



Renata Nowakowska-Siuta

Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw

ORCID 0000-0001-7227-6127

Comparative education in search of a processual model for dealing with cultural diversity

Abstract: As the world becomes more and more culturally diverse, an accurate knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on the mental processes of an individual and the construction of social capital become increasingly important for our ability to effectively understand differences in culture. How can we cope with this task in everyday life? What is the relevance of comparative education in this process? One solution could be to create a certain intellectual map of cultural similarities and differences to which we could refer at any time in order to better understand the diversity around us. Such a peculiar encyclopaedia of knowledge about the diversity of the world has not yet been created, and it is unlikely that it will, given the dynamics of social processes, the multiplicity of events and ways of understanding them. Then how can a rational model for dealing with cultural diversity be created? In this article, I want to draw attention to the importance of comparative education in the creation of such a model, taking into account the relatively new position of comparativists recognising that a considerably important role in the process of coping with cultural diversity and difference is played i.a. by dialogic memory.

Keywords: comparative education, cross-cultural communication, cultural memory, cultural differences.

Introduction

Why do we study different cultures? What role does comparative education have in this process and what is its essential value in this respect, in contrast to other sub-disciplines of education and other disciplines of the social sciences? Can comparative research serve as a valuable element in the process of coping with cultural diversity? Is it possible to build a model for dealing with the multiplicity of cultures based on comparative research? I address these and a number of other questions in this article in order to demonstrate the importance of comparative research in the world of inevitable diversity, inconsistency, heterogeneity and accompanying cognitive and emotional references to others, often perceived as strangers, different and sometimes threatening the hitherto coherent identity of societies and national groups.

Until we become aware of the motives behind our strategies of dealing with multiplicity and difference, a plethora of facts about cultural similarities and differences will remain just what they usually are - a layer of information. We study other cultures primarily to improve the quality of our lives and our relationships with others. If we fail to find a way to put the acquired knowledge to good use, the chance to improve the quality of life, both of our life and that of others, will be lost. The essence of comparative education, therefore, is to find a way to make use of the established facts, to make them a means to achieve the goal of mutual understanding and respect between the diverse perspectives on the world and the place of the human being in said world. This way, comparative education becomes, as has been more evident in recent times, not only an idiographic but also a nomothetic science. It establishes and analyses the regularities governing the world of social life. It is not only a description and analysis of the elements of educational policy in individual countries, as it was perceived a decade ago, but it is changing dynamically in the direction of the creation of new models, new areas of exploration of social life, examining social phenomena that build social capital, such as trust, community, prosociality, in order to determine the rules governing the way societies function through the juxtaposition of variables and indicators, to analyse and compare the various models that already exist in individual countries and, in the final phase, to determine the scientific possibility of their implementation in other countries and national communities. It is no longer enough for comparative education to merely describe and explain the organisation and main tasks of education in individual countries. Similarly, the inclusion of international elements in analyses of selected social problems is not enough. Comparative education,

as can be observed even in the topics which belong to this sub-discipline of the educational sciences undertaken worldwide, increasingly displays the ambition to determine, on the basis of analyses of international solutions, the causes, effects, rules which determine the success or failure of social actions, including those within the field of education.

Trust as an element of social capital and uninterrupted intracultural and cross-cultural communication

Knowledge simplifies the understanding of processes taking place in the world which is increasingly culturally diverse, yet people are influenced more often by their emotions than by their desire to acquire knowledge. Emotions, especially the negative ones, take control over our behaviour and even those who are usually able to critically analyse problems and, in most situations, act ethically and sometimes altruistically, are unable to think and act in a rational manner under the influence of negative emotions. Regulation of emotions, critical thinking and openness are essential qualities not only to foster proper interpersonal and intercultural communication, but also the most significant factors for one's personal development. This model of personal development is inherently a developmental one. As a result of critical thinking about cultural differences, as well as due to flexibility and openness to new ideas, new ways of perceiving others are developed, the existing hypotheses about others undergo reformulation creating new constructs within ourselves, which we can call higher-level reflection, shifting our thinking from one extreme to the other, that is, from denial of differences and belittling them to adaptation and integration. The development of critical thinking in individual persons builds social capital and turns the world into a fascinating meeting place for different cultures, different ways of experiencing and understanding the world.

