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Parents’ sense of participation in shaping and developing intercultural competences in children at the early school age in the contemporary multicultural spaces of life and education. Report on research

Poczucie partycypacji rodziców w kształtowaniu i rozwijaniu kompetencji międzykulturowych dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym we współczesnej wielokulturowej przestrzeni życia i edukacji. Doniesienie z badań

Abstract

Introduction. The variability and dynamics of the contemporary multicultural spaces of life and education result in the need for joint and integrated new solutions aimed at developing strategies for intercultural education of children by all education entities, including the family. Raising a child with a high level of intercultural competence, who shows valuable attitudes and can actively participate in both national and global culture is an important task for parents.

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Aim. The aim of the research was to determine the sense of participation of parents of students at the early school age in shaping and developing intercultural competencies of children, *i.e.*, examining how parents perceive their role in the process of intercultural education of children and what actions they take in this regard.

Materials and methods. The article presents the results of qualitative research embedded in the interpretative paradigm, conducted using the individual open-ended interview method. The study involved parents of children at the early school age.

Results. On the basis of the analysis of parents' statements, categories of answers were distinguished, reflecting the ways of understanding the essence of intercultural competencies, and perceiving their role in shaping and developing them.

Conclusion. Determining how parents understand the essence of activities aimed at shaping and developing intercultural competencies of children at the early school age can be the basis for planning and implementing integrated activities of the school and family in the context of the challenges faced by the child in the contemporary multidimensional and dynamic spaces of life and education characterized by multiculturalism.

Keywords: multiculturalism, education, intercultural competencies, participation, family, children at the early school age.

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. Zmienność i dynamika współczesnej wielokulturowej przestrzeni życia i edukacji wywołują potrzebę podejmowania przez wszystkie podmioty edukacji – w tym rodzinę – wspólnych, zintegrowanych działań, zmierzających do wypracowania nowych rozwiązań i strategii na rzecz edukacji międzykulturowej dzieci. Wychowanie dziecka z wysokim poziomem kompetencji międzykulturowych, dziecka, które prezentuje wartościowe postawy oraz potrafi aktywnie uczestniczyć w kulturze zarówno narodowej, jak i globalnej jest ważnym zadaniem, stojącym przed rodzicami.

Cel. Celem podjętych badań było ustalenie poczucia partycypacji rodziców uczniów w młodszym wieku szkolnym w kształtowaniu i rozwijaniu kompetencji międzykulturowych dzieci, czyli zbadanie, w jaki sposób rodzice postrzegają swoją rolę w procesie edukacji międzykulturowej dzieci i jakie działania podejmują w omawianym zakresie.

Materiały i metody. W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań jakościowych, osadzonych w paradygmacie interpretatywnym, przeprowadzonych za pomocą metody indywidualnego wywiadu otwartego. Badaniami objęto rodziców dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym.

Wyniki. Na podstawie analizy wypowiedzi rodziców wyodrębniono kategorie odpowiedzi, odzwierciedlające sposoby rozumienia istoty kompetencji międzykulturowych oraz postrzegania swojej roli w ich kształtowaniu i rozwijaniu.

Wnioski. Ustalenie sposobu rozumienia przez rodziców istoty działań, które mają na celu kształtowanie i rozwijanie kompetencji międzykulturowych dzieci w młodszym wieku

szkolnym może stanowić podstawę do planowania i wdrażania zintegrowanych działań szkoły i rodziny w kontekście wyzwań, stojących przed dzieckiem we współczesnej wielowymiarowej i dynamicznej przestrzeni życia i edukacji nacechowanej wielokulturowością.

Słowa kluczowe: wielokulturowość, edukacja, kompetencje międzykulturowe, partycypacja, rodzina, dziecko w młodszym wieku szkolnym.

