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of changes***

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Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialization

University of Warsaw

Ul. Podchorążych 20

00-721 Warszawa

e-mail: socialpedagogy@pedagogikaspoieczna.edu.pl

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Alicja Zbierzchowska

CALL FOR PAPERS

Introduction

Dear Readers,

The twentieth century has been a time of many modernist transformations within society. Mostly they affected family. The transition from a large family – a stable and multi-generational, structured and strongly linked economically – to the nuclear family – alienated from the environment, liquid and hybrid – has been a process that is not finished yet.

We have entered the twenty-first century with a discourse of reproduction and a discourse of gender. Heteronormative order is questioned. These processes play an important role in a family's life: its condition and functions. A sign of the times is the increasing acceptance of homosexual families, partnerships, or the relocation of procreation outside the family.

The nuclear family, still the dominant form of family life, shrinks and / or takes the form of a dyad – childless couple or a single parent (usually the mother) with one child, or is being replaced by living all alone. The percentage of single and double households increases from year to year. Destabilization and deinstitutionalisation of family life have been recorded in the statistics for the last 20 years.

Nevertheless, the research conducted in Poland, but also in other countries, show consistently that the family is the greatest value of young people's individual hierarchy of values. The questions of family's future and its condition, as well as questions of empowering and weakening factors of the family's internal ties seems to be justified. It is reasonable to ask about the new models of motherhood and fatherhood. Selected issues related to the family are discussed in the following pages of "Papers of Social Pedagogy".

With best wishes for the New Year 2017!

Laura Lalak

*Family matters
are not just
domestic affairs:
a perspective on
social pedagogy in
social work*

IRENA DYCHAWY ROSNER

Malmö University, Sweden

EN

In the last few decades, the traditional concept of family has weakened while the development of numerous new constellations has gained a lot of attention. Convention sees family as a nuclear social formation, where heterosexual parents raise their children well. This view attests to the potential for healthy functioning in a variety of family arrangements, and to the stability of these social environments. In the turmoil of our rapidly changing world, the value of system orientation is changing and questions are being raised over what is an ordinary landscape of family life, its constellations and optimal functioning. This article raises family-relevant issues and discusses social pedagogy in family social work, particularly related to social care in Sweden intended for socially vulnerable populations such as the elderly, members of minority ethnic groups, and persons with disabilities suffering from discrimination and social exclusion. It is concluded that – in these populations – the family constellation, be it traditional or modern, is not really the issue, since public social care service constructions have mostly replaced traditional caring relations within families with leveling institutional structures. The social pedagogy in family social work professional practice is conducted using socio-ecological approaches for assessment, treatment and service delivery, for the improvement of individual wellbeing referred to as the individual, social and sociopolitical life-world context.

Key words: family, social pedagogy, social work, Sweden



Introduction

Contemporary research recognises many factors that impact family as a social construction: established patterns of stereotypes and the portrayal of social groups, a family's origin and friends, norms of interaction between various family members, and direct exposure to one another. It is noted that family shapes are constantly changing and come in a variety of forms relating to demographic trends, social policies, immigration patterns and cultural rules (Dominelli, 2004). From this perspective, a single definition does not exist. Social workers acknowledge that every family case presents limits and resources related to their living conditions that requires situational knowledge, which also has to be connected to a broader society and social care system (Guidi, Meeuwisse and Sacaramuzzino, 2015). Furthermore, when situated in the diverse public institutional domain of the welfare state, a family construct operates within different family systems, influenced mostly by different logic (e.g., family care, child care or elderly home care).

Until recently, the recognised family form was a heterosexual married couple in which the man was the economic provider and the woman the carer. This mainstream conceptualisation simultaneously normalises a particular way of viewing family and dismisses other structures as pathological. That may, for example, include extended cross generational family patterns, individuals living alone, or parents of the same gender – all of whom, by this, may be categorised as deviant (Peterson, 2013). These impacting factors may expose people to major problems, lead to disadvantages in social equality, and cause oppression, powerlessness and the need for support from the social agencies and social care services in a welfare regime.

The focus of this paper originates from a presumption that social work interventions serves as a partial replacement of family care structures in relation to current social policy and professional schemes. The aim of this article is to shed light on the complexity of social pedagogy in family social work, and to reflect on the existing patterns of family constructs as social formations. The question is, to what extent the professional models of practice focus on person-centered approaches, and how the specific needs of the individual are shaped in the model's problem approach and understanding. I will reflect on the meaning of family matters, examining its relationship to social pedagogy within social work practice. The basis for the portrayals in the paper are sourced from contemporary research in services for people at risk of exclusion and social vulnerability, analysing inquiries associated to managerial approaches in the Swedish context of certain families. The literature offers various theoretical perspectives on social service organisation, professionalization and service delivery. In the present article, however, the sphere between welfare systems and life-world domains forms the theoretical starting point for framing social pedagogy in family social work (Coleman, 1986; Habermas, 1987).

Swedish social pedagogy intertwines with professional social work practice by way of integrated educational programs, and as a field of professional activity, through being the agents of society who offer social interventions at the individual, group and communities level (Righard and Montesino, 2012). Hence, professional social workers are recognised as representing both central and local authorities, protecting the welfare of not only the individual but also the wider community. The 'social' in social pedagogy refers to socialisation into values and beliefs (Kyriacou et



al., 2009), focus on specific beliefs for social integration (Hallstedt and Högström, 2005), and social protection to emphasise equal opportunities (Stephens, 2009). In this sense, there is no duality between social work and social pedagogy (Göppner and Hämäläinen, 2007). The terms social work and social pedagogy are used interchangeably through this paper, and refer to socio-pedagogical social work related to living conditions with the aim of protecting vulnerable populations with respect to class, education, status and wealth (Ericsson, 2013; Mullay, 1997).

This article consists of two parts, providing an overview of the contextual landscape and socio-ecological models of practice in social pedagogy in family social work. In the first part, the contextual factors are explored, and the second part provides a general overview of the operationalised concepts and empirical examples of various family-related practices.

Contextual landscape of family socio-pedagogical social work

Developing social welfare in so-called welfare states and societies is considered to be a way of creating societal togetherness and, for example in Sweden, it is strongly connected to decreasing the social vulnerability of individuals, by sheltering their existence and by building service systems including social care, so that they, and society, may grow and flourish. Social welfare benefits regimes, such as various social services and agencies in social care (e.g., elderly care or services for people with disabilities, residential care homes and child protection institutions), embrace helping professions as the implementers of social policies in diverse social programs for populations at risk.

According to Midgley (1997), social welfare has to include dimensions of the management of social problems, meet people's needs, and enhance opportunities at the individual, group and societal level. The Nordic welfare system is often considered a reference point for many countries in the world, with its emphasis on good living conditions, universal health and social care. And yet, although Scandinavian countries underline a concept of "social welfare citizenship", citizens' self-responsibility and participation regarding welfare schemes is subject to paternalistic differentiation in the system's tendency to divide and access people to identify those "in need of service" and "no need of service". These key elements of social inclusion to welfare-based standards of living are, in surveys, explained sometimes by the urge to limit the high costs linked to generous welfare schemes (OECD, 2005).

