

# Raising territorial awareness of the students from Gorzów Wielkopolski county (Poland) as part of geographical and historical education

Zbigniew Podgórski<sup>1</sup>, Agnieszka Mielczarek<sup>2</sup>,  
Przemysław Charzyński<sup>3</sup>, Remigiusz Stańczyk<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kazimierz Wielki University  
Faculty of Physical Education, Health and Tourism, Institute of Geography  
ul. Mińska 15, 85-428 Bydgoszcz, Poland

<sup>2</sup>Warta Mouth National Park  
Chyrzyno 1, 69-113 Górzycza, Poland

<sup>3</sup>Nicolaus Copernicus University,  
Faculty of Earth Sciences, Department of Soil Science and Landscape Management  
ul. Lwowska 1, 87-100 Toruń, Poland

## Abstract

This article contains selected results of research on the course of geographical regional education and the territorial awareness of pupils in Gorzów county (Western Poland), a region situated on the border with Germany (the Land of Brandenburg). The paper defines the basic concepts and terms, and describes a research tool. Students' knowledge about their own region, the source of this knowledge and the means of its acquisition were set as outcomes. The state of territorial awareness of pupils including its spatial extent and the nature and strength of ties were established. While analyzing the results, the authors highlighted the differences between the declared attitudes of the students of each school, differentiating them due to the stage of education (middle school and high school) and the place (Gorzów Wielkopolski, Kostrzyn nad Odrą and Witnica). It was found, that lessons on regional issues implemented within geography lessons and educational trail such as *Regional education – cultural heritage in the region (Edukacja regionalna – dziedzictwo kulturowe w regionie)* play an important role and contribute significantly to the mastery of complex knowledge about the region. Beside the formal education about the region a family home is of great importance, especially in terms of shaping forces of territorial ties. Deficiencies in terms of regional education were also highlighted. Due to the nature of this article and its small size authors focuses only on the selected parts of research, in particular the analysis of the diversity of geographical and historical knowledge resources of the surveyed students was omitted.

**Keywords:** regional education, territorial awareness, territorial bond, survey, Gorzów county (Poland).

## Introduction

The functioning of people in geographical space develops different types of relationships. Of these the most important is functional interaction, determined by their existential needs. Satisfying these needs depends on environmental assets, primarily from socio-cultural resources. In this context, it is necessary to draw attention to the importance of emotional ties, arising from the reception of the surrounding reality and diverse experiences of it. In Poland, studies of this kind of relations, mainly focused on the issue of the bond between man and place of residence (region) or geographical object were taken in the 1980s, and in recent years were continued by e.g. G. Cancer (2000), E. Szkurlat (2004, 2007), P. Pytka (2005, 2011), P. Pytka and J. Szczęsna (2007), A. Awramiuk (2009), J. Angiel (2011).

These works have been essential to the research issues studied in this chapter. Regardless of their scientific value, these studies represent the geographic mainstream that has developed parallel to the direction defined by sociological and psychological approaches. In these studies, there has been a strong emphasis on socio-cultural analysis, unfortunately with a vague approach to the impact of geographical space on territorial ties. Meanwhile, geographical space (understood as a system of biotic and abiotic components, as well as products of human activity along with relations produced and shaped by him) if understood holistically, clearly determines the nature of people – environment relationships, regardless of spatial scale. An application of the described research arises primarily from the possibility of using conclusions and results in formal regional education, including those related to the development of appropriate educational strategies. This was emphasized by P. Pytka (2011, p. 6) referring to the work of D.R. Willams and J.W. Roggenbuck (1989) [...] *the application significance of research on the influence of geographical determinants on the bond of man with his territory is based on the possibility to use this knowledge in the development of local strategies for space management. It gives an opportunity to input a very important and often skipped planning aspect in the form of residents personal feelings and preferences with respect to the surrounding environment.*

Results presented in this article clearly confirm that lessons on regional subjects play an important role in shaping territorial identity and the attitudes of students. The particular role in this respect falls to those which are implemented within geography lessons and as part of the educational trail *Regional education – cultural heritage in the region*. They contribute significantly to the mastery of complex knowledge about the region, its distinctiveness and ultimately to the development of student's personality.