Emilé Durkheim wrote that 'some believe that in order to learn about the nature, functions and causes of the division of labour, it would be sufficient to analyse how each of us understands it'. (own transl. Durkheim, 1933, p. 46). If we replaced the terms 'division of labour' with 'trust', we would arrive at a similar characterisation of the understanding of the concept. The degree of trust or distrust towards another person can be influenced by knowledge of the person and understanding of their behaviour. To trust someone means to have adequate information about the person we want to trust, especially regarding his or her intentions towards us. It is therefore possible to mistakenly trust or distrust someone because one has inadequate or incomplete information about the other. However, if we consider the matter of trust as

a category of social life, we can conclude that trust spreads vertically and horizontally, thus, from one local organisation to another, as well as from a local group to a higher authority. This positive perspective has not been properly studied, there exist merely some scattered theories on the subject. Gabriela Montinola (2004, p. 298) asserts that one may observe the opposite process: distrust towards one institution generates distrust towards others. She argues that it is not possible, for instance, for citizens to trust those in authority when the former lack the knowledge to define real intentions of the latter. In either case, trust is a matter of choice. The antidote to a lack of public trust can be, and generally is, transparency and clarity of actions, preceded by an open and transparent process of lawmaking.

Thus, for instance, in the Finnish society, one observes active trust, which is a mechanism of social solidarity, based on monitoring the honesty of the other person and the institutions of the state in an open and continuous manner. Citizens are willing to trust each other as democracy gives them protection against potential abuse of trust, however, for democracy to function efficiently, people need to trust others. Trust is therefore both a condition and an effect of democracy. Finland leads the rankings regarding public trust. The level of public trust in the state institutions and of people towards each other is high, the police and the legal system are relied on, which is also influenced by a low level of corruption of state officials and representatives. Finland is not a country free of crime, but it is one of the safest. This is also a result of active trust. Active trust has to be renewed, it implies openness, the ability to use new information and public audacity/courage, also evident in educational solutions.

The issue was considered quite differently in English political thought, which for many centuries was dominated by the approach of, among others, David Hume, Adam Smith and Michael Oakeshot, regarding the emphasis on distrust towards those in power. However, today it is not a popular belief and in fact, apart from the work of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, no major political party has made such an assumption a part of its own political agenda. On the contrary, the predominant stance is mostly one advocating for the need to embed trust in the authorities. It is clear that trust in those in power is not the same category as trust in a friend or acquaintance. However, there is a thread connecting the two relationships. The failure of an individual relationships most often reflects the relationship between the government and the citizens. Social capital based on trust, community, causality, prosociality, constitutes the foundation for the construction of a model to deal with the diversity of the social world. According to the typical definition, social

capital refers to such features of organisation of a society as trust, norms and connections which can increase the efficiency of this society by facilitating coordinated action (Putnam, 1995, p. 258). Coleman claims that social capital is defined by the functions it performs. It is not formed by single individuals, but by the sum of individuals who share the fact that they facilitate the work of other actors (Coleman, 1998, p. 598). One may conclude, already on the basis of these two discussions of the definition of social capital alone, that it enables the society to act without resorting to legal sanctions. It provides the context that protects the individual from abuse at the hands of others (Macneil, 1980). Thus, the social capital may be a substitute for the institutional capital, informal measures based on social capital may substitute for formal measures, such as the control of the hierarchical conformity of legal norms. High level of social capital appears to be significant for the achievement of social well-being: high economic levels, effective functioning of institutions of state and law, low crime rates, etc. (Brehm and Rahn, 1997, p. 1000).

An illustration of this point may be found in the experience described by Alexis de Tocqueville in his book 'On Democracy in America'. During his nine month journey across what was then a young America, between 1831 and 1832, the author encountered an astonishing variety of associations and social organisations formed spontaneously for an array of reasons. He was astonished by the phenomenon of formation of social groups based on responsibility for the local environment (Tocqueville, 1996). Today, we would understand this phenomenon precisely as the formation of social capital which inspires the democratic system. An essential concept here is how trust, rules, social networks that are of importance at the level of individual functioning enable the actions of formal institutions including the executive power. Already in the late 1990s, Putnam wrote about the disappearance of the effectiveness of government institutions in the United States, similarly Francis Fukuyama pointed out the relationship between trust and economic performance, with the mediating variable for him being cross-cultural differences in the interpretation of the concept of trust (Fukuyama, 1997; Hollis, 1998). In order to understand the central issue of the level of trust in different societies, we would need to establish whether trust is derived from interpersonal capital or whether it is itself a category of interpersonal capital. Putnam and Fukuyama lean towards the latter option. The fact that we teach our children to be trustworthy, for instance, creates institutions which motivate us to be trustworthy and influences us to enter into lasting relationships with others, which are a part of interpersonal capital. In turn, this sets the framework for social interaction. The concept of social

interaction was introduced to sociology by Max Weber, who used the term 'social action'. He defined it as directed towards another person and oriented, in its course, according to the actual or expected reaction of the latter (Weber, 2011). Thus, if we recognise that a different culture is represented by another human being, the perspective of understanding the tasks of cross-cultural communication (interaction) changes.