The prevailing notion views the state and the public sector as synonymous. Researchers have directed their attention to the caring character of the state (Christiansen and Petersen, 2001), while municipalities (kommuner) at local government level are often seen as a sort of mediator between the state and the rest of society (Kröger, 1997). Although some variations occur, studies present social policies as very coherent and uniform in their intentions. Within the mainstream study of welfare, though, the same services can be rated as ineffective in terms of redistribution and extremely progressive in terms of quality of life. Scandinavian feminist discussion has questioned the male-dominated welfare state debate, accusing it of a disregard for social care services and ignorance of the gender issue (Kröger, 1997). In recent decades, Sweden has shown a considerable increase in the numbers of two-income families. Around 70% of women are part of



the workforce. The Swedish labour market operates in gender neutral terms, promoting women's autonomy and independence, leading to an expansion of public child care. In everyday life however, gender specific boundaries often prevail; although, on the other hand, the norm-critical gender perspective and ideology of equality promote fathers' involvement in child care and domestic chores (Johansson and Klinth, 2008; Plantin, 2007). Traditionally, families have always played a major role in caregiving for those with long-term illnesses. For example, Boonsastean et al., (2015) found that there is an important family role in encouraging women with diabetes to manage their life situations. In Swedish social policy and social care services, the important role of related care providers has recently been rediscovered. This significant perspective is expressed by the authorities in supporting relatives who provide familial care to family members with a psychiatric condition, a disabled child, or older parents (Socialdepartamentet, 2008).

Globalisation and the changing labour market impact the boundary between work and family, and people experience an intensification of their workloads as well as decreasing work stability and employment security (Bergh, 2011). At the same time, it is recognised that welfare policies are concerned with the full employment of citizens in order to fulfil the vision of social security and equality. As a consequence, the structural typology of the welfare regime in Sweden is allocated between the state, the market and the family (Jegermalm and Sundström, 2015). It applies the extensive promotion of individual autonomy and public social care services, as well as putting demands on the individual's availability to the labour market and indicating simultaneously existing mutual rights and obligations.

Contemporary theorists have highlighted views of the family as a societally created construct, influenced by cultural and societal values, along with the growing complexity and diversity of family arrangements (Dominelli, 2004; Jegermalm and Sundström, 2015; Johansson and Klinth, 2008). From an ecosystemic perspective such as that stated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), each family's capabilities, needs and coping styles are considered in relation to the larger social systems in which they are embedded. In this sense, family as an important social unit has received increasing attention in literature and from practitioners. Likewise, the concept of social pedagogy in social work is seeing increased interest, as it considers people's lifeworlds and their lived experiences (Grunwald and Thiersch, 2009), and prevents work with social problems related to process of exclusion (Hallstedt and Högström, 2005), avoiding the negative effects these can have on people's living conditions. Social pedagogy practice in social work toward the family can be applied in a variety of circumstances, such as conditions of poverty, violence, poor school performance and addiction, to name a few. The interventions can be made at individual or community level.

The fundamental complexity of social vulnerability is the significance of the difficulties that need to be addressed in human wellbeing, such as the problem of the inequality of living conditions and the risk of marginalisation. Social construction theory, with its roots in interpretative social sciences, has a powerful impact on the present ideological shift in family social work (Blumer, 1969). It is concerned with illuminating the processes by which people perceive, interchange or relate to the world in which they live (Goffman, 1958; Lewin and Levin, 1987). Research shows that social work and social pedagogy practice both tackle the nature of social problems, in that they are an inherent part of the existing society and its social order



(Hallstedt, Högström and Nilsson, 2013; Stephens, 2009; Thompson, 2015). Additionally, according to Thompson (2015), social work practice is driven by a theoretical perspective, and from fieldwork experience.

In summary, focusing on these issues recognises the prevailing infrastructure around a person or a family unit. This holistic way of working called for a rethink from social workers, urging them to have a wider outlook in the conceptual base for their work and to accept approaches that may be understood as socio-ecological models of practice.

Socio-ecological models of social pedagogy in social work practice

The concept of social pedagogy in social work includes the processes of social justice and equity, and empowerment and emancipation, which lie at the core of an individual's experience with the incorporated collective experience. Certainly, a process of exclusion may be seen as a set of objective circumstances, but it also includes a subjective interpretation of existing life conditions, ideology, the present social order or social policy. In examining the understanding of social pedagogy within social fields of practice, Eriksson (2014) found two discourses: the universalistic and the particularistic, which were constructed extending from an individualistic adoptive starting point through a democratic and mobilising collective work meaning. These underlying and overlapping components follow the central ideas of progressive socio-pedagogical social work that may be comprehended in relation to system theoretical understandings at the micro-, meso- and macro-level (Coleman, 1986). This school of thought engages with the micro aspects of daily life but also with the macro elements of the social characteristics of the society, its roles and institutional norms (Huston and Mullan-Jensen, 2011). It is a serious challenge because vital aspects of the implementation may involve different micro-, meso- and macro-levels, which do not always respond in harmony to an individual's needs. Theoretically, the existing pragmatism is related to conventional, interactive and contemporary progressive critical social work.

Elements of the conventional family approach at the micro-level

Some crucial ideas on micro family matters regard the social situation of individuals (Coleman, 1986). At the client level of practice, it is recognised as important for social work practitioners to maintain space in approaching peoples' experiences of hardship of everyday life problems. Formative personal experiences such as, for example, trauma, illness or loss, play a significant role in an individual's unique journey throughout the life course. The traditional models of approaching practice represent diverse fieldwork with reconstruction or restoration of the status to its former condition. There are also areas of disagreement. Social pedagogy in family social work practice within a neo-conservative paradigm attributes problems to an individual's family dysfunction as a pathological social unit. Thus, the major tactics in working



with families within this micro-system level may be controlling this pathology, for example by removing children from the family, or using tools such as asylums and prisons.

The micro-level of practice also reflects Goffman's (1959) emphasis on the interaction order, where face-to-face encounters take place within a specific scene of social location. Several researchers have highlighted the importance of the interpretative aspect of the social in social pedagogy practice and noted its impact as being difficult to fully explain in tangible interactional social situations. Kyriacou et al., (2009), found its core shapes in the interaction process of socialisation into values, and beliefs that embrace aspects of personal and social development. Focusing in on social interactions, it is indicated that they have significant importance when, for example, working with diverse issues of integration.

The recent wave of immigration comprises refugees and relatives of immigrants living in Sweden. An analysis conducted by Dychawy Rosner (2016) identified that cultural and identity-related issues needed to be developed proactively in supported transitions to independence, such as, for example, socio-pedagogical work around the development of integrated living contexts and inclusion programs with immigrants. With this socialisation outlook in place, Hammarén, Lunneblad and Johansson (2014), investigated social work practices on men at risk of either harming themselves or others, gender inequalities, and men's violence against women. Drawing on a norm-critical approach, they found that young men problems were individualised, and they were depicted as lost or confused. The study showed how the practice was inclined towards traditional images of gender and the common assumption that young men are a problem and risk in society. Only a minority of the investigated projects aspired to challenge gender stereotyping norms or thinking and criticise polarised gender positions.

