

**S O C I A L
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**RELIGIOUS
PEDAGOGY**

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Religious pedagogy in relation to intercultural education

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The concept of intercultural education is very broad. As a scientific discipline, it covers the knowledge of various cultural and symbolic systems, i.e. ways of defining the world and relations with people from different cultures.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: Interest in cultural diversity dates back to the 5th century BC and is associated with Herodotus. The year 1901 marks the beginning of the contemporary approach to intercultural education, which bloomed in the 1960s. In Poland, the development of this scientific discipline was initiated in 1993 by M.S. Szymański, J. Nikitorowicz, T. Lewowicki, T. Pilch, and P.P. Grzybowski.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Intercultural education (formal and informal) should take into account the religious diversity of individuals, whereas religious pedagogy should take into account the cultural diversity of the world. While looking for the links between them, it is important to identify both cultural and religious boundaries, as they enable the proper systematising of relations between people, and between people and the world.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Religious pedagogy should be treated as a form of concretisation of intercultural education. From this perspective, intercultural education in relation to religious pedagogy aims to prepare people to discover, understand, respect, and accept cultural diversity and the religious diversity that comes with it. Religiousness and interculturalism are

the challenges of today's world and can sometimes lead to situations in which the religious aspect of life opposes the creation of a new multicultural reality.

Keywords: education, intercultural education, religious pedagogy, religion, identity, multiculturalism, interculturalism, upbringing

Interculturalism has become one of the manifestations of the modern, technologised world and, like any complex social process, it brings benefits but can also be a source of many problems and doubts. So, what is intercultural education about? What are its connotations and its links with religious pedagogy? In order to answer such questions correctly, it seems necessary to refer to John Paul II's view on globalisation. He observed that globalisation is a new phenomenon that needs to be analysed in depth because it is characterised by obvious ambiguity. Therefore, in today's increasingly culturally diverse societies, the most important task is to ensure harmonious interaction between people and groups with different cultural identities and to develop in them the desire to coexist together (John Paul II, 2000, 3). In view of the above, interculturalism obviously becomes a challenge for education. Education in the area of cultural diversity requires not only the formation of conscious and creative members of a national or world community, but also the co-creation of a harmonious global community. In this sense, intercultural education *versus* religious pedagogy concerns man and his numerous determinants, as well as the opportunities and limitations in his development. Therefore, in order to identify the links between intercultural education and religious pedagogy, the semiotics of the former should be analysed first.

Definition of the term

The subject literature on intercultural education is not devoid of problems related to the definition of this term. This is caused primarily by the great number of theoretical concepts and practical educational solutions which are determined by the diversity of the social-demographic-cultural dimensions in which their authors work and live. Another factor generating terminological diversification is the lack of consensus on primary concepts in the category of intercultural education (interculturalism, multiculturalism, multicultural pedagogy, intercultural pedagogy) (Kuleta-Hulboj, 2005).

Polish and foreign subject literature offers a wide range of ways of describing intercultural education. Various elements of intercultural education are emphasised: contents, goals, tasks, and the processes of

this education, and various approaches are adopted: narrow, broad, regional, and global approaches (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2016).

According to the first definition of intercultural education, which was developed by D. Markowska and appeared in Polish subject literature in 1990, intercultural education is

an educational and upbringing process the aim of which is to shape the understanding of cultural differences – from subcultures in one's own community to the cultures of spatially distant societies – and to prepare students for dialogical interactions with representatives of other cultures. This is to lead, through critical reflection, to the strengthening of one's own cultural identity (Markowska, 1990, p. 109).

Encyklopedia PWN [the PWN Encyclopaedia] defines intercultural education as

a pedagogical concept the aim of which is to broaden one's own individual and social identity through maintaining contact with other cultures, shaping understanding of cultural differences, eliminating prejudices and stereotypes (e.g. ethnic or religious), and promoting attitudes of tolerance and dialogue (Encyklopedia PWN).

A structural definition of intercultural education is given by J. Nikitorowicz. In his opinion it embraces

all mutual influences and interactions of individuals and groups, institutions, organisations, associations, and unions which foster such development of a person that he becomes a fully conscious and creative member of his family and local, regional, religious, national, continental, cultural, and global-planetary community and is capable of active self-fulfilment of his own unique and permanent identity and distinctiveness (Nikitorowicz, 2003a, p. 9).

