School Learners’ Relationships as an Object of Educational Research under Globalization

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The present article is an attempt to discuss the role of culture within the context of globalization and to describe the dialectical inter-relationship between culture and globalization. The article is also aimed at revealing the attitudes of both the researchers of globalization and the experts of culture towards the impact of globalized culture on people's relationships. Within this context, new forms of mediation-based communication can be brought forward as well as their possible outcomes to effect the process of individual's spiritual self becoming. Due consideration of some issues of emancipation and manifestations of individualism as reflected in people's relationships also finds place in the article.

On the basis of the data obtained from empirical research, the characteristics of school students' human relationships with their parents, teachers, peers and themselves in forms 7 to 9 and 10 to 11 are discussed. Some evidence is presented of how those relationships were conditioned by age and gender and how school students tended to value those relationships. Most clearly manifested regression could be observed in the school students' valuations of their relationships with themselves and their teachers, and the smallest degree of regression was found in the student's relationships with the mother. The relationships with peers also tended to be characterized as of decreasing human quality.

Key words: globalization, culture, relationships, values, humaneness.

Introduction

Globalization as a major tendency of development of modern world is a multi-faceted state of things the underlying idea of which is complex interdependence (J. Tomlinson, 2002). People's lives are directly affected by the fast-spreading and overlapping mutual ties and interdependent networks: the individual's links with the world as a whole get strengthened and new prospects for political, economic and cultural development offer free access. However, at the same time, globalization may threaten by weakening human relationships within local communities and among separate individuals that, consequently, may further result in reducing or even destroying the individual's identity.

Quite a member of fields of human activity become involved in the processes of globalization but the domain of culture in characterized by
exclusively significant role in this respect. Different authors (A. Giddens (2000), E. Džėžulskis-Dienys (2004), B. Kuzmickas (2003), J. Morkūnienė (2003), J. Tomlinson (2002) and others) lay a special emphasis on the necessity of relating the processes of globalization, as potentially powerful changes, to the processes of culture in order to adequately grasp the essence of globalization. Alongside, the question of the origins of this essential relationship between globalization and culture is raised as well as the question of to what extent the changing culture is in power to influence people's relations with the surrounding reality and, consequently, execute impact on people's spiritual being. Therefore, the authors of the present article see as their major goals to discuss the role of culture within the context of globalization, to analyze the effects of globalized culture upon human relationships as such, and to reveal the characteristics of school students' (in forms 7 to 11) relationships with other people and with themselves.

The role of culture within the context of globalization

Some authors, while searching for the most satisfactory identification of the role of culture with respect to globalization, tend to attribute culture itself to globalization as one of its constituents. In an approach of similar kind, the polidimensional character should not be overlooked, as J. Tomlinson (2000) points out, and the very idea of culture may render the investigator helpless in terms of its complexity and evasiveness. Thus, another question is put forward: what is it that constitutes the cultural layer of globalization? In order to address the above question, the dimension of culture as such has to be defined.

Culture as a multi-faceted phenomenon may be given a variety of definitions but the investigators of globalization tend to primarily focus on those ways of activity that facilitate the actualization of human living. In this way, culture is perceived as a significant domain that encompasses all the varied aspects of human activity and is able to provide important personal meanings to the individual. On the other hand, similar approaches to the definitions of culture can be found not only among the theoreticians of globalization but also among the experts of culture. It is notable that some Lithuanian researchers of culture, while defining it, also tend to prioritize the aspects of human activity, behavior, communication, creation, or in general – ways of living (A. Greimas (1991), V.Berenis (1995), L. Donskis (1994)). Culture is primarily defined as “a way of existing in space and time of its subject (i.e. of a nation or historically related community)”, – L. Donskis (1994, p.43). Other scholars tend to emphasize more the meaningful (value-based, spiritual) aspect of culture (S. Šalkauskis (1992), A. Maceina (1993), M. Lukšienė (1993)) or culture is understood as something to be developed, purified, perfected and realized through certain qualities (V. Kavolis, 1996).

Needless to say that globalization, when based on the idea of inter-dependence, produces a certain effect on the meaningfulness of human activity and communication. The theoreticians of globalization seek to find out how globalization is able to change the context of generating meanings: how the individual identity is affected, what modification in the person’s immediate relationships with the local community are observed, how the interaction of separate individuals tend to change, to what extent globalization can be said to have impact on values, desires, experiences and the like. As pointed out by A. Giddens, globalization is a two-sided
action that embraces everything taking place ‘not here’, and also everything ‘here’. The cultural layer covers these both aspects of the action.

