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REGIONAL STUDIES AS PART OF TEACHING RELIGION TO POLISH YOUTHS IN SCHOOLS Prospects, limitations and challenges*

The changes that have taken place in Polish schools since the end of the 80s, have influenced, among other things, religious education. They can be seen not only in the structure of education, but also in its curricula. The central position is ascribed, at least at the declarative level, to interdisciplinary dialogue and integration of various fields of knowledge. One of such fields is correlating the content taught in religion lessons in secondary schools with regional studies. The aim is to support the young in acquiring knowledge about the modern world and in preparing them for engaging in Christian social-cultural activities in their towns, areas and regions. The practice of teaching religion in schools proves that issues related to regional religious education are very complex and must be approached from multiple perspectives. Given the extensive scope of the field, this article focuses on

* The author of this article analyses an issue of regional education of Polish youth in teaching catechesis at school using Polish pedagogical literature. An attempt to show the extent to which pedagogical point of view can be taken into account in regional education of Polish youth in teaching catechesis is made in the article. The author examines possibilities, limitations and challenges. This approach contains many author's ideas connected with regional education in teaching catechesis. They involve inculturation and acculturation.

a few chosen aspects such as: the nature of religious education in Polish schools, the role of regional education in teaching religion, regional studies in religion lessons in lower secondary schools (gimnazjum), and upper secondary schools (liceum). All of these issues will be discussed in light of the Polish pedagogical and catechetical literature, and only in relation to the young. Finally, some conclusions and catechetical postulates will be presented.

THE NATURE OF REGIONAL EDUCATION IN POLISH SCHOOLS

Regional education is the subject of Polish pedagogical research¹. At present, it is also a subject raised by Polish catechetical studies². Usually, both teachers and catechists perceive regional studies as a didactic-educational process carried out in accordance with the principles of regionalism³. Most researchers agree that regional education mainly consists in helping the students develop their abilities to discover the surrounding nature and social reality, as well as recognizing universal values in them⁴. The process of developing one's identity and establishing bonds with the regional environment is also one of its key elements⁵. It is further related to such

¹ See M. Boszman-Szklarska, *Wokół szkolnej edukacji regionalnej – próba porządkowania pojęć*, „Z Teorii i Praktyki Dydaktycznej Języka Polskiego” 17 (2004), p. 88–101; A. Horbowski, *Edukacja regionalna czynnikiem kształtowania tożsamości kulturowej*, „Nauczyciel i Szkoła” 3–4 (2006), p. 124–129; T. Michalewski, *Kreatywna edukacja regionalna w szkole – cele, zasady nauczania i treści programowe*, Małopolska 9 (2007), p. 229–237; J. Nikitorowicz, *Edukacja regionalna i międzykulturowa*, Warszawa 2009; P. Petrykowski, *Edukacja regionalna. Problemy podstawowe i otwarte*, Toruń 2003.

² See P. Tomasik, *Kształtowanie postaw społecznych na lekcjach religii*, „Katecheta” 40,9 (2000), p. 9–18; P. Tomasik, *Troska o autentyczny regionalizm*, „Katecheta” 40,12 (2000), p. 50–52; A. Zellman, *Edukacja regionalna dzieci i młodzieży w szkolnym nauczaniu religii*, in: *Wybrane zagadnienia z katechetyki*, ed. J. Stala, Tarnów 2003, p. 203–256; Idem, *Świadomość regionalna katechizowanej młodzieży w świetle badań empirycznych*, „Studia Warmińskie” 43 (2006), p. 215–224.

³ See A. Hornowski, *Edukacja regionalna – dziedzictwo kulturowe w regionie*, „Nauczyciel i Szkoła” 1–2 (2003), p. 199–202; P. Petrykowski, *Edukacja regionalna...*, p. 35; A. Zellman, *O możliwościach realizowania aspektu regionalnego na katechezie*, „Katecheta” 44,11 (2000), p. 14.

