

VALUES PREFERRED BY PUPILS AT A YOUNGER SCHOOL AGE

Key words: values, hierarchy of values, upbringing, younger school age

The manuscript will elaborate on the problem of values preferred by children at a younger school age. In integrated education, the issues of values are inscribed into a wider context, not only school but also educational one, as well as into an axiological context in pedagogy. In upbringing and pedagogy, the axiology determines any educational activities and inspires pedagogical thinking. As claimed by, among others, M. Nowak – “there is no upbringing without values” (Nowak 2008, p.341), whereas W. Brzezinka states that: “Those who educate, also value” (Brzezinka 1979, p.92).

Values respected by children affect their perception of social phenomena, assessment of people and their own behavior. Therefore, investigations into the axiology of the young generation are of the utmost significance. Despite ample works addressing axiology, sparse studies have been devoted to the preferred values, *i.e.* those that are most respected and desired by children at the younger school age. Most of researches are conducted amongst adolescents, while the first stage of education, *i.e.* learning in classes I- III, is very important. Educational programs elaborated for children at the younger school age point to integral, subjective, personal and individual approach to a pupil. Those assumptions originate mainly from personalism – a philosophical mainstream of thinking about man and upbringing, emphasizing the role and value of a person.

Concept, defining and hierarchy of values

The word “value” may often be found in discussions from the field of philosophy, religion, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology. It occurs in journalism, in mass media as well as in conversations. We know its meaning by intuition, yet we have a problem with its precise definition. W. Tatarkiewicz stated that: “Defining “values” is difficult, if at all possible” (Tatarkiewicz 1985, p. 61).

The problem of values has been appearing in the philosophical thought since the ancient times. Platon (427-347 B.C.) claimed that things were valuable when they participated in the improvement of their transcendental prototypes, referred by him as ideas. The ideas are measures of the value of things, if they themselves participate in the principal idea of good. Platon claimed that the good was the first rule and the ultimate objective of the world. According to him, the knowledge of ideas was the prerequisite of the appropriate valuation of things.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) stated that there was no other right than the real right. He claimed that thought was what was divine in man. He applied a division into inner rights – “right by themselves” and outer rights – instrumental rights. He was determining the value of things:

- a) statically – by contact with nature;
- b) dynamically – by consistency with the function.

According to St. Thomas of Aquin, the sole existence of things, comprehended as the real prerequisite of any perfection in all categories of the being, is the cardinal virtue. Owing to this, St. Thomas of Aquin formulated major axioms of his axiology: *Ens et bonum, – et verum, – et unum, – et pulchrum convertuntur* (January 1985). St. Thomas Aquinas believed that the essence of being is the act, which is the sole perfection of the existence of that being. God, which is the highest good, is the pure act. God is the first reason and the ultimate aim of existence. St. Thomas Aquinas divided the goods into:

- ultimate goods, i.e. those chosen by man based on the good will;
- goods chosen by man based on intellectual judgments.

In analyzing different philosophical concepts, it may be stated after A. M. Krapc that “value is the quality of existence as far as the existence is the subject of intentional cognitive-desiring acts. [...], whereas in the Ancient times and especially in the Middle Ages the value was perceived as a transcendental quality, mainly as the good, although not only, since truth and beauty were also claimed to be values” (Krapiec 1993, p. 328).

As noticed by S. Kowalczyk: The philosophical meaning of the term *value* is very differently comprehended in particular philosophical mainstreams. It is understandable, as the idea of values is linked with the concepts of existence, world, man, community and culture (Kowalczyk 2006).

In the discussion being held, it seems advisable to determine the value as “what is worth of being desired”, as the most desired thing by man, as the objective a man pursues, meaning internalized standards of behaviors that should be developed in the process of upbringing.

A number of philosophers have undertaken trials to systemize values. Platon claimed the following triad to be the most significant: truth, beauty

and good. A more developed hierarchy of values may be found in works of phenomenologists. M. Scheler discriminated five groups of values, the so-called "modality", and ranked them as follows:

1. absolute value;
2. spiritual values (cultural);
3. vital values;
4. utilitarian values;
5. hedonistic values.