Introduction

In recent years – due to the intensification of migration processes and, above all, in connection with the war crisis in Ukraine and the accompanying refugee phenomenon – an increasing number of foreign students have joined and continue to join Polish educational institutions. Cultural diversity has already become a permanent feature of contemporary reality, and the space of life – including education – is a space of “mutual perception of differences with various consequences” (Gołka, 1997, p. 54). In light of the phenomena indicated the challenge for adults – about children – is increasingly becoming “to implement education about different cultures and to search for ways to communicate between people representing different cultures, to teach the use of the achievements of all cultures functioning not only in the immediate, neighbourhood space” (Nikitorowicz, 2019, p. 6). Among the main didactic and educational challenges facing all educational entities, i.e., teachers, students, and parents, for the sake of cultural diversity, Barbara Dobrowolska (2012) lists:

- the presence of new cultural patterns and codes of communication, which change the existing interactions of actors in school life;
- social inclusion for the mutual integration and intercultural learning of pupils and teachers possible with interest and mutual empathy;
- the need to revise previous attitudes, knowledge and references to “foreign”, cultural stereotypes, which changes the scope of cultural, and intercultural competence of teachers and parents;
- shaping students' cultural sensitivity and influencing the type and forms of interaction in a multicultural classroom.

In the space of interpersonal and intercultural differences, it is increasingly necessary to develop new educational strategies that

[...] would enable the formation of the relevant competencies [...]: on the one hand, a sense of subjectivity, self-determination, freedom, and responsibility, on the other hand, the implementation of functioning in multicultural and intercultural

systems, the formation of solidarity [...], as well as integration about universal and timeless values (Nikitorowicz, 2001a, p. 17).

Educating children with migrant experience, coming from culturally diverse backgrounds, with limited knowledge of the Polish language and now also with experience of war trauma as a result of the war crisis in Ukraine, is a particularly difficult challenge for teachers. This is because foreign students represent a group with numerous and varied needs and problems. In educational situations, “representatives of different cultures have to overcome many communication barriers; verbal language and non-verbal communication, psychocultural barriers related to cognitive and emotional insecurity, as well as ethnocentrism, prejudice and a whole range of cognitive schemas” (Nikitorowicz, 2019, p. 14). In this context, the education system has a role to play as “an intercultural bridge, between students from different cultures and backgrounds” (Badowska, 2018, p. 198).

The formation and development of intercultural competencies, due to their complex and multidimensional nature (Chromiec, 2004), is a very intricate and life-long process. Hence, it requires the involvement of all educational actors, including the family, which is “the carrier of values and behavioural patterns” (Hruzd, 2011, p. 45) and constitutes “the first micro-community in the child’s life [...], which is said to be the cradle of personality and protects from the process of cultural homelessness” (Suchodolska, 2000, p. 15). It is in the family

[...] there is a process of introduction of the individual by significant “others” into the social world. Parents transmit to the child a certain image of the world, a structure of meaning dependent, on the one hand, on the place of the family in society and, on the other hand, on the specificity of the individual attribution of meanings to reality, determined by the biography of the family (Cierpka, 2002, p. 174).

The family, entangled in cultural differences, often both inside and outside the family itself, constitutes a complex and multidimensional environment of educational influence (Szerląg, 2014). It is the first, fundamental period of the child’s identity formation that takes place, which provides the basis for further interpretation of the values and patterns presented by other groups in the process of secondary socialisation, allowing for the acquisition of a group identity (Nikitorowicz, 2001b). As the social context in which the child is brought up plays a fundamental role in the content of the views and attitudes conveyed, the culturally shared values and attitudes of the parents towards other nations or cultures can – through a social learning mechanism – be adopted by children. The age of the child also has a crucial role to play in the perception of differences between nations and cultural differences. Research indicates that as

early as three years old children may manifest a simplistic and negatively valued image of people who are different (e.g., because of their age), and the pre-school period is a time when the ability to perceive the otherness of other races and ethnic groups is formed (Bryant, Colman, 1997). During this period in the process of learning about the world, the child begins to extend his or her thought beyond the perceptual, real world, seeking to understand not only what is real, but also what is potentially possible. Such a direction of development opens up the prospect of a better understanding of other people's thoughts, actions and needs that are different from one's own (Voloshinova, 1975). Hence

[...] the pre-school and primary school stage, is the right time to explain to children that people are different and that there is nothing wrong with this, but on the contrary, that difference can be a source of many valuable experiences that enrich personality. This will help the child to make an objective assessment of otherness that is adequate to his or her perceptual abilities and to go beyond existing prejudices (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2016, p. 38).

