

# The challenge of education in diverse environment: a review of literature on how we understand the diversity in education?

**Joanna Kotlarz**

*Jagiellonian University, Poland*

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to answer the question how the concept of diversity can be understood in educational context. As it is argued, basing on the literature review, the diversity notion proves to be very contextual and impossible to close in the frames of only one definition. An educationally adequate understanding of diversity and its complexity by school leaders and all others involved in educational processes is a key element when we think of properly using the diversity potential in supporting developmental processes in schools. On one hand, it requires but, on the other hand, enables flexibility in the organization of those processes. This kind of flexibility and openness changes the educational perspective and highlights the new role of education, which is the promotion of the joy of learning and the connection of this process to the individual experiences of all. That is why understanding diversity seems to be one of the key elements important for educational leadership.

**Keywords:** diversity, diversity in education, educational leadership, leadership for diversity

## **Introduction**

School is a place where different children meet and learn and those children bring different experiences to school, which are viewed as deficient when assessed under the mainstream norms (Delpit, 2012). It is perceived as a huge challenge, which Polish schools take up implementing basic points of education for diversity. The experience of the by-gone era of socialism causes that the education of children from different backgrounds, with different families, different social capital, or financial status is treated as a problem, not as a challenge or a value for learning. Education in the twenty-first century should put greater emphasis on the transfer of the images of the world from different points of view. The need to take account of diversity in the curriculum is a result of desire to participate in the democratic world where society is not only aware of the differences but also fully accepts them.

Children live now in a different world than their grandparents and even parents. They have other schooling need. The skill they need are completely different from those their families needed. The demand for new skills, necessary for living in a world of technological complex-

ity and global connectivity requires the rethinking of many aspects of the school experience. A special role in this process is played by educational leaders, including formal and informal conceptualization of leadership in education.

School leaders should know how to cope with the phenomenon of diversity and how to shift their pedagogy to be more engaging. Old solutions to old problems do not work anymore. New mindsets and new understanding of problems are required and this is what school leaders should learn.

The purpose of this analysis is to examine the problem of diversity in education in Polish context and answer the question why it is important from the contemporary perspective. This clarification is crucial because of two reasons. Firstly, it was commonly assumed that Poland is a very uniform country and the existence of differences was denied as they are imperceptible. Secondly, the essence of the concept of diversity is too narrow. Its notion takes many forms and should be treated more broadly.

No mention is made of the fact that Poland was a diverse society already during the reign of the Jagiellonian Dynasty, when every third person was from a culturally different population. It is also worth stressing that the idea of the homogeneous state has actually been strengthened after the Second World War and even cultivated during the People's Republic of Poland. Diversity in Poland is not a new topic, on the contrary to what we have believed so far (Madajczyk, 1998).

Thus, the perception of a Pole "from time immemorial" takes on a slightly different meaning, and diversity in Poland had begun earlier than after 1989. It can be assumed that diversity issues are not new in the Polish reality but have existed for a long time. Changing the optics of thinking about diversity in Poland (not as a new one but returning) seems to be the first step to understand it. This historical aspect expands the research area on diversity in the Polish context. Until now, many of the researchers assumed that the problem of diversity started after Polish access to the European Union. In fact, it

had started earlier but Polish entry to the UE structures could have strongly highlighted it.

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

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 failure. In addition, "the Ukrainian crisis" exposed the weakness of European policies in areas such as security, economy, foreign affairs and education and the huge problem of diversity of the Old Continent. On one hand, the process of integration and unification of the social life of community follows, on the other hand, parallelly, the process of growth of huge differences occurs between regions or countries. Dealing with diversity has become one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century civilization.

Terms such as "cultural shock" (Oberg, 1954), the "global village" (McLuhan, 1962), "McWorld" (Barber, 1995) do not surprise anybody and even passed into everyday language, defining social relations and pushing for deeper reflection on this phenomenon.

The problem of diversity is not only sociological or political but also educational. Following John Dewey who said "[e]ducation is a function of society and society is a function of education", it should be emphasized that school is a key element in the process of developing the modern society (Dewey, 1972). School is a major – and probably the only one - institution intended to educate people for living in a diverse world.