According to Scheler, the top of the rank were absolute values, including the holy values – ascribed to God, deities, specific natural or social phenomena. These values are found the most prized by people. An opposite to the holy values are demonic values (Brzozowski 1989).

In Scheler's theory of values, the spiritual values were divided into three groups:

- a) esthetical values;
- b) values of knowing the truth;
- c) moral values (good).

The third group covers vital values, referred also to as values of life. They refer to the preservation of life as well as psychical and physical health. The fourth group of values, according to Scheller, includes what is useful and useless, *i.e.* utility values. He believed that they were no intrinsic, but derivative values (*e.g.* diligence, prudence, frugality). The last place in the rank is held by values linked with experiencing sensual or emotional pleasures or displeasures, *i.e.* hedonistic values.

Values play a significant role in education and pedagogy. They support the development of man. It is impossible to raise and teach the identity of a young man without specific "guideposts", meaning: without values. As rightly emphasized by K. Popielski, "values bind the human existence with life, activate the course of interpersonal relations and are a point of reference to an individual. They attract and open a person to the reality, they oblige and direct. In that meaning, a statement may be made on them in terms of reality, which enables an individual the process of autotransformation, transformation, orientation and decision-making" (Popielski 1996, s. 62).

A man who does not possess any role models, any points of reference, is at risk of moral ambivalence. Such a condition is likely to elicit the feeling of loss, uncertainty and apathy in a man. Hence, a task of a teacher – the one who guides – is to educate in the spirit of respect for moral values.

Upbringing, which may be comprehended, among other things, as help in the preparation for playing and accepting social roles, formation of conscience, and help in personalization (Nowak 1996, p. 254), is impossible without values. In the process of upbringing and education, a tutor refers to

the values a pupil is knowing, choosing, accepting, taking as his and implementing.

There is a close relationship between values and objectives of school education. The latter are a conscious and “programmed” effect we wish to achieve in the development of pupils over the period of educational processes. What objectives are to be achieved depends on the pupil and tutor but also on the social, cultural and political situation.

Values play also one of the key roles in the integral development of a man. A man needs a number of values¹. We may agree that personalistic upbringing is integral upbringing.

Personalism, which emphasizes uniqueness, dignity of a person and their right to chose own path of personal perfection, is against the manipulation of contents of education and upbringing. It does not mean, however, that the upbringing should not be oriented. On the contrary, it should be oriented to desirable values, including: truth, good, beauty, humanistic and Christian values.

It is advisable to undertake empirical investigations that would enable identifying the values preferred by pupils, in order to determine whether the process of upbringing to values proceeds correctly.

Perception of values in children at a younger school age

In the early period of the younger school age, children are able to spot the simplest moral problems. As observed by E. B. Hurlock, before commencing education children can differentiate between the good and the bad in simple situations, which is the beginning of the development of their conscience. At the end of childhood, the scale of values and their conscience should already be developed.

At the younger school age, children are noticing simple moral problems, however they are still lacking subtle sensibility in selected situations. In that period, children’s behavior seems rapid, spontaneous, rigid and ill-considered. Yet, the noticing of moral problems is accompanied by the comprehension of situations and the will of their realization. As a result of moral sensitiveness, a subject perceives moral problems owing to the understanding of a situation (Magda 2000).

¹ It is worth referring to the stratified theory of development presented by S. Kunowski, who by pointing out the role of biological, psychological, sociological, cultural and spiritual factors, emphasizes their significance in the process of upbringing. See: S. Kunowski, *Podstawy współczesnej pedagogiki*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 164-259.

In building the identity of a child at the school age of crucial significance is the environment the child is living in. Apart from family, an important place of modeling the identity is school. A lack of or vagueness of desirable and socially-acceptable standards may lead to the misunderstanding of the standards, treating them as extrinsic and, thus, unfamiliar. The objective of axiological education, directed to a child at this stage of development is, therefore, to equip a child in knowledge on values as well as standards derived from them (Jeziarska 2003, p. 156).