Thus, it is legitimate to assert that culture is a peculiar aspect of globalization, and in scholarly literature it is often treated as the essential component of complex inter-related networks. The major arguments in favour of this attitude relate to the impact of cultural consequences on globalization as the process of generating meanings have effect on the activity of both separate individuals and whole communities and that activity of both bears consequences. It is only evident that the representative signs of culture as well as their interpretations tend to constantly urge people to take action. It turns out that even in the cases when the people’s action remains on the purely instrumental level, as conditioned by practical or economic necessity, the cultural consciousness is nevertheless present in the people’s action, and this “cultural context” encourages people to reflect on the essence of what is being done. On the other hand, separate acts against the local background may, in turn, bring global consequences. Thus, the cultural layer is powerful enough to reveal the dialectical nature of globalization, or, the dialectical unity of the local and the global that witnesses the potential possibility of local factors to interact with global processes, as pointed out by A. Giddens.

What is especially important to note is the fact that globalization tends to weaken cultural links as directed towards and attached to specific locality, or, in J. Tomlinson’s figurative expression, the belief that culture and locality are paired up by origin is no longer valid. On the other hand, it is also acknowledged that the detachment of culture from its locality opens new wider horizons for developing cultural consciousness and gaining new cultural experiences. All that, without any doubt, acts in favour of the world as a new whole and expands the scope of cultural globalization. However, as the processes of limiting the variety of cultural entities are gaining speed, they may start threatening national cultures for their extinction, with the cosmopolitan processes expanding and becoming more powerful. For that reason, “globalization can be treated as both the biggest cultural gain and the most serious danger” (E. Džežulskis – Dienys, 2004, p.175). Alongside the issues we have been discussing, the problem of change of human relationships comes into the foreground in terms of the effect that the changing cultural attitudes may have on people’s relationships.

The globalized culture and human relationships

It is needless to say that culture as an overall way of human living has a lot to do with relationships among people. Recently more and more prominence has been given to mediation-based forms of communication that are implemented with the help of different technologies and that replace customary, stereotyped ways of communication. The researchers of the field (A. Giddens, 1997, F. Jameson, 1998, J. Tomlinson, 2002, J. Thompson, 1990) tend to focus on the issues of culture and communication and refer to the ways and possibilities of evoking closeness or even intimacy while communicating, as well as their consequences on the individual. According to A. Giddens, social relationships have the tendency of being taken out of local contexts and transformed in the indefinable prospect of time and space, they sort of “overstep” “all possible distances and join the idea of spatial closeness. Thus, the present-day modern society is characterized by a new way of communication – “the mediational interaction” that is available by
means of mass media and other technological devices (e-mail correspondence, telephone, fax).

It is only obvious that mediation-based communication has a lot of self-evident advantages, which are part and parcel of the life of modern person. However, it is legitimate to raise the question if the so-built kind of relationships are not, in fact, secondhand and lifeless, and if those relationships can potentially satisfy the need for genuine closeness and intimacy or rather manifest only “the detached intimacy” (J. Tomlinson, 2002), or are a form of mere “quasi-interaction” (K. Thompson, 1990). What is more, the essential question arises of the direction into which the application of modern technologies tends to lead people’s moral relationships with the surrounding world; do these links get stronger or, on the contrary, get weakened and become lame, or, perhaps, there is no observable impact of the technologies affecting human relationships? Some scholars tend to maintain that, by changing the traditional ‘face to face’ communication, modern information technologies “tend to affect not only the manner of human communication but also the spiritual content of personality” (B. Kuzmickas, 2003, p. 35). There are also considerations found in the field literature about how closely the individual is ready to establish the specific relation with what those technological advancements have to offer whether the individual is ready to plunge into the new reality or whether she/he chooses to remain calm and even indifferent. Thus, depending on the moral interdependence, which is testified either by the closeness and activity of interface or by its absence or passivity, the quality of changes in human relationships could be derived.