The prototype of interaction is conversation. If people fail to talk, close themselves off, remain silent towards each other, it proves that the situation is extraordinary, unusual, implying alienation and, as a result, a lack of any understanding. Silence does not solve any problem, it is in itself a message - I refuse to speak with you - I refuse to acknowledge your reasons or I am indifferent to what you think. The absence of words spoken to each other is the absence of any desire for interaction. Of course, there is also silence which expresses concern towards another person. In the atmosphere of a Warsaw or London metro, passengers often hide their faces from each other behind a book, disappear behind the screen of a smartphone to avoid eye contact with a potential other - the enemy. Such defensive isolation also occurs in conditions of various oppressions, including the rule of repressive regimes. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, for example, described Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship: 'Wrapped in dark coats, they seemed separate in a foreign city. The faces were expressionless, revealing nothing, not even fear' (own transl. Marquez, 1986, p. 16). I am afraid of the other, meaning I do not trust his or her intentions. Distrust triggers negative emotions and activates processes of mutual accusation. On the other hand, it is important to remember that having trust, loyalty and reciprocity in someone can be wrongly targeted, met with disloyalty and our trust being used to manipulate us. Morality, as Piotr Sztompka writes, does reward moral people. (Sztompka, 2016, p. 329). Authentic moral capital, however, must be inclusive, universalistic in nature. Excessive control, monitoring of others, even in communities with high internal social capital, may restrict individual freedom, lead to the "freezing" of traditional institutions and a failure to align with contemporary living conditions. Examples include various social enclaves and, on a broader scale, fundamentalist religious communities. At the micro level, the family may also sometimes lock its members in a 'golden cage', depriving them of the chance to be independent, resourceful, to pursue individual goals, experiment with different social relations in the name of their own particular understanding of family values. Social capital represents value when it is spent with moderation, in a way that is free from manipulating others and using them cynically for one's own selfish gain. Whether at the

micro-, meso- or macro- level, building community and trust can sometimes be a risky game, but there is no other option to adequately find our way in the patchwork, heterogeneous modern world.

My world - your world and never a common one. Dilemmas of intracultural and cross-cultural communication

During intracultural interactions, interlocutors follow similar unwritten rules. They encode and decode messages using the same cultural codes. When we communicate with others within the boundaries of a common culture, we form an implicit judgement about our interlocutor being a member of our cultural group or about their behaviour being socially acceptable. When we communicate with members of our own culture the communication process runs smoothly as we share with our interlocutors the same codes and rules of encoding and decoding. However, even during intracultural interactions, we often react negatively, if our interlocutor crosses the boundaries of what we consider to be socially and culturally acceptable. In such a situation, we often make negative dispositional attributions, judging the person, for example, as ill-mannered or even rather dumb. Thus, even in intracultural communication, stereotypes can arise due to our cultural filters and our ethnocentrism which contribute to the formulation of a set of expectations of others. What is required for stereotypes to change is content processing (Forgas, 1994), which is, however, largely influenced by emotions. If emotions are negative, they foster negative attributions and thus perpetuate our original expectations and behaviours. While cross-cultural communication is a very similar process to intracultural communication, the participants in intracultural communication do not always follow similar rules. Interlocutors have difficulty concentrating on the content of communication as they encode and decode it through different cultural codes. Cross-cultural communication is therefore often accompanied by uncertainty and conflict. Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede concluded from his analysis of the intercultural competence of members of multinational corporations that there are four basic dimensions of comparing cultures (Ting-Toomey, 1988, pp. 39-59). The first is power distance: the extent to which the weaker members of society accept the fact that power is unequally distributed (Ting-Toomey's research shows that the Americans represent a low level here, while the Japanese a medium one). The second dimension is clearly defined gender roles: as a rule, it is men and not women who are associated with the right to success and social dominance (Americans - high level, Japanese - very high). The third dimension is uncertainty avoidance

