protagonists’ potential allies. Ezmerelda is a monster hunter, a student of another important character, Rudolph Van Richten, whom she treats as a fatherly figure. She is brave, determined, and, among the other side characters from the module who lost hope and will to fight, Ezmerelda is a bright spot in the darkness of the Barovian reality. In 2020, a blogger using the online pseudonym eswood3003 published an article in which they analyzed the character of Ezmerelda and noted that she *combats the damaging stereotype of a swindling, sly ‘Gypsy’* (Eswood3003, 2020).

The blogger, however, points out other problems related to Ezmerelda’s character and characterization. For all her positive and noble qualities, Ezmerelda is the only one among the Vistani possessing such merits, she stands out from the rest of her people, which again is also a problematic representation of an “exceptional individual”.

3.3. Musicians

The last stereotype pointed out by Coleman is the myth of natural musical inclinations, which in some sense balances the scales and represents the more positive aspect of the portrayal of the Romani culture. Coleman writes that music and the supposed innate abilities of the Romani are portrayed positively, but it also has some overtones. Romani music is seen as improvisational, spontaneous, free, and exotic, but also – more primitive than “civilized” music (Coleman, p. 50).

Music, musical instruments and dancing (preferably around a campfire) are props that recur regularly in portraying the Vistani. In “Realm of Terror”, the concluding paragraph of the chapter dedicated to the Vistani paints the following picture: “As the fire rages, young women dance to the fervent sounds of fiddles, guitars, and tambourines. Their skirts sweep the earth, rising and falling as they twirl, and if you look closely, you can see the music swirling around them” (Nesmith, 1990, p. 37).

Next to this, the reader can see an illustration depicting this scene – a starry sky, a wagon in the background, the three musicians off to the side, and a young, black-haired woman with a tambourine in the centre – puzzlingly similar to how a few years later Esmeralda would be depicted in the Disney adaptation of Hugo’s novel.

In the book *The Evil Eye* the music is the leitmotif of the first part of the adventure. The players are presented with the story of a Vistani blacksmith, Raul Salazar, haunted by the ghost of his dead wife, Leyla. The goal of the heroes is to stop and release the spirit of Leyla – the key to achieving this turns out to be the destruction of the magical violin, which belongs to Raul:

Raul's violin of passion is a potent magical item (...).Raul went to the matriarch of the Kamii, hoping to learn the secret to Leyla's heart. After gazing at her tarokka, the wise woman told Raul to find a violin and a hairbrush from Leyla's vardo. After Raul's procured these items, the matriarch took the violin and hair from the brush to restring the instrument. The wise woman then told Raul to play the violin every night for a year and a day, thinking only of his love for Leyla (Kurtz, 1996, p. 11).

3.4. Thieves and child-snatchers

This particular myth can be found, among others, in the aforementioned novel by Victor Hugo – when it comes to light that Esmeralda is not a Romani child at all, but the daughter of a Parisian woman named Agnes by her mother and kidnapped and later raised by Romani.

The motif of child kidnapping also appears in the portrayal of the Vistani, mainly in the story of Rudolph Van Richten, who began his career as a monster hunter after his son Erasmus had been stolen by a Vistani clan and sold into slavery to a vampire. In most versions, his hatred and lust for revenge are tempered when he develops a closer relationship with a person of Vistani descent – in *Van Richten's Guide to Vistani* this person is Arturi Radanavich, the clan’s last survivor seeking an end to the mutual curse (Wise, 1995); in *Curse of Strahd* this is Ezmerelda, the daughter of the kidnappers, and later his student. The ultimate conclusion of Van Richten’s story is generally that understanding and forgiveness are better than hatred and revenge and that the entire community should not be blamed for the actions of corrupted individuals. However, these positive morals are still built using one of the most dangerous stereotypes used in anti-Romani rhetoric since the Middle Ages – and still alive in the 21st century.

In 2013, the police showed up at a Romani camp in Greece and took away a little girl named Maria. The child was blonde and bright-eyed and was suspected to be a victim of kidnapping. Genetic testing confirmed that Maria was not related to the Romani couple raising her, but as it turned out, no abduction had taken place. Her biological family was identified, and it turned out that, firstly, they were also Romani, and secondly, they only confirmed that, indeed, they had placed Maria in the care of the other family because they themselves did not have the means to support her. However, the press and the public have managed to make their own judgments (Walker, 2013; Doughty, 2013).

Describing the story in an article posted on reason.com, Jesse Walker writes: “Generations of British parents have warned their kids about Gypsy bogeymen lurking in the shadows, waiting to snatch incautious children” (Walker, 2013).

He also points out that alongside these stories, there is a real problem that the Romani community has faced for centuries – the fear that it is their children who will be kidnapped, taken from their families, and assimilated (Walker, 2013).

Commenting on the resurgence of the myth of child-snatchers, Adrian Marsh points out (in a statement posted on the romaniarts.co.uk) the correlations with economic crises involved in the rise of anti-Romani sentiments. He compared this to situations occurring in the 16th century and in the 1930s, which all culminated in genocides (Marsh, no date and year).

3.5. Seers, fortune-tellers and witches

Another element in the exoticization of the Romani culture is its association with supernatural elements. In addition to the already discussed stereotype of the “gypsy seductress”, there is also another female figure – an old fortune teller, a seer who reads the future from the palm of a hand. In “Curse of Strahd” one of the important side characters that players may encounter is an old woman named Madam Eva:

Magic flames cast a reddish glow over the interior of this tent, revealing a low table covered in a black velvet cloth. Glints of light seem to flash from a crystal ball on the table as a hunched figure peers into its depths. As the crone speaks, her voice crackles like dry weeds. “At last you have arrived!” Cackling laughter bursts like mad lightning from her withered lips. (Crawford, 2016).

Among others, the Romani's association with magic – especially black magic – is discussed by Sydnee Wagner in “Outlandish People: Gypsies, Race, and Fantasies of National Identity in Early Modern England”: “Alongside skin color, clothing, and sexuality, witchcraft and necromancy was another ‘devilish and naughty device’ plaguing representations of Gypsies in early modern English literature and culture” (Wagner, 2020, p. 104).