Education in today's diverse society has to face many tasks to properly shape this socie-

<sup>1</sup>Official name of Republic of Poland during communism time in the year 1952 – 1989.

ty. However, this process should be investigated in order to verify the school's readiness to perform tasks for diversity education. Before we start searching for the answer about the function of school in the modern world, the notion of diversity should be conceptualized.

### ***An attempt to define diversity (selected definitions)***

One of the first metaphors defining the phenomenon of diversity has already been used in 1780 and referred to the American society. It was the metaphor of a cultural "melting pot". It was believed that, despite diversity, society becomes very uniform – differences mix as in a mortar and form a harmonious entity. It took almost two centuries to change this view radically. It was recognized then that difference is the greatest value. The alternative was a so-called "salad bowl," which is a combination of different cultures while the autonomy of each of them is maintained.

In contrast to the American melting pot stands the concept of a "cultural mosaic" which was used by John Murray Gibbon and John Porter ("vertical mosaic") to describe Canada as a country of diverse ethnic, linguistic, regional and religious elements (Gibbon, 1938, Porter, 1965: in Valee, 2011).

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).

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. Paweł Boski basing 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, 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 – 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 of 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 because the particular groups from the list above are structurally or culturally advantaged (empowered) or disadvantaged (marginalized) within their societies (Banks, 2005).

A definition of diversity could also cover a larger territory. As Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener discovered, the social characteristic 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 lives (Loden, Rosener, 1991, in: Johnson, 2006).

On the other hand, Zygmunt Bauman notes

that in the midst of all these distinctions (like race, status) is one of the most important ones, the distinction between “Us” and “Them”. He claims that we can divide people into categories of those who are demanding different attitudes and different behaviors. Of course it is 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 I belong to. I understand everything that happens inside this group, I feel safe and comfortable there. This group is my natural environment where I want to be. “They” are the group which I cannot be part of or do not want to. I am suspicious of them and feel distance and fear (Bauman, 1990).

Underlying the concepts of diversity is the idea of dialogical human nature including “I” and “significant Other”. Human 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 valuable to offer to all people and therefore we are obliged to respect the value of all cultures.

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 nowadays the “Other” could be the enemy of democracy. This may be, for example, a Muslim who is perceived as an enemy of the Western civilization identity. The author stresses that diversity can be defined through the prism of violence, terrorism and clash between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. In this context, the term “Other” is the embodiment of evil, the opposite of “Us” who are seen as a good, lawful, ethical society (Huntington, 1997).

The approaches proposed above are only an attempt to define what diversity is. It seems that it is impossible to create one general definition of diversity because of two reasons. First of all, when we follow the history and evolution of the notion of diversity we can see that it was changed in its history very often. For

this paper we use the category as follows: the traditional approach to diversity which was strongly merged with the political context. A characteristic feature of this approach is using metaphors to describe social relations in each country and connecting it with specific political strategies which were introduced as the official policy towards immigrants, migrants, etc.

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

Researchers and authors who elaborate studies on diversity often create their own conceptual range of diversity resulting from their field of study, e.g. diversity and social justice (Adams, 2013), diversity and democracy (Ayers, 2009), diversity and citizenship (Banks, 2006), diversity and equality (Cooper, 2004), diversity and privilege (Maher & Tetreault, 2009).

From the scientific perspective, diversity is more complicated than we used to think. First of all, 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. What is more, definitions can be wider or narrower, specific but also more theoretical or practical.

According to Kurt Lewin, when we analyze human relations we should analyze every group that is part of this interaction. Over the past years, we realized that the problems of minorities are also problems of majorities. The problem of black people is also the problem of white people, the problem of Jewish is the problem of non-Jewish, etc. (Lewin, 2010).