It is clear that other global tendencies also influence the relationships among people. As philosophical and psychological literature sees it, one of such tendencies is the growing emancipation of individuals, that surfaces in the attempts of escaping from some of the traditional dependences (communal, family, citizenship, confession). However, the struggle for freeing oneself from these dependences cannot guarantee the individual a genuine autonomy because s/he gets into the influence of other dependences that are infrequently more constraining or even dangerous. On the other hand, the expanding autonomy of the individuals can turn into individualism—the worst enemy that causes alienation in the relationships among people. According to A. Chinnery and Ch. Bai (2000), modern world is in the huge trap of individualism which stands in the way of manifestation of empathy as a condition for morality because the individual’s I is put into the first place and not the relationships with others. These kind of relationships can be destructive for the person’s conception of identity, and, alongside, hinder the meaningfulness of one’s living. The person that is inclined towards individualism not only keeps away from any closer contacts but also more frequently stays indifferent towards values as the foundation layer of togetherness.

Thus, the change of relationships in globalized society can surface a number of educational problems. The most topical ones are the prerequisites for the qualitative relationships with the surrounding world and their development in the course of educating school students. All that induced us to investigate the issues under discussion.

**School students’ relationships as the object of educational research under the circumstances of globalization**

According to different theories (personalisation, humanism, existentialism, neotomism), the relationships with other people should be
considered as an exceptional expression of the person's spiritual world. When these relationships get into disarray or even discontinue, the individual sort of loses the sense of life, gets alienated, gets a different perspective on oneself. The changed relationship with oneself also influences the relationships with other people.

While investigating these relationships in the school students, we have chosen as the research object the students' relationships with close people and themselves as the foundation basis for the students' spiritual expression. The aim of the research was to disclose 7th to 11th form students' developmental peculiarities of relationships with other people and themselves and the pedagogical conditions for their development in different types of school. The specific goals of the research were: 1) to define the relationships of 7th to 11th form students with their parents, peers, teachers, and themselves; 2) to compare the developmental peculiarities of the relationships acquired by 7th to 9th form students and 10th to 11th form students; 3) to establish the extent to which these relationships vary according to the gender of the students and type of school they attended.

In the course of the research the relationships were viewed as a distinctive reaction of a person to the surroundings which can manifest itself as the recognition of and respect for its worth, and as the wish, intention or specific manifestation of the willpower and action to show, develop, safeguard, take care, etc. In other words, we tended to view those relationships as subjective (inner) and objective (outwardly) forms of expression.

The most important aspect that helps to define the value of the relationships among people is humaneness. As the expression of man's spiritual maturity, it serves both as the criterion of maturity of human relationships and a tool for their harmony and sublimation. Therefore, while analysing senior school students' relationships with their parents, peers and teachers, the greatest attention was given to the range and stability of expressions of humaneness (sensitiveness, respect, confidence, tolerance, thoughtfulness, openness, etc.). It was considered that with the help of these criteria it is possible to establish the quality of the investigated students' relationships with their family members and other close people as well as establish the character of expression of spirituality in the medium of specific relationships.

Another aspect that enabled us to obtain some further information about the state of the investigated students' relationships was their attitude towards their own and others' social roles and the expectations they set. There was an attempt made to see how senior students evaluated their own and their social partners' (father's, mother's, teachers', peers', daughter's and son's) roles; and how much the performance of these roles conforms to their expectations which can influence their behavior and relationships. At the same time it was attempted to define how the investigated students related the performance of their social roles to the realization of the principle of humaneness. The discovery of this relationship was to help to understand how important humaneness is to an individual while performing different roles according to the status in specific social surroundings (in the family, at school, in a group of peers, etc.).

The methods of the research: 1. The empirical methods of unfinished sentences tests and M.Philips's emotional experiences tests, questionnaires, and interviews were applied. There were investigated 1257 teenagers and 467 senior students studying at secondary schools and gymnasium type schools.

2. The statistical methods of descriptive statistical analysis (absolute and percent – age-
related calculations), factorial and correlation analysis, application of the chi 2 criterion were applied. The data have been processed with the help of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software, Version 10.0.

The peculiarities of maturity of senior students’ relationships with other people

Thus, taking into consideration the students’ attitudes towards other people as the partners in humane relationships and the performers of social roles, typical of those, and, towards their expectations relating to all of these aspects, 6 levels of relationships were singled out.

