

LET'S MEET – LET'S RESPECT EACH OTHER”

REPORT FROM THE PROJECT TO SUPPORT
STUDENTS FROM MINORITY/ETHNIC GROUPS
AND FOREIGN STUDENTS

EXECUTION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SERVICE
OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

ELŻBIETA JASZCZYSZYN, JOLANTA ANDRZEJEWSKA

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Reviewer: full professor Rafał Piwowarski
(Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warsaw)

Authors of the report: doctor habilitatus Elżbieta Jaszczyszyn, Jolanta Andrzejewska, PhD
Cooperation: Anna Wróbel (OMEP, Warsaw)

Translated from the Polish language: Karolina Klucznik
Cover design: Grzegorz Chodacki
Editorial correction: Editorial Board

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02-956 Warszawa, ul. Gubinowska 28/30
tel./fax 22 842 56 33, e-mail: zarzad@omep.org.pl



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CONTENS

INTRODUCTION	5
AIMS OF THE PROJECT	7
PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLISH OMEP COMMITTEE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT	8
THE RECIPIENTS AND THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROJECT. ITS PROMOTION	9
THE STAGES OF THE REALISATION OF THE PROJECT AND THE RESULTS	10
THE INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEACHERS AND THE PROBLEM OF MULTICULTURALISM	14
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEACHERS ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE CHILDREN OF FOREIGNERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES	15
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEACHERS ABOUT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CHILDREN OF FOREIGNERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES WITH THEIR PEERS	19
THE KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS ABOUT THE REASONS FOR ADAPTATION DIFFICULTIES OF THE PUPILS	25
THE SUBJECT MATTER OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION	29
THE TEACHERS' SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN	33
THE FORMS OF SUPPORT FOR THE PUPILS AND THEIR FAMILIES	35
THE FORMS OF TEACHER'S COOPERATION WITH THE PARENTS OF THE FOREIGNERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINORITIES	40
THE PROBLEMS OF MULTICULTURALISM VS. THE DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-EDUCATION OF TEACHERS	42
THE FORMS OF TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT	45
SUPPORTING THE TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT	47
DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE PROJECT	50

INTRODUCTION

This book is a summary of the realisation of one of the tasks of the Polish Committee of the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education (OMEP) which was undertaken within the framework of the execution of the public administration service of the Ministry of National Education "Projects to support students from minority/ethnic groups and foreign students" "Let's Meet – Let's Respect Each Other". It obviously does not fully cover many interesting issues that are connected with the matter of multiculturalism in the modern societies. This is not its aim, however. When we started the realisation of the project in the spring of 2011 we were aware that the migrations of people in the globalised world have shown "the world's multiculturalism at the same time opening the individuals to the problems of differences, diversity, individuality, rejection and prejudice. The difference and individuality have become not only a fact and a day-to-day issue, but, most importantly, an educational challenge, the source of mutual enrichment, the source of knowledge"¹. The society has ceased to be a homogenous community where the values for everyone are identical, constant and predictable. The identity of a strictly-designed and stable world has been changed into the identity created by many participants². As it is common in such circumstances, the social need or negotiation and achieving compromise in the process of creating the world has reappeared. The necessity to change the culture and education³ in the field of human subjectivity, emphasising the multiculturalism and interculturalism of the societies has appeared. This is why the

¹ Nikitorowicz, J., *Kreowanie tożsamości dziecka. Wyzwania edukacji międzykulturowej*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 15.

² Nikitorowicz, J., *Dialog międzykulturowy w edukacji patrioty i obywatela świata*, (in:) Karpińska, A., (ed.), *Kreatorzy edukacyjnego dialogu*, Białystok 2002, p. 115.

³ Klus-Stańska, D., *Nauczyciel wobec utraty jednoznaczności kultury. Podejście wyzwania czy ucieczka?*, (in:) Kwiatkowska, H., Lewowicki, T., *Społeczno.-kulturowe konteksty edukacji nauczycieli i pedagogów*, Warszawa 2003, p. 47.

contemporary education stresses the uniqueness and individualism of a human being, it emphasises the freedom of people in the post-modern world and reinforces the right of groups of people to different lifestyles. Understanding the world, knowing oneself and the ability to create a dialogue are relevant not only from the perspective of the individual success of a person, but they also have other meaning as the characteristics of the civic attitude which governs the ways of engagement of a person into the creation process of the common good⁴.

In the discussion on the multicultural education in Poland the issues of ethnic, racial and cultural differences of the society are raised. They represent, however, the different visions of the world and concepts in order to enable the dialogue between the groups and to protect cultural identity. The parties to the dialogue are encouraged to cross the borders and enter the area where the borders overlap. The aims of such actions are, among others, the internal enrichment of a person and soothing/eliminating the social tensions. Hence, it can be stated that the multicultural education concerns "the shaping of understanding the cultural differences starting with one's own society and finishing at the cultures of different societies"⁵. "Such education is not restricted to the openness towards the cultural differences, but it also inspires the individuals to think about their own cultures and to enrich their own cultural identities"⁶.

The practical ability of decentration, the fact of not seeing the difference as an excluding feature, the awareness of cultural relativism and cultural differences leading sometimes to conflicts make up the multicultural competence gained in the process of multicultural learning⁷. Multicultural education at the level of kindergarten and primary school education may concern the values that are indigenous to

⁴ Zalewska, E., *Szkoła jako miejsce uczenia się siebie i świata?*, (in:) Karpińska, A., (ed.), *Edukacyjne tendencje XXI wieku w dialogu i perspektywie*, Białystok 2005, p. 144.

⁵ Klim-Klimaszewska, A., *Edukacja międzykulturowa w przedszkolu*, (in:) Bobryk, A., (ed.), *Kultura pogranicza, pogranicze kultur*, Siedlce – Pułtusk 2005, p.136.

⁶ Gajdzica, A., *Założenia edukacji międzykulturowej a możliwości ich realizacji w klasach początkowych*, (in:) Grzeszkiewicz, B., (ed.), *Współczesność i przyszłość edukacji elementarnej*, Szczecin 2006, p. 268.

⁷ Grzybowski, P., *Wspólny język-utopia czy środek komunikacji międzykulturowej?*, (in:) Lewowicki, T., Urban, J., Szczyпка-Rusz, A., (eds), *Język, komunikacja i edukacja w społecznościach wielokulturowych*, Cieszyn – Warszawa 2004.

a certain cultural or national community including language, religious denominations, territory, traditions, customs, rules and norms of conduct in the “private/native homeland” and social relations based on tolerance and acceptance for the difference.

The discussions on the project’s website should be noticed. Five topics have been discussed. They dealt with the books useful in practice (77 views), when to start developing sensitivity to difference (107 views), stories in multicultural education (80 views), good practice in working with children with different native languages (84 views) and working with children with different native languages (60 views).

This work consists of studies that have not been published previously. They describe the authors’ own research as well as their interpretation. They have been realised within the framework of the project to support students from national/ethnic minorities and foreign students “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” financed by the Ministry of National Education and executed by the Polish Committee of the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education (OMEP).

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

To make education supporting international communities more popular was made the main aim of the project. Its realisation was possible due to:

1. The promotion of children’s rights especially in the communities where foreigners live.
2. The popularisation of the educational ideas of Janusz Korczak which emphasise the respect and tolerance towards the others.
3. The popularisation of achievements in the field of institutional kindergarten education in Europe as a result of the cooperation within the framework of the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education (OMEP).
4. The exchange of experience in the field of multicultural education in cooperation with the institutions home and abroad.

5. The formulation of good practice and exchange of experience in the field of multicultural education in Poland and at the international level.
6. The support for integration of the foreigners with the local community.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLISH OMEP COMMITTEE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

All the assumed aims of the project set forth in the offer submitted to the Ministry of National Education have been fully achieved thanks to the great involvement of the teachers realising the programme as well as the volunteers. They have been realised through:

- the creation of a bilingual (Polish-English) platform for the project which enabled the discussion of the topic of multicultural education and the presentation of texts and educational materials developed by the programme board of the Polish OMEP Committee as well as the presentation of good practice in the field of multicultural education;
- the exchange of experience in the field of multicultural education on the website of the Project;
- the organisation of the International Contest for teachers “Presentation of Good Practice in the Field of Multicultural Education”;
- the organisation and presentation of the International Art Gallery for children “Me-You-Us”;
- gathering the feedback about the project through the means of evaluation questionnaires.

THE RECIPIENTS AND THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROJECT. ITS PROMOTION

“Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” project was not intended only for the creators of the Polish education but also for people living abroad who are cooperating with the Polish Committee of the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education (OMEP). Since its ideas were to get to the largest numbers of the people interested in this matter, the project was promoted in multiple ways. The information about the project has been sent via the electronic mail to the representatives of the national OMEP Committees in Europe.

In Poland the promotion of the project was performed directly via the electronic mail sent to the kindergartens operating in the areas of the local divisions of the Polish OMEP Committee activity, that is: the Tricity Polish OMEP Division (Gdansk, Gdynia, Sopot), the Warsaw Polish OMEP Division (the capital city of Warsaw), the Masovian Polish OMEP Division (the Mazowieckie province), the Świętokrzyskie Polish OMEP Division (the Świętokrzyskie province), the Polish OMEP Division in Częstochowa (the city of Częstochowa), the Silesian Polish OMEP Division (the Śląskie province), the Podlaskie Polish OMEP Division (the Podlaskie province), the Polish OMEP Division in Lublin (the Lubelskie province).