From this point of view, it is reasonable to create a proper and adequate definition which would be named practical or functional. For

this study, the practical definition of diversity was based on interviews with people directly connected to diversity issues in their practice. The research group was school teachers and college faculties. During the seventeen individual interviews (IDI) they were asked about their definition of diversity. Based on the analysis of individual respondents' answers there was a practical definition of diversity created which is as follow: diversity is a cocktail of differences within people. This cocktail might be mixed with different ingredients (nationality, race, gender, etc.) but tastes good only when is well prepared. For this preparation we need to recognize, understand and celebrate differences in the world and give opportunities for everyone to participate in the society.

The recognition of diversity is not a problem nowadays. All respondents agreed that in their practice they have to deal with various manifestations of social diversity.

*"Diversity is kids with different backgrounds, different walks of life. Diversity is also where the kids are come from. National – you have some who are from the Middle East, who are from Europe and Asia. Diversity is also cultural background in a school as well."* [BGSU\_IDI\_4\_19.08.14]<sup>2</sup>

*"For me I would say diversity is like a different culture background, doesn't have to be like ethnic or economic, can be beliefs or lifestyles. I mean just having group of people or within a group of people - people from different backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicity, whatever."* [BG\_IDI\_10\_7.08.14]

It is not enough only to recognize diversity; it needs to be understood also. To understand particular situation of diversity respondents appealed to their personal or professional experience and they pointed out that knowledge e.g. about kids in classroom is basic component in process of understanding diversity.

*"Other aspect of diversity I see is economic diversity. We have parents who are single parent and have two jobs and they do not have to do homework with the kids. The homework is*

*not, you know, put the food in the table is more important that do the homework. And this kids who did not do homework and they need some help. They should be able to understand the concept but they need somebody to give them a little bit of guidance."* [BGSU\_IDI\_6\_03.09.14]

Firstly recognized and after that understood differences slowly stop being a problem. We start to see and celebrate values of those differences. It could be also understand as creating space or learning environment.

*"We need to take an approach that recognizes those differences and celebrate or appreciate those differences, so we need to be able to have schools systems that can welcome students, engage their differences."* [BGSU\_IDI\_17\_12.08.14]

Giving opportunities might be the last stage of this process. It can be assumed that it could not be possible without first stages: recognition of problem, understanding based on knowledge and celebrating diversity in safe learning atmosphere.

*"My classroom I so diverse. My classroom is rounded square hole depending on where the kids didn't fit before. All the students in my room either they didn't fit in the classroom – you know, they were kind of round peg in a square hole, or they didn't fit in normal classroom. They come to me. I can have kids who literally can not read. Can not recognize letters, two kids who have low grades, they are of the charge. They do not fit anywhere else so the diversity what I see is how do I, how make things relevant for them, how make things challenging for them. I do not want to have kids just scape by."* [BGSU\_IDI\_6\_03.09.14]

Summing up the discussion on the definition of diversity, it should be noticed that the notion of diversity initially was referred to something unknown, alien, incomprehensible, hostile, and even evil. Nowadays, we all participate in the culture of diversity and it depends on us how we are going to deal with it? People ask themselves how they should live in the modern reality, how they should teach their children life when reality is changing so fast. It seems that we should search

<sup>2</sup>This and next quotes come from the interviews. The transcription is original and could be ungrammatical.

for the answer to this question in education.

### ***The value of diversity education***

Education for diversity, nowadays, is a “mega-trend” in modern education, promoting the discovery of the coexistence of different cultures. These cultures have coexisted for a long time but, sadly, it should be noted that often shut from one another, not appreciating each other’s different traditions, not understanding the rank of values represented by another community. Modern education reveals the value of the “micro-world” in the context of the world “macro”, where different cultures can coexist and fully benefit from this coexistence.

Banks and Ayers link the concept of diversity to the concept of democracy. According to Banks, democracy is a way of living together, a kind of government. It is a fragile and delicate system. We know failures of democracy from history. Many researchers claim that democracy is impossible without education (Banks, 2006).