⁴ See P. Petrykowski, *Edukacja regionalna...*, p. 50–54; S. Gawlik, *Edukacja regionalna*, in: *Regionalizm polski u progu XXI wieku. Kongres Regionalnych Towarzystw Kultury. Wrocław 23–25.09.1994*, ed. S. Bednarek, S. Słowik, J. Wojtaś, Wrocław 1994, p. 99–109; S. Gawlik, *Edukacja regionalna młodzieży*, in: *Integracja europejska a ruch regionalny w Polsce*, ed. A.J. Omelaniuk, Wrocław–Ciechanów 1998, p. 105–117; Dz. Jankowski, *Edukacja regionalna jako czynnik regionotwórczy*, in: *Regionalizm polski (przeszłość i teraźniejszość). Materiały i komunikaty ogłoszone na konferencji naukowej 15–17 września 1989 r.*, Wrocław–Zamek Książ, ed. S. Dąbrowski, A. Kociszewski, A.J. Omelaniuk, Ciechanów 1990, p. 101–113.

⁵ See J. Nikitorowicz, *Zadania edukacji regionalnej i międzykulturowej w kreowaniu tożsamości kulturowej człowieka*, „Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze” 48,2 (2008), p. 3–16; P. Petrykowski, *Edukacja regionalna...*, p. 50–60.

⁶ P. Petrykowski, *Edukacja regionalna...*, p. 50–60.

issues as developing attachment towards one's town, region and country, becoming sensitive to cultural differences of other regions, learning to be tolerant, strengthening local and national patriotism⁶. These educational activities are complemented by preparing pupils for participation in the life of their local community, bound together by the common cultural heritage and tradition, as well as preparing them for an active life in national and international communities⁷. Regional education in this sense appeals to the pupils' positive experience and allows them to discover values inherent in the regional and national culture. At the same time, regional education prepares the pupils for a creative life among cultural goods and values, which together make up the „little motherland”. It also helps the pupils discover elements of the national culture, influenced by Christianity⁸. All of the abovementioned educational activities are accompanied by handing down knowledge about the region and its cultural heritage, as well as popularizing various forms of artistic activities⁹. Getting to know one's town, municipality, district, region and its culture, ways and customs should encourage pupils to identify themselves with the place in question and actively join in the life of various communities. Accordingly, it is assumed that regionalism of teaching should be a part of regional education¹⁰, and that is why regional topics are included in the curricula. The topics may be chosen from such areas as history and politics of the region; culture – customs, traditions, folklore, language; natural environment – ecology, nature, geography; economy of the local community¹¹. This means that regional education is linked to the whole of the didactic-educational process in the school environment – in various lessons

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ A. Horbowski, *Kultura w edukacji*, „Kwartalnik Edukacyjny” 3 (2001), p. 11.

⁹ See D. Wędzian, *Edukacyjne walory materialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego*, „Zeszyty Naukowe. Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. Witeolona w Legnicy” 2 (2007), p. 15–24.

¹⁰ See H. Bednarski, *Globalizacja i regionalizm a edukacja*, „Prace Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Częstochowie. Pedagogika” 12 (2003), p. 137–146; A. Zielecki, *Regionalizm w reformowanej polskiej szkole*, „Wiadomości Historyczne” 44,2 (2001), p. 82–97;

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² One should add that compulsory regional education in Polish schools was introduced on September 1, 1999, and it was clearly set down in *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego* [*The core curriculum of general education*]. The document was amended a few times since (e.g. in 2001–2003). In accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of National Education, regional education was one of several education paths in grades 1–4 in primary schools and in all grades of lower secondary, secondary and technical secondary schools. In vocational schools, regional education was introduced above all as a part of social studies and history. At each grade, regional education involved content and skills important as far as cognition and education are concerned. Teaching regional education in primary, lower secondary, secondary and technical schools could take place during teaching of other subjects or in separate regional education classes. The decision on how regional education was taught was taken by the head teacher and the teachers in charge of respective groups of pupils. The scope of aims, tasks and content of regional education has been defined in *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego*. At present, the abovementioned regulations concern grades 4–6 in primary schools, grades 2–3 of lower secondary schools and secondary schools (including technical and vocational schools). The new *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego*

and extracurricular classes. It is, thus, interdisciplinary and its nature is inseparable from the nature of a given subject. Regional education should be carried out during school lessons and extracurricular classes¹². For this purpose, content taught under a given subject is correlated and integrated with regional topics to be taught at a given grade under a given subject.

