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Multi-competent pupils – a challenge for teachers at the time of global cultural transformation

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to characterise pupils' profiles as well as the initiatives undertaken by teachers in order to comply with the dynamically changing world. The first part of the paper presents selected contexts of global cultural transformation. The second part focuses on the characteristics of pupils' multiple competencies with an aim to identify and reorganize their cognitive axiological, social and emotional competences. The last part points to and analyses developmental potential of pupils' multiple competences in properly arranged and implemented educational processes. In order to meet the challenges, teachers should make use not only of pupils' potential, but also of their own resources.

Key words: cultural transformation, multiple competencies, challenges, educational process, cooperation

SELECTED CONTEXTS OF GLOBAL CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Globalisation is an effect of scientific and technological progress as well as development of information technology. Time and space are changing their traditional character, the world "is shrinking", becoming a "global village", in which people experience the same events and use the same products for mass consumption at the same time.

The current political and social changes, according to M.J. Szymański (2015, p. 17), enable overt or covert exchange, “export/import” of particular socio-cultural models and values, as well as routine and occasional behaviour leading to popularisation of global models of popular culture. Mass culture promotes consumption of goods and services, but also of changeable ideals and cultural fashions. Consumerism is disguised as freedom – freedom to purchase, consume and continuously use more and more attractive consumer offers. Consumption is becoming a form of self-expression, in accordance with the “what I buy shows what my lifestyle is” attitude (Burszta, 1999, p. 48).

Zygmunt Bauman (2007, p. 131) mentions a “consumerist syndrome”, replacing the strategy of permanent possession and long-term engagement. Ł. Iwasiński (2007, p. 169) rightly stresses that boundaries are being blurred not only between consumer goods and other areas of life, but also between the truth and illusion. Alternative reality, being a desired good, is becoming a commodity. It is possible to freely manipulate and distort reality, and digital technologies cause the blurring of boundaries between the truth and simulation.

The cultural changes that we are facing involve normative elements of culture, such as religion, world view, attitude to history, ethics, law and customs. High pace of transformation in these spheres causes uncertainty, burdens adults and hinders the process of raising children (Brezinka, 2005, p. 6). Popular culture surrounds contemporary humans, affecting their choices, values and ideals, as well as offering insofar unseen opportunities and freedom of choice (Kuligowski, p. 5). Mass culture often promotes only hedonistic values, either connected with vitality (health, appearance, beauty, youth) or material values (rat race and money as an end).

When values and norms that limit egoistic pursuits cease to play a role, when the system of values is decomposed, when previously valid normative regulations fail, then humans become lost (Durkheim, 2011). It may be assumed that the more one’s environment changes, the more serious identity reorientation is required, something that constitutes an undeniable challenge for each of us.

Mirosław J. Szymański (2015, p. 74) observes that profound cultural and social changes dramatically change the system of reference which enables self-identification. The author adopts a thesis that only a conscious, reflective and active individual, aiming at self-fulfilment, has a real identity.

Hence, one does not only need to be familiar with the surrounding world and everything it offers, but also with oneself. Also, one should obtain new tools and strategies to cope in different situations, to learn and create new values, and through this to transform oneself and the surrounding reality.

Our times impose on us the requirement to responsibly create ourselves (our internal world) and the surrounding reality (the external world), to experience our agency, to use the freedom of choice resulting from the adopted system of values, and to undertake autonomous initiatives in different spheres. This is only feasible after acquisition and application of certain competencies.

PUPILS' MULTIPLE COMPETENCIES AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

C. Hudley and A.E. Gottfried (2008, p. 16) point out that “children possess competencies in multiple areas of functioning (social, emotional, physical, linguistic and cognitive), which they require for mastering the challenges posed at each developmental stage. Context refers to multiple systems within a child’s environment which influence the development of these multiple competencies”.

Psychologists from the University of Washington (<https://depts.washington.edu/>) argue that: “social, emotional and cognitive competencies constitute a critical foundation for children’s well-being and protective factors for their functioning in adverse circumstances. These competencies are meant to reduce the risk of related academic, behavioural, mental, health or substance-abuse problems.

The European Parliament and the Council Europe (2006) list eight key competences: 1) communication in mother tongue, 2) communication in foreign languages, 3) mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, 4) digital competence, 5) learning to learn, 6) social and civic competences, 7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, 8) cultural awareness and expression.