The idea of teaching for democracy and social justice is also considered by Ayers: “Respect for persons, for teachers and for students, for parents and community members, is at the core of good democratic schools (...) democratic teaching encourages students to develop initiative and imagination, the capacity to name the world, the wisdom to identify the obstacles to their full humanity and to the humanity of others, and the courage to act upon whatever the known demands. Education in a democracy is characteristically eye-popping and mind-blowing—always about opening doors and opening minds as students forge their own pathways into a wider world” (Ayers, 2009).

It is also important what Ayers said about teaching for social justice: “might be thought of as simply a serious approach to democracy, a kind of popular education of, by, and for the people – something that lies at the heart of education toward a more vital, more muscular democratic society. It can propel us toward action, away from complacency, reminding us of the powerful commitments, persistence, bravery, and triumphs of our justice-seeking fore-

bears-women and men who sought to build a world that worked for us all.” (ibidem, p. 8).

Despite the increasing democratization of social life, we are not free from concerns. Antonia Darder claims that well-confirmed democracy is never guaranteed, even during great movements of people. As such, we are reminded that democracy is never given, but rather entails an ongoing emancipatory struggle for political voice, participation, and social action. In this context education continues to exist as a formative contested terrain of struggle, given the potential of public education to serve as a democratizing force for the evolution of critical consciousness and democratic public life (Darder, 2012).

As a result of the foregoing statements, it can be concluded that one of the most important value of education is promoting education for democracy and social justice. This seems to be particularly justified in the face of growing crises such the recent “Crimea crisis”, which stroke the democratic values in Europe. The Ukrainian problems show how easily separatist groups can reach for power in a country with ethnical diversity and infirmity of the democratic system. Referring to the research which argues that democracy can only exist with education, it should be said that school should be a place where democratic values are shown and promoted. It is particularly important for young people who will later develop the democratic citizenship. A logical consequence of this approach could be the assumption that school is the place where new generation can learn how to be prepared to meet with Others, know what is accompanied by the interaction and be ready for dialogue with Other.

In this context, the importance of the problem of different value systems that operate and compete with each other is highlighted. According to Nikitorowicz, school should promote the idea of tolerance towards others. The diverse society gave tolerance a special importance, since the basic requirement is the respect and recognition of diversity. Tolerance as an idea is an expression of respect for the individuality and autonomy of the opponent, as well as the value of interpersonal, univer-

sal, timeless and durable, involving intellectual and emotional sphere. Shaping the attitudes of tolerance is possible if our attitude to being different will be the result of respect and recognition, but without sacrificing our own needs and values (Nikitorowicz, 2009).

Creating open minded attitudes among children is one of the challenges of education. Shaping the attitude of tolerance should be the first step to this.

Lynch proposes another value of diversity education which is respect for equality. "Education has the potential to become a place of resistance against injustice, both through the use of best practices, as well as the training itself." (Lynch, Lodge, 2002).

The main problem with the analysis of this issue is the fact that the Polish school is equal one-dimensionally, namely only in terms of equality in access to education. If a discussion on equality in school starts, the first argument which appears is mainly equal educational opportunities, ensuring equal access to education for all children. But taking care of quite different matter of equality, namely equality with respect and recognition, which should provide value and be shaped in school education, is equally important.

Inequalities with respect and appreciation for the field have their origins in the symbolic, in patterns of interpretation, definition and communication. It is also important to say that the people on the margins of culture are defined as "other" and treated as invalid or even inferior. They are subject to cultural imperialism, which becomes invisible. However, when they become apparent, they start to be the subject of negative stereotypes and neglect. An example would be a group of children with lower financial status. The school expects that parents will invest in their children and consequently the school will receive greater status. Children from working class families are less seen than children from middle or higher class, which is more suitable for the profile of a high standard ( Lynch, Lodge, 2002).

There are two practices that play an important role in perpetuating inequalities in terms

of respect and recognition: ignoring and hiding off and the division into different classes and schools. School curriculum and student assessment methods are biased in most educational systems, including Polish. In a privileged position in this case are the students of the so-called written language skills and mathematical logic. But the fact is that these abilities largely depend on cultural conditions. The biggest differences are in the development of linguistic abilities in different cultures and social classes because of cultural differences, lifestyle, work, or a different pace of development. In one culture, oral traditions are stronger, and in others, written language is more important. Students who have not mastered fluent language skills are treated as unintelligent because of their way of communication and understanding of the world. The students are required to advance their language skills but are not taught.

