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Child's Identity from the Perspective of Cultural Diversity

Introductory notes

Building subjectivity in a culturally diverse space is not possible when referring to roots. It is necessary to search for new ways to build your own self. A nomadic entity constructs its identity against a background of change, transformation and metamorphosis. The key element of building subjectivity should be a dialogue, and conducting it at the moment requires a re-definition of who is a man in a situation when the old definitions do not work. At present, anything that is human is being reconstructed in the context of the global economy, technological revolution, emergence of multicultural societies and a new social and cultural reality (R. Braidotti, 2009, p. 10). The continuous interaction of man with both culture and nature takes place through the means of a universal technology. This requires posing new questions about both the environment of life and the spiritual sphere that gives meaning to life.

The mechanisms for constructing an identity in the modern world

According to the idea of transculturalism, a new concept of identity develops (W. Welsch, 1998, p. 203), which is carried out not on the basis of national components, but the integrating features of different cultural backgrounds. The mechanisms that determine the identity process take

place according to the cultural rules of exchange. Transculturalism is combined with the generation of a new variety. Transcultural identities include a cosmopolitan aspect, but also a local affiliation (W. Welsch, 1998, p. 217–221). The dynamism of the world in which a child lives, initiates changes in the sources, aspects and factors of identity (I. Samborska, 2007, p. 120).

Cultural identity is determined by the knowledge and experience of a particular time-space. Knowledge is the mental tracks that lie in a man – they are the most important, obvious and continuous. Experiences form the identity knowledge: who am I, how am I, among whom and what am I, for what meaning area am I, what connects me with others? This knowledge and experience make up a mental locum. It is also indicated by other cultural tracks, such as: mental continuity, linearity (A. Kunce, 2004, p. 81). It shows itself at the level of cognitive functioning, because we think in sequences and we look for relations of cause and effect. Continuity and linearity are also visible through the course of our lives – we come from somewhere and we go somewhere. Due to the continuity of events, everything is cognitively and emotionally familiar; this provides a sense of security. In addition, the mental world demands systemic thinking, seeing things in a systemic way. In such a world, boundaries, opposition, similarities and differences are visible. This, in turn, leads to a clear distinction between what is mine or that which belongs to others. In this perspective, the described mental locum is a kind of mental archive, which consists of the entire historical, geographical, social, linguistic, economic, aesthetic, moral and religious experience. Memory plays a huge role here, which focuses on what is permanent (what is the constant point of reference). Therefore, the identity experience refers to the permanent elements of nation, language, customs, laws and religion, as well as of those related to biology and relating to the continuity of generations. The determinants that significantly shape the character of community ties are the ties of blood, racial affinity, belonging to a particular territory.

These identity experiences, seen as a centre that integrates units in terms of certain groups, are a defining feature for a strong identity. This identity is based on strong foundations; it is internally consistent and

stable. It appears as a historical and social function of an entity. The boundaries of such an identity are derived from an idea (from the laws of nature, religion, reasoning). Strong identities provide people with a sense of security and independence. For identities seen in this way, a kind of counterweight is an identity that is disclosed from the postmodern perspective - an identity that is open to change, giving the freedom of choosing one's own "I" (I. Samborska, 2006, p. 88–91). This kind of identity, defined as "weak", is mobile, variable and incoherent. Its existence is temporary and ambivalent. The experiences defining a weak identity are completely different in terms of form and content. They are rooted in the dynamics of globalization and media fascination (I. Samborska, 2007, p. 120–121).

Today's child experiences a series of ambivalent feelings related, on one hand, to the need to place themselves and their experiences, as well as things, events and other people, in some spaces; on the other hand, to those related to the dominant metaphors that fill their life: incident, dispersion, dislocation, individuality, creation (A. Kuncze, 2004, p. 79). The above considerations show that the experience and knowledge that define an identity, need a mental territory for their placement. Thoughts are the tracks of location. They are arranged in a manner defining points that constitute the frame of reference – the context. In this way a child develops the mechanisms to deal with an excess of experience and chaotic events. Location means encirclement, seizure, and rooting.

