

Challenge of education in diverse environment – designing methodology of research

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Statement of the problem

Questions about the place of education in the modern world, its role in society, value, objectives, and functions, are nothing but questions about the meaning of its existence at all. The question "why do we need school?" should lead to a profound reflection on the condition of modern education. This discourse in Poland, while not new, has increased significantly in the last decade after Poland gained access to European Union structures. Educational theorists, scholars, stakeholders and media debated about current education in Poland, its values and vision of school. Public debate also extended to areas as follows: Program content, educational supervision and evaluation, teacher training, educational law, financing of education, etc., focused on designing changes in these fields.

Interest in the topic of diversity has become the subject of discussion in many scientific disciplines including sociology, psychology, pedagogy and management. Diversity is the hallmark of modern society, so it is also a feature of the school. In the context of education, diversity is a challenge, which is measured by contemporary school, in particular with the problem of how to prepare students for living in a diverse society.

Research problems that arise in connection with the subject of social diversity highlight the difficulty at the levels of defining, classifying and understanding of the concept of diversity. This gives rise to problems in managing diversity in schools and use this phenomenon to the development of individual students as well as whole organizations.

Context of the study

Political debate in the European Union at the turn of the millennium concerned problems related to transnational cooperation, "cultural diversity" and "multiculturalism." The idea of a solution to these problems was intercultural communication and intercultural dialogue. This policy was based on the strategies of "talking through differences" and drafting of dialogue based on mutual respect for cultural affiliation. European policy in this area focuses on promoting a coherent cultural identity among the member countries. [Aman, 2012, p.1]

It would seem that with the modern development of civilization, the progressive integration processes, the gradual increase in the wealth of individual countries and the development of the knowledge society, Europe is no longer threatened by the open conflicts arising from diversity, including armed conflicts, illegal looting of the lands of sovereign states, or totalitarianism. However, Europe has failed on this field and the consequences of it are already felt.

The leaders of the richest countries in Europe: Angela Merkel (Germany), Nicolas Sarkozy (France) and James Cameron (UK) officially admitted that their policy of multiculturalism was a defeat. In addition, "the Ukrainian crisis" exposed the weakness of European policies: security, economic, foreign affairs and educational and the huge problem of diversity of the Old Continent. On one hand, the process of integration, unification of the social life of community follows, on the other hand, parallel, the process of growth of huge differences occurs between regions and countries.

Dealing with diversity has become one of the major challenges of twenty-first century civilization. Coping with this challenge should reveal the ineffectiveness of current European policies and unmask the apparent policy for social diversity that does not actually work.

Exposing the superficiality of the organization, in practice, results in the beginning to criticize the status quo, and public policy changes. Methods of social change are primarily empowerment (strengthening disadvantaged groups and self-control) [Parker, 2002; Sulkowski, 2012, p. 228].

Selected definitions of diversity

Diversity is a reality for many educators. The most obvious kind of diversity is represented in heritages, histories and cultures of the students and parents who have recently come to Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia from all over the world (...) The diversity that we are currently experiencing is due to much more than simply immigration. (...) Contemporary diversity also extends beyond ethnicity. It continues to expand with the increasing number of choices, experiences and information available to us. [Ryan, 2003, p.11]

One of the first approaches to the problem of diversity has given rise to acculturation or to the process of exchange of cultural elements in case of mutual contacts. It was practiced in many different forms depending on the state. In Polish context Paweł Boski building on the work of John Berry presented four policy options of acculturation:

1. Exclusion – exclusion, different ethnic cleansing, eliminating the presence of minorities in the common area by deportation, expulsion, deportation, genocide, etc.
2. Segregation - separation, which is the specification and implementation of separate development paths of different races, ethnic groups, religious minorities in a given society, while maintaining the domination of one group.
3. Ethnic melting-pot - republic of citizens, or the removal of links, origin and diversity in the pursuit of homogenization, conversion to a new country nationals.
4. Multiculturalism, which is promoting intensive relations between different groups and at the same time preserving the identity of each of them. Dissimilarity and diversity are affirmed, because each culture has to offer other specific values. [Boski, 2010]

Diversity could also be understood broadly and includes many variables that exist within and across groups that live in different environments. The most popular definition was created by James Banks who lists the following variables: Diversity within the nation, social class, ethnic identity, race, language, abilities and disabilities, religion, sexual orientation, gender. Due to these variables, diversity has become an issue particularly because the groups from the list above are structurally or culturally advantaged (empowered) or disadvantaged (marginalized) within their societies. [Banks, 2005, p.17-18.]

