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**Considerations on  
the Essence of Intangible  
Heritage - Contemporary  
Educational Contexts.  
Place-Based Education and  
Introduction to Culture as an  
Opportunity to Discover Identity**

In present times, the issues of cultural heritage are very important for a teacher or museum educator. Getting to know even the most cursory definition of the word “heritage” demonstrates that the word itself came from three separate terms, that is tradition, history and memory, and currently competes with them<sup>1</sup>. Heritage draws upon these words; however, it is not just a simple synonym. Heritage is also connected with terms such as “cultural object” and “monument”. According to

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<sup>1</sup> Kowalski Krzysztof, *O istocie dziedzictwa europejskiego – rozważania*, Kraków 2013, p. 5.

David Lowenthal, an outstanding heritage researcher, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century heritage is omnipresent, some may say it is even intrusive<sup>2</sup>.

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought about the broadening of the notion of heritage with **intangible heritage**, which is treated, along with tangible heritage, as the second component of cultural heritage. The notion encompasses customs, rites, myths, legends, languages, dance, traditional knowledge and practices<sup>3</sup>.

Here it is worth noting the notion of tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century pedagogy, when the traditional school was created. One of the most exceptional representatives of the New Education Movement, John Dewey (1859–1952) believed that

[...] a child was to be introduced to the social heritage of human kind by appropriate methods. Therefore, his school workshops held many simple tools (looms, spindles) in order for children to learn about the work of their predecessors. The best teaching traditions of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe [...] were sadly under-used in Poland, primarily because of the Partitions. However, after regaining of the independence, the interest in the developments of the Western pedagogy in the Second Polish Republic grew significantly.<sup>4</sup>

In the years of the Polish People's Republic, Polish educational institutions used the European and global pedagogical thought of the interwar period. However, the great achievements of John Dewey were not used to a sufficient extent in Poland, even though his works were an important source of inspiration in the works of many teachers.

Andrzej Tomaszewski (1934–2010), an outstanding expert in the field of monument preservation and conservation, tried to define the essence of intangible values, by describing them as “internal meanings and messages, understandable by enlightened contemporaries, read by us with difficulty today”<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Lowenthal David, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge–New York 1998, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> In the conventional definition of intangible heritage, it was pointed out that it is expressed through: oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship.

<sup>4</sup> Dymara Bronisława, Korzeniowska Wiesława, Ziemiński Franciszek, *Dziecko w świecie tradycji*, Kraków 2010, p. 24, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Tomaszewski Andrzej, *Ku nowej filozofii dziedzictwa*, Kraków 2012, p. 65.

It is worth noting that the Polish concept of aesthetic education before and after World War II always put literary education as one of its priorities, connecting it with native language education<sup>6</sup>.

**Myths and legends** hold a special place in the definition of intangible heritage. It is worth recalling the thought of Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), an outstanding Romanian historian of religion, cultural philosopher and researcher of myths who wrote that the foremost function of the myth is to reveal the exemplary models for all human rites and all significant activities<sup>7</sup>. “To know the myths is to learn the secrets of the origin of things. In other words, one learns not only how things came into existence, but also where to find them and how to make them reappear when they disappear”<sup>8</sup>. Myth is a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. “Myth [...] is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked, active force”<sup>9</sup>.

It is also worth taking a closer look at **social practices** connected with the tangible and intangible heritage. Educational activities in museums, publications for children and youth, reports about the state of museum education, as well as various conferences and seminars related to this wide-ranging issue have been conducted for several years now. However, the special dimension of heritage, such as its intangibility, is very rarely taken into consideration, and the activities are thus directed mainly towards tangible heritage.

Workshops and museum lessons are conducted on a regular basis, with cooperation with foreign institutions in that regard becoming an increasingly common trend. Moreover, field activities for kindergarteners and primary school students are also developed, employing the **concept of learning outside the classroom**.

Coming back to the general considerations, it is worth remembering that even Aristotle wrote that theory is the strongest side of practice, or every activity. It is therefore worth recalling the theoretical deliberations related to the area of education in contact with the intangible heritage.

<sup>6</sup> What is important, the definition of artistic and cultural education from the Eurydice network reports does not include mother tongue education.

<sup>7</sup> Eliade Mircea, *Aspekty mitu*, trans. Piotr Mrówczyński, Warszawa 1998, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

The theoretical basis of these activities is **place-based education**<sup>10</sup>, since every human being builds their identity upon place, regardless of skin colour, as well as geographical or cultural context. The place is always the first space, in which the human being exists.