Wagner points to anti-Romani echoes in, among other things, the depiction of the Three Witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Associating any group with an innate magical, supernatural predisposition exoticizes and alienates them, makes them an Other – in addition, a dangerous Other, an Other who can curse you, who can cast a spell on decent citizens with an “evil eye”.

4. Conclusion

From the beginning, not only have the Vistani been clearly inspired by the Romani, but their depictions have reproduced virtually all the stereotypes associated with the portrayal of the Romani in popular culture. The Vistani are exotic nomads, child-snatchers, thieves, and have an innate aptitude for both musical instruments and black magic, while Vistani women are seductresses dancing around the campfire and flaunting their colourful skirts.

The Vistani are modelled on the Romani culture in a way that is difficult to deny, and their representation reflects the way in which culture is stereotyped. Although they are a fictional creation of speculative literature, they can be placed as an example in the broader context of studies on representation in popular culture.

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Theory and practice in the implementation of intercultural education using information and communication technologies (ICT)

Abstract: In the article, the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) is highlighted in the context of intercultural education and the ways are identified in which modern technologies can support the development of intercultural competencies. The authors analyze the theoretical foundations of intercultural education and the practical aspects of using ICT in the process of intercultural learning.

By integrating ICT with intercultural education, it becomes possible to promote both the understanding of cultural diversity and collaboration skills in a globalized world. On the basis of the presented foundations of intercultural education, it is pointed out that ICT enables global access to information concerning different cultures, fostering understanding and tolerance towards intercultural differences. In their discourse, the authors focus on the possibilities of creating interactive educational environments using ICT, which stimulates active participation in the cultures of other communities.

The article demonstrates that the use of ICT allows for the personalization of the teaching process, adapting it to the individual needs of students and supporting the development of their intercultural competencies. Additionally, the significance of virtual reality (VR) and distance learning in the context of intercultural education is analyzed, emphasizing their role in stimulating intercultural situations and global cultural exchange.

Keywords: culture, intercultural education, ICT (information and communication technologies), virtual reality, e-learning

Introduction

In contemporary society, where artificial intelligence permeates all areas of human activity, new possibilities for globalization and cultural diversity are introduced through innovative solutions in information and communication technologies (ICT). Modern technologies not only provide opportunities to prepare individuals for functioning in a multicultural world but also offer a direct means of experiencing different cultural environments (Resta and Lefarriere, 2015, p. 747).

Intercultural education, as both a scholarly and practical field, focuses on developing awareness, understanding, and skills necessary for effective functioning in a diverse society (Adamczewski and Płonka, 2020, p. 26). An integrated approach to this field, based on theory and practice, becomes crucial in supporting the process of adaptation and mutual understanding among different cultural groups.

Current advanced ICT solutions bring new possibilities to the educational process for achieving the goals of intercultural education. This article is focused on acquainting the reader with the theoretical foundations of intercultural education and practical aspects related to the use of information and communication technologies. By analyzing the synergistic interaction of theory and practice in the context of ICT, the authors concentrate on identifying and presenting best practices, challenges, and potential benefits arising from the integration of modern ICT tools in the process of intercultural education.

Theoretical foundations of intercultural education

Intercultural education is a broad scholarly and practical field that focuses on developing awareness, understanding, and skills necessary for effective functioning in diverse societies (Grzybowski, 2011, p. 18). The primary goal of intercultural education is to impart knowledge about different cultures while shaping attitudes of tolerance, openness, and collaboration (Nikitorowicz, 2018, pp. 58–64).

Despite its longstanding history, the theoretical and practical foundations of intercultural education remain unchanged. It primarily revolves around developing an understanding of one's own culture (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2016, p. 13). Properly implemented education in this area enables individu-

als to think, understand, build value systems, and behave effectively. It also facilitates a proper perception and understanding of other cultures, their developmental perspectives, and practices (Chiper, 2013, p. 1641).

The cornerstone of intercultural education is the understanding of cultural diversity (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2016; Pukin, 2019). Cultural differences are not a reason for segregation or discrimination but they rather represent the richness of the world. Through intercultural education, one learns to recognize differences and, on the basis of this skill, view them as more of an asset than a drawback. It also provides inspiration and motivation for further exploration of other cultural differences (Pikhart, 2019).

Theoretical aspects of intercultural education also encompass the development of intercultural communication. This involves linguistic awareness, overcoming language barriers, as well as recognizing differences in communication styles and interpreting messages (Wilczewski and Soderberg, 2017).

Theoretical principles of intercultural education also address stereotypes and prejudices (Fornalczyk-Lipska, 2017, p. 17). These should be addressed in a way that minimizes generalization, perceiving each individual as an existing beauty derived from individual characteristics, regardless of their culture.

Another theoretical aspect of any intercultural education is global awareness (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2021). Everyone should understand the global challenges that are common to the entire world, using diversity for innovation and supporting collaboration among different social groups.

In the context of contemporary events, an important aspect is education in conflict resolution and problem-solving (Lewowicki, 2013, p. 20). Intercultural education should focus on teaching the recognition and resolution of the source of problems.

Connecting all the aforementioned areas is the ethics of intercultural education. Its main aspects include respect for other cultures, equality for all individuals, fairness and justice towards others, the ability to cooperate and engage in dialogue, proper understanding of the cultural context, and the development of cultural sensitivity (Smoter, 2020, p. 95).

In the current technological development, intercultural education gains new significance and possibilities. Information and communication technologies (ICT) not only enable global access to information but also provide the opportunity for direct communication among representatives of different cultures and for global collaboration. Thus, intercultural education imparts knowledge of cultural differences and becomes an integrating factor. Integrating an understanding of cultural diversity with digital skills becomes

a crucial element in preparing society for active participation in the globalized and technological world.