One definition of diversity could also cover larger territory. As Marylin Loden and Judy Rosener discovered, social characteristics like gender, ethnicity, age, etc. could be dependent on more external factors like work background, income, marital status, military experience, religious beliefs, geographic location, parental status and education. These two researchers propose “The diversity wheel” concept which assumes that anyone can describe themselves by going around the wheel, and it shows how social reality shapes people’s life. [Johnson, 2006, p.15]

On the other hand, Zygmunt Bauman notes that between the midst of all these distinctions (like race and status) is one of the most important, the distinction between “Us” and “Them”. He claims that we can divide people into categories of those who are demonstrating different attitudes and different behaviors. Of course it’s not a division in its literal meaning but it shows the difference between two opposite attitudes: likes and dislikes, trust and mistrust, confidence and anxiety, willingness to cooperate and hostility. “We” means the group which we belong to. We understand everything what happens inside this group, feel safe and comfortable. This group is the natural environment and is where we want to be. “They” are the group which we cannot be part of or I do not want to. We are suspicious of them and feel distance and fear. [Bauman, 1990, p. 47]

Underlying the concepts of diversity is the idea of dialogical human nature, including “I” and “significant Other”. Man is capable of self-determination only through the "Other". In this sense diversity contains a postulate of openness to other cultures, because every culture at some stage of their development has something value to offer to all people and therefore we are obliged to respect the value of all cultures. [Taylor, in: Guttman, 1997]

Scientific definitions are characterized by a multiplicity of perspectives. It is impossible to list all of them but to make it more complete, the perspective of Samuel Huntington should be added; he notes that presently the "Other" could be the enemy of democracy. This may be, for example, a Muslim who is associated as an enemy of the Western civilization identity. The author stresses that the diversity can be defined through the prism of violence, terrorism and clash between Muslim world and non-Muslim world. In his context the term “Other” is the embodiment of evil, the opposite of “Us” who is seen as good, lawful, ethic society. [Huntington, 1997]

The proposed approaches above are only an attempt to define what diversity is. I assume that it is impossible to create one general definition of diversity because of two reasons. First, when we follow the history and evolution of the notion of diversity, we can see that it was changed very often. For this paper I use category as follows: traditional approach to diversity which was strongly merged with political context. Characteristic feature of this approach is using metaphors to describe social relations in each country and connecting it with specific political strategies which were entered as official policy towards immigrants, migrants, etc.

The second group of definitions I called the academic approach. This approach goes beyond traditional strategic thinking about diversity and the inclusion of culture/cultural background as the most important factor shaping identity. Important attributes of this are: broad meaning, interdisciplinary connection like anthropological, sociological, philosophical or psychological perspectives. These definitions can also be neutral, non-evaluating its components but can also include positive or negative distinctions.

Researchers and authors who elaborate on diversity often create their own conceptual range of diversity resulting from their field of study, e.g. diversity and social justice [Adams, 2000, Goodman 2001], diversity and democracy [Ayers, 2009, Donovan, 2007], diversity and citizenship [Banks, 2007], diversity and equality [Cooper, 2004, Gale & Davidson 2006], diversity and privilege [Maher & Tetreault, 2009].

From a scientific perspective, diversity is more complicated than we used to think. It depends on our perception of diversity. Basically diversity is what we understand as diversity. The logical consequence of this approach is a dynamic, contextual and relative definition which concerns relations. Furthermore, definitions can be more wide or narrow, specific but also more theoretical or practical.

According to Kurt Lewin, when we analyze human relations we should analyze every group which is part of this interaction. Over the past years, we realized that the problems of minorities are also problems of majorities. Problem of black people is also problem of whites, problem of Jewish is a problem of non-Jewish, etc. [Lewin, in: Cervinkova and Gołębniak, 2010, p.16].

Summary of research methodology

Research problem

Assuming the anthropological/ethnographic perspective deliberately I did not formulate hypotheses. The research problem was formulated to narrow the scope of research and identify the general framework within the research that will be conducted. During field research, the problem would change or would be modified in accordance to methodological principles of ethnographical research presented by Malinowski, Garfinkel, Ogbu, Czarniawska, etc.