In the process of shaping and developing intercultural competence, it is worth taking advantage of cognitive curiosity, which is characteristic and natural for this developmental period, and the desire to learn, which also relates to learning about cultures and deriving knowledge about the values and norms behind the behaviour of people from different cultural backgrounds. Jerzy Nikitorowicz (2019) sees the essence of intercultural competence precisely in the developmental process, which begins with noticing and natural curiosity about cultural distinctiveness and undertaking educational and communicative activities to sensitise the differences and diversity of cultures. Because the educational experience gained at the beginning of education is invaluable for the further development of open social attitudes and intercultural competence (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2016), it seems necessary to undertake integrated activities aimed at equipping children with appropriate knowledge and skills in intercultural education by all educational actors. As Anna Małgorzata Śniegulska (2019, p. 28) writes, "the goal of family upbringing should be to raise an individual with a high level of intercultural competence who, manifesting valuable attitudes, can actively participate in both national and global culture".

Among the leading tasks of intercultural education that teachers, educators, and parents most often mention in the literature are activities that bring about the mastery and/or deepening of children's skills such as:

- the search for values that have a universal dimension, the recognition and practical realisation of "commonly recognised worlds of values" (Rembierz, 2018, pp. 91–92);

- shaping an attitude of reasonable openness to cultural differences (Neuner, 2014);
- raising awareness of the existence and knowledge of different patterns, values, norms, and symbols characteristic of various cultural areas and the ability to apply many different lifestyles, and diverse ideas from several cultures (Szompka, 2010);
- the formation of constructive social relations between groups and individuals representing different ethnic, religious, economic and cultural backgrounds (Chromiec, 2006);
- the readiness to engage in positive contacts and relationships with people representing other cultures and the ability to deal with “intercultural conflicts” (Schmidt-Behlau, 2005, p. 114).

A prerequisite for achieving the above-mentioned goals is the participation of educational actors in the process of shaping and developing intercultural competencies, understood as “a willingness to engage in a project and an ongoing dialogue through which educators and parents, together, being attentive to everyday educational activities, develop guidelines for early childhood education policy and thus build a culture of childhood” (Maj, 2017, p. 50). Participation means not just taking part in something, but “being part of something – the essence, the content of a shared identity, it means a “we” that is made real through participation” (*The Charter*, 2002, p. 8), it represents “the most favourable arrangement of connections between elements of the educational and nurturing environment” (Dubis, 2019, p. 162). According to research conducted on parents’ perceptions of their role in shaping their children’s intercultural competence (Nowakowska-Buryła, 2016), the vast majority of them recognise the necessity of raising the young generation in a spirit of tolerance for cultural differences. At the same time, only half of the respondents are confident in the need for theoretical education of preschool and early school children in this regard. Parents attribute the responsibility for upbringing their children in respect for other cultures to both the family and the kindergarten/school, while the responsibility for educating this knowledge to the teachers. Irrespective of the age of the child, the parents surveyed assess their intercultural competence as low or even believe that they have no such competence. Meanwhile, Polish seven-year-olds have crystallised attitudes towards certain ethnic groups, which are manifested in the favouritism of their group and the disfavouritism of groups traditionally disadvantaged in Polish public opinion - such as Jews or Gypsies (Weigl, Łukaszewski, 1992). Reports on multicultural schooling in the context of the war in Ukraine produced in the last year (Tędziągolska, Walczak, & Żelazowska-Kosiorek, 2022; Pyżalski et al., 2022) indicate that space is relatively rarely arranged in schools for teachers and Polish

parents to establish relationships with parents of Ukrainian students, which could undoubtedly provide a basis for dialogue and action to develop children's intercultural competences.