Most of the people interested in the project learned about it from the Internet (31%). Other people received the information because they are members of OMEP Poland (18%), OMEP Russia (13%) and OMEP Ukraine (3%). Another way of spreading the information about the Project and its aims were notes at the beneficiaries’ workplaces (13%) or passing the information by acquaintances (13%). The academic teachers were the sources of information for people in Poland, Ukraine and Great Britain (13%). The information was also passed by the means of TV programmes and the education periodical “Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” (6%).

THE STAGES OF THE REALISATION OF THE PROJECT AND THE RESULTS

The realisation of the project was divided in three stages:

- The 1st stage was the study and analysis of the teachers' individual knowledge, their individual experience in working with children of foreigners, repatriates as well as children from national or ethnic minorities, their preferred forms of development in the field of multicultural education and their expectations as to the personal and professional achievements and the work quality of a certain educational institution or local community.
- The 2nd stage was connected with the activation of the teachers' community and the kindergarten pupils, different levels of schools and the local community.
- The 3rd stage comprised the opinion survey among the participants of the "Let's Meet – Let's Respect Each Other" project about the usefulness of particular activities of the project and the social feedback of the discussed topics in the field of multicultural education.

The result of the *first stage* was the determination of the participants' knowledge and their needs as to the multicultural education. The total number of 60 people answered the questions that enabled to diagnose the state of the matter (58 women, 2 men). As to the education, the people surveyed have: a secondary education (24%), a Bachelor's degree (8%), a Master's degree (68%). They work in: nurseries (13%), kindergartens (17%), primary schools (50%), lower secondary schools (15%). The unemployed constituted 5% of the people surveyed.

This stage of the project also involved an on-line survey. The questionnaire about the issue of multiculturalism and multicultural education in various European countries was published on the project's website and 39 people (from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Great Britain and Germany) completed it. Most of the participants of the on-line survey are women (98%) and most of the respondents (95%) live in the city. The profile of education may be described as varied since 49% have a Bachelor's degree, 48% have a Master's degree and 3% have

a secondary education. Almost three quarters (74%) of the people surveyed work in kindergartens. The following 21% work at a higher education institutions and the remaining 5% at primary schools.

During the second stage of the “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” project could get a solid and well-adapted to their needs academic knowledge from the field of multicultural education that was published on the website. The articles available on the OMEP website described:

- the state of knowledge about multiculturalism,
- the practical ideas including the lesson plans and integration activities – the so called “Presentation of Good Practice”,
- the contents of the programme designed for the specific stages of the pupil’s education starting from kindergarten until secondary school,
- the bibliography of the latest publications from Poland and other countries dealing with the issue of multicultural education in the European Union.

People interested in the problems of the students that come from the families of repatriates or foreigners could participate in discussions that were held on the OMEP website.

Educators who wanted to get an immediate information on how to deal with a problem occurring in the classroom resulting from the multiculturalism could consult specialists (academic teachers, experienced teachers, foreigners living in Poland) who were available for a telephone conversation at OMEP Poland. Most of the pedagogy teachers and students participating in the project could use many trainings and educational projects.

We should emphasise the interest and the number of participant in the “International Art Gallery Me-You-Us”. This gallery was generated by 59 education institutions, 28 from Poland and 31 from abroad. Poland was represented by 16 institutions from Warsaw, 3 from Częstochowa, 2 from Białystok, 2 from Gdańsk and 1 from Krasnobród, Opoczno, Katowice, Olsztyn, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski and Przywidz each. The foreign participants were represented by 24 institutions from Russia, 2 from Ukraine and 1 from Virgin Islands. The participants have sent the total of 206 artworks.

The participants of the Gallery were 364 children and 125 teachers. The Contest was closed and concluded on 29 October 2011 when the

report prepared by the Contest commission was signed. The following aspects were taken into consideration during the contest: autonomy, creativity and originality of the children's artistic visions. The works of 12 children were awarded by publishing them in a special edition of calendar for the year 2012. Moreover, 50 artworks were given honourable mentions and a special prize was awarded to 3 teachers who were preparing the artworks with the children (from Gdansk, Warsaw and Moscow). The awarded teachers will participate in the European OMEP Conference "Respect for a Child" in Warsaw from 18 April to 20 April 2012 without paying the Conference fee.

All the institutions participating in the contest were given diplomas and books connected with the regional education. Every artwork submitted for the contest was presented on the project's website. The interest in the Gallery may be illustrated by the number of views of the individual kindergarten galleries (from 57 to 7105).

The artworks that were awarded and given honourable mentions were presented during:

- The 3rd All-Polish Conference of Kindergarten Headmasters and Teachers - "Kindergarten 2011/2012 - needs, challenges and inspirations" held at the National Library of Poland on 24-25 November 2011;
- The meeting of Zdzisław Witwicki's Works Enthusiasts in Zdzisław Witwicki Kindergarten No. 31 in Warsaw;
- The Folk Song and Dance Contest held in Śródmieście Community Centre on Smolna Street.

The International Contest for teachers "Presentation of Good Practice in the Field of Multicultural Education had participants from 23 institutions including 13 from Poland (4 from Warsaw, 2 from Gliwice and 1 from Częstochowa, Olsztyn, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Białystok each) and 10 institutions from abroad (9 from Russia and 1 from Ukraine). The total number of 35 teachers took part in this contest and they submitted 30 works in the following categories:

- Project/Lesson plan - 20 works submitted;
- Essay - 4 works submitted;
- Film/Presentation - 10 works submitted.

The primary criterion for evaluation assumed by the Competition Committee was the compliance of the suggested practical solutions with the principles of child development psychology and methodology of work with kindergarten children.

A Special Prize has also been awarded: one work has been chosen to be presented during the European OMEP Conference "Respect for a Child" in April 2012 (reimbursement of the Conference fees).

From the awarded works 8 have been chosen to be published in a collection of texts entitled "Presentation of Good Practice in the Field of Multicultural Education" edited by E. Jaszczyszyn, J. Uszyńska-Jarmoc. They have also been published on the "Let's Meet – Let's Respect Each Other" project website.

Next 2 works have been chosen to be published in the periodical for teachers "Wychowanie w Przedszkolu". In the category Film/Presentation 3 works have been pointed out for publication on the project website.

All teachers who participated in the Competition were awarded with a diploma and received a methodology publication published within the framework of the project.

For the purposes of the project the total number of 200 pages have been translated from the Polish language to the English language as well as 25 pages from the Russian language to the Polish language. The translation comprised methodology texts chosen by the programme Board of the Polish OMEP Committee, additional materials, contents of the project website and the awarded examples of good practice sent in by the teachers.

The third stage of the project gave the organisers opportunity to read thoroughly the opinions of the participants of different types of activities connected with the project. The majority of the positive feedback (80%) came from the teachers working in kindergartens and primary schools, the students of pre-school pedagogy and integrated teaching from the universities in Białystok, Warsaw, Lublin, Toruń and parents of the children from the whole country taking part in art competitions.

THE INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEACHERS AND THE PROBLEM OF MULTICULTURALISM

The early stage of the project implemented questionnaires as a tool for diagnosing the teachers' individual knowledge (the teachers who declared, among others, their participations in many activities offered by the project). Basing on the results, various forms of training have been designed and organised. Their aim was to effectively raise the level of knowledge in the field of multicultural education and how the children from national or ethnic minorities as well as foreigners function in a kindergarten or at school.

The research examined the teachers' individual knowledge about:

- the reason for problems of children of foreigners and representatives of national minorities,
- how such children function among their peers,
- the reason for adaptation difficulties of the pupils,
- the usefulness of selected issues from the multicultural education in kindergartens and primary schools,
- the ways of supporting pupils and their teachers through multicultural education by the institutions or teachers,
- the usefulness of selected forms of cooperation between the teachers and parents of foreigners or minority students.

The project assumed that "the teacher's individual knowledge is a strong base for interpretation through which an individual perceives and evaluates the new experiences and the incoming information"⁸. The individual knowledge of educators is their popular knowledge and the scientific knowledge which is objective, internally ordered and empirically justified.

The popular knowledge is the primal situation of a person in the world, it sets the perspective for the actions and thinking of an individual, the perception of others and himself. It defies the objective logic. It is subjective and formulated in absolute judgements that are exceptionless and bipolar (black - white, good - bad), it is often guided

⁸ Zdybel, D., Kusiak, K., Bednarczuk, B., *Indywidualny wymiar edukacji nauczycielskiej o procesie stawania się refleksyjnym praktykiem*, (in:) Skrzetuska, E. (ed.), *Problemy edukacji wczesno.szkolnej. Indywidualizacja. Uzdolnienia. Refleksja nauczyciela*, Lublin 2011, p. 195.

by prejudices, stereotypes, common sense. This is the *a priori* kind of knowledge this is why it is poorly acceptable for the intentional reflection and verbalisation. Hence, it is often called the silent knowledge, hidden from the reflection of an individual⁹. The knowledge is used in the process of organizing the view of the world, coping with the unclear situations and post-modern chaos, systematisation of information. The source of the popular knowledge is the human nature, socio-cultural forms of life, traditions and customs natural for the individual and the language.