- the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and form beliefs to avoid it (Americans - low level, Japanese - very high level). Finally, there is the fourth dimension, individualism, which is the degree to which people turn to themselves and their relatives, rather than identifying with a larger group responsible for looking after them in exchange for group loyalty (Americans - very high level, Japanese - low level). Many comparative scholars agree that Hofstede's distinction between individualism and collectivism identifies a fundamental dimension of cultural differentiation. Cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall described the communication style characteristic of collectivist cultures as being of a high context and that of individualist cultures as being of a low context, and divided groups of people on the basis of how they interpret the meaning of messages. Hall hypothesised high context communication to be characterised by the fact that the majority of information is either contained directly in the physical context or internalised by the individual, with only a minor part falling within the coded and directly transmitted portion of the message. The low context specific communication is different, with most of the information falling within the direct code (Hall, 1959, p. 95). William Gudykunst took a similar comparative approach in his study of intercultural communication. He was intrigued by the possibility of taking into account that senders, whose message is of high context, may feel more doubtful about the Other's speech stylistics or behavioural skills of the latter than in the case of low context circumstances, such as similarity of attitudes or ability to communicate openly. What happens when we try to communicate within a culture which is foreign to us? Gudykunst uses the term 'effective communication' to describe the process of minimising misunderstandings (Gudykunst, 1988), and considers communication to be effective when two people are able to predict behaviour and clarify it to each other in such a manner as to reduce anxiety and uncertainty. However, the scripts that arise from our life experiences often determine our communication with others. Behaving on the basis of established scripts is helpful when the roles assigned to us are familiar and acceptable and all actors in a scene of life know their lines. In a cross-cultural situation, on the other hand, the script can condemn participants in the communication process to misunderstanding, tension and confusion. Well established patterns do not work when the communicating parties know little about each other. Routines and scripts may put us at risk of our interlocutor's irritation, of ridicule and may sometimes lead to conflict. Not everyone in a group shares the same values or behaves according to the accepted norms, but everyone recognises them as specific to their group.

Cross-cultural differences constitute, therefore, differences in thinking about the values that guide human behaviour, the norms to which we conform, and the ways of behaving and communicating that are considered appropriate by a given cultural group. Communication between cultures takes place through various elements of the broader culture, namely language, media, art, in everyday contacts, attitudes and behaviour. Language allows one to navigate the realm of verbal understanding, though what is of even greater importance at the intersection of cultures is the non-verbal and contextual communication. After all, depending on the recognised values and replicated cultural scripts, each message can have a different meaning. Language barriers and perceived inconsistencies in verbal and non-verbal communication are particularly prevalent causes of misunderstandings and conflicts between representatives of different cultural backgrounds. Stella Ting-Toomey and Atsuko Kurogi (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998) believe that the effectiveness of intercultural communication is determined by the equality of both parties, impartial mutual listening, not assigning blame to anyone and appreciation of the feelings and needs of others. Modern times bring additional problems of cross-cultural communication due to rapid changes in social identity. It is a particularly qualified type of social bond, distinguished, as Piotr Sztompka writes, by '(...) a sense of emotional community not with a single partner, but with an entire and realistically existing social group or statistically distinguishable social category about which we think "we"' (Sztompka, 2016, a. 136). In an atmosphere of freedom of choice and construction of identity, new references for it are created, new collectivities about which we say 'we'. Sometimes, when identity becomes an object of deliberate construction, there emerges a possibility of feigning it in order to gain specific benefits, for example, to gain an unwarranted prestige in life or at work. In modern society, social identity loses its traditional constancy. Social mobility, fluctuation of statuses and roles, group affiliation can lead to confusion and loss of a sense of inner stability and unambiguous identity. What is characteristic of the identity bond is its omnipresent complement from the category of strangers. For every 'we', there is a corresponding 'they', against whom various forms of distance, discrimination or rejection are created. An entire scale of otherness can be constructed. Religious wars between fundamentalists and people of different denominations, ethnic cleansing and, in extreme cases, genocide, are all the result of defining the hostile Other in the abovementioned manner. The Holocaust in the 20th century or years of destructive wars waged in the 21st century show the persistence of the mechanisms of rejection and the inability to overcome