Notably, presenting a critical analysis of social systems and conventional social work practice as a response to social problems, Mullan (1997) offers the structural descriptive nature of social problems as they are an inherent part of existing community norms and social order. The perception of problems as tied to the individual opens up other directions of thinking in theory and practice based on intersubjective notions of social systems. Thus, it is claimed, community development traditions in social work and social pedagogy apply to both traditional and more radical approach bases in their interventions. Mobilisation dimensions consider help to emancipate those on the margins of society from oppression as, in practice, Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1996). It focuses on an individual's frame of action in partnership with the social environment. The identified constraints and impacting weaknesses at the micro- system stance are explored by this theory, which attracted more attention when enhanced by issues of different social spheres.

Elements of the interactive family approach at the meso-level

The meso-level focuses on intermediate arrangements such as families and social networks (Coleman, 1986). The family perspective captured in the meso-level represents the notion that people experience their lives while interacting with the people around them. One



life event of a family member can therefore impact other family members, or people interacting in their social networks.

Descriptive social work within this system level assumes an inclusive practice and its attempts towards a dialectical practical intent concerning all forms of oppressive relations at the personal, group or political level. Its outlines social transformation dynamics and emancipatory forms of social work as a sort of mediator between the individual and institutional systems. In contrast with neo-conservatism, descriptively progressive social pedagogy family social work – as the dominant societal Swedish paradigm – provides opportunities that to a great extent shape society as a pluralism (manifold) of individual structures, rather than as a class or stratified society. People are equal in face of the law and have access to education, the job market, health care, social services and so on. This view of the representation of existing pluralism may be adopted and basically carried through the two models of socio-pedagogical social work practice, both reactive approach models and the re-socialisation approach, which are both based mainly on the more holistic socio-ecological model of practice. Reactive family practice focuses on the effects of social problems rather than on its causes. Social work and social pedagogy practice try to make some changes in people's immediate environments, and influence existing societal structures. According to Dominelli (2004), rather than attributing problems at the family level – to, e.g., poor parenting or maladaptive communication, or dysfunctional families where social problems become family problems – the focus should be directed toward the social problems and their impact on the micro- and meso-levels of social structures in shaping relationships.

The meso-level dimensions can be exemplified by working with the mechanisms of re-socialisation as another way of helping families who are negatively affected by social exclusion and disadvantage. These models of practice may obtain service programmes by way of compensation, focusing on the causes of problems and promoting well-being through, for example, job protection, housing programs for the homeless, immigrants etc. Another study, conducted by Guidi et al., (2015) which investigated how Italian and Nordic welfare models influence social workers' assessments of children at risk, found different response tendencies among Italian and Swedish social practitioners. The different approach and work processes were influenced by institutional factors and the organisation of the child welfare delivery system at the local level. The Swedish style of assessment and intervention was conducted more formally, strongly influenced by the organisation of the service and the law.

Elements of the progressive family approach at the macro-level

The occurrence of multi-layer family realities challenges practitioners to apply a more comprehensive framework (with respect to holistic social work directed by changes) on the structures of society, instead of the personal characteristics of individuals or groups victimised by social problems (Mullaly, 1997). As Thompson (2015) points out, social work is part of a problem-solving perspective on society; existing social problems thus operate at the intersection of personal situations and broader social forces. A progressive structural approach at the macro-level suggests the focus for change occurs mainly on the arrangements of society and not solely based on the individual. It



appears to be flexible and inclusive, and is concerned with all groups who are victims of the present social order – the practical relevance is in making connections between the individual and the political. Progressive social pedagogy in the family social work approach offers to utilise the social theory of domain and an interpretative perspective on the social world (Göppner and Hämäläinen, 2007).

The presence of multilayered encounters between formal organisational logics and clients' life-worlds have been investigated many times. This can be exemplified by a study conducted by Dychawy Rosner, which applied a combined focus on both the medical (Dychawy Rosner and Eklund, 2003) and social (Dychawy Rosner, 2015) origins of models in its inquiries into social work practice with people that have intellectual disabilities. Bringing together these perspectives allowed a movement from traditional treatment approaches, focusing on the pathology of an individual, to the role of social structures and their impact on personal lifeworlds and perceived lived constraints. This effort implies that the concept of measuring functional disability and documenting chronic conditions could be pooled into community intervention. The conducted participatory action research (PAR), involving the individual, family and community levels, decreased social inequality and isolation (Dychawy Rosner, 2015). The participation and active partnership of service receivers in the development of services empowered these socially disadvantaged persons and reduced the discrepancies of power between care takers and care receivers. The participants had an enhanced sense of belonging and increased access to facilities such as mainstream recreation arenas and work placements. This opening for service receivers and local community authorities to both be involved has been a significant component of the contextual approach. Likewise, Herz (2016) examined 13 social projects conducted by civil society organisations as a complement to the municipal welfare sector in subsidised child care. The study revealed a lack of long-term service alternatives, a lack of a holistic approach in terms of policies, and a lack of capability to take more responsibility for the well-being of clients. Correspondingly, diverse social domains can be illuminated, shedding light on the personal aspects of a client's lived experience.

This recent development, related to the process of linking the perceiver with what is perceived, brings the theory of social domains and layered social world to the social work process (Huston and Mullan-Jensen, 2011; Mullan, 1997). In order to understand this ongoing development, these new ways of inquiring into practice can be seen as examples supporting an ongoing redefinition of the macro-structures of the welfare state as it is shaped locally at the municipal welfare system level.

Conclusion

Family matters are recognised as a multidimensional construct containing bidirectional interactions. They are a complex phenomenon that originates in people's relationship with each other and with society. The implications for social pedagogy within family social work can be understood as a process of coping with the demands of peoples' disadvantages and, correspondingly, a process of establishing better relations to the society and social systems in which they belong.

To address the situation of socio-pedagogical social work, a comprehensive understanding of the whole dimension of the society and family interface is necessary. Nevertheless, it is

worth bringing attention to the fact that the changing scenes of 'the family' is not at problem to be solved, but rather a feature, constituted of complex territory, for social pedagogy in family social work to occupy. Indeed, social pedagogy related to this could not be resolved by a rule book or manual procedures followed slavishly. However, a potential opportunity may develop through an increased awareness of the response in a social environment to clients' life conditions, their families, and diverse roles of advocacy network. Thus, social pedagogy within social work is assumed as a way of addressing the question of social justice and welfare among underprivileged individuals and families, and engaging societal implementations to address the social issues affecting them. The professional task is to consider what is going on inside the system, e.g., the family or the helping institution. This approach assumes an expert position on behalf of the professional worker. In addition, it is worth pointing out that social work practices operate within dual logics, having an impact on welfare legislation and related political decisions, and being impacted by the same. The tradition of using professional expertise may include hidden conflicts of duties in relation to the family due to professional responsibilities for both the care and control of the family members (Johansson et al., 2008). These issues may also be connected to factors including concern for the child and the welfare institution that do not correspond, e.g., a responsibility to control public spending. In terms of the legitimacy mandate and power, however, the process of professional conduct has to be strong, involving conscious responsibility and critical reflective practice. However, social workers have to adopt a combined focus on attempts to deal with the development towards the conceptual interchange between micro-, meso- and macro-systems, in order to intervene in cooperation with the family orders, the institutional logics and the occurred structures of power.