came into force on September 1, 2009, for grade 1 in primary and lower secondary schools and will be introduced to grade 2 in 2010, grade 3 in 2011 and so on. The document introduces important changes. It does away with education paths. Regional education is included in the broad scope of humanities. Regional topics appear in the integrated education and curricula of such subjects as: Polish, History, Social Studies, Geography, Cultural Studies, Music, Arts and Crafts, Personal Health and Social Education, Business Studies, Regional Language (Kashubian Language). Consequently, by 2015, as the guidelines set down in the new *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego* are introduced in consecutive grades, education paths, including regional education, will no longer be a part of the curriculum. Regional education issues will be taught as a part of the abovementioned subjects as well as in extracurricular classes. Zob. e.g. the following regulations of the Minister of National Education: *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 15 lutego 1999 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego. Załącznik nr 1, Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla sześcioletnich szkół podstawowych i gimnazjów*, „Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej” (DzURP) 1999, nr 14, poz. 129; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 15 lutego 1999 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego. Załącznik nr 2, Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla szkół ponadpodstawowych*, DzURP 1999, nr 14, poz. 129; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 21 maja 2001 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego, kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół oraz kształcenia w profilach w liceach profilowanych*, Załącznik nr 2, *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla szkół podstawowych i gimnazjów*, DzURP 2001, nr 61, poz. 625; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 21 maja 2001 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego, kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół oraz kształcenia w profilach w liceach profilowanych*, Załącznik nr 4, *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla liceów profilowanych*, DzURP 2001, nr 61, poz. 625; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu z dnia 16 lutego 2002 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół. Załącznik nr 2, Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla szkół podstawowych i gimnazjów*, DzURP 2002, nr 51, poz. 458; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 6 listopada 2003 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół. Załącznik nr 1, Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla szkół podstawowych i gimnazjów*, DzURP 2003, nr 210, poz. 2041; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu z dnia 6 listopada 2003 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół. Załącznik nr 2, Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla liceów ogólnokształcących, liceów profilowanych, techników, uzupełniających liceów ogólnokształcących i techników uzupełniających*, DzURP 2003, nr 210, poz. 2041; *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z 23 grudnia 2008 roku w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół*, DzURP 2009, nr 4, poz. 17.

THE ROLE AND PLACE OF REGIONAL STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Regional studies of the young are an inherent element of religious education in Poland. They are related to the cultural dimension of Catholic religious education in lower and upper secondary schools as defined in the Church catechesis curricula in Poland¹³. It is the cultural dimension of religious education that indicates the need of introducing elements of religious education to the fields of national and regional culture, as well as other fields of knowledge¹⁴ and creating space in which catechized pupils can discover the significance of Christianity for the national and regional culture, and their individual development¹⁵. Bearing these aims in mind, the authors of religious curricula in Polish lower and upper secondary schools¹⁶ introduce such activities as meetings, in which they attempt to provide the youth with systematic and critical insight into and relation to the national heritage, integration of culture with the pupils' faith, helping the pupils internalize values and Christian attitudes, and preparing them for making responsible and right choices¹⁷. This involves, among others, communicating the message of salvation in the context of regional culture and history of the region, which are often closely related to Christianity and local administration units of the Church (dioceses)¹⁸. By means of that, inculturation of faith is achieved, i.e. including the Church's teachings in the local culture and, at the same time, introducing Polish youth to their cultural heritage in the Church community¹⁹.

Due to the assumptions of the *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*²⁰, *Programy nauczania religii „Wierzyć Chrystusowi”*²¹

¹³ See Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* [Core curriculum of the Catholic Church catechesis in Poland] (PPK), Kraków 2001; Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii* [Religious education curriculum] (PNR), Kraków 2001.

¹⁴ Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa, *Dyrektorium ogólne o katechizacji* (DOK), Poznań 1998, p. 73.

¹⁵ A. Offmański, *W kierunku katechezy ewangelizacyjnej. Polska katecheza młodzieżowa w latach 1945–2000*, Szczecin 2000, p. 207.

¹⁶ At present, Catholic religious education in Poland is based on *Podstawa programowa katechezy* [Core catechesis curriculum] and *Programy nauczania religii* [Religious education curricula] of 2001. However, work on a new core curriculum for catechesis is under way. The new curriculum will be adapted to the amended *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego*.

¹⁷ PPK, p. 49–97; PNR, p. 74–140.

