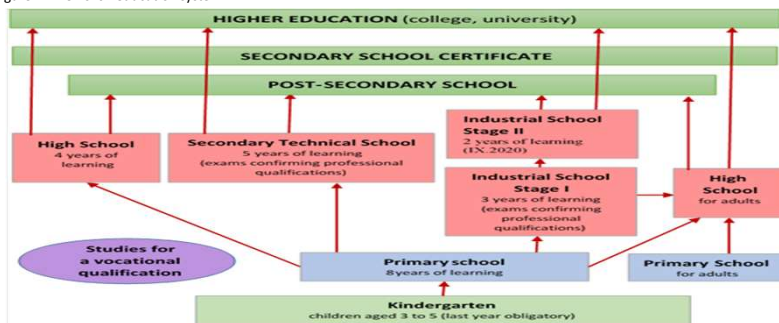


The Influence of Culture on Education Systems: A Comparative Analysis of Vietnam and Poland

Maria Katarzyna Grzegorzewska PhD, mkgrzego@agh.edu.pl

Culture plays a fundamental role in shaping every aspect of a society, and education is no exception. This paper delves into the profound influence of culture on education systems in Vietnam and Poland, shedding light on the intricate relationship between cultural values and educational structures. We explore how cultural factors create attitudes, organizational orders, and educational priorities, ultimately influencing a nation's cultural identity. In an era of constant change and globalization, both Vietnam and Poland face the challenge of preparing the younger generation for an increasingly complex world. Migration trends, which bring together students from diverse cultural backgrounds in the same schools, add another layer of complexity. While this diversity offers opportunities for mutual learning and perspective sharing, it also necessitates the development of specialized organizational school cultures to address unique needs and challenges. To address these challenges, we must consider how cultural diversity can be integrated into educational systems. This paper argues that a deep understanding of different education systems is essential to building a consensus on how best to navigate these complexities. We compare the education systems of Vietnam and Poland, highlighting both convergences and divergences, to provide a basis for informed discussion and the development of effective solutions. Furthermore, education is more than just a system; it encompasses the values and principles that underpin a society. The paper discusses the intersection of cultural values with the education system, including Confucian ideals in Vietnam and the influence of Christianity in Poland. These cultural ideals shape attitudes towards education and organizational cultures. We also explore the current state of education in both countries. While Vietnam maintains a strong emphasis on the value of education and educators, Poland has seen a decline in the prestige of teachers and an erosion of traditional hierarchies. These differences are rooted in historical experiences, traditions, and the influence of global culture. In conclusion, the paper underscores the importance of acknowledging cultural factors and values in designing education systems. It emphasizes the need for a flexible and inclusive approach to education to accommodate students from diverse cultural backgrounds effectively. By recognizing the cultural influences on education systems, educators and policymakers can make informed decisions to meet the challenges of a changing world while preserving cultural identity and values.

Figure 2: The Polish education system



3. Two analogies between Vietnam and Polish culture

We can find two analogies between Vietnam and Polish culture: first schools were created in or within the area of monasteries and curriculum was based on scholastics depending tightly on Christian philosophy of life. Getting education was extremely difficult and only some people had access to it. It could enable to start a career, but the only way to learn and then get promoted was becoming a monk.

The first Polish university – Cracow Academy was created with the support of the king Kazimierz Wielki in the second half of 14th century while in Vietnam the first university Quoc Tu Giam was built in the second half of 11th century. Men could take exams based on a Chinese model [Bialek, Huonh, Halik, Tuong 2009]. A characteristic feature of Vietnam education was a bigger, than in feudal Poland, access to exams – financial and social status were not a barrier. The prior position in society belonged to teachers who were widely respected. Boys who started school at the age of 6 were to become familiar with Confucian books until they were 15. The most important was The Book of Virtue. 15-years-old boys took an exam to get a thi sinh degree and then in order to get to university [Bialek, Huonh, Halik, Tuong 2009]. Apart from canonical books, a student was learning philosophy, history and Chinese poetry. He was also gaining the buddy and taoistic knowledge. It shows that humanistic education was prior in medieval Vietnam. In this case, the European scholasticism, which had to build foundations for the process of logic thinking, is similar. But it came together with mysticism which based on intuition or contemplation [Tatarkiewicz 2005]. The most important exam at Vietnam university was thi hoi taken only by the chosen. Those who managed to pass it got the title cu nhan and could strive to take an imperial exam thi dinh. Successful students gained the second doctoral degree. The next one allowed to take part in imperial dinners. As far as social respect is concerned it was the most important degree [Bialek, Huonh, Halik, Tuong 2009].