Differences in communication codes, according to Bernstein, are one of the dimensions of the selection held at the school. Teachers usually identify them with the high culture and, in the contact with students, use developed language code (non-emotive language, without gesture, without context, with complex grammar construction). What is more, teachers require the same language from their students. This causes an immediate difference in educational opportunities of students from middle-class and working-class.

According to Freire, the system of dominant social relations creates a culture of silence that instills a negative, silenced and suppressed self-image into the oppressed. The learner must develop a critical consciousness in order to recognize that this culture of silence is created to oppress. Also, a culture of silence can cause the "dominated individuals [to] lose the means by which to critically respond to the culture that is forced on them by a dominant culture." Social domination of race and class are interleaved into the conventional educational system, through which the "culture of silence" eliminates the "paths of thought that lead to a language of critique" (Freire, 2004).

Silencing is the most common form of lack

of recognition in the education system. It involves pushing a group on the margin primarily by failing to indicate its name. An example is the concept of educational policy which assumes a heterosexual society. Therefore, sexual minorities experience a lack of recognition in schools. This manifests itself in the form of ridicule, social trauma, living in a constant lie, in a broader sense based on the assumption that Polish society is culturally uniform. Each of the signs of the differences is taken as margin or “exception that proves the rule.” (Lynch, Baker, 2005).

Another form is the lack of recognition of class division. The students are expected to possess specific skills that schools do not teach them. Institutions do not recognize the cultural dissonance between their customs and practices, and the customs and practices of pupils with different class origins (as well as ethnic and racial) contribute to failures in learning and a sense of alienation (Archer, Hutching, Ross, 2002).

Emphasizing the need of taking account of the diversity in education is also evident in determining the redefinition of the role of the teacher. As Witkowski noticed “In the modern world, saturated otherness, it is very important that the teacher should abandon the role of arbitrator to act as a mediator, showing his students how to take care of the quality of the meetings with the Other”. (Witkowski, 1997). This means that definition of teaching is changing radically and teacher role as well.

The selected issues do not cover all the problems in schools but they may indicate another very important role of education – inclusive mission. In this aspect the value of education should be removing students’ “handicaps” caused materially or socially and as a result reduce the polarization of society. What is more, promoting in schools values such as: tolerance towards others, respect for equality, democracy, the attitude of respect and appreciation for others is not easy. A number of related issues still need to be clarified.

***The value of education from the per-***

### ***spective of critical pedagogy***

Questions about the place of education in the modern world, its role in the society, value, objectives, functions are nothing but a question about the meaning of its existence at all. The question “why do we need a school?” is being repeated like a mantra. It is impossible to answer this question without making the following assumptions. First, people create a social reality that emerges from the interviews, conflicts, agreements and that is more subjective in beliefs, rather than in terms of objective facts. Secondly, the human functioning in this world seeks to radically change, because the social reality requires a fundamental reconstruction. In this case the role of education is to discover the camouflaged mechanisms of power, domination and inequality, as well as alterations in consciousness and social reality and a change in social reality (Sułkowski, 2012). To cope with this challenge, we should discover the ineffectiveness of the conducted European policies and unmask the apparent educational policy for social diversity that does not actually work. Exposing the superficiality of the organization, including schools, in practice, results in an attempt to criticize the status quo, and then to change public policy. In this direction goes the proposition of critical pedagogues who postulate to create the educational theory from “the best” pieces of modernism, postmodernism, radical theory and feminism discourse. This eclectic, complex project built on many fundamentals is named critical pedagogy (Szkudlarek, Śliwerski, 2010).

The juxtaposition of those aspects results in a certain quality of critical pedagogy. Below are presented some common and important assumptions of critical pedagogy.

