

Human Identity and Educational Challenges

Abstract

The changes of human identity (individual and group) are analyzed in the context of cultural diversity. Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are contrary approaches towards otherness (pros and cons). Otherness is a constitutive element of our identity. (In)tolerance is considered as a social pattern of behaviour and as an effect of socialization. The development of inclusive, socially empathic identity is a challenge for education.

Key words: *human identity, inclusive identity, attitude towards otherness, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, tolerance, social empathy.*

We live in the time of significant and intensive changes, consensual as well as antagonistic and controversial. In any case, these changes are permanent and judging by their intensity and impact also more profound and swifter than in the past.

The formation of a society influenced by cultural diversity is accompanied by two sometimes contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, there are processes of globalization affecting timeless, universal values shaping general human relationships, while on the other hand, there are processes protecting what is local and national, regional values, uniqueness of regional groups (including ethnic groups) and revitalizing their culture. When combined together, both tendencies lead to the formation of a so-called intercultural individual who lives in an open society and shares the values of tolerance, solidarity, etc. The objective of education is to gain empathy, multicultural and intercultural competences, self-understanding, and awareness of the values of one's own culture as well as understanding of and openness towards the "other". When the two tendencies clash, it results in the formation of negative stereotypes and prejudices that nourish homogenization