Attachment to a place, as proposed by traditional anthropology, is one of the primary characteristics of humans. Since the dawn of time, human beings have distinguished their own, safe and incontestable image - their place, their home - in the boundless and infinite space. Right behind it, there is a smaller or broader area of familiarity, the physical boundaries of which are consolidated by cultural signs, marking their symbolic belonging to a given community. However, existential philosophy proves that the sheltered safety of a home is not enough for human being to accomplish something, which could be called "living to the fullest". The unsettled space, spreading out beyond their own borders seduces them with its sense of freedom. On the one hand, the need for establishment and becoming rooted, on the other - the striving for independence and freedom of choice are the two aspects of human thought about the world. Yi-Fu Tuan, an expert on the matters of place uses it as a basis to distinguish between the "place" and "space"<sup>11</sup>.

He assigns place the characteristics of attachment to the mythically certain and permanent harbour of home and its surroundings, comprising notions such as the "family nest", "home areas" and so on, which serve as a point of reference for individual and cultural identity. On the contrary, he describes space as a chaotic and uncertain area, but at the same time a symbol of freedom and adventure, the sense of which is missed by many human beings<sup>12</sup>.

[...]in the correlation between a human being and space is not about the physical contact with a given territory more than it is about revealing constructive reflection in the course of building and living. The reflexivity leads to understanding place as a

<sup>10</sup> For more, cf. *Pedagogika miejsca*, ed. Maria Mendel, Wrocław 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Tuan Yi-Fu, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, trans. Agnieszka Morawińska, Warszawa 1987.

<sup>12</sup> Copik Ilona, *Pedagogika miejsca – kultura lokalna a kształtowanie się tożsamości współczesnego człowieka*, „Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Pedagogika” 2013, vol. 22, p. 180-181.

phenomenon, which constitutes being (in the words of Martin Heidegger "being in the world"); however, it does that in a complex way.<sup>13</sup>

Human beings can also define themselves through place, while not living in it permanently. The opposite is also possible - living somewhere does not have to result in identification. Thanks to the place, in which the human being lives, they do not attain a stable and certain form of existence, it is rather that through the place the person constantly becomes themselves, by participating in the complex interplay of meanings. By "significant", we consider not only human activities, but also notable properties of the place itself, equipped with power to influence its inhabitants.<sup>14</sup>

According to Maria Mendel,

probably the most significant characteristic of a place, worthy of particular scientific attention, is its dual character of being both open and closed at the same time. It means that the place should be perceived as having two seemingly mutually exclusive features - of the residence and of open space. Being between these two dimensions of human existence - the place and the space - seems to be not only the key aspect of existence described in the language of philosophy, but also an urgent need and requirement of the increasingly multicultural and hybrid contemporary world. On the one hand, it is endangered by the expansive unifying forces of globalisation, on the other it is in constant fear of all forms of xenophobia, chauvinism and particularism.<sup>15</sup>

The phenomenology of the place assumes a relational and dialogic character of a place. Thus, it can be said that

[...] we can make places exactly like we want them to be, but they also can do the same to us. We create their meanings, and they create us. [In order to] translate this into theories of upbringing, we would have to once again refer to metaphors and assume that

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger Martin, *Budować, mieszkać, myśleć. Eseje wybrane*, trans. Krzysztof Michalski, Warszawa 1977, p. 326. As cited in Ilona Copik, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>14</sup> Copik Ilona, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> Mendel Maria, *Kategoria miejsca w pedagogice* [in:] *Pedagogika miejsca*, ed. Maria Mendel, Wrocław 2006, p. 25.

the place bears significance not only because we raise in/for/through it, but by using the collection of values present in it, but it is also significant because it raises us.<sup>16</sup>

This reciprocity means that, first of all, we have to forgo the tendency of assuming ownership right and supremacy in our contact with places. Then, we also have to assume that the place is a phenomenon that offers a wide range of interpretation abilities to everyone; however, it commands our respect.

It is therefore imperative to recognise that in every moment of our existence the place “exceeds” us and we are not able to “command” it, to tame it or to understand it fully. As persons living in a given place, we are never there alone. We coexist in places with material items and other people, living there on equal rights, and above all, it is an area equipped with historical marks of the “others”, living there “in another time”, and their spiritual and material traces, which command our respect.

