

EDUCATIONAL NOTES ABOUT FORMATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Piotr Petrykowski

Nicolas Copernicus University (POLAND)

Abstract

Human life is a kind of translocation in the social space, where an important coordinate is time. Human life we can also divide for smaller parts – micro spaces, which sometime we can call them – phases of human development. They are very well described in science – Piaget, Ericson, Debesse, etc. My notes contains a few new points in the view of human life and development.

When we will have a look deeply in these micro spaces we can divided them also for micro phases. In case of individual life the micro phases composes functional integrated system – phases, which constitute an functional integrated system – human life. Each of us passed the micro phases and phases on several interrelated levels – biological, intellectual, social, transcendental, emotional etc. Between each micro phases and phase we can detect more or less expressed borders – gates, or meta gates. The meta gates between phases are better visible. Young man does not have a well constructed and integrated “ego”, but at the same moment he has consciousness of problems which are before him. In adolescent formation of identity meet a special crisis concerned sense that “I am not, whom I should be, I will be, I was”. This crisis is a problem in search answer for question “who I am now”.

One of the characteristic signs of this phase important for this notes is eradication. “Old” kinds of inveteracy are not enough useful and young man has to find a new inveteracy in social world, social space. He/she is not a child, but still not an adult. He/she search an identity, and one of the way in the process of inveteracy is style of life.

For these reasons the society is “organizing” a special space – moratorium, where and when adolescent people can find a possibility to formulate their own, individual identity and connections with cultural identity. One of the kind of moratorium is education. The adult members of society are expecting that young man, when he passed the period of moratorium, he will be ready to be an adult, responsible for his own life, family, society etc., will be ready to open the meta gates to new micro phases and phases. Because we – adults – are.

But in our adults, our generation, experiences, we passed the borders, meta gates well designated. Changing the modern society we have mixed all of the micro phases’ ways with the meta gates, and destroyed most of the designates of the phases’ meta gates. A lot of examples can give the strong arguments for thesis, that most of the young people are losing a consciousness of passing the meta gates, borders between the phases – adolescence and adult. My own research gave me the arguments that youth has the same world of values, but they do not have well précised designates.

On the other hand they live in the well complicated world, made by adults. We – adults loosed control of some cultural extensions (computers, technology etc). So we have problems to understand this world, and we can’t understand the world of

adolescent people. For this reason we can't not only to give the answers for many questions, but also we can not to be a guide or partner. So the most important question is: what are the designates of the borders, what are the meta gates, in contemporary life for young people.

If we will look at this problem also from global perspective – we can notice, that at the same time we deconstructed a lot of individual borders, individualized; we broken the borders of our social, safe “territorial” spaces and start build a behavioral sink.

Keywords: Cultural identity, education, multiculturalism, biculturalism

Human live is kind of translocation in the social space, where an important coordinate is time. This kind of space has the mechanisms, regulations and rules similar as in the space described by Albert Einstein in his theory – with a bend, abridgement and extension etc.

Human live we can also divide for smaller parts – micro spaces, which sometime we can call them - phases of human development. They are very well described in science – Piaget, Ericson, Debesse, etc. My notes are not against any of these descriptions, but contains a few new points in the view of human live and development.

When we will have a look deeply in these micro spaces we can divided them also for again smaller parts – lets call them micro phases. In case of individual live the micro phases composes functional integrated system – phases, which constitute an functional integrated system – human live. Each of us passed the micro spaces and spaces (micro phases and phases) on several interrelated levels (ways) – biological, intellectual, social, transcendental, emotional etc. These different ways are well looked specially in micro phases.

Between each micro phases and phase we can detect more or less expressed borders – gates, or meta gates. Most of these meta gates which concerned micro phases are not visible but they have the designates denoted a moment of passing the border. First steps, first “me”, first menstruation, first gray hair etc.

The meta gates between phases are better visible: living a pubes with first cry, baptism, entrance to kindergarten, then to the primary school, Communion, high school, diplomas ceremony, first engage, first job, marriage etc. Both kind of meta gates are very important in the process of identity formation, the most important for adolescence.

