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In(ex)clusion of Refugee Children from Ukraine in Cultural Institutions on the Example of the Gorzów Library

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ABSTRACT

This article raises the issue of inclusion of refugee children from Ukraine in cultural institutions on the example of the Gorzów Library, where since March 4th, 2022 until now the classes entitled *Colorful syllables are organized*. The meetings are aimed at integrating the Ukrainian community with Polish, preventing discrimination against immigrants, while taking care to preserve the cultural identity of the newcomers. In the first place, the concept of culture is discussed and its indispensability in human life is considered. The role of cultural institutions is also analyzed, with particular emphasis on cultural transmission towards the emerging multicultural society. Pilot studies on the organization of cultural and educational activities for children from Ukraine by Polish libraries are discussed. Further on, the cultural and educational activities in the Gorzów library addressed to refugee children in order to accelerate their resilience are presented. The role of cultural security was also noticed to finally emphasize the importance of ethnosecurity and ethnopädagogy.

KEY WORDS: culture, cultural institution, identity, inclusion, cultural security, ethnosecurity, ethnopädagogy

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*If you want to make the world a better place,
first make people feel safer.*
Stephen Porges

The Essence of Culture and its Importance

Culture is the most beautiful area of public life and, above all, the lasting spiritual and material achievements of ancestors. The concept itself is considered in various approaches: philosophical, anthropological, sociological, psychological, theological, historical, pedagogical. For the purposes of this article, culture will be analyzed from a social, anthropological, and pedagogical perspective (the organization of cultural activities as a process of education requires knowledge of the cultural context).

Interestingly, as Filipiak (1996, p. 9) states, the Latin word *cultura* (*agri*) was associated with farming or breeding; above all, it referred to the change of natural phenomena into a state useful for humans. In philosophy, *cultura* (*animi*) referred to the cultivation of the mind (Cicero). In ancient Greece, the term *paideia* was used, which in turn meant all human activities for the sake of education, nurturing and improvement. Nowadays, the term 'culture' is polysemantic. The classic definition of culture, as suggested by Cichosz, Lewicka and Molesztak, is: "it is the totality of products of human activity, material and non-material, values and recognized ways of conduct, objectified and accepted in any communities, passed on to other communities and future generations" (2018, p. 16). It is worth noting that there is a scientific discipline dealing only with culture and its role, i.e. cultural studies.

The issue of culture itself is multifaceted. From the social and anthropological point of view, culture is realized in the area of broadly understood social life, in which man is an inalienable element (Cichosz et al., 2018, p. 16). It is the carrier that transmits the products of culture, and then the human community. Therefore, the communication systems in which this culture can be created are also important:

- the first system—i.e. the direct process of communication between individuals;
- the second, institutional system—also subjective, but in a way formalized communication process, where there is an inner circle of recipients and an outer circle of broadcasters and organizers;
- the third arrangement—i.e. the means of indirect communication—the means of mass communication (Cichosz et al., 2018, p. 17).

The above-mentioned communication systems allow us to distinguish certain features of cultural phenomena, from which it will be clear that culture is always related to man (man creates it, but is also subject to its influence, which allows him to be shaped), secondly, that culture is a social phenomenon (its survival is conditioned

by the transmission of generations, i.e. the group, of collective life); thirdly, culture is regular (institutionalized religious experiences, reproduced styles in art, architectural forms) and fourth: culture is a set of learned phenomena (it is a product that is subject to development and can be learned), (Cichosz et al., 2018, pp. 17–18).

What is the importance of culture for a man? First of all, it takes care of the transmission of values, moral principles and traditions from generation to generation, which in turn have an impact on the formation of human cultural identity.

We should also consider the functions of culture, which depend on many factors, i.e. the life situation of a particular person and the type of contact with culture. According to Gierszewski and Pieczywok (2022, pp. 45–47), the most important functions include: transmission of cultural heritage, integration, affiliation, adaptation, communication, entertainment, compensation, relaxation, as well as cognitive, creative, axiological and conservative aspirational functions.