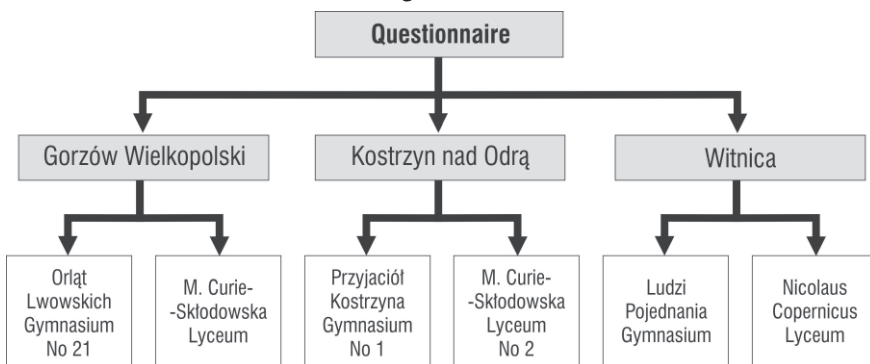
### Aim and scope of research

In order to determine the development level of pupils territorial consciousness a number of surveys have been completed. Referring to the work of Z. Rykiel (1999) it was assumed that territorial awareness refers to the [...] *sense of separateness of own territory, as well as the territorial collectivity (community)*. Due to the extensive and unfortunately often interchangeable use of the terms *territorial identity* and *regional identity* it was necessary to define a second term. In this case, referring to the work of I. Dybska-Jakóbkiewicz (2007) it was assumed that [...] *regional identity is an identification with a certain area – a region*, which is reflected in the attitude of students involved in the functioning of their environment and opened to other communities. Territorial identity is therefore, a permanent element of personality that despite the transformations of environment, guarantees the ontological security, allowing the man to remain himself. The interaction of two factors on personality: ones own perceptions and the incoming information about the image from the environment makes the identification not only a process of a continuous nature, but also an evolving subject.

The research was carried out in September 2007, in Gorzów county, lying in the western part of Poland, near the border with Germany (the Land of Brandenburg). Three towns with distinctly different population were selected:

- ▶ Gorzów Wielkopolski (about 125,000 inhabitants),
- ▶ Kostrzyn nad Odrą (about 18,000 inhabitants) and
- ▶ Witnica (about 7,000 inhabitants).

From each of these cities one middle school (gymnasium) and one high school (lyceum) were selected to the survey, and after the interview students from two classes in each school were tested (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1.** The names and location of schools selected for the survey.

The questionnaire used to design the tool consisted of two parts. The dichotomy of the research tool was forced by the formulation of the research aims:

- I) the determination of regional identity and
- II) territorial consciousness of middle and high school students from the Gorzów county.

The survey was supposed to demonstrate emotional attitude of students to their region and to show what was their knowledge in this field. It was also assumed that on the basis of these results, changes that occur in the awareness of students on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> levels of education could be determined.

Before the beginning of the study it was hypothesized that students' knowledge about their own region will increase, and therefore will be higher on the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of education, while the regional identity of the students would be clear and well developed. It was also assumed that the spatial extent of the region (treated by students as their own) would increase with the age of the student. The location of the school the student attends was also considered as an important factor.

A number of questions corresponding with the research tasks were formulated:

- ▶ *Which area did students consider as "their own region"?*
- ▶ *To what extent did pupils feel a bonds with their region?*
- ▶ *How does the territorial identity and the area that students consider as their own region changes with successive levels of education?*
- ▶ *Does the size of the city where student live influence their attitude to their own region?*
- ▶ *Where the students would like to live?*
- ▶ *Are the students satisfied with their place of residence?*
- ▶ *Where the students gained knowledge about their own region?*

The number of students from each school was different, because classes had different sizes. Furthermore, during the survey the attendance was less than 100% (**Table 1**). A total of 258 students, including 131 middle school students and 127 high school students was tested. The number of students tested from each town was similar: 84 from Gorzów, 85 from Kostrzyn nad Odrą and 89 from Witnica.