The younger school age is a highly important stage in the life of a man, as it has a significant effect on the further years of their life. This is the period at which the child's identity is being developed. It is additionally a special period of susceptibility to educational actions and enhanced cognitive curiosity. Thus, even the cycle of early learning has been discriminated as a period of special significance.

The upbringing and the identity development of a young man is impossible without values. These are the values preferred by man that are becoming the motif of his action. It may be stated that the quality of life of a man depends, somehow, on the values he meets, the way he receives and accepts them, as well as on their hierarchy and on how they are going to be implemented. P. Oleś writes about values that "[...] they determine the attitude towards the surrounding world, affect the evaluation of the future and the selection of objectives and directions of actions in the future" (Oleś 1983).

As noticed by M. Przetacznikowa, when children reach school maturity and begin education, their educational environment is extending and enriching, and forms of pedagogical effects they are exposed to are subject to qualitative changes. Most of children still remain, at least over the period of attending to primary school, under the upbringing influence of a family home, however changes occur in their position in the family, chores, requirements and privileges as well as in their relationships with parents, siblings and relatives (Przetacznikowa 1986).

The younger school age is the period of one of the most important transformations in the moral development of a child.

The entering of a child on the path of social experiences exerts a considerable effect on the comprehension of moral concepts. The consistency of own actions with generally-acceptable rules is becoming a source of satisfaction. Adopting the criterion of the evil and the right as own makes that a child begins to apply it to their own behavior. [...] It is then, when the capability for controlling own behavior from the viewpoint of adopted rules as well as positive and negative responses is being born (Olek-Redlarska 2002).

At the younger school age, a child – to some extent – still thinks with pictures, hence persons responsible for the modeling of the values should refer to such concepts as: reason and dependency.

The comprehension of moral concepts is strictly linked with the intellectual maturity of pupils. J. Piaget believes that in the early school period a child is at the stage of:

1. moral conformism – in fear of punishment a child behaves according to requirements of parents and teachers;
2. conventionalism – a child behaves following commonly-accepted principles and rules and does not analyze effects of his or hers actions on himself/herself and on the environment;
3. moral principialism – a child takes into account the concern of the group and subordinates his/hers behavior to the rules adopted by the group;
4. moral rationalism – a child is capable of separating actions that are consistent with a standard and those that are inconsistent with it, based on their effect.

In that period, upbringing functions of parents are still very important. However, there appears the second upbringing environment, meaning – school. The upbringing at the younger school age is a specific fundament, the further process of which is based on. A highly significant role is ascribed to teachers, as they introduce a child into a new upbringing environment, constituted by school. The first experiences of a child gained in this school environment are very important as they determine child's attitude to school, learning, social group, himself/herself, and values.

It is extremely important, therefore, that in this period the organized educational process satisfies expectations of children, parents and the entire society (Adamek 1997).

Sparse works are available that refer to the perception of values by children. An exception may be a study by U. Morszczyńska and W. Morszczyński. They conducted a survey amongst children at the age of four to nine to identify their perception of values.

Analysis of empirical studies into values respected by children at the younger school age

Values preferred by pupils at the younger school age will be presented based on a survey conducted amongst III class pupils living in the Bialski District. The survey was carried out in May 2007.

The study was undertaken in order to depict values respected by children at the younger school age.

In the study, use was made of a technique "Draw and write", elaborated based on a technique of T. Williams, N. Wetton and A. Moon from the University of Southampton. It is an appropriate research technique adjusted to developmental capabilities of children at the younger school age. It consists in drawing and describing (naming) a figure. It is a good tool for examining the perception of children in order to plan an educational program or to monitor and evaluate its results. The analysis and interpretations of the figures enables determining values that are appreciated by pupils as well as the hierarchy of those values.

The technique consists in drawing and describing (naming) a figure. It may be applied in children under four years of age. It enables determining in what way the children are interpreting the surrounding world and experiences. Its usability has been verified by T. Williams and co-workers in a study covering 23,000 children at the age between 4 and 11.

