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Author: Agata Cabała, Violetta Rodek

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Agata Cabala, Violetta Rodek

University of Silesia

Cultivating regional traditions in preschool and early school education

Abstract: The article attempts to determine the degree of cultivating regional traditions in education implemented by kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers (grades 1—3) with reference to some of the conditions associated with education and work experience of the respondents. The scaling method has been applied in the study. The Scale Sheet devised for the purpose of personal research contained 16 questions and addressed 81 preschool and early school education teachers. The respondents answered the questions by means of applying adjectives from a five-degree adjectival scale, where the value of one indicated the lowest degree, whereas the value of five — the highest one. The research findings have revealed that the interviewed teachers cultivate regional traditions in their own professional work to high and moderate degrees. Certain differences in the results have been observed, due to the variables such as education and work experience.

Keywords: regional traditions, preschool education, early school education

Introduction

Schools function in a certain local environment. It is said that the main source of integration activity in the local community should be the educational system, particularly its main institution that is school (Jacher, 2001, pp. 17—21). In the approach presented in this paper, school is viewed as a place where actions are taken to preserve local traditions. Topics concerning microgeography, local history, literature, language (local dialects), local personalities, folklore, and customs are included in the educational content, which facilitates the process of passing on cultural heritage to the young by means of assimilation of values found in direct, that is, natural and cultural environments. The axiological

dimension of local education is first and foremost to make the youth aware of multiple values pertaining to the human as well as patriotism underlying their own region (Sopot-Zembok & Nocoń, 2000, pp. 47—48). The renaissance of local traditions, known also as “return to the roots” or “roots in the local homeland” implies that as a process it invigorates the multiple facets of social life, the dynamic progress and enrichment of values surviving in local environment (Skoczylas-Krotla, 2001, p. 75).

Cultural heritage ought to be bequeathed to the young within the frames of well-organized educational actions at all stages and levels of education, university education included. The paper deals with actions undertaken on the preschool and primary school education level. The answers given by the teachers questioned in the survey provided some clues on how to cultivate regional traditions in preschool and early school education. The main purpose of this paper is to present the results of empirical research rather than discuss varieties of meanings of the concepts of tradition, region and regionalism, which tend to be prevailing subjects of publications in the fields of ethnology, cultural anthropology, ethnolinguistics, museology, cultural science, sociology, and pedagogy. To highlight the variety of definitions, we refer the reader to the references on the subject (Damrosz, 1987; Handke (ed.), 1993; Theiss (ed.), 2001; Brzezińska, Hulewska & Słomska (eds.), 2006), maintaining the focus on the regional education as the key issue of this analysis. Without education about tradition, it is impossible to cultivate tradition. Education is a requirement *sine qua non*, yet not always sufficient, to maintain and develop traditions, customs, rituals and values of regional culture. The most accurate definition of regional education, in our opinion, is suggested by Piotr Kowolik:

A group of processes whose main goal is to change people, mainly children and adolescents, according to the ideals and goals of upbringing pursued in a given society, inform them about the culture of the region of origin and sensitize to cross-regional differences, and thus instill tolerance in children and reinforce patriotic feelings. Regional education involves schools’ intentional activities aimed at strengthening among children and adolescents the bonds with a given region. The goal of this kind of education is to deliberately create emotional bonds with the so-called private homeland, that is, the region where a person was born or lived most or entire his or her life. (1999, pp. 120—121)

Jerzy Nikitorowicz in his teleological analysis wrote that

Regional education should inform, sensitize, support, strengthen, and protect local values, encourage to cultivate them and make others

cherish them to deliberately create the bond with the so-called private homeland, the world that lies at roots. (2009, p. 218)

By stimulating the processes of cognition and self-understanding, regional education helps young people to perceive otherness and it also enables them to seek mutual understanding and cooperation, which is favorable to educational dialogue (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p. 219; 2011, pp. 26—27).

Regional education should be considered as a system — “an ordered group of subsystems: familial upbringing, preschool education, school and extraschool education. Within these systems a variety of educational activities are undertaken to introduce an individual to the world of values and cultural heritage, which forms this individual’s personality. Advancing through the following stages of social experience, that is, family, regional, national, and global one, determines the logic of the individual’s development. Moreover, it builds self-awareness as much as enables this person to understand multiple, complex bonds between the human and the world of social and interpersonal relations (Dawid, 2002, p. 137).

Regional education is part of core curriculum for preschool and primary school education, as one of the elements, means of instilling in children an integrated picture of the world. Iwona Miłobędzka, in the introduction to her program of regional education — *Jestem dziedzicem tej ziemi* (I’m the heir to this land), prepared for the first stage of education at primary school, stresses that

Acquisition of the key competences by the child in early primary schooling is possible only thanks to “multidimensionality” of mutual educational content and space concerning the child’s place of residence and neighborhood. (Miłobędzka, 2000, p. 27)

As a pedagogical concept, regionalism is directly related by the above-cited author, to Wincenty Okoń’s understanding of learning/teaching, where beside presentation methods, there are also methods involving problem-solving, demonstrating and practical solutions (Bereźnicki, 2001, pp. 264—296). Edmund Rosner points that

It is not necessary to use separate methods dedicated to regional education. All the methods which refer to pupils’ experience are important. Familiarity of regional materials intensifies the bond with the nearby environment to a significant degree, and also creates a sense of satisfaction with achievements of people of the region in a natural and positive way. That is why materials pertaining to regional knowledge especially in early primary schooling are introduced by means of those methods

which facilitate creating an atmosphere appropriate for children's experiences. (1995, p.75)

If we take into consideration practical forms of work used by preschool and primary school teachers and aimed to fulfill the goals of regional education, one can mention just a few, like organizing trips (to the open-air museum, historic mines, other museums), knowledge competitions about pupils' region, teaching regional dances and songs, organizing regional festivities, meetings with regional personalities, telling local tales and legends, etc. It shows how elaborate and creative activities pupils can undertake by participation in one of the above-mentioned forms of classes.

Comments in line with our remarks can be found in the paper by Bogusława Cholewa-Gałuszka and Antoni Gwizdak, who wrote that

Preparing celebrations, cultivating customs and rituals often requires combining various activities performed by pupils. During these activities it is often necessary to combine elements of language with practical activities, with motor, artistic and musical expression. (2001, p. 462)

In this context, as they claim, it seems that it is worth raising the issues of cultivating traditions, customs, rituals and symbols in school education, as this can increase the role of school in children's upbringing (Cholewa-Gałuszka & Gwizdak, 2001, p. 457).

The meaning of regional education in educational and didactic school activities is possible first and foremost thanks to the work of competent educators and pupils' community (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2000, p. 99). Maintaining and cultivating local traditions by pupils mostly depends on teachers' knowledge, skills, competences and commitment as well. It is important to note that to achieve the expected and desired effects, separate classes are not necessary. Additional elements included in the curricula will suffice, whose main assumption is to broaden pupils' knowledge of facts concerning a given region and knowledge about natural, social, and cultural reality; the source of the information is children's direct contact with the local environment (Rosner, 1995, p. 75). Such a combination of the content knowledge coming from different sources creates a very good basis for the creation of an integrated image of the regional reality in pupils' minds.

In this paper we do not aim to carry out meticulous pedeutologic analyses. However, as Rosner claims, regional education is often marginalized in the context of academic investigations, it is important in teachers' didactic work. As regionally-flavored educational texts and other works on regional topics are largely unavailable, the teacher who wants to regionalize his or her didactic work has to collect texts on regional topics by himself or herself. These are

usually private source materials, such as documents, source texts, for example, diaries, pictures, books, local newspapers, audiovisual aids, recordings of regional songs, music, movies, etc.; artefacts and the teacher's research results — notes and observation reports. The necessary condition for successful didactic work is that classrooms should be equipped with some teaching aids related to the region. It is also important that pupils participate in collecting such region-specific items, as such activities can excite their interest in the surrounding world (Rosner, 1995, p. 74). The following part of this paper is a presentation of results of the research conducted among teachers who work in pre- and primary schools in the selected cities of the Silesian Province.

Research methodology

The research had a diagnostic and descriptive character. This type of research involves searching for and identifying facts, phenomena (events, situations, personal features), frequency and intensity of their occurrence, as well as determining the causes of these phenomena and their significance for individuals and whole groups, by trying to predict which of them can be used in supportive, prophylactic, and therapeutic activities. In diagnostic research, apart from the description of the status quo, it is important to make an attempt at explaining the reasons and conditions of the status quo (explication) and then proceed to predict what can happen and how to improve the situation. The specific features of diagnostic research are exploratory reasoning and explanatory description, which are of utmost importance (Palka, 2006, pp. 97—102; Gnitecki, 1993, p. 178; Gnitecki, 2003, p. 40). The research thus aimed to examine the degree of cultivating regional traditions in education by teachers working in preschool and in I—III forms of primary school. In the light of the above, the following research problem was formulated: To what extent does cultivation of regional traditions in education by teachers in preschool and primary school (I—III forms) occur and what are its conditions? To solve the main research problem, we also formulated the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the responding group of teachers cherish regional values in their lives?
2. To what extent do they apply regional education content in their work?
3. To what extent do they make use of museums' educational offer on regional education?
4. To what extent does the group of respondents consider regional education as a self-study area?

5. What is the relationship between the degree of cultivating regional traditions in education by teachers and their work experience and education?