**Table 1.** Number of surveyed students from each school covered by the study.

Surveyed	Number of surveyed					
	Gorzów Wlkp.		Kostrzyn n. Odrą		Witnica	
	middle school	high school	middle school	high school	middle school	high school
Girls	20	21	16	37	31	24
Boys	22	21	24	8	18	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>40</b>

The questionnaire included two parts: a general and a detailed one. The general part consisted of 8 questions (5 closed and 3 open) addressed to all respondents. Questions were constructed to determine their regional identity. On the other hand, the detailed part of the survey was designed to assess what was knowledge the students had about their own region and thus check what was their territorial awareness. This part of the survey was different for students from each town. Nevertheless, it was composed of very similar questions, sometimes identical in order to make the final comparison easier. The survey consisted of 17 questions for pupils from Kostrzyn n. Odrą, 18 questions for students from schools in Gorzów and 18 questions for Witnica pupils. The results obtained from detailed (second) part of the survey is not discussed in this paper.

## Results

Based on the analysis of student responses to the questions in the general part of the survey, an attitude to the region was determined, expressed by the territorial diversity and strength of ties with the region. For question 1 (*Which of the following areas do you consider "your region"?*) students could choose one of 12 variants (**Table 2**). The answers were slightly different. Students from Witnica considered their region commune (51%) as most important, followed by "city and surroundings" (39%). In contrast, students from Kostrzyn n. Odrą and Gorzów favoured "city and surroundings" as a region (respectively 55% and 48%).

Pupils of both middle schools and high schools, frequently treated "city and surroundings" in which they live as their region. Secondly, middle school pupils indicated commune (municipality), and high school students – province (voivodeship) as significant. On this basis it can be concluded that an area with which pupils identify extends with age. In the third place students at both types of schools pointed to "town/city". Students did not identify with the geographical area in which they lived. This answer was marked only by few high schools students (see **Table 2**).

**Table 2.** Territorial understanding of the region by the surveyed students.

Question 1: Which of the following areas do you consider "your region"?						
Options to answer	Middle school			High school		
	replies	% of replies	% middle school pupils	replies	% of replies	% high school pupils
Area:						
Country	10	4.48	7.63	15	6.82	11.81
Voivodeship	20	8.97	15.27	28	12.73	22.05
District	19	8.52	14.50	14	6.36	11.02
Commune	33	14.80	25.19	16	7.27	12.60
<b>City and surroundings</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>27.35</b>	<b>46.56</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>31.82</b>	<b>55.12</b>
Town/city	27	12.11	20.61	22	10.00	17.32
Geographical area	0	0.00	0.00	5	2.27	3.94
Other indications (5)	52	23.31	39.69	50	22.73	39.37
No answer	1	0.45	0.76	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100 = 131</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100 = 127</b>

Pupils had six options at their disposal to indicate the strength of any ties to their region (**Table 3**). The degree of bonds at both stages of education was almost the same. Most pupils answered that the degree of their relationship was average – 42% of middle school students and 53.5% of high school students. 28.4% of high school students and 20.6% of middle school students indicated that their bond with the region is high. 19.1% of middle school students and 7.9% of high school students pointed at very high bond with region.

At both stages of education most of the students had an average connection with their region. In middle school only 2.3% answered that their bond with the region was low or none. Approximately 9.9% of middle school students did not give any answer to this question. In contrast, 1.6% of high school students said that they did not feel any bond with the region, and less than 0.8% stated that this bond was very low. Among high school students 3.1% did not give any answer. Most of the students who pointed their degree of bonds as low came from Witnica. In each city, there were some young people who were not able to determine the strength of bond to their region, but most of these students were in Kostrzyn nad Odrą (8.2%).