S. Popek notices that: Artistic work of children emerges from psychical needs of an individual and, thus, is fully integrates with the psychical life of an individual and the whole social, natural, civic and urban environment. As the basic form of expression, it is the manifestation of individual psychic development and, consequently, one of the ways to recognize mental development and a developing identity (Popek 1985, p.130).

Examination by means of a figure enables knowing the contents the subject is not always aware of. It may be applied amongst pupils at the younger school age, who may still have some difficulties with filling up longer questionnaires. The study with the use of the "Draw and write" technique, requires sheets of A3 paper for each person and colored pencils. The children are asked to draw themselves and around them five illustrations depicting what is the most important and valuable in their life. Each of these illustrations should be described below (entitled). At figure presenting "someone or something most important in life" to the subject, children should draw digit 1, which will indicate the first place (the highest rank). Next, children should analogously number the other figures – this will show the hierarchy of values of each pupil. The children should be explained that:

- the work is not a test and will not be marked;
- it is unimportant whether they draw and write nicely;
- they should work on their own, and do not share their ideas with other children;
- it is important that the figure depicts what they really feel;
- the work is anonymous, only gender of the subject is noted.

Characteristics of the surveyed pupils

With the use of the above-described research tool, 110 pupils of III classes of elementary school were examined in the study.

Tab. 1. Distribution of sample size as affected by gender.

		N	%
gender	girls	55	50.0%
	boys	55	50.0%
Total		110	100.0%

The study covered 55 girls (constituting 50% of all pupils surveyed) and 55 boys (50%).

Tab. 2. Distribution of pupils sample size as affected by the place of living.

		N	%
Place of living	city	57	51.6%
	country	53	48.4%
Total		110	100.0%

Amongst the children examined, 57 pupils (51.6%) were living in the city and 53 pupils (48.4%) were living in the country.

Almost all works made by the children were colorful and full of details. Sometimes, the children were using symbols (e.g. love – a heart, education – a book). 91% of the pupils were drawing themselves in the centre of the whole figure. While drawing the values, some of the pupils drew less values than requested (the pupils were supposed to Draw 5 figures depicting the respected values, next entitle them and rank with numbers in order of significance).

Tables presented below show values selected by the children (with consideration given to the place ascribed to each value by the subject).

Tab. 3. Values preferred by the pupils – 1st place.

No.	value	N ²
1.	family	50
2.	religious values	31
3.	love	5
4.	hobby	4
5.	health	3
6.	sport	3
7.	education	3
8.	home	2
9.	friendship	2
10.	food	2
11.	job	2
12.	nature	2
13.	peace, safety	1

The Table presents values that are the most significant to the children.

Tab. 4. Values preferred by the pupils – IInd place.

No.	value	N
1.	family	52
2.	love	15
3.	religious values	11
4.	home	5
5.	friendship	4
6.	education	4
7.	hobby	4
8.	sport	3
9.	food	2
10.	favorite pet	2
11.	health	2
12.	nature	2
13.	money	1
14.	good	1
15.	happiness	1
16.	peace, safety	1

² Number of works depicting particular value.

Tab. 5. Values preferred by the pupils – IIIrd place.

No.	value	N
1.	family	45
2.	love	14
3.	home	13
4.	education	7
5.	health	6
6.	friendship	3
7.	religious values	3
8.	hobby	3
9.	nature	3
10.	sport	2
11.	favorite pet	2
12.	happiness	2
13.	good	2
14.	food	2
15.	truth	1
16.	job	1
17.	money	1

Tab. 6. Values preferred by the pupils – IVth place.

No.	value	N
1.	education	29
2.	friendship	20
3.	family	15
4.	health	10
5.	home	5
6.	hobby	4
7.	nature	4
8.	love	4
9.	sport	3
10.	favorite pet	3
11.	religious values	2
12.	food	2
13.	kindness	2
14.	truth	2
15.	happiness	1
16.	peace	1
17.	job	1
18.	homeland	1
19.	money	1

Tab. 7. Values preferred by the pupils – Vth place.

