Capítulo 3

Chapter 3

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Students with refugee background in the Polish educational system in the context of a lockdown period

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze chosen problems and challenges related to developing teachers' competencies to work in a culturally diverse environment (Polish reality) in the context of the first lockdown period. The text consists of two complementary parts. The first one shows the main issues connected to teacher education from the perspective of higher education. The second one presents the situation of students from refugee backgrounds related to their participation in remote education during the lockdown period (including the research interviews carried out by the author of the chapter). The analyses presented in the chapter show that one of the priorities of teacher education is to develop their professional competencies in the field of providing remote education with culturally diverse groups taking into account the needs of students from migrant backgrounds (especially refugees). The interviews conducted by the author of the chapter present the fact that remote

education was associated with many difficulties for refugee students. This resulted from the fact that the teachers did not take into consideration the situation and special needs of this group of students. This chapter may be useful for anyone interested in preparing teachers to work in a culturally diverse environment taking into account new challenges. The issues analyzed in it may provide inspiration for designing further research on the teachers' competencies in remote education in a culturally diverse environment.

Keywords: teacher competencies, remote education, students with refugee background, culturally diverse environment

The space of modern schools, regardless of the country, is culturally diverse to a greater or lesser extent in the context of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious fields. Migrations has transformed the cultural landscape of modern schools, which is reflected in everyday school life. In many schools, apart from indigenous minorities, new groups of students from migrant backgrounds are starting to participate in education. Children and teenagers with migration experience (including forced migration) differ from students from the receiving society in terms of culture, religion, language, biographical experiences, etc. Previously they functioned in completely different educational systems, and that is why they perceive many elements of school reality differently than most students (role of the teacher, way of dressing, communication with peers, etc.). Therefore, developing competencies to work in a culturally diverse environment is a very important element of teacher education (on the higher education level, during supplementary education, etc.). It should be emphasized that not only the cultural landscape of contemporary education is changing dynamically but also its context. Consequently, lifelong education is necessary. Teachers' competencies should be continuously developed.

This chapter explores problems and challenges related to developing teachers' competencies to work in culturally diverse schools (Polish context) from the perspective of remote education during the first lockdown period (from March 26, 2020 to June 26, 2020). The chapter consists of two parts. The first one addresses the main issues

related to teachers' intercultural competencies (including higher education). The second one analyses the situation of students with refugee background in the context of participating in remote education during the first lockdown period. The considerations in the second part of the chapter are enriched by the narratives of forced migrant students (fragments of the interviews conducted by author of the text). The chapter ends with conclusions related to developing teachers' competencies in the field of designing remote education in a culturally diverse environment.

Developing intercultural competencies: priority of contemporary teachers education

The phenomenon of multiculturalism can be observed since the beginning of human history. Human beings and their culture exist best in a situation of differentiation and constant meeting with Others, because only such conditions motivate people to learn and be creative. Certainly, interactions between cultures, as well as understanding and giving value to one's own culture, define its place (Nikitorowicz, 2013, p. 9). Cultural diversity has a huge potential. But it can be the source of many open and hidden problems. It is education that determines what intercultural relations will look like in contemporary societies.

The profound impact of the scope and quality of teachers' competencies on student's learning requires our attention more than ever as the student population continues to change (Lin & Bates, 2014, p. 1). Teachers are responsible for operating educational systems; that is why they need strong and efficient professional competencies (Selvi, 2010). It is difficult to disagree with the statement that professional competence which teachers need in the global world and diverse multicultural schools is very different than what it used to be when the task of the school was to support the construction of a rather 'monocultural' nation state (Räsänen, 2005, p. 92). Therefore, developing the competencies of future teachers, educators and other groups of students who will be involved in educational practice in the future (already in the course of academic education) is crucial. More and more universities in the world

provide various types of courses aimed at students, the purpose of which is to prepare them for work in a culturally diverse environment. Despite the fact that the situation in this area has improved, it is not yet a standard in the education of future teachers, educators, etc. The results of research conducted in many countries around the world show that teachers may not have the required disposition to be effective intercultural educators or the skills to guide young people to develop intercultural competences (Banks, Cherry & McGee Banks, 2003, Leutwyler, Carola, Petrović, Dimitrijević & Zlatković 2014, Młynarczuk-Sokołowska & Szostak-Król, 2016).