Young man does not have a well constructed and integrated “ego”, but at the same moment he has consciousness of problems which are before him. In adolescent formation of identity meet a special crisis concerned sense that “I am not, whom I should be, I will be, I was”. This crisis is a problem in search answer for question “who I am now”.

One of the characteristic signs of this phase is a “negative identity” . Other – well important for this notes is eradication. “Old” kinds of inveteracy are not enough useful and young man has to find a new inveteracy in social world, social space. He is not a child, but still not an adult. He search an identity, and one of the way in the process of inveteracy is style of life.

For these reasons the society is “organizing” a special space – moratorium, where and when adolescent people can find a possibility to formulate their own, individual identity and connections with cultural identity. One of the kind of moratorium is education, especially school, in contemporary societies – high schools. Others can be travels, ramble etc.

The adult members of society are expecting that young man, when he passed the period of moratorium, he will be ready to be an adult, responsible for his own life, family, society etc., will be ready to open the meta gates to new micro phases and phases. Because we – adults –are.

But in our adults, our generation, experiences, we passed the borders, meta gates well designated. First job with procedure of engage and ceremony of coming in; the ceremony of marriage, opening account in the bank etc.

Changing the modern society we have mixed all of the micro phases’ ways with the meta gates, and destroyed most of the designates of the phases’ meta gates. Young

people can open account in the bank just after the Confirmation (“learn to save money”), are working at summer or weekends, or full/part time as pupils of secondary or high school (“for holidays” etc). A lot of examples like these can give the strong arguments for thesis, that most of the young people are losing a consciousness of passing the meta gates, borders between the phases – adolescence and adult. My own research gave me the arguments that youth has the same world of values, but they do not have well précised designates.

On the other hand they live in the well complicated world, made by adults. We – adults loose control of some cultural extensions (computers, technology etc). So we have problems to understand this world, and we can not understand the world of adolescent people. For this reason we can not only to give the answers for many questions, but also we can not to be a guide or partner. So the most important question is: what are the designates of the borders, what are the meta gates, in contemporary life for young people.

Another side of this problem is national and cultural identity in the Europe without well précised borders and designates (“euro”). Not only economical, but also simple borders designates are deconstructed. When we are passing the border between France, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark we do not have clear designates of different countries, different cultures. Probably the only one differential value is language. But for how long ?

If we will look at this problem also from global perspective – we can notice, that at the same time we deconstructed a lot of individual borders, individualized; we broken the borders of our social, safe “territorial” spaces and start build a behavioral sink.

For these reasons I am sure that a very important problem of research studies should concern the cultural conditioning for determining the sources for formation of cultural identity – “personal homelands”.

The fundamental research problem I intend to solve is to determine the two types of factors that are significant in the formation of cultural identity in its local/regional dimension and that enable the contemporary youth to (1) perceive and recognize the borders of their own versus alien cultures, and (2) perceive and recognize critical

“*loci*”, also known in the literature of the subject as “intimate loci” and “personal homelands”.

The research will focus more precisely on determining the sensory points of entry through which young people enter the cultural space of other groups’ or communities’ and how they go about defining the borders of the space or the cultural territory.

Theoretical and methodological foundations for the project currently submitted for funding is comprehensively laid out in my work *Edukacja regionalna. Problemy podstawowe i otwarte* (*Regional Education. Basic and Open problems*) published by Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland) in 2003.

Regional education is being endangered with that in a particular way. The system changes not only in European countries, processes of European integration, new face of nations, ethnic groups, local communities, development of the means of communication, globalisation etc. especially stimulated discussion and controversies around such notions as the cultural identity, national identity, the homeland – large and little, region, regionalism, cultural heritage. They became present in the lips of politicians, ideologists, activists, animators, organisers. Quite obviously they entered also the workshop of researchers and scholars, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, geographers, historians, economists, lawyers and finally – pedagogues.