This research aimed to establish the sense of participation of parents of children of younger school age in the formation and development of their children's intercultural competencies, i.e., to investigate how parents perceive their role in the process of their children's intercultural education and which activities they undertake in this area. Determining parents' understanding of the nature of activities aimed at shaping and developing children's intercultural competencies at earlier school age can provide a basis for planning and implementing integrated school and family activities for intercultural education.

Research procedure

In the context of the theoretical assumptions indicated above, the research conducted aimed to demonstrate the parents' understanding of the essence and importance given to intercultural competencies and to determine what declared, activities they undertake to shape and develop the said competencies in their children at an earlier school age.

In planning the research project, I resorted to a qualitative strategy. Because of the adoption of the interpretative paradigm of qualitative research, the research was directed at revealing the different ways in which parents of younger school-aged children think about the nature and characteristics of intellectual upbringing and how they declare to embody it in their parenting activities. For Lawrence Neuman (1994, p. 62), "the most important thing about the interpretative approach is the systematic analysis of the social meanings created by people in their natural conditions of functioning, with a view to understanding and interpreting how people create and understand their world in which they function".

The research subject of my study was parents' opinions and reflections on their participation in activities for shaping and developing the intercultural competencies of children at an earlier school age.

The research problems have taken the form of questions:

- How do parents perceive their participation in the process of shaping and developing their children's intercultural competence?
- What is the parents' understanding of the concept of intercultural competence?
- What are the declarative measures taken by the parents surveyed about the formation and development of their children's intercultural competence?

The answers to the aforementioned questions were provided by an analysis of the statements made by parents during the open-ended interviews conducted with them individually. When responding, the respondents were accompanied by reflection on the issues raised in the questions, understood as “deeper reflection, thought combined with analysing something” (Sobol, 1997, p. 945). Reflection is, in other words, a focus “through which the mind illuminates thoughts” (Didier, 1992, p. 337). Thinking and reflection allow one to reconstruct experience, to formulate conclusions beyond the narrow horizon of the concrete, but — above all — they allow one to understand the meaning of one’s participation in educational reality (Łukasik, 2014, p. 212). The method of the individual open-ended interview did not involve repetitive questions and a specific order of issues raised. The use of an open format allowed for interaction between the interviewer and the respondent. The interviewer was guided by a general agenda, but not a specific set of questions to be asked using specific words and in a set order (Babbie, 2008). As a result, the open-ended interview allowed more of a grasp of what the respondents thought about reality, rather than what the researcher, seeking only confirmation of the interviewee’s thesis, thought about it.

Twenty-three parents were included in the study. With this number of respondents, the outcome field became exhausted, which means that new contexts stopped appearing in the respondents’ statements (Hammerslay, 2000, pp. 52–53).

The selection of respondents was purposive (nonprobability). The criterion for selection was the age of the child and the fact that the child was attending a class with students from other countries. The research was conducted directly by the researcher between October 2022 and January 2023. Seventeen mothers and six fathers were among the respondents. In the study group, fourteen respondents had a university degree, five had a secondary education and four had a vocational education.

The research was conducted on dates proposed by parents on the territory of four schools in the Silesian voivodeship, in conditions and atmosphere ensuring anonymity and freedom of expression. According to the adopted research approach, the ways of understanding the studied phenomenon expressed in the analysed material implied the categories of description established by the researcher. Such categories are “generalised and structured descriptions of the understanding of phenomena present in the experience of the respondents” (Męczkowska, 2002, p. 18). The categories of description emerge through the condensation of themes that emerge when reading the responses of the respondents. The description categories are always both singular and collective, which means that the same statement may reflect various expressions of the same or different concepts (Jurgiel, 2009). The distinguished categories of description were generalised and structured descriptions of conceptions of phenomena present in the respondents’ experience (Męczkowska, 2002, pp.18–19).