Meanwhile, the modern world offers a child multiple and distributed spaces. The basic parameters of culture - time and space – are a subject to constant changes. The dynamics, variability and dialogue of the modern world mean that it becomes problematic even to describe reality. It is necessary to apply the concepts and categories that highlight its transgressive, transformative, uncertain and indefinite character. No assignment to territory (non-territoriality, lack of common place), mediation of relationships, blurring of national and cultural boundaries are the phenomena that characterize the modern world. In their background, an identity is seen as a nomadic variable marked with slight traces. Attempts to describe it require new concepts such as "dynamic rooting," "variable territory" (B. Kita, 2003, p. 115–116). New concepts refer to describing the

condition of an identity; they focus on relations. There are liquid identities, appearing in a variety of contexts and situations created by new media (the viewer's identity, the identity of the web user, the "nomad" identity in the virtual world, the identity of the interactive art performer). Significant features of the new identity include: instability, lack of specificity, and blurring.

Identity, from the postmodern perspective, is seen as a "transit" identity – constantly searching, changing, determined by a non-place. It is defined by the idea of nomadic becoming. It is a way to work out a balance between what is local and global, and what belongs to the past and the present. In this context, the process of experiencing is important rather than becoming attached to a certain point of time. This new way of thinking about who we are requires pointing to the process of becoming, rather than to the result of this process. In this new approach, the entity continues to be rooted even when it is on the move (R. Braidotti, 2009, p. 22). This is a nomadic, culturally diverse, postmodern entity, the formation of which takes place at the intersection varieties of class, race, ethnicity and age. Nomadic changes indicate a creative type of becoming; they refer to a performative metaphor, which allows for the sources of interaction of experience and knowledge.

The foundations for thinking about the location of an identity were initiated by the research on non-Euclidean geometry with the current philosophy inspired by the Husserl and Heidegger phenomenology and temporal practices in the western philosophy and science (E. Kosowska, 2004, p. 67–68). Postmodernism (as opposed to modernism), which focuses on individuality, treats identity as an epistemological category. In fact, reflections on identity become reflections on the nature of relations. In the process of forming such a vision of identity, some changes were made in terms of abstraction-substance and relation-event. It is assumed that a new quality is formed in terms of these relations. A third quality becomes the existence of a new generation and begins to create a new level of an intellectual culture (E. Kosowska, 2004, p. 70–71). It is a condition of achieving the mental materializing of the relation. The construction "between" is seen as a real place and a carrier of interpersonal

action. For identity, this is a variation of "between," the major role is played by time rather than space.

When perceiving ourselves and the world, we are used to defining everything in the context of time and space. Referring these dimensions to identity, we should ask where identity exists? In the context of time, identity is seen in the transformation of an event into an event. In terms of space, however, locating the identity is a problem. This problem concerns the identity of space itself. Space, as with everything else, changes in time; therefore, the space where identity exists becomes impossible to define. It is a paradox that is a result of an epistemological turn – a Derrida deconstruction. An identity not rooted in location loses the right of existence against the intentionality (E. Kosowska, 2004, p. 72–74).

Problems of identity location – cognitive and research perspectives

The world that a child experiences shows signs of simultaneous constant, long-term and temporary events. A child, when participating in social and cultural events, acquires experience that collates and dismantles his or her identity. Personal experience indicates the rhythm of the location and dislocation of identity. Describing identity constructed in such a way requires the use of appropriate terms. It is necessary to switch from modern to postmodern language. It will then be possible to use metaphors that are offered by a post-modern discourse, which is attractive from the point of view of the "location" of identity. These include, for example, metaphors such as: rhizome, chaos, movement, eradication, moment, deference, variability, indefiniteness (A. Kuncze, 2004, p. 79). These concepts allow us to see identity memory in a different way. They are suitable for tracking the ordinary and everyday experience of identity. They can be noticed at the first level of unit narration, the level that reveals a variable rhythm of experiencing.