In order to particularize the research problems, it was necessary to identify variables and indicators. Because of the diagnostic and descriptive character of the research, there was no need to formulate dependent variables, independent variables, or intermediary variables. The research concerned the degree to which preschool and primary school teachers cultivated traditions, customs, rituals, and values of the regional culture in their professional work. Taking into consideration the fact that in diagnostic research, apart from the description of the status quo, it is important to explain the reasons and conditions of a given status quo (explication) and predict what can happen and how to improve the situation (Gnitecki, 2003, p. 40), the two variables were used, teachers' education and work experience as differentiating the population in terms of the degree of cultivating regional traditions in education. This constituted an element of exploration and meticulous diagnosis, however, no verification. In order to describe the variables in a communicative way, one has to use descriptive values, indicators. In this research we used: (1) the indicator for the variable "cultivation of regional traditions in education" was its score on the 5-point scale constructed for this very research and included in the Scale Sheet; (2) the indicator for the variables "teachers' education" and "work experience" was the questionnaire in the last part of the Scale Sheet in which respondents were asked for some information about themselves.

The scaling method has been applied in the research (cf. Łobocki, 2005, p. 81; A. Brzezińska & J. Brzeziński, 2004, p. 233). It consists in evaluating an object with respect to particular categories (or continuum) to which the researcher assigns numerical values. Persons making the estimation have to present their observations concerning the object or what they know about it in descriptive and/or numerical categories. This also refers to members of the research group who evaluate their own features according to precisely determined points of the scale (cf. A. Brzezińska & J. Brzeziński, 2004, p. 234; Łobocki, 2005, p. 81; Pilch & Bauman, 2001, pp. 107—109). In the present research, the estimation method consisted in self-evaluation of the respondents, preschool and primary school teachers. The self-evaluation concerned the extent to which they cultivated regional traditions in their professional work, according to the points of scale. We used an adjectival scale¹ whose points are expressed by

¹ Due to the manner of their presentation, the following ones are distinguished: the categorical scales, the numerical scales, and the graphical scales. On the other hand, in terms of describing the category, the scales with the described extreme points and the scales with all the points described are indicated. However, according to the criterion of character, the unipolar scales and the bipolar scales are mentioned (A. Brzezińska & J. Brzeziński, 2004, pp. 237—238). When identifying the scaling method with measuring and recognizing that the scale assumes the existence of a particular phenomenon, Tadeusz Pilch and Teresa Bauman distinguished the nominal,

adjectival categories referring to the frequency of occurrence of particular type of behavior.

Apart from the choice of the type of scale, an important element in the estimation method is the determination of the number of points. The teachers participating in the research differed in terms of education and work experience; however, it can be stated that they displayed a high level of intelligence and knowledge, and were able to evaluate the object by means of the scale. Aside from that, the respondents made a self-evaluation — that is, they evaluated their professional activities, so it was a topic they are familiar with, related to their own experience, which could motivate them in a positive way to answer the questions and cooperate with the researchers (J. Brzeziński, 1999, p. 296). Taking the above into consideration, we decided that it is possible to use an adjectival scale with a greater number of points.² The 5-point scale was thus chosen. According to Mieczysław Łobocki, in pedagogic research such scales are generally the optimal choice (Łobocki, 2005, p. 94). Likewise, Edwin S. Conklin's research results (quoted after: Guilford, 1954, p. 290) show that if evaluation is to be made by persons inexperienced in such tasks — and such were members of the research group — the maximal number of points which can be used is 5 on a one-pole scale.³

The research tool — the Scale Sheet — was first constructed as an introductory version. It was then tested in a pilot study with respect to its accuracy and functionality, which refers to language communicativeness, the ranks' structure of the scale, their precision and unequivocal character. We carried out the pilot study in Sosnowiec, among 10 pre-school teachers and 7 primary school teachers, teaching I—III forms. In sum, 17 teachers took part in the pilot study. Thanks to the research, it turned out that the scale requires slight improvements. In the main part, changes involved the notation of some categories, for the clarity of the used formulations we got rid of longer descriptions. We also removed two categories referring to the role of regional values in human life, because the respondents signaled that they had a problem distinguishing between them. Finally, the scale consisted of three parts: the introductory part, the main part, and the final part. In the introductory part, there was a special instruction providing the research participants with some information concerning the way

ordinal, interval, and quotient scales. In turn, Mieczysław Łobocki pointed to the possibility of applying the numerical, graphical, adjectival, and descriptive scales, as well as the continuous scale with an enforced choice, the standard scale, the anchored behavioral scale, and the name scale (Łobocki, 2005, pp. 84—90).

² Jerzy Brzeziński enumerates the scales of a smaller number of points: 0—1; 0—1—2; 0—1—2—3 as well as the scales of a greater number of points: 0—1—2—3—4—5 and more (A. Brzezińska & J. Brzeziński, 2004, pp. 237—238).

³ Unipolar scales are applied to evaluate the degree of intensification of a particular dimension or to evaluate the frequency of occurrence of a particular quality (J. Brzeziński, 1999, p. 238).

answers to the questions should be given. It was stressed that every answer was appropriate provided that it was honest. The main part had a form of a table in which there were 16 categories of statements referring to cultivating regional traditions in education. The respondents were to determine the degree of their own educational activity in this area by means of the 5-degree adjectival scale where 1 meant “very small,” 2 — “small,” 3 — “medium,” 4 — “large,” and 5 — “very large,” a very large degree of performing a particular activity. In the final part, the respondents were asked to give some information about themselves (gender, place of residence, education and work experience in the teaching profession).

The research was carried out in December 2014 in several primary schools and preschools in Sosnowiec, Katowice, and Cieszyn. In the research — mainly due to time and financial restrictions — purposive sampling was used. Thus, the results do not provide basis for formulating any generalizations which would refer to the whole population of teachers. The research group consisted of 81 teachers of preschool and early primary education. The figures presented below show the research group characteristics with respect to place of residence, education, and work experience.

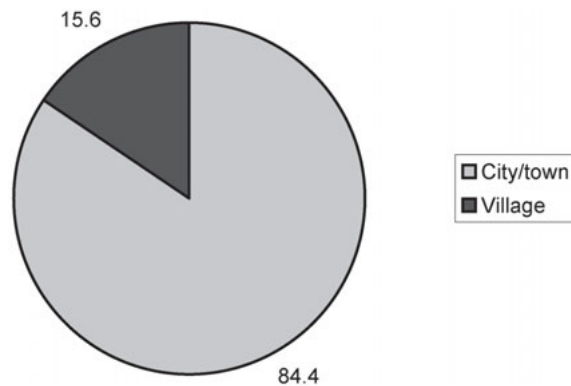


Figure 1. The respondents' place of residence

As can be inferred from the data presented in Figure 1, the majority of the questioned teachers live in the city.

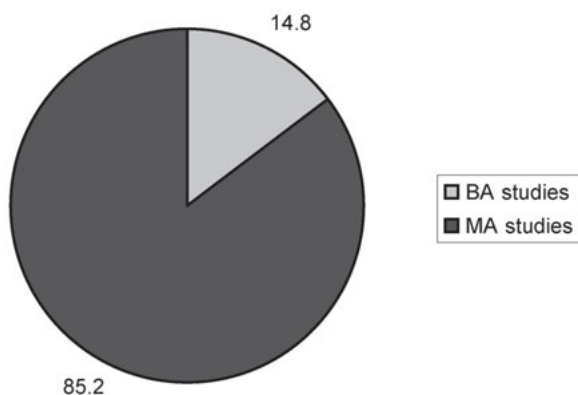


Figure 2. The respondents' education

On the basis of the data presented in Figure 2, one can notice that the majority of the respondents hold an MA degree.

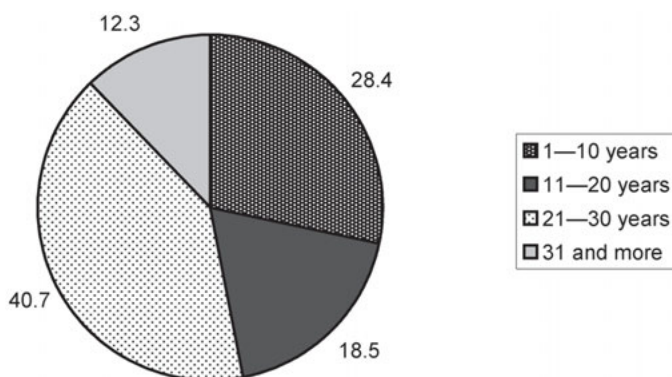


Figure 3. The respondents' work experience

As regards their work experience, the research group turned out to be more diversified (Figure 3). The highest percentage constituted teachers with 21–30 years work experience and with 1–10 years. The least numerous group consisted of teachers with work experience longer than 31 years (12.3% of all the respondents).

To conclude, 81 women who participated in the research work as professional teachers in preschools and primary schools (forms I–III), which probably results from the feminization of the teaching profession, especially in preschool and early primary school. The majority of the respondents live in the city, hold an MA degree, and usually have 21–30 or 1–10 years work experience.

The paper will now proceed to the presentation of the research results.

Analysis of the research results

In order to gather information concerning the degree of cultivating regional traditions in education by the teachers questioned, they were asked to answer 16 questions concerning 4 problem areas, such as regional values in the respondents' life; the realization of regional education content; the use of museums' educational offer in regional education; and regional education as an area of the respondents' self-education activity. The respondents answered the questions with reference to the 5-point adjectival scale in which 1 meant the lowest degree, and 5 — the highest.