Results of the study

Appropriate to the adopted procedure of qualitative research, the presentation of the results (for this paper) was limited to the presentation of the categories of responses, extracted as a result of the content analysis of the parents' statements as they appeared in the interview, with the dominant tendencies in their selection highlighted. Due to the adoption of an interpretative paradigm of qualitative research, the study did not aim to consider the examined phenomenon in terms of quantity and multiplicity, which is characteristic of a quantitative approach, but to extract the meanings and dimensions of children's intercultural competence as they are found in the parents' consciousness. The analysis of the empirical material obtained as a result of the research conducted on small groups of people is qualitative and does not involve statistical tools. Nevertheless, David Silverman (2008) points to the potential for quantitative terms to be applied to qualitative and explanatory projects. He justifies this as follows: "Simple computational techniques can become a way of probing a whole set of data that is usually lost in intensive qualitative research" (Silverman, 2008, p. 62). The analysis of the respondents' statements resulted in the categorisation of their analysis, noting that the categorisation is not separable.

Category 1: The relevance of parents' shaping and developing intercultural competencies of their children

The analysis of the parents' statements reveals that all respondents perceive the need to develop their children's intercultural competencies. In their justifications, parents pointed to the fact that contemporary reality is increasingly becoming a space of intercultural differences, which is related to the phenomenon of migration, e.g., for work purposes, and more recently to the war in Ukraine. In the opinions of those surveyed, the multiculturalism currently experienced by children (mainly at school) can cause conflicts between children and educational problems with them. Less than half of the parents (11 participants) gave examples of difficult upbringing situations at school (recounted to the parents by the child or the teacher), which were caused, among other things, by language differences, different appearance, customs of children coming from different countries and cultures.

Category 2: Natural versus planned character of the process of shaping intercultural competencies of children

In the opinion of the vast majority of respondents (18 participants), the development of children's intercultural competencies is a process that is and should be primarily natural and spontaneous in the family, relating to situations and events in which the child is participating at the time, which the child is witnessing or in which the child is participating in a mediated way, e.g., through media messages, stories read, etc. In

such situations – according to the respondents – it is the parent’s task to talk to the child, explain and satisfy the child’s curiosity about multiculturalism. In such situations – according to the respondents – it is the parent’s task to talk, explain and satisfy the child’s curiosity about multiculturalism. More than half of the respondents (13 parents) emphasised that this process should also include conscious, planned actions by the parents in advance of situations in which the child may come into contact with people representing different cultural systems.

Category 3: Passive versus active parental participation in shaping and developing intercultural competencies of children

All parents agreed that shaping and developing children’s intercultural competencies requires the cooperation of the school and parents. The majority of the respondents (15) have a low opinion of their intercultural education competencies and expect support in this area from teachers or specialists at school. Parents’ statements indicate that their participation in shaping and developing their children’s intercultural competencies is mainly passive, i.e., most often limited to attending information meetings at school, during which difficult educational situations related to multiculturalism at school are discussed. Sometimes these meetings are combined with a lecture on multiculturalism. Parents declared passive participation in the development of their children’s intercultural competencies in the form of carrying out tasks assigned to them by teachers, e.g., interviewing their children. The vast majority of parents (18 participants) declared that they did not have a sense of co-determination, of being able to negotiate and get involved in activities organised at school for the shaping and development of children’s intercultural competencies, while the remaining respondents (5 participants) gave examples of active participation, mainly in the form of submitting ideas, proposals for educational undertakings and activities to teachers.