The regionalism, the Renaissance of which is readily today spoken of, constitutes *de facto* an important source for regional education. And the regionalism is a peculiar ideology, expressing the attitude to a particular, important or even sometimes beloved by each of us and every group, members of which we are, territory. The territory of childhood, the territory of life – our territory. And as such an ideology – regionalism is an attribute of a human being, has a *stricte* human dimension. Such understood regionalism is not only a process of transmission of knowledge of a given territory, this is a process of experiencing territory of life, regardless of the name we give to it: home, region, little homeland or our world.

In my works also draw the attention to the fact, that the regional education should not be restricted to school alone, but that it oversteps the limits of possibilities and

competence of that institution. But first of all my aim is to point out, that the intrinsic attributes of regional education contain numerous suggestions and important propositions for the education in general. I have reached here to the look from the perspective of the essence of some behaviour and ways of functioning of the human being. The essence – which I underline – already described by the classics of: sociology, anthropology, theory of education. Basically, I do not make any discoveries, I reach for what has already been known and described. I aim at describing the regional education by renewal of the theories and concepts already known; I decided that it is justified to undertake the analysis through the prism of the key-terms of regional education such as the region, the regionalism, private homeland and little homeland , culture, cultural heritage, regional identity.

That analysis constitutes the major part of my study. Perhaps at times it is too presentational and review, but I have decided that it is justified for the argumentation of the thesis that, first – the notion of regional education is not only unjustified, but secondly, that it comprises a broad and both socially and pedagogically important part of the reality.

My years-long research in the essence of regionalism and regional education, studies, collected data, placed against the background of more or less extensive critical analyses, lead to the reflection: in the search for answers to numerous questions, many concepts, already existent in social sciences and suggesting possible solutions, slip away. And those which are being quoted, are usually used only in selected contexts. In consequence we receive a very hazy, simplified description, containing numerous ambiguities, sometimes even contradictions. The causes of such a state of affairs are diverse, however mostly it is the political and ideological utilitarianism.

As a priority I have taken not to look at the sphere called the regional education through the prism of the newest pedagogical or sociological concepts, but to take it as an essence of human behaviour, from the perspective of the anthropology of culture, sociology, psychology or pedagogic, being today already a classic. I have to admit humbly, that I did not discover anything new, I only revealed, what has been obscured by the ideologys and so called universalisms.

One of the major concluding suggestions is a suggestion of the necessity to discuss the motivation of using the term *regional education*. This suggestion is not only a cosmetics, this is, on one hand, showing many new research areas, and on the other, a possibility for educational activities to reach for much more diverse means, often overlooked and left out. All the more so, that the problems of such education, as well as of cross-cultural and multi-cultural education, interweaved with it both structurally and functionally, are not only the problems of contemporary Poland and its contemporary young generations. This are also the issues of the present and future generations of other societies, making the united Europe, which is being confirmed by my analyses and observations made during travelling experiences.

The suggestion to discuss the motivation of the term *regional education* results also form the fact, that my research has a character of a specific study of one notion. I felt obliged to that attitude since form one hand I have found that the known things and phenomena are named differently or inadequately; that many things and phenomena is not named or not defined precisely enough. And this ambiguity of notions, however quite comfortable in terms of ideology, in terms of education and research is harmful. What justifies undertaking such a specific study of a notion is also the fact, that education, called regional is still deprived of essential theoretical foundations. One of the important foundations of each concept is after all its notion machinery. That is why I have assumed a particular structure of my point of view. In some my works I present and analyse the descriptions, pretending to the status of such concepts. It includes almost all important attitudes.

I make the analysis of the most common ways of handling and describing used in discussion on the regional education and regionalism, notions and key-words: region, regionalism, culture, cultural heritage, private homelands, regional identity. I decided the review and presentation how many doubts and ambiguities there are in the sphere of notions, and what consequences result from that.

I have formulated the proposal of different attitude to regional education, as to the cultural education. In my researches concerned *Space, place, time* in consequence of the assumptions made, I undertake the analysis of regional education in context of

those three, neglected in pedagogics, categories. Because those three categories are practically not being taken into account at all in theoretical discussion and studies on the so called regional education, in spite of the fact, that they are being the reference for all the processes and mechanisms of: developing cultural identity, rootedness, experiencing culture etc. My studies *Regional education – a moderate context of announcement*, contains the summary of my considerations and reveals the possible directions of further research as well as motivation for the change of attitude to and thinking of (a kind of *metanoia*) education called regional as on the cultural education, answer to the questions rankling the present and future young generations.