In theory, education is no longer meant to replicate societal inequities but rather to reflect the ideals of democracy, we know that such is not always the reality. Our schools have consistently failed to provide an equitable education for all students. The complex interplay of student differences, institutional racism and

<sup>3</sup>Is a paraphrase of a quote Ian Gilbert’s book - “Why do I need a teacher when I’ve got Google?”



discrimination, teachers' biases that lead to low expectations, and unfair school policies and practices all play a role in keeping it this way.

Focusing on the persistence of racism and discrimination and low expectations is meant in no way to deny the difficult family and economic situation of many poor children and children of color, or impact on their school experiences and achievement. Drug abuse, violence, and other social problems, as well as poor medical care, deficient nutrition, and a struggle for the bare necessities for survival harm children's lives, including their school experience. The fact that poor children and their parents do not have at their disposal the resources and experiences that economic privilege would give them is also detrimental.

But blaming poor people and people from dominated racial or cultural groups for their educational problems is not a solution to societal inequities. Teachers can do nothing to change the conditions in which their students may live, but they can work to change their own biases as well as the institutional structures that act as obstacles to students learning. As we have seen, racism and other forms of discrimination play a central role in educational failure, as does the related phenomenon of low expectations (Nieto, 2000).

Therefore, school is a place where critical education can happen and a place of "public sphere" where children can acquire skills important for their own lives. In this context the educational process should be seen not only as a process of one-direction knowledge transfer but also as a process of encouraging to self-education, the natural tendency of everyone to learn and to self-realization and of shaping students' responsibility for the learning process.

The next point is the issue of differences. It is understood as a process of creating individual identity based on diverse, complex, sometimes inconsistent intergroup relations. Differences are in the foreground in this approach.

The authors also underline that critique pedagogy has to create specific language and open space for a free exchange of ideas. In this situation, school is a place where people can discuss their ideas in dialogue and

express their individual and social freedom.

From this point of view, it is very important to create a new form of knowledge which expands beyond the traditional frames of knowledge. In result, the process of learning should include everyday experience, very specific and individual. This is the basic effect of empowerment and "validation of silenced voices" of people who are marginalized. The knowledge in this approach is of great importance for difference and resistance which in this context are the base for emancipation.

Critical pedagogy assumes also the changes in school leaders role. From this perspective, a leader becomes "the transformative intellectualist" who is very active, critique and exposes his or her civil courage in social and political situations.

Last but not least, another assumption of critical pedagogy is "the policy of voice". It is particularly important for diversity issues. In this context, education should concentrate on the connection between individual identity and social and political processes.

### **Conclusion**

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

There is lot of evidence that political solutions to the problems of diversity failed, such as the aforementioned examples of the governments of France and Great Britain, which themselves admit the failure of their immigration policy. The confirmation of these words is for example the massacre in Norway in 2011 when an assassin killed students on Utoya Island and the riots in London in 2011. Policy understood as political strategy proved to be an ineffective tool in dealing with the issue of diversity not only in Europe but also in the United States where, in 2014, riots broke out in Ferguson, Missouri.

Ferguson in Missouri is not only about race, it is about class. It is very deeply about class. (...) *How did that happen? It did not just happen by accident. And that is in fact one of the main thing try to get across. Very few of conditions*

*we look at did not happen just by accident. It happened by designed. Segregation in US happened by designed.* [BGSU\_IDI\_3\_21.08.14]

It shows us that riot acts all over the world do not happen accidentally. It can be the symptom of something more important. In my opinion, this is the symptom of diversity problems which have never been solved – such as racism problem, segregation, social inequality and other.

We can also observe changes in our society. For example The U.S. Education Department projected that by the autumn of 2014, the percentage of students who are white will be lower than of students who have been in minority groups so far (Strauss, 2014). In this situation, when “the majority become the minority,” education has a new role to play in order to properly shape the society. An average child from different families, crossing the threshold of culturally diverse school, brings his own baggage of experience and heritage that teachers tend to skip in the idea of justice and equality.