"Methodological responsibility of the researcher is in detail an account of its proceedings and of thinking. Before starting the research, ethnographer does not finally formulate the problem and how it should be. [Czarniawska, 2013]

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the research is to describe the role of schools/education in preparing young people for living in a diverse society based on study results from the students. Assuming a critical perspective in studies focused on the experiences of students who gain a voice in the study. The techniques used include critical reflection on data from analysis to understand the phenomenon of diversity and its potential use by schools/institutions for personal growth/success of the students. The result of the research will provide new knowledge about the phenomenon of diversity, which in a broader perspective can be used to provide proposals for educational policy.

The paper describes methodological choices in answering the research questions. It also provides the background on the research settings and overview of research design, methodology instrumentation and data analyses. It contains the substantiation of research methodology and ethical considerations.

The educational policy of many countries treats diversity in education as a priority of teaching in every educational institution. The study is designed to answer the problem of education in diverse environments. The goal is to provide theoretically and empirically grounded answers to actual challenges for education. Additionally, both theoretical (literature review) and empirical (own research) highlight problem of critical dialogue about democracy, race, gender, social class, nation, globalization, freedom and community. [Denzim, Lincoln 2010]

Table1. Summary of epistemological inspiration, research strategies and research methods

Epistemology	Strategy	Methods	Research practice
comprehension the multiplicity of interpretations social and historical construction creating the theory of politicization the emphasis on the issue of empowerment (empowerment) participation	narrative research phenomenology ethnography grounded theory case studies	emerging research in progress open questions data from interviews, observations, and audiovisual documents have text and iconographic analysis interpretation of subjects and patterns	dealing own position collecting the opinion of participants focusing on one concept or phenomenon taking into account personal values the study participants context or situation validation of the accuracy of the results interpreting the data create an agenda for change or reform cooperation with the participants

Source: own elaboration based on Creswell, 2009

The table above includes the most important elements of which authors called critical theory or ethnomethodology. According to this approach researcher seeks understanding of the world he/she’s living in, giving the subjective meaning for experience in social constructivism theory. The researcher also wonders about the complexity of views, rather than trying to bring them into the one category or ideas: [Crotty, 1998]

- Studies formulate broad and open-ended questions that allow discussion and interaction with other actors in society,
- Meanings are constructed by people who, through contact with the world, make certain interpretation of meanings,
- Researchers gather data personally, thereby they submit personal interpretation of the data,
- The creation of meanings has social character and occurs during interaction in human communities,
- Researchers are aware that their interpretations are shaped by the environment, and so develop the theory in inductive way.

Epistemological considerations based on selected items of the constructivist theory should also mention the activism approach: [Creswell, 2009, p.35]

- Contain the criticism of constructivist approach, which does not encompass marginalized entities,

- Emphasize the need to deal with the problems of the present, including empowerment, social inequality, exploitation, domination, enslavement and alienation,
- Researcher gives voice to the participants (depending on what is studied researcher can realize the pursuit of the audited needs to change/improve the conditions and goes program of action),
- This approach focuses on the needs of individuals or groups marginalized or deprived if rights,
- Researcher is personally involved in the research and aims to introduce changes in practice,
- Studies can help individuals to release themselves from restrictions,
- It is a recognition of emancipation, because it helps in rejecting unfair barriers for unit that are an obstacle to self-realization and self-determination,
- Research participants become active co-authors of the study (study with others, or for others or on other).

The educational research as part of social science research uses the social research methodology as well. [Rubacha, 2012]. John Ogbu, a Nigerian-American anthropologist developed the idea of educational anthropology. This anthropological approach to education tends to focus on the cultural aspects of education, including informal as well as formal education. As education involves understandings of who we are, it is not surprising that the single most recognized dictum of educational anthropology is that the field is centrally concerned with cultural transmission. Cultural transmission involves the transfer of a sense of identity between generations, sometimes known as enculturation and also transfer of identity between cultures, sometimes known as acculturation. Accordingly, it is also not surprising that educational anthropology have become increasingly focused on ethnic identity and ethnic change. [Simons 1998]

Strategy of research based on critical approach:

Educational research is a part of social studies and thus, uses their methodology [Rubacha, 2008]. John Ogbu has promoted the trend in research on education called educational anthropology. Research on education involves the meaning of who we are. The qualitative research strategy was based on previous epistemological assumptions and is a strategy that includes the following components:

- Ethnography - long-term strategy for data collection in the natural environment cultural group. The research process is flexible, contextual, in response to the current conditions of the study. [Creswell, 2013]
- Ethnography of organization - considered inference methodology to study at the local level and does not lead to building a general theory. The knowledge gained from the findings of qualitative research should be socially important, enlightening and instructive for a wider group of people. In contrast to quantitative research that take into account only what is typical, and qualitative research permits to study the complexity of the world and take into account also anomalous, extremely unusual, irregular phenomena or deviations. [Czarniawska, 2013]
- Critical ethnography approach – this approach aims to establish the symbolic mechanisms that distinguish ideology from action. The investigator is inextricably linked to the subject of the study. In addition to speaking on behalf of the people, "critical ethnographers" also seek to identify and express their own perspectives including our own prejudices, limitations, stories, and position. This can be both a political and pedagogical approach. This approach does not imply a purely individual and scientifically objective reporting and analysis. In contrast to conventional ethnography, which describes what is, critical ethnography also asks what could be, in order to interfere with the tacit relationship of power and perception of social inequalities. [Carspecken, 1995]

Methods/own implications:

Qualitative research has become a place of philosophical and methodological revolt against positivism. This rebellion carries the alternative interpretation, hermeneutical and constructivist. [Cresswell, 1996]

Qualitative research allows it to understand people, their motives, their customs and ways of their behavior. They touch phenomena in their natural context in holistic manner. Qualitative methodologies are inductive, so generalizations are built based on empirical material collected. [Czarniawska, 2013]

The present study will use qualitative methods to address the research questions about student conceptualization of diversity and how they struggle with this issue in society.

The study assumes qualitative research methodology which is set of interpretative actions and do not submit one technique above another. Qualitative research does not have its own theory or paradigm. It is used in many research areas and is not assigned into particular discipline. [Denzim, Lincoln, 2010].

The qualitative field of study is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and disciplinary at the same time; it intersects humanities, sociology and natural science. It is a multi-paradigm field of study. In according to these the qualitative approach was chosen as appropriate to study in differences, which do not have one established definition. The research also assumes pragmatic approach, which allows the use of various methods in study. [Creswell, 2013]

Summary and research questions

Schools in Poland are diverse in the context of understanding diversity as a feature of contemporary school. Much has been written about multicultural education but there is still lot of unanswered issues about how students are conceptualizing diversity and what schools do to help students use diversity in their own development. The analysis of literature suggests the need to address the following research questions: [see table no. 2]

Table2. Summary of research question, variety, data sources

Research question	Variety	Question/disposition	Data source
What competencies are useful for living in diverse society?		Selected competencies	Data analyses card. Literature review, reports, documents, etc.
How do polish students conceptualize diversity?	Noticing	How we are diverse? How can we show that we are different in school?	Questionnaire survey. Open and closed question.
	Understanding	If we accept the knowledge that we are different, whether we know what are the consequences?	
	Appreciation	What diversity gives	

		us/school?	
	Implementing/ using	How we take diversity in our action? How do we use diversity?	
How are students developing themselves to live in diverse society?	Diversity of students	What is the social capital of students?	Individual interviews. Deepening questions, not directly questions, eg. tell me about society where you live. What type of society you think you.
	School actions + varieties from above	What school does? Are these actions are adequate?	Individual interviews. Deepening questions, not directly questions. Eg. Tell me about society where you live. What type of society you think you. Observation card.
Does the school offer an opportunity to achieve success for all students?		How to prepare pupils for life in a diverse world?	Compare students survey responses to interviews

Source: own elaboration

The role of researcher:

Critical ethnographer is more reflective, explores the interactions between I-other, which is typically characterized by fieldwork. [Denzim, Lincoln, 2010]

Anthropological approach to research (called “anthropological frame of mind”) - researcher characterized openness to new meanings, refusal of anything for granted, curiosity, motivation and ability to surprise to the everyday world [Czarniawska, 2013]

