

Knowledge about culture and multiculturalism in curriculums of medical and pedagogical universities

Introduction

Humanitas – University mission

Curriculums of medical and educational studies at universities do not include subjects which would contain elements of inter-cultural education.¹ They were introduced into curricula of several universities by an independent individual decision of authorities on some universities, understanding usefulness of such education for the professional role graduates of these universities are going to play in the society. In our drive towards standardisation of education curriculums, required from us by the European Union, and in our care for market usefulness of knowledge transferred to our students, we often forget about the mission of the university, about who, for who and how we educated, in the humanistic dimension.

Knowledge about culture for future medical doctors, nurses, social workers and teachers

“Knowledge about Culture” in secondary schools in Poland

Culture is what characterises a human being. „Culture knowledge” as a subject in secondary schools has functioned in Poland only for slightly more than a decade. Textbooks in this subject, and there is a wide variety of them available, include mainly a compendium of basic information on history of arts (with visual arts being generally preferred) and theory of culture, according to curricula approved by the Ministry of Education. However, this is very general knowledge and it must be said that it is - more theoretical than practical, it rather speaks *about culture* than shows it.

Professional helpers could be sensitive

Voluntary classes named „Introduction to the world of culture” for students of Health Promotion with Art Therapy were supposed to facilitate „moving around” in the world of culture and art, understanding not always clear and direct cultural messages, verbal, visual, musical, references to various individuals, quotes, works, melodies and facts

¹ We don't talk about Faculty titled “Cultural Studies”

from various periods and countries. They also include **elements of inter-cultural education**, necessary in the globalized world. Such education may be provided in several ways. One of them, implemented as a part of the „Cultural education” programme is expansion of knowledge about arts therapies used in various countries over the world, presented in cultural context.

Cultural and multicultural education

Preparation to help people living through various dramatic, existential situations resulting not only from diseases, physical disability, family conflicts, but also from social, political, religious, nationality conflicts needs special educational methods.. Execution of these assumptions provides future teachers knowledge about world, history and culture of countries where such conflicts took and are taking place. Another goal executed by the **inter-cultural education** stems from the fact that globalisation of the world of today results in mobility of university graduates, thus the students should also be prepared for work with people coming from various cultures.

Inter-cultural education should be continuous, as it is required by life conditions in the 21st century and it should not end at or be limited to school only. Universities also have to play an important role in this process, which is shown by experiences of the author gained at several higher education institutions and published as a series of articles called „Travels with arts therapy”.²

My personal experiences in teaching of “Knowledge about culture”

After over thirty years of my work with students of the some Faculties : Health Sciences, Medicine, Social Science and Pedagogy on The K. Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences, A. Mickiewicz University, Wrocław University and The State Witełon University of Applied Sciences in Legnica I noticed that medical doctors, nurses, social workers and first of all – teachers need more knowledge about culture than they acquired during their education in secondary schools. Thus arose the idea of introducing classes such as „Culture therapy” and „Introduction to world of culture and art.”, „Cultural education with elements of art therapy” accepted by the governing body of the university. The first university which introduced such classes already in **1982** was The K. Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences in Poznań.³ Curriculum of such subject was presented on some international conferences and presented in books.⁴ Teaching cultural competence

² . See a cycle of articles of W. Szulc titled “Podróże z arteterapią” /Travels with arts therapies./in Journal “Arteterapia” 1996 – 2002, ibid. In :W. Szulc, Kajros i arteterapia. Arter, Warszawa 2013, s. 123 – 166.

³ W. Szulc. *Kulturoterapia. Propozycja wprowadzenia nowego przedmiotu nauczania w Akademii Medycznej*. In: „Medycyna – Dydaktyka – Wychowanie. „Wyd. Naukowe Akademii Medycznej w Warszawie. Warszawa 1982, s. 103 – 106.; Szulc W/, *Elementy wiedzy o kulturze w programie kształcenia magistrów pielęgniarstwa*. „Życie Szkoły Wyższej”, 1986, t. 34 nr 10, s. 113 – 117.

⁴ W. Szulc, *A course of “Culture Therapy” at the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences*. In: MedEd 21:An account of Initiatives for change in Medical Education in Europe for the 21st century. GD Major

to medical students – as later wrote R. Roy in a meaningful way is challenging. Trying to teach cultural communication as a measurable skill oversimplifies both the complexities of culture, race, and ethnicity and their effect on the medical interaction.⁵ The original program of „Cultural education with art therapy’ is focused on stimulating personal activity of students, starting from reflections on ways of own enculturation („My entry into the world of culture”- students narrations), on monitoring and where possible, participation in various forms of cultural life and social initiatives. It also takes into account preparation for strictly therapeutic activities.⁶ In my conception of AT education the core of curriculum there are personality. and sensitivity of worker (i.e. of art therapist, nurse, teacher) who wants help others. Part of duty of arts therapist is to make an effort to find out what sort of people they are for whom he or she has accepted responsibility, what their experiences have been and how much they understand about their situation and are affected by it.

Arts therapist and a nurse or a teacher in role of art therapist must be :

- aware of historical, anthropological and sociological factors that affect cultural attitudes towards and illness
- sensitive to the effects of their own cultural bases as well as those of clients because all people have a cultural heritage and therapist’own influences the ways he/she provides therapy.

The art therapy process is closely intervened with **Milieu Therapy** and provides the expert dimension of the **Therapeutic Use of Self**. Arts therapists make use their selves in art therapist – client (patient) relationship to assists client/patient of grow and change. Part of this use of the self is the response of art therapist to client’s symptoms needs rather than to client,s symptoms of illness. Observation, listening and indirect questioning may be more useful than attempts to question people directly about their cultural practices.

Philosophy of Arts Therapy Course which appeals to “Culture based Arts Therapy” conception

The central focus of the course is to deepen and extend culture knowledge in relation to arts therapies. The goal of the course is for the student through class discussion, presentations, reading , inspection of medical and care institutions to begin to develop a theoretical framework for practice as an art therapist. The course increases the stu-

(et al). Amsterdam Thesis Publishers, 1997, p. 167 – 171.; Szulc W: *Arts in medicine service from antiquity to postmodernity*. (w:) 6th European Arts Therapies Conference. Theme: ”Exposing difference” . Abstracts Book.13 – 16. September 2001, Luxembourg

⁵ Roy R., (2007)Teaching Cultural Sensitivity through Literature and Reflective Writing. Virtual Mentor, vol. 9, nr 8

⁶ W. Szulc, *From Culture Education to Culture Therapy*. 9th Annual International Participative Conference. Core Papers. University of Durham (UK), September 1998. **Szulc W.**: Music Therapy as part of Primary ducation Teachers Training. (w:) Dialogue and debate. Music Therapy in the 21st century: A Contemporary Force for Change. Book of Abstracts. 10th World Congress of Music Therapy 23rd – 28th July 2002. Oxford, England, p. 343

dent's knowledge of art medias, i.e. imaginative books, music, pictures. The course participants are provided with appropriate knowledge and skills base to enable them to act as innovators and catalysts for change in their work environment.⁷

The core and aims of course

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Aims of course

1. To provide better understanding of such notion as health, well-being, quality of life
2. To enable art therapist to comment on the similarities and differences in culture in another countries of the world and an interpretation of main theoretical principles which support philosophy of Culture Therapy.
3. To increase sensitivity of students and to reach their understanding of the life.

Teaching methodology Examples of classes.

Lectures are not monographic and chronological, instead they form a specific verbal – visual – musical mosaic. The provided knowledge is supposed to be ordered thanks

⁷ W. Szulc ., *Arts therapists education : teaching sensitivity through works of art contemplation, literature and reflective writings* W: M~3usdienu m~3akslu terapija : teorija un prakse : t~3ezes : 6 Starptautisk~3a m~3akslas terapijas konference = Contemporary arts therapies : theory and practice : theses : 6th International Art Therapy Conference. – R~3iga : R~3gas Stradina universit~3ate, 2008. – S. 35; W. Szulc ,*Music Therapy as part of Primary ducation Teachers Training. (w:) Dialogue and debate. Music Therapy in the 21st century: A Contemporary Force for Change. Book of Abstracts. 10th World Congress of Music Therapy 23rd – 28th July 2002. Oxford, England, p. 343*

to reading indicated to the students, in the forms of monographic publications and textbooks. The starting point of each lecture is a current cultural event, sometimes information on important historical, social, political events published in the media, it can also be a topic earlier suggested by the lecturer or by the students.

Particular emphasis put on shaping sensitivity and empathy, required in the professions of teachers, carers, art therapists.

Discussions inspired by literature and poetry works.

Bibliotherapeutica method

Problem 1. Situation of *Different*. If and when one should have a different opinion?

Task for students: Evaluate the station of the king presented in the „Wise King” fable by Khahil Gibran **The wise king**⁸

Once there ruled in the distant city of Wirani a king who was both mighty and wise. And he was feared for his might and loved for his wisdom.

Now, in the heart of that city was a well, whose water was cool and crystalline, from which all the inhabitants drank, even the king and his courtiers; for there was no other well.

One night when all were asleep, a witch entered the city, and poured seven drops of strange liquid into the well, and said, “From this hour he who drinks this water shall become mad.”

Next morning all the inhabitants, save the king and his lord chamberlain, drank from the well and became mad, even as the witch had foretold.

And during that day the people in the narrow streets and in the market places did naught but whisper to one another, “The king is mad. Our king and his lord chamberlain have lost their reason. Surely we cannot be ruled by a mad king. We must dethrone him.”

That evening the king ordered a golden goblet to be filled from the well. And when it was brought to him he drank deeply, and gave it to his lord chamberlain to drink.

And there was great rejoicing in that distant city of Wirani, because its king and its lord chamberlain had regained their reason.

Comments of students

„The fable makes me reflect, incites internal rebellion against opportunism of joining the majority not always better) passing out judgement that different means worse.

I am scared by the vision of social ostracism, even aimed at people of renown, liked, when their opinion does not agree with that of the rest of society. I feel rebellion and sadness.

⁸ <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/58702>

An ironic smile, with a hint of sadness, that this is how things are. ,,

“Maybe the king drank the water in order to calm down the crowd, he was wise and did not want violent unrest to happen, he wanted order to prevail.”

“I think that the king was afraid of reaction from people, he was afraid that he will not be accepted by his society – due to his „difference”. He wanted to be closer to his subjects. People with differing opinions are really badly received by others. I think that the king **showed bad behaviour**, he should have defended his opinions – different does not mean bad. “

”I think that the king really wanted to rule his country, thus he drank the water. I think that it would be an act of far greater wisdom for the king to try and convince the people to his views. Here showed **incompetence of the king** and it turned out that the majority really decides and influences a single person. Rule of the king will be mad, fatal”.

By choosing the path of following his ideals, the ruler would sentence himself to loneliness and damnation. This would not allow him to continue his rule.being a ruler of people who does not support actions of their king could quickly end up in him being overthrown and another king chosen. A king who would match the background, who would be just like everyone else. Who would also be mad.

”I evaluate the stance of the king as positive. By drinking water from the well, the king subjected himself to others. He acted like everyone else, not stepping out from the nation.”

Summary/Conclusion

Most of those asked about the meaning of the fable answered with a Polish equivalent of the proverb: „When in Rome, do as the Romans do”. The reflection came after the next question: Do you really have to?

The answers do not show the word conformism, opportunism in regards to the stance of the king, but the surveyed students evaluate it as such. Ca. 15% evaluates the decision of the king positively, not seeing a moral conflict.

Problem2. If silence has meaning? Role and understanding of silence in art therapy.

Question: How do you understand words of the Hindu poet, the Nobel Prize winner, Rabindranath Tagore: ‘The Learned say that your lights will one day be no more’, said the firefly to the stars. The stars made no answer.

Answer 1/” This quote suggests that one day everything will cease to exist, even the stars.

Glow-worms point out to the stars that one day they will die out, but they are unaware of the fact that the same problem applies to them, too. This is so obvious that the stars fell silent or took the fact as something unacceptable, not related to them.

Silence of the stars can be interpreted as surprise, astonishment or acknowledgment.”

2. ”The stars symbolize wisdom, whilst the glow-worms symbolize stupidity. Silence of the stars signifies wisdom. Time will show how much the worms were wrong. Sometimes it is better to say less or nothing at all. “

3. A completely contrary statement is provided by the author of the following statement who claims that the glow-worms are wise, not the stars: I think that the glow-worms can be compared to people of today, wise and educated, but shy, while the stars can be compared to uneducated people with few skills, but boasting, and with high self-esteem.

I think that the stars, namely people assuming a priori they know everything, did not reply to the glow-worms, because why did they have to listen to common and average people, if they themselves know everything best? Intelligent people, but ones who are not appreciated by others because of their modesty, wanted to warn that the end of the „stars” will come, by saying their light will die out one day. Lack of reaction from the stars, namely superficially wise people with too high self-esteem means that they really do not know anything.

I think that the silence also shows that today people do not appreciate wise people (geniuses) because of their modesty and their lack of ability to shine makes them unrecognized”. (no signature)

4. A text about passing, one-sided relations, maybe about the desire to provoke someone to a reaction resulting from desire to be important, to be „someone”. A desire to incite emotions in someone else by touching the sensitive topic of passing.

Summary/Conclusion

Most of the answers focused on direct interpretation of the text: thinking about stars existing in the Universe and elaborated on subjects of passing, life and death, more rarely the metaphor of human relations was seen, and the most rare was the fact that the poem touched a dialogue in which the approached party is silent.

Opinions of students about classes

Evaluation surveys the students fill in at the end of a class cycle provide knowledge about the form and contents of classes forming a part of „Introduction to the world of culture” and „Cultural education with elements of art therapy” as subjects. Here are some example answers:

Answer 1., „Thanks to these classes I got to know a lot of things I had to search for when preparing material for the classes (...). Despite not the most interesting meetings with culture during my high school time, these classes left a very positive impression in my memory” (M.E. Gniezno 2009).

2., „During these classes I got to know many things I have never heard before, e.g. about Mr Bartoszewski. I also got to know who Robindranat Tagore was. I have been interested in India for a while, but I haven't heard about him, I had the opportunity to thanks to these classes. I also liked the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, as well as the Congress Library in Washington, D.C. One day I would like to visit the two places and see if they are really as beautiful as described on the Internet. I got to know many composers, including e.g. Haydn, Beethoven, Penderecki.... Thanks to these classes I became convinced that we can use the term culture in regards to our entire surroundings, and its meaning is subjective, it can result in various reflections for every person watching and listening, or lack thereof. Have I gained new knowledge during the lectures/ I of course did. I obtained detailed knowledge in various fields of social and cultural life.

3., „Participation in the classes turned me to reflection about my life thus far. I started asking myself what I do in order to cultivate and care for my personal culture and pondering what is going on around me. I have two daughters. I want to enflame them with the desire to explore culture and art of their own country and of other nations, the heritage of which is enormous”

4. „Lectures in the „Introduction to the world of culture” subject can be compared to a travel around uncharted, not fully explored spheres of our life, which reach beyond what is obvious and visible to the „naked eye”. I think these are classes which could be useful for everyone, and for us in particular. As future pedagogues whose task is to shape personality and views of young people we have to, we should have some personal culture, knowledge about world in order to be able to share it with others and be an example worth following.

5. „These classes do not end for me the moment I leave the lecture theatre. I return home, take care of every day chores, and I still have new thoughts in my head, new curiosity, I see it differently and listen to everything surrounding me. I would describe my perceptions and impressions as follows: I am as a beeswax with empty spaces, however, each class in this subject causes these empty spaces to be filled with honey. Now I am even more convinced that gaining knowledge is not a steep road uphill but a road through life!

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