Methods

In the article, a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to research methods was employed in order to collect extensive material on the usefulness of information and communication technologies (ICT) in intercultural education. The following research methods were used:

- expert literature review, which formed the basis of the study, allowing the authors to gather existing theoretical and practical assumptions. Through the literature review, the authors analyzed various approaches and research findings, as well as pedagogical practices related to the integration of ICT in intercultural education. This approach enables the study to be situated within the existing knowledge and provides a foundation for further expanding the research area;
- case studies, which involved the inclusion of examples and cases illustrating the effectiveness of using ICT in intercultural education. This added depth to the conducted research. By analyzing these cases, the authors were able to assess the impact of ICT on the development of intercultural competencies among students and the effectiveness of the teaching process. It should be noted that this is empirical evidence, strengthening the argumentation and providing real examples of ICT implementation in intercultural educational environments;
- comparative analysis, through the application of which the authors compared different approaches to the use of ICT in intercultural education. This allowed for the identification of best practices and strategies that can be applied in various educational contexts. Comparative analysis enriched the understanding of the effectiveness of ICT in intercultural education by highlighting the differences and similarities between the existing approaches.

The adopted research strategy allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the role of ICT in intercultural education. By integrating literature review, case studies, and comparative analysis, the study provides valuable insights into how ICT can effectively support the development of intercultural competencies among youth.

The role of information and communication technologies in intercultural education

Contemporary information and communication technologies (ICT) play a significant role in intercultural education, offering new perspectives for improved and more effective learning (Smyrnova-Trybulska, 2018, p. 25). The easy accessibility of internet resources allows for the exploration, analysis, and learning about diverse cultures. Modern seamless access to various cultural resources includes texts, films, photos, and sounds.

By making use of ICT, participants in intercultural education have the opportunity to explore and immerse themselves in the cultures of other communities, contributing to broadening horizons and developing cultural awareness (Butter, Perez and Quintana, 2014, p. 443).

An essential aspect is that ICT enables the creation of interactive educational environments where students can engage in simulations, intercultural dialogues, or online group projects (Okońska-Walkowicz, Plebańska and Szaleniec, 2009, p. 26).

Information and communication technologies provide the means to create interactive environments where students can participate in various activities. Simulations are an example, allowing the practical application of theory and testing various scenarios. This practical experience often translates into a better understanding of the material (Kampermann, Opdenakker, Van der Heijden and Bücker, 2021).

In the context of intercultural education, modern technologies are a key element of integration and dialogue. They facilitate easy access to information from many cultures, promoting better understanding and tolerance towards differences. Students participating in virtual meetings with peers from different parts of the world have the opportunity to exchange views and experiences, developing their interpersonal skills crucial in interacting with others (Ogonowska, 2023, p. 18).

It is noteworthy that ICT facilitate global communication and collaboration among students from different parts of the world. Video conferences, information exchange platforms, or online projects allow participants to have direct contact with representatives of other cultures, fostering understanding and developing intercultural communication skills.

Contemporary online meetings are an “encyclopedic” example that information and communication technologies are the driving force behind in-

tercultural educational development. Distance communication applications enable individuals to converse and share experiences of different cultures. This means that people from various parts of the world have the opportunity to expand their mental horizons, not limiting themselves to the local environment (Świerczyńska-Kaczor, 2009).

Collaborative problem-solving in an international setting allows the recognition of intercultural differences, opening the doors to new forms of interaction independent of the geographical location of individuals on the other side of the screen. Cultural awareness becomes involuntary in these relationships.

In the context of intercultural education, ICT provides the opportunity for comprehensive individualization of the learning process. Thanks to modern technologies, the teaching process can be tailored to the individual needs of students (Morbiter, 2007, p. 62). Intercultural education is particularly crucial in this regard. Cultural diversity, and thus unique experiences, require teachers to adopt an individual approach to each learner. Through appropriately prepared tools, teachers can reach the cultural nuances of each learner, making it easier to establish contact. Moreover, modern technologies offer the possibility of a multidimensional knowledge transfer, allowing the application of the best-suited methods to individual predispositions of learners. In practice, this means that ICT support the comprehensive development of intercultural competencies, giving each student the opportunity for a full understanding of the differences between participants, thereby shaping their awareness.

The integration of ICT with intercultural education also allows the development of digital competencies. Participants acquire skills in using modern communication tools, processing information online, and analyzing cultural content in a digital context. Learners using modern technologies have the opportunity to actively participate in creating open educational resources (Piotrowska and Cichoń, 2015, p. 71). By sharing their projects, blogs, or virtual exhibitions, they not only subject their achievements to assessment but, more importantly, contribute to the global community of the educational society.

High digital skills also provide an opportunity to participate in multi-dimensional didactic situations that bring one closer to different cultures. Through virtual simulations, interactive games, or online journeys, students have the opportunity to better understand the surrounding world of others.

Practical implementation of intercultural education in virtual reality and distance learning

One of the leading technologies enabling the effective development of intercultural education is the virtualization of environments belonging to different cultures. The term “virtuality” is widely used today, encompassing various fields such as management, production, culture, organizations, and, most importantly, education (Korinth, 2018, p. 78). It is frequently employed as a key concept necessary to understand socio-economic and technological transformations. Virtuality is often associated with virtual bookstores, virtual banks, virtual universities, or virtual offices.

There are diverse attempts to define this concept. The term “virtuality” is derived from the Latin words *virtus*, *virtutis*, meaning efficiency, courage, and virtue, and *virtualis*, meaning effective (Encyclopedia PWN). The popularization of the concept of virtuality can be attributed mainly to computer science. In this scientific discipline, virtuality is understood as something artificially created using computer techniques – a reality generated through simulation (Brzozowski, 2010, p. 34).

The continuously evolving technology has led to the emergence of the concept of virtual reality (VR). J. Lanier, the author of this term, defined VR as the use of computer technology to create an interactive, three-dimensional world in which objects give the impression of spatial presence (Bryson, 2004, p. 29). Contemporary intercultural education, through easy access to virtual reality technology, can offer various opportunities.

The first possibility is virtual travel around the world, where students can explore different places globally without traveling in the physical sense (Kosiński, 2021, p. 120). Within such virtual travels, they can learn about new cultures, cities, cultural monuments, meet people from other cultures, and even live and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Virtual encounters allow for a better understanding of cultural differences and similarities, proving to be more effective than traditional presentations or lectures.