There are different classifications of competencies, one being a classification adopted in post-Soviet countries, associated with the name of a famous scientist A. Khutorskoy (2005). In his opinion, key competencies are related

to the total educational content, and as such, they are stipulated according to educational disciplines, subjects and levels:

- axiological competence,
- common cultural competence,
- educational and cognitive competence,
- information competence,
- communicative competence,
- social and labour competence,
- personal improvement competence,

The purpose of the development of key competencies is to prepare competent and competitive specialists with proactive, responsible attitudes when entering the labour market. By “key educational competencies” we understand human capacity to establish connections between knowledge and real situations in order to: adopt true educational paths, to develop an algorithm for its implementation, as well as to act as quantitative and qualitative evaluation of educational outcomes with focus on modern graduates’ preparation quality demands. Key educational competencies are fundamental, universal and interdisciplinary. Their classification is performed according to age, educational level, discipline, type of institution, educational standards, etc. (Khutorskoy, 2003, p. 59).

Another well-known author, I.A. Zimniaya (2006), indicates three main groups of competencies:

1. related to individuals, acting and communicating parties: health protection competence, axiological orientation in the world, integration competence, competence citizenship, self-improvement competence,
2. related to social interaction: communicative competence,
3. related to human activity: cognitive activity, skills, information technology.

It must be emphasised that in the age of global cultural transformation, teacher’s task is to create conditions promoting the development of cognitive as well as axiological, emotional and social competencies in pupils. They are considered necessary for: the cognition and comprehension of the dynamically changing world, critical reception of the products of popular culture, recognition and implementation of “good” values, effective regulation of emotions, development of self-esteem and self-confidence, self-identification, formation of positive interpersonal relations and effective cooperation.

Cognitive competencies “engage” in psychological processes, recognising the reality through action, thanks to which individuals not only learn about

the world and assign meanings to it, but also gradually construct their understanding of the world, which facilitates effective and happy adaptation. Direct interactions with the external world are both the source and means of cognition. The degree of effectiveness of this cognition depends on the degree of development of cognitive competencies, as well as on skills of using cultural instruments within one's community (Michalak, 2011, p. 133).

Renata Michalak (2011, p. 134) considers cognitive competencies to be of key importance for the process of learning and problem-solving. She states that cognitive competencies are a very broad and comprehensive category, including a number of skills: (1) processing information (connected with searching, synthesising, reporting and planning information, as well as designing solutions to particular problems); (2) planning cognitive activities; (3) organising self-study (including self-improvement); (4) using multiple sources of knowledge; (5) cooperating; (6) properly using the acquired knowledge”.

Cognitive competencies are connected with the ability to learn, understand and remember, with openness, curiosity and fresh insight. The greatest curiosity and cognitive passion usually occur in the early years, in childhood and adolescence, but sometimes they are maintained throughout the whole lifetime (Oleksyn, 2006, p. 24).

Tadeusz Pilch (2000, p. 85), highlighting the importance of competencies in education, points to: cognitive (searching, thinking), regulatory-cognitive (which enable communication) and regulatory competencies (cooperation, action, adaptation).

Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak (1997, p. 87) divides competencies in the same way, but divides them into cognitive and communicative competencies. When characterising cognitive competencies, she argues that they include openness to change, readiness to use new information, and the skill of updating knowledge, whereas communication competencies are skills manifested in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and non-verbal expression.

R. Michalak (2011, p. 134) attributes all the above-mentioned abilities and skills to cognitive competencies. She defines cognitive competencies as a set of mental abilities, such as: attention, ability to make observations, memory, thinking, imagination, ability to listen, communicate and read with understanding, and efficient writing.

As D. Klus-Stańska (2005, p. 74) observes, the essence of competencies is a so-called procedural knowledge, “knowing how”, as opposed to “knowing

that". The former is manifested in actions, whereas the latter in statements. Declarative knowledge is associated with recognising and reporting previously defined meanings, and procedural knowledge involves personal search and assigning meanings in the face of new situations.

To conclude, cognitive competencies are reflected in the abilities to acquire knowledge, to understand it, and to use it both in model and unknown, difficult situations. Significant skills related to cognitive competencies include: memory, attention, ability to make observations, thinking, imagination, ability to listen, communicate and read with understanding, and efficient writing, among others. In this area of competencies, mental abilities necessary to process information, such as analysis, synthesis, generalisation, evaluation, abstracting and reflection, become extremely important. The discussed competencies also include the following skills: planning cognitive actions, organising self-study, using multiple sources of knowledge, cooperating with others in the process of learning, and appropriate use of the acquired knowledge.