In relation to this context, it is worth thinking about the wealth of traditions, customs, habits, songs and names brought by intangible heritage. Separating the notion of intangible heritage opens a wealth of opportunities for educator/teacher, in particular with regards to the disconnect between the traditional educational environment - the family - and the transfer of cultural tradition, which is visible in particular in urban environments.

The issue of intangible heritage is connected with participation in intangible culture. Cultural teaching, one of the leading movements in Polish pedagogy, which developed in the interwar period focused on the issue of heritage in times of regaining national identity by the Poles. It was said that the frequent and deepened contact with cultural objects has a significant effect on the personality. Patriotic songs, as well as songs for children and youth, legends, as well as various games and activities were said to play a most significant role, along with the living word, or the ability to express oneself, tell tales and thus influence the imagination of the pupils.

As Sergiusz Hessen (1887–1950), an exceptional cultural philosopher and cultural educator of Russian descent, wrote in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the social function of education is to “ensure the continuity of cultural tradition, and the goal of education should be to introduce the individual to the tradition. [...]

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32.

Tradition can be preserved only if it is creatively transformed<sup>17</sup>. He wrote about the so-called combined education, defined as “education about our fatherland”: “the whole of regional environment”, something called *Heimatkunde* by Germans, *rodinovyedyeniye* or *krayevyedyeniye* by Russians - in some regions of Poland it was called “education about the native matters”<sup>18</sup>. Hessen postulated that education in public schools should start with the local environment and ethnography, archaeology, hagiography, local dialects, art, songs and customs<sup>19</sup>. According to many of the leading theoreticians of the contemporary public school, the “constant juxtaposition of the dialect used by the child with literary language allows them to broaden their linguistic experiences, gather the material of their own observation and experience the issues, which will be later clarified by the systematic course in the language. [...] «the child is supposed to learn grammar from the native language and not language from grammar»”<sup>20</sup>, wrote Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), a German writer and philosopher of history, creator of a theory stating that collecting the poetry and folk songs has a significant impact on the development of national culture<sup>21</sup>.

Hessen wanted every elementary school teacher to complete a course in knowledge about the country, and according to him, regional studies should be the centre point of the supplementary courses for teachers working in primary schools<sup>22</sup>. He also wrote about the process of acquisition of expressive skills in children (speech, drawing, handiwork)<sup>23</sup>.

Contemporary cultural scholars assume that the world has a meta-cultural dimension. Every single object or phenomenon created today has a simultaneous character. There is an increasing tendency to treat some phenomena which do not conform to the media standards as niche, and the focus on the future and

<sup>17</sup> Hessen Sergiusz, *O sprzecznościach i jedności wychowania. Zagadnienia pedagogiki personalistycznej*, Warszawa 1997, p. 61. The book is devoted to pedagogy as the philosophy of upbringing.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, *Struktura i treść szkoły współczesnej. Dzieła wybrane*, vol. 4, Warszawa 1997, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*. Cf. also Herder Johann Gottfried, *Rozprawa o pochodzeniu języka*, trans. Barbara Płaczowska [in:] *Eadem, Wybór pism*, Wrocław 1987, p. 127, 130, 132, 150, 152, 172.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 119.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120.

present times replaces the cultural memory<sup>24</sup>. There are people who promote the de-consumption model and strive for satisfying their longing for things that are authentic, closer to the roots and their own identity.

While working with individuals of all ages, in direct contact with the objects of intangible heritage (as well as the tangible one), it is necessary to focus on the development of digital heritage in the museums and in the region<sup>25</sup>, of course in accordance to the principle saying that all multimedia and interactive methods of transmission of intangible heritage, as well as other digital tools should never dominate over the exhibits, but only encourage to further activities or studies<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore, the role of the transmission of intangible heritage is invaluable. The role of a museum educator is to shape the perception abilities of the specific groups of recipients, teaching understanding of the world and presenting its complexity depending on age and individual predispositions.