The use of VR technology enables the simulation of intercultural situations, interaction with individuals holding different views and cultural backgrounds. Leveraging VR in this aspect helps to shape communication skills with other cultures, generating diverse situations, and building intercultural relationships (Bigos, 2022, p. 232).

VR allows users to see history and narratives from the perspective of cultural diversity. This facilitates being in a particular environment and attempting to see the regular routine and experiences of other people from various perspectives. No traditional educational method can replace virtual immersion in a generated world of another culture (Konieczniak, 2011, p. 9).

An interesting solution is also the use of VR to explore culture and art. Through entirely virtual lessons, students can explore and understand various aspects of culture (Bigos, 2022, p. 232). Education using VR provides an opportunity to experience real situations related to cuisine, dance, and art.

In the context of VR, another crucial aspect is the simulation of historical events. Direct experiences in a virtually generated reality help better understand the cultural and social context of conflicts or cultural disputes. Such situations can contribute to an empathetic understanding of other people (Markowski, 2021, p. 96).

In the context of intercultural education, the massive potential of distance learning (e learning) is also noteworthy, as it offers immense benefits for both teachers and students. E-learning, widely used in many European countries at all educational levels, is a dynamically evolving method for modernizing education (Siemieniecka, 2017, p. 54). According to various definitions, e-learning encompasses all didactic activities using information and communication technologies (Hyla, 2005, p. 19). It can also be a didactic process outside the traditional school environment, with the use of modern ICT solutions (Zieliński, 2002, p. 5). In other words, it is a form of education based on ICT, using devices such as computers, laptops, or smartphones (Kuzmicz, 2015, p. 5).

Above all, e-learning enables global access to educational resources. Thanks to ICT development in education, students worldwide can access materials representing various cultures, perspectives, and traditions. This opens the possibility of learning about the history of other countries, their traditions and customs without leaving home. Intercultural education is at one's fingertips, and the ability to compare and analyze materials from different perspectives contributes to the development of critical thinking and to broadening scientific horizons.

Collaboration is also a crucial aspect. Virtual classes, where people from different parts of the world can participate, create a space for intercultural interaction. Participants working on joint projects can exchange experiences and develop social skills.

Participation in online courses placed on e-learning platforms (e.g. Moodle) is another important aspect. These educational materials may include

foreign language training that enhances intercultural skills. The ability to listen, speak, read, or write in a foreign language on a dedicated e-learning platform provides an opportunity to gain valuable language skills, crucial for overcoming cultural and language barriers among participants in the educational process (Galbarczyk, Kozłowski, Krawczyk, Pacholak and Sidor, 2020, p. 120).

A key aspect enabling the effective implementation of distance learning in the context of intercultural education is ensuring adequate technological infrastructure, including access to computers and the internet. This ensures the smooth functioning of e-learning platforms and technical support for participants (Gawlik-Kobylińska, Trochowska and Maciejewski, 2016, p. 25).

Using interactive e-learning platforms that facilitate dialogue and collaboration among participants from different countries and cultures is a key factor supporting intercultural interaction, requiring continuous development and customization of technology to meet the needs of different social groups. Teaching programs should be designed to support the development of participants' intercultural competencies, such as empathy, openness to diversity, and intercultural communication skills, requiring an interdisciplinary approach and ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of educational activities, thus unequivocally enabling distance learning.

Equally important is proper training and support for teachers conducting online classes, which are essential for effective managing cultural diversity in virtual educational groups, necessitating collaboration with experts in pedagogy and educational technology.

Creating a safe and trusted online environment where participants can freely exchange their views and experiences is a key aspect promoting openness and acceptance in intercultural education, requiring the implementation of appropriate security procedures and monitoring of participant behavior. Promoting intercultural dialogue and encouraging reflection on personal prejudices and stereotypes can lead to deeper understanding and tolerance in the context of intercultural education, requiring the integration of educational activities with scientific research and pedagogical practice (Barrett, 2018, p. 100).

E-learning is a crucial tool in intercultural education, as it supports not only the development of global awareness and empathy but also allows for the exchange of experiences among people from different parts of the world.

Summary

Intercultural education is focused on developing awareness, understanding, and essential skills crucial for functioning in polarized societies. Its main principles include imparting knowledge about diverse cultures and cultivating attitudes such as tolerance, cooperation, and openness to differences (Garbuzik, 2021, p. 340).

Information and communication technologies (ICT) play a significant role in this context. Facilitated access to information about various cultures, participation in virtual classes, and the development of digital skills are just a few benefits offered by technological advancements in intercultural education. Virtual reality enables virtual travel worldwide, providing invaluable opportunities for understanding cultures and arts from different parts of the world. E-learning, on the other hand, allows global access to educational resources, fostering intercultural collaboration.

21st-century technologies allow both the acquisition of knowledge about other cultures and the integration of cultural understanding with technical skills, preparing society from different parts of the world for full participation in the digital age.

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Reviewing Articles



Towards irreducible differences.
A review of the book edited by Grzegorz Piekarski:
Equity pedagogy discourses
Cracow 2024, “Impuls” Publishing House, pp. 401,
ISBN: 978-83-66990-91-3

Diversity has become part and parcel of our reality. It appears that nowadays nobody needs to be convinced that “living together means to discover the Other, to counteract enslavement, to pursue common goals” (Zaniewska, 2005, p. 18). Only this manner of conceptualizing community presents a value in societies diversified in terms of race, nationality, religion, physical and mental capabilities. At the same time, Jerzy Nikitorowicz has observed that “(...) anthropological enchantment with diversity is already a thing of the past, slowly giving way to mutual distrust and fears” (2017, p. 7). Marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination of Others make one insist on the proper understanding of the concept of community. This has been consistently done by researchers from the University of Słupsk, who once again have reflected on issues related to equity pedagogy¹.