Axiological competencies refer to knowledge, skills, experiences and beliefs concerning different values; they characterise one's functioning in the axiological sphere as far as searching, interpreting and implementing values is concerned.

As proposed by Katarzyna Olbrycht (2002, p. 95), axiological competence involves: knowledge of values and evaluation, as well as efficiency in taking conscious, autonomous and axiological decisions.

In her concept, Agata Popławska (2013, p. 186) points out the following components of axiological competencies: knowledge about values, axiological preferences, evaluation activity, and axiological attitude.

Knowledge about values is knowledge about specific features of the world of values and about the place and role of values in a person's life. Such knowledge can be a result of learning about values and experiencing them. Having knowledge about them promotes the understanding of the world of values and later becomes a basis for taking decisions concerning the choice of values one wants to express.

Another element is *axiological preferences*, i.e. self-knowledge regarding particular values. This involves the formation of both the rational and the emotional attitude to values. The following abilities are of utmost importance: ability to search and select values, to determine what is valuable and significant in life, what may constitute a goal, as well as ability to adopt these values as one's own, i.e. internalise them.

The next significant element in the discussed concept of axiological competencies is *evaluation activity*, i.e. ability to “respond” to values present around us and to evaluate our actions regarding their implementation.

The axiological attitude (especially its behavioural component) is manifested in life conforming to the adopted system of values, as well as in making the right choices from the perspective of knowledge about values. It may refer to human’s choice of certain things and behaviours, and attempts to achieve the set goals. The pattern of such behaviour is relatively permanent. The source of evaluation is none other than the subject. It also involves applying the selected values to behave in different situations and making your life meaningful. The way to put values into practice is to act and develop ourselves and the world around us in a certain way. It is accompanied by the willingness to assume responsibility for oneself and one’s actions.

Emotional competencies are “emotional skills and abilities acquired in the course of development, as well as knowledge about the manners and patterns of emotional behaviour in interpersonal relations” (Saarni, 1998, p. 107). Humans intentionally learn these skills all their lives, taking into account both what the current situation requires of them and their own goals. Individuals’ inborn abilities only constitute a basis for conscious development of emotional skills.

Saarni (1998, pp. 109–117) identifies several components of emotional competencies: *awareness of emotional states* (from simple to complex emotions with different signs and intensity, accepting the dynamics of a feeling); *ability to differentiate between emotions experienced by others*; *ability to use the right verbal expressions to describe emotions*; *ability to adapt and cope with negative emotions* (using different strategies, e.g. control and regulation of negative emotions); *emotional self-sufficiency* (perceiving oneself as feeling accurate emotions); *ability to accept the interaction perspective in emotionally engaging interpersonal relations* (conscious use of self-presentation strategies and being aware that the partner in interaction is doing the same).

The above-mentioned components of emotional competence involve abilities to perceive, understand and regulate emotions.

English-language sources link emotional competencies with a concept of emotional intelligence, which is defined as human capacity to control their own feelings and the feelings of others, to identify them and to use this information to manage their own thinking and actions (Salovey, 1990, pp. 185–211).

A. Bechara (2000, p. 211) et al. consider emotional intelligence as a set of emotional abilities that make up a certain form of intelligence, which is different from cognitive intelligence or IQ.

Moreover, P. Salovey and D. Grewal (2005, pp. 281–282) developed a model of emotional intelligence components, which include four different abilities and skills: a) perceiving emotions, b) using emotions, c) understanding emotions and g) managing emotions.

In all areas of human social activities, including education, emotions and cognitive activity, in other words, feelings and thoughts are inextricably intertwined. Education inherently involves emotions and thus is an emotional process. A. Hargreaves (1998, pp. 835–854) claims that humans have an ability to detect information denounced by emotions, and using this information to carry out abstract conclusions. Therefore, understanding the role of emotions in the educational process is an extremely important factor in successful learning.

Vanessa C. Petersen (2010, p. 2), having conducted a review of research on the influence of emotional intelligence on adult education, indicates at the existence of positive correlation between emotional intelligence and educational achievement. As pupils develop skills necessary to communicate with teachers, and they solve problems occurring in the learning process, they are able to cope with stress better and eventually achieve better results.

To sum up, emotional competencies involve awareness and efficiency of human activity in the area of emotions, ability of personal reflection, effective regulation of emotional behaviour and social regulation, and acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.

Regarding emotionally competent pupils, it must be stressed that they are self-aware, have a sense of personal freedom and dignity, respect themselves and others, and flexibly direct their thoughts and feelings depending on the situation. They display sensitivity, both towards their own feelings and the feelings of those they interact with. They empathically engage in emotional experiences with other participants in interaction. They possess knowledge of their internal states and preferences, they create a realistic and adequate image of themselves, and refer to it, making efforts of personal development and forming relationships with peers and teachers.