The contents of this article carry evident facts but also reflect limitations, as the study did not systematically access all published studies of family matters. In spite of these shortcomings, the study draws attention to the constructs of family as a societal process of importance for social workers preparing diverse social pedagogy in family social work interventions. Contemporary progressive critical family social work aspires to be a comprehensive understanding of the complexity and specificity of family themes, avoiding the fragmentation of the field. The proposed dimensions can aid practitioners in the conceptualisation and treatment of family-related challenges, particularly in cases where the relations of close family members have to be replaced by institutional functions.

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*The vision
of the family
functioning
in the perspective
of young
people from
dysfunctional
environments*

BARBARA KOŁODZIEJ

Poznan University
of Life Sciences

EN

Modern families function differently than families of the previous generations. The set of family functions, the way they are performed changes, and the partnership model of the family is becoming more popular. Especially the young generation considers this model as the most practical and functional, what results from the professional activity of men and women. However, in the circles formed by the dysfunctional families (understood as problematic), so far there is not only paternalism, but also authoritarianism, what implies difficult relations in these families. Supporting young people from such families is dealt with, among others, by the Voluntary Labour Detachments, conducting different types of institutions and forms of action. In the VLD centres there is implemented a program, which constitutes the comprehensive care, educational and preventive impact, while the vocational training is a specific direction. The aim of the interaction is to equip the pupils with the skills and qualification, so they are not at the mercy of poverty, unemployment and pathologies. However, these impacts focus on professional qualifications, while the problem also includes the family functioning of these young people, which are not necessarily corrected by the mere fact of acquiring professional qualifications or even obtaining employment.

Key words: family, young people, Voluntary Labour Detachments, dysfunctions



Introduction

In many ways, the modern family functions differently than the families from previous generations. The set of functions changes, which is to be fulfilled [Bednarski 2008, p.206nn], the way they are fulfilled, serious changes apply to the relations in the family and the division of responsibilities. While until recently the paternalistic family was the basic model, currently the relations in the family are more often in accordance with the partnership model. The issue of the division of responsibilities was, among others, the subject of the IPSOS studies¹, performed in 2009, with the participation of the representative random-quota sample of 1000 Poles aged 15 and older. The results were also analysed using the division of the studied group, in terms of sex. The share of men (in the number of 483) allowed for the calculations of the results with the statistical error of the estimates no more than (+/-) 3,2% at a confidence level of 0,95 [IPSOS 2009].

As part of the above-mentioned research initiative, every second male respondent decided that *women are not necessarily better in taking care of the children than men*. Moreover, the younger the respondent and the more education, more often he considers the *full competences of men for taking care over children*. Nevertheless, up to 70% of the group decided that *women can look after the house better*, and what is important – *they can get the same satisfaction from it as from the professional work*. While *men would like to derive satisfaction from performing such a role*, only in recognition of 40% of the surveyed population. Most of the respondents ruled out the *possibility of the complete takeover of the household responsibilities even in a situation, when the partner would earn more*. In terms of performing the economic function in the family, in recognition of 85% of the respondents, *the responsibilities for maintaining the house should be divided between the man and the woman*, but 87% decided that it is the *man who is the head of the family and his fundamental obligation is to provide the necessary resources*. Differences of the presented beliefs and situations of the respondents were used for identifying 4 subgroups in the surveyed population:

- *traditional* – recognising paternalism as the most appropriate model. The man provides the material resources in it and exercises the power in the family;
- *modern* – recognising that the division of responsibilities between men and women should result from the arrangements or the current needs.
- *young oriented towards partnership* – that is pupils or students, still living with parents, but already convinced that their future families will be modern.
- *aware fathers* – believing that sharing responsibilities and tasks is obvious, and the professional work is equally needed by men and women. However, if necessary, the woman should quit her job to take care of the family.

The first, second and fourth subgroup included 30% of the population, while the subgroup of the youngest responded was represented by approx. 10%. And thus, the model of the paternalistic family is losing popularity in favour of partnership.

¹International research group specialising in the market and social studies.



Regardless of the changes in the family models, not all families perform their functions in a complementary way consistent with the applicable standards (traditional or modern). Noncompliance or a different execution of individual functions can virtually apply to every family. However, if the dysfunctions is permanent, this usually impairs the performance of the next functions, and the accumulation of the dysfunctions makes the family become problematic, or even pathological. Such families are also called dysfunctional, although this term does not strictly reflect the range of the derogation from the norm (dysfunctional family is a superior term; it means that every pathological family is dysfunctional, but not every dysfunctional is a pathological one). However, that is why, among others, it is recognised as more cautious or *balanced*.

The consequences of the dysfunctional aspect of the family generate serious social costs, what justifies the more and more complex systems supporting the family of the modern countries. These forms of support are, which aim at the family in performing its educational function, treated in a special manner. Those forms of aid are the most desirable, which result in the improvement of the relations of the family members, focusing attention on the children's needs and the equipment of the adults with the educational skills. However, if this is not possible, it is necessary to use the forms, which aim at the direct compensation of the deficits of the children or youth from these families. The tasks in this trend are implemented, among others, by the Voluntary Labour Detachments.

This organisation is a state budget institution supervised by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy. [Journal of Laws 2011 no. 155 item 920]. Because VLD implement tasks related both to education and employment of the youth, the activity of this institution is determined, among others, in the act of 1991 on the *education system* [Journal of Laws 1991 No. 95 item 425] and the act of 1994 on the *employment and counteracting the unemployment* [Journal of Laws of 1995 No. 1, item 1].

Currently, VLD conducts 217 care and education units, among which there are 7 education and upbringing centres, 31 training and upbringing centres, 165 labour detachments and 14 environmental labour detachments [VLD.pl, A]. These institutions support the young people belonging to two subgroups:

- the first one is created by juveniles aged 15 to 17, *from educationally insufficient environments, which do not implement the school obligation and the teaching obligation, have got problems with graduating and need to acquire professional qualifications;*
- the second one are people aged 18-25, *including people, who are looking for work or want to retrain, the unemployed, school graduates and students* [ohp.pl, B]

The people mentioned in the second subgroup can also use the offer of the market subjects, the first subgroup includes people, who do not seem too interesting for the market subjects (hence they are also called the *disfavoured youth*). The deficits of this youth make it necessary to use the support of a broader scope, much exceeding the mere education or professional qualifications, what is recognised as *building, organising and supporting the forms of getting out of the poverty, unemployment and social pathologies*. These actions in detail include *diagnosing the*



needs of the pupils; ensuring the conditions for continuing the general and vocational education; for increasing qualifications, encouraging the lifelong education; including the preventive, educational and rehabilitation impacts; implementation of the comprehensive care and education actions /.../ and cooperating in this scope with their parents or carers; promoting the activities /.../ VLD; and studying the care and education actions towards the VLD participants [ohp.pl, B].