¹⁸ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* (PDK), p. 69.

¹⁹ DOK, p. 21; PDK, p. 71.

²⁰ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*, Kraków 2001.

²¹ Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla gimnazjum Wierzyć Chrystusowi*, numer programu AZ-3-01/1, in: PNR, p. 75–106.

and „Świadek Chrystusa”²² [*Religious education curricula „Have faith in Christ” and „Christ’s Witness”*] regional education of lower and upper secondary school pupils is to be carried out by correlating the goals, tasks and contents of religious teaching and regional education. The aim of the correlation is to: 1) create space in which pupils who learn religion can discover the significance of Christianity for the national and regional culture, as well as their personal development; 2) enabling the youth to get acquainted directly with the culture of the region and helping them recognize its connections with the national heritage and Christianity; 3) supporting the youth in discovering human and Christian values in the regional culture²³. Thanks to the correlation of religious and regional education, pupils: 1) recognize the tradition of the „little motherland”, especially the history of the region in connection with their family traditions and traditions of the local Church; 2) learn about the place and role of the Christian culture in the regional, national, European and world cultures, and contribute to them by providing their authentic values; 3) develop love towards the „little motherland”, including the local ecclesiastical community. The youth’s love of the „little motherland” assumes affirmation of material and spiritual goods of a given regional community. The love for the region makes the youth feel „rooted” and „at home” in the local, ecclesiastical and national community. At the same time, the love of the „little motherland” arouses interest in other regions and allows for a „dialogue” between cultures. Regional studies introduced as a part of religious education prepares the young for living in the big Motherland – Poland, determines the sense of community and the development of Christian identity²⁴. Accordingly, regional education topics in religious education of the youth focus on the whole social and cultural reality in which they live, mainly on their human and religious experience shaped by their environment and influenced of the local culture²⁵. These topics are related to local and regional traditions, as well as customs of seasons and feasts of the liturgical year (e.g. Advent, Lent, Christmas, Easter), the veneration of Mary, regional art and music, especially sacred art and music, neighborhood, school and important figures of the region. Other regional topics presented in religious education involve: connections between the history of the region and the history of the diocese, family history in the context of the history of the „little motherland”, religious orders present in the

²² Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla liceum profilowanego Świadek Chrystusa*, numer programu AZ-4-01/1, in: PNR, p. 107–140.

²³ Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla gimnazjum Wierzyć Chrystusowi...*, p. 75–106; Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla liceum profilowanego Świadek Chrystusa...*, p. 107–140; PPK, p. 66, 67, 91, 92.

²⁴ See A. Zellma, *O możliwościach realizowania aspektu regionalnego na...*, p. 14–17.

²⁵ Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla gimnazjum Wierzyć Chrystusowi...*, p. 75–106; Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla liceum profilowanego Świadek Chrystusa...*, p. 107–140; PPK, p. 66, 67, 91, 92.

region and the seminary of the diocese, sanctuaries and local churches, veneration of Mary and Christocentric motives in regional culture, Christian values present in the history of the region (e.g. the child in the regional culture, the elderly in the regional culture, regional and Catholic family feasts and customs)²⁶. All of the abovementioned topics focus both on historical background and the present – i.e. the current events in the region and within the local Church.

All of the didactic processes presented, carried out as a part of correlating religious education with regional education, concentrate on transferring knowledge of regional cultural heritage in connection with Christian values, but at the same time on more general education²⁷. The young, while discovering the richness of their region and the variety of the related values, develop emotional bonds with the area where they were born, were baptized and thus entered the Church, where they spend a part of their lives and undertake various activities for the local environment, like Evangelization of culture and creating culture in the Christian spirit²⁸. But there is more to the educational role of regional studies of the youth in religious education. Thanks to correlating catechetical topics with regional ones, the youth are given an opportunity to recognize the connections between the regional and national culture, as well as cultural differences of other regions. The young also receive support in developing attitudes of tolerance and patriotism in the appropriate sense. The contact between the catechized youth and local and regional world helps establish close relationships and an understanding of a person's belonging to various areas. It also helps to develop a national identity through the development of regional identity and discovery of the links between family traditions and the history of the region, parish and diocese²⁹. Regional education introduces the young to the world of traditions and various goods of the region³⁰. They can also: 1) discover the region as a part of Poland and Europe; 2) establish deeper bonds with the environment, region and country; 3) develop regional identity in the context of national values; 4) develop respect towards other regional, ethnic and national communities³¹.