Pupils with high levels of emotional competencies recognise and accurately define their emotional states, are aware of the consequences of giving in

to different emotions, are not driven by detrimental impulses, control negative emotions, and adequately express their emotions. In conflict situations, they can use logical arguments, listen and understand, negotiate and try to achieve a consensus.

They also express self-confidence: a strong sense of their own value and well-developed awareness of their capabilities and skills. Thanks to accurate self-evaluation, they know both their strong and weak points. This helps them engage in various tasks, challenges or initiatives.

Pupils with high emotional competencies observe certain rules. They diligently perform their duties and take responsibility for their actions. Motivation constitutes an important feature of such pupils, i.e. the will to act connected with the ability to set goals and consistently aim at achieving them. They know what they want to accomplish and try to do better and better; they manifest deep intellectual and emotional engagement when performing. They are persistent in their pursuits despite obstacles or failures and know how to cope with pressure or problems. They skilfully take advantage of opportunities that arise.

K. Rubin and L. Rose Kresner (in: Kamenskaya, 2012) understand children's **social competencies** as an ability to deal with their interpersonal issues in communication. According to G.E. Belitskaya (1995), this new concept identifies a high level of social activity in a person. A.V. Brushlinsky (2002) considers it as development and integration of psychological and socio-psychological issues of social cognition, and social logics, social representations, feelings and memory, and thus social competence acts as a higher level of understanding of reality through consciousness. E.V. Koblyanskaya (1995) identifies social competence as a relation "I–Community", which includes a combination of skills to choose the right social guidelines and to organise their activities in accordance with those guidelines. S.N. Krasnokutskaya (2005, p. 11) considers social competence as "a certain level of human adaptation to effective implementation of a specified social role".

According to Paweł Smółko (2008, pp. 28–29) social competencies can be defined as: 1) ability to generate social behaviour which makes it possible to initiate and maintain positive interpersonal relations and facilitates them, and 2) effectiveness of achieving own goals in contact with others, ability to influence others. J. Borkowski (2003, p. 110) also presents a broader perspective of social competencies, arguing that: "they ensure better mutual understanding and communication, facilitate meeting new people, support

coping in new situations, extend the possibilities of satisfying social needs, facilitate the provision of social support, open broader perspectives of participation in civic life, improve the efficiency of individual and collective work, stimulate the process of self-creation and direct one's development, as well as enhance the potential of overcoming problems, conflicts and social pathologies."

The structure of **social competencies**, as understood by A. Popławska (2013, p. 192), involves such elements as: cooperation, assertiveness, communication and support.

Cooperation is an ability to initiate actions together with others and do it effectively – collaboration, not competition or rivalry is important here. Pupils are able to take into consideration both their own goals and the goals of others in their activities, so as to achieve all of them. Cooperation is manifested in the ability to build good interpersonal relations.

Assertiveness is associated with the ability to defend one's own rights, express emotions and refuse to do things without offending others. Pupils are able to influence others and gain their favours, and they have a positive attitude towards others.

Communication is ability to effectively communicate, to send and interpret verbal and non-verbal messages, and to listen actively, being open to others and their needs. It is also ability to reduce conflicts, i.e. to mediate and settle disputes.

Support denotes ability both to provide help and to benefit from the assistance of others. Pupils are aware that they have high quality interpersonal relations and have a sense of group bonds. They can create an atmosphere of security and trust and exhibit sensitivity towards the needs of others.

TEACHER-PUPIL COOPERATION IN CREATING THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS – PRECONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPING MULTIPLE COMPETENCIES

As Ewa Kobylecka (2010, p. 105) rightly observes, a 21st century teacher is supposed to meet very high expectations: to support pupils' development, to act "as educator, caregiver, friend, therapist, guide, counsellor, master, value transmission intermediary, and leader".

There is research which identifies the preconditions for the development of competencies in school pupils. Ilyina M.V. (2011, p. 9) identified the following pedagogical preconditions, under which the development of key cognitive competencies in primary school pupils will prove more successful: 1) creation of educational environment aimed at the development of a system of key competencies in primary school pupils; 2) ensuring active approach in the learning process; 3) diagnosis and correction of results of the process of development of key competencies.