The collected empirical data were presented in percentage values (with reference to the whole group of respondents) in the figures that follow. The use of scale allowed us to calculate the arithmetic mean of the estimation points. To describe the degree to which teachers cultivate regional traditions in education (high, medium, low) two quantifying methods were applied, that is, classification by points and classification by order. The respondents answered 16 questions included in the Scale Sheet, using a 5-point scale. The scale points in the 16 categories were added together with the use of one of the quantifying methods, classification by points, consisting in subjective assignment of a particular number of points to a particular category. The teacher could get 80 points. The other quantifying method, classification by order, consists in putting the evaluated objects in the highest to lowest order of estimation. The point range for the three levels of regional traditions being cultivated in education was set in the following way: (1) high (54—80 points); (2) medium (27—53 points); (3) low (0—26 points). This allowed us to present diversity in the following degrees: regional tradition cultivation in education with respect to teachers' education and their work experience.

First, the respondents' answers to particular questions, included in the Scale Sheet, were presented in percentage values.

Regional values in the respondents' lives

Regional education is closely related to cultural heritage and values. Cultural values condition the existence of a regional community, bringing there what is specific for all human beings. Among the most central values, we can find respect for work, the land, both as a private and as a common property. The values cherished irrespective of social status are justice, work, truth, the demand for good law and freedom, as well as dignity. The axiological dimension of regional

education predominantly consists in presenting multiple values existing in the region in the context of nationwide and human values (Sopot-Zembok & Nocoń, 2000, p. 48). This can shape pupils' attitude towards their land; the feeling of love to one's own "private land" becomes an autotelic value, around which people want to organize their lives. In this context, the teachers' task is to teach their pupils how to make a conscious choice of values and take responsibility for their decisions. Whether teachers perceive cognitive and educational aspects of the region depend largely on their personal attitude to the issue, which is why the Scale Sheet, addressed to teachers, four questions concerning cultural values were included. The first question was the following: To what extent do you cherish regional values at home? The percentage value of the respondents' answers was presented in Figure 4.

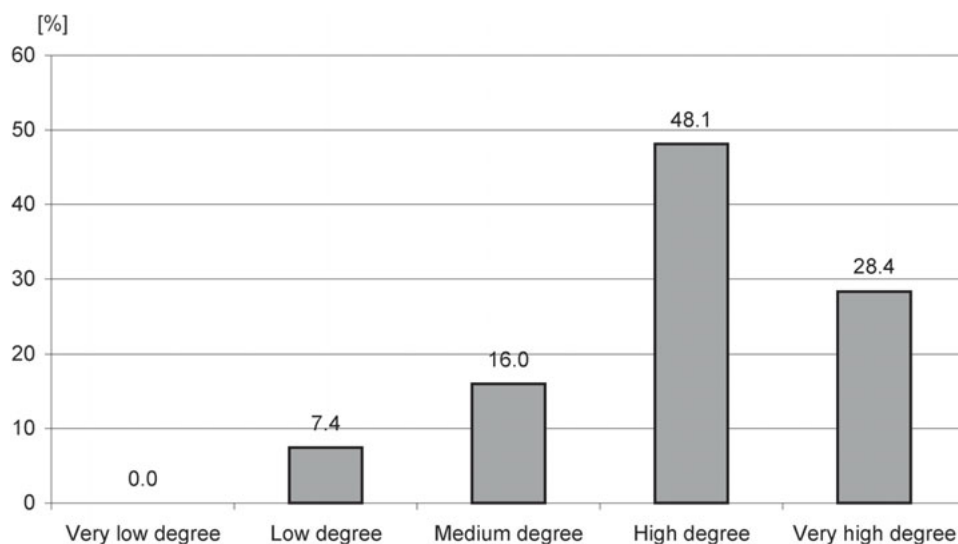


Figure 4. To what extent do you cherish regional values in your life?

As can be seen in Figure 4, the respondents highly or very highly cherish regional values in their life (respectively, 48.1% and 28.4% of the whole population). In the case of only 7.4% of all the respondents, regional values are not significant. In addition, in the answers to this question, the arithmetic mean indicator was relatively high — 3.54. The results show that the teachers questioned have a positive emotional attitude towards their region, which has an impact on the cultivation of regional traditions in their professional work. Figure 5 presents how the respondents cultivate regional values at home.

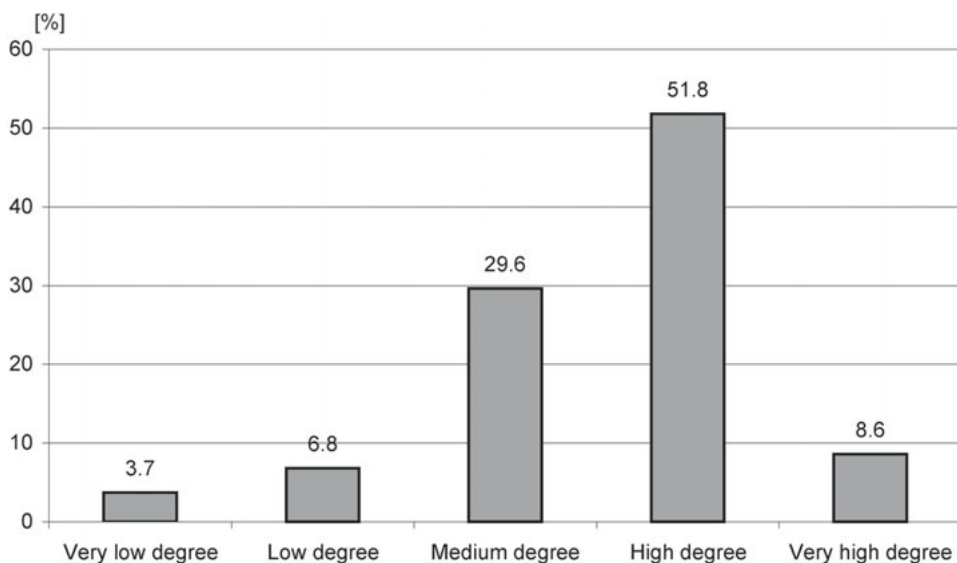


Figure 5. To what extent do you cultivate regional values at home?

Although majority of the respondents declared that regional values are located high in their hierarchy of values, the extent to which they cultivate the values at home is relatively diversified. Hence 51.8% of the respondents cultivate regional values at home to a high degree, while only 8.6% to a very high degree. Some respondents declare cultivating regional values at home to a low or very low degree (respectively, 6.8% and 3.7% of all the teachers questioned). However, the value of arithmetic mean turned out to be similar to the value in the case of the previous question: 3.55. In the light of the results, the answers to the following question, concerning cultural heritage as a system of values necessary for educating young generations, seem to be interesting. The data are presented in Figure 6.

To the majority of the teachers, cultural heritage seems to be a system of values necessary for educating the young generation to a high or very high extent (respectively, 58.0% and 25.9% of all the respondents). The opposite opinion is represented only by 4.9% of the respondents. In comparison with all the questions included in the Scale Sheet, in the case of this question there was the highest value of arithmetic mean: 4.00. Thus, it is probable that the questioned teachers appreciating the axiological value of cultural heritage would be interested in regional education in their work to a greater extent. However, parents as well, or mainly parents, are responsible for the upbringing of their children. So the teachers' comments on parents' commitment to regional education are also valuable. The data discussed above are presented in Figure 7.

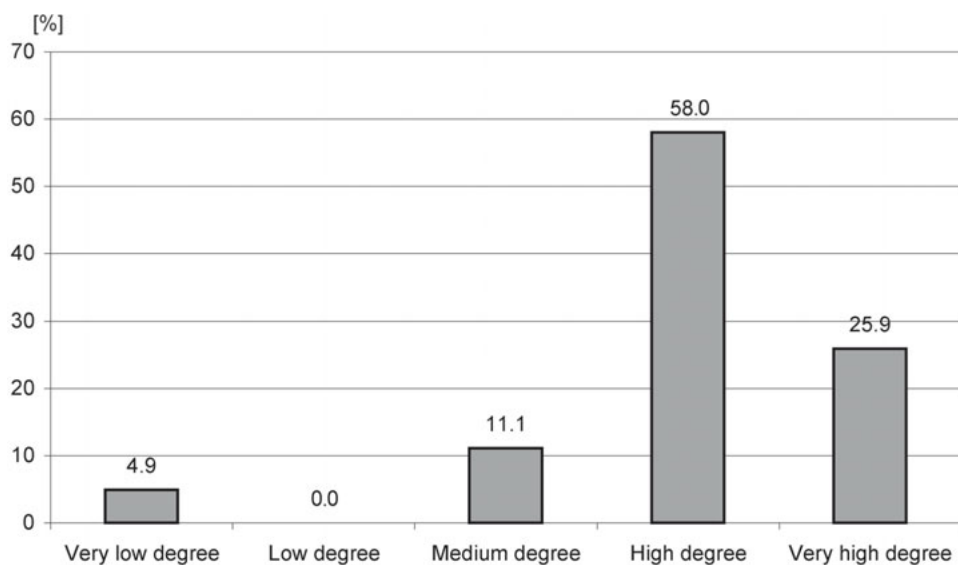


Figure 6. To what extent does cultural heritage build a system of values necessary for educating young generations