hostility towards otherness. Unfortunately, rejection leads to a spiral of hostility. Isolated groups tend to become increasingly isolated, more and more attached to their own beliefs and customs, cherishing their own otherness and seeing it as a bonding agent for their own sense of uniqueness. In such conditions, assimilation or integration as mechanisms for the inclusion of isolated groups do not stand much of a chance when confronted with the phenomena of 'enclavisation' and 'ghettoisation' (Melosik, 2021, p. 39). The recent experiences of the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Italy or Germany, where ethnically, religiously different immigrant communities are particularly numerous, indicate just how difficult and distant assimilation is and how local communities often feel threatened by the sometimes rather aggressive affirmation of their own otherness by migrants settling in these countries. One might say that a distinctive feature of cross-cultural communication is the inevitability of conflicts and misunderstandings. The ambiguity of messages, the difficulty in interpreting them leads to anger, frustration and, as a result, conflicts and mutual resentment. The reason for these conflicts is usually uncertainty and lack of trust.

In search of a model for dealing with cultural diversity

As the world becomes increasingly culturally diverse, an accurate knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on mental processes and the construction of social capital becomes even more significant for our ability to effectively understand cultural difference. How can we live up to this task in everyday life? What relevance does comparative education have in this process? One solution could be to create a type of an intellectual map of cultural similarities and differences to which we could refer at any time to better understand the diversity around us. Such a peculiar encyclopaedia of knowledge about the diversity of the world has not yet been and is unlikely to be created, given the dynamics of social processes, the multiplicity of events and ways of understanding them. Then how does one create a rational model for handling cultural diversity? I would like to draw attention to the importance of comparative education in the development of said model, taking into account the relatively new position of comparativists who recognise that cultural memory and its unique type, dialogic memory, is of considerable significance in the process of coping with cultural diversity and difference.

We live in a time when the requirement for critical reflection on constructions of memory gains momentum. Countries and societies are looking at each other's memory and often question the determinants of memory.

‘In the 19th and 20th centuries,’ writes Aleida Assmann, ‘the age of nations, each national memory in Europe was shaped in a polemical confrontation with neighbouring countries, without any regard for them. What was celebrated in one country was something that another tried to forget, what was considered a disgrace in one, was celebrated in another’ (own transl., Assmann, 2007, p. 43). Perspective constructions of national memory violently clashed with each other creating excellent material for conflict. The 21st century brought hope in the first decade for rapprochement of perspectives. Indeed, nations are currently stronger linked due to economic and ethnic globalisation. The bearer of the new ethos is the transnational public opinion, which, because of the media, gains importance and seeks recognition of universal norms and intercultural standards. The new perspective aims to observe the collective construction of memory and to critically analyse potentially difficult and conflicting transcultural relations. However, above the communicative and collective memory, another level must be placed – the cultural memory. Cultures are, each in its own way, systems of protection against widespread forgottenness. Cultural memory serves to transmit experiences and knowledge across generational boundaries, thus producing the lasting social memory. Cultural memory achieves its stabilisation through the intensification of symbols and strong emotions, it relies on media and institutions which foster such memory. The transmitted repertoire of cultural memory - artefacts such as texts, sculptures, paintings, monuments and temporal orders: rituals, celebrations, customs, require constant adjustment and renewal in the course of debates and discussions. However, the problem of cultural memory lies in its detachment from the living and dynamically changing consciousness of individuals. It has been contrasted against social memory, for which the problem is unification and politicisation. While the social/collective memory defines the shared experience and the common will, cultural memory serves the citizens to communicate with each other in a longer historical perspective and to reassure them in the identity based on shared participation in a multi-generational tradition. In the 1990s, Europe developed two main strategies of policy concerning memory. On the one hand, the politics of history under the label of a new ethos of national self-criticism and a willingness to face the dark sides of one’s own history, to take responsibility for crimes, and on the other hand, the politics based on an ethos of pride which reinforces the selective view of historical events and erases what is shameful for the nation. Can this polarisation of memory be replaced by a dialogical memory? The aim is to liberate the memory patterns from the boundaries set by both sides. Building a dialogical memory is the