The above functions indicate what tasks are carried out during participation in culture by both the individual and the community. Each of them is very important and satisfies a specific need. Culture, through its semantic capacity, can be atomized into: national, symbolic, popular, mass, high culture. According to Jawor, Markowska-Manista and Pietrusińska (2020, p. 35), national culture is “a broad and complex system of modes of action, norms, values, symbols, beliefs and symbolic works, which is considered by a community to be its own, particularly its right, grown out of its traditions and historical experiences, and binding within it”. Symbolic culture has the function that most distinguishes national cultures. It covers popular and high culture, i.e. art (painting, architectural, literary, musical works). However, in order to interpret it well, you need to know the rules that will explain the meaning of the symbols. In addition to art, religion is important in the context of *sacrum* and science in the cognitive aspect (Jawor et al., 2020, p. 35). As indicated by Jawor and colleagues popular culture

It is expressed primarily in such forms of art that serve entertainment. Examples of popular culture include: rock and blues music, action films, TV series, as well as stage shows, circus shows, and sports competitions. (...) Popular culture is sometimes referred to as low to emphasize its opposition to high culture, which does not mean that its products have to be of low quality or worthless (Jawor et al., 2020, pp. 35–36).

So what is the difference between popular and mass culture, which are identified with each other? As suggested by Jawor and colleagues (2020, p. 36), mass culture

It is disseminated by means of the mass media (radio, television, high-circulation press, cassette or CD), and in popular culture direct contact can appear, both within the original and institutional system of culture. Thus, mass culture is defined by the

nature of the message, popular culture—rather by the easy-to-read, entertaining content of the message (Jawor et al., 2020, p. 36).

High culture refers to art in its broadest sense. Art that draws a little from the resources of national culture (cultural heritage) and is sophisticated art created by the elites. In order to receive it, intellectual effort is needed. The tasks of this culture disseminated by cultural institutions, public media and educational institutions include cultural transmission, as well as the conservation of cultural patterns (Jawor et al., 2020, p. 37).

This is only a very cursory discussion of the broad issue of culture. There are institutions involved in the promotion of culture, such as libraries, museums, cultural centres, etc., which in the modern technological world still fulfil their functions and protect the national heritage.

Cultural Institution and its Significance in Cultural Transmission in the Emerging Multicultural Society

Before considering the role and importance of cultural institutions, it is first necessary to pay attention to the importance of the institution itself, identified as a collective action “the purpose of which is to control individual activities ranging from unorganized customs to organized organizations” (Gierszewski & Pieczywok, 2022, p. 70). The family, church, school, local environment and peer group, as well as all non-governmental organizations and associations can also be considered as a culturally shaping institution.

Each institution, as suggested by Gierszewski and Pieczywok, is responsible for performing individual functions, which include:

- 1) meeting the needs of members of the community, e.g. the school satisfies the need to acquire knowledge, skills and competences;
- 2) cognitive function, because thanks to institutions it is possible to obtain information about the environment (closer and more distant), about features and behaviours preserved in traditions or customs;
- 3) stabilizing function, because thanks to institutions rights are protected, social and economic order is created, and greater predictability of human behaviour is possible. Thanks to institutions, it is also possible to define a safe space for action (...).
- 4) an integrating function, because institutions create bonds between individual members of the community, enable cooperation thanks to the fact that people have the same system of values. This group includes, for example, schools, local government, because they integrate a given community around specific problems;

- 5) the function of instruments of influence, because institutions set certain boundaries, defining sanctions for acting contrary to the rules, and they also determine acceptable forms of human activity (Gierszewski & Pieczywok, 2022, pp. 72–73).

So what is a cultural institution? This is:

- 1) a standardized way of behaving including norms and patterns of behaviour (...);
- 2) A group of people undertaking and implementing joint activities (...);
- 3) an organized system of human activities (...) (Gierszewski & Pieczywok, 2022, p. 73).

Cultural institutions are tasked with collecting and conserving works of art, as well as disseminating culture, thus being responsible for its transmission. It is no different with libraries—the Act of 27 June 1997, from chapter I, Article 4, subsection 2, states that “the tasks of libraries may also include conducting bibliographical, documentary, scientific and research, publishing, educational, popularizing, instructional and methodological activities”. Institutions can be defined as any collective action that is designed to inspect individualized activities that have unorganized practices within their reach, to organized organizations, and their formal content includes legal norms and an informal norm of behaviour (Gierszewski & Pieczywok, 2022, p. 71).