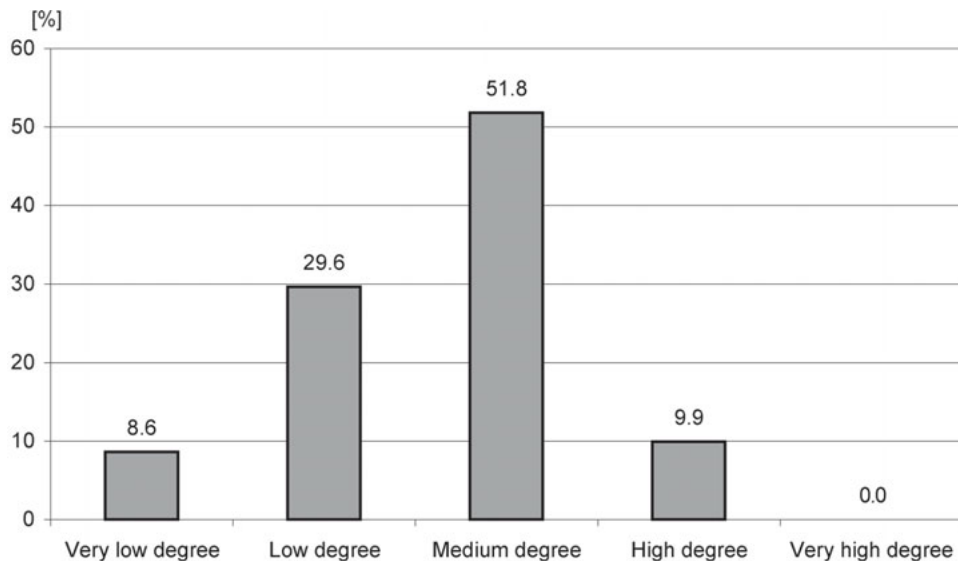


Figure 7. To what extent are parents interested in incorporating regional traditions in the upbringing of their children?

Despite great significance of cultural heritage for axiological maturation of the young generation, parents, according to the teachers, are not too much interested in giving their children upbringing with respect to regional traditions. It is interesting to note that a similar percentage of the respondents expressed opinions concerning high and low level of parents' interest in this issue (respectively, 29.6% and 25.9% of all the respondents). In the case of the question, answers were highly diversified, and the arithmetic mean had a relatively small value, 2.62. In the light of the opinions expressed, it is the teachers who take the greater responsibility for introducing the young generation to the world of regional values, using regional education content in their work. The following part of the paper presents further results of the research.

The extent to which the questioned teachers use regional education content

The second research question concerned the degree to which teachers use regional education content in their professional work. To solve the above problem, the respondents were asked to answer seven questions, having the form of a 5-point scale. Our attention was focused on the problem of the institutional dimension of cultivating regional traditions. The first of the questions concerned the usefulness of the curriculum for introducing regional education. The answers to this question are presented in Figure 8.

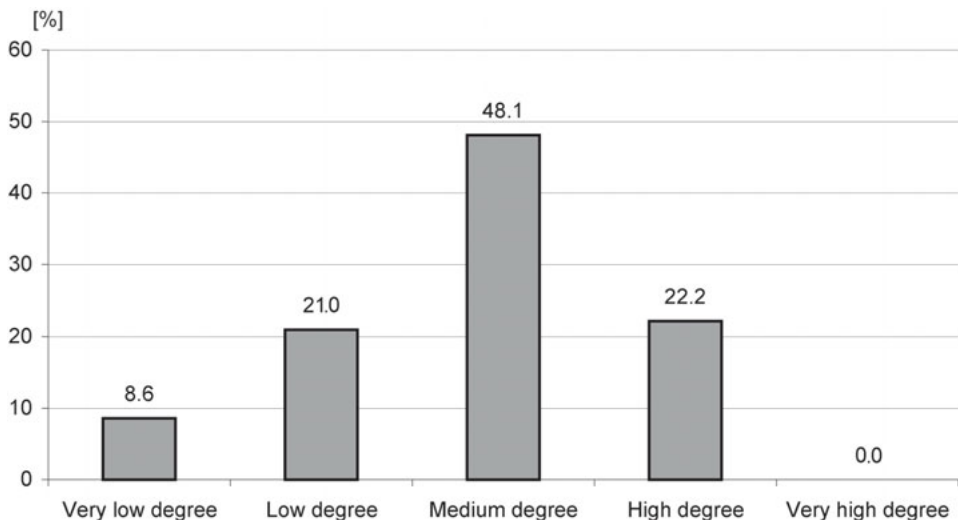


Figure 8. To what extent does core curriculum create favorable conditions for introducing regional content knowledge to teaching?

The analysis of the subject literature shows that many authors stress the fact that it is sufficient to use the curriculum in the tasks related to cultivating regional tradition. According to Miłobędzka, “regional education is among the priorities mentioned in the current curriculum, formulated by the Ministry of National Education” (Miłobędzka, 2000, p. 26). Going through the respondents’ answers to the question: To what extent does the curriculum based education create favorable conditions for introducing regional content knowledge to education? One can ask, quoting Dariusz Wędzina (2009, p. 515), “why is it so bad, if it is so good?” Almost half of the respondents answered with “medium degree.” As in the case of the previous question, the majority chose the middle answer in the scale, while in the case of earlier questions the answer most frequently chosen was “high degree.” In addition, it is difficult not to notice a significant difference between the arithmetic means of the questions, illustrated in Figure 4 (3.54), Figure 5 (3.55) and Figure 6 (4.00), and the arithmetic means in the last two questions (7 and 8) (2.62 and 2.83). In the latter two, the respondents more often indicated “very low degree” and “low degree.” Answering the former questions the respondents had to evaluate themselves, while answering questions 7 and 8 they had to evaluate others (parents, the curriculum national curriculum and, indirectly, school). Thus, the answers may be interpreted as an indication that there are some limitations in cultivating knowledge about the region (i.e. regional socialization); the causes of the situation, however, are external to the respondents, partially institutional (core curriculum) (Figure 9).

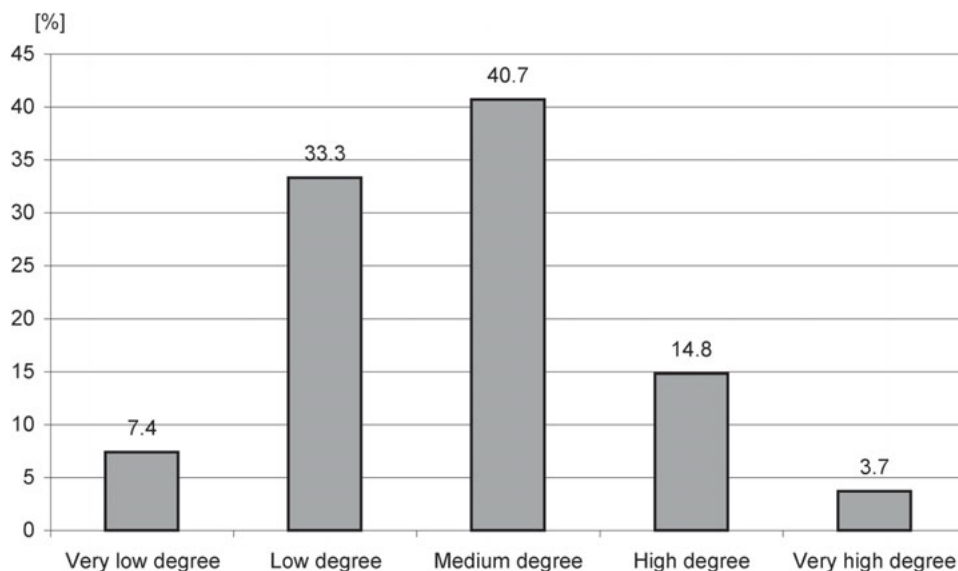


Figure 9. To what extent do the syllabi you follow create favorable conditions for introducing regional content knowledge to teaching?

The impression that neither school nor parents constitute a strong link in regional socialization is reinforced by the answers to the above question. It is important, however, that the respondents in their subjective evaluation take some responsibility for this “malfunction” (although it seems to be done unconsciously), because they choose a syllabus. The answers may also be interpreted in terms of the evaluation of the curriculum as inadequate for the regional component. The results of the research may be commented on with Rosner’s words: reflections on the interface between region and school reduce the topic to the role of the teacher in schooling and education in general, and not to methodologists’ and curricula authors’ recommendations. It depends only on the teacher to what extent he or she values cognitive and educational aspects of the region in his for her other work (Rosner, 1995, p. 73).