Regional education of the Polish youth as described above clearly shows numerous didactic and educational opportunities. Apart from introducing a wide range of topics, it also has educational value. Regional culture as a medium of universal

²⁶ Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla gimnazjum Wierzyć Chrystusowi...*, p. 75–106; Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii dla liceum profilowanego Świadek Chrystusa...*, p. 107–140; PPK, p. 66, 67, 91, 92.

²⁷ See e.g. D. Kunicki, *Edukacja regionalna i środowiskowa w katechezie*, „Wychowanie na co dzień” 6 (2000), p. 17, 18; J. Szpet, *Założenia nowego programu kształcenia religijnego*, in: *Katecheza wobec zadań nowej szkoły*, ed. J. Szpet, D. Jackowiak, Poznań, p. 69.

²⁸ See. e.g. in: my article *Edukacja regionalna dzieci i młodzieży...*, p. 203–256.

²⁹ PPK, p. 66.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 91, 92.

values is a necessary element of young Christians' development, as well as a help in developing social attitudes and establishing bonds with the „little motherland”, parish and diocese. In practice, religion teachers need to undertake appropriate educational activities. This means – above all – supplementing and integrating the youth's knowledge of the cultural heritage of the region³² and creating opportunities for experiencing Christian values inherent in the regional culture, and for developing related social attitudes.

INTRODUCING REGIONAL STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS LESSONS IN LOWER SECONDARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Religious teaching curricula contain suggestions of regional topics for religion lessons, which are a starting point for religious education teachers. However, in practice these topics have to be made more specific. Religion teachers in grades 1 and 2 in lower secondary school and grades 1–3 in upper secondary school, carry out regional education according to the principles defined under *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego* of 1999 and amended in 2001–2003, *Podstawa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* and in *Programy nauczania religii Wierzyć Chrystusowi* and *Świadek Chrystusa* of 2001. This means that the teachers are obliged to specify the correlated topics and related didactic activities in their annual curricula. They are also called to cooperate with other teachers in carrying out the assumptions of regional education – as a part of the correlation process of subjects and education methods. While catechizing³³ the pupils of grade 1 of lower secondary school (and – in the coming years – also the pupils in grades 2–3), religion teachers are no longer obliged to distinguish regional education as a separate educational method. Nevertheless, they should address the topics related to the cultural heritage of the region, included in *Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego*, which came into force in September 2009. At this point a certain problem emerges, which is, at the same time, a challenge for religion teachers. As there is no new *Podstawa programowa katechezy*, adjusted to the changes introduced to the general education, it is the teacher who is expected to

³² See. P. Tomasiak, *Korelacja religii i historii Kościoła w programach i podręcznikach do historii w gimnazjum*, „Katecheta” 44,7–8 (2000), p. 11, 12; Idem, *Zasady integrowania treści programowych historii i religii*, „Horyzonty Wiary” 4 (2000), p. 31–33.

³³- Taking into consideration and Polish catechetical tradition, in Polish literature the terms „catechesis at school”, „catechizing at school” and „teaching religion” are usually used as synonyms. Teaching religion at school is treated as a specific form of catechesis connected with other Catholic church activities (for example with initiation catechesis in the parish). That is why in this article these terms are sometimes used interchangeably when meaning teaching and educating in faith accomplished at school. See PKD 82, 83; K. Misiaszek, *Koncepcja nauczania religii katolickiej w publicznej szkole polskiej. Próba oceny*, Warszawa 2010; R. Chałupiak, „Katecheza” czy nauczanie religii? *W obronie szkolnej katechezy*, „Katecheta” 44,5 (2000), p. 7–12; P. Tomasiak, *Katechetyczny charakter lekcji religii*, „Katecheta” 44,5 (2000), p. 100–102.