The diversity problem is not a new phenomenon, although it is still considered as such in public opinion. However, I believe that public discourse does not play a substantial role in the reflection on this problem. In my opinion, young people are not sufficiently aware of the changes that have occurred in the world. The school in this case is a special place because it starts a process of shaping a young man to live in the new society.

Over the years, multicultural education has promised much and delivered little (May, 1999).

Critical multiculturalism – the first step in developing a non-essentialist conception of cultural difference is to unmask and deconstruct the apparent neutrality of civism that is supposedly a universal, neutral set of cultural values and practices that underpin the public sphere of the national state. Civism, as constructed within the so called “pluralism dilemma,” is not neutral, and never has been. Rather, the public sphere of the nation-state represents and reflects the particular cultural and linguistic habitus of the dominant (ethnic) group (May, 1999)

The second step is to situate these cultural differences within the wider nexus of pow-

er relations of which they form part. It is one thing, after all, to recognize and describe cultural differences as they affect the educational performance of minority groups. It is quite another to unmask the reproductive processes which underlie these and which lead the school to prefer certain cultural values and practices (those of the dominant group) over others. In this respect, the normalization and universalization of the cultural knowledge of the majority ethnic group and its juxtaposition with other (usually non-Western) knowledge and practices should be critically interrogated (Nieto, 2000).

A critical multiculturalism needs both to recognize and incorporate the differing cultural knowledge that children bring with them to school, while, at the same time, address and contest the different cultural capital attributed to them as a result of wider hegemonic power relations. In short, culture has to be understood as part of the discourse of power and equality (Giroux, 1997).

The third, and perhaps the key step in developing a non-essentialist critical multiculturalism is to maintain a reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that avoids the vacuity of cultural relativism and allows for the criticism (both external and internal to the group), transformation, and change. The reflexive position on culture and ethnicity is encapsulated by the distinction drawn by Homi Bhabha (1994) between cultural diversity and cultural difference (May, 1999).

The concepts presented above bring us closer to understand what diversity in the present world is and how school leaders should not only understand this phenomenon but also implement it in the educational processes in schools. School leaders should be an integral part of the reflection on what J. Delors (1996) named “learning to live together”.

The purpose of this paper was to answer the question how we understand diversity. As

I tried to indicate, basing on the literature review, the diversity notion proved to be very contextual and impossible to embrace in frames of only one definition. This kind of flexibility and openness changes the educational perspective and highlights the new role of education

and educational leaders which is the promotion of the joy of learning and the connection of this process to individual experiences. According to Polish researchers, understanding and accepting diversity is not enough. Using it for the purposes of development is more important. That is the huge challenge and effort for educational leadership which should be built on the foundations of respect and freedom of speech for different groups (Mazurkiewicz, 2011).

This approach, on one hand, shows a new function of modern school leadership, and from the other hand, contradicts Albert Camus's words that "school prepares children to live in a world which does not exist."