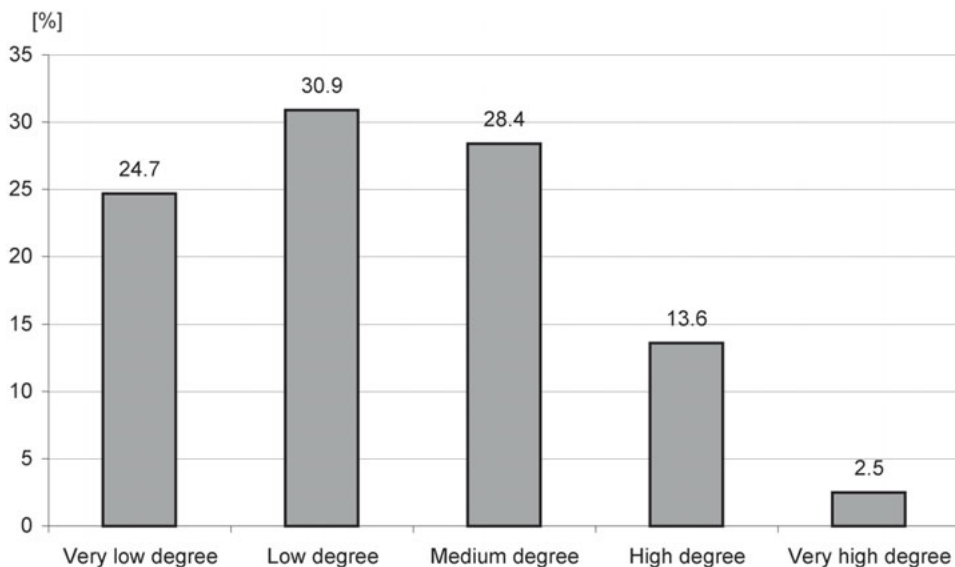


Figure 10. To what extent does the realization of core curriculum teaching goals create favorable conditions for creating children’s regional identity?

The answers to the question concerning the extent to which the realization of the teaching goals stated in core curriculum creates favorable conditions for creating children’s regional identity (Figure 10) reinforce the impression that school (preschool) does not seem to be a strong link in preserving regional specificity and shaping regional identity (the arithmetic mean: 2.38). It can therefore be noticed that the teachers perceive themselves as a strong link in the process of preservation of the regional (local) culture continuity and appear to be aware of the dimension of sociocultural life, however, they rate real (not potential) significance of parents and school in the process rather poorly.

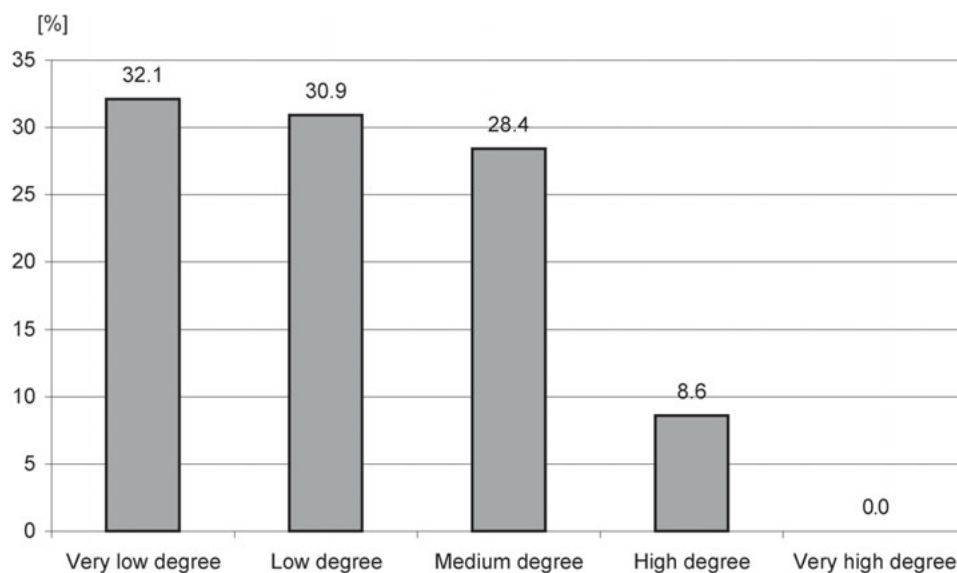


Figure 11. Did you receive professional knowledge in conducting regional education classes?

The assumption that educational institutions fail in the process of regional socialization seems to be confirmed by the answers given to the question whether studies prepare them for carrying out professional tasks related to regional education (see Figure 11). The results show that low values dominated in the survey, and the arithmetic mean was slightly above 2. What is important, in the case of this question, the percentage of “low degree” answers was highest of all the questions in the Scale Sheet (32.1%). The quality of regional education at the university level was not the subject of analysis; here the respondents’ opinions are the source of information. The opinions give rise to concern, as they indicate indolence of higher education in regional education. Even if we assume that some answers include exaggerated criticism (in many cases many years had passed since their graduation), we cannot neglect them. Impressions can often lead to particular actions (or lack of them). For example, in linguistic education the teacher’s tasks are very complex and require a solid theoretical and methodological basis. As Hanna Synowiec claims, “only those teachers who are well prepared linguistically and ethnographically, and are sensitive to cultural uniqueness of the region and open to children’s problems can cope with linguistic education in regional communities. Curricula in elementary education studies at universities should be modified to include dialectology and ethnolinguistics. This would help future teachers, especially those who are not autochthons, to better understand their pupils’ linguistic behavior which results from cultural specificity of their regional community, and also to prepare suitable didactic activities (Synowiec, 2000, p. 125). Such education subjects,

mentioned by Synowiec, are not taught during pedagogic studies. They are not offered even as subjects of choice. Taking into consideration the character of pedagogic education of pre-primary and early primary school teachers, it seems that Rosner's suggestion as to teachers' regional education organized in pedagogic universities seems to be realistic and possible to introduce. An experienced scholar from the University of Silesia wrote: "it is impossible to provide students of pedagogy with particular knowledge about the area of their future work. However, it is necessary to make students aware of the role of region and regionalism in school context and make them realize that to know the region where they work is one of their commitments" (Rosner, 1995, p. 76).

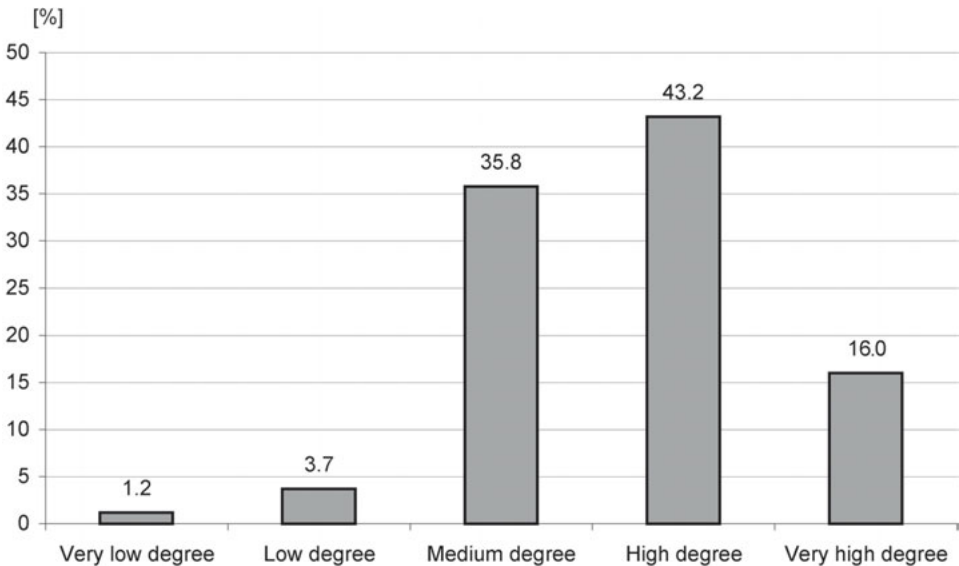


Figure 12. What aspects of regional education content do you implement in teaching?

The analysis of the answers depicted in Figure 12 shows the same regularity: parents, school and university fail, and the respondents, in spite of these external obstacles, stress great importance to training in regional education. The self-portrait emerging from our research seems to be based on the far-reaching criticism of external educational subjects and quite high respondents' self-evaluation as far as their commitment to cultivating regional traditions is concerned. Unfortunately, it is difficult to estimate whether the respondents' answers were true and reflected facts, or rather referred to the respondents' wishful thinking. Nonetheless, it goes without saying that the emphasis put on regional topics, roots, local homeland (*heimat*) and local identity became elements of political correctness. A person deprived of local roots and tradition seems to be deprived of a valuable source of his or her self-concept.

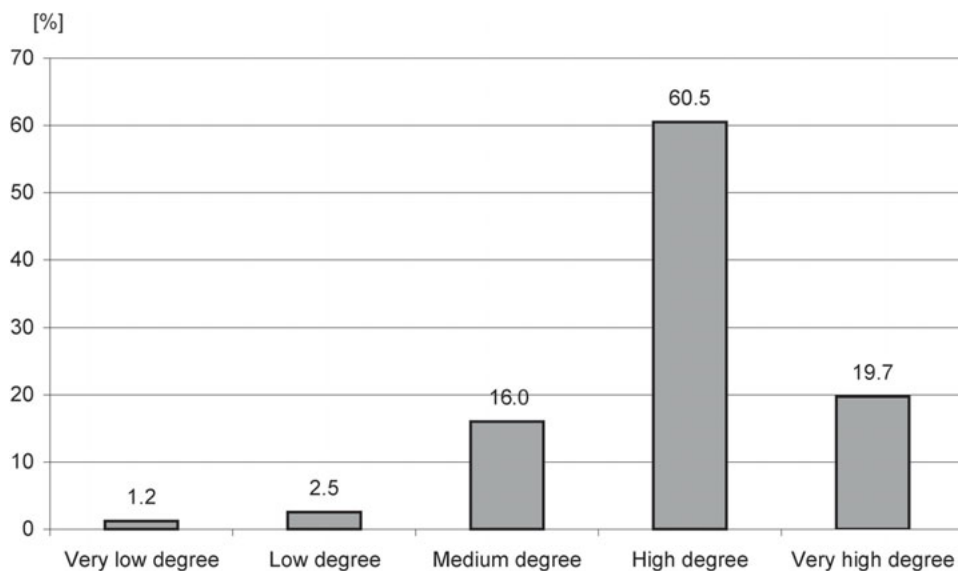


Figure 13. To what extent should preschools and primary schools be obliged to teach regional education?