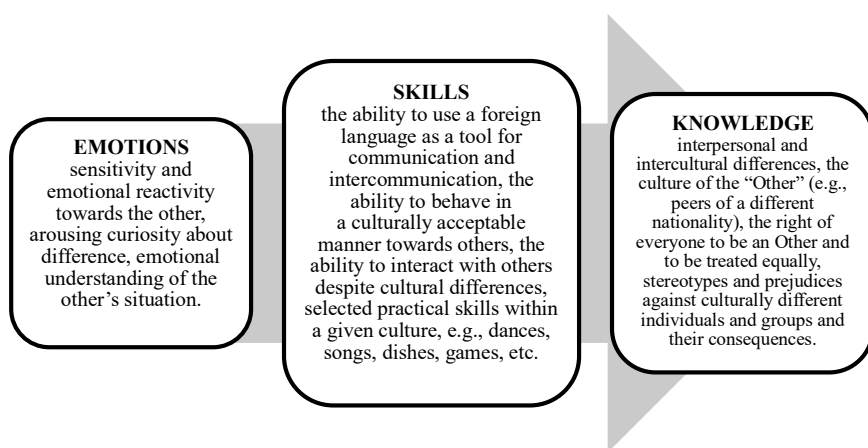
Category 4: Upbringing in values as a basis for intercultural competence development

The vast majority of respondents (20 participants) associate the fundamental aims and duties of the process of shaping and developing intercultural competencies with the sphere of values. The sense of this process – in their opinion – is contained in the broadly understood upbringing in democratic and human values, among which the parents most frequently mentioned tolerance and respect for other people. In the opinion of parents, these are fundamental moral values in the life of every human being and, above all, in the formation of a child’s personality. The inculcation of these values influences the understanding of other people and behaviour towards them regardless of differences in nationality, race, etc. It should be emphasised that – according to the parents – tolerance does not consist only in the so-called “putting up with otherness” (Ma-

zurkiewicz, 1996, p. 11). Their understanding is close to treating tolerance as a positive value (Górniewicz, 2001), which is a peculiar ability to respect different opinions and judgements, derived from respect for the person expressing them, who then becomes someone worthy, unique, with the right to a personal opinion. Tolerance and respect are related by respondents to their country of origin, differences in language, religion, traditions, customs, and rituals.

Category 5: Cognitive/affective/behavioural dimensions of intercultural competence

In the statements, the respondents also emphasised (to varying degrees) one of the three components, dimensions of intercultural competence. In the context of shaping and developing children's intercultural competence, all the respondents attributed a special place to emotional-motivational competence, concerning the need to develop positive attitudes towards people of a different nationality and/or culture as well as the awakening of emotional sensitivity towards the situation of people from other countries affected by crises such as war, earthquakes, etc. In the second position (19 participants) they pointed to behavioural competencies, representing concrete, observable acts of behaviour towards objects of intercultural attitudes (Ron, 2007). They attributed crucial importance to communication skills, i.e., language skills and the ability to behave in an appropriate, culturally accepted way in a given country. The least frequent emphasis was attributed by the respondents to cognitive competencies, related to knowledge of the values, patterns, norms, and standards of other cultures, and knowledge of the equal rights of everyone regardless of their country of origin, religion, etc.



Picture 1. Components of the intercultural competence of the child as perceived by the surveyed parents. *Source:* Own study.

Several parents (5 participants) emphasised the need to explain stereotypes and prejudices towards people from other countries to their children. According to the respondents, negative beliefs about other nationalities entail unequal treatment of others and – as a result – can lead to experiences of fear, alienation and stigmatisation of people with a different appearance, culture, etc.

Category 6: Forms of development of intercultural competencies which are undertaken – declaratively – by parents towards children of younger school age

In the process of shaping and developing intercultural competencies, children, and – at the declarative level – also parents, most often undertake activities based on the following strategies: perceptual (22 participants) and activity (16 participants). As they admitted, these activities are rarely undertaken by them due to lack of time and occasionally, i.e., due to the requirement of the situation, i.e., the child's current interest in the topic or his/her access to multicultural content (film, fairy tale, programme, etc.).