The underlined sentence (briefly including a huge area), emphasises the educational mission of the discussed institutions, which is carried out mainly in the course of the boarding school activity. It is often repeated that the youth using them *are no angels*, however, it is worth emphasising that the decision to stay is connected to their voluntary consent and referral, which are issued by the *curators, pedagogical and psychological counsels, social welfare centres, emergency care, juvenile courts, police and children's homes* [ohp.pl, C].

Therefore, VLD is a specific form of supporting youth, and its previous achievements are the best proof for the purposes justifying the existence of this type of institutions. Such a request was put forward in 2012 by the Supreme Chamber of Control [SCC 2012], as a result of the conducted control. Nevertheless, several shortcomings of VLD have been pointed out, among which there was the lack of effectiveness studies of the care and educational actions. In addition, in the SCC relation, (just like in the descriptions of the VLD itself), the educational and vocational actions are emphasised, while the remaining issues, related to the family functioning seem to be treated as secondary. Does this mean that the program offered by VLD guarantees the alignment of deficits in terms of the family and social functioning, through the above-mentioned educational actions and vocational training?

The perception of family home by youth from the dysfunctional environments

The above question was the base for undertaking this study. To obtain answers for them, I reached for the results of the studies conducted in one of the Training and Education Centres of VLD², aimed at, among others, describing the vision of the family and social functioning. In the research initiative, first the documentation study was used, and then the questionnaire study. The pupils were invited to the studies, who had at least one year of experience in the establishment, and so their age ranged from 16 to 18. In the facility there are 89 pupils, 50 of them decided to undertake the role of the respondents. The vast majority (39) were boys, so the girls constituted one fifth of the surveyed population.

The first task, which was implemented during the studies, was the description of the families of the respondents. As it resulted from the documentation, 42 respondents came from complete families; 4 people grew up in families of single mothers, while one person was brought up by *grandparents*. The survey included, among others, a question about the *biggest family problems*. The answers could be given by circling the selected answers (table 1) or you could add your own version.

²Centre for Training and Education of the Voluntary Labour Detachments in Dąbrowa Górnicza. The studies were performed by Adrian Klimczyk, for the needs of the master's thesis prepared under the supervision of the author of this article.



Table 1. The biggest problems of families of the Centre's pupils

<i>Versions of answers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Alcohol problems	32	64
Cramped housing	24	48
Poverty	13	26
Educational awkwardness	12	24
Low standard of the apartment	7	14

Source: studies of A. Klimczyk (hereafter labeled with the initials A.K.)

The most often circled version (choice of 32 people), indicated the alcohol problems; almost every second respondent indicated the cramped housing; a dozen people – poverty and educational awkwardness, while 7 people the low standard of the apartment. The postscript of one respondent was significant: *it is not so bad at home, it is much worse elsewhere.*

What relations exist in the discussed families, i.e., who exercises the power, who is the most helpful, how do the respondents perceive its individual members? – these are another issues, which have been explained.

In response to the question: *Who rules at home is the so-called head of the family, makes important decisions on significant family matters*, the vast majority of the respondents (43 people) stated that the role of the *head of the family* is performed by men (42 people indicated *Fathers*, one – living with “grandparents” – the *Grandfather*); The power of women was indicated (logically) by four people living only with mothers and three people, from complete families.

- *Who will understand you best, to whom do you turn in matters that are important to you?* – was the next question (table 2). In the response, 70% of the surveyed population listed the family members (22 people indicated the *mother*; 10 people *brother/sister*; 2- *father*; one – *grandmother*). Almost every fourth person (24%) indicated people outside the family (*a friend*; one person indicated a *teacher*), while 2 people answered: *nobody understands me*. Similar results were obtained with the task, with a question: *Who is the most important person to you?* Almost everyone circled the same people as they indicated before, as supportive. However, several people previously indicating *friends*, this time made different choices, circling the *grandfather* or *grandmother*.



Seemingly the semantic scope was included in the next question: *Whom from your family can you call a friend?* However, this time the results indicate different choices that in the previously discussed tasks, as more often that every second respondent (26 people), ignored the clarification include in the question (*whom from the family/...!*), writing *friends* in the answer. Among the other respondents the siblings were considered to be friends (11 people), while *mothers* this time were indicated by 9 people (table 2).

Table 2. People supporting respondents.

Person:	understanding		most important		friend	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
mother	22	44	22	44	9	18
father	2	4	2	4	2	4
grandmother/grandfather	1	2	4	8	1	2
brother/sister	10	20	9	18	11	22
Other relatives	-	-	1	2	-	-
friend	12	24	11	22	26	52
Other people	1	2	-	-	1	2
Other answers (nobody)	2	4	1	2	-	-
total	50	100	50	100	50	100

source: studies of A.K.



For obtaining a more complete picture of the family life of the respondents there were also questions: *Who in your household does the homework with you, goes to the parent-school meetings or goes to the doctor with you when you are sick?* Only 6 respondents indicate the family members (4 - mother, 1- father, 1 – grandmother), while 44 people marked the answer: *Nobody helps me.*

The issue of relations in the families was also to be explained by the tasks, in which respondents evaluated (using a 5-point scale) a series of features/behaviours. The task had an introduction: *to what extent do the features mentioned in the set apply to your family?* (table 3. The sequence of features/behaviours with the weighted average scores).

Table 3. Atmosphere and rules in the respondents' families; evaluation of features/behaviours

Assessed features/behaviours		Scale values					average
		1	2	3	4	5	
positive	Mutual love	21	12	2	7	8	2,38
	Support	16	22	2	7	3	2,18
	Forgiveness	23	15	12	0	0	1,78
	Atmosphere of peace	23	17	9	1	0	1,76
	Kind conversations	28	14	2	5	1	1,74
	Praising others	33	13	2	1	1	1,48
	Satisfying the children's needs	29	21	0	0	0	1,42
	A lot of happy moments	35	15	0	0	0	1,30
	Repeating "I love you"	39	10	1	0	0	1,24
	Concern about health of the family members	41	9	0	0	0	1,18
negative	Verbal violence, quarrels	6	7	11	14	12	3,38
	Discipline	10	12	7	6	15	3,08
	Physical violence	1	18	23	1	7	2,90

Source: studies of A. K. * scale 1 no, 2 rather no, 3.I don't know 4.rather yes, 5. yes



Generally, in the assessment of the desired features/behaviours, respondents rarely used the scale values other than 1 (*no*) and 2 (*rather no*). The largest amount of answers *yes* and *rather yes* (a total of 15), was noted in the *mutual love*, nevertheless, the votes of the majority of the group still prevailed on the negative assessment. The other desirable features/behaviours, were assessed more and more consistently, as rarely occurring in the discussed families. A more significant change in the distribution of the results was obtained during the assessment of the negative features/behaviours, because unless the respondents expressed a certain reticence in the assessment of the *physical violence* (23 people marked: *I don't know*), *the verbal violence, quarrels and discipline* have already achieved the average of 3,38 and 3,0. Only 13 people denied as if the *verbal violence* and quarrels are used in their families; and 19 people stated that there is no *physical violence* in their families.

The choices of the respondents are also expressive, which concern the assessment of the provided statements about the family. The largest number of indications (19) was noted for the sentence *for me the family is: love, warmth and safety*; although 7 people crossed out the word *love* from the above sentence. The next 11 respondents circled the version: *for me the family is the lack of warmth an safety*. The own version was provided by 20 people, while the sense of these additions can be summarized in two sentences: the family is a *place for living or a place for sleeping*.