task of immense difficulty, since the memory of nations is generally organised in the form of a monologue. In other words, national memory tends to narrow history down to a fragment acceptable to the nation in question. The monologic nature of national memories was criticised, among others, in the 1920s by Marc Bloch, who wrote: 'Let us finally stop the endless talk about national histories without understanding each other' (own transl., Bloch, 1925, p. 42). Perhaps this is a utopian project, yet it seems that dialogic memory can provide an alternative to the monologue of memory as a form of dealing with the history of nations and states which is largely a history of violence. In addition, it represents a great cultural opportunity to work through the past. The aim, in fact, is not to remove the historical experiences from the memory of any nation, but rather to create rules for a dialogic approach to memory. The contextualisation used in this process is a cognitive operation and is made possible because of and through education and the awakening of historical awareness. A post facto insight into the historical context does not have to close the mouths of individual experiences; on the contrary, by making individual experiences visible, they can be integrated into a broader scope and their memories can benefit from confrontation with other memories. In the battle of contrasting memories and the competition over whose sacrifice is more significant, the lack of space in the nation's memory is always at stake. One's own suffering occupies much of it, leaving no space for the suffering caused to others. The asymmetries of memories further highlight this problem.

Jorge Luis Borges, in an essay titled 'Shakespeare's Memory', writes: 'The memory of man is not a sum; it is a chaos of undefined possibilities' (own transl., Borges, 2000, p. 32). This statement is puzzling, for it calls into question the existence of a coherent memory which takes into account the criteria of form and content, the social and the cultural ones. Implicit in Borges' opinion is the unspoken thesis that each of the aforementioned criteria towards memory can be unreliable. Memory is not objective in principle. Memory always belongs to someone. Both the individual and the social one, related with the distinctiveness of a given group, the sense of identity which is strengthened and cultivated through it. Memory can bring people together and create a network of shared understandings of identity, it can also effectively divide people and the boundaries of such division may follow extremely tangled patterns. Memory is both a process and a phenomenon. The separation of individual memories from fiction and confabulation, the representation of different views of the same issues in various societies or nations, such as the memory of Nazi crimes in Germany and Poland, or

the memory of the political and social upheaval of 1989 in both countries, and subsequently the representation of these phenomena and processes in school textbooks, may be an example of how difficult and even painstakingly meticulous the work of comparing and reconciling meanings in two different societies is, as we are witnessing nowadays (again) listening to political manifestos on the invalidation of numerous years of building up the German-Polish cooperation demanding both remembrance (of certain selected issues in these relations) and oblivion of others at the same time. The same is true of the Polish-Jewish dialogue, as well as the British-French, German-French, Polish-Ukrainian, Bosnian-Serbian etc.

Cervantes wrote in *Don Quixote* Part One, Chapter Nine: '(...) truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and lesson to the present, and warning to the future. (Cervantes, 1938) Is history indeed the mother of truth? Or perhaps history, which we are an incidental part of, is but a kind of palimpsest on which the traces of the previous deeds of our predecessors remain visible? Possibly, our reading of our own history, of our own nation, of other nations and cultures, is also based on deliberate anachronisms and misattributions? In the course of socialisation, the individual is asked to adopt as their own a set of values and ideals, which determine the nature of the group's lifestyle. This style must be presented to and accepted anew by the next generation. It is impossible to predict in advance whether a given generation will adopt the lifestyle offered by its predecessors. When individuals, who have received the same education as their ancestors, no longer endorse the values which shaped their parents' group lifestyle, the socio-cultural system does not die perhaps, but disintegrates, dissolves on its own. Socio-cultural systems do not have a life of their own, they exist solely as a function of the choices of individuals deciding to live their lives in one way and not the other. If individuals cease to choose a particular model of life - that model ceases to exist. When a generation decides not to honour the received socio-cultural heritage as its own model of fulfilling life, we become witnesses to the disappearance of the hitherto existing set of artefacts of cultural memory, often including values important for the predecessors, which are no longer relevant for the next generation. Socio-cultural systems do not become extinct, they are abandoned, new ones are not born, but are constituted by the next generation of people who have decided to structure their thinking about the future in a new way. The process of socialisation can be described as a process of ancestral substitution, as a requirement addressed to individuals to behave as if they were actually descended from historical or mythical models rather than those of their

genetic heritage. The conflict between an individual's commitment to genetic ancestors and their commitment to culturally transmitted ancestral models implies the necessity of substituting a culturally supplied 'set' of ancestors in place of their own. Erwin Schrödinger describes life as reducing positive entropy in specific space-time locations by borrowing negative entropy from the immediate environment (Schrödinger, 1998). Historical relationships establishing presumed genetic links between sets of selected ideal ancestors and the socio-cultural systems, which use them to legitimise their goals or intentions, serve a similar function. It seems that an organised past is essential to people just as much as an organised present. As we choose the past, we choose the present and vice versa. We utilise one to justify the other. The problem of multicultural societies is to find common ground, common cultural ancestors for the multiplicity of cultures, religions, languages and cultural references, which is immensely difficult. However, the establishment of a heritage jointly accepted by a culturally diverse society seems to be the only possible action to bind the diversity together. At the same time, this is a great challenge for cross-cultural education and comparative education. It is also the foundation of a processual model for dealing with cultural diversity.