Intercultural education in this understanding stems from the growing multiculturalism of the contemporary world, increased mobility, and dynamic changes in the value systems of both individuals and groups (Nikitorowicz, as cited in Sobiecki, 2007).

In further reflections on the definition of intercultural education, J. Nikitorowicz emphasises that

intercultural education is education that takes into account the revived concepts of agency and identity, that prepares people to live side by side in a spirit of tolerance and respect for the rights of each minority, that prevents the emergence of harmful stereotypes and ethnic and religious prejudices, that prepares a person for life in culturally different communities and for dialogical interactions, that nurtures traditions and activates the carriers of tradition (family, creative groups, associations, brotherhoods, etc.), that presents the other as someone interesting and friendly, that is helpful in development and is not threatening and hostile (Nikitorowicz, 1995, pp. 133–134.)

Communication between cultures is also important as it points to the necessity of mutual borrowings. Based on this assumption, J. Nikitorowicz describes the paradigm of coexistence, which enables the mutual development of cultures that interact with one another because of the dialogue they enter into. It seems that such a definition of intercultural education is close to the fundamental humanistic ideals of pedagogy (Nikitorowicz, as cited in Sobacki, 2007).

T. Lewowicki (2000) places similar emphasis in his definition of intercultural education, which is a model of social, cultural, and educational activities aimed at the mutual discovery, understanding, and enrichment of cultures. It takes into account and respects the internal ethnic, racial, and cultural differences of a given society that are the source of different patterns of behaviour. In this perspective, education should lead to the integration and socio-cultural dynamism of various social groups, based on their members drawing closer together. Moreover, he observes that

intercultural education is to promote new attitudes towards “the others” – people and cultures. This education should allow cultures other than the culture of your own group to be discovered. What is more, it should foster the mutual enrichment of cultures, should bring people together and shape their mutually recognised worlds of values and attitudes of tolerance and acceptance of difference (Lewowicki, 2001, p. 161).

Slightly different aspects of the essence of intercultural education are indicated by the French researcher C. Camilleri. In his opinion, intercultural education should attempt to understand the internal logic of every culture, which would lead to the recognition of the dignity of the individuals representing them. In theory, this would also lead to exposing cultural relativism in education as a factor weakening negative attitudes, e.g. xenophobia or nationalism (Camilleri, as cited in Sobacki, 2007).

Apart from the aforementioned approaches regarding intercultural education based on an anthropological understanding of culture, the subject literature presents views formulated on philosophical and political grounds, most often based on postmodern reflections. T. Szkudlarek is a Polish representative of such a view on pedagogy. He mentions two trends in intercultural education: liberal and radical. While the former is intended to promote tolerance, the latter, which perceives hidden or explicit violence in intercultural relations, focuses on active opposition to these phenomena. T. Szkudlarek (2004) also draws attention to the issue of unlearning domination, which primarily relates to the representatives of the cultural majority and can be treated as a test of intentions in the intercultural space. If integration boils down to assimilation, i.e. absorption of a smaller group by the majority, then talking about intercultural education makes no sense. Therefore, according to Szkudlarek, intercultural education is related to the development of competences that enable representatives of cultural minorities to live on an equal basis in society, but it also requires that the majority develop a distance to their own culture. This is primarily associated with a move away from treating the system of values that underlies one's own culture as indisputable (Szkudlarek, as cited in Sobecki, 2007).

According to M. Sobecki (2007), intercultural education should be understood as all those influences that concern cultures and their elements, which are in a state of interaction (diffusion or interference). These influences should create pedagogical acts in such a way that they will lead to the development of the appropriate attitudes of individuals and groups towards cultural diversity and to their reflective rooting in their own cultural heritage (Sobecki, 2007).

In conclusion, it should be noticed that the different definitions of intercultural education presented above have a common denominator: establishing and maintaining positive relations between people from different cultures and with different identities. These definitions emphasise different aspects and cover different subject areas. However, it should be remembered that one of the main factors that generates diversity and ambiguity, along with numerous terminological ambiguities, is the lack of consensus regarding the primary concepts that outline this semantic field of education and determine its existence and functioning in the world (Januszewska and Markowska-Manista, 2017).