In summary, respondents come from dysfunctional families. The image of dysfunction of these families, however, is not the same, as the alcohol problems can concern two thirds; the cramped housing – the half, poverty – one fourth, etc. However, in terms of their atmosphere and the applied rules and performance of individual functions, similarities are considerable. And so, they primarily concern the power, which officially belongs to men, however, the women – mothers are the most important to children. However, also the performance of the mother's role is limited, as this does not meet supporting the children every day, caring for their needs. As a result, in the discussed families we can point out the numerous deficits in terms of *support; forgiveness; atmosphere of peace; praising others; satisfying the children's needs; joyful moments; repeating "I love you"; caring for the health of the household members* (table 3). Worth mentioning is the result indicating the position of children: no respondent confirmed that the *satisfaction of the children's needs* was significant in his family. So, therefore, they are not deemed worthy of attention.

All in all, the surveyed population has a different way of evaluating the essence of the family: the positive associations (warmth, safety and love) were indicated by almost every fourth person (12 people); more often than every fifth person denied as if the family could be compared with these qualities; the others associate the family with the place for sleeping or living... And still, the family is important, what is evidenced by the identification of the most important people with the family members. This does not mean that the most important people are always the most helpful, supportive, sometimes the support comes from people from outside the family, but this in turn means that they are the most important for the respondents. Therefore, the family ties are a priority, despite the relations implying deprivation of the respondents' needs.



Future: visions and perspectives

- *What rules, standards, do the pupils of the Centre want to use in their future families?* – this is the second question, which oriented this research.

In the first task included in the discussed thematic group (table 4) the task was to assess a number of the provided values (using a 5-point scale). The highest marks, applied by all respondents, were noted for *happiness* (average of 5,0), and *money* (average of 4,92); the *family* was on the third position (average of 4,88). The majority has also positively assessed the *good job, love; and health*; The remaining values did not achieve bigger recognition of the most of the respondents, while for these three values (*education; children; helping others*), 45 and more respondents applied the assessment 1 (the value of the lowest degree). Thus, respondents declaring the high position of the family in their hierarchy of values have regard to its specific and unusual image, as there is little room in it for *children*, who tend to be a by-product. This issue was differently viewed by only 4 respondents (who chose the highest mark for the *children*). The low marks of the education are also worth emphasising.

Table 4. Priorities and values

<i>scale</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>average</i>
Happiness	0	0	0	0	50	5,00
Money	1	0	0	0	49	4,92
Family	0	0	0	6	44	4,88
Good job	0	1	1	3	45	4,84
Love	1	10	3	7	29	4,06
Health	14	8	2	2	24	3,28
Friendship	27	2	4	1	16	2,54
Education	45	0	0	0	5	1,34
Children	45	1	0	0	4	1,34
Helping others	47	1	1	0	1	1,08

Source: studies by A.K., *1- to the lowest degree, 5- to the highest possible.



Similar conclusions are indicated by the task results, in which the people were asked to assess the provided versions of the *vision of the future*. All respondents likely decided that they *will have a wife/husband* (average of 4,80); the vision: *I will have a good job*, was taken for granted by only 34 respondents (average of 3,98); the subsequent positions included the predictions regarding the ownership of a *car* (3,82); *children* (2,98); Most respondents has rejected the visions indicating the ownership of *own house* (2,42); *travelling* (average of 2,32); *living in a different country* (1,98) and *studying* (1,28).

- *What will your future family be like?* – was the next question, this time bearing the versions of the answers to choose from. Most often (26 times) the following version was selected: *Happy, joyful, without quarrels and tensions*; every fourth respondent (13 people) selected the answer *I don't know right now*; every fifth (11) concluded that *It will be better, because he knew what to improve*. Nobody chose the answer: *my family will be the same as the present one*.

There was also an attempt to determine what conditions, according to the respondents, are significant in the preparations for living with the chosen person. Respondents again evaluate the similar statements using the Likert scale. The first of them: *We will come from similar families*, was recognised as right by 22 respondents; while 18, on the other hand, assessed it as untrue (average of 3,32). The truth of the condition included in the sentence: *The fact that we will get to know each other, we will talk*, was recognised by 19 respondents, while 21 rejected it (average of 3,14). Two statements related to the potential findings of the partners: the first one, about the performance of the *head of the family* role concerned the management of the finances (*who is to give the money to whom at home*). These sentences did not receive the approval of the majority (the first of these sentences was accepted by 9 people, the second one by 7; the average for the above-mentioned statements 2,62 and 1,94).

Likewise, the questions related also to the assessment of the rules, which are to organise the life of the future respondents (table 5). The greatest recognition went to the statement *Respect for the elders by children* (average of 4,86); The majority also agreed that in their families *the raising of children will be stress free*. While 32 people negated the *Sparing of problems and a lot of conversations* (with the confirmation of 17 people); The majority (this time: 37 people) has rejected this option, which is the *partner model of a family*; Almost in line (votes of 48 people) *Shared meals at the table, without a TV* (average of 1,18!) were rejected.



Table 5. Rules organising the future families of the pupils from the centre.

<i>Scale*</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>average</i>
Respecting the elders by children	1	1	0	0	48	4,86
Raising children will be stress free	7	4	5	0	34	4,00
Sharing problems and a lot of conversations	31	1	1	1	16	2,40
This will be a partner model	35	2	1	1	11	2,02
Shared meals at the table, without a TV	47	1	0	0	2	1,18

source: studied by AK *1. no, 2. rather no, 3. I don't know 4. rather yes, 5. yes

The previously reported problems of the respondents' families are often based on the abuse of alcohol. That's why we tried to determine to what extent these problems are a warning to the respondents. The questions were: *to what extent are you worried that the psycho-active substances will complicate the life of your future family?* In response, 31 people decided that *Their use can break down their family* (average of 3,78), however, the bigger compliance of the group (average of 4,36), accompanied the assessment of the sentence *I more fear the lack of money*. While 38 respondents found the following sentence to be true *I will eliminate them after starting a family*.

The last question, somewhat summarising the previous tasks, is: *what are your chances for a nice family in the future?* Every second respondent (26) chose the answer 25%; The next 22 people indicated the answer maybe 50%; Only 6 people estimated their chances from 75 to 100%.

Conclusions

Pupils of the Centre are oriented to start a family, however understood specifically, as generally they have in mind the partner, and even more literally: their own happiness, while the presence of children in these families is indeed predicted, but not necessarily expected, treated in the category of values. The future families of the respondents are to be happy, but the pupils of the centre do not know how to achieve this goal. Most of them declare that love is important to them, but friendship is appreciated only by some; sharing thoughts and the pursuit of understanding, getting to know the other person and his/her priorities are rarely considered important.