The next question (see Figure 13) concerns the above-mentioned problem of two of facts and obligations, the real and the possible (desired) (Kojs, 2000). Eighty percent of the respondents perceive primary school and preschool as a significant link in providing the youngest with knowledge about their region. However, their answers show some inconsistencies. On the one hand, the questioned teachers see school and preschool as a significant link in regional socialization (how it should be), on the other, they point to some weaknesses of the institutions, restrictions of institutional character (core curriculum and syllabi) and family socialization barriers (how it really is). The respondents treat themselves as representatives of one of the two institutions, school or preschool, but, at the same time, they claim that they are able to overcome the above-mentioned barriers. It is hard to decide whether the respondents presented a real picture of the situation (how it really is) or an ideal picture (how it should be improved). The respondents seem to be alienated from the school environment, whose regional dimension completely fails; the teachers are an exception. Regional education, as they suggest, is realized at school and preschool only thanks to their own invention and effort, as if against the logic of the institutions (Figure 14).

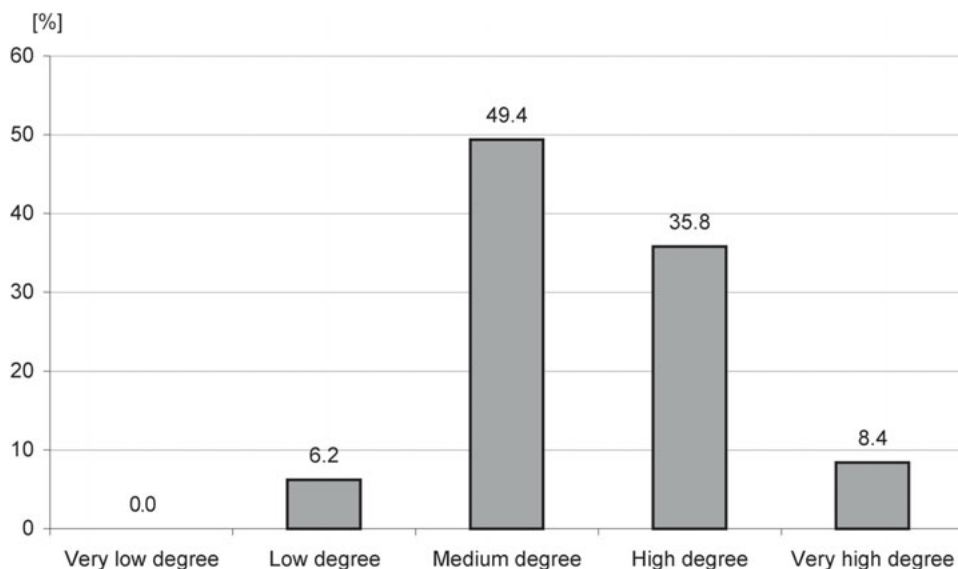


Figure 14. To what extent does the preschool/school you work for participate in cultural life of the region?

The picture of the teachers' activity in regional education is completed by their answers concerning the extent to which they are committed to the cultural life of the school/preschool region. Taking into consideration the arithmetic mean (3.46), their commitment was quite highly evaluated, although almost a half of the respondents characterized it as "medium degree" (however, almost 45.0% evaluated it as "high degree" or "very high degree"). Generally speaking, we can observe certain regularity; the respondents evaluate highly those aspects of regional education in which they are directly engaged. Their answers seem to confirm Rosner's thesis that it is not curricula, but the teacher that plays the key role in regional culture cultivation. If the respondents positively evaluate their own commitment to regional education (see Figure 12), the high evaluation also refers to the school or preschool where the teachers work. As a consequence, according to the respondents' subjective opinions, particular schools, in spite of obstacles, human (parents) and institutional (core curriculum and syllabi), participate in cultural life of the region to quite a large extent, being thus an important link in regional socialization. In other words, a shift from an abstract picture of the educational system supported by parents and created by teachers, limited by core curriculum and syllabi which fail in regional education towards a picture of a particular school or preschool (in which the respondents work), has an impact on the evaluation of their commitment to the process of regional socialization.

The extent to which teachers use museums' educational offer on regional education

Polish museums have changed their educational offer in recent years. Museum websites are abundant with educational events for infants, mothers and fathers on parental leave, elderly people and people with disabilities.⁴ Cooperation between schools and museums has been the basis of culture dissemination activity. School and preschool outings to museums have always improved museums' visitor statistics in a significant way. Renata Pater, PhD, from the Institute of Pedagogy at the Jagiellonian University, an expert in museum education claims that

Most frequent museum visitors are pupils of preschool and early primary school. It is not caused by "teachers' laziness" who want others to do the schooling (perhaps it sometimes happens), but it results from better organizational and formal possibilities of realizing curricula outside school or preschool, and a possibility to correlate topics of museum lessons with the curriculum and an attractive museum offer. (2013, p. 71)

⁴ Cf.: the educational offer by the National Museum in Warsaw or the National Museum in Cracow:

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/rodzinne-niedziele-w-faras/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/warsztaty-familijne-na-wystawie-masoneria-publico-bono/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/mamy-w-muzeum/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/mam-dwa-latka-dwa-i-pol/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/trzy-cztery-start/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/program-dla-rodzin/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/dzieci-rodziny/rodzinne-zwiedzanie/>;

<http://www.mnw.art.pl/edukacja/seniorzy/>;

<http://mnk.pl/artykul/konik-muzealny/>;

<http://mnk.pl/artykul/latajacy-dywan-opowiesci-przedmiotow/>;

<http://mnk.pl/artykul/paleta-debiutanta-warsztaty-dla-najmlodszych/>;

<http://mnk.pl/artykul/7-dzien-tworzenia/>; <http://mnk.pl/dorosli-i-seniorzy/>.

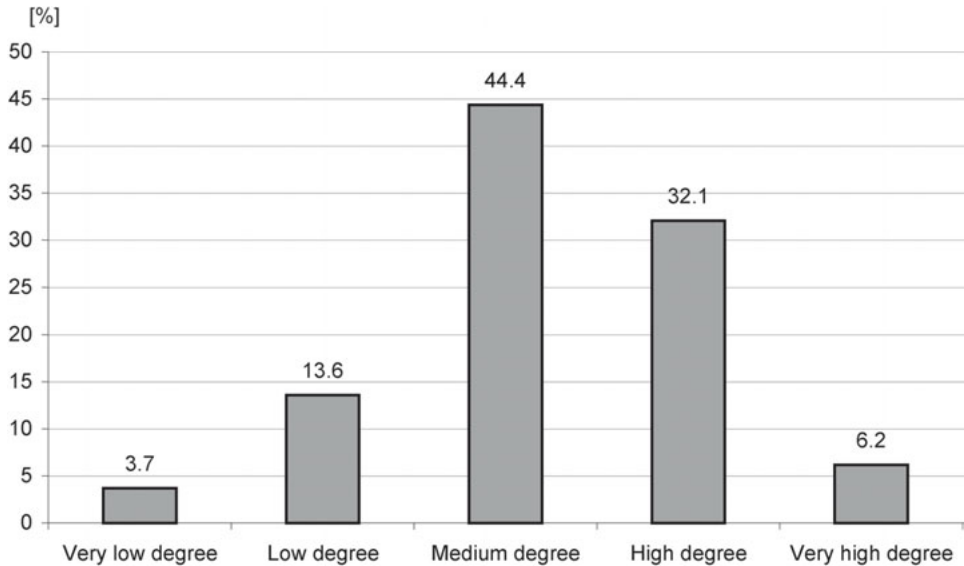


Figure 15. To what extent do museums as repositories of regional traditions help you implement regional education content in courses you teach?

It seems that the evaluation of the extent to which museums as repositories of regional tradition help to implement regional education content is positive. If we take into consideration the two extreme values, we can see that 6.2% of the respondents chose “very high degree,” while more than 3.7% choose “very low degree.”