**Table 3.** Strength of territorial bonds with the region in the opinion of surveyed students.

Question 2: <i>To what extent do you feel a bond with the region?</i>							
Options to answer	Gorzów Wlkp.	Kostrzyn n. Odrą	Witnica	Middle school		High school	
Rank:	% pupils			replies	%	replies	%
Very high	12.0	14.1	14.6	25	19.1	10	7.9
High	31.0	17.7	24.7	27	20.6	36	28.4
<b>Average</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>53.5</b>
Low	6.0	4.7	2.2	5	3.8	6	4.7
Very low	0	1.2	3.5	3	2.3	1	0.8
None	2.3	3.5	0	3	2.3	2	1.6
No answer	4.7	8.2	6.7	13	9.9	4	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Specifying their own knowledge about the region (question 3: *What is the level of your knowledge of the region?*) students had six possible variants of answer. Both middle school (58.8%) and high school students (64.6%) mostly reported that their level of knowledge about the region was average. Then, 15.3% of middle school students answered that their level of knowledge about region was high, and 9.9% very high. High school students were more cautious in making judgments, because 15.7% of them thought that a level of knowledge about their own region is low. However, 11% felt they had a high level of knowledge. Only 3.1% of high school students indicated a very high level of knowledge about their own region (**Table 4**). It can be concluded that the students at the higher stage of education admitted to lower amounts of knowledge about their own region. This can arise from the fact that in high schools less time is devoted to regional education than in primary and middle schools. In addition, older students evaluated knowledge more critically than their younger colleagues, and in fact may know more than younger colleagues.

Analysing the responses of students in relation to their place of study (**Table 4**), most of respondents also indicated a medium level. About 69% of students from Witnica, more than 54% of students from Kostrzyn n. Odrą and 62% of students from Gorzów place their knowledge of the region at this level. It seems to be a manifestation of relatively little criticism of their knowledge.

**Table 4.** The level of knowledge about the region in the opinion of the surveyed students.

Question 3: <i>What is the level of your knowledge of your own region?</i>							
Options to answer	Gorzów Wlkp.	Kostrzyn n. Odrą	Witnica	Middle school		High school	
Degree:	% pupils			replies	%	replies	%
Very high	6.0	9.4	4.5	13	9.9	4	3.1
High	14.2	10.6	14.6	20	15.3	14	11.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>68.6</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>64.6</b>
Low	14.2	13.0	5.6	8	6.1	20	15.7
Very low	0.0	8.2	2.2	6	4.6	3	2.4
None	1.2	0.0	1.2	1	0.7	1	0.8
No answer	2.4	4.7	3.4	6	4.6	3	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100.0</b>

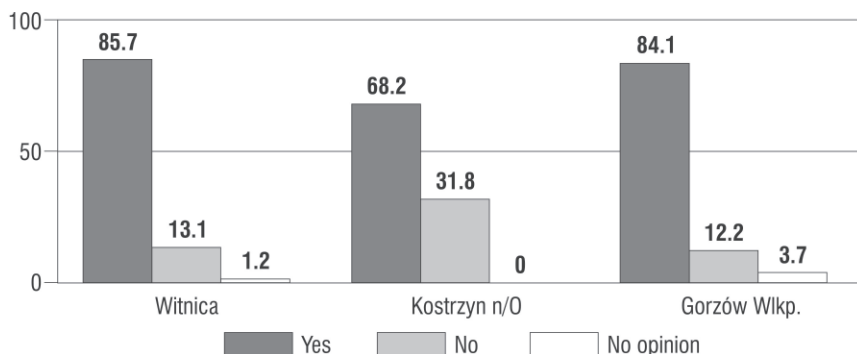
Most of the students who determined their level of regional knowledge as high were in Witnica (14.6%), least in Kostrzyn n. Odrą (10.6%). However, most of the students who indicated their level of knowledge as very high came from Kostrzyn n. Odrą (9.4%), and least of Witnica 94.5%. On the other hand, most of the students evaluating the level of knowledge about the region as low came from Gorzów Wielkopolski (14.2%), then in Kostrzyn n. Odrą (13%) and Witnica (5.6%). The comparison of indicated values confirms that the number of students who assessed their knowledge about the region critically increased with the size of the municipality of residence.

The vast majority of students in all localities were satisfied with living in their own town. Most satisfied were in Witnica – almost 86%, and least in Kostrzyn n. Odrą – 68.2%. A very small number of students from Gorzów Wlkp. (3.7%) and Witnica (1.2%) admitted they did not know whether they are happy or not with the place of residence. It can be concluded that "local patriotism" can be seen among the students in certain districts. Most of the dissatisfied pupils were in Kostrzyn n. Odrą (31.8%), which may result from the fact that students felt an insufficient number of recreation and entertainment facilities as well as sports, cultural and educational ones.