With the help of the use of the unfinished sentences tests and the inventories of wishes and expectations, the following relationships between senior students and their parents and teachers were revealed (Figure 1).

As we can see, those students were inclined to evaluate their relationships with their mother more favourably than with father. Thus, the relationships of half of the students with their mothers are fairly humane; and their relationships with their fathers are also humane of a little more than a quarter of students. Besides, the relationships of one fifth of the students with their fathers were indifferent or indefinite (not defined). Therefore, while analysing some students’ descriptions of their fathers, the general impression was as if they lived not with their fathers, but rather beside them.

The distinctive feature of the students’ humane relationships with their mothers is a better mutual agreement. Besides, it is obvious that one of the factors determining more harmonious relationships with mother than with father is the mother’s more prominent humaneness. According to the opinion of the investigated students, there are many mothers who try to treat their children in a humane way (to look after them, to protect, to safeguard them, to worry about them, to sacrifice themselves and so on).

On the other hand, although the relationships of the senior students with their mothers are better
than with their fathers, still more than one third of the students defined these relationships as not positive enough and accompanied by certain disagreements, rows or scolding; besides, some students had doubt as to the worth of mother's personality and the social roles performed by mother. More than one tenth of the students defined these relationships as indifferent or indefinite. Therefore, in the course of the research, it was noted what the senior students missed most of all in their relationships with mother and father. Judging from the students' answers, it became evident that most of all they missed respect, reliance, understanding and help. Besides, although the relationships with father were evaluated as less positive, the students expected to find more humaneness not in the relationships with father, but with mother. In some cases their wishes, concerning the mother, were more clearly defined. It may be explained by a stronger attachment to mother than to father, and also, by mother's stronger feelings and difficulty in expressing them, which hindered to fulfil the needs for unconditional love (R. Campbell, G. Chapman, J. Rembowski and others).

With the purpose of defining the relationships between senior students and teachers, the greatest attention was given to the cognitive and emotional levels of relationships, expressed by the students' attitudes towards a pedagogue as a specialist and person, and by the related experiences, desires and wishes.

Taking all that into consideration, it became clear that the relationships between students and teachers were more similar to the students' relationships with father than with mother. Almost the same number of senior students evaluated favourably their teachers (30,4 pc) and parents (27,3 pc) as humane persons (kind, sincere, competent, very skilled at work, dedicated to it, knowing how to socialize and so on); less favourably were evaluated their teachers (54,1 pc) and parents (45,9 pc of the students). The data of negative evaluation differed very slightly and showed not only a weak relationship (disrespectful, cold), but also a feuding one (with vain rows, disagreements, affects, and other negative emotional states).

On the other hand, we should not miss out the fact that the relationships between senior students and teachers were usually not positive enough rather than neutral or indefinite. Although the relationships between students at this age and their parents were not positive enough either, still they were at least neutral or indefinite. However, the number of students who manage to maintain this kind of relationships with mother and teachers differs very slightly (0,90 pc in mother's favour).

While analysing not positive enough relationships between pupils and teachers, it was found out that in some cases the students lacked teacher's respect, tolerance, understanding, warmth and teacher's ability to accept the student as he/she is. In other cases, the students' more positive attitudes towards the pedagogue as a specialist and person were lacking. In still other cases, the attitude towards the teacher, as a professional of a subject, prevailed.

It was discovered that the pedagogue's competence is more important to students: either of the subject or of a humanistic person. The information gained from the answers confirmed the data that the majority of students (59,1 pc) preferred the teacher's humanistic competence to that of the subject (34,8 pc) and only few of them (6,1 pc) admitted a tight unity between these two competences. The students confirmed the opinion that in giving the definition of a good teacher, his/her personality is primarily taken into consideration, not his/her knowledge of the subject.
In adolescence and early youth, the need for communication with contemporaries becomes very strong. Therefore, in this research we tried to define students' relationships with peers as their closest contemporaries; and, at the same time, to compare them with their relationship with themselves. As self-awareness, the relationship with oneself, helps a person not only to perceive and understand his/her own individuality, but also to develop it and change social relationships accordingly. While comparing the research data, which define the state of the types of these two relationships, the following results were obtained (Figure 2).