Conclusion

There is no escape from the culture that has created and shaped us. Comparative education, however, creates our dream of a global culture, a transnational culture in which all roads lead to unity and understanding between different cultures. This is unfortunately a utopian thought. For it is not possible to declare unity or understanding, nor is it possible to remove from the memory of nations the difficult memories affecting prejudice against the foreign others, treated in one's social memory as enemies. The only aspect which remains relevant and invariably important is the process of constructing knowledge about other cultures, providing rational arguments for understanding, disenchanting stereotypes by means of knowledge and understanding of distinctiveness, insisting on the priority of recognised and research-proven knowledge over ubiquitous opinions and personal beliefs, avoiding generalisation or, on the contrary, referring to individual educational practice instead of scientific and methodologically grounded exploration. This is, at the same time, the task of comparative education as a scientific sub-discipline, increasingly gaining importance in a culturally diverse world due to the versatility, comprehensiveness and interdisciplinarity of the research conducted by said sub-discipline.

References:

- Assmann A., (2007). Europe: A Community of Memory? Twentieth Annual Lecture of the GHI, 16. XI. 2006. *German Historical Institute Bulletin*, 40, p. 11-25.
- Bloch, M. (1925). Mémoire collective, tradition et coutume. *Revue de Synthèse Historique*, 40, p. 78-83.
- Borges, J. L. (2000). *Pamięć Szekspira*. Transl. Adam Elbanowski. Kraków: Prószyński i Spółka.
- Brehm, J., Rahn, W. (1997). Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41, p. 999-1023.
- Cervantes Saavedra, M.de (1938). *Przedziwny Hidalgo Don Kichot z Man-czy*. T.1. Warszawa: J. Mortkowicz Drukarnia Naukowa Towarzystwa Wydawniczego.
- Coleman, J. C. (1988) Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*. 94, suplement.
- Dürkheim, E., (1999[1902]). *O podziale pracy społecznej*, tłum. K. Wakar, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Forgas, J. P. (1994), The role of emotion in social judgments: An introductory review and an Affect Infusion Model (AIM). *European Journal of Social Psychology* 24, p. 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420240102>.
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (1988). Uncertainty and Anxiety. In: Y. Y. Kim, W. B. Gudykunst (eds.), *Theories in Intercultural Communication* (p. 125–128). Newbury Park: Sage,.
- Hall, E. T. (1959). *The silent Language*. New York- London-Toronto-Sydney: Anchor Books, Doubleday.
- Hollis, M. (1998). *Trust within Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Macneil, I. R. (1980). *The new Social Contract: An Inquiry into Modern Contractual Relations*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Marquez, G. G. (2010). *Clandestine in Chile. The Adventures of Miguel Littin*, transl. Asa Zatz. New York: Henry Holt & Company.
- Melosik, Z. (2021) Izolacjonizm mniejszości, hybrydyzacja tożsamości i dylematy edukacji międzykulturowej. *Edukacja Międzykulturowa*, 2(15). DOI: 10.15804/em.2021.02.02.

- Montinola, G. (2004). Corruption, Distrust, and the Deterioration of the Rule of the Law. In: Russel Hardin, *Distrust* (p. 298-323). Russel Sage Foundation: New York.
- Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling Alone. America's Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1).
- Schrödinger, E. (1998). *Czym jest życie?* Kraków: Prószyński i Spółka.
- Sztompka, P. (2016). *Kapitał społeczny. Teoria przestrzeni międzyludzkiej.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). *Culture and Interpersonal Communication.* Newbury Park: Sage.
- Ting-Toomey, S., Kurogi, A. (1998), Facework Competence in Intercultural Conflict: An Updated Face-Negotiation Theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations Communication*, 22, 187–225.
- Tocqueville, A. de (1996). *O demokracji w Ameryce*, t. I-II. Tłum. B. Janicka, M. Król. Kraków: Znak.
- Weber, M. (2011). *Etyka protestancka i duch kapitalizmu.* Tłum. D. Lachowska. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.