No.	value	N
1.	hobby	19
2.	education	15
3.	friendship	13
4.	health	13
5.	home	8
6.	nature	8
7.	family	6
8.	sport	6
9.	favorite pet	5
10.	love	5
11.	religious values	2
12.	food	2
13.	happiness	2
14.	money	1
15.	truth	1
16.	beauty	1
17.	job	1
18.	good	1
19.	peace	1

Tab. 8. Hierarchy of values of the pupils surveyed (based on the “Draw and write” technique).

No.	value
1.	family
2.	religious values
3.	love
4.	home
5.	education
6.	friendship
7.	health
8.	hobby
9.	sport
10.	nature
11.	favorite pet
12.	food
13.	good
14.	happiness
15.	truth
16.	money
17.	work
18.	peace, safety
19.	homeland
20.	beauty

As described earlier, each pupil was ascribing a rank (place) to each value. Adding together all results obtained (each value was granted a specified number of points for each place, *i.e.* 5 points for the 1st place, 4 points for the 2nd place, *etc.*) enabled formulating the hierarchy of values of the pupils of integrated education.

Based on the analysis of drawings depicting values most estimated by the pupils, it may be concluded that the most preferred values to them are: family, religious values (God, Jesus), love, home (actually "home" may be acknowledged as a symbol of family, however in the study it was treated as a separate value – a place being of importance to a child, where a child feels safe and good), education, friendship, and health.

Thus, the holy values, recognized by philosophers (*e.g.* Scheler, Tischer) as the most important ones, were ranked second by the children surveyed. The respondents were found to respect the most the "secular values" – family. In the hierarchy of children values, lower places are occupied by values of recognizing the truth (education – 5th place, truth – 15); vital values (health – 7, sport – 9); hedonistic values (hobby – 8, happiness – 14); moral values (good – 13); economic and utilitarian values (money – 16, job – 17). The patriotic values were ranked at the penultimate place, whereas the esthetic values (beauty) at the last place.

Statistical calculations and results of the Chi-square test enabled concluding that gender, place of living and educational status of parents affected, to some extent, the way of providing answers to the above problem, yet the differences noted were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

We often wonder whether we are currently facing a crisis of Christian and humane values. Having analyzed the conducted study, I agree with M. Nowak, who believes that: Faith of a man and humanity a man possesses suggests that what is the greatest, the most noble, and solemn, will remain for ever, for all generations. Timeless values, grown from experiences of the humankind, do exist (Nowak 1993).

According to the assumptions of personalism, upbringing may be comprehended as educating a man towards its ultimate goal, as well as of the society the man lives in (Adamski 2005). Results of the conducted empirical studies may evoke optimism, since children at the younger school age estimate the most the holy values: family and religious values (in the Scheler's hierarchy of standards, the holy values are acknowledged as the highest ones).

The conducted empirical study, depicting values preferred by children at the younger school age, contributes to the deepening of a pedagogical reflection on upbringing to values amongst parents and teachers.

It would be advisable for the authors of educational programs to pay attention to the necessity of modeling values omitted by children at the younger school age (e.g. hardly ever do the pupils pay attention to patriotic values).

Abstract

The presented manuscript elaborates on the values preferred by children at a younger school age. In integrated education, the issues of values are inscribed into a wider context, not only school but also educational one, as well as into an axiological context in pedagogy.

The manuscript is composed of a theoretical and empirical section. The theoretical section covers literature on the subject and depicts basic problems of axiology. In this section, additionally, the concept of value was defined, selected theories referring to the hierarchy of values were presented and the significance of value in education was depicted.

The manuscript addresses issues referring to the perception of values by children at the younger school age. The modeling of specified values proceeds in the course of the upbringing process. The comprehension of moral concepts is strictly linked with the intellectual maturity of pupils.

Values preferred by the children at the younger school age were presented based on a survey conducted amongst III class pupils. In the study, use was made of a technique "Draw and write" elaborated based on a technique of T. Williams, N. Wetton and A. Moon from the University of Southampton.

Based on the analysis of drawings depicting values most estimated by the pupils, it may be concluded that the most preferred values to them are: family, religious values (God, Jesus), love, home, education, friendship, and health.

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