An important feature of a cultural institution is its universalism (every social system has an institution that satisfies the needs of its users). The satisfaction of needs by institutions is equally important with the normalization of the activities of social group relations and the formation of human identity, which consists of the components of integrity, continuity of existence in time, as well as the mutual perception of the person through one’s own prism and others (Gierszewski & Pieczywok, 2022, p. 75).

Culture has an impact on shaping the identity of institutions. On the other hand, the extent to which man will draw from cultural goods will affect the construction of his identity.

Cultural transmission is the transmission of principles, traditions, moral norms. According to Gierszewski and Pieczywok (2022), a special role in the broadcast is played by the following institutions:

Arnold Galen claims that institutions are the core of culture, a kind of anchor that enables the proper functioning of man. It also includes programmes of action that discipline the drive sphere and limit the natural aggressiveness of man, and stabilize the society, guaranteeing its survival and development. Thanks to them, we know what moral principles, rituals, customs, norms of statutory law, family, marriage, church, school, university, social association are (Gierszewski & Pieczywok, 2022, p. 78).

Of course, it can be concluded that cultural institutions, such as libraries, are obliged to perform the function of cultural transmission, but one should not be convinced that in the era of the constitution of multicultural societies this will be an easy task. Stakeholders do not have competence in cultural security. They are only responsible for the transmission of culture on one level. They do not have inclusive instruments, only awareness of the universality of institutions and individual moral and ethical values. To a large extent, interactions are intuitive. In connection with this, disharmonies can appear: how to transmit culture without seeking the deliberate acculturation of the newcomers? What about the cultural security of immigrants? How to carry out activities to pretend to be a multicultural institution? This is a complex problem that cannot be solved by participating in possible training.

Pilot studies on the activities of libraries in Poland for refugee children from Ukraine

In order to verify the activities of libraries in Poland in terms of the organization of cultural and educational activities for refugee children from Ukraine, pilot studies were conducted (June 2023). The research was also intended to answer the question of what specific measures were used and what possible problems accompanied it. The focus was primarily on provincial libraries, but information was also sought from city libraries when there was a lack of response or when the data provided turned out to be incomplete and insufficient.

The answers show that only 10% of libraries did not undertake cultural and educational activities for refugee children at all. The main reasons given were the language barrier, lack of financial resources, lack of educational and art materials or simply lack of interest of the social group. Interestingly, libraries with a profile other than the public one, i.e. with an academic status (10%), organized aid activities, e.g. by employing Ukrainian citizens, distributing books prepared by the Book Institute in Ukrainian to public libraries within their province, organizing free Polish language classes, etc.

32% of libraries declare that they have stopped conducting classes for refugee children from Ukraine. The reasons are the following: a significant decrease in the number of recipients, lack of interest in the offer, acculturation of refugee children. As librarians point out, "(...) However, there is not much interest. This may be due to the fact that the Ukrainian population has chosen other regions of Poland to live in" [Książnica Podlaska]. "Currently, due to the low interest, we are not conducting any activities" [Municipal Public Library in Olsztyn]. Some libraries focused exclusively on Polish-Ukrainian integration, addressing classes to combined groups: "The art workshops were attended by children and young people from Poland and Ukraine from mixed school classes (...). The classes were aimed at integrating students and

anticipating the emergence of potential conflict situations related to the migration experience" [Silesian Library].

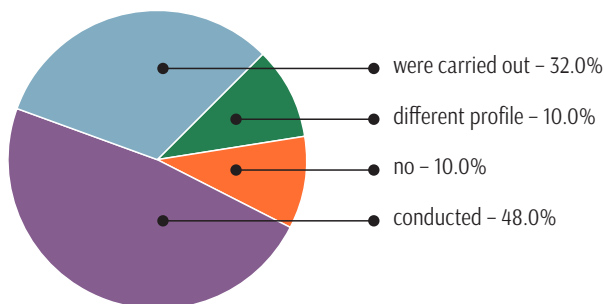


Chart 1. Participation of libraries in conducting classes for refugee children from Ukraine

Source: own study

The remaining 48% still teach classes for immigrant children. Some libraries take part in projects from which they raise funds for their activities ("Boundless Friends", "Santa Claus Foundation", "Emic Foundation", "Library for All. Different. Equal. Important").