decide which regional topics should appear in the annual curriculum and within which subject areas. This task calls for a good knowledge of the new core curriculum of general education. Moreover, the choice of regional education issues is always largely dependent on the region, parish and diocese of the youth in consideration. This means that in practice regional education in religion lessons is directly determined by the region and its cultural heritage. Local traditions and the needs of the environment in which religion lessons are carried out, determine the ways of correlating religious education with regional education. For example, regional aspects raised in religion lessons in Małopolskie Province will be different from those which are likely to appear in schools in Kaszuby region, Pomorskie or Podlaskie Provinces. Accordingly, the teacher needs to have a thorough knowledge of historical, language, cultural and religious traditions of the area as this will allow him or her to select regional issues in catechesis classes effectively and show a clear connection between the issues raised and experiences of the pupils. Sources which can be helpful in preparing the lessons include various works on the cultural heritage of the region, regional education curricula and lesson schedules, as well as plans for extracurricular activities prepared for the teachers working in a given region. Religion teachers are required to adjust the chosen regional education program, i.e. adapt the suggestions included in it to the way religious education is carried out in lower and upper secondary school, as well as to the cultural heritage and religious traditions in the diocese³⁴.

In order to carry out regional education of the young in religion lessons in lower and upper secondary schools properly, the lessons should be organized adequately, and the pupils' work methods worked out under the teacher's guidance³⁵. This is yet another challenge for religion teachers who should take recourse to visual methods as well as get involved in the organization of excursions and pilgrimages in order to make the pupils acquainted with the cultural heritage of the region, including sacred places.

Apart from the abovementioned educational activities, raising regional issues in religious lessons calls for appropriate teaching aids – objects and symbols – which will make it easier for the pupils to understand issues related to the cultural heritage of their region. Pictures, drawings, descriptions, maps, monographs, albums, illustrated stories, local press articles, films, radio broadcasts and TV programs about the „little motherland”, as well as computer databases and local websites can be examples. Religion teachers also need to cooperate with institutions and people who are in charge of social and cultural activities in the region, diocese or parish³⁶; such experienced people and institutions may help religion teachers.

³⁴ See e.g. in: my article *O możliwościach realizowania aspektu regionalnego...*, p. 14–17.

³⁵ D. Kunicki, *Edukacja regionalna i środowiskowa...*, p. 17, 18.

³⁶ Further information on the subject may be found in my article: *Formy współpracy katechety z nauczycielami w realizacji ścieżki edukacyjnej „Edukacja regionalna – dziedzictwo kulturowe w regionie”*, „Katecheta” 45,5 (2001), p. 3–10.

Religion teachers can – for that matter – get help from those people and institutions while organizing competitions in the knowledge of the region, diocese or parish, as well as extracurricular classes on regional or artistic topics (e.g. folklore).

The abovementioned education activities of religion teachers, included in the structure of religious education, are limited by various factors. They are determined by: the need to keep up the autonomy of religious education, certain goals, tasks and contents of catechesis in schools, as well as intended achievements³⁷. Religious education in schools should combine and complement regional education topics, as well as the related process of acquiring skills and shaping certain attitudes³⁸. Sometimes – in order to abide by the truth – the teachers should challenge the pupils' ideas on regional cultural heritage³⁹. This enables the teachers to support the youth in discovering authentic values, passed on by means of regional culture.

It is important for religion teachers to be well prepared for the lessons. What is meant by being prepared is an appropriate understanding of regional education; being able to define regional topics for religious education lessons as well as the key didactic and educational aims; planning a regional education curriculum for the school year. Apart from these didactic elements, teachers should have a thorough knowledge of the topics they choose for the lessons. They should also be able to carry out the theoretic assumptions and cooperate with other teachers in charge of regional education⁴⁰. That is why religion teachers should be independent, creative and efficient in selecting methods and tools, and organizing religion lessons while taking advantage of regional education materials. The teachers' passion in the area of research, emotional engagement and creativity are the key elements determining the success of regional education of the youth in religion lessons. Religion teachers not only provide knowledge on the subject, but also interpret it. Focus on regional elements and the teachers' requirements towards pupils is the main factor determining the extent to which the pupils absorb the knowledge of the region, local Church and regional cultural heritage. All of the abovementioned didactic elements and personal qualities of religion teachers are very helpful in the effective correlation of religious and regional education. However, in practical school education the most important factors are creativity and a good knowledge of local environment.

³⁷ PDK 82–85.

³⁸ Ibidem 83, 85.

³⁹ Ibidem 83.

⁴⁰ Remarks mentioned in the following article may be helpful for religious education teachers: J. Jadach, *Warsztat nauczyciela regionalisty*, „Studia Pedagogiczne Akademii Świętokrzyskiej” 15 (2005), p. 141–167.