A mandatory precondition for the development of key competencies is a practical activity. In the process of acquisition and accumulation of experience, knowledge and skills, practical activity is responsible for the development of higher competency levels. When learning, it is necessary to create conditions for pupils to gain experience with the use of knowledge and skills, in order to increase the proportion of their independent work (Merzlyakova, Zuyev, 2009, p. 91).

The goal of education is to create situations promoting pupils' active involvement in the process of learning, i.e. construction of knowledge. Through their activities, teachers evoke pupils' internal motivation and encourage them to engage personally, referring to their interests, abilities and natural curiosity, and thus, strengthening their faith in their own potential. The teacher invites pupils to participate in the creation of knowledge. Thanks to initiatives undertaken by the teacher, pupils are left with a sense of meaningfulness of the learning process. Motivation contributes to learning willingly and to personal engagement. Pupils perceive their role in the creation of knowledge and development of interests, believe in their own power and possibility of success. Knowing the goal, pupils assume responsibility for their own learning.

Another aspect of the didactic process is teaching content, referring to great ideas and concepts that are integrated, show comprehensive perception of the world and function as "vehicles" of skills. In turn, the curriculum is a set of experiments to perform and experience, i.e. contents from various overlapping disciplines of knowledge. The curriculum is open and its content can be negotiated. The teacher makes it possible for pupils to participate in making decisions concerning the teaching contents and to learn the contents, by arranging situations which promote a disclosure of knowledge and experiences that already are in pupils' possession. The teacher learns what constructions (rules, generalisations) pupils have in relation to the discussed contents. Besides, the teacher appreciates pupils' personal knowledge and allows the use

of different sources of information. Pupils participate in deciding about the teaching contents depending on their interests, needs and abilities, negotiate the topics and sources of information, realise what they already know, remember and can perform in relation to the subject of cognition. Pupils have a sense of continuity and coherence of the obtained information, associate processes, things and phenomena with their descriptions, models and explanations, process information, evaluate and assess contents, and construct knowledge.

Teaching methods, which are to ensure pupils' autonomous thinking and doing, e.g. activating methods which foster learning by doing, experiencing, and discovering in cooperation with others, constitute another important element. When using activating methods, such as an independent knowledge acquisition method, discussion, dialogue, project method, exposure and practical methods, the teacher arranges situations which create autonomy and invoke creativity in pupils, and thus, introduces them into the world of contradictions and cognitive dissonance. The teacher also facilitates hands-on approach, allowing pupils to make mistakes, encouraging them to cooperate, and teaching peer evaluation and self evaluation. Pupils display wide-ranging activity, present their own opinions and judgements, exchange experiences with others, perform theoretical and practical tasks, experiment, discover, prepare dramas, formulate and solve problems, assign meaning to their own actions, cooperate with the teacher and peers, construct concepts, negotiate, create meaning and conduct self-evaluation.

It must also be stressed that in the creative perspective of the educational process, the use of multiple sources of knowledge is important. These may be both traditional and modern didactic measures, ensuring varied educational experiences. Referring to modern technologies becomes inevitable in education. The teacher allows pupils to use source materials and manipulation materials, pictures, photos, sounds, graphics, simulation videos, enables and supports them in experimenting in the natural environment, and lets them use contemporary media. Thanks to the teacher's initiatives, pupils are exposed to various didactic measures, perceive processes and phenomena as accurately as possible, and autonomously use many sources of knowledge, including the Internet. Pupils manipulate different objects, materials, as well as make charts, diagrams, models, simulations and videos. Besides, they use new media to communicate with the teacher.

The last element is the organisational forms of education. In creative education, forms of work which promote pupils' personal engagement and coop-

eration are encouraged. The teacher creates situations which promote various types of interactions: with self, other people and the world; pupils enjoy opportunities for individual, binary and team work. Thanks to activities undertaken by the teacher, pupils can communicate with others, as well as engage in dialogues with the teacher and peers. They can learn by cooperation and collaboration with different entities and work adequately to the task: individually, in pairs, in groups, or together with others.

Such organisation of the educational process facilitates the development of pupils' cognitive, axiological, social and emotional competencies.

CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, school should be a place where various people, values, ideas and concepts can meet and where the present and the future coincide. School, like a mirror, reflects what is important in social life. Thus, at the time of global cultural transformation, the teacher should assume the following tasks: 1) to recognise and critically analyse the dynamically changing reality, and 2) to create conditions for pupils to learn and understand this reality and function in it effectively. This is possible when pupils can develop multiple competencies thanks to their axiological, cognitive, intra- and interpersonal activities in the right educational environment, prepared by their teacher.

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