Equity pedagogy is education promoting equality and diversity. At the heart of it, there are such values as dignity, equality and subject-orientation. The objective of equity pedagogy is to identify social bias and inequalities,

¹ Earlier released publications include: Bałasińska, K., Pasikowski, S., Piekarski, G. and Ratkowska-Pasikowska, J. eds. 2015. *Nierówności społeczne. W trosce o otwarcia horyzontów edukacji [Social inequality. For the sake of opening the horizons of education]*. Gdańsk: IRSE Foundation; Piekarski, G. and Sałapata, M. eds. 2018. *Horyzonty i perspektywy edukacji równościowej [Horizons and perspectives of equality education]*. Gdańsk: Katedra Scientific Publisher; Obrycka, M., Piekarski, G. and Sałapata, M. eds. 2020. *Edukacja równościowa. Tworzenie przestrzeni i warunków dla Innego [Equality education. Creating space and conditions for the Other]*. Cracow: “Impuls” Publishing House.

to counteract negative stereotyping and discrimination, and, ultimately, to implement activities promoting equality and tolerance (Łagoda, 2015). Ideas behind equity pedagogy converge with the ideas of intercultural education (emphasizing the need of being together despite differences) and ideas of anti-discrimination education (highlighting the need to prevent discrimination and violence). The common denominator of these sub-disciplines is seeing diversity as good. Thereby, the “difference” having negative connotations and providing reasons for discrimination gives way to the so called irreducible difference, “pertaining to differences existing between people of different races, nationalities, cultures, beliefs, views, preferences, personality traits etc. A difference is approached not as a value *per se*, but as an essential quality of human being and as a factor whose differentiating action leads to complex outcomes for a human being (...)” (Grzybowski, 2007, p. 64).

Multiple types of diversity, as well as many related outcomes all make equity pedagogy deal with cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary problems.

This interdisciplinary nature of the topic has been clearly highlighted in the reviewed publication. Female and male authors of the texts included in the monograph represent different research disciplines, which allows to present equity pedagogy issues from different perspectives: the pedagogical, psychological, sociological, political, anthropological, linguistic, historic, theological, legal, medical, media related, artistic one. As highlighted by Grzegorz Piekarski in the Introduction: “The editor’s intention was to collect various discourses found in the narratives and to focus on problems related to the categories of equality – diversity – anti-discrimination, and at the same time create an interdisciplinary platform for sharing experiences and reflections on the issues addressed by female and male authors, researched as part of equity pedagogy or strictly related to it.” (p. 12).

The assumed objective is reflected in the structure of the book encompassing six essential sections, presenting the issue of equality in the following order: in historical discourses, discourses on health and disability, artistic and media discourses, gender discourses, in the context of the relationships with others, educational discourses.

As part of historical discourses, equality has been analyzed in view of educational activities of the Society for Workers’ University (Jacek Kowalczyk, Przemysław Kmiecik), mechanisms of memory and affective impressions used by political history in the context of public attitudes to LGBT community (Marcin Ogrodnik), topicality of ideas and achievements of priest Jan Zieja and other figures of the post-war Słupsk with regard to eccentricity

and social inclusion (Izabela Kasproicz). The authors prove that historical discourse plays an important role in reflecting on equity pedagogy – it may bring forward good traditions in this regard, but it can also be used to achieve certain policy objectives.

In health and disability discourses, the equality category is addressed in relation to: children suffering from cystic fibrosis and their social maladjustment due to errors in the system of education and socially immature parents (Marcin Michalik), children with speech disorders and their functioning in the school reality (Helena Liwo), patients and availability of health care systems (Maciej Chrzanowski), medicalization in daily life (Agnieszka Zalewska-Meler), youth suicide prevention – with particular attention paid to LGBTQ+ adolescents (Danuta Sowińska). Problems discussed by the authors in this part of the monograph show that despite privileges guaranteed under a considerable number of international and national laws governing the protection of physical and mental health, issues related to health and disability require sensible reflection translating into specific practical and systemic solutions. In approaching health (as proposed by the World Health Organization) as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, promotion of equality and counteracting discrimination gains specific meaning.

Equality in artistic and media discourses has been analyzed with respect to specific films and plays, revealing the role of art in anti-discrimination education (Marta Florczak), emancipation and empowerment (Magdalena Koperska), in the building of identity, tolerance and responsibility for Others (Anna Sanecka). The studies included in this part of the monograph prove that equity pedagogy may be successfully implemented also beyond formal schooling, as part of public pedagogy (Sandlin, O'Malley and Burdick, 2011).

In the reviewed publication, gender discourses have been focused on: sexual orientation and gender identity of non-binary individuals and reasoning statements uploaded by their parents to social media (Katarzyna Gajek), differences between heterosexual and homosexual men in terms of satisfaction with body image and degree of internalization of socio-cultural models of attractiveness (Jakub Hartung-Wójciak, Anna Kobierecka-Kołodziej, Kosma Kłodziej), maternal narratives of gender reassignment surgery in teachers working in early school education (Anna Szkolak-Stępień). These are important voices in view of: continually widespread discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity, manipulating reality, use of confrontational and emotional language, building the air of acute insecurity.

In the context of the relationships with others, equality is examined with reference to: the relationship between experiencing social exclusion and openness to minority groups (Kosma Kołodziej), use of positive psychology strategies in equity pedagogy (Jacek Kowalczyk, Piotr Modzelewski), restrictions on freedoms of elderly persons in the pandemic era (Jolanta Czerwiakowska), problems faced by pedagogical assistants for Roma students (Agnieszka Caban), professional challenges of female and male teachers having migrant or refugee experiences (Maria Aleksandrovich). These are highly important questions, for equality underlying relationships with others provides grounds for shifting from the “Other – Stranger” scheme to the “Other – Interested” formula, that is from hostility and assimilation to interactions based on respect as the foundation of dialogue, cooperation and collaboration (Nikitorowicz, 2004).