The individual knowledge of teachers is the knowledge that has been deeply experienced and built into the system of concepts, visions, judgments and assertion about the reality. Adult slowly construct their own view of the world in the process of development. The personal knowledge, which depends on the parents' education as well as the social status of the family and the environment, is the origin of this laborious process. The scientific knowledge is added to the individual knowledge. Such knowledge should be used consciously and built into the private experience.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEACHERS ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE CHILDREN OF FOREIGNERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES

Multicultural education gives the children and teachers the scientific knowledge about the ethnic, national, religious groups, it teaches different cultures, develops sensitivity, erases the existing prejudices and stereotypes and gives the feeling of security. Education based on the solid scientific knowledge from the field of philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology makes it possible to notice the value in different cultures, to develop ways of communication and to make the general atmosphere of the kindergarten/school aimed at a multicultural society.

⁹ Kwiaśnica, R., *Dwie racjonalności. Ku milczącej wiedzy pedagogicznej*, „Forum Oświatowe” 1989, no. 1, p. 71.

The teachers may have both the popular and the scientific knowledge about the problems that are encountered by the pupils in the institutions. After all, the teachers' knowledge is a durable representation of reality, it has a form of an organised and mutually connected information structure encoded in the long-term memory. In the mind it is processed and becomes a special construct of emotional tone which is linked with the beliefs and opinions system¹⁰.

While working with the Different, the teachers should constantly increase their scientific knowledge about the pupils' problems and give a methodical thought to the popular knowledge present in their consciousness, experience and actions.

The teachers' knowledge about the children of foreigners, repatriates or from minorities sometimes stops them from getting to truth, to carry out an impartial analysis of the education situation, to understand the behaviour of the Different in the classroom that are set in a different culture and language especially. In the course of time the most difficult for the teachers is to determine, name, realise and criticise his or her own limitations and reasons for many attitudes towards foreigners, repatriates or national minorities. It is extremely difficult to determine what makes a kindergarten or school teacher intolerant, reserved towards the problems of "aliens" and what sets the limits of his present knowing and understanding. According to Giraux¹¹ and Kwaśnica¹², every kind of knowledge possessed by a person should be constantly subject to adaptive, hermeneutical and emancipation criticism. Such behaviour of a teacher is the basis for the fight with a false consciousness which makes him or her non-meditative prone to xenophobic behaviour and stereotypical actions.

¹⁰ Nęcka, E., Orzechowski, J., Szymura, B., *Psychologia poznawcza*, Warszawa 2007, p. 137.

¹¹ Giraux, H., *Teoria krytyczna i racjonalność w edukacji obywatelskiej*, (in:) Kwieciński, Z., Witkowski, I., *Spory o edukację. Dylematy i kontrowersje we współczesnych pedagogiach*, Warszawa 1993, p. 106.

¹² Kwaśnica, R., *Trzy wykładnie hasła bądź krytyczny. Wprowadzenie do rozumienia krytyczności pedagogiki*, „Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny” 1988, no. 2.

Table 1. The knowledge of the teachers about the problems most commonly occurring among children of foreigners, from national and ethnic minorities in the kindergartens and at schools (N=60).

Children's problems connected with:	Kindergarten children		School children	
	N	%	N	%
Lack of tolerance, humiliation, mockery, harassment, aggression, abusing, violence	37	62	36	60
Language difficulties	27	45	27	45
Different physical appearance	10	17	10	17
Following different religion, having different symbols	10	17	10	17
Rejection of peers during playtime	9	15	9	15
Accepting new behaviour	6	10	6	10
Adaptation to a new environment	9	15	7	12
Lack of trust "e.g. to gypsies"	3	5	7	12
Acquiring knowledge	3	5	3	5
Emotional problems	5	8	5	8
Misunderstanding of customs, code of behaviour	5	8	5	8
Different lifestyle	4	7	5	8
Feeling of inferiority	2	3	2	3
No answer	1	2	1	2

The figures do not add up to 60, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

The individual knowledge of the teachers surveyed about the children of foreigners and repatriates in kindergartens and at schools is relatively large and relates to the issues of: lack of tolerance among peers, problems with communication in the Polish language, difference resulting from the physical appearance, behaviour in some social situations as well as rejection during playtime and adaptive difficulties connected with entering a different society and lack of trust towards some national groups.

Many teachers surveyed (62%) consider the *lack of tolerance* in the Polish society and aggressive behaviour to be the biggest problem of the children of foreigners, repatriates and from national minorities. This is why, according to them, the multicultural education of pupils aimed at the right perception of the Different started as early as possible is really important. The teachers' task, however, is a careful observation of the behaviour and activity of the students and using all the appearing

educative situations created by the children themselves in order to provoke certain behaviour or changes in the structure of their knowledge and attitudes (acceptance and tolerance towards the difference).

For the Polish children existing within the diversified groups of peers the most important are the features that make the play with a child of different nationality more difficult or easier. Kindergarten children and the children in the first three years of primary school pay special attention if their foreign friends can initiate and co-create interesting plays, how they communicate during them, how often they take offence during the play, to what extent they can obey the group and how many interesting ideas they give to the friendly interaction. From the teachers surveyed, 15% indicate that the problems of foreign children result from rejection *during playtime* or *being rejected in the task*. The task of the educator is to create a proper atmosphere within a group of children, to make everyone feel needed, attractive and necessary in the play and the tasks given by the teachers.

According to 8% of teachers, the *difference of upbringing styles* preferred in different cultures and nationalities followed by different code of behaviour in certain situations results in many difficulties for children of non-Polish origin in adaptation to their peers. For example, in families where children are used to warm contact with others, hugging, holding hands they will have difficulties with understanding why the children who were deprived of such affectionate experience (from Asia) cry when others try to touch or hug them. Initially, the cultural differences is a frequent cause of misunderstandings between the children in one class. However, due to the teachers' work the cultural differences are understood and accepted by both sides.

According to 45% of the teachers, the conflicts or problematic situations among children are caused by the *language and verbal and non-verbal communication*. Sometimes the multiple meanings of many symbols should make the teachers working with groups where there are representatives of foreigners or national minorities should be sensitive to some phrases, gestures, body language and facial expressions that can be treated by every pupil in different way.

The *difference in physical appearance*, according to 17% of the people surveyed, is also the reason for many misunderstandings. The children

spontaneously look for and notice the differences in faces, skin colour, the size of the body and are curious why the foreign child does not have the same hair or eyes as they do. Kindergarten children, for example, consider the smaller children of Asian origin to be younger and they start to treat them as a “child” or a “daughter” in a play. This results in the child’s reluctance. The literature or the media may deepen or level the problems.

The teachers surveyed very rarely (3%) indicated the difficulties of children in *learning* that result from a different country of origin. The educators did not value the fact that constructing the knowledge in the mind is linked with the previous experience and the view of the world which was certainly different for the children of foreigners or repatriates from the experience of children raised in the Polish culture.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEACHERS ABOUT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CHILDREN OF FOREIGNERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES WITH THEIR PEERS

In the early stage of education in a kindergarten or at a primary school children are dependent on the teachers and perceive them as people whose actions are the direct and immediate source of rewards and punishments. This situation makes the children to comply and learn to behave according to the teachers’ expectations. The attitude of young people to school, norms and tasks as well as to the other participants of school life including the foreigners is developed through a particular connection with the teachers. The first relations with people important to the children are the source of norms in the later interpersonal relations. The social representation of the people important to children kept in their memories are activated while encountering a person they do not know. When the general assessment of the important people (parents, teachers) and attitude to them are positive, then in the process of transference the positive reactions to the unknown person like a foreign peer are present. It is an extremely important mechanism in the school relations of very young people with others and it fosters their

adaptation to new situations, tasks, people as well as initiating the cooperation with them. This phenomenon noticed in the first years of children in the kindergartens or at schools gives the teachers a lot of opportunities to influence their relations with peers and further development. The mechanism of transference is supplemented by the actions intentionally performed by the teachers in order to create a harmonious group of children and a friendly atmosphere in the education institution.

The OMEP “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” project assumed that the teachers will be given the knowledge and the skills useful while creating the friendly atmosphere in kindergarten groups and school classes where the pupils are Polish and of foreign origin. Hence, the survey intended to assess the teachers’ individual knowledge in this respect as well as what skills and scientific knowledge is required.

The teachers surveyed showed relatively great knowledge about the functioning of a Different child in the kindergarten group or school class. They pointed out varied forms of support that can be undertaken by the teachers who are aware of the problems resulting from the differences in the origin and the language (Table 2).

Teachers are significant people for the pupils, their behaviour and opinions expressed in front of the whole group are very powerful. Half of the teachers surveyed emphasised the meaning of the *teacher’s attitude* towards all the pupils. It is extremely important when the teachers accept the difference of a child that enters a homogenous group of students in the respect of nationality and language and gives him the emotional support.