Historical analysis of the term

In its essence, science is primarily a historical process. It is therefore impossible to understand fully the achievements of intercultural education without being familiar with its historical development. The oldest science dealing with intercultural education is anthropology, and the first person to study this issue was Herodotus (489–425 BC), who travelled to Persia, Egypt, Italy, and Greece and collected information about people from different cultures (Nikitorowicz, 2009).

The historical diversity of the needs and policies of different countries in the world has shaped different perspectives and evolutionary paths of intercultural education. The beginnings of the contemporary approach to this discipline can be found in the educational policy of traditionally immigrant countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. However, the first educational influences (called “pedagogy for foreigners”) which took cultural diversity into account were undertaken in Germany in 1901 and were triggered by the need to assimilate children who spoke foreign languages through education and upbringing (Szymański, 2000, as cited in Bleszyńska, 2011).

The educational policies of the New World countries underwent a similar revolution. At the beginning of the national formation processes, they accepted the coexistence of mainstream schools and autonomous ethnic educational institutions. In the interwar period, however, a tendency to treat educational institutions and education as a means of assimilating immigrants and building a sense of national unity emerged. This trend changed in the 1960s as a result of the development of culturally heterogeneous social structures, progress in democratisation and liberalisation, and the awakening of ethnic and cultural identity. In this context, it is worth noting that the approach to intercultural education in European countries was different. After years of cultural domination, countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands developed full educational multiculturalism following the examples of the New World. France marginalised the issues related to its citizens’ cultural diversity, concentrating instead on building a civic awareness that unites the whole community. Poland moved away from the policy of cultural domination and assimilation of minority groups; instead, it moved towards educational activities which took into account the regional and

cultural diversity of minority groups of old-standing (Lewowicki, 2002, as cited in Bleszyńska, 2011).

Following A. Portero (2005) and M.S. Szymański (2000), three main stages in the history of intercultural education can be distinguished:

1. assimilation – education addressed to foreigners which supports the process of their assimilation;
2. multiculturalism – a focus on statistically perceived cultural differences;
3. interculturalism – a turn towards dynamically perceived intergroup relations and competences of functioning in culturally heterogeneous communities.

The particular stages developed in different regions of the world following different patterns that were determined by the specificity of their traditions and the needs of current social policy. In this context, it is worth noticing that the differences in history, cultural tradition, and social composition translate into different theoretical perspectives and practical solutions (Bleszyńska, 2011).

To complement the historical analysis of intercultural education, it is worth mentioning P.P. Grzybowski (2001), according to whom the beginnings of scientific reflection on the links between education and the problems of cultural diversity should be associated with the work of the American Bureau for Intercultural Education. This Bureau was established in 1939 to help teachers prepare and implement intercultural educational programs, to educate teachers, and to conduct scientific research on interpersonal relations in city centres, especially regarding the tensions and conflicts resulting from cultural diversity (Grzybowski, 2001, as cited in Kitlińska-Król, 2013).

In Poland, intercultural education began in 1993 with papers written by M.S. Szymański, J. Nikitorowicz, T. Lewowicki, T. Pilch, and other researchers from university centres in eastern and southern Poland and in its centre. In its initial phase, intercultural education was a response to political transformation and legal and socio-economic changes, which enabled Poland's openness to international cooperation, the revival of the identity of minorities, and a search for educational paths that lead to a culturally and nationally diverse community (Nikitorowicz, 2009, as cited in Januszewska and Markowska-Manista, 2017). The emergence and shape of intercultural education in Poland was influenced not only

by social policy but also by Poland's transboundary policy, followed by migration and international cooperation with the European Union and partner countries (Januszczyńska and Markowska-Manista, 2017).