## References

- Adams, M. et.al. , (2000), *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, Routledge, London
- Aman, R., (2012), *The Recycling of Colonialism: Formation of Europeans Through Intercultural Dialog*, in: Educational Philosophy and Theory, Vol. 44, No. 9
- Archer, L., Hutching, M., Ross, A., (2002), *A Higher Education and Social Class. Issues of Inclusion and Exclusion*, Falmer Press, London
- Ayers, W., (2009), *Teaching in and for democracy*, in: Slater, B., Flinders., D., J., (eds.), Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, Vol. 12, pp. 3-11
- Banks, J., A., (ed.), (2006), *Democracy and Diversity Education: Global Perspectives*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
- Barber, B., (1995), *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*, Ballantine Books, New York
- Bauman, Z., (1990), *Socjologia, (Sociology)*, Poznań, Zys I S-ka.
- Boski, P., (2010), *Kulturowe ramy zachowań społecznych. Podręcznik psychologii międzykulturowej (Cultural Framework of Social Behaviour. Textbook on Cross-Cultural Psychology)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa
- Cooper, D., (2004), *Challenging Diversity: Rethinking Equality and the Value of Difference*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK
- Darder, A., (2012), *Neoliberalism in Academic Borderlands: an On-going Struggle on Equality and Human Rights*. in: Educational Studies, Vol. 48, pp. 412- 426
- Delors, J., (1996), *Education: The Treasure Within*. UNESCO
- Delpit, L., (2012), *Will it Help the Sheep? Why Educate?*, Published online in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com), (retrieved 10.02.2014)
- Dewey, J., (1972), *Demokracja i wychowanie, (Democracy and Education)*, Wydawnictwo Osolińskich, Wrocław
- Freire, P. (2004), *Pedagogy of Indignation, Paradigm*, Boulder: Colorado
- Giroux, H., (1997), *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope. Theory, Culture and Schooling*, Westview Press, Boulder: Colorado
- Huntington, S., (1997), *Zderzenie cywilizacji i nowy kształt ładu światowego (Clash of Civilisations...)*, Wydawnictwo Muza, Warszawa
- Johnson, A., (2006), *Privilege, Power and Differences (2nd edition)*, MacGraw Hill, New York
- Lewin, K., (2010), *Badania w działaniu a problem mniejszości, (Research in Action and a Problem of Minorities)* in: Cevinkowa, H., Gołębiak, B., (eds.), *Badania w działaniu. Pedagogika i antropologia zaangażowane (Research in Action. Pedagogy and Anthropology engaged)*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław
- Lynch, K., Lodge, A., (2002), *Equality and Power in School. Redistribution, Recognition and Representation*, Reutledge Falmer, London
- Lynch, K., Baker, J., (2005), *Equality in Education: The Importance of Equality of Condition*, in: *Theory and Research in Education*, Vol. 3, No.2, pp. 131-164
- Madajczyk, P., (1998), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce, (Minorities in Poland)*, Warszawa
- Maher, F., A., Tetreault, M., K., (2009), *Privilege and Diversity in the Academy*, Routledge, New York
- May, S., (ed.) (1999), *Critical Multiculturalism. Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education*, Falmer Press, London
- Mazurkiewicz, G., (2011), *Przywództwo dla uczenia się. Jak wyjść poza schemat?, (Educational Leadership for learning – how to Get out of the box?)* in: *Przywództwo edukacyjne w szkole i jej otoczeniu. (Educational leadership in schools and their environment)*, Kwiatkowski, S., Michalak, J., Nowosad, I., (eds.), Difin, Warszawa
- McLuhan, M., (1962), *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London
- Nieto, S., (2000), *Affirming Diversity. The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, ( 3rd ed. ), Longman, London
- Nikitorowicz, J., (2009), *Edukacja regionalna i wielokulturowa, (Regional and Multicultural Education)*, WAiP, Warszawa

Oberg, K., (1954), *Culture shock*, in: *Youblisher in Bobbs-Merril Series in Social Sciences*, from [http:// www.youblisher.com/p/53061](http://www.youblisher.com/p/53061) , retrieved 11.12.2011

Ryan, J., (2003), *Leading Diverse Schools*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Toronto

Strauss, V., (2014), *For First Time*, Minority Students Expected to be Majority in U.S. Public Schools this Fall, Washington Post. [online] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/08/21/for-first-time-minority-students-expected-to-be-majority-in-u-s-public-schools-this-fall/> [25 Aug 2014]

Sułkowski, Ł., (2012), *Kulturowe procesy zarządzania, (Cultural Processes of Management)*, Difin, Warszawa

Szkudlarek, T., Śliwerski, B., (2010), *Wyzwania krytyki pedagogicznej i antypedagogik, (Challenges of Pedagogical Critique and Antypedagogy)*, Impuls, Kraków

Taylor, Ch., (1994), *The Politics of Recognition*, in: Gutmann, A., (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton

Valee, F., (2011), *Vertical Mosaic. The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Dominion. Retrieved on: 2011-09-22.

Witkowski L., (1997), *Edukacja wobec sporów o (po)nowoczesność (Education and the discourse on (Post)Modernity)*, IBE, Warszawa