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PREPARING POLISH TEACHERS TO WORK IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The issue of multiculturalism in the context of the practice of Polish schools and kindergartens is dealt with by many Polish researchers: Jerzy Nikitorowicz, Tadeusz Lewowicki, Zbigniew Melosik, Bogusław Śliwerski. Multicultural education is the term used to describe activities consisting of recognizing cultural systems of communities that are different from the Polish traditions and that function in Polish society. We treat these communities as closed circles, even though our goal is to build social capital based on the diversity paradigm. These views are presented in the works of the scholars mentioned above.

Long before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the subject “Multiculturalism in education” was introduced to the curriculum of studies in preschool and early school pedagogy. The aim of educating students in this subject is primarily to understand and acquire knowledge and skills in the analysis of basic concepts related to the types of multiculturalism and interculturalism; shaping the skills of critical interpretation of theoretical and practical positions on multiculturalism and interculturalism; shaping the skills of comparative analysis of the concept of multicultural and intercultural education in kindergartens and primary classes of selected European countries; acquiring by the student the skills of designing educational situations introducing the issues of multiculturalism and interculturalism and patriotism in the methodology of kindergarten and primary classes and introducing the student to self-improvement, formative work on personality traits that condition effective conduct of multicultural and intercultural education in kindergarten and grades I-III [1, pp. 91–92]. Providing students – future teachers – with knowledge in the field of multiculturalism will

probably make it much easier for them to understand the behaviour and attitudes of students. Multicultural education promotes and is based on: openness to representatives of other cultures, respect for differences and mutual understanding, tolerance, recognizing existing cultures as equally valuable, ensuring equal opportunities and overcoming discrimination. At the same time, it contributes to: a fuller understanding of cultures in contemporary societies, a greater ability of people from different cultures to communicate, understanding and accepting cultural diversity in society, a greater ability to participate in social interactions on a supranational scale [1, p. 92]. The proposed teaching content of this subject concerns, among others, the category of intercultural pedagogy, its problems and challenges of education, changes in the global world in the perspective of the constitution of multicultural societies. Attention is paid to cultural diversity in Poland and around the world. The next issues that are being raised are the cultural contexts of the social functioning of communities, groups or individuals. The cultural identity of the student and teacher is also being discussed. The problem of growing in frequency otherness in the contemporary world and identity crises. The role of cultural contact in changing attitudes towards the Other as an element of intercultural/multicultural education – these are the subjects of subsequent considerations. A lot of time is devoted to qualifications and attitudes towards cultural differences. It is important to show the historical development of intercultural education – as a path to learning the Other and building dialogue relations in homogeneous and diverse groups, as well as contemporary concepts of intercultural education.

Students are introduced to the directions of educational policy and strategies of intercultural education in Poland and around the world. Ways of implementing the assumptions of intercultural education in culturally homogeneous and diverse environments are indicated in the context of selected models.

One of the most difficult issues is intercultural education in the face of acculturation challenges in Poland and around the world – between marginalization and integration. Defining a map of problems defining possible/necessary directions of development of intercultural education. Up to what concerns us most in the current geopolitical

situation – social relations and cultural diversity, the issue of migration and refugeeism – challenges of intercultural education.

When preparing future teachers to work in classes that are diverse in terms of nationality, we must remember that the diversity of the ethnic and political definition of a nation affects attitudes towards representatives of other national groups. Among these attitudes – on their negative side – ethnocentrism and nationalism are the most frequently discussed. If we consider nationalism in a narrow sense, then both concepts are close to each other.

Ethnocentrism is often mentioned as one of the typical manifestations of hostile behaviour towards others. It is worth emphasizing, however, that we can talk about two faces or varieties of this phenomenon. The first variety of ethnocentrism is negative ethnocentrism, which is nationalism.

In the case of positive ethnocentrism, the cultural background of one's own group is highlighted, respecting the achievements of others.

An important element of a teacher's work is knowledge of specific methods used in multicultural education. In addition to methods of presenting (lectures, conversations and discussions on multicultural issues), exposing (exhibitions, concerts, literature, film, foreign-language theatre) and searching (e.g. project method), specific methods are also used in intercultural education, such as: search methods knowledge about Others, methods of searching for common roots (chronological, circles, cultural routes, contact maps), methods of searching for solutions (text analysis, wind rose, mandala), methods of working with stereotypes (identifying, breaking, preventing stereotypes), methods of understanding and respecting differences, methods of solving problems (decision tree, decision table, decision paths, debates, negotiations, conflict maps), meetings and exchanges of young people, methods of building cooperation scenarios [2, pp. 31-34]. The most important thing is to prepare teachers, because they are the ones who are treated as professional educators and should have intercultural sensitivity, which will allow them to open students' minds to learning about the cultural complexity of the world.

Students are also introduced to the concept of universalism, among others in the sense of universality, spread, or dominant trend.

According to Jan Szmyd, the goals of universalism are related to: integrating cultures of different geographical, ethnic, regional areas while maintaining and cultivating their specific values, distinctiveness and identity; combining and interpenetrating the sciences: technical, social and humanities in the theoretical and methodological area; integrating contemporary philosophy while maintaining its diversity; developing and popularizing universalist (global) ethics, among others by spreading the ethics of rotarianism; attempting to reconcile life values; bringing different religions and worldviews closer together and conducting a dialogue between them emphasizing similarities and values; creating meta-religious, meta-cultural and meta-theoretical premises for resolving the main conflicts of modernity and paving the way for a better coexistence of cultures and nations [3, pp. 113-114].

A teacher, taking care of the positive course of acculturation of children and youth, should remember the importance of intercultural education. This type of education plays one of the functions supporting cultural adaptation, both for people from cultural minorities and the dominant, majority receiving society.

A teacher of preschool and early school education, who has been equipped with such extensive knowledge in the field of multi- and interculturalism, will certainly find it much easier to work with a student/child – a refugee from Ukraine, but not only that, also with other students/children with experiences of migration or re-emigration.

REFERENCES

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