The relationships of senior students with themselves were much worse than with their peers: less than one tenth of the students evaluated themselves positively; whereas more than one third of the students evaluated positively their peers. The number of students whose attitude towards themselves is not definite, is bigger than the number of students who evaluated their peers not positively enough, and it was even several times bigger than the number of students who evaluated themselves not positively enough. Thus, nearly half of the students did not have a definite opinion of themselves i.e. referring to their personal qualities, abilities, etc. These students' relationships with themselves were not only less positive than with their peers, but the total orientation was less humane, too. Besides, a similar conclusion can be drawn while comparing the students' relationships with themselves, their parents and teachers. Although there were more students who evaluated their parents and teachers less positively than themselves, still the number of the students who evaluated themselves indefinitely remained prevalent.

While comparing senior students' relationships according to gender, the most distinguished relationships were with peers: girls managed to maintain frequent relationships with their peers more successfully than boys. Besides, girls expressed greater need than boys for more open relationships with their mothers (they wished their mothers were telling them more about themselves, shared their achievements and failures; and they wished their fathers respected them more, trusted them and understood them). At the same time, the boys' needs were less expressed. Also, the girls
needed closer contacts with the teacher more often than boys. On the other hand, the boys’ relationships with themselves were less positive and definite. It seemed that boys lacked more definite attitude towards themselves and a deeper cognition and understanding of themselves.

The tendencies of manifestations of teenagers’ relationships with other people

By applying the analogical research methods and criteria, the peculiarities of teenagers’ (the students in forms 7, 8, 9) relationships with other people were identified. On the basis of the criterion of humaneness, there were distinguished the following four levels of relationships: very positive, positive, less positive, and negative (Figure 3).

Most positively the teenagers tended to evaluate their relationships with their mothers; almost two thirds of the students of this age defined them as positive. Also very similarly the students evaluated their relationships with teachers. However, more than half of the students evaluated their relationships with their fathers either less positively (49.8%) or tended to show straightforward and even cynical hostility. While defining their relationships with parents (father or mother), the students pointed out not only to personal contacts with them, but they often referred to parents’ mutual relationships and to the relationships between parents and children in general; sometimes the students took into consideration their fathers’ social status, too. It is worthwhile noting that search for one’s identity did not reduce the teenagers’ need for communication with their parents. It is obvious that in those cases when students were pleased with their parents, they wished them all the best; however, this need was also manifested when the students suffered from lack of communication with their parents and accused them of inability to understand their children and to be interested in their lives. One third of the students (34.5%) constantly derived pleasure from communication with their parents, and many more students (37.9%) experienced it fairly frequently.
The relationships between teenagers and teachers were somewhat different. They were regarded as very important, too, and equaled to contacts with mother; however, in this case, matter-of-fact and personal relationships were not even and tended to show preference in favour of the first. In this way, it becomes clear that matter-of-fact relationships with pedagogues are becoming more significant to teenagers because on this basis the most of school interaction takes place. When the student fails to give an efficient answer, these relationships cannot develop without a specific help of the pedagogue; thus, they acquire negative forms which embody the student’s personal dissatisfaction with the pedagogue as a person. The research revealed that only 5,9 pc of teenagers constantly derived pleasure from communication with their teachers and only one third of them (34,1 pc) experienced it fairly frequently.

While comparing the data obtained from the teenagers’ and senior students’ answers, we can see that at upper secondary school level a very positive relationship with father, mother and teachers is declining even more. The same tendency is noticed while comparing teenagers’ relationships with peers and themselves. However, it is obvious that students’ relationships with mother tend to change least of all and the relationships with teachers change most of all.

All scholars agree that relationships with contemporaries are exceptionally important to teenagers. Figure 4 shows, on the basis of criterion of humaneness, what teenagers’ attitudes towards their peers and themselves are.