The consequence of the processes taking place in Poland within the broader European contexts is the attrition or at least partial superceding of many elements constituting cultural identity, such as language, religion, and material objects of cultural heritage. In addition, the designators of cultural borders facilitating perception of difference are also subject to universalisation. The adult generation does not seem to notice the emergence of qualitatively new spaces around the same places or the new cultural designators and other factors that could become very helpful in understanding how the bases for cultural identity of contemporary youth could be created. Analyzing the mechanism of territoriality we see that a part human behavior is concerned with acknowledging and respecting of various types of distances, including the social distance, that has been extended with television, telephony, and its most recent extensions – cellular telephony and the Internet. In my view, there exist three types of social distance: intimate, intra-cultural and inter-cultural.

The intimate social distance has an individual being able to maintain contact with other members of the group within which the individual functions. That includes also such extensions that contributed to that distance.

The intra-cultural social distance is one within which an individual can maintain contacts with other members of the same cultural community – local, ethnic, or national – while using culturally determined understandable and non-ambiguous forms of communication. The system of signs and the language has been absorbed by the individual through the processes of education and socialization.

The inter-cultural social distance comprises contacts with members of other cultural communities with which an individual is able to communicate by having acquired the prerequisite skills for such communications. Such skills may include the ability to speak or understand a foreign language, exposure to other cultures, etc.

Such classification of the social distances is based on my research which shows that a majority of adults experiences only two types of social distances, namely the intimate and the intra-cultural. Younger people in the research experience generally more than the adults the third type of social distance, the inter-cultural one. This is due to their foreign language skills, greater territorial mobility across cultures, not only as tourists but also as students, workers and explorers. A new space becomes the locus for an individual when he or she perceives it as familiar. For an increasing number of young people the space between the intra and inter cultural distance becomes to be perceived as cognate and becomes a locus. This space then becomes a symbol of freedom and openness suggestive of future and encouraging to take action. For most adult people that same space and the freedom associated with it constitute a threat.

Among the many aspects of perceiving and entering space, we should consider an important but often ignored fact that not everyone approaches to the surrounding world in the same way. Cultural conditioning of the differences between the perceptual worlds is a well known phenomenon. Though the differentiation is lesser among people belonging to one culture than among people from different cultures, these differences do exist and can be very significant. We can propose that the perceptual worlds of the two generations – adults and youth – are fundamentally different. As other authors also find, location of both the adults and the young in different spaces is manifested also in different ways of orienting within the space or translocation from one place to another. The variance of orientation lends further support to the thesis of location in two different perceptual worlds.

The above also applies to perception of objects and places by representatives of various generations. One more aspect is worthy of noting. The stimulating force of symbols depends on the existence of a coherent world. Lack thereof reduces symbols to the status of mere signs. The nature of living and present symbols is that they do not

require an explanation. On the other hand, increasing number of symbols have become signs because they have lost their status of a place or locum. This may not be, however, a result of a lack of general meaning, but rather an effect of the belief that the coherence of the world that has generated the places and symbols continues nevertheless. Meanwhile, the world has changed, escaping in many instances the control of its creators. The problem of symbols, signs and perception of signs is also the problem of borders.

The significance of the issue of determining the factors that would enable today's youth to define important places, intimate places, private homelands reaches beyond purely educational issues and conditions. Along with the globalization processes, in the Polish dimension it is also an issue related to: transformation of the political system; new administrative division of Poland; the processes of European integration; as well as the new types of migration.

This is a really fascinating challenge to understand the meaning of place and time for a human being and to support it in search for its intimate place, its own substitute of Eden, which once was its mother's womb; a safe territory, where it can find time and possibility for reflection on the questions: who am I?, where am I from?, were am I?

Isn't it?