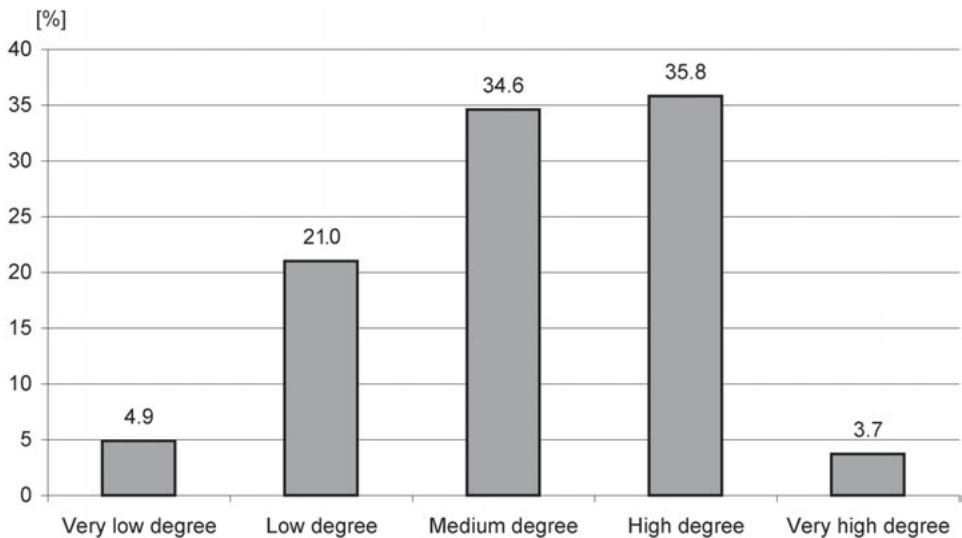


Figure 16. To what extent are you familiar with museums' educational offer on regional education addressed to children?

“A museum is good on condition that it can communicate with the society. If it fails to do so, it becomes only a static collection of exhibits rather than a dynamic element of social development,” as Piotr Czarnowski says a little too arbitrarily (2013, pp. 20—21). Undoubtedly, without advertising which provides us with good, thorough and attractively presented information about museums’ educational offer, the number of visitors, especially young ones, would get significantly smaller. To attract teachers who have the authority to select educational means, methods and conditions in which classes are conducted, museums publish information leaflets; they also offer courses for teachers and send educational offers to schools via the Internet. It seems that museums and schools meet halfway (cf. Czetwertyńska, 2012, pp. 291—296), as the above results show. Twenty-one percent of the teachers questioned declare that they poorly know museums’ offers (“low degree”), 5% characterize their knowledge as very poor (“very low degree”), which indicates that there is much to do in the area of cooperation between schools and museums. Not to mention particular activities, that is, the actual use of museums’ offers of regional education for children (see Figure 17). The evaluation of the extent to which teachers make use of museums’ educational offer addressed to children as part of their professional work is poor (“low degree” — 11%); nobody indicated “very high degree.” Nobody needs to be convinced of advantages of children’s visits to museums. It is obvious that “the museum space should be gradually brought into small children education, as a kind of specific enculturation. Reproductions and simulators will not substitute real meeting with an object, an original piece

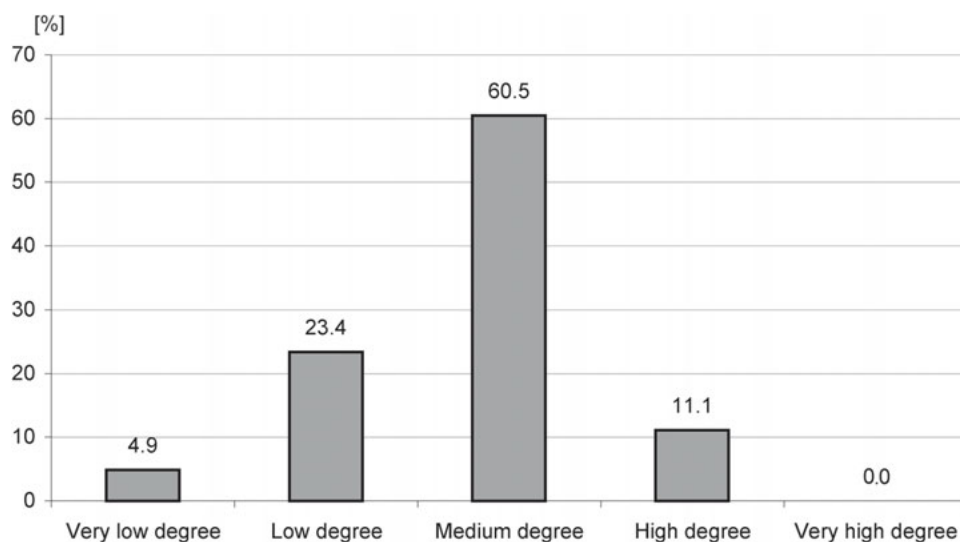


Figure 17. To what extent do you make use of museums’ educational offers in your professional life?

of art, in a museum. A contact with educators, museum workers, or experts is equally important; it provides an opportunity to talk to them, ask questions, and look together for answers (Pater, 2013, pp. 57—58). As has been already mentioned, the research did not include the question concerning the use of museums' educational offers in general, but only regional education offers.

Sometimes teachers make use of the museum's educational offer addressed to children, which is available on the museum's website in education bookmarks. A good example of such an offer is the educational project prepared by the education unit in Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek. The website "The residents of No. 11" was created for I—III form pupils of primary school and teachers who are interested in popularizing completely new qualities and patriotic themes in elementary education. The basic aims of this project were to bring the museum into the process of broadening the knowledge of such values as independence, respect, and patriotism, and to promote new methods of teaching in Polish schools. On the other hand, breaking geographical and time barriers in relations with future museum visitors became an equally important stimulus to start an educational website for children.

Regional education as a field of self-educating activity

School as an institution which exerts a considerable influence on children and adolescents⁵ is responsible for developing their aspirations to independent and creative self-improvement. According to Wincenty Okoń (2003, p. 169), the process of independent learning constitutes a higher level of education. Reaching this level is a confirmation of the value of education, while lack of independent learning in the individual's life calls the value of school education into question.

Thus, the ultimate goal of regional education should be pupils' preparation for self-education in this field, as regional education involves self-creation knowledge, helps to discover their self, identity, by referring to the past, present, and future of one's own region perceived through the prism of their country, Europe, and finally the world. Self-education constitutes a chance for young people to authentically engage in enlivening social life and dynamic development of their environment. Acknowledging the importance of self-education

⁵ The strengths of the school as an educational institution, owing to which it becomes possible to effectively support students in their development, are more extensively described by Dzierżyśław Jankowski (cf. Jankowski, 2002, pp. 61—62).

in the field in question, we asked the respondents two questions, included in the Scale Sheet. The first one concerned self-evaluation of their own activities aimed at preparing the pupils for self-education in the field of regional education. The percentage values of the respondents' answers to this question are presented below (see Figure 18).

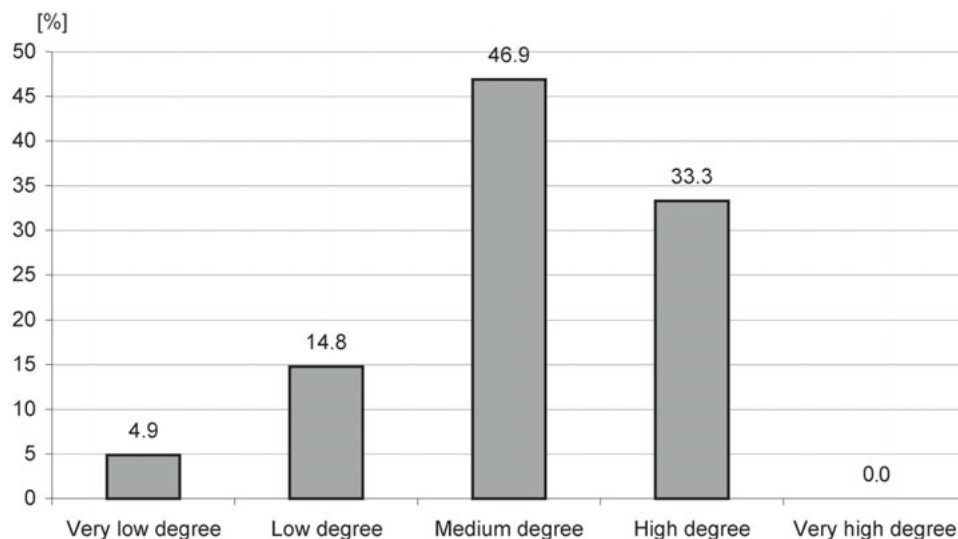


Figure 18. To what extent do you prepare children for self-education in the area of regional history and culture of their region?

On the basis of the data presented in Figure 18, one can conclude that the questioned teachers prepare their pupils for self-education in regional education mainly to a medium degree and to a high degree. However, one can worry about lack of declarations of very high degree of activity in this respect and a significant percentage of comments on small and very small interest in this type of activity. The answers to this question show that the arithmetic mean was 3.08. Similar values can be observed in answers to the question concerning the teachers' self-educational activity in regional education (see Figure 19).

The majority of the teachers questioned declared a medium and high degree of their self-educational activity related to regional education, which is rather optimistic. The teacher's attitude to self-education and discussion about his other experience in this respect and values with pupils may inspire them to work on their development and show the right direction. Only 13.6% of the respondents engage in self-education to a small extent, and 4.9% seem to show little interest in these activities. The arithmetic mean for the answers to this question was 3.07, so its value, in comparison with the other arithmetic means, was average.