In the light of the obtained results, it was impossible to confirm the hypothesis that the satisfaction of students increases, with the size of the place of residence. Analysing the responses in distinction between stages of education, it can be seen



that both the middle and high school students are mostly satisfied with the place of residence.



**Figure 2.** Emotional attitude to the place of residence. Answers to question 4: *Are you happy that you live in your town?*

However, a certain imbalance was noticed, since over 10% more of middle school students than high school students were satisfied with their place of residence. The number of dissatisfied high schools students was significantly higher than middle school. An argument often recited by high school students was a concern for their education and the belief that in their municipalities there are no colleges in which they would like to study. High school students from Kostrzyn n. Odrą dominated among the disaffected (31.8%, 13.1% in Witnica and 12.2% in Gorzów, see **Figure 2**). Students from smaller towns often pointed out that: *it is a small town, unattractive, there are no possibilities of developing talents and interests, etc.*

A natural step oin the research procedure was to ask the question 5: *Where would you like to live and why?* (**Table 5**). Among the middle school students 44.2% said they would like to continue living in their town, and more than 34.1% would like to live in a bigger/big city in Poland. The most popular cities mentioned by students were: Poznań, Wrocław, Warsaw, Szczecin and Cracow. First of all, students would like to live in large provincial capital. This tendency was the same among middle and high school students. High school students frequently emphasized the presence of good and reputable universities in such cities. Most of high school students, over 45.2%, would like to live in big city in Poland.

Almost 40% of students in Witnica and 47% in Kostrzyn would like to live primarily in some major city in Poland. However, it is worth noticing that in both cases as a second choice pupils pointed their current place of residence. In contrast, most

of the students from Gorzów would not change the place of residence (37.5%), and 32.9% would prefer to live in a larger city. It can be concluded that students from smaller towns would like to live in larger centers where, as they believe, life is more interesting, but in the absence of such a possibility they would remain in the place of the actual residence.

**Table 5.** The level of knowledge about the region in the own opinion of the surveyed students.

Question 5: <i>Where would you like to live and why?</i>							
Options to answer	Gorzów Wlkp.	Kostrzyn n. Odrą	Witnica	Middle school		High school	
Degree:	% pupils			replies	%	replies	%
In bigger/big city in Poland	32.9	46.9	39.5	44	34.1	57	45.2
Abroad	19.3	18.5	15.1	20	15.5	25	19.9
Where I live	37.5	27.2	37.2	57	44.2	30	23.8
Close to the big city	5.7	0	3.5	4	3.1	4	3.2
I don't know	2.3	0	0	1	0.8	1	0.8
Other	2.3	7.4	4.7	3	2.3	9	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Living abroad was selected as the third option. This variant was indicated by 16% of middle school students and 20% of high school students. The most frequent argument was that they would find a better job, their family and friends were already there and they would live well. The most frequent places were England (London), Spain, Germany and the Netherlands. The option "abroad" was selected mostly by students in Gorzów – more than 19.3%, followed by Kostrzyn n. Odrą – 18.5% and Witnica – 15.1%. In these cases, the number of students who desired to live abroad increased with the size of the place of residence. This was probably due to the fact that students from larger cities have a greater knowledge about migrations, have more friends who went abroad and, at this stage of life, were braver and more independent.

Among middle school students the best source of information about their own region was their home – nearly 23% of the responses (see **Table 6**). Some students indicated that they learned a lot from their grandparents and great-grandparents. Then, 20.8% of respondents indicated geography lessons, 16.4% television and

15.4% regional newspapers. Only 13% of respondents pointed other classes in school and approximately 12% indicated friends as a source of knowledge. Among high school students most of responders indicated geography lesson (21.5%), followed by regional press (19.8%) and family home (17.8%). The smallest numbers of people chose "friends". The fact that approximately 21% of middle and high school students indicated geography lessons proves that for them this subject is the most important source of knowledge about the region. Among the other subjects History was most important (36% of the middle and 45% of high school students), followed by Civics, Social and Political Education (Wiedza o społeczeństwie) and Polish language. Few students pointed Biology and Education classes (approximately 20% of middle school students). Therefore, it can be stated that accordingly to these responses, in the course of formal school education, Geography and History create the essential body of knowledge about the region. However, for middle school students this range of knowledge was only slightly higher (0.6% of responses) than the knowledge gained by them at home and from contacts with friends. In contrast on the fourth stage of education, high school students indicated school (35.7%) more often than family home and friends (28.6%) as a source of knowledge about the region. It is also worth mentioning, that regional newspapers played an important role in informal education of an incidental character (as indicated by 15.4% of middle school students and 19.8% of high school students) and television (16.4% and 15.9% respectively).