At this point it is worth considering what competencies teachers need to work effectively in a culturally diverse environment. Generally speaking, it can be said that these are intercultural competencies. On the basis of a literature analysis, it is possible to distinguish many perspectives of perceiving the type of disposition, which will enable effective functioning in conditions of cultural diversity. More than three hundred terms and constructs relate to the concept of intercultural competencies or are used interchangeably (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, Bodineet al. 2021). They are described by different terms such as cross-cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, cultural expertise or effectiveness, multicultural awareness, intercultural communication, etc. (Jokkikoko, 2010, Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Gastiglioni, 2004; Kealey, 1990; Salakka, 2005; Sue, Arrondo & McDavis, 1992, Byram, & Grundy, 2003, Lustig & Koester, 2006, Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, Szostak-Król, 2016). Regardless of the differences in concepts that focus on emphasizing other aspects of intercultural competences, they all focus on the ability to deal with cultural differences. All refer to an ability to encounter diversity in a positive, respectful way (Jokikokko, p. 26). Sławomir Magala has proposed a broad and metaphorical view of intercultural competencies. According to Magala, this particular competence can be compared to a backpack or a toolbox, gradually filled with tools by people when they encounter different 'software' of the mind (Magala, 2011). This definition refers to the understanding of culture proposed by Geert Hofstede, who claims that culture is a collective mind software which distinguishes members of one group from another. Cultural differences can be embedded in the following

fields: masculinity – femininity, individualism – collectivism, power distance, avoiding uncertainty, time orientation (Hofstede G., Hofstede G. J. & Minkov, 2010).

Intercultural education enables intercultural competencies to develop. According the Holistic Intercultural Education Concept (HIEC) by J. Nikitorowicz (2005), intercultural education is a process that involves a series of actions, both intentional and institutional, as well as spontaneous ones. Intercultural education enables us to change the perceptions of difference and therefore overcome the path from Strangeness to Otherness. This means that in the course of its process, the threatening Stranger, i.e. a person who is different, unknown or little-known, who can arouse distrust, negative emotions and a sense of danger, can become perceived as an interesting Other thanks to the acquired skills (Gudykunst & Kim 2019). They may arouse curiosity, interest, willingness to interact in order to get to know each other and consequently, in spite of the differences, to be understood. Intercultural education is an area of observation of Others in different spheres (psychological, concerning a worldview, social, economic, cultural etc.) and of dialogue, which allows us to develop our own multidimensional identities (Nikitorowicz, 2017). This type of education is an attempt to create a society open to diversity, Otherness and Difference (The Concept of Perceiving and Interacting with the Other, an Holistic Concept of Intercultural Education, Nikitorowicz 2005, 2018). Therefore Jerzy Nikitorowicz points out that it should be dedicated to acquiring competence by teachers, students and parents, including: shaping the equality of all cultures and preparing individuals for a peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society (1); sensitising regarding Otherness (2), different cultural rooting and tradition as well as shaping an open and tolerant attitude (3), enabling the exchange of values, dialogue and negotiation (3); an implementation of self-perception from the perspective of the Other as something enriching and curious rather than hazardous and hostile (4); realising one's own cultural identity, increasing the feeling of one's own value, of safety and self-acceptance (5); shaping the skill of problem-solving, regarding prejudice and negative stereotypes that function in a particular society (6) (Nikitorowicz, 2002, p. 27).

Preparing teachers to work in a culturally diverse environment requires a methodical knowledge regarding goals, content, methods, and forms of regional, multicultural and intercultural education. Knowledge of methods and forms of work with a culturally diverse group, inclusive of all students in the educational process (including those with special educational needs) and the ability to carry out activities in an intercultural context are integral element of teaching staff intercultural competencies. Practical experience acquired through contact with different cultures, foreign language, etc., is also important to support the acquired knowledge.

It is worth noting that in today's dynamically changing world, it is not enough for teachers to have high intercultural competencies. They should also foster the development of intercultural competencies among their students. Teachers have the opportunity to affect their students' awareness, open the world for them, and provide them with tools to critically analyse global phenomena and to act for a more equal and sustainable world (Jokkikoko, 2010). At the classroom level, teachers should develop an intercultural understanding perspective in students by giving them tools to compare different events and issues in the past, present and future across countries. From the perspective of intercultural relations is an understanding that there are many ways of looking at people, history and issues and that the environment colours our perception (Mthethwa-Sommers, Kisiara, 2015). Teachers should be ethical professionals, responsible for supporting the personal and academic growth of all their students, regardless of background, culture, language, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (Nieto, 2000, Jokkikoko, 2010). Teachers should not choose whose learning to support and whose not to (Jokkikoko, 2010). To better meet the needs of the diverse student population, culturally responsive teaching should be in place in all schools (Lin and Bates, 2014). An interculturally competent teacher can also monitor socially unacceptable behaviors (such as racism, xenophobia, etc.) and develop a tolerant atmosphere in schools (Mthethwa-Sommers, Kisiara, 2015).

Poland is a country with a relatively low degree of cultural diversity. As part of the National Census of 2011 conducted by the Central Statistical Office, 97,09% of respondents (including people who

also declare a second nationality) declared Polish nationality. The specificity of its cultural diversity is created mainly by indigenous national and ethnic minorities (Narodowy Spis Powszechny…, 2011). Despite the fact that Polish society is characterized by a low degree of cultural diversity, the cultural landscape of the country is changing under the influence of migration movements. More and more students whose parents have decided to leave their country for economic, professional or forced reasons have become participants in the educational system. Being involved in the education of students from migrant backgrounds (including forced migrants) – regardless of its specificity – is becoming more and more natural from the perspective of teachers. Polish teachers' experiences regarding working with individuals of different cultures and culturally diverse groups are constructed by following factors: the type and specifics of a school (minority dedicated school, bilingual school, foreign language school, multicultural school), specifics of the region and the type of settlement (frontier, cultural centers) as well as the social-cultural diversity of its residents (the proximity of the institution regarding the refugees, the presence of indigenous and new cultural minorities in a majority society), the activity of a school regarding international cooperation (regional, cross-border, EU), the open attitude of the teaching staff towards the multi- and intercultural issues on both local and global level, their ability to acquire knowledge and skills regarding the discussed field (Dąbrowa, Markowska-Manista, 2010, p. 48). The aforementioned factors determine various challenges and educational needs as well as the mode of functioning of a particular institution. One should mention the fact that working in a culturally diverse environment is a major challenge, as unpredictability and permanent change are its inherent elements. Therefore, it is not possible to prepare the teaching staff for solving every unforeseen situation. Individuals must rely on themselves when searching for solutions to some issues. Individuals characterised by responsibility, the wisdom of referring to the pedagogical knowledge and their own experience, that manifest organisational skills (Szczurek-Boruta, 2014, p. 201) as well as the readiness to self-learning and acquiring additional knowledge, are prepared to face this challenge. At this point, it is worth adding

that teachers need intercultural competencies not only for ethnic, racial or linguistic differences but for other subcultural differences as well. If cultures are seen as dynamic, flexible and constantly changing constructions affected by various subcultures, intercultural learning/education and competence cannot merely be seen as the possession of specific knowledge on particular cultural groups, or skills on how to behave in certain cultural contexts, but as a process which demands constant reflection, openness and willingness for mutual learning (Jokikokko, p. 22). It is crucial to remember that intercultural competencies should not be seen as an additional or separate part of teachers' professional competencies but more as a holistic perspective that affects all choices teachers make in a broader context – in the classrooms, society and the world. Thus, intercultural competencies constitute teachers' professionalism and way of working in intercultural contexts (Jokikokko, p. 26).

The author's experiences with working in a culturally diverse environment show that the attitudes of teachers and students towards developing their own intercultural competences and their students in the future are varied. Scientific research proved that teachers' beliefs about intercultural education differ according to different levels of intercultural sensitivity and – conversely speaking – that a development of intercultural sensitivity might lead to a change in one's beliefs about intercultural education (Leutwyler, Mantela, Petrović, Dimitrijević, Zlatković, 2014). Miranda Lin and Alan Bates note, by quoting Van Hook that teachers' beliefs influence and affect their teaching practices and become barriers that prevent the integration of curriculum for diversity (Lin & Bates, 2014, Van Hook, 2002). Implementing a diversity curriculum however, is not without difficulty, because of the fear, uncertainty, or discomfort of many teachers. It still happens that specific content of intercultural education, especially the difficult issues, openly discussed in the public discourse (e.g. the issue of admitting and the integration of refugees), meet with resistance from school principals and parents as well as confusion among teachers (Lewowicki, 2008, p. 23). That is why besides teachers' intercultural competencies the implementation of intercultural education and a certain attitude of readiness to overcome various problems related to it is also important.

Educational curriculums addressed to students of educational sciences and complementary training of the teaching staff should be accompanied by the development of feelings and sensitivities towards the Other, teaching the art of life, the art of interpersonal and social relationships, anything that determines the culture of mutual cohabitation and the accomplish¬ment of the coexistence paradigm, present in education (Szczurek-Boruta, 2014, p. 206). Moreover, one should remember, that each culture should be open to encounters with other cultures. Only the intercultural interactions allow for the full understanding as well as evaluating the value of own culture, determining one's own place in consideration of the culture, perfecting and developing culture, and the shaping of open attitudes (Nikitorowicz, 2010, p. 29).

At the University of Bialystok (the Faculty of Education), academic teachers try to enable students to acquire knowledge and skills imperative for future occupational tasks. The academic team of the Department of Intercultural and Elementary Education carry out an intercultural education curriculum. Moreover, preparing future teachers and pedagogues for the inherent challenges regarding working in mul¬ticultural environments, takes place during dedicated seminars. There are courses like 'Selected issues regarding working with a minority child', 'Anti-discrimination workshops'. Students of international studies (including the Erasmus Plus participants) have the opportunity to select dedicated programs e.g. 'Working with a culturally diverse group', 'Designing intercultural projects' (by Anna Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 'Intercultural awareness' (by Emilia Żyłkiewicz-Płońska). The important aim of the mentioned courses is to shape the attitudes of future educational staff, allowing them to work individually, to expand their own intercultural competencies. During the classes, apart from equipping students with a firm theoretical basis, members of Department of Intercultural and Elementary Education try to show them the practical possibilities of translating pedagogical theory to educational practice, and the principles of designing educational initiatives, and they experience some of these while working with educational institutions as well as experiencing innovative methods and forms of work. Subjects on intercultural topics are also implemented among others at the

University of Silesia in Cieszyn, University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. Those who are interested in the issue can study at the postgraduate studies level (e.g. Regional and Intercultural Education, Teaching Polish as a Foreign Language, Inclusive Education). Postgraduate studies preparing for work in a culturally diverse educational space are conducted by, among others: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. The widest version of this adapted to current educational challenges, developing the competencies of students and teachers is offered by non-governmental organizations. Training programmes are implemented, by the following Polish non-governmental organizations: Forum for Social Diversity Foundation (Warsaw), Polish Migration Forum (Warsaw), Dialog Foundation (Bialystok), The Open Education Foundation (Bialytsok).

Remote education in a culturally diverse class. Perspectives of students from refugee backgrounds

Students from refugee backgrounds are people who were forced to migrate to other countries because of persecution and threats on their lives in their native lands. Many of them bring the baggage of difficult, negative, often traumatic, experiences (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2019, 2020). Finding themselves in the world of a new school is not an easy task. Students from refugee backgrounds may find adjusting to a new school reality challenging, due to traumatic experiences from the home countries (pre-immigration phase). Together with this, their disrupted and limited access to formal schooling may result in significant gaps in educational knowledge and conceptual development and their understanding of school structure, practices and classroom routines, causing difficulties for their learning across the curriculum (Hammond & Miller, 2015).

An analysis of the literature shows that some countries have more experiences with the integration of forced migrants then others. In any case, preparation for working with students experiencing forced migration and culturally diverse groups is still a big challenge for education systems, teachers and education of pedagogical students (higher education level). Forced migrants, changing the country

of education, usually begin the learning process in a new school, struggling with language difficulties and curriculum differences. Students of refugee backgrounds have varied educational experiences: some settled well but some do not 'fit in'. The parents of many of them value the efforts undertaken at their schools, but some of them still suffer from a lack of support. These students are also faced with the dilemma of in/visibility: they often stand out — for various reasons — but their needs are often 'invisible' and they fail through deficiency of the educational system (Hammond & Miller, 2015). The importance of schooling for children of refugee backgrounds has been acknowledged in a number of studies. Schools are a stabilising force in the lives of children and young people of refugee backgrounds as they provide a safe space for 'new encounters, interactions and learning opportunities' (Matthews, 2008, p. 32). Schools are not only sites for developing new language competencies, and study literacy, which are pre-requisites for educational success. They also play an active role in facilitating children and young people of refugee backgrounds to become citizens in their country of settlement by helping them to develop familiarity and a sense of belonging within their school and broader communities (Sidhu, Taylor & Christie, 2011). At this point it should be noted that children and teenagers from refugee backgrounds are students with special educational needs, who are often unable to participate in the educational system without individualization of the education process (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, Szostak-Król, 2019).

In Poland, children (regardless of nationality, social status, etc.) from the age of seven are subject to compulsory education, which obliges them to study in an eight-year primary school, but not longer than when the student turns 18. According to the educational law in Poland an integrated model of supporting foreigners in the school space has been implemented. This means that children with migration experience (including forced migration) are included in mainstream education. Poland thirty years ago (that is, in 1991), by becoming a party of the international Geneva Convention and the New York Protocol made a commitment to provide protection to foreigners who look for safe living conditions (Konwencja dotycząca… 1951, Protokół dotyczący..., 1967). In Poland, relatively few foreigners

receive international protection. According to the annual Reports/ Information of the Head of the Office for Foreigners on the application of the Act of June 13, 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland in the scope of fulfilling the obligations resulting from the Geneva Convention and the New York Protocol relating to the status of refugees, for years, the largest group of foreigners who are applying for international protection are citizens of Russia (Chechen nationality) (Ochorna międzynarodowa w 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016). In 2020 the biggest group of foreigners covered by international protection in Poland, whose children attend Polish schools, were mainly citizens of Turkey. Among the forced migrants receiving formal education were also Belarusians, Chechens (citizens of Russia), Ukrainians and Tajiks. The internal situation (the matter of the presidential election) in Belarus has resulted in an increase in applications for refugee status in Poland submitted by Belarusians (Ochrona międzynarodowa w 2020…).

Pursuant to Polish law, it is possible to support students with migration experience through education in preparatory classes (welcome classes), cooperation with the help of a teacher (intercultural assistant), participation in classes in Polish as a foreign language, making up for school backlogs, developing their cultural identity and religion (Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 roku, Prawo oświatowe…, Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 23 sierpnia 2017 r…., Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 kwietnia 1992…). A new and still rarely implemented opportunity to work with student migrants in Poland is participating in the so-called Welcome Class (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 23 sierpnia 2017 r….). Over the last several years, a lot has changed in terms of teachers' competencies to work with research with refugee experience and with culturally diverse groups.

Teachers are becoming more aware of the challenges and problems that arise in a culturally diverse environment. More and more teachers know the methods and forms of working with students with migration experience and a culturally diverse group, and implement them in educational practice. School principals are becoming more and more aware of possibilities for supporting migrant students

in the school space as set out in Polish educational law. In Poland, it is possible to find instructive examples of inclusive educational institutions that can serve as an example for others. There are also schools characterized as being closed to diversity, for which migrant students (especially forced migrants) are still a big problem (because, for example, they lower the school's achievement standards).

The Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic has caused a number of changes to various levels of human activity. Contemporary schools and universities are rapidly facing the new challenge of remote education. Headmasters and teachers with various IT competences started designing and implementing distance education overnight. It was (and still is) a very difficult situation for the teaching staff and students at every stage of education (regardless of the place of residence, nationality, ethnic origin, etc.). The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees shows that, in general, the situation of children of forced migrants during the period of the first closure of schools was extremely difficult. Especially in the case of children without adult care – they often lacked any access to education (Raport UNHCR, 2020). The analyses of distance education conducted in Poland mainly concern students belonging to the majority group and teachers. They do not explore the situation of students from migration backgrounds.

According to the opinion of a team of experts, during the first lockdown in Poland, students with forced migrant experience struggled with a number of problems (Koronawirus. Sytuacja migrantów i migrantek…, 2020). A major problem (especially in the case of people living in refugee centers) was the lack of computers and equipment enabling audiovisual communication with the teacher. Some groups of students from refugee backgrounds during the difficult period of closure additionally experienced (for a certain period of time) a broadly understood digital exclusion. During the distance-learning period, many schools did not offer Polish language classes and compensatory classes from various subjects which, according to Polish law, can be available to students with migration experience. This was undoubtedly a factor in the deepening of school problems and difficulties. Another important obstacle was the lack of adequate support for refugee students from their parents during

remote education. They were: parents' lack of appropriate technical skills and computer competencies to help their children to use online communication tools; a language barrier (parents themselves were not able to help their children in implementing remote education); digital exclusion of parents and inability to communicate in Polish and in consequence lack of direct communication between teachers and parents of foreign children (Koronawirus. Sytuacja migrantów i migrantek…, 2020).

In the governmental level in the case of education of students with special educational needs, only general recommendations were formulated and possible materials were indicated. Because of the fact that the term 'student with special educational needs' also applies to students with migration experience – the recommendations also applied to this group. Due to the specificity of recommendations, the lack of detailed solutions and materials, and the lack of state involvement in this area of the school's work, they can be considered of little use from the perspective of designing educational activities by the teachers (Wsparcie uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami…, 2020).

The qualitative interviews (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2020) in the center of research situating the voice of students with forced migrant experience, conducted by the author of the chapter schools shows that this group of students associated remote education with a high level of stress and a sense of loneliness mainly due to the lack of contact with teachers. The findings presented below are not representative; however, they well illustrate the experiences of students with refugee backgrounds at the beginning of the first lockdown period and the specificity of the educational process designed by teachers.

From the narratives of students with experience of forced migration it follows that remote education in their school was based on teachers sending materials for individual work at home. Classes carried out using instant messaging were not a common practice. As a result, they experienced difficulties in understanding the material for their individual work (fragments of texts, exercises, audiovisual recordings, etc.) and experienced a great lack of contact with the teacher (by

Internet communicators). The inability to talk to the teacher also resulted in difficulties with understanding written instructions and material for their own work. Children and teenagers from refugee backgrounds are students with different levels of linguistic competence in the use of the Polish language. But it is worth noticing that sometimes even students with a good comprehension of Polish language face difficulties with understanding the instructions (because of specific language – terminology related to a given area of knowledge, etc.). Difficulties with solving the tasks sent by teachers and no possibility of communication with the teachers and thus accumulating school backlogs resulted in fear of not being promoted to the next grade. The fear of staying in the same grade twice was experienced not only by students whose language competencies are at a low level or by those who struggle with school difficulties on a daily basis – as might be expected – but also by students who had no problems with learning. The narratives of students with forced migration experiences indicated the fear of losing linguistic competence to communicate in Polish, because of the lack of possibility to contact Polish peers. According to the opinions of the students with refugee backgrounds, the school management showed kindness towards them – introducing promotion strategies to the next grade. As you can guess, it was a form of compensation for the imperfection of remote education.

Table 1. Participation in remote education from the perspective of the forced migrant students' experience

	Experience of	Narratives
Remote education (with limited contact with teachers)	Individual work of students on the basis of materials sent by teachers (fragments of texts, exercises, audiovisual recordings, etc.)	We could not learn this subject - because we did not understand too much... And if our teacher told us how to do it - I would understand and remember everything ... (girl, 12 years old). We didn't simply contact the teachers - so it was as if our learning was not going forward... Because we had emails, and not, for example, via a webcam, and it was very difficult - because we didn't understand it. This is why we are having a hard time this year... (girl, 11 years old).
	Difficulties with understanding written instructions and material for their own work	- It was a very hard time... I did not understand everything then... - What does it mean? [A.M-S] - Because when they (the teachers) explained a topic or the task was difficult - I couldn't understand... Even if you had to read a book, it was hard - I couldn't understand... (girl, 11 years old).
	Fear of losing linguistic competence to communicate in Polish	And we also did not see friends (school peers - A. M-S.) - and it was also difficult ... Because in this coronavirus - we were very distant during this period - because we did not meet. And it was as if we were losing contact with one other ... And when the first bell rang (after returning to school after lockdown), it was very difficult for me to talk to my friends (i.e. classmates) with whom I am friends - Poles. Because I have forgotten all the words - and they were strangers to me... And not like they used to be - because I didn't see them (girl, 12 years old).
	Accumulation of school backlogs resulted in the feeling of fear of not getting promoted to the next grade	I was afraid that I would not get promoted to the fifth grade. I was also afraid that it would be a massacre in the fifth grade (because of school backlogs - supp. A. M-S.)... And I was very concerned about it... I was so concerned.... But we all passed... - because everyone in our class did. I think it was this way as the headmaster thought it was difficult for us. (...) I got very good grades at the end of the year. That's why I passed ... And when I saw that card - the certificate - I turned it - and my grades were good. Only the grade from maths was worse. Because she (the teacher) gave us a grade for the first semester, not for the second (girl, 12 years old).

Source: own research.

Based on the analysis of the empirical materials, it can be concluded that it resulted from insufficient preparation of the school and teachers for remote education in a culturally diverse environment. The narratives of children and teenagers show that their special educational needs were not taken into account. During designing remote education, the teachers did not pay attention to the specific situation of students from refugee backgrounds and did not individualize the educational process. The sphere of emotional experiences of students with a refugee experience was also overlooked.

During the first lockdown in Poland, non-governmental organizations and intercultural assistants tried to support the process of educating students who had experienced forced migration. NGOs and intercultural assistants involved volunteers – i.e. pedagogy students (i.a. Dialog Foundation). Thanks to them, many educational initiatives were implemented, enabling students from refugee backgrounds to participate in education through

dialogue in Polish and through interesting activities. They were an important experience for students. From the students' point of view, it was an important element in developing their intercultural and methodological competencies, which are very important in the context of their future educational work.

Conclusions: Towards teachers' sensitivity to the Other

Cultural diversity has been an integral part of education for centuries. Currently, we can observe an intensification of migration movements, and therefore, the structure of cultural diversity of educational institutions is changing. In many schools, it is getting easier to meet students from sometimes distant ends of the world. They, together with their parents or alone, left their home country, out of fear of losing their life or health. Therefore, it is important that the professional competencies of teachers also include intercultural competencies (including methodological skills) which will contain sensitivity to diversity, the ability to work with migrant students, a culturally diverse group. At the same time, it should be remembered that intercultural competencies are not enough. It is also a priority for teachers to implement an intercultural curriculum among the students they work with. Therefore, at the level of higher education, the future teaching staff should be prepared to work and recognize cultural diversity. More and more universities in the world are aware of this and provide courses that prepare students in this field. This is also the case in Poland. The world situation in the context of preparing teachers to work in a culturally diverse environment looks better and better. However, this is a space where still a lot needs to be done. Preparing to work with culturally diverse groups, some of which are refugee students, is a particular challenge especially during the lockdown because of the pandemic. This group of students, despite cultural differences and linguistic difficulties, brings a baggage of difficult experiences to the education system. The situation of forced migrant students was difficult around the world during the first lockdown. In Poland students with refugee experience struggled with many problems. Some students could not take part in online learning and participate in the virtual life

of their class. Technical problems (e.g. no access to computers) were solved relatively quickly. The author of the chapter observes that remote education took place mainly without communicating with teachers by video communicators. It mainly involved sending tasks to be done by students. That is why remote education was associated by this group of students with a high level of stress and a sense of loneliness, fear of not getting promoted to the next grade, and fear of losing linguistic competence to communicate in Polish, etc. Thanks to the experiences of remote education during the first lockdown period, the situation of forced migrant students is despite problems much better.

Either way, it is worth noting that nowadays schools that are influenced by neoliberal ideology mainly focus on completing tasks and measuring student outcomes. This distracts from taking action to meet the educational needs of children and young people in a diverse community, caring for their well-being, and minimizing the energy devoted to these goals. That is why, modern schools are completely inadequate from the perspective of supporting students with forced migrant experience (Sellars, 2020). This was especially noticeable during the first lockdown period. Therefore, when analyzing this crisis situation, it is beneficial to formulate significant conclusions in the context of student and teacher education. A topic devoted to the special educational needs of refugee students is crucially needed in the teacher education programs at the level of higher education. Teachers should remember that students from refugee backgrounds require individualized curriculum, school requirements and assessment. Without it, participation in education of this group of students in a new school can be very difficult and can be associated with many failures. This can lead to early school leaving. Therefore, an important task of higher education is to develop sensitivity to Others in various spheres of human functioning (individual, economic, cultural, etc.) which allows for the implementation of intercultural education. This will enable teachers to design and provide sensitive education towards the Other.

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