Probably omitting the issues of understanding and agreements with the given person results from the obvious (for most respondents) authoritarian model of the family, and thus in this respect they will repeat the family model, from which they come. The authority of men in these families (and probably in the families in the previous generations) is beyond dispute. Women can be the *significant people*, however, it does not seem that this is appealing at all to the respondents (as partnership). The respondents would like for their future families to be different, better, however, they do not know that their current priorities and choices, to some extent, determine the reproduction of the family patterns from which they come. The vast majority of the respondents has difficult childhood which was the time of lonely struggles with the encountered difficulties. They were not treated as valuable people. As a result, currently they are characterised by low self-esteem, and their aspirations for their own life goals are largely due to the so far experienced deficits. Therefore, the adulthood is perceived not in terms of responsibility, but freedom and the chance to satisfy their needs. They cannot constructively build on their bad experiences. Although they know that, for example, alcohol problems destroy the family, in relation to the psychoactive substances they assume quite laid-back attitudes, often stating that after they start their families, they will make appropriate decisions in this matter. They fear that their future families will struggle with the financial shortages, but they do not even allow the thought of the earning emigration and living abroad. They do not even allow themselves such common dreams like travelling or having own house. Do such dreams or visions really not attract them? They are probably afraid of the failure, they do not feel strong enough to dream about *flying higher*. Even more, they cannot plan. In addition, the orientation of their actions, in line with the previously unmet needs, explains the lack of interest in *helping others*. This also explains, the previously mentioned, underestimation of friendship – even, as stated by the respondents, though they have friends (outside the family), the family is always the most important, and if it is constantly struggling with some infirmities, it seems to the respondents that they cannot afford to *help others*. Yet another explanation for the lack of activity in this area is the association of *helping* with material resources (other *helping* would require the appreciation of talking, sharing thoughts).

As it results from the cited SCC report, many of VLD pupils do not obtain employment [SCC 2012, p.21]. In this situation the respondents' fears are confirmed that the problem of their families will involve the financial deficiencies. Moreover according to the IPSOS researches, unlike their peers, the respondents will probably not like to perform the partner model of the family, and thus again they will create specific social circles, complied with the *margin*.

The performed studies can only be treated as the preliminary diagnosis of the undertaken issues. The research initiative including 50 respondents, in one centre, is insufficient to accept such observations as reliable and accurate, but it seems to logically explain the behaviours of the *social margin*. Therefore, they should inspire to undertake the following studies, as well as to develop projects, which aim at the more intensive support for young people from dysfunctional families, directed towards their future social and family functioning. Issue undertaken in this research shows that family functioning seems to play an important role in the process of reason-



cialization of the described youth. Meanwhile it is rarely considered or recognised in scientific reports. It seems that continuation of the described initiative, with involving a broader number of respondents and other educational centers, will be appreciated.

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This paper focuses on echoing to the roles of parents in solving issues of educating children. Though every single parent wants to give the best to his or her children, the wrong assumptions about what are considered important for children sometimes bring only distance between children and parents and traumas for their life experiences. The fact exists that some people put their understanding of valuable things is to give their children what they can earn, not their time. This paper reflected a case study with a basic principle of teaching and nurturing children by parents' time of playing, learning, and sharing with them. Having less time used for playing and sharing with children would cause the movement of family and social structures which has changed the roles of parents as educating their own children. Finally, the stories of the case and practical activities have been described to call for the comments and real attention from families during the process of children education.

Key words: roles of parents, family, education in family, educating children

*Issues in
educating
children: what
should be cared by
the parents?*

NGUYỄN DUY KHANG

PHAN THỊ TUYẾT VÂN

University of Gdansk



Introduction

Every family in this world wants their children to have the best conditions for living, growing, and educating. Everyone would like his or her children to have a good life now and in the future and so does Vietnamese. Regarding the effects of modernization, globalization and integration, the smallest unit that represents the small scale society has been gradually reformulating from their former model of the extended form of families. Along with this new movement of family structures in Vietnam and its effects to education, parents rely more and more on teachers and schools. This movement is strongly affecting the family functions in educating young generations, nurturing relations, and transferring the inheritance of Vietnamese traditions. When education is switching to the school and society, these changes also lead to wider distance among family members.

In each society, “family plays an important role in the child’s weekly and daily life. First, it constitutes a background that may or may not be rich in stimulation. It also represents an authority regulating the child’s life, because, after all, parents are the ones who make decisions about their child’s weekly and daily routines. However, there are constraints on parents’ decisions.” (Patricia et al., 1994:14)

Supportive functions of the family have suggested that the extended family is continuing to exist though its original structures are alternated by the quick process of globalization. In a research in the United States, a replacement is “modified extended” family (Cohler & Geyer, 1982: 197). The contrastive family tags of “traditional” and “modern” are less effective to reflect the huge complexity in the world pattern of family, as pointed out by Engel (1986), putting the stressful role of the mother in the development of the child is assigned to the woman sole-caregiver role . In Vietnam, the tendency is changing from grandmom and mom caregiver role to young parents or daycare and educational places for children.

As a tradition, in China, Vietnam, and some other Asian societies, the elderly and their adult offsprings will take care of their grandchildren and/or with traditional parental protection of children in each extended family (Yang, 1988:109) . “Family care is substantial. Similar family interdependencies are reported in many cultural contexts: Sinha (1988) for India ; Kagitcibasi (1990) for Turkey ; Bond (1986) for China ; Sinha and Kao (1988) for several Asian countries ; Storer, (1985) for US and Australia ; Iwasaki-Mass (1984) for Asian rooted people in America or Amerasian , and Miranda (1985) for Hispanic ”. As can be seen, in most cases and so does Vietnamese society, “family is still the main source of support to bridge the gap between mother’s work hours and the hours of organized care, even if universally available”, as in Hong Kong .

Learning philosophies from European and Polish education philosophers and teachers, we are assured that the education has its core as children. For that reason, family is everything that a child needs for any starts. That is a place where children should be protected, educated, and nurtured in priority than at schools. Therefore, no under- or over-care would be good for children though children in their education, parents have more vital roles in formulating their routines, behaviors, and mindsets from the family context.

Regarding different scenarios of nurturing children around the world, we would assume that children life is reflected the society where they live. So, what we are doing is affect-



ing directly to the next generations so do schools, teachers, political issues, social issues, and so on. We are parents as others, but unluckily our presence in the educational route cannot be aside with our child. The knowledge about being a good teacher, even from your own house is far of reach to us because our child is living in our homeland now. This situation triggers a case study on the roles of parents as teachers through practical activities.

Roles of parents in educating their own children have been changed in the contexts of Vietnam since the hierarchy of the society has burdened children's education on school and teachers' responsibilities. It seems that families try to rely their children education on the society so that their ignorance in this matter has caused children more serious behavior and learning problems.

More and more parents participate in the process of the children's schooling through different ways of involvement as in Pfannenstiel and Seltzer (1985) and Pfannenstiel, et al. (1996). Among many studies of parents as teachers (PAT), the study illustrated that children have more opportunities to learn effectively at home through various activities such as reading in the library, writing, sharing, and playing with parents. Thanks to these activities, children have exposed more to the language and literacy as well as shaping their behaviors.

If parents know how to spend time with children, they can help their children not only overcome the psychological injuries, but also develop holistically. In contrast, playing in the improper ways may cause vulnerabilities to children and the effects may nurture them to become naughty and rude. Being naughty and rude is not the end of consequences from wrong ways of teaching by parents.