The data revealed that teenagers are fairly self-critical: they consider their own humaneness to be lower than that of their contemporaries; besides, they consider their contemporaries to be more humane than their own mothers. Figure 4 shows that nearly two thirds of teenagers recognized some manifestations of humaneness in their contemporaries (honesty, diligence, and tolerance); or considered their contemporaries to be able to spread goodness and beauty. But the most important point is that their contemporaries can understand them (“they understand me”, “they are able to hear me”, “they do not turn their back on me if I am not well off”, etc.). However, first of all the teenagers (a quarter of them) noted the following traits of their contemporaries as
cheerfulness, self-discipline, determination, etc. The students expressed the wish their peers were not so cruel, were more ready to agree to their opinion, did not spread rumours. Such relationships can be treated as being obviously situational and superficial; therefore, the teenagers did not expect to maintain them long. Teenagers have a desire to strike up a friendship, and although very often they get disappointed with it, still they try to maintain it (1 pc of teenagers had not succeeded in striking up such a friendship even partly, their attitude towards contemporaries was unfavourable, or even cynical.) Only one among ten teenagers evaluated his/her relationships through the prism of deeply realized humaneness, and mentioned their contemporaries' noble deeds, care of other people, ability to understand and forgive. They also hoped to keep and consolidate their friendships.

While comparing teenagers' and senior students' relationships with their peers and themselves, it is noticeable that very positive and positive relationships tend to decline.

Conclusions

1. Globalized culture encourages the prevalence of mediation-based communication that is able to precondition the type of relationships that are hardly grounded by moral values or even tend to become exceptionally individualistic. Thus, it is of utmost significance for educationalists to be in the know of the type of relationships that prevail in school students' communities of different age groups and what values those relationships are based on. The humaneness of relationships seems to be of primary importance here as it serves both as the key criterion for establishing the degree of maturity of relationships and the major form of expression of those relationships.

2. The data of the present research highlighted that although the relationships between the senior students and other people next to them (parents, peers and teachers) are not very humane, still the most important task is to improve the relationships among the students of that age group and their parents and peers. Besides, the relationships of senior students with themselves were even worse than with their peers. On the other hand, although the girls' relationships with themselves and others were more humane, the girls still expressed stronger desire to have more humane relationships with teachers than the boys did.

3. The relationships between teenagers and the people next to them were not humane enough, in the same way as the relationships between the senior students and other people. On the other hand, the teenagers' relationships with their mothers and teachers were more humane than with their contemporaries and themselves. However, these relationships did not include all the agents of education and did not ensure their extended impact onto the youth. Therefore, it is extremely important that the relationships of students of this age, as the major form of expression of spirituality, would acquire the tendency of becoming more humane.

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MOKINIŲ SANTYKIAI KAIP EDUKOLOGIJOS TYRIMO OBJEKTAS GLOBALIZACIJOS SĄLYGOMIS

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Santykiai

Straipsnyje pirmiausia aptariama kultūra globalizacijos kontekste ir apibūdinama globalizuotos kultūros įtaka žmonių santykiams kaip jų dvasingumo raiškai. Remiantis skirtingomis teorijomis (personalizmo, humanizmo, egzistencializmo, neotomizmo), santykiai su žmonėmis laikyti išskirtine žmogaus dvasinio pasaulio raiškos sritimi. Kai šie santykiai sutrinka ar nutrūksta, žmogus tarsi netenka gyvenimo prasmės, susvetimėja, kitaip ima žiūrėti ir į save. Pasikeitęs santykis su savimi gali turėti įtakos ir santykiams su kitais žmonėmis.

Kadangi globalizuota kultūra skatina tarpininkavimo bendravimo įsigalėjimą, galintį supontuoti santykiai, nors net perdėti individualistinius, todėl svarbūs žinoti, kokie santykiai vyrauja skirtingomis sąlygomis. Šiuo atveju paauglių santykiai su kitais žmonėmis ir juos geba suprasti kaip brandų kriterijų, todelė pasinaudojant empiriniai tyrimo duomenimis šiame straipsnyje taip pat siekiama atskleisti paauglių (VII–IX klasės mokinių) ir vyresniųjų mokinių (X–XI klasės) santykiai su kitais žmonėmis ir savimi, taip pat žinoti, kokie santykiai vyrauja skirtingomis sąlygomis.
nėra pakankamai humaniški. Antra vertus, paauglių ir jų motinų bei mokytojų santykiai buvo humaniškesni nei su bendraamžiais ar savimi. Tačiau šie santykiai neapreπia visų edukacinių proceso dalyvių ir negaran-
tuoja, kad tokie pat santykiai yra palaikomi su skirtin-
go amžiaus jaunimo atstovais. Todėl ypač svarbu, kad stiprėtų šio amžiaus mokinių santykių humaniškumo, pagrindinės dvasingumo išraiškos, tendencija.