A very important aspect for the author of this article was to compare the type of actions taken for refugee children in order to find inspiration for further actions and to confront the offers in terms of effectiveness, usefulness and innovation, as well as to indicate whether the chosen direction is the right one. The actions taken for refugees are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Actions taken by libraries for war refugees from Ukraine

Libraries' activities for war refugees from Ukraine	Number of libraries implementing a particular activity	Percentage number of libraries implementing a particular activity
Polish language lessons	5	25%
art and music workshops, exercise classes	4	20%
expanding the book collection with items in Ukrainian	2	10%
obtaining books from the Book Institute	3	15%
in-kind and financial collections	2	10%
employment of people from Ukraine	3	15%
cultural integration (Mother's Day, Children's Day)	3	15%
guided tours of the library/ongoing service	2	10%
bibliotherapy	2	10%
board game tournaments	1	5%
online meetings with Ukrainian writers	2	10%

Source: own research

Analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the actions taken by libraries in Poland are homologous. The most common offer addressed to refugee children are Polish language lessons, art workshops and activities aimed at Polish-Ukrainian integration through the celebration of holidays, e.g. Mother's Day, Children's Day, etc. The libraries expanded their book collections with literature in Ukrainian, largely thanks to the Book Institute, which donated books. Several people with refugee experience have been given jobs in Polish libraries. Material and financial collections were also organized in the libraries. Additional activities include the practice of bibliotherapy and on-line meetings with Ukrainian writers, which significantly influenced the resilience of war refugees. In one of the libraries, unusual actions were undertaken: "on the premises of the library, Ukrainian and Polish volunteers weave camouflage nets for Ukrainian troops" [Provincial Public Library in Krakow]. Importantly, most libraries struggle with the problem of financing activities, because although they participate in applying for external funds, only some institutions receive a grant. In addition, not every library can count on support in this matter: "I would like to mention that we have not received any material or financial support from the city or voivodeship government" [Municipal Public Library in Olsztyn].

Another conclusion resulting from the pilot study regarding the implementation of library activities intended for refugee children is that some aid offers are slowly dying out. The reason for this may be the fact that Ukrainian children are included in the Polish education system and the librarian community has concluded that there is no need to carry out activities for refugees from Ukraine, since their assimilation has taken place (the position of the author of the article is that the deliberate assimilation of a minority group is unfair, therefore, in their original classes for refugee children organized in Książnica in Gorzów Wielkopolski, care was taken to preserve the cultural identity of the newcomers). Despite this, several institutions continue to focus their attention on the integration of children from Polish and Ukraine, who function together on a daily basis in preschool and school groups. Libraries point out that some immigrants resign from the offer themselves. What is the real reason for this? This question may be a contribution to further research.

Colourful Syllables—Animation and art Classes for Foreign-language Children—Resilience of Refugee Children

The modern world, living in general harmony, eliminated the word 'war' from political dictionaries long time ago. An armed conflict seemed to be a situation far from the norm in the 21st century. However, on February 24th, 2022, the Russian Federation

launched the Russia-Ukraine war under the veiled phrase “military operation”. The entire political scene is shocked, especially when the actions of Russian President Vladimir Putin, or rather his soldiers, were barbaric and directed at the civilian population. Russian missiles fell on schools, kindergartens, hospitals, theatres, people standing in line in front of the store for bread. This caused pejorative feelings directed at President Putin and the Russians themselves. The aggressor was sanctioned by the EU (individual, economic, diplomatic). This, however, did not stop the imperialist from stopping his attack. The effect was the opposite. Putin began to threaten Europe and the world with nuclear weapons.

As a result of the situation, war refugees are arriving in neighbouring Poland in order to save their lives. The Polish government organized humanitarian aid, accommodation facilities, and over time also financial aid, etc. But it was the citizens of the Republic of Poland, with their altruistic attitude, who offered the greatest support to refugees from Ukraine, organizing material and financial collections, and most importantly, providing shelter in their own homes.

Cultural institutions have joined in the help, as mentioned above. This item will present the activities undertaken by the Z. Herbert Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Gorzów Wielkopolski for war refugees from Ukraine.