This writing aims to share our practical lessons regarding educating our son as a case study. It may not be interesting to any parents but our experiences here would send a signal to everyone to notice their roles as parents. Roles of parents importantly influence the children's education and personality. Though the lessons are from a Vietnamese context, it would give some possible insights for the teachers in education.

A case study of our own son

Kha is our son. He is 10 years old. My wife and I have to suffer with his schooling from the first moment to today. He is cute and as any other parents, we love our son.

Our family has the average economic conditions and that is why we always try to give him the best we can. We want him to live and develop naturally. We let him play and enjoy joyful time with us. We try to play with him when we have free time. We teach him to take care of himself and stand up by himself if he falls down. At the same time that we nurture our son with joys.

When he was little, my parents helped us keep the boy during the day time when we went to work. When he was 3 years old, we sent him to take kindergarten. When he was 5 years old, he broke his left arm and we needed to do surgery two times for his arm bones. After that summer of his 5th years old, we found and assigned him to study in the 1st grade of the elementary school which is opposite to my workplace. When he was nine years old, we had to leave him at home because our scholarship was not enough to cover for the whole family to go abroad



for our further education. Leaving him far away from our care-taking taught us and inquired us to study more about how the parents should be. The consequences of living far from parents can be found from his bad results in studying and the risk of being left behind from education.

We realized that parents should be together with their children and the educational process would happen naturally. However, the current conditions stopped us from being with him daily, but the summer for more intensive roles of being mother and father to re-construct the sentimental patterns and strengthen our connections. The following set of practical activities was conducted with that purpose and as to share for discussions about the issues regarding education of children in this century of technology and fast movement of the world.

Practical activities to deal with the pattern of parents to children education

We had done many lessons and hours to play together with him during the mentioned time. The aims of all activities were to have more time together. We would like to learn from him and help him explore what he wants to do now and in the future. We also would like our lessons to help us understand him better through his reactions during these strategies. Among of them, the notifications should be for the following activities.

1. Math
2. Spelling and dictation lessons
3. Learning to draw
4. Ethics discussion with dad
5. Making stuffs together
6. Public security training, writing diary, and messages

Math lessons

From the teaching experiences in Poland, we realized that one of the best methods for teaching children is just to focus on working slowly with him to find the current problems and solve them together. The first approach in my teaching was to encourage his interests in mathematics. We tried to prove to him that it was not too difficult as everyone's thoughts of which math should be. We spent a lot of time read the math books to understand what he was studying before any decisions of what should be worked about.

We consulted with his teachers. They suggested us to review him with basic mathematical calculations. We discussed about the number of digits in one calculation.

We designed some exercises of all 4 basic calculations for numbers from 1 digit to 4 digits and the ones with x factor. We observed him as he did the exercises and used questioning strategies to help him form the routine of solving different types of calculations. After a few days with exercises from easy to difficult levels, we noticed that we needed to guide him a way to focus on each exercise. We have tried many ways to help him do math exercises in an effective way because he showed that he had a problem with mixing up calculations. For example, he forgot to remember or had a note to remember a number to add to the next calculation when he did the summation. Or he sometimes miscalculated for a subtraction as summation, a multiplication as a summation, and summation with more digits without an order.



Because his teachers mentioned us that he had some problems with remembering and doing mathematics. And math is difficult if teachers do not care much on each learner. When a child has some problems with math in one calculation, he or she will not be able to do well in the rest three basic calculations. We recognized that our son felt scared of doing mathematics and he always said that he could not do math. At the time, what we thought was just to think of a way to guide him and let him know that math was not that difficult if we had some ways to crack it. For that reason, we focused on how to do math step by step and turned the steps into words that our son could repeat at the same time with doing math. The ideas came from what we learned from him that whenever we asked him using questioning strategies he could do exactly right the exercises. When he did it alone without the questioning skills, he forgot many details as mentioned above. And we were sure that our methods could bring some effectiveness. We splitted the tasks into steps and did together. Here in math, we did the same thing with our son and had an intention to lead him the possibility to do most math calculation by himself after a few weeks.

After getting more advanced in doing basic calculations, we reviewed and taught him with more fractions and calculations with fractions. We created the checking lists for him to remember and used whenever he worked with fractions. We wrote down all the checking cases of calculations of fractions for him and asked him read for me every day before he needed to do this math alone.

The secret of this section lied on how we could minimize the complexity of math so that the child could learn the hints and practice before the skill was formulated.

For example:

Ways to turn mixed number (a number together with a fraction) into a fraction.

We take the integer (the number together with a fraction) and multiply it to the denominator and then sum the result to the numerator. The denominator of the mixed number is kept the same as in the new fraction. For example: A mixed number of 7 and a fraction of 3/5.

$$7 \frac{3}{5} = \frac{7 \times 5 + 3}{5} = \frac{35 + 3}{5} = \frac{38}{5}$$

This easy way became effective for him to do maths alone. Whenever he did maths, at the first times we only needed to remind him to identify types of calculations and then repeated the checking cases during the time he did maths. After about 1 month at the end of this summer using this method as a reminder, he could do different types of maths that we gave him or got from his books. That created a new form of confidence for him to deal with in his learning.

Spelling and dictation lessons

These lessons were conducted by Van, his mother. She usually read out loud the texts in the books or made them up by herself. She aimed to read them loud for him to recognize



the sound and then write them down to check his spelling mistakes. She focused on helping him understand the contents and seeking for the errors by himself. After a few times, she taught him to check the spelling alone and fix the errors by himself.

She selected some texts from the books for children and read for him to write. Then, she asked him to read the text again from his own notebook. She checked it when she listened to it again. She underlined some mistakes for him and asked him to fix it alone. After a few times of doing spelling and dictation with him, she realized that our son had so many mistakes on his spelling and he always lost attention to the tasks.

I realized that too and talked to him. He shared that he felt scared of this kind of activities in class. He had never got good scores and his friends played jokes on him. For that reason, he had not done or followed any similar activities in the classroom. He thought that if he did not write anything, no one could find the mistakes. This problem again led us to the lesson that if children do not like to do something, we should know the real reasons. If not, it could last for a long time and if we are not so close with our children, their education would be a problem.

Thinking of ways to crack his problem for writing through dictations, we took turns to read for him and encouraged him to do one step before writing or listening to the dictation. It was the step of copying from the book. We asked him to copy the assigned texts and then asked him to read them again for us check orally. If we found something wrong, we let him know to recheck by himself from the source. After a few weeks of doing this task, he seemed to be better with fewer mistakes in writing down the dictations as we tried. The way may not be a creative method but it helped him to focus and the encouragement let him to do it better. The secret of doing this activity was that practicing might help him be alerted with the words he knew and learned. More attention and more practices helped him improve and avoid the spelling errors.

Learning to draw

Parents would not have time to play or learn together with their children. However, we found that learning together with our children brought a lot of opportunities to understand more about them.

As a joke, we asked him to think of an activity or skill that he could do and would like to do. We mentioned many courses for summer as English, kung-fu, singing, swimming, football, and drawing. Van added that he could draw and suggested a course of drawing for him. He told me that he would like to continue his