Discussion of the term

The religious diversity of societies is one of the determinants of the multicultural nature of the modern world. Therefore, the theory and practice of intercultural education should take religious issues into account, and religious pedagogy should take the multicultural reality into account. Scientists who study contemporary religious pedagogy and intercultural education are aware of the challenges posed by multiculturalism. The names worth mentioning in this context include Robert Jackson, Friedrich Schweitzer, and Hans-Georg Ziebertz, as well as Polish academics Bogusław Milerski (religious pedagogy), Tadeusz Lewowicki, and Jerzy Nikitorowicz (intercultural pedagogy). Religious pedagogy should reflect the intercultural and multi-religious dimensions of reality. It can also be an important factor in shaping attitudes towards the followers of one's own religion and towards different religions (beliefs). Moreover, it can also create good opportunities to look for values common to many religions and the elements that are likely to bring people of different faiths together in the pursuit of a good, dignified, and happy life, with awareness of cultural and doctrinal differences. It seems that all these opportunities are widely known, but in practice they are rarely implemented (Różańska, 2017).

The religious sphere, especially in religious pedagogy, is an important space for self-defining oneself in terms of one's identity and culture; however, this sphere is rarely described and addressed in terms of its active impact on one's sense of identity regarding its strictly religious dimension. It seems that nowadays the way in which people (self-)define themselves within the religious sphere is an important argument in communicating mutual positions and interpreting culturally different behaviours. Many authors emphasise that religion and cultural diversity have many points in common, although the precise relationship between religion and cultural identity is not obvious. Religion performs important cultural functions, especially in communities deprived of their

own statehood. In such situations, religious boundaries often become the boundaries of local culture, a private homeland. One example is the situation of the former Republic of Poland in the 19th century, when the Catholic Church, through its educational and pastoral activities, strengthened the sense of distinctiveness in Poles (Rusek, 2001, as cited in Sobecki, 2007).

One could get the impression that social sciences are rarely interested in the influence that religious pedagogy exerts on intercultural education. Some authors, pointing to the fundamental role of religion in the formation of cultural identity, consider it of central value and mention Jews as the perfect example. Although there are many other examples in which religion is the main distinguishing feature of a group, they concern peoples living in non-European countries. These peoples, not having any religion, are unable to find any criterion that can determine their cultural identity and thus openness to intercultural dialogue. It seems that due to the complex history and intensity of mutual cultural-ethnic influences, religious pedagogy in the space of intercultural education is an important point of reference in building the identity of culturally diverse individuals (Sobecki, 2007).

In view of the above, it is worth adding that in the face of constantly growing religious diversity, the interaction of religious pedagogy and intercultural education creates an opportunity to develop an open religious identity. This enables a comprehensive and comparative approach to the processes and phenomena that are taking place in multicultural and multi-faith environments, which embraces the analysis of religious identity and the discovery and understanding of culturally different behaviours against a religious background. Therefore, the common ground for activities undertaken within religious pedagogy and intercultural education include understanding one's own religion, knowledge of other religions, treating others with equal respect, the ability to conduct interfaith/ interreligious/intercultural dialogue, and respect for other cultures (Róžańska, 2017).

To complement the above presentation, it is worth adding that intercultural education can be divided into:

- a) formal – based on programmes that are developed and run by educators and teachers in educational institutions or institutions of an educational nature;

b) informal – coinciding with formal intercultural education, complementing it, but additionally using other ways, methods, and forms of organisation. It is conducted by, for example, non-governmental organisations, social movements, libraries, or theatres. It is worth mentioning here that the transition from one's own culture to a foreign culture may take the form of one of the following four reactions:

1. escape – (xenophobia), fear of otherness;
2. domination – an attempt to subordinate a foreign culture and a culturally foreign interaction partner;
3. adaptation – adaptation to a foreign and new culture;
4. integration – boils down to transnational empathy, synthesis of one's own cultural system, and orientation with this system (Szkudlarek, 2004).

Such a division of intercultural education reveals certain areas in which religious pedagogy can be influential. It is expected to function as a specific foundation in shaping and complementing contemporary cultures, and one of its tasks is to realise intercultural goals. Providing an individual with models that allow him to interpret the world seems to be an indispensable and practical postulate of religious pedagogy, which appreciates the significant role of human spirituality. At this point, it should be noted that religious pedagogy emphasises the importance of religion for a holistic upbringing in a particular cultural and intercultural environment. Reflection on diverse faiths and religions helps people to find the meaning of life, as in a specific way it makes it easier to explain the meaning of the culturally diverse world around us. Therefore, religious pedagogy helps intercultural education to direct the relationship between people and between people and the world (Charchut, 2015).