Educational discourses at the end of the book focus on such issues as: equity measures in sexuality education of children and adolescents (Małgorzata Klimasz), chances and limitations for school counsellors working in the pandemic reality (Maciej Maraszkiewicz), psychosocial aspects of functioning of children from migration families in the process of cultural adjustment (Hanna Rugała), equity in the classroom according to Maria Montessori’s method (Joanna Augustyniak), potentials of the hybrid language from the educational perspective, taking Bruno Latour’s natural religion argument as an example (Monika Humeniuk). They reveal a number of barriers and challenges to be faced at school and other educational environments by recipients, as well as educators promoting equity pedagogy.

This short review of topics addressed in the monograph not only shows the multi-faceted nature of discourse on equity, but also the relationships across specific discourses. Particular discourses intertwine with each other: historical discourse intertwines with gender discourse, health discourse with the context of relationships with Other, artistic discourse is linked to educational discourse, which highlights multiple threads and complexity of equity pedagogy even more strongly, and accounts for the need to explore it.

In the introductory paper, Małgorzata Michel (pp. 20–21) formulates a number of pertinent questions: “If equity pedagogy is to be free from discrimination, what kind of activity it should involve? What content should be transmitted in order not to be appropriated by some ideology or social group? Is this possible at all? The book “Equity pedagogy discourses” brings us closer to responses to these questions. It offers no explicit guidelines, as

these are hard to find when dealing with such evasive, difficult and multi-thread issues. Surely however, it is an important voice in the area of equity pedagogy and a step towards an irreducible difference underpinning the community but also identity, for “only when there is the Other, you can know who you are (...). And there is no such identity without a dialogic relationship with the Other (Giroux, 1994, p. 428).

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Does laughter in and at school promote intercultural education?

A reviewing article of a monograph by

Przemysław Paweł Grzybowski:

Laughing at education. A comic image of education in Polish literature and popular culture. Vol. I.

Bydgoszcz 2022, Publishing House of the Kazimierz

Wielki University,

pp. 418, ISBN 978-83-8018-502-9

Przemysław Paweł Grzybowski set himself an extremely ambitious task, requiring many years of methodical work and analyses in the field of gelotology. Although this time it is not a monograph directly embedded in intercultural education, like his text written a few years ago (2015), I have considered that the enormous potential it carries is extremely valuable from the perspective of intercultural educationalists. As the unforgettable Professor Tadeusz Lewowicki wrote many years ago: “(...) it is believed that intercultural education (not only multicultural one) will become an important factor in the desired changes. One is accompanied by states of ambivalence, because of operating between doubt and resignation and hope and faith, between overwhelming pessimism and returning or sustained optimism” (2000, pp. 22–23). This optimism and laughter at school and about school is an important factor that can and should break the existing stereotypes, build bonds and contribute to getting to know each other – to building an intercultural environment.

The publication: *Laughing at education. A comic image of education in Polish literature and popular culture* consists of two complementary parts. The first volume *Assumptions, ideas, analyses*, which is published in a tradi-

tional form, comprises 418 pages divided into 13 chapters, a postscript and a bibliography. Volume II *Quotes, examples, comments* is included in the form of a CD and comprises a collection of texts, many of which are provided with comments. This is particularly valuable and often enables the understanding of humour – especially in the case of older works. The author applied two basic goals: to collect and organize comic works that are set in the school space and to show how important and worthy of scientific discourse the topic of laughter in education is.

In Volume I, the author introduces the reader to the issue of humour, indicating at the same time that there is no universal and exhaustive theory, and the causes of humour lie in violating and exceeding the norms applicable in a given environment. What needs to be emphasized is the variability of what was and what is perceived as funny, amusing or comical. Hence, in order to properly read some texts and understand their humour, knowledge of the cultural and social context is very important. What seems equally important is the specific sensitivity of the recipient, related to individual experiences and the ability to read texts and evaluate or interpret them. In his monograph, P.P. Grzybowski describes an extremely important phenomenon of community-forming laughter (pp. 42–48). According to the author, the very formation of laughter communities is a natural phenomenon and does not require special competences, and the ability to participate in them is innate and lasts throughout one's life (p. 43). For me, however, this is somewhat debatable – not everyone has the same ability to read comic texts and situations. Frequently, limitations result from individual predispositions or even the intellectual potential of individual participants. This is why there is such a huge diversity of communities, which are a derivative of the potential of their members. Laughter has a huge significance in the processes of socialization, which is not always appreciated and noticed. P.P. Grzybowski rightly points out the positive and negative functions of laughter in individual groups and institutions. He describes the school community of laughter, taking into account both the roles played by its individual members and the importance of being in a community for the formation of personality and personal culture. The author emphasizes that the culture of laughter has been formed as a factor of social, ethnic, class or religious rooting. This is undoubtedly a part of the study that is extremely significant from the perspective of intercultural education. It is good that the author did not divide the texts according to the subjective vision of high and low culture, but divided them into what can be considered valuable, not valuable or valuable in a different way. It is hard to

disagree with the statement: “humour present in works on education can constitute a common value embedded in the spiritual life of the nation” (p. 56), it has always been the basis for building everyday life. P. P. Grzybowski familiarizes the readers with the possibilities of considering the educational process through the category of ambivalence, introducing them to the perception of trickster characters as narrators, primary or secondary characters who show one around the seemingly serious, correct world in order to expose what is wrong in it (pp. 61–64).

Two chapters of the monograph may be particularly interesting for those who want to learn about the meaning of humour in a time perspective – Chapter VII *Precursors and pioneers of literary laughter at education* and Chapter VIII *Culture of laughter in the Polish People’s Republic*. The first of them is a kind of condensed guide, in which the author, taking into account the historical context, takes the reader through the backstage of what was treated as comic in individual historical periods, indicates the marginalization of entire social groups (e.g. the lack of women in the old Polish culture of laughter), openly and covertly functioning laughter communities, and ways of popularizing them in the form of new literary genres or entire publishing series serving this purpose.