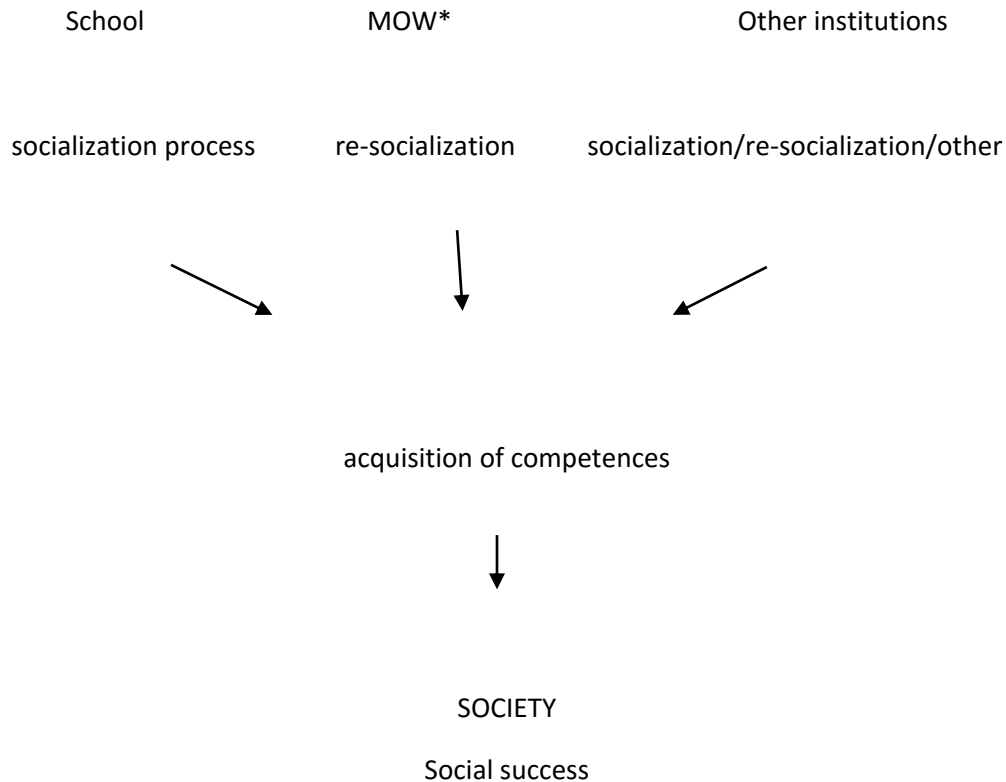
The role of researcher is to observe and interpret reality, including my sensitivity modern, postmodern, critical and humanistic approach to learning. This "research sensitize" and responsive science will allow me to combine different methods and forms that I use to interpret the collected data and presentation of results.

Place of research:

Angrosino lists criteria to justify the choices of location for the research: [Angrosino, 2010]

- A place that provides a clear illustration of the research issues,
- Is a continuation of other studies
- The desire to act in favor of some social cause
- The availability of respondents
- Researcher will not be a burden on the environment.

Scheme no. 1 Educational institutions and acquisition of competences process



Source: own elaboration

*Youth Educational Center (Polish Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy, MOW.), the re-socialization/social norming institution for persons between 13-18 years of age who have specific problems and are socially maladapted.

One of the most important roles of education is to prepare the student for living in a diverse society where they could achieve individual success. Education that will help achieve this success for every student is needed. The Polish education system has many different institutions that serve this role [see scheme no.1]. The “preparation” process is called socialization in the case of regular public schools or re-socialization in the case of institutions, which get socially maladjusted children. The aim of both of these processes is to develop the students' competencies that will help them succeed in life. The research location will be selected based on following criteria: the transparency, comparability with other studies, action in favor of the respondents and availability.

Instrumentation:

The first part of research assumes the selection of competencies based on literature review, reports and other documents, which include important information for the research. All the data will be cataloged and put into "Competence card" – special tool designed for the research.

The second part of research will be a questionnaire survey. This part aims to discover students noticing, understanding, acting, appreciating and profiting from diversity. This research tool will include open and closed questions based on research question no. 2 and includes all variables.

The third part of research will be individual interviews (IDI) with students and observations. The construction of the interview scenario will depend on the second part of search and include questions which should deepen the issues from second part of research. This depends on asking the interviewee more or less formal questions. This part of research process also provides observation. After every day of research/visit in institution, the researcher will take notes from observations.

Sample:

The research methods employed in this study were designed to explore how students of diverse schools/institutions understood the diversity. I chose methods that focused primarily on the student. I did this for two reasons. First, I assume that perception of diversity for students could be different than for others (adults, parents, teachers, etc.). They are the ones who are consciously or unconsciously part of it - they are its components. The second reason why I chose students was to give them a voice in research. It is the researcher's opinion that in current society, children's voices are being silenced by others who speak for them, such as parents, teachers, educators, politicians and researchers. I found that that these groups often with their own interests and have their own insight of what is happening in schools or should be happening in schools. This study is designed to give students chance to speak for themselves and about the situation in which they are exist.