CONCLUSION

As it was mentioned above, the scope of issues raised in this article was limited to regional education of Polish youth within religious education in schools. Accordingly, the most important topics were analyzed, opportunities, limitations and challenges of regional education of Polish youth in religious education were shown. An attempt was made to prove the distinctive qualities of regional education of Polish youth in religion classes, determined by the character of religious education. Regional education of the youth refers to the assumptions set down under the general education curricula, but in religious education it focuses mainly on the cultural heritage linked to the local Church and Christian values. Its main goal is to complement and integrate pupils' knowledge of the regional cultural heritage and help develop attitudes of love towards the „little motherland”, as well as actively engage in activities within the local community. Sometimes, however, if the pupils' image of the region is distorted, the task of religious education teachers is also to question these images. The only way to support the young in discovering the richness of regional cultural heritage and the significance of cultural goods for a person's integral development is adding regional aspects to religious education, taking into consideration the abovementioned principles.

Meeting the objectives of regional education as a part of religious education in schools requires from religion teachers a cooperation with persons in charge of education, social and cultural activities in the region and catechesis in the local Church. It seems important that regional education plays an essential role in an ongoing formation of religion teachers. Also, it is vital to promote necessary materials on the regional cultural heritage and the local Church⁴¹. Moreover, the teachers should be encouraged to study with passion the spiritual culture of the region.

The presence of regional cultural elements in religious education provides great opportunities for raising the young in the patriotic spirit. It allows not only for handing down knowledge, but also for developing social attitudes. That is why one cannot focus exclusively on the cognitive aspects of regional education in religious education. The emotional and axiological dimensions are of significance, too. Acknowledging all of the abovementioned elements of regional education in religious education will help the young find out more about themselves, as well as their place in the local community (also in the community of the parish Church) and encourage them to foster and enrich the region's cultural heritage.

⁴¹ Materials on the cultural heritage of the region can be promoted at catechetical conferences, published in the Catholic regional press, taking into account not only the current events, but also history of the region.

REGIONAL STUDIES AS PART OF TEACHING RELIGION TO POLISH YOUTHS IN SCHOOLS

Prospects, limitations and challenge

Summary

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the prospects, limitations and challenges connected with providing Polish youth with regional studies as part of religious education. The conducted research focuses on: supporting the young in discovering the regional community and their regional cultural heritage, and preparing them for Christian involvement in socio-cultural activities in the region. The following issues have been presented: the nature of regional education in Polish schools, the role and place of regional education in teaching religious education, the practice of providing regional studies in religion lessons in secondary schools. All the abovementioned issues have been discussed in light of the Polish pedagogical and catechetical literature and only with reference to the young. They have shown the complexity and variety of aspects of regional education in teaching religion to the young. In the closing section, some conclusions and catechetical postulates have been presented.

EDUKACJA REGIONALNA POLSKIEJ MŁODZIEŻY W SZKOLNYM NAUCZANIU RELIGII

Możliwości, ograniczenia i wyzwania

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie możliwości, ograniczeń i wyzwań związanych z realizacją edukacji regionalnej polskiej młodzieży w nauczaniu religii. Podjęte analizy koncentrują się wokół zainspirowania młodzieży do poznawania problemów społeczności regionalnej i dziedzictwa kulturowego regionu oraz przygotowania jej do chrześcijańskiego zaangażowania w działania społeczno-kulturowe. Kolejno zostały opisane następujące zagadnienia: istota edukacji regionalnej w polskiej szkole, miejsce i rola edukacji regionalnej w nauczaniu religii, realizacja edukacji regionalnej na lekcjach religii w gimnazjum i w liceum. Wszystkie te problemy zostały ukazane na tle polskiej literatury pedagogicznej i katechetycznej, i jedynie w odniesieniu do młodzieży. Pozwoliły dostrzec złożoność i wieloaspektowość edukacji regionalnej młodzieży w nauczaniu religii. W podsumowaniu wprowadzono niektóre wnioski i postulaty katechetyczne.

Keywords: regional culture, regional education, religion lessons, teaching religion, youths

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja regionalna, kultura regionalna, lekcje religii, młodzież, nauczanie religii