Narration, as in telling somebody about something, is both a kind of communication between people and a product of this communication.

It is a specific form of cognitive representation of reality – therefore it is a way of understanding the reality (J. Trzebiński, 2002). Narrative structuring of individual experience gives an insight into a way of organizing the experiences and therefore into the order of the world experienced by the child. It is also a chance of understanding how the author experiences himself in the world. In this sense, the narrative structuring of individual experience helps to co-create the identity.

Identity experiences are situated within individually constructed and culturally confirmed *locum*. Their interesting context emerges from the use of such categories as: movement, excess, spread, and gathering (A. Kunce, 2004, p. 87–93). The world of identity is characterized by points because what we experience is in motion. Against this background, identity can be related to the state and effect and the process or moment. In addition, identity breaks down into details; the movement of identity is undertaken by the abundance of the things that compose it. There is a process of collecting for oneself of the fragments of contexts, random and torn events. In their own way, they collect for themselves that which is culturally given, specified in culture, harnessed into the identity knowledge system, as well as what it is not specified, which form and meaning is not realized, and what rarely belongs to the common schema of knowledge. Distributed identity is a state of a lack of consolidation; it takes place in the context of chaos, incident, parts of events and fragments.

The result is a thickening of semiotic space and, eventually, experiencing the situation of an excess. Over-saturation of the field of experience relating to the present, experience over-saturated with things, meanings and possibilities, forces the child to a huge effort of elimination. Experience of the excess should be linked to new ways of experiencing the time. Postmodernism is seen as the place where culture emphasizes the routine and monotonous aspect of change. This means that experience marked with change is no longer special. It has been moved into the background of consciousness, which is forced to develop new categories, allowing us to recognize this new experience in terms of discourse. This new experience determines a new form of categoriza-

tion that is indicated by modern consciousness. It focuses not on the very motion of changes in time, but on the diversity coexisting "here" and "now," pushing the present into a multi-dimensional space. This diversity, experienced as potential excess, requires making choices and experiencing a feeling of resignation.

The child has to deal with an excess of things that are only theoretically available, as only their quantity and diversity creates the need to choose and forces us to exclude the other potentially available options. The importance of this phenomenon is enhanced by the development of technology resulting in changes in the living environment, which determines the field of experience.

Giving this situation a discursive form requires the development of a new categorization, the source of which is the art of the individual evaluation of things. The consequence of this is the ability to build our own space of meanings and the time dimension that conditions it. The modern child's space of life becomes a place where different orders of existence and forms of presentation (e.g. forms of media) meet. This includes various fragments of reality, where realism is combined with fantasy. They become a source of subjective experience, which, from the perspective of the pedagogy, raises the need to know how to support children learning these realities. And dealing with balancing the attachment to what is known and what is new.

Methodological assumptions of own study

It seems that in order to know the processes of identity formation, we need to attempt to get an insight into the child's world of experiences. How do children perceive everyday life, how do they gain knowledge about society, about the world in which they live, how do they perceive themselves (including relationships with others), how do they express emotions in direct and indirect contact? The creation of identity takes place through realizing their own actions and their causes, describing, understanding and explaining their behaviour.

This interdisciplinary approach that is presented above, allows for the engagement in the complexity of present and life situations. The philosophy of nomadism offers the use of abstract concepts for practical social and private activities. Against this background, we can ask basic questions:

- What is the importance of the everyday experience of a six-year old child in creating its identity?
- To what extent is a six-year-old conscious of its embodied and rooted experience?

Understanding, in this regard, will be obtained by exploring the conditions of structure transformation and the content of a dynamic living space, which is important because of the creation of the conditions of achieving the objectives of education. Educational practice must be preceded by knowing the child's life world, and so it is necessary to find access to meaningful structures of this world, to separate them, and to examine them. Being in the world (real and created) is a sign and source of internalized structures and schemas of perceiving individual elements of the world, understanding them and the criteria for their evaluation. Dealing with the multidimension of life space, with its symbolic and material elements that the child constantly interacts with in its daily life, is the basis of experience, on the basis of which the mental structures regulating behaviour, the needs and attitudes towards themselves and the world are shaped. In a child's knowledge we can see mainly marginal events, cases that are an important clue to identity.