The Library’s experiences are identical to others located in Poland. The wide range of activities, which include: collections of items, expanding the book collection with publications in Ukrainian, seminars for adults, charity concerts, free provision of rooms for all aid activities, as well as activities undertaken for the benefit of the youngest recipients, i.e. the organization of language, animation and art classes entitled *Colorful syllables*. The aim of the workshops is to integrate the Ukrainian community with Poland, prevent discrimination against immigrants, and at the same time take care of the preservation of the cultural identity of the newcomers. The first meeting took place on March 4th, 2022 and, interestingly, the workshops continue to this day. During the classes, a tripartite organizational scheme was clarified: they begin with an integration game, then linguistics (learning lexemes in Polish), and finally art workshops. Over time, changes were made to the offer. Bibliotherapy, physical games, educational games, logic games, etc. are included. Together with Ukrainian children, traditions are cultivated in a dualistic way in Ukrainian and Polish, such as “Christmas afternoon at Herbert’s, or a multicultural Christmas and New Year’s meeting”, during which the book *Double Christmas* was read in two languages, carols were sung, gingerbread was decorated, etc. The children were also very happy to welcome spring. First, pancakes were fried with the participation of a qualified chef, following the Ukrainian tradition (related to *the butter week*), then an effigy of Marzanna was made, which was drowned in a nearby pond. An important event was the illustrated book workshop conducted by their compatriot Julia Kołomojecz—a talented illustrator of children’s books, who

was invited to the Gorzów Library. In order to counteract discrimination and ethnic conflicts, once a month Ukrainian children integrate with Polish children at additional workshops called *Little Artists*, where they learn about the stories of famous artists and various painting techniques.

After a year of classes (from March 4th, 2022 to June 30th, 2023, 65 meetings were held, attended by 1494 children) with the participation of refugee mothers, who are present at each meeting, evaluation research was carried out. The research questionnaire included questions about the purpose of attending classes among others. In response, 35% of the respondents indicated contact with peers, 30% indicated the comprehensive development of the child. Parents bring their children equally for educational (15%) and entertainment (15%). Only 4% of respondents indicated joint adaptation. Information about the need to continue activities was important for the lecturers. The opinions of mothers of children attending the workshops show that they are needed and give satisfaction: “at the beginning the library was like a breath of fresh air for us, now we go to the library as to our family home. In the library, the child engages in various interesting activities. Thank you very much! I wish you a lot of inspiration and a lot of patience” [Parent_01]. Further opinions: “we look forward to every Wednesday” [Parent_02], “our mentors are a godsend” [Parent_03]. The interest in the offer is not waning, hence the conclusion that classes are needed.

Cultural Security—Ethnosecurity, Ethnopedagogy

What does security mean? How is it defined? Security “appears as a certain state of an individual or a group that does not contain threats to the existence, stability and development of these entities, but gives them a sense of security, support in other people and the legal system” (Bera, 2017, p. 13). In the previous considerations, an attempt was made to explain the concept of culture. Now the attention will be paid to cultural security, i.e.:

a process taking place in the field of national security, including various means and activities, the use and implementation of which is aimed at consolidating and cultivating values that significantly affect national identity and drawing on the achievements of other nations, while at the same time preventing the growth of the importance of foreign influences that can significantly weaken internal integrity (Gierszewski, Pieczywok, & Piwowarski, 2020, p. 7).

From the above considerations, it is clear that cultural security is of significant consolidation importance for the members of a given nation. It allows you to shape the iden-

tity of both the individual and the community. Security, cultural security, and human security are the three essential elements that make up ethnosecurity.

Enthosecurity is a new concept proposed by Beata Orłowska, which in its scope

It concerns the maintenance of ethnic security of representatives of minority groups—national and ethnic, occurring in a given area. Its main objective is to guarantee the safety of a minority group in the area of preserving the identity and culture of individuals and groups against the background of the majority. (...) Guaranteeing ethnosecurity for representatives of minority groups allows for preserving, maintaining and transmitting identity among their representatives, who function among the majority group on a daily basis (Orłowska, 2022, pp. 35–36).

Ethnosecurity is a response to the divagations contained in the chapter on cultural institutions and their role in cultural transmission in a multicultural society, because it concerns “taking into account the achievements of other cultures and drawing on them in the country of residence (...)” (Orłowska, 2022, p. 36).

