

Excerpt

The political, sociocultural and demographic developments that define 21st-century Europe have broadly impacted the current didactic climate. There is a need to prepare individuals to live in a heterogeneous society of many religions, cultures and languages while also concomitantly paving the way for macro integration and unification together with renewed focus on shaping national and regional identity in the face of globalization and its effects on local populaces.

This issue is of special meaning in the Polish and German cross-border region where projects for the development and integration of individuals living on both sides of the border have become a central objective under the Euroregion transnational co-operative structure. Due to opening of the labour market May 2011, bilingual and intercultural competence are now essential factors for graduates who wish to benefit from the economic potential offered in the cross-border region. Hence, the educational strategies of Poland and Germany in this region are intertwined, with cross-border cooperation necessary to establish curricula with common intercultural elements as well as provide appropriate training to educators that also promote the cross-border sharing of best practices.

This doctoral thesis is an attempt to analyse the processes and mechanisms of such intercultural education as well as its efficacy in relation to the contemporary economic, cultural and social situation of the Polish and German border region. It was guided by formulating the following research question: **to what extent is education policy in the Lower Silesian and Saxon cross-border region a result of broader didactic strategy and intercultural education that involves the neighbouring country?** This question in conjunction with other more detailed subordinate queries guided an initial analysis of primary documents defining the objectives and merits of such education policy (sourced from Lower Silesian curriculum plans and Saxon lesson plans) and survey sampling students, teachers and representatives of pedagogical supervisory bodies to verify the competencies, experiences and insights of those directly involved in the learning process.

The thesis consists of four chapters that introduce both theoretical and empirical content. The first chapter introduces the reader to education policy issues, defines all related constructs and illustrates the objectives, conditions, functions and areas of action of current education policy. Further discussion addresses the role of education in EU politics, the role of education policy in EU treaties and normative acts and the tools available towards implementing educational measures in the EU. In addition, the chapter presents and compares the Polish

and German education systems and shows what forms of education-related cooperation have been adopted between Poland and Germany as well as between Lower Silesia and Saxony.

The second chapter focuses on aspects surrounding intercultural education in the Polish and German cross-border region. Next to the definitions, objectives and forms of implementation, differences are noted between intercultural, multicultural, regional and civil education and the role of intercultural and regional education in shaping social identity in the cross-border area. Moreover, the chapter presents the historical and social circumstances that have influenced the development of intercultural education in the Polish and German cross-border region.

The third chapter presents the results of the author's analyses of the curricula and lesson plans that address the history, geography, civics, and language of the neighbouring country and questionnaires administered to teachers, students and pedagogues regarding Polish and German intercultural education. The results show that none of the measures, decisions and guidelines developed by entities responsible for EU and Polish-German education policy and intercultural education are reflected in actuality nor was high intercultural competence found among school teachers and school administrative employees on either side of the border.

Chapter four, the final chapter, summarises the author's conclusions based on obtained results, reflecting on the current state of intercultural education in the Lower Silesian and Saxon cross-border region. Proposals are presented on the development of sustainable cross-border solutions necessary for effective intercultural and regional teaching.

Wrocław, 18.09.2017

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