In this way, the child's practical knowledge acquired and internalized through experience is revealed. It turns out that it shapes the child's actions at the same time. In fact, it is searching for new "places" where a child plays, learns, rests, realizes the needs of belonging and self-presentation in the process of developing their own identity. These new places can become an area of education which is understood as supporting a child in its development.

Questions on how children perceive themselves and the world in which they live, how they evaluate their own participation in the processes

of creation and what are the processes of shaping their identity in this context, are significant educational challenges (J. Nikitorowicz, 2005). They are part of the relationship between globalization and education, in the interdisciplinary space and dimension, and therefore are also global. Somehow in the centre of these considerations, there is a problem of creating the child's identity.

Identification criteria of children experiences

The research conducted by me focuses on exploring and verifying the material and symbolic components of time and space, in which the child lives. They compose the structure and content of the experienced and lived spaces of life in both real and created dimensions. Ongoing mediations within them are determined by the subject's disposition. This disposition is the result of individual experiences of interacting with elements of reality that the child lives in and experiences "here" and "now" with his own history. The area of social interaction becomes extended over time. To initial relations on the mother-child dyad, other forms of interaction are added: symbolic, those of a language nature, those that are internalized and integrated into the consciousness, and the symbolic sensory interactions that shape the foundations for the development of identity and imagination (K. Illeris, 2009, p. 139).

In the area of child's life there are suitable stimulators and stabilizers. In the case of a small child, this space is referred to as "home" (the immediate environment, both physical and social). Research in this area aims to answer the question of what is reality from the point of view of children, and how it is created by a child: *where* important objects are located in this reality, in what spaces children's patterns of orientation and functioning in the world are anchored.

94 six-year old children from an urban environment took part in the study. Analysis of the children's statements made it possible to distinguish three groups of categories of experience as a source of knowledge on identity. These experiences were situated in a culturally and socially

confirmed "locum." Distinguishing three groups of categories of experience was dictated by children's preferences. This was the result of structuring their experiences in a private living space. In this space, children placed objects (persons and things) and events that were important for some reason. At the same time, they revealed their preferred and recognized values. Thus, the child's experiences in a personal space were the models of certain values. Their disclosure was treated as a reflection of the intentional actions that resulted from specific motives (S. Epstein, 1990, p. 25).

The basis for differentiating between categories of children's experiences in personal space were preferred and recognized values. This distinction refers to the phenomenological tradition and is consistent with separating these types of values into: the vital values associated with enjoyment and utilitarian values that are closely related to them, the cultural values that include cognitive, aesthetic and custom values, and moral values (R. Ingarden, 1966, p. 85).

The following groups of experiences were distinguished:

- I. Personal experiences - experiences stemming from the conditions of life, related to perceiving the world, perceiving oneself in the world, experiencing pleasure;
- II. Social and cultural experiences - experiences stemming from social relations (kinship relations, belonging and relationship, emotional closeness; possessing relation; rooting relation);
- III. Social and cultural experiences - experiences stemming from social actions (actions based on cooperation, competition and fight motives; resulting from established conventions)

The obtained results indicate that in the process of becoming, and that is determining its identity by a six-year old child, what the child experiences when participating in cultural and social events is significantly important.

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Abstract:

The text points to the problem of creating an identity in a culturally diverse space. Reference is made to the mechanisms of creating identity from the post-modern perspective and to the problem of location and dislocation of identity. At present, the identity of a child is determined by the idea of a nomadic becoming. Against this background, there are new cognitive and research perspectives. In the studies undertaken, the questions asked concerned the importance of everyday experiences in creating an identity, and the extent to which a six-year-old is aware of his embodied and rooted experience. The obtained results enabled the identification of three groups of experiences of children situated in the individually constructed, as well as the culturally and socially confirmed, locale.

Keywords: identity, experience, child, life space, location of identity

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