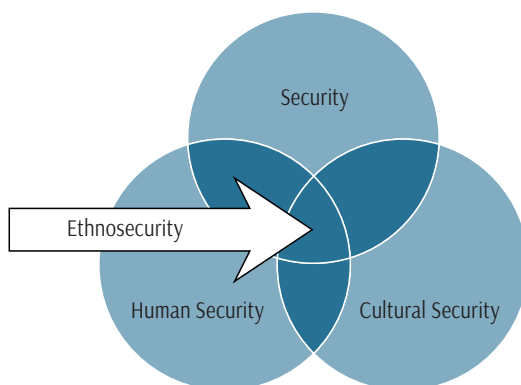


Diagram 1. The Ethnosecurity Nexus

Source: B. Orłowska (2022, p. 37)

Ethnosecurity, with its research area, will ensure that the minority group maintains the principles of language, history, culture, religion towards the majority group (Orłowska, 2022, p. 36).

Another important issue to discuss is ethnopedagogy, which would include in its research area broadly understood education preparing individuals in the field of defense. Ethnopedagogy is a new subdiscipline of pedagogy that

notes and emphasizes the connections and dependencies of the functioning of people identifying with ethno-national and religious groups, the processes of socializa-

tion and enculturation taking place in these groups, with pedagogy that indicates the possibilities of human development, supports him in the process of upbringing, education and self-education throughout his life, shapes dialogical attitudes towards cultural diversity and secures the continuous constitution of identity (Nikitorowicz, 2018, p. 16).

Polish specialists draw attention to the fact that our society is not ready for the emerging multicultural environment, which may result from a misunderstood definition of this concept. The new sub-discipline of pedagogy also faces the problem of politicization of culture. However, ethnopedagogy needs specialists in the public debate dealing with multicultural education, thanks to which it would focus on practices that strive for the coexistence of cultures (Nikitorowicz, 2018, pp. 10–14).

Applications

Culture, which originally meant farming and the transformation of natural resources by man for his own use, has evolved into a medium that transmits cultural patterns. It in itself constitutes the national heritage, and its contemplation has an impact on the development of aesthetic taste and the formation of human identity.

Libraries as cultural institutions, within the scope of their activities resulting from the Act, are also responsible for the broadly understood education of both individuals and communities. As a result of the outbreak of war in Ukraine after February 24th, 2022, Polish libraries offered a number of activities to war refugees: from employing immigrants to institutions, organizing collections of items, to arranging cultural and educational activities and learning Polish. Pilot studies have shown that the activities undertaken for war refugees are slowly disappearing. The reason for this is the lack of interest in the offer and the assimilation of immigrants. As a result of the multicultural society that is taking shape in Poland, the libraries, like other educational institutions, face the dilemma of transmitting culture in a way that does not threaten the identity of the newcomers.

In order to alleviate the effects of trauma in refugee children from Ukraine, the Z. Herbert Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Gorzów Wielkopolski, in order to accelerate their resilience, arranged classes entitled "Children". *Colorful syllables*, i.e. linguistics, bibliotherapy and art therapy. In order to preserve the cultural identity of the newcomers, tradition was cultivated with them in a dualistic way: in Polish and Ukrainian. The actions taken had a positive effect, the children began to regain a sense of security, which was reflected in their behaviour: they willingly began to join in the game, smiled, entered into a dialogue with the teachers and, importantly, as a result

of the trust inspired, they did not require the presence of their mothers at classes. The meetings continue to this day, because the author feels they are needed and enjoys interest, which is also proven by the results of the evaluation survey. From 4/03/2022 to 30/06/2023, 65 meetings were held, attended by 1494 children.

In the current situation, the question arises about the cultural security of the host country and the minority group. How to take care of cultural transmission in the emerging multicultural society so as not to give rise to conflicts and so that individuals preserve their own identity without succumbing to deliberate acculturation? The answer to this question may be the emerging new sub-disciplines of pedagogy, such as ethnosecurity and ethnopedagogy. The former is to take care of maintaining safety within culture, religion, language, etc. minority group versus the majority group. In addition, it sensitizes us to draw on the achievements of other cultures. Ethnopedagogy, on the other hand, familiarizes individuals in the field of broadly understood defense, but also analyzes the issues of culture in education. It also prepares for effective communication towards people with a different cultural script (coexistence of cultures), thus influencing the safe formation of identity.

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