Qualitative method was chosen because flexibility of the technique could help to provide the forum that would allow new information and insights to come to light. I also believe that qualitative interviews are necessary to probe the complexity of the process that I want to understand: the students have to have space to use their own language to describe phenomena that could be easily captured in the words of others. Previous research has focused mainly on the adult's opinions and interpretations of diversity and possible comparison these reviews. These groups have different agendas. For the purposes of this study, the researcher has adopted the perspective of students and their interpretation of the phenomenon of diversity to avoid misinterpretation and let them speak about reality which they are part of.

Data Analysis

Stage I - Preparation of the collected data for analysis; transcription of interviews, digitizing notes from observation, organizing data, classification data typing depending on the source of information. In my case, the data be generated from questionnaires and interviews.

Stage II - Summary of the contents of all data; preliminary assessment of the merits of the respondents, the assessment of insight, reliability and usefulness of the information.

Stage III - Detailed analysis, coding of interviews.

Stage IV - Use of the encoding process to describe the topics for analysis; determination of the most important results (5-7), supported by citations and concrete evidence.

Stage V - Presentation of research results.

Stage VI - Explanation of the research results. What are the results of research? Do these results lead to new questions?

Limitations

- Limitations resulting from intentional sampling for testing does not allow for generalization.
- "Logic of representation" - each respondent has "own truth" and subjective feelings, whereas the role of the researcher is to have this awareness, to abstain from assessments and gather information from various sources, meant to show a broader picture of the observed reality,
- Lack of trust for the researcher.

Summary

Shaping the global identity has become a fundamental challenge of education. Modern school faces a difficult and complex task - determining a value of diversity education.

In the available literature much is said about the fact that the Polish education system is not prepared to meet all the requirements of European diversity education. The reason for this is the lack of qualified teachers, teachers who would be preparing for the education of children in the spirit of diversity [Stańkowski, 2007, p.27]. The genesis of reflections on education in diverse environments in Polish schools have been recent developments in several European countries associated with the problem of foreigners in France and the UK. Media in Poland were writing about a failure of integration policy in European countries; for example, France and Germany. There were armed conflicts in Ukraine and increased roles of separatist movements. Social sense of security has been shaken and society, in the face of crisis, wanted to find someone or something guilty of this situation. The easiest way to blame for crisis, violence, insecure, danger was to find guilt in someone who is different (looks different, behave different and have different values). The countries which not so long ago were regarded as role models of diverse societies, suddenly faced a huge crisis, which could not cope in almost every aspect of life, including social communication, work, policy, media, and (the most interesting topic for me) education. The basic inspiration to carry out research on diversity in education in Poland was that the researcher was convinced that Poland - in order to avoid mistakes of other countries - should look for solutions not in politics but in education. This would allow achievement of long-term effects, not only (as in the case of policies) short-term effects.

The education in diverse societies has tasks, the implementation of which will allow the proper development of this society. Economists, sociologists and philosophers agree with each other in terms of increasing complexity and interdependence of processes. This is also confirmed by reports, such as UNESCO report "Intercultural competences" or Institute for the Future "Future work skills 2020" which emphasize the role of education in learning multicultural competence, strengthen emotional intelligence, building students skills of adaptation, tolerance and using new method of communication, which is called intercultural communication.

The purpose of my research is to answer the question how students understand the diversity. The average child in the family culturally diverse cross the threshold of school brings their own baggage of experience and heritage that teachers tend to skip the idea of justice and equality.

As I tried to indicate, based on literature review, the diversity notion proved to be very contextual and impossible to embrace in frames with only one definition. This kind of flexibility and openness changes the educational perspective and highlights the new role of education which is the promotion of joy of learning and the connection of this process to the individual experiences. According to literature, understanding and accepting diversity is not enough. More important is using it to development. This is what is huge challenge and effort for education, which should be built on foundations of respect, freedom of speech for different groups.

The problem I have undertaken is not a new phenomenon, nor that, which are not discussed publicly. However, I believe that the discussions do not play a substantial role in the reflection on ways of diversity education in Polish schools. Young people have too little awareness of the changes that have taken place after Polish accession to the European Union. The school in this case is a special place because it begins the process of shaping a young person to live in a new society.

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