The next chapter reflects the climate prevailing in the difficult period of the Polish People’s Republic, in which humour and laughter were one of the ways of building resistance to the decisions of the state authorities, showing one’s attitude towards the situation in the country. Despite the repressions that affected officially functioning artists who used laughter on stage as an attribute of active resistance or fight, it was perhaps this situation that led to the creation of a unique climate of creativity in that period. It consisted in building situations told indirectly, with the help of allusions, understatement, using symbols that entered the common language, creating at the same time a specific language code that built a completely different, qualitatively new community of laughter. The author brilliantly shows what was considered dangerous in that period precisely because of the used humour and comedy. He also refers to numerous authors, some of whom began their activity in the interwar period, and whose works shaped not only the reading tastes, but to a large extent the way of looking at the world of subsequent generations of young Poles.

The next chapter of the monograph is devoted to cabaret, dating back to the first half of the 19th century and experiencing its renaissance after World War I. The author gives an opportunity to get acquainted with the work of those

cabarets that were popular in some narrow circles of people and were forgotten over time, but also recalls those figures, groups or places that are today symbols of Polish culture, such as: Piotr Skrzynecki, Stanisław Tym, “Piwnica pod Baranami [The Cellar under the Rams]”, the student theatre “Bim Bom”, the cabaret “Klika [The Clique]” or the one that serves to integrate the school, academic and artistic environments: the Review of Amateur Cabaret PAKA. Cabaret has also become a form used in radio and television programmes. Some of these programmes accompanied their loyal viewers for years, such as: “Podwieczorek przy mikrofonie [Afternoon tea at the microphone]”, “Wesoły Autobus [A merry bus]”, “Kocham pana, pani Sułku [I love you, Mr. Sułek]” or the television programme “Spotkania z balladą [Meetings with the ballad]”. A significant contribution to the satirical description of students, teachers and schools was made by T raperzy znad Wisły [T-rappers from the Vistula region], whose presented characters enjoy enormous popularity even today, as indicated by the millions of views of individual episodes on YouTube.

A separate chapter with an intriguing title: *Academy with a smile and in a crooked mirror* is devoted to higher education (pp. 171–231). The author notes that the scientific community is stereotypically treated as serious, full of prestige, dignity or authority, and students, in turn, are treated as those who potentially have a tendency to joke, have fun, create and participate in comic situations, which in turn is a counterbalance to excessively – again stereotypically – serious and boring scientific bodies. In the next chapter, the author presents scientific reflections on laughter in education, referring, among others, to Maria Dudzikowa, whose *Osobliwości śmiechu uczniowskiego [Peculiarities of student laughter]* allowed entire generations of students of pedagogy to understand what a weapon laughter is from the angle of a student and a teacher.

In the chapter: *Democratically and kindly. An attempt at a summary*, the author shares his ideas for further research that go far beyond the scope of the prepared study and presents comments on the material collected here. Two lists have been prepared for potential researchers – the first is a list of numerical examples for individual authors, co-authors or studies. It includes 359 authors, seven of whom are editors of five collective studies. Additionally, two printed studies of comic texts from satirical Internet portals (Aszdzienik.pl, Joemonster.org) have been used here. The next list comprises comic motifs and threads in selected examples related to the issue and/or person in the context of education. Here again, it is worth appreciating the enormous amount of work done by P.P. Grzybowski.

The author opens Chapter XIII with the title question: *It already used to be funny, or what happened to our laughter?* and with some bitter reflections on the changes in the public sphere and popular culture (pp. 267–281). I definitely agree with the thesis that “laughter manifested in literary works is one of the essential elements of the mosaic that makes up the image of societies” (p. 268) – in the provided texts, there are fragments of reality that in some way affected their authors. Hence, the frequency of certain threads, the used language code or even the way of communication that makes up a dramatic (because sometimes comic, but on other occasions tragically comic) image. That is why, especially today, what P.P. Grzybowski included it in the last sentence of the conclusion is so important: “Let us laugh wisely, not only at education. Even when more difficult times come, we will at least get a little closer to the truth through it. Who knows, maybe it will make us feel better?” (p. 281).

The monograph ends with *Postscriptum, or what else to include here?* In connection with the formulated title, at first association, the humorous but extremely important title of Wojciech Młynarski’s text came to my mind. Here, however, the author adds that the chapter is a kind of another hint – what else can be researched within the subject of the monograph, what to pay attention to, what to look for. This is undoubtedly very valuable for those who seek inspiration at various stages of their research activities.

The supplement, or rather continuation of the monograph is Volume II. The author has done an extensive job, collecting comic descriptions of phenomena and processes related to education and schooling. The selection of examples included in the second volume is – due to its contents – a unique collection. The epigram opening the volume comes from the notes of Ambroży Pępowski and is the oldest Polish comic work, the protagonist of which is a student. P.P. Grzybowski collected texts that in their titles or contents referred to characters, events, processes related to education in its broad sense – not only school education, although this is the main area of comic situations. Owing to these texts, one has an opportunity to see how rich our culture of laughter related to education is. After all, as the author writes in Volume I (p. 47), “comic works fulfil a community-building function, the implementation of which depends on frequency, lasting (ability to be remembered in collective memory), repeatability of the message, the nature of humour, its reception, comprehensibility, etc.” Such intense laughter focused on school is certainly the result of the fact that everyone has experienced being a student and there is probably no person who, thinking about

their education, would not be able to recall school jokes circulating at that time, funny situations provoking laughter or sometimes “legendary” events that build the unique history of school. One might dare to say that each school has developed its own culture of smiling and laughter – with hidden laughter, secret laughter, or laughter through tears also playing a significant role here.

However, while this is most often an oral transmission, in this monograph, thanks to the enormous meticulousness and titanic work of the author, there are written texts – small literary (epic, lyrical and dramatic) forms with very reliably cited sources. The authors are both amateurs and experienced writers who have collaborated with satirical magazines, as well as performing stage artists. Reading the texts is an opportunity to deal with various literary forms – such as fairy tales, epigrams, monologues, stories, parodies, songs, tales, or poems. There are also fragments of memories, diaries, popularizing studies, as well as personal publications – of teachers and academic scholars sharing their comic output.