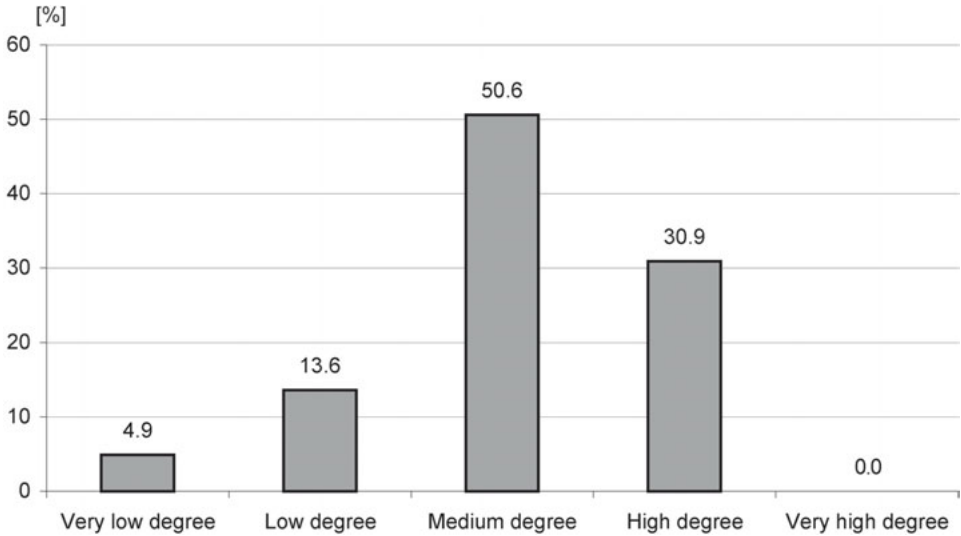


Figure 19. To what extent do you consider regional education as a self-study area?

The general degree of cultivating regional traditions in education

The procedure of measuring the general degree of cultivating regional traditions by teachers in education was presented in the introduction to the research part of the paper. Figure 20 shows the results of the estimation.

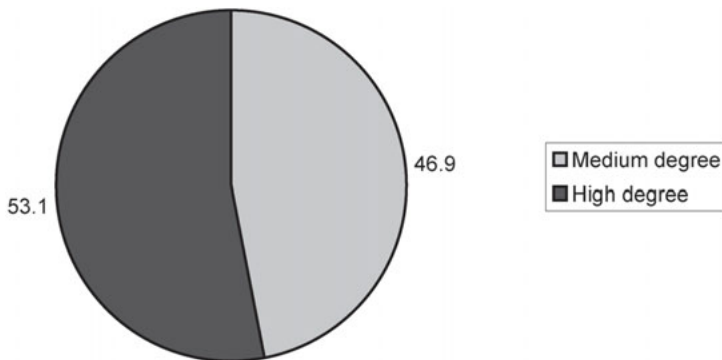


Figure 20. General degree of cultivating regional traditions in teaching

The data presented in Figure 20 show that the general degree of cultivating regional traditions by preschool and primary school (I—III forms) teachers in education is high, although the percentage of the respondents presenting a medium degree of commitment is slightly smaller. It is worth emphasizing that none of the respondents indicated a low degree of cultivating regional traditions in teaching.

The degree of cultivating regional traditions by teachers in education in the light of selected factors

In the presented analyses, we decided to investigate the relationship between the general degree of cultivating regional tradition by teachers in education and the two sociodemographic variables. However, as has been stressed in the methodology section, this relationship was not considered in terms of verification, but in terms of exploration. Figure 21 shows the relationship between the general degree of cultivating regional traditions by teachers in education and their education.

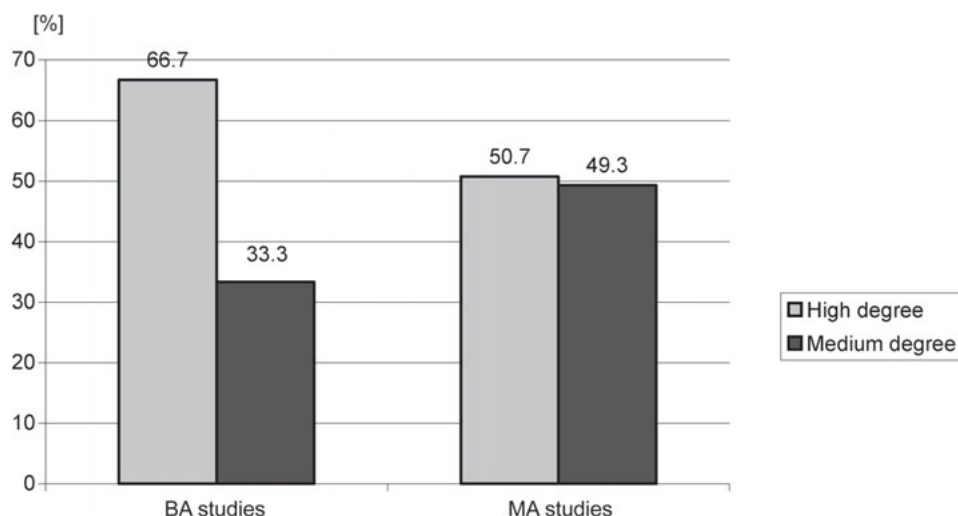


Figure 21. General degree of cultivating regional traditions by teachers in light of their education

The data shown in Figure 21 may be surprising, as they suggest that BA studies promote cultivating regional traditions in education to a larger extent than MA studies. Teachers holding an MA degree indicated a medium and high degree of engagement in the activity, while teachers holding a BA degree indicated mainly a high degree. Perhaps the results would be different if the numbers of respondents in the two groups were equal. The next figure shows the relationship between the degree of cultivating regional traditions by teachers in education and their work experience.

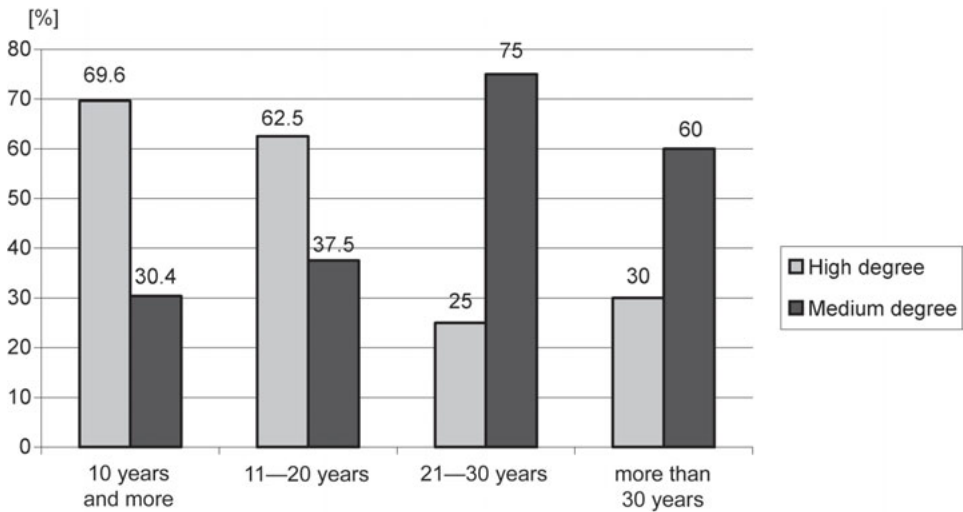


Figure 22. General degree of cultivating regional traditions by teachers in light of their professional work

On the basis of the presented data, it may be concluded that the shorter work experience, the higher degree of commitment to cultivating regional traditions (see Figure 22). Teachers with smallest work experience (1–10 years) turned out to be most active. This relationship can be interpreted in terms of age: younger respondents cultivate regional traditions to the higher extent. The respondents' age might be considered as a more significant variable than work experience. This phenomenon can be explained with the already mentioned concept of localism in public discourse; it is possible that now we experience the revival of the local in the young generation, but it does not occur due to spontaneous home socialization, but, rather, it is an element of the larger process of discovering the cultural heritage of the region and local community.

Summary

Summing up the analysis of the research results presented above, one can come to the following conclusions:

1. The majority of the questioned teachers show a positive emotional attitude to the region, and they deeply cherish regional values in their life; however, they cultivate regional traditions with their own family at home to a slightly lesser extent.
2. They appreciate the importance of cultural heritage as a source of values necessary for the upbringing of the young generation. Besides they claim that parents are interested in introducing their children to regional culture to an average degree. Teachers bear greater responsibility in this respect.
3. According to the respondents, there are some restrictions on cultivating regional traditions in education, generally related to external factors, for example, the curriculum or syllabi which are inadequate for regional education. That is why preschool and primary school do not seem to constitute a strong link in creating and maintaining regional identity.
4. The respondents claim that studies barely prepare future teachers to realize the goals of regional education. It seems necessary to make students aware of regional issues and regionalism in schooling.
5. In spite of the obstacles mentioned in the paper, the questioned teachers declare that they clearly realize the content knowledge in regional education. They believe that preschool/primary school should serve as a fertile source of knowledge about the region.
6. The respondents appreciate the importance of museums in the realization of content knowledge in regional education, although they have insufficient knowledge of museums' offer addressed to children, and little general knowledge concerning this type of education. Perhaps that is why the respondents make use of museums' regional education offer for children in their work only in a lower degree.
7. They declared commitment to preparing children for regional self-education. However, there also was a significant percentage of answers showing their lack of interest in such activities.
8. To many teachers, regional education is an area of their own self-education, which can be an inspiration for their pupils to engage in similar activity.
9. It has been observed that the results differ with respect to the variables: education and work experience. Greater commitment to cultivating regional traditions in education appeared in the group of teachers who hold a BA degree. Moreover, teachers with smaller work experience were more active as far as regional education was concerned. Due to a small number of respondents, the results of the research can be treated as a valuable source

of information about certain tendencies that still need to be confirmed by further empirical studies.

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