This way of promotion changed because of French model which was introduced when France colonised Vietnam and started its administration. In 1915 Vietnam education was reformed according to A. Sarraute's and next P. Beau's regulations. It was the time when numerous attempts, to eliminate the Vietnamese language and culture and replace them by the French ones as well as French ethos, were taken. That is why, the education system consisting of three levels appeared. The first stage was in elementary schools governed by communes, the next one in county schools while secondary schools were controlled by provinces. The attempts to unify the system did not bring any expected, by the French reformers, beneficial results. It led to coexisting French, Vietnam and Vietnamese- French schools at the same time. Students attended for 3 years while in Vietnamese- French elementary schools it lasted 3 years but it was possible to pay and continue education for 4 years in primary schools. Similarly, students could pay for 3 years of education in a secondary school.

4. The quality of education in Poland

It is noticed that nowadays an access to education is easier but the quality of teaching is not good enough. More and more often Vietnamese people are combining education with their financial and social status and are not treating it as an isolated value. Educated people, especially teachers, are respected in Vietnam. In Poland the situation is different. With the curse of time, a position of a teacher lost its prestige and became poorly paid. Teachers are not treated with such a respect as before the 2nd World War. Their jobs are the most vulnerable to stress. [Grzegorzewska 2006]. Thanks to creating in recent times vocational schools, especially in towns, it is quite easy to get university education in Poland but it does not confirm its value. Being educated does not mean getting a good job, especially that unemployment rates had been raising for years. It proved that creating vocational schools that were to prepare young people to do their jobs was not a good solution. Despite the constant changes and numerous reforms the quality of education in Poland is dropping. Contrary to the situation in Vietnam, in Poland university education does not mean prospects for promotion and prestige.

It seems that tradition influences mostly an approach to education and to organizational culture of education. In Vietnamese culture Confucian ideas are still alive while in Poland there are no such strong philosophical systems which would emphasise the importance of moral and ethical values.

Of course a Christian tradition remains still influential what in a country ruled by a right wing conservative government can influence the content in Polish education. An approach to teachers and the general idea of hierarchy is an important issue as well.

In Poland it is becoming less and less important and teachers highly respected in Vietnam lose their prestige here. Confucius taught that a teacher is the third important person after a father and an emperor. There is no such a tradition in Poland. There is less and less trust placed in authority. In addition family values are underestimated. It may be an effect of a global culture. The history of Vietnam was not easy too but the complicated and unhappy history of Poland [Kwiecinski 1999] put its stronger mark on Polish mentality. Zbigniew Kwiecinski says that in this context: there was a radical change of a source of influential factors. Family, school, church lose suddenly the range and power of its impact while the peer groups and mass media become powerful. (...) According to Stefan Morawski, 'getting to the top in the hierarchy of wealth – living fast, temporary pleasures, short-lasting present perspective, self indulgence, easy life (...) constitute an essential feature influencing badly Polish education organizational culture'.

2. Education is not only a system

According to information from the Ministry of Education, foreigners use knowledge and care in all types of public kindergartens and schools up to 18 or graduating a secondary/ upper secondary school on the basis of conditions related to Polish citizens. Whereas conditions related to Polish citizens are obligatory for education in public schools for adults, public post-secondary schools, public artistic schools, public institutions and colleges of employees of social services, lifelong education in the form of a vocational qualification course in case of:

1. Citizens from 27 countries as UE members states, European Free Trade Association's member states-parties to the contract about the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and The Swiss Confederation but also their families members who have the right of residence or the right of permanent residence.
2. People who come from Poland within the meaning of regulations on repatriation.
3. People who, on the territory of the Republic of Poland, obtained:
 - permanent residence permit
 - complementary protection, with their families
 - tolerated residence permit
 - residence permit because of humanitarian reasons, with their families
 - time protection
 - residence permit for a long-term UE resident
 - temporary residence permit because of a situation included in article 127, article 159 of the act 1, article 176 or 186 of the act 1 point 3 or the act 4 form the 12th of December 2013 about foreigners (Dz. U. poz. 1650)
4. People who obtained refugee status, with their families.
5. Families of people who apply for refugee status.
6. People who have a valid Pole's card.
7. People who have such a right because of international contracts.
8. People who have a residence card with annotation 'access to work market', Schengen visa or a national visa issued in order to work on the territory of the Republic of Poland.
9. Fellows who obtain scholarships of the Minister of Education, school authority or a headmaster (<https://men.gov.pl/wspolpraca-miedzynarodowa/kształcenie-cudzoziemcow/informacja-o-ksztalceniu-cudzoziemcow-w-polskim-systemie-owsiati.html>).