Definitely in the field of pedagogy, also intercultural pedagogy, P.P. Grzybowski has become one of the most important authors dealing with laughter in the space of education (2012, 2014, 2015b, Grzybowski and Idzikowski, 2018; Grzybowski and Marszałek, 2022). The two volumes prepared are an extremely valuable source that make up an integral whole. However, they should not necessarily be read chronologically. What can be even recommended is reading Volume II while reading Volume I. I agree with the author’s statement that comic artistic work on education can have a refreshing effect on the sphere of education, also by ridiculing the tensions and pathologies occurring within it. It is worth asking, paraphrasing the author’s question: Does one have the right and can one laugh at education? Is it worth popularizing such texts, making them available to a wide range of readers? Most certainly yes. Laughter, as Bakhtin wrote, purifies seriousness from dogmatism, one-sidedness, unchangeability, fanaticism and categoricity, the elements of fear and intimidation, didacticism, naivety and illusion, poor one-dimensionality and unambiguity, stupid despair (1975). The two volumes prepared by P.P. Grzybowski are a contribution to the discourse on school, but at the same time an excellent tool to use in didactic and educational work – to talk about difference and stereotypes in a cheerful way. Laughter is an extraordinary tool, yet rarely used in a proper way.

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Biographical Notes

Łukasz Albański, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, University of the National Education Commission, Krakow, Faculty of Social Sciences, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-5819-1557

Tomasz Bajkowski, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, University of Białystok, Faculty of Educational Science, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0003-4931-8637

Halyna Bevz, Ph.D. hab., professor, National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, Institute of Social and Political Psychology, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0003-2487-5429

Maja Brywczyńska, Ph.D., Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Sociology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-7306-430X

Małgorzata Chojak, Ph.D., Maria Curie Skłodowska University of Lublin, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-7558-7630

Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Warsaw School of Economics (SGH), Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-1121-6240

Barbara Jankowiak, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Educational Studies, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-7660-2070

Agnieszka Jeran, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Sociology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-9670-8585

Liudmyla Khoruzha, Ph.D. hab., professor, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Faculty of Pedagogical Education, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0003-4405-4847

Urszula Klajmon-Lech, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Arts and Educational Science, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0003-4195-2094

Agnieszka Knap-Stefaniuk, Ph.D., Ignatianum University in Cracow, Faculty of Education, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-9201-9889

Mariusz Korczyński, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Wincenty Pol Academy of Applied Sciences in Lublin, Faculty of Social Sciences, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-1520-8643

Mirosław Kowalski, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, University of Zielona Góra, Faculty of Pedagogy, Psychology and Sociology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0003-2960-8258

Łukasz Kwadrans, Ph.D., associate professor, University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Arts and Educational Science, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-6102-2308

Urszula Lewartowicz, Ph.D., Maria Curie Skłodowska University of Lublin, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-0915-9486

Ela Luria, Ph.D., Levinsky College of Education, Department of Education, Israel, ORCID: 0000-0001-9201-2188

Dorota Mroczkowska, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Sociology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0003-4410-0276

Inetta Nowosad, Ph.D. hab., professor, University of Zielona Góra, Faculty of Pedagogy, Psychology and Sociology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-3739-7844

Agnieszka Nymś-Górna, Ph.D., Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Sociology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-5538-1953

Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur, Ph.D. hab., professor, University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Arts and Educational Science, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-9990-6176

Ewa Sarzyńska-Mazurek, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Maria Curie Skłodowska University of Lublin, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-3464-6892

Maya Shalom, Ph.D., Beit Berl College, The Israeli Social Enterprise Research Center (ISERC), Israel, ORCID: 0000-0002-3637-6478

Ewa Sowa-Behtane, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Ignatianum University in Cracow, Faculty of Education, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-0190-0567

Agata Strzelczyk, Ph.D., Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Department of Sociopedagogical Problems of Youth, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-9825-8111

Anna Szafrńska, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Arts and Educational Science, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-9797-2591

Krystian Tuczyński, Ph.D., University of Rzeszów, Pedagogy Institute, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-8220-2199

Tomasz Warchoń, Ph.D., University of Rzeszów, Pedagogy Institute, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-7978-8149

Danuta Wosik-Kawala, Ph.D. hab., associate professor, Maria Curie Skłodowska University of Lublin, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0003-2846-7203

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1. Monographs:

authored

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co-authored

Ogrodzka-Mazur, E., Szafrńska, A., Malach, J. and Chmura, M. 2021. *The cultural identity and education of university students in selected East-Central Countries. A Polish-Czech comparative study*. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage.

edited work

Grzybowski, P.P. and Marszałek, K. eds. 2023. *Kultury śmiechu a edukacja/ Laughter cultures and education*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”.

2. Articles in scientific journals:

Witkowski, L. 2023. Edukacja w trosce o „efekt pogranicza” międzykulturowego (panorama tropów i profili humanistycznych w retrospekcji)/ Education concerned with the intercultural “borderland effect” (a panorama of humanistic tropes and profiles in a retrospect). *Edukacja Międzykulturowa/ Intercultural Education*. **3** (22), pp. 17–39.

Budzyńska-Daca, A. and Rogowska, K.J. 2023. Retoryczny model nauczania debaty – perspektywa gatunkowa/ The rhetorical model of debate teaching – a genre perspective. *Edukacja Międzykulturowa/ Intercultural Education*. **1** (20), pp. 171–184.

3. Chapters in edited works:

Dzierżawin, K. 2023. Wielojęzyczność w rodzinach polsko-egipskich/ Multilingualism in Polish-Egyptian families. In: Żurek, A. ed. *Wielojęzyczność jako wyzwanie społeczne, kulturowe i edukacyjne/ Multilingualism as a social, cultural and educational challenge*. Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, pp. 127–142.

Miodunka, R. 2023. Biografia językowa jako jedna z metod badania dwujęzyczności/ Linguistic biography as one of the methods for research bilingualism. In: Dębski, R. and Miodunka, W.T. eds. *Bilingwizm polsko-obcy dziś: od teorii i metodologii badań do studiów przypadków/ Polish-other bilingualism: from theory and research methodology to case studies*. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, pp. 49–87.

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Contact:

Assistant Editor:

Anton Dragomiletskii ✉ redakcja.em@gmail.com