Table 1.

Types of activities undertaken, declaratively, by parents to shape and develop their children's and development of intercultural competencies of children at younger school ages

Strategy	Types of activities
activities based on the child's perceptual strategy	reading stories, fairy tales etc. about other cultures and countries to your child
	watching films and programmes about other cultures/countries together
	talking about culture, e.g., festive traditions, customs of other nations, curiosities
	explaining cultural differences, e.g., culturally different behaviour when watching television programmes
activities based on creating conditions for children to experience multiculturalism directly	giving the child a good personal example of an attitude of tolerance
	joint trips, e.g., holidays and weekends in other countries
	participation of the child in organised activities, e.g., music, games, dance, etc., on the theme of other cultures or with children from other countries

Strategy	Types of activities
forms based on an activity strategy towards the child	preparing and tasting together dishes, flavours of the world
	joint parent-child games/plays (undertaken by children in other countries)
activities based on a reflection strategy	developing compassion and empathy by talking about difficult crisis situations of people in other countries: war in Ukraine, poverty, famine, etc.
	fostering respect for other peoples and cultures
actions based on cognitive strategy	attention to the learning of foreign languages by the child as a tool for communication in the form of formal and informal education
	situational learning about other cultures, religions etc. in response to a child's interest

Source: Own study.

It should be emphasised that less than half of the respondents (11 participants) are aware that children most effectively acquire intercultural competencies in action, by gathering experiences and being active. Therefore, they try to create conditions for contact with representatives of other cultures, and races e.g., through trips during holidays to other countries and participation in classes for children on multiculturalism.

Conclusion

Multiculturalism as “an immanent component of contemporary political, social and cultural life” (Gromadzka, 2016, p. 127) is a challenge for all educational actors. Active participation of teachers and parents is a necessary condition for the process of forming constructive social relations between children representing different national and cultural backgrounds. Living in a multicultural space requires „crossing the boundaries and codes of one's culture, going to the multicultural borderlands of religious diversity and worldview pluralism” (Rembierz, 2018, pp. 91–92).

Based on the conducted qualitative research, it can be concluded that parents are aware of the need to form and develop intercultural competencies among their children. They attribute the realisation of this process in the family above all to its natural character, inherent in everyday life situations, currently characterised by increasing contact with people from other countries and representing other cultures.

Respondents – due to low self-esteem – are less likely to declare conscious, planned actions in this area. Intercultural competence is seen by participants to consist mainly of upbringing in values such as tolerance and respect for other people, which determine the nature of interpersonal relations regardless of nationality and culture. They see their role in developing intercultural competencies in children primarily in developing their emotional openness and awakening positive emotions towards understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. They associate this objective with involving children in concrete activities aimed at contact with other cultures, such as: going abroad, watching programmes, and films about other countries and cultures, preparing food together, singing songs in other languages, etc. In line with the position expressed by Jolanta Suchodolska (2009), parents expressed a desire to teach their children to read the emotions of the other, their needs and behavioural communication skills, to open up to the culture of the Other with full conviction of the value of such communication.

The main role in developing intercultural competencies in the cognitive area, i.e., in extending children's knowledge of other countries and cultures, is attributed by the respondents to teachers. The statements of the respondents show that they are rarely involved at school in activities aimed at shaping and developing intercultural competencies. These activities take the form of information meetings, e.g., on difficult educational situations in classrooms in the context of multiculturalism. Parents are then asked to discuss with their children how to behave appropriately towards foreign students. It should be emphasised that all parents surveyed expressed their readiness to actively participate in the activities undertaken by the school to awaken in their children the need to make a conscious intellectual, emotional and/or activity effort related to "reaching out to the Other, with a desire to understand him/her, to acknowledge him/her" (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p. 516). Hence, it is the task of the school and teachers to involve parents in the planning and implementation of various forms of children's participation in activities that create space for the acceptance of interpersonal and intercultural differences.

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