**Table 6.** Sources of students' knowledge about their own region.

Question 6: <i>How did you get knowledge about your region?</i>							
Options to answer	Gorzów Wlkp.	Kostrzyn n. Odrą	Witnica	Middle school		High school	
Source:	% pupils			replies	%	replies	%
Geography lessons	20.0	18.5	24.6	80	20.8	88	21.5
Other lessons	16.2	14.9	10.0	50	13.0	58	14.2
Home	19.2	21.8	19.6	87	22.7	73	17.8
Friends	11.4	12.2	10.4	45	11.7	44	10.8
Regional newspapers	16.6	14.9	21.1	59	15.4	81	19.8
TV	16.6	17.7	14.3	63	16.4	65	15.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The largest group of students from Witnica gained knowledge about their region during Geography lessons (appr. 25% of responses). 21.1% of responders indicated regional newspapers, followed by home – 19.6% and television – 14.3% (**Table 6**). Only 10% of pupils from Witnica indicated other classes. It demonstrated that in schools in Witnica, regional content is transferred mainly through Geography lessons. On the other hand, most students in Kostrzyn n. Odrą indicated “home” (22%), followed by geography lessons (18.5%) and television (about 18%). Friends were least indicated. Almost 15% pointed “other lessons” and “regional newspapers” as a source of knowledge about the region. Pupils from Gorzów Wielkopolski responded that regional knowledge was gained during geography lessons (20%) and at home (19.2%). Other vital sources of knowledge were media (with 16% of responses) and other classes (16%). The least significant source of information, according to the students were friends (11.4%).

To confirm the results arising from the previous questions students were asked if during Geography lessons knowledge about regional issues was taught (**Table 7**). In total 258 responses were gathered, including 171 for YES (66.3%) and 82 (31.8%) for NO. In middle schools in Gorzów 62.6% of students answered that there were such geography lessons, when they learned something about their own region and surrounding area. Nearly 36% of the surveyed middle school students answered there were no geography lessons on this subject. In high schools, this trend was similar.

**Table 7.** Information about conducting geography lesson of regional subject.

<i>Question 7: Did you have any geography lessons, during which you mastered the knowledge about your region, surroundings?</i>				
Options to answer	Middle school		High school	
	replies	%	replies	%
Yes	82	62.6	89	70.1
No	47	35.9	35	25.7
No answer	2	1.5	3	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In each town the majority of students responded that they participated in Geography lessons, during which the region was discussed. However, the percentage of positive replies was significantly different in each city. In Witnica and Gorzów Wlkp. over 70% responded positively, but in Kostrzyn n. Odrą this was much lower – 51.8%. Frequently, students did not remember whether they had participated in lessons on this subject, because they were held for example, only in

primary school or had single classes in subsequent years of study. Based on these results, it was confirmed that pupils from Kostrzyn n. Odrą only rarely took part in lessons on region related topics.

Question 8: *Were school activities that involved the city and surrounding area held in field?* had an open character. However, taking account of its specificity, results are summarized in the table (**Table 8**). Surprisingly, it was found that the majority of replies indicated that the lessons on regional issues were not held in field. This was especially the case in middle schools – about 75.7% of the responses. Most of the positive responses were given by the students from Witnica – 44.4%, and least by students from Gorzów – 28.9%. It seems that classes focused on regional subjects were being held in field more often in smaller towns than big cities. Perhaps this was due to the fact that in small towns was easier to access remote places where such activities can take place and it takes less time to get there.

Insufficient fieldwork dealing with regional subjects is common in many schools, that is because such activities often involve different logistical problems, that cannot always be solved by the teacher. As a part of the educational trail "Regional education", such activities are necessary and are the main form of fulfilling the educational aims written in the curriculum.