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

Intercultural education attempts to reconcile the demands of emancipation, the agency of individuals and social groups, and social and cultural pluralism with the need to lay the foundations of community life, i.e.

a society that, despite cultural differences, constitutes a certain whole. Axiological issues and the worldview are important areas of perceived and experienced differences which are specifically reflected on the grounds of religious differences. That is why, as B. Milerski (2009) observes, religious pedagogy should be treated as the concretisation of intercultural education. It should be emphasised, however, that the relationship between intercultural education and religious pedagogy expresses not only a specific social interest but also an existential human need resulting from the necessity to deal with the diversity and multiplicity of cultures. From this perspective, intercultural education in relation to religious pedagogy should prepare students for an encounter not only with cultural differences, but also with the religious differences contained in them. In this relationship between intercultural education and religious pedagogy, the metaphor of a teacher as a "guide" who offers students certainty is replaced by the metaphor of an "explainer of different choices" (Bagrowicz, 2006, p. 140, as cited in Milerski, 2009). Although the relationship between intercultural education and religious pedagogy in Poland can be interpreted in a traditionalist and conservative way, it should be remembered that religious pedagogy as a scientific sub-discipline has for a long time been formulating intercultural tasks for religious instruction in schools. Such an approach is legitimised by the practice of religious education, at least in some Western countries (Milerski, 2009).

As noted by B. Milerski (2009), religious pedagogy allows us to perceive intercultural education as an element of humanistic and social education. This is why various concepts of religious pedagogy, together with the development of its identity as a scientific sub-discipline, have been increasingly taking multiculturalism into account. They approach multiculturalism from the perspective of their own theoretical premises. Thus, it can be concluded that the theoretical development of religious pedagogy may be described as the discovery of particular educational phenomena that determine the contemporary perception of intercultural education as a form of intercultural teaching. These phenomena include the recognition of the individual and the existential significance of the understanding of the message: the conflict of interpretations (symbol didactics and hermeneutical-existential conceptions), existential experiences defined inductively rather than deductively, agentivisation, emancipation, shaping society as a cultural (multicultural) community,

the ideological entanglement of educational theory and practice ("critical religious pedagogy"), the narrative character of identity (narrative concepts), and finally, appreciation of the challenges of globalisation (including technicisation), which opened religious pedagogy to the issues of intercultural education (Milerski, 2009).

Contemporary religious pedagogy, being aware of the challenges of intercultural education, not only undertakes reflection in this area, but also asks for recognition of the fact that the theory and practice of intercultural education should include religious topics. In this context, it is worth noticing that European integration, increased social mobility, migration processes, threats from fundamentalism (often of religious provenance), and (more recently) terrorism have all given rise to a new perspective on both the intercultural tasks faced by education and the importance of religious education. Moreover, religious instruction in schools is increasingly being recognised not only as a special area of hermeneutical and existential education, but also and above all, of intercultural education (Milerski, 2009).

In the analysis of religious pedagogy in relation to intercultural education, it is worth following B. Milerski (2009), who talks about its two interpretations:

1. The first assumes that – apart from shaping social, cognitive, or professional competences – it is important to prepare an individual for an encounter with cultural and religious differences. However, this cannot be achieved without prior rooting in an individual's primary culture. In this context, religious pedagogy in intercultural education should take into account the religious-pluralistic context of a culturally and religiously diverse social life.
2. In the second, religious pedagogy becomes a form of experiencing community 'in' and 'despite' cultural and religious differences in the space of intercultural education. In this sense, it is a form of intercultural dialogue and the creation of a new social reality (Milerski, 2009). The educational process itself should focus on the realisation of the tasks that result from religiousness and interculturalism; thanks to this, religious pedagogy may acquire an intercultural character.

The interpretative model of the research problem presented above indicates that, on the one hand, intercultural education is an important

dimension of modern religious pedagogy and, on the other hand, the presentation of the arguments offered in pedagogical-religious discussions may be important for intercultural pedagogy. Such an approach expresses not only the awareness of contemporary religious pedagogy as regards the challenges it faces today, but – in some cases – may also put it in opposition to intercultural education.

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