The specifics of intangible heritage are especially liked by younger recipients. We should not, however, diminish the role of cultural literacy, or introducing the youngest recipients to culture. Folk songs for children with proper and common names of objects are especially important during that period, for example, for Poland and Kraków: “Wyleciał ptaszek z Łobzowa”, “Płynie Wisła płynie, po polskiej krainie, zobaczyła Kraków, pewnie go nie minie”, as well as other nursery rhymes and poems. There is a need to introduce more music, dancing and crafting classes - in other words, teaching children expression from the youngest age as part of the talent development and discovering passion through meetings and workshops with folk artists, observation and participation in artistic activities, as well as other methods.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. e.g. Burszta Wojciech, Kuligowski Waldemar, *Sequel. Dalsze przygody kultury w globalnym świecie*, Warszawa 2005; Assman Jan, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, trans. Anna Kryczyńska-Pham, Warszawa 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Mobile applications used in museums expand the opportunities for taking advantage of the collections, both in the museums themselves, as well as outside. Various video and audio recordings, multimedia presentations, audio guides, portals, proximity technologies, QR codes, 3D reconstructions, audio-visual recordings, digital tools - individual devices or parts of larger exhibitions, info booths (and touch-enabled devices) and digitalisation of archive materials are an attractive form of presenting not only digital information, but also multimedia activities, as they expand the opportunities offered by the tour with various senses, such as hearing, touch, smell etc.

<sup>26</sup> For more, cf. *Dziedzictwo kulturowe w dobie nowych mediów*. Materials from a scientific symposium, Kraków 19 May 2016.

On the other hand, the research by Wiesław Theiss has resulted in an inspiring and important thought regarding educational and animation potential of the places, which are full of human history, accumulated throughout the ages. It seems that it is enough to carefully observe and listen to the places, and the tasks related to the shaping of coherent community and intercultural condition will be carried out by “themselves”. Such a function is perfectly fulfilled by legends, stories and poetry connected with various places, such as the poem *Smok* by Julian Tuwim (“Na Wawelu, proszę Pana, mieszkał smok, co zawsze z rana zjadał prosię lub barana”) as well as others. It is also worth mentioning that the cultural memory of a place is an infinite, however poorly exposed, resource - *locus educandi*<sup>27</sup>.

The past in the present is visible in the history, memory, tradition and heritage. Those are retrospective strategies. They are distinguished by the way in which the continuity between the present times and the past is ensured in each of them. The basis of the distinction is not what we remember, but rather how do we remember it; therefore, the distinction between history, memory, tradition and heritage is decided by the method of creating narratives around the traces of the past, combined into a meaningful whole<sup>28</sup>.

The considerations presented above result in several basic conclusions.

There is an urgent need, or even necessity to undertake dynamic systemic efforts in order to bring about reorientation of the teachers’ training at all levels, so that they may become experts regarding their direct surroundings and region. The teachers’ training should be re-profiled from psychological and pedagogical into philosophical, historical and cultural, and it should also include knowledge about the country and the environment.

It is also important to prepare materials related to intangible heritage, with the participation of well-prepared museum workers (ethnographers, anthropologists and other experts), as well as regional studies centres and educators.

The living word plays a very significant role in education design; therefore, it is vital that teachers and schoolchildren alike learn rhetoric and narration building, which should be incorporated in the curriculum.

<sup>27</sup> *Pedagogika miejsca*, ed. Maria Mendel, Wrocław 2006, p. 11. For more, cf. Maria Mendel, *Pedagogika miejsca i animacja na miejsca wrażliwa* [in:] *Ibidem*, p. 21-37; Męczkowska Astrid, *Locus educandi. Wokół problematyki miejsca w refleksji pedagogicznej* [in:] *Ibidem*, p. 38-51.

<sup>28</sup> Kowalski Krzysztof, *op. cit.*, chapter IV.

Drawing upon proven educational concepts (such as Jordan's concept, regional education, clubs of country lovers etc.), combined with the inclusion of subjects pertaining to intangible heritage and modern forms of broadly understood artistic and cultural teaching<sup>29</sup>, or education on a high level, using new technologies may help create the basis of an education appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Text translated from Polish language*

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<sup>29</sup> That is, comprising plastic arts (two-dimensional, such as drawings and paintings, as well as three-dimensional, such as sculptures), music (performances, composing and critical interpretation of music), theatre (performance, dramatic writing, theatre interpretation), dance (performance, choreography, dance interpretation), media arts (artistic and expressive elements of media such as photography, film, films, computer animation), crafts (artistic and cultural elements of crafts, such as fabrics, weaving and goldsmithing), or architecture (building design, observation, planning, area construction). Cf. *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe*, Warszawa 2010.

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