

Summary

Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad. Cultural and Educational Areas of Research and Experience

The book entitled *Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad. Cultural and Educational Areas of Research and Experience* is the end result of the authors' interests and passion for both research and teaching. It aims to present the achievements and directions of research on the Polish diaspora and Poles abroad, as well as cultural-identity and educational experiences of Poles living abroad. The particular chapters in the book come from the fields of historical research, comparative pedagogy and cultural studies, and the texts deal with multifaceted, topical issues related to Polish communities abroad, placing them in the global and local framework of their socio-cultural reality.

Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, facilitates its creative use to find one's place in a „foreign” environment. For migrant families, it may become a basis for shaping feelings of self-worth, with the aid of skillfully combining the values of native culture (also those that are inherited) and the culture of the host society. The diverse cultural environments of Polish communities abroad prompts reflections on the efforts to cultivate an awareness of one's origin, culture and language, but also requires assimilation of previously unknown traditions and the customs of another country, which for the next generation of Poles living abroad become their traditions, their customs, their language and their culture. This clash of enculturation and acculturation processes does not necessarily take on the character of a conflict of loyalties; it can, however, contribute to many phenomena being perceived in terms of dynamic multiculturalism and interculturalism. It is important to imbue education with elements of a culture other than the dominant one (the culture of the immediate environment), particularly for children who are developing a cultural identity, and for adults to create a forum for meetings and discussions on the importance of an individual's cultural identity and cultural heritage, an interest in local history, and in it Polish vestiges present in the region.

The worlds of Polish communities abroad, full of traditional stability and post-modern dynamics, are intertwined with each other, though not always subject to symmetrical changes. They create common and separate, partly or completely, sets of cultural meanings, signs, symbols and values, as well as cultural and social practices. Hence the importance of nurturing the Polish language, since it is both a tool of interpersonal communication and a „space” in which the memories of a given community are stored. As Polish communities abroad are not homogeneous, their memories are multifarious, although in no way does this mean that they have to be in conflict with each other.

The context of research and experience that is highlighted in the title corresponds with the scope of Polish community education explored by the authors of the texts and refers to what are broadly understood as reflections on phenomena, problems, educational and cultural processes within various countries and societies in which Poles and their relatives construct their life spaces, becoming part of the cultural, intercultural and multicultural experiences of everyday life. What falls especially within

the areas of interest presented here is education to preserve the cultural heritage of Poles and Poles abroad in the spheres of memory, identity and interculturality. This research is necessary to form a basis on which to create cultural-educational programmes which can be implemented in such Polish communities abroad in order to maintain and develop the cultural potential of these communities.

With this volume, the editors' intention is to open up space for discussion and reflections on education and culture addressed to Polish communities, as well as on projects which are developed in these communities. It seems that knowledge of history is as important as mastering skills and competences for intercultural understanding, forming the educational foundations for understanding contemporary processes to which the cultural identity of Poles and their families abroad are subject in the postmodern world. Therefore, we hope for further authorial discussions, whose horizons go beyond the sphere of „to have” and allow a balance to be maintained between the „permanent memory of the past” and the „short-term memory of the present”.

Keywords: education, comparative education, cultural pedagogy, history of education

Translated by Rob Pagett