Table 2. The knowledge of the teachers about the support possibilities for a child of foreigners or representatives of minorities in the process of w accustoming to the peer group (N=60)

Teacher's support in the relation-building process in a group	In kindergarten		At school	
	N	%	N	%
Accepting all the children in the group by the teacher, showing that they are liked, appreciated	24	40	30	50
Playing games as a whole group that enable to know the best side of the other person	18	30	18	30
Expanding the children's knowledge about the Different through a film, a talk, books about different cultures and religions	15	25	18	30
Making children interested in the difference of a child through special photos/lessons, to promote the different culture through education programmes	18	30	19	32
Integration activities that create friendly atmosphere and trust among children	15	25	25	42
Compensation activities that enlarge the knowledge and prestige of the Different in the class	5	8	13	22
Talking with children about the differences between people	12	20	12	20
Creating groups consisting of different children to complete specific tasks	8	13	8	13
Workshops for the whole families	16	43	6	10
Meeting with the parents of the children from the whole group, event with parents	10	17	5	8
No support suggestion	3	5	3	5

The figures do not add up to 60, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

Teachers who create and initiate interactions in the education institutions use their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The atmosphere in the group of children as well as the pupils' sensitivity to otherness in the biological, social and cultural aspects and the complex relations between the parents depend on the teachers. Such *atmosphere-*creating teacher needs to immediately react in the problematic and confrontational situations which are initiated by racial and national differences. The lack of reaction may lead to the escalation of mutual prejudice. It is necessary for the teachers, and sometimes for the parents as well, to thoroughly analyse the problem, to get into its essence, because it is very often a result of the cultural differences and the differences in the interpretation of the world.

The examination of the teachers' individual knowledge was done among the nursery, kindergarten and primary schools teachers. This is why a third of the people surveyed very often suggested a *set of games and outdoor competition* that can be used by the kindergarten or school in the process of group integration. Since games are still an important form of activity for kindergarten and school children, the appreciation of their advantages and functions in the respondents' indications seems to be adequate. Not only do the games develop the children's cognitive processes, but they also expand their knowledge, develop their interests, help to initiate social contacts in extraordinary situations, teach to obey the rules of behaviour in certain situations. Well-organised games help to release the negative emotions, get more experience and give enjoyment and happiness to the participants. While playing, the Polish child may learn something about the Different child through observation, mimicking, common exploration of the environment and help.

The teachers working in the education institution of higher stage suggested *integration activities* that create a friendly atmosphere in the class and use roleplay, dance, humour-based artistic tasks, theatre-like improvisations, Klanza sheet games, drama, picnic parties, sport competitions, team games in a gymnasium, a school playground or a park.

According to the teachers surveyed, the children's *knowledge* about the culture, language or the country the Different comes from is important in the multicultural education. The educational task is to show all the pupils the features that constitute the value of every person, to show the fundamental rights of people and their right to freedom.

The best method of preventing aggression and exclusion due to race, nationality or religion in a diversified society is multicultural education that creates people sensitive to others and a direct communication between people having different cultural background. Probably this is why a third of the teachers suggested: a special, *regularly organised activities and lessons* with the aim of making children interested in the distinctness of their peers, promoting a different culture through education projects realised by the whole classes or the whole school community, enlarging the knowledge of the pupils about the Different through watching films about different religions, talks presenting the values of each culture, literature, tourist guides, albums, geographical

atlases that show the distinctness and uniqueness of different countries, exploring the characteristic features of particular cultures with the use of multimedia presentations made by older students.

Some teachers indicated the importance of direct conversations with children about the differences between people in their physical appearance, clothes, language, the important values. The teachers stressed that the conversation will help to get to the individual knowledge of the pupils and will help to show their fears, prejudices taken from their families or insecurity. The conversations held in friendly and objective atmosphere would have the aim of inspiring the cognitive interest and changing the present knowledge.

Some of the teachers (13%) paid attention to the meaning of *peer tutoring* in the process of developing the proper relations within a class. They suggested to make groups for certain tasks composed of different children. The essence of peer tutoring are individual encounters of pupils taking place in the atmosphere of dialogue, respect, mutual attention which help to know the certain field of knowledge precisely and to develop certain skills necessary for existing in the social reality. Tutoring fosters the cognitive activity of the pupils, promotes the establishment of social bonds and gathering new experiences, leads to the improvement of interpersonal skills. A tutor – a more experienced peer – helps other students to discover and develop their abilities, to work out their own ways of coping with difficult or complex situations. The tutors lead their peers to create their own way of development.

The teachers surveyed claim that, apart from the topics included in the multicultural education, the *existence* of a child representing a different culture within a kindergarten group or a school class is important and so are the direct ways of learning the cultural and religious differences and the time needed for building the new topics into the knowledge previously acquired.

The process of child's learning takes place through the social experience in contacts with the teacher-partner, peer, tutor and other significant or inspiring people. The significant people always have the role of authority for children and influence their behaviour and decisions. "A child who represents a different culture becomes for another child a commentator of difference which he or she constitutes. They assume the role of 'interpreters' of differences and make it possible

to get accustomed to it"¹³. The personal encounters of pupils representing different cultural backgrounds taking place in friendly atmosphere help them to discover the diversity of the world, to notice and compare the selected elements of culture or racial distinctness (skin colour, characteristic features of face and body posture). A child slowly puts the new cultural norms (the preferred behaviour, games, social relations) into his or her own creations and adapts them unnoticed to his or her own system of ideas. A student encountering on a day-to-day basis various signs of cultural difference slowly becomes tolerant. The stereotypes most often started by the adults become weaker and the differences start to be accepted. The pupils discover the right to their own opinions and accept peers who have different points of view on the topic like how and what to play, who to make a pair with, who to lend some school accessories, who to choose as a help with the duty during the meal or to do difficult exercises during the lessons.

The teachers who work with older children draw attention to the need of *compensation lessons* at school which will, on the one hand, enhance the knowledge and abilities of the Different and, on the other hand, they will bring out his or her uniqueness, originality, special abilities and they will boost the Different's prestige with the class.

The respondents working in kindergartens indicate that parents have a big influence on the atmosphere in the class as they are the people who transfer the whole system of values and the interpretation of the world. Hence, the teachers surveyed suggested to organise workshops for the whole families about different religions or unusual traditions and meetings with the parents of all the children in the group as well as events where the parents would participate like festive picnics, show or integration activities.

¹³ Kamińska, K., *W stronę wielokulturowości w edukacji przedszkolnej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 24.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS ABOUT THE REASONS FOR ADAPTATION DIFFICULTIES OF THE PUPILS

In order to solve the problems of children of different nationality teachers should remember that for people today adaptation means not only the fulfilment of needs in a specific niche, but also development of the creativity in actions, stimulation of the creativity and cooperation abilities.

For all kindergarten or school children, especially the ones representing a foreign nationality, there is a series of situations that require a great adaptive effort which also has a significant influence on their personal and social functioning. Life is a continuous process of adaptation¹⁴. One of the particular periods that requires an effective activation of the adaptive abilities of a person is unquestionably the beginning of education at kindergarten and in the first class of primary school.

The basic adaptation mechanisms for humans are:

- resistance of the nervous system to stimuli;
- reaction time;
- language development;
- development of cognitive processes;
- the ability of social learning;
- the person's individual experience.

The teachers' knowledge about the reasons for the adaptation problems concentrated mainly on the children from national and ethnic minorities and foreigners (Table 3). The least problems were noticed by the teachers among the children of repatriates. This may result from a little experience in working with this kind of children or the lack of thought given to the problem. The teachers surveyed most commonly indicated the adaptation problems of the foreigners connected with a new language (90%), different culture and code of behaviour (83%), functioning of children during games (75%) and difficulties with learning new information (72%). According to the people surveyed, the most adaptation problems occur among children from national and

¹⁴ Klus-Stańska, D., *Adaptacja szkolna siedmiolatków*, Olsztyn 2004.

ethnic minorities in relations with their peer in play (68%), in relations with the teachers (60%) and with understanding a different religion. However, the respondents also claim that the children of repatriates have the most problems with the change of mode of life from the house-based to the kindergarten or school life.

Table 3. The teachers' knowledge about the adaptation problems of children of different nationality, repatriates and representing minorities in kindergarten or at primary school (N=60)

Children's adaptation problems connected with:	Children of foreigners		Children of repatriates		Children from national/ethnic minority	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Learning new information	43	72	21	35	25	42
Controlling emotions	11	18	28	47	22	37
Change of mode of life	41	68	39	65	23	38
New culture and code of behaviour	50	83	23	38	34	57
Different language	54	90	18	30	32	53
Relations with teachers and peers	31	52	29	48	36	60
Accepting new kinds of food	36	60	11	18	13	22
Understanding religion	30	50	34	57	36	60
Peers' aggression	36	60	23	38	32	52
Proper behaviour	22	37	23	38	26	43
Rejection during play	45	75	26	43	41	68
Nicknames connected with the origin	2	3	0	0	1	2

The figures do not add up to 60, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

The preparation of a foreign child for new tasks in the education institution means acquiring the abilities in advance. The preparation in the subjective aspect is connected with actions for emotional, intellectual, social and physical protection in a new social and psychological situation.

In the first months in an education institution the children of foreigners/repatriates/refugees who attend the Polish kindergarten or school get used to:

- novelties and changes;
- social environment;
- social roles;
- natural environment;
- technical environment.

The surveyed teachers (68%) were aware that especially the children of foreigners and repatriates may have adaptation problems connected with the *change of the mode of life*. Hence, the basic task for children entering a Polish education institution is adaptation to the novelties and acceptance of: the environment different from their homes; different language which influences the different view of the world; different thinking and ways of defining the world¹⁵, arranging the experience; different culture and the behaviour resulting from it; sometimes different religion and new social situations, things, people and rooms. The role of adults, teachers and parents, is to help children prepare for the changes. They also should undertake many measures to make the pupils acquainted with the different culture, make them know how to behave in certain situations and to teach them how to swiftly go into roles that are new for them.

The teachers also noticed the adaptation problem connected with functioning within a kindergarten group or among peers. The respondents drew attention to the issue of *aggression* among children especially aimed at the foreign children (60% of the teachers) and the children from national or ethnic minorities (52% of the teachers). The issues of *rejection* in play of foreign children (75%) and children from national minorities (68%) were important problems for the surveyed teachers. Plays and games are some of the basic forms of children activity and they have certain functions to be performed in the processes like social and emotional development of children. With the support of the adults (foreign parents and teachers) children should accept the fact of belonging to the place and environment: my classroom, my group, friends. At this moment children should recognise their teachers and friends and should gradually learn that they have to obey the rule of not walking away from the teachers and that they can turn to the supervising

¹⁵ Nikitorowicz, J., *Kreowanie tożsamości dziecka. Wyzwania edukacji międzykulturowej*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 69.

people if they have the need to do so. With time, children start to trust their friends who speak a different language, their teachers and other employees of the kindergarten.

According to 90% of the teachers surveyed, the extremely complicated task for the foreign children in the Polish educational institutions is *language familiarisation* of the new world, the arrangement of their experience in the language they use at homes and in the Polish language, communicating with peers through active participation in free activities organised by the teachers and other forms of activities, undertaking the team tasks and games, using the names of their closest friends, the correct language reaction to the teachers' calls and tasks.

Only a third of the teachers surveyed paid attention to the difficulty the foreign, repatriate and national minority students have with *controlling emotions* and accepting the new relations. A big change for children taking place with the start of education concerns getting used to the new social roles and emotional competence. Relatively quickly, the children should accept the new roles of kindergarten students, friends, helpers in the Polish kindergarten. Unfortunately, the research conducted under the direction of H. Sowińska and concerning *the level of children's emotional competence and the level of social competence development* in educational situations indicate the low level of the competence in the kindergarten period and a very low level of coping with emotions¹⁶ and the sense of subjectivity¹⁷ in the early-school period.

The teachers' knowledge about the emotional and social competence of the foreign, repatriate and national minority children was not sufficient and would require a particular attention.

For children attending kindergarten or school it is difficult to quickly get to know the new material environment. For some children it is a great challenge to know and to accept the new environment: toilets,

¹⁶ Mikołajczyk, K., *Kompetencje emocjonalne dziecka w późnej fazie dzieciństwa*, (in:) Sowińska, H. (ed.), *Dziecko w szkolnej rzeczywistości. Założony a rzeczywisty obraz edukacji elementarnej*, Poznań 2011, p. 352.

¹⁷ Sowińska, H., *Rozwój kompetencji społecznych dziecka na etapie edukacji wczesnoszkolnej*, (in:) Sowińska, H. (ed.), *Dziecko w szkolnej rzeczywistości. Założony a rzeczywisty obraz edukacji elementarnej*, Poznań 2011, p. 352.

rooms, garden, playground, gymnasium or the sensory stimulation room as well as getting used to using this room independently according to their needs. The teachers surveyed did not pay attention to this issue, because they have probably assumed that when the parents sent their children to a kindergarten/school, they prepare them for the new environment. The kindergarten and school teachers (60% of the people surveyed) have only noticed that the foreign pupils may have problems with accepting the new kind of food in the institutions. The subjective preparation of children for the institutional environment concerns the situations, conditions, materials, accessories, the arrangement of time and space. This preparation should be done not only by the parents by sending the children to the institutions, but also the teachers should participate in this process. They should implement in their educational activities the lessons, tasks and projects connected with discovering the material environment of the classroom, the school's common room, the gymnasium, the corridors and some other interesting places in the school building¹⁸.

THE SUBJECT MATTER OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

The next assignment given to the teachers in the questionnaire was to propose some hypothetical topics of lessons from the subject matter of multicultural education. The task was: *Which topics should you discuss during lessons in kindergarten and primary school when a child of foreigners, repatriates or a representative of national minorities will be attending your institution?* (Table 4).

In Polish kindergartens and primary schools there are many indirect ways of solving the problems which occur when the children of foreigners, repatriates or representatives of national minorities come to the groups (classes) and with adapting to the new situations which will definitely appear.

¹⁸ Jaszczyszyn, E., *Oczekiwania sześciolatek i ich rodziców w stosunku do szkoły a realizacja obowiązku szkolnego*, Białystok 2010, p. 30-58.

Table 4. The teachers' suggestions of topics for the multicultural education lessons (N=60)

Topics for the multicultural education lessons	Number of teachers	%
The richness of different languages	51	85
The differences in peer's physical appearance in group/class (e.g. skin, eyes, height)	42	70
Interesting traditions, customs, legends	42	70
The elements attributed to a country (national anthem, language, flag, national emblem, name of the capital city).	41	68
Different behaviour in certain situations e.g. when saying "hallo", at a table.	39	65
The variety of customs connected with (e.g. giving presents, funeral, traffic)	37	62
Stereotypes, myths (e.g. Scottish - mean, gypsy - a thief, Arabian - a terrorist)	35	58
The variety of religious ceremonies	32	53
The diversity in the world of plants and animals in the native countries of the foreigners, interesting sights	29	48
The richness of the national cuisine	29	48
The issue of wars which make people leave their homes and countries	29	48
Ritual items in different cultures and religions (e.g. <i>nikab</i> , incense, headgear, candle)	28	47
The meaning of dialect	24	40
Aggressive behaviour towards the Different, towards different religion and culture	20	33
The issue of famine and poverty	13	22

The figures do not add up to 60, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

The common way of adaptation is *backing out*. It is present when students, teachers and parents fulfil their tasks superficially without engagement and enthusiasm. They realise the given tasks moderately without effort, emotional or creative engagement. They do enough to keep up appearances of dealing with the new situation. Their activity does not have foundations of learning new things or skills, but they adapt the possessed knowledge to the new situation or they use the ready-made scenarios available in different publications. This is why in the questionnaire part of the teachers (60%) indicated only selected topics for lessons which do not require a particular substantive and

methodology preparation. This issue has been repeatedly described in handbooks for teachers or presented within the projects realised in training workshops. These topics include: elements attributed to a country (national anthem, language, flag, national emblem, name of the capital city); description of the physical appearance of different people; the comparison of selected customs and languages, interesting traditions, legends.

Students segregation is another example of adaptation behaviour. The educator immediately divides the students into those who will succeed and will adapt to the situation and into those who are not worth their time and energy. This is why even when the foreign or repatriate students attend their institution, they do not realise any topics from multicultural education following the rule that it is the student who should adjust to the Polish educational reality. Among the surveyed teachers only 2% did not feel obliged to realise some selected topics during lessons.

Another strategy is the analysis of *side advantages*. The teachers prepare for additional topics when they notice the possible profits from their realisation. Since multicultural education is not a traditional subject and it is very often monitored by the education bodies, media, foundations, local governments, the teacher develops programme for the lessons connected with the introduction of the repatriate children into the Polish culture having in mind his own profit and not the benefit of his students. Such teachers select only the popular topics that can be easily presented through wall presentations, films, school events. The issues that are not pleasant and engage the emotions are underestimated. Such treatment is justified by saying that these problems do not occur in the area and their realisation would be unjustified. Only 16% of the teachers surveyed indicated solely the topics of different behaviour in different situations, e.g. saying hallo, eating meals; the meaning of dialects (from the Kashubian, Lublin and Białystok regions); the richness of national cuisine, the diversity of religious ceremonials, the diversity in the world of plants and animals in the foreigners' national countries. most of the teachers linked those matters with other topics.

The most beneficial reaction of teachers is solving the problems in an active way and *coping with* the whole of the matter of multiculturalism. In this way the educators may be able to anticipate, to foresee some of

the questions or inappropriate behaviour. By assuming to realise many problems they try to thoroughly investigate the new areas of knowledge, to develop their own opinion, to think over the most appropriate projects, lesson plans or educative events to be realised with the pupils. As much as 22% of the teachers interested in the matter of the “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” project gave almost all the topics. This fact indicates the great professional courage of the Polish teachers and their willingness to deal with new challenges as well as being professionals in their field of expertise. This humanistic approach proves that teachers notice the changes in the population migration and that they want to help their pupils to successfully adapt to the Polish educational and cultural reality. The fact that teachers want and know how to translate to the children’s language and perception some complex and difficult social topics is very uplifting. Those topics include: famine and poverty (22% of the teachers), wars that force people to leave their homes and countries (48%), the meaning of stereotypes and myths (58%), the issue of aggressive or xenophobic attitudes towards the Different and towards the religious or cultural distinctiveness (33%). The teachers’ willingness to investigate the complex multicultural issues promises well for the promotion of cultural pluralism in the Polish education which is still the system of education centred around one culture. “Cultural pluralism and diversity are features of the democratic society”¹⁹, this is why the schools should be the places of cultural and religious pluralism. Educators should be aware that they should not popularise one culture in the classroom, but they ought to change, modify and offer the vision of education that is preparing everybody to living and cooperating in the world irrespectively of their origin and the culture they represent.

¹⁹ Nikitorowicz, J., *Nauczyciel i szkoła w aspekcie edukacji międzykulturowej*, (in:) Kotusiewicz, A. A., Koć-Seniuch, G., Niemiec, J. (eds), *Mysł pedeutologiczna i działanie nauczyciela*, Warszawa – Białystok 1997, p. 104.

THE TEACHERS' SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN

By noticing the needs of foreign children and children from national/ethnic minorities the teachers see the need for understanding of the difference, to complete the knowledge about different cultures and to start an inner dialogue with the aim of breaking stereotypes and common opinions about, for example, national minorities. Solid knowledge and skills are foundations for the teachers while supporting every pupil in their development.

The support of children's development by the teachers has become a notion understood in different ways depending on the approach, knowledge, experience and teaching intuition. According to D. Klus-Stańska²⁰, the support may have the following forms:

- functional-behaviouristic;
- humanistic-adaptation;
- constructive-developmental;
- constructive-social;
- critical-emancipation.

In the *functional-behaviouristic* approach the support is treated as steering the child's linear development in a previously assumed direction and according to set standards. The teachers have a function of managers who organise and direct children's actions. Their task is to provide new information, to initiate individual tasks, to teach lessons according to trusted plans, to support students through additional tasks in handbooks and worksheets.

The *humanistic-adaptation* definition of support is the process of learning to be oneself. Teachers unconditionally accept the students as they are and what they have to offer. The educators' role is to help children of certain potential in adaptation to the existing conditions of the environment.

In the *constructive-developmental* approach, the support is seen as the organisation of the educational environment for a child that is an individual in the process of learning. The teachers are creators of the

²⁰ Klus-Stańska, D., *Konteksty teoretyczne nadawania znaczeń przez dzieci. Wokół pytań o rozumienie pedagogicznego wsparcia*, (in:) Puślecki, W. (ed.), *Wspieranie rozwoju dzieci w procesie wczesnej edukacji*, Wrocław 2008, p. 42-44.

material, personal, spiritual and didactic environment. They are to organise the best research environment for the process of learning, that is construction and reconstruction of meanings. Here the work is based upon individualisations, tasks performed in small groups and accepting several correct answers, ideas, projects.

The support seen from the *constructive-social* point of view emphasises its function of helping. The point of departure for the teachers' work is the zone of proximal development ZPD (L. S. Wygotski) and on this foundations they design their didactic and educational work. The effective methods are projects, working in mixed-ability groups or peer tutoring. The teachers engage the members of the closest family to the process of children's development. The family members know the children's developmental possibilities, but they can also give them the proper support. The right motivation of a child, the right emotional atmosphere and the individual, committed relations between teachers and students are important.

The *critical-emancipation* approach defines the support as setting free from certain social and personal assumptions as well as from the accepted code of behaviour. The teachers in their work should get rid of the symbolic violence, the realisation of the hidden programme of the school. Their task is to teach the children to defend their own opinions and stands, to value their own culture and family roots, to engage personally in the change for better. The teachers are obliged to cross their own prejudices, stereotypes, habits and to notice the potential held in the change, difference and interpretational problems²¹. The educators present the multidimensional world to the students, as it is seen from different points of view (e.g. the perspective of Polish children, foreigners, Polish parents, foreign parents). Hence, the emergence of children and parents from different cultures gives the teachers and their students opportunity to enlarge the interpretation perspective.

²¹ Tuohy, D., *Dusza szkoły. O tym, co sprzyja zmianie i rozwojowi*, Warszawa 2002.

THE FORMS OF SUPPORT FOR THE PUPILS AND THEIR FAMILIES

When children are born, they do not receive a ready-made cultural or civilisation heritage. They gather experience and create solid constructions in their minds later in the process of learning and upbringing. The teachers' function is to support their pupils when they are growing into a small community of a class and slowly becoming the citizens of the world. The task given to the surveyed teachers was: *What measures would you take if a foreign/repatriate child or a child representing a national minority started attending your kindergarten/school?*

The questioned teachers the most commonly chose forms attributed to the functional-behaviouristic and constructive-social support. The least attention was paid to the support in the constructive-developmental view. Relatively rarely they chose forms of support within the critical-emancipation support.

From the *functional-behaviouristic* point of view, which was the most popular among the respondents, the teachers chose child evaluation, individual work with a foreign child, family evaluation and compensation lessons offered by the institution. Those forms are probably the most common in the educational programmes of the schools and the educators are prepared and well-trained to realise them.

Table 5. Forms of support for the students preferred by the teachers
(N=60)

Forms of support for foreign, repatriate, national minority child by the teacher in the institution	Number of teachers	% of the teachers
Functional-behaviouristic support		
Child evaluation	39	65
Individual work with a child	36	60
Family evaluation	31	52
Compensation lessons	29	48
Specialists' help	13	22
Additional tasks	6	10
Humanistic-adaptation support		
Help with introducing a child to peers	56	93
Social help	13	22
Financial help	8	13
Presentation of works prepared by a child	7	12
Constructive-developmental support		
Glossaries of the words most commonly used by children	9	15
Individual developmental programmes	9	15
Additional didactic accessories	7	12
The creation of special environment	6	10
Material environment for the investigation of different cultures and religions	4	7
Constructive-social support		
Emotional support	44	73
Help with getting into a task group	37	62
Additional motivation during the task	20	33
Additional home tasks for parents	15	25
Special roles in a group e.g. assistants	8	13
Giving prizes often in front of the group	7	12
Peer tutoring	6	10
Critical-emancipation support		
The promotion of their culture in the class	19	32
Class presentations made by parents	18	30
Special trips to places of worship	12	20

The figures do not add up to 60, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

The conducted research indicates that most of the teachers preferred one of the humanistic-adaptation forms of support for children from foreign, repatriate or national minorities families. They most commonly indicated the help with introducing the child to the peer group, that is the adaptation to the requirements of the new social environment. With the teachers' help, the pupils are to learn the patterns of behaviour within the group, the system of valuation of the world and to adapt their forms of behaviour to the new culture as fast as possible and as best as possible. In this approach, teachers do not concentrate on the richness that the new children bring from the different cultures, but their whole attention is paid to the process of preparation of the "different " to the obligatory Polish culture.

The surveyed teachers relatively often emphasised the support from the *constructive-social* point of view. The teachers are willing to give the children from the foreign and national minorities families the emotional support, help with introducing to the group during projects and to motivate them additionally during performing the tasks. The teachers in favour of this kind of support have assumed that diversity in a kindergarten group or classroom is a natural reason for possible conflicts or aggression, but it is also a good opportunity for integration between cultures. The process of defining the Different mainly depends on the educators' approach and their appropriate behaviour in certain situations that are culturally different. According to them, diversity and distinctiveness at a kindergarten/school should not be seen as a danger which leads to discrimination, but as an opportunity to gain knowledge and enlarge own interpretation of the world and human behaviour.

After the analysis of the respondents' answers it can be presumed that the teachers are still not prepared to support their pupils by: creating a special educating environment, preparing additional didactic accessories which are necessary in the process of exploring different cultures or religions, creating mini-glossaries of vocabulary frequently used by foreign children, creating individual development programmes. Hence, according to the *constructive-developmental* approach, pedagogues should know the new ways of creating the students' forms of knowledge. Those forms take everyday life and certain experience as the point of departure and are based upon contact with items connected with culture or religion, popular knowledge, visual and virtual cultures.

We should bear in mind that getting knowledge about the behaviour of other people is a slow process. It is connected with, among others, understanding the complex emotions of surprise resulting from discrepancies between expectations and reality²².

As the *constructionism theory* indicates, the teachers organise the environment for the students to gather various experiences including those connected with learning different cultures. But it is the children who “choose from the experiences offered by the teachers the ones that are the most relevant and supporting. The developing children are the cause of the changes in themselves as well as in their environment, especially in the relations connected with other people”²³. Children have the nature of explorers, inquisitive people constantly looking for new things²⁴, switch from one kind of activity to another. Basing on the previous and the new experience they build/construct in their minds new concepts, ideas, conceptions, knowledge, points of view, rules and strategies. During the whole day of activity they process different information, select them, solve practical and social problems, foresee the consequences of some activities, create scenarios and courses of action and makes decisions. They “work” hard in order to: acquire knowledge about the world, arrange it, determine the cause-and-effect relations, to put the new knowledge in a certain space, time and culture (the cognitive, ethic, ontic and aesthetic values) or nature²⁵. The process of learning is involved with the children’s egocentrism, it is based on individual paths of experience and it is performed by action.

In the *critical-emancipation* approach the multicultural education teacher is not only commentator and mediator of a different culture, language or religion brought by a child but also helps to build the unfamiliar view of the world into the knowledge existing in the children’s minds that have been learned at home and through the mass media.

²² Kielar-Turska, M., *Jak dziecko interpretuje zachowania własne i innych*, „Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” 2004, no. 10.

²³ Twardowski, A., *Strategie nauczania wspierającego rozwój psychiczny dziecka*, „Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” 2004, no. 4, p. 6.

²⁴ Waloszek, D., *Pedagogika przedszkolna. Metamorfoza statusu i przedmiotu badań*, Kraków 2006, p. 228.

²⁵ Andrzejewska, J., Wierucka, J., *Pogram wychowania przedszkolnego. Razem w przedszkolu*. Wydanie rozszerzone, Warszawa 2010, p. 16.

This is why a third of the teachers surveyed emphasised the significant role of promotion of the alien/different culture or religion in the class, the meaning of showing different view of the world by the parents of foreign children and the necessity of organising special trips to the places that are important to children from national minorities.

Children approve of the different contents of culture even when they do not understand it and do not see the connection with their present knowledge because teachers are significant to them. "The difference should be associated by the children with something new and not something strange"²⁶. Such approach initiates the children's cognitive curiosity and their willingness to explore, investigate and distract. The reflective presentation of the multicultural education *contents* make it possible for the children to identify with culture and religion, to develop their interests, to learn the difference, tolerance of the different and enlarging the cultural circles²⁷. However, the difference does not result only from the racial or ethnic differences, but "every socio-cultural feature may be a criterion for being alien or different"²⁸ and lead to isolation, aggression towards people and groups of people and infringe their rights. The carefully selected contents should promote the openness and tolerance among children who are strongly identifying with their families and through that with a specific culture and language²⁹. Proper education enable the children to make an adequate to their development age assessment of difference and otherness. "At this age the children are cognitively active and they are willing to explore the world, people, things and phenomena. It is visible while manipulating the interesting object, meeting an interesting person, experimenting, solving the problems and formulating various questions about facts and phenomena"³⁰.

²⁶ Kamińska, K., *W stronę wielokulturowości w edukacji przedszkolnej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 22.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 19.

²⁸ Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, A., Szostak-Król, K., *Przygody Innego*, „Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” 2012, no. 1, p. 23.

²⁹ Orłowska, B. A., *Edukacja wielokulturowa, międzykulturowa i proeuropejska – czy potrzebna od dzieciństwa?*, (in:) Grzeszkiewicz, B., *Dziecko w kontekstach edukacyjnych*, Szczecin 2010, p. 92.

³⁰ Andrzejewska, J., *Rozbudzenie zainteresowań dzieci kulturą krajów Unii Europejskiej*, (in:) Karpińska, A., (ed.), *Edukacyjne tendencje XXI wieku w dialogu i perspektywie*, Białystok 2005, p. 131.

THE FORMS OF TEACHER'S COOPERATION WITH THE PARENTS OF THE FOREIGNERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINORITIES

The main ally of parents of foreign origin and representing national minorities in the fight for good Polish education of their children should be the kindergarten institutions or schools. Every Polish educational institution is obliged to make an effort to provide all the foreign language speaking children or representing different cultures with the best conditions to achieve the development potential and full development of personality. When designing the activities supporting the children's development we need an accurate diagnosis of their needs, situations and links in which the children exist, what they experience as well as the best use of the potential found in the family environment and their family culture. A perfect communication between those ecosystems and multidimensional activity is necessary. The participation of parents and teachers in the common undertakings and tasks may evolve into a permanent partnership for the good of every child.

The teachers' willingness to support foreign children, young repatriates and national minority children is a sign of social sensitivity and professionalism. The parents should trust the teachers that they will always support their children and will react responsibly in all situations.

The foreign parents support their children as much as possible in adapting in the new circumstances. They help their children to choose their aims, engage the children in the activities that may end with a success, help in getting knowledge and abilities enabling them to succeed³¹.

³¹ Grzeszkiewicz, B., *Uwarunkowania dziecięcych sukcesów*, (in:) Grzeszkiewicz, B., Walak, B., *Obszary edukacji dziecka*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2011, p. 94.

Table 6. Proposed topics of teachers' meetings with foreign parents and parents representing minorities according to the teachers (N=60)

Topics of meetings with parents	In kindergarten		At school	
	N	%	N	%
Expanding knowledge about the Different, his culture, religion				
Differences between cultures	22	37	22	37
Variety of ceremonies	5	8	8	13
Religious diversity and the problem of tolerance	9	15	7	12
Stereotypes and myths „about Different”	5	8	6	10
Presenting to the parents the activity of the institution and the children's problems among peers				
Child's adaptation to the requirements of the institution	10	17	10	17
The functioning of the educational institutions in Poland	7	12	8	13
Accepting the difference in a kindergarten group and a classroom	7	12	7	12
Support possibilities for a child in a Polish institution	7	12	7	12
Difficulties that a child may encounter	1	2	1	2
Children rights in Poland	0	0	1	2
Social functioning of a child among peers	0	0	1	2
Possibilities of child support by parents				
Child development in kindergarten and at school	1	2	1	2
Ways of working with a child at home	2	3	3	5
The educational partners get to know each other				
Parents' integration meetings	3	5	3	5
Discussing the reasons why a foreign child is in a Polish education institution	5	8	5	8
Getting to know the parents' culture and their expectations about the institution	1	2	1	2

The figures do not add up to 60, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

After the analysis of the proposed topics of teachers and parents meetings in kindergarten and at school several groups of topics may be indicated:

- expanding the knowledge about the Different, his culture and religion;
- making the parents acquainted with the work of the institution and the children's problems among peers;

- forms of parents' support offered to children;
- the educational partners are getting to know each other.

In their work with the parents, the teachers offer meetings with the aims: to know the substantial differences between cultures, ceremonies and religions, to present the parents with the adaptation difficulties of their children and the support possibilities for the children speaking foreign languages in Polish kindergartens, the child's functioning among peers and the acceptance of the difference. The educators want to know the parents during the integration activities and to know the reason for their stay in Poland by contacting the parents.

Unfortunately, there is a group of teachers (15%) among the people surveyed who do not see the need of organising the meetings with parents and cooperation with them in the fields necessary for the kindergarten/school society.

Not many teachers would take on the education of parents in the topic of the development potential and the needs of the children and the ways of individual work with the pupil in the institution or at home. This is why the aim of the trainings within the project "Let's Meet – Let's Respect Each Other" in the field of multicultural education was to show the teachers the link between the education of parents (especially mothers) and the development achievements of their children.

THE PROBLEMS OF MULTICULTURALISM VS. THE DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

The contemporary multicultural education assumes the children/pupils to be learning subjects and should respect the pupil's autonomy³², thoroughly analyse the actions undertaken by the children on their own, start, sustain and strengthen the cognitive curiosity of children, enable them to choose the way of exploring the environment

³² Uszyńska-Jamroc, J., *Wybrane problemy uczenia się dzieci we wczesnym dzieciństwie*, (in:) Cichocki, A. (ed.), *Edukacja elementarna szansą nowej jakości wychowania*, Białystok 2005, p. 91.

according to the theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner³³, provoke the discussion even on the difficult topics of poverty, racism, social inequality, organise the process of learning of the more structuralised character, to create opportunities for exploring, activate two ways of thinking (pragmatic and narrative)³⁴ which are used in the process of arranging the experiences connected with the physical world and the world of intentions, beliefs and desires³⁵.

The postmodern world is full of many narrations, information about different cultures and their truths, views of the world, it invites the teachers meeting children from different cultures to reflection and going beyond the set interpretations. The arising doubts of the teachers in the existence of the absolute truth and the bipolar understanding of the values may dispirit and surround them or bring joy and motivate for self-development³⁶.

The factors motivating the teachers to expand their knowledge in the field of multicultural education are various. We indicate:

- *civilisation challenges* (e.g. social changes, human migration, constant cultural changes, the dominance of randomness in life, losing authorities, new social structures within school classes, the changes within the information technology);
- *educational* (the constantly changing role of the teacher in the contemporary world, lack of order in the pedagogical, methodology and psychological knowledge, the chaos of many parallel functioning pedagogical theories and mutually excluding methodology concepts, the constant appearance of the “new – the best” methods and forms of work in the field of intercultural and multicultural education, the growing autonomy of teachers triggers off the need for the authentic knowledge and professional qualifications);
- *personal* (adapting own competence for the purposes realised in a certain educational institution, getting new abilities and

³³ Suświłło, M., *Inteligencje wielorakie w nowoczesnym kształceniu*, Olsztyn 2004, p. 25-29.

³⁴ Kowalik-Olubińska, M., *Konstruktywizm w edukacji małych dzieci*, „Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” 2006, no. 10, p. 10.

³⁵ Andrzejewska, J., *Przedszkole rozwija aktywność dziecka*, „Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” 2010, no. 3, p. 6.

³⁶ Gaś, Z. B., *Doskonalący się nauczyciel*, Lublin 2001.

predispositions necessary to implement changes into one's professional work, to increase the prestige of a teacher, to display the professionalism of a creative teacher, to acquire abilities and knowledge directly influencing the quality and effectiveness of work, creating a character representing a high level of personality or to fight the fear of problems with the students, increasing self-esteem, dealing with the problems in relations with the foreigners or repatriates in the classroom).

Self-study may help the teachers in dealing with the personal and professional freedom and with initiating the feeling of responsibility for another person. "The path of teacher's professional development is strictly individualised as to the tempo of changes and the level achieved"³⁷. Hence, not all the teachers represent the same level of knowledge, skills and reflection after years of practice³⁸. Sometimes the educators do not gain the ability of reflective point of view and acting in complex and unique education situations³⁹. They constantly stick to perceiving their own form of activity only through the prism of the orders given by the educational authorities of different rank. The teacher's reflection takes place during the educational situation and its essence is about the making of conscious changes in its elements according to the contexts and space. The belief in one's competence and the view of oneself is the point of departure for the process of self-education and autcreation.

³⁷ Zdybel, D., Kusiak, K., Bednarczuk, B., *Indywidualny wymiar edukacji nauczycielskiej o procesie stawania się refleksyjnym praktykiem*, (in:) Skrzetuska, E. (ed.), *Problemy edukacji wczesnoszkolnej. Indywidualizacja. Uzdolnienia. Refleksja nauczyciela*, Lublin 2011, p. 185.

³⁸ Arends, R. I., *Uczymy się nauczać*, Warszawa 1995, p.17.

³⁹ Czerepaniak-Walczak, M., *Aspekty i źródła profesjonalnej refleksji nauczyciela*, Toruń 1997, p. 6.

THE FORMS OF TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT

During the professional work, teachers undertake the conscious and individual effort of development through self-development and autocreation. They individually decide to leave the set paths of behaviour and stereotypical patterns of behaviour in adaptation reasonableness in the favour of elasticity, uniqueness, creativity, boldness and responsibility in the educative situations of emancipation reasonableness⁴⁰.

In the introductory evaluation of the „Let's Meet – Let's Respect Each Other” project the participants were asked what kind of support they expect in the field of multicultural education and what benefits they would like to obtain through participation in various forms of projects. The following tables contain the answers given:

Table 7. Forms of support expected by the teachers within the framework of the project (N=39)

Formy wsparcia	N	%
Participation in workshops on the methods of work that would implement the potential resting in the cultures of representatives of national/ethnic minorities and foreigners	26	67
Participation in the individual meetings with teachers working with representatives of national/ethnic minorities and foreigners	21	54
Recommendation of literature on the topic of national/ethnic minorities and foreigners	21	54
Participation in the individual meetings with the representatives of national/ethnic minorities and foreigners	8	20
Sharing the experience from the work	1	2

The figures do not add up to 39, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

⁴⁰ Kwiaśnica, R., *Dwie racjonalności. Ku milczącej wiedzy pedagogicznej*, „Forum Oświatowe” 1989, no. 1, p. 74.

Table 8. The benefits from the participation in the project for the benefit of the students from national/ethnic minorities and foreign students „Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” as expected by the teachers (N=39)

Predicted benefits	Number of teachers	%
Mobilisation to get the substantive knowledge (its scope and subject matter are included in the title of the project)	26	67
Methodology background (the knowledge and implementation of the rules, methods and forms of teaching adequate for the aims and subject matter of the multicultural education)	26	67
Sharing own experience	23	59
Extended participation with other adults for the benefit of the national/ethnic minorities and foreign students (cooperation with the headmaster, teachers and parents, undertaking initiatives)	21	54
Activation of own realisation abilities in the education-upbringing process (the choice of didactic measures, control of the group, the ability of observing and interpreting the educative phenomena)	13	34
Modification/change of own attitude towards the children representing national/ethnic minorities and foreign children	13	34
Making new acquaintances with the people interested in the subject of multiculturalism	1	3
Enhancing own workshop	1	1

The figures do not add up to 39, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

Table 9. Advice and suggestions of the teachers submitted to the people realising the project (N=39)

Advice and suggestions of the participants of the project	N	%
Regular development of the teachers’ abilities in the field of multiculturalism	5	13
Publication of lesson plans and scenarios for activities	4	10
Exchange of good practice	3	8
Continuation of the website devoted to multiculturalism	3	8
Wider promotion of the project	2	5
Creation of base of institutions that support the teachers in the field of multicultural education	1	3
Cultural integration of families with foreign backgrounds	1	3

The figures do not add up to 39, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

After the analysis of the given answers it can be assumed that the teachers surveyed most commonly expected the declarative knowledge from the subject matter of the multiculturalism and interculturalism pertaining to different facts, news and information. Within the project “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” such knowledge was available on the OMEP Poland website. The participants could find there articles on the topic of multiculturalism published in Poland, facts and figures pertaining to the institutions that work with the families of foreigners, refugees and repatriates, addresses of the associations, foundations and international organisations working for the benefit of children and families.

The teachers preferred the procedural knowledge connected with the practical intelligence (How to do it?) acquired by getting to know and analysis of the model lesson plans from the field of multicultural education, the examples of good practice that can be implemented in kindergartens and at schools, during workshops and training sessions, while sharing the experience in individual contacts with other teachers or foreigners.

During the training sessions within the project “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” the teachers were given a lot of useful activities and lesson plans and materials from the field of multicultural education.

SUPPORTING THE TEACHERS’ DEVELOPMENT

Going through the successive stages of the professional development is not an automatic process. It requires the teachers’ effort as they constantly learn how to behave in the professional situations. This learning may be supported by specialists who are personally engaged, respected in certain community, autonomous, resourceful and inviting the environment to extend the possessed knowledge, abilities and learnt behaviour. Moreover, the specialists should remember that people need time to think in order to resign from the current resources and to create new constructs in their sets of concepts. In order for the professional development to occur, the existence of a specific stimulus is a must. This incentive will start the individual through modification of the series of

actions, looking for the ways of getting support, reconstruction of the professional practice as well as individual and cultural transformation of experience. This stage may be named *stimulation phase*. According to the research, such incentive for the participation in the “Let’s Meet – Let’s Respect Each Other” project were:

- direct contact with children/students and their parents, foreigners, emigrants or repatriates in the professional work (67% of the people surveyed);
- meetings with students from foreign countries (10%);
- publicity of the national minorities issues in media (5%);
- encountering in the teachers’ community the problems with the children adaptation (34%);
- encountering a language barrier in everyday life (5%);
- working with refugees (3%);
- encountering the lack of religious tolerance (3%).

The people surveyed encountered the issue of multiculturalism in everyday life and in their professional activity. In the case of academic teachers, it were cultural problems and different ways of defining the educational, racial and religious situations. The group of kindergarten teachers encountered problems with the children adaptation to the kindergarten, language barriers (German, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Chinese minorities), cultural barriers (Rom children, Afghan refugees, repatriates from Russia), the differences in physical appearance (dark complexion, slanting eyes), the problems of many religions.

In the teacher’s professional development it is necessary to switch from the *stimulation phase* to the successive phases (*modification, application, reconstruction* and *transformation*) with the help of the specific, strong stimulus.

The *modification phase* is a stage when the teachers explore how to improve their practice. It starts with the analysis of their activities until now, exploration of the new solutions and testing their consistence with the teachers’ environment. The contemporary kindergarten and school teachers have learned to look for a system of help and consulting in their actions connected with the work with the foreign, repatriate and national minorities children. Hence, the question “Do you think that it is necessary to exchange the teachers’ experience in the field of multicultural education?” was answered by 37 of the people surveyed

(94,9%) that they feel the need of sharing their knowledge, thoughts and experience with others. The key to success is the connection with the wider community of pedagogues. Every person in the net of connections brings his or her personal knowledge and enriches all the other members of community with it. The teachers experiencing strong support have the most favourable conditions to engage into projects and is the most open for the critical view of the current working methods and willing to implement the suitable modifications.

The *application phase* is determining the practical ways of implementing the new knowledge and abilities to work. In the *reconstruction phase* teachers transfer from designing the changes in their education (e.g. multicultural) to executing them. This stage modifies the teachers' professional thinking and acting. It is preferable when the change takes place as well within the institutions and the teachers get support from the authorities, co-workers, students and parents.

The final stage is the *transformation phase*. In the individual dimension, it is authorisation of the changes in thinking, acting and the teachers' attitude. However, in the institutional aspect it is the formal adaptation of the change that results in the modified modes of action. The teacher who initially by the means of a stimulus needed a new paradigm in acting has performed a change in the whole system of multicultural education sometimes without being aware of it. This is why the professional development of teachers is a multi-staged process that results from the dissatisfaction from the current state⁴¹ and is aimed at achieving success in the educational situations and personal development.

⁴¹ Gaś, Z. B., *Doskonalący się nauczyciel*, Lublin 2001, p. 58.

Table 10. Benefits for the participants of the project (N=39)

Benefits for the participants of the project	N	%
Methodology background (knowledge and the implementation of rules, methods and forms of teaching appropriate for the aims and contents of the multicultural education)	31	65
Extended cooperation with other adults for the benefit of the students from national/ethnic minorities and foreign students (cooperation with the head master, teachers and parents, undertaking initiatives)	30	63
Activation of own realisation abilities education-didactic process (the choice of didactic measures, control of the group, ability of observation and interpretation of educational phenomena)	27	57
Mobilisation for acquiring substantial knowledge	27	57
Sharing own experience	27	57
Modification/change of own attitude towards national/ethnic minorities children and foreign students	14	29
Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices	14	29

The figures do not add up to 39, because the respondents could indicate several answers in one question. Source: own survey.

The surveyed participants have given a high note to the value of the project. As much as 80% of the surveyed teachers have given the highest note to the project. In 0-5 scale 38 people, which constitutes 80% of the surveyed, gave the project mark 5, 6 people (12%) gave the mark 4, 1 person (2%) gave the mark 3, 2 people did not grade the project.

DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE PROJECT

The information available on the website were useful in the full realisation of the project. I often read the information and used it in relations with my friends in a Day Care Centre of the Polish Community Centre in Sankt Petersburg. Our exchange of experiences is based upon getting to know the cultures of Gdansk and Sankt Petersburg. For two years parents and children from those cities have been exchanging experience, history and culture of their cities.

A very interesting way of promoting the culture of one's country as well as the possibility of knowing cultures, customs and religions of different countries.

A lot of interesting materials to be used in the lessons. I will use them to prepare my students for teaching in kindergartens.

Participation in all the forms have strengthened my belief that multicultural education is an undertaking that every teacher has to be well prepared for. The discussion on the website resulted in the union of thinking about it. I presume that this thinking will evolve into a joint action.

In my opinion the available materials were interesting and presented in an attractive way. They have enlarged my knowledge about multiculturalism and motivated me to continue discovering this subject.

The materials were interesting and gave me the information I was looking for. They also inspired me to undertake similar actions. Thank you :)

It has significantly enriched my knowledge and horizons. Excellent project and very interesting ideas.