**Table 8.** Sources of students' knowledge about their region.

Question 8: <i>Did the school activities that involved the city and surrounding area, were held in field?</i>							
Options to answer	Gorzów Wlkp.	Kostrzyn n. Odrą	Witnica	Middle school		High school	
	% pupils			replies	%	replies	%
Yes	28.9	31.6	44.4	27	24.3	51	45.1
No	71.1	68.4	55.6	84	75.7	62	54.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In reference to the different stages of education a negative answer was also predominant. However, figures showed that a positive response was much more frequent among high school students than among middle school students. It may be a result of the fact that these classes will be taken by middle school students at a later stage in their education, and high school students had already participated in them. Students gave many interesting replies enabling the orientation in the type of activities carried out during fieldwork.

Among others, they stated:

- ▶ [...] *we have visited historic sites, which are important for our citizens* (Witnica)
- ▶ *We were in the Warta River Mouth National Park (Park Narodowy "Ujście Warty"), where we observed various species of birds* (Gorzów Wlkp.)
- ▶ [...] *an educational tour to see the post-glacial sculpture [...] took place* (Gorzów Wlkp.)
- ▶ *We drove to the Warta River Mouth National Park and museums in Witnica. Also, we carried out various projects [...]* (Gorzów Wlkp.).

Using the results obtained from the detailed questionnaire the actual state of students' knowledge of their region was tested. These results are not presented in this publication.

### **Conclusions**

The level of territorial identity of students from selected schools in Gorzów county is high. However, with the change in the stage of education level, this identity slightly decreases. Presumably this is related to the fact that most of the attention to ones region is paid in primary school, a little less in middle school and definitely it is "forgotten" in high schools. Not without significance is the difficult situation on the labor market in the Gorzów region, which creates a desire, in the students, to emigrate from their city of residence. In the eyes of the students, the region in which they live is not able to provide a fair future for them.

Most frequently, for the students, their "own region" is the place in which they live and its surroundings. The location of the school that student attends is also very important. If the school is not located in their place of residence, it is most likely that student will identify with a greater area and their own region of influence (aura) increases in size with the age of the student.

Generally, it was found that the bond of the surveyed students with their region was average. Students do not consider themselves to be strongly connected with their city and neighborhood. Among surveyed students, residents of Kostrzyn n. Odrą are the least connected with the town, which certainly is a result of location within walking distance from the border with Germany.

According to most students their knowledge of the region and its specific characteristics was average. Middle school students rated their knowledge higher than high school students, who were quite critical of themselves. However, an analysis of the detailed questionnaires, showed that high school students had a broader and more reliable knowledge of the various aspects of their own city

and region. Also, along with a higher level of education, students' knowledge of the individuality of their regions' was larger, which, to a large extent, is influenced by completed regional activities, which were yet to be done by younger students.

Students from Gorzów county declared they were happy with where they lived. Most of the satisfied students were in Witnica, most unhappy were located in Kostrzyn nad Odrą. It was also noted that with the higher stage of education, the level of satisfaction was lower. Older students evaluated their towns more critically as a result of their greater knowledge about them, as well as major requirements. Most of younger pupils preferred to live where they lived so far and older students were more willing to move to larger cities from their present place of residence. It showed that the bond of high school students' with their region was smaller, but their territorial awareness was broader, as they noted the strengths and weaknesses of their place of residence. A large group of high school students wanted to go abroad for work. Responses related to the preference for towns showed that the majority of students wanted to live in larger cities, because, in their opinion they would have better conditions for learning, developing interests, leisure. Most of the students from Gorzów would like not to change their place of residence. These responses indicated that in Gorzów, students' territorial awareness is greater, than the other questioned pupils.

The territorial identity of students from Gorzów county is quite diverse. At lower levels of education it is stronger. Students are more connected with their town and appreciate its individuality and specificity, despite the fact that they have less knowledge about it than older colleagues. The connection is stronger among the students from Witnica than other places. Taking into account all of the answers it can be concluded that the weakest territorial identity was in Kostrzyn nad Odrą, which could be the result of its border location, increasing cooperation between Polish and German municipalities resulting in larger multiculturalism.

The territorial awareness of students in Gorzów county was better developed among the students at the higher education levels. However, the results showed that there were significant gaps in students' knowledge of their region.

Results from the questions about the learning process showed that the knowledge about region is gained mainly on geography lessons (high school) and at home (middle school). Besides geographical studies, regional issues appear in History lessons. A valuable source of knowledge about the region is also obtained from local media. Unfortunately, most students did not participate in any fieldwork, in their city or area. Those who experienced such classes, often spoke about

them negatively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of the curriculum of *Regional education – cultural heritage in the region* trail is inadequate, because fieldwork should be the most important form of activity in building territorial awareness of students. Moreover teachers point out that the implementation of the regional trail is difficult in the current school practice. Most of them admitted that in their schools, teachers of different subjects placed regional content in each classes, which is a direct result of the lesson program taught by them. The big problem, in their opinion, was insufficient teaching materials to assist in teaching about regional education.

Regional education and shaping territorial awareness should not be concluded with getting the secondary school certificate, it should last a lifetime. It must be considered as a process of constant discovery of the region in its astonishing richness and diversity – a process that allows personal, comprehensive intellectual development through the acquisition of knowledge about the history, geography and culture of the region. It should also include physical activities as well e.g. through hiking, biking, kayaking and other. Its importance is even bigger in adult life, because then, even more than in adolescence, the necessity of deepening ties with the motherland and taking responsible action in its development is even greater.

## References

1. ANGIEL J., 2011. *Rzeka Wisła jej wartość i percepcja. Wisła w edukacji geograficznej*, WSiGR UW, Warszawa.
2. AWRAMIUK A., 2009. *Pogranicze kultur. Percepcja „własnego regionu” przez uczniów a edukacja regionalna*, Wydawnictwo UW, Warszawa.
3. DYBSKA-JAKÓBKIEWICZ I., 2007. *Etapy kształcenia a zmiany tożsamości regionalnej uczniów*, *Geografia w Szkole*, No. 1, pp. 47-50.
4. NAWROCKA A., 2008. *Rozwój świadomości terytorialnej jako element edukacji geograficznej o regionie na przykładzie uczniów powiatu gorzowskiego*, (M. Sc. thesis under the academic supervision of prof. Zbigniew Podgórski on the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, manuscript).
5. PYTKA P., 2005. *Bieszczadzkie „święte źródła” – cenne obiekty krajobrazu kulturowego*, *Annales UMCS*, No. B, LX, pp. 129-145.
6. PYTKA P., 2011. *Geograficzne uwarunkowania więzi terytorialnych młodzieży w Bieszczadach*, (Ph.D. thesis under the academic supervision of prof. Marian Harasimiuk in Didactical Laboratory of Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, manuscript).
7. PYTKA P., SZCZĘSNA J., 2007. *Tożsamość kulturowa dzieci i młodzieży w aspekcie edukacji regionalnej*, [in:] *Region w edukacji przyrodniczej i geograficznej, Nauki Geograficzne w Badaniach Regionalnych*, Vol. IV, Kielce.



8. RAK G., 2000. *Poczucie przynależności terytorialnej młodzieży licealnej Dolnego Śląska*, [in:] *Studia nad rozwojem Dolnego Śląska*, No. 5 (6), pp. 112-131.
9. RYKIEL Z., 2004. *Region a chaos percepcyjny*, [in:] T. Michalski., ed., *Region i edukacja regionalna – zarys problematyki*, Wyd. Bernardinum, Pelplin, pp. 42-47.
10. SZKURLAT E., 2004. *Więzi terytorialne młodzieży z miastem. Uwarunkowania. Przemiany*, Wyd. UŁ, Łódź.
11. SZKURLAT E., 2007. *Psychologiczne i kulturowe uwarunkowania percepcji środowiska*, [in:] *Percepcja współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej*, M. Madurowicz ed., Wyd. WGiSR UW, Warszawa, pp. 63-72.
12. WILIAMS D.R., ROGGENBUCK J.W., 1989. *Measuring place attachment: Some preliminary result*, [in:] *Abstract of the 1989 Symposium on Leisure Research*, National Recreation and Park Association, Virginia, p. 32.