The number of foreigners in Poland is increasing. That's why, it is necessary to make strict adjustments in terms of their schooling. However, establishing education rules will not solve some important problems or dilemmas connected with teaching people coming from cultures that differ so much from the one in which they are being educated. Education is not only a system. It is also upbringing and shaping personalities with the aim to help young people realizing where they are, what is going on and what will happen.

Figure 2: The Vietnamese education system



5. Conclusion: For a Vietnamese student a respect for a teacher that is expressed by avoiding any actions that may negate teacher's authority is the most important. It causes a passive learner's attitude during classes. It is also a feature of numerous Polish learners but is frequently recognised as ignorance and a lack of interest in learning. Ewa Grabowska underlines that a lot of actions and attitudes represented by Vietnamese students result from their strong cultural patterns: such as a need of integration with a peer group (among Polish students individualism is becoming more and more popular), being used to family values and hierarchy in families, a need of hard work as a way to a better life. For sure, such an approach differs from the older Vietnamese generations' point of view which was shaped by the education system based on law and order, community and respect, creating strong ties and hierarchy- not equality. The way education is organized is undoubtedly important and must be adjusted to specific cultural needs. However, ideological conditions that shape attitudes towards education are important as well. In the world where cultures mix, the awareness of these conditions is extremely important and essential in the process of appearing something like a flexible and supporting integration approach to foreign students from different cultural regions.

References:

- K. M. Bleszyńska, Dzieci obcokrajowców w polskich placówkach oświatowych – perspektywa szkoły (Warszawa 2010)
- K. M. Bialek, D. T. Huong, E. Grabowska, T. Halik, N. V. Tuong, Edukacja dzieci i młodzieży wietnamskiej w Polsce (Warszawa 2009)
- A. Cwikliński, Zmiany w polskiej edukacji w okresie globalizacji, integracji i transformacji systemowej (Poznań 2006)
- M. K. Grzegorzewska, Stres w zawodzie nauczyciela. Specyfika, uwarunkowania i następstwa (Kraków 2006)
- C. Kupisiiewicz, Drogi i bezdroża polskiej oświaty w latach 1945-2005. Próba wybiórczo-retrospektywnego spojrzenia, w: Drogi i bezdroża polskiej oświaty w latach 1945-2005. Próba wybiórczo-retrospektywnego spojrzenia, ed. C. Kupisiiewicz (Warszawa 2005)
- Z. Kwiecinski, Edukacja wobec nadziei i zagrożeń współczesności, w: Humanistyka przełomu wieków, ed. J. Kozielecki (Warszawa 1999)
- S. Morawski, List o edukacji, „Forum Oświatowe” 2 (1998)
- G. Szymańska-Matusiewicz, Niezpełnienie bliźniacze społeczności. Wietnamczycy w Polsce i Czechach [Not exactly the twin communities. Vietnamese in Poland and the Czech Republic], Centrum Studiów Polska – Azja, <http://www.polska-azja.pl/2013/04/22/g-szymanska-matusiewicz-niezpełnienie-bliźniacze-społeczności-wietnamczycy-w-polsce-i-czechach/>, [access: 31.09.2023].
- W. Tatarkiewicz, Historia filozofii, t. I (Warszawa 2005)
- Zieliński, P. (2000). Samorealizacja i samowychowanie w zen i metodzie Silvy. Częstochowa.
- P. Zieliński, Wychowanie i systemy edukacyjne w kulturach Dalekiego Wschodu. W: T. Pilch (red.). Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku. T. VII. (Warszawa 2008a).
- P. Zieliński, Jan jako system wychowania. W: T. Pilch (red.). Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku. T. VII. (Warszawa 2008b).
- <https://men.gov.pl/wspolpraca-miedzynarodowa/kształcenie-cudzoziemcow/informacja-o-ksztalceniu-cudzoziemcow-w-polskim-systemie-owsiati.html> [access: 31.09.2023].
- <http://reformaedukacji.men.gov.pl/o-reformie/uczen-i-rodzic/struktura-szkol-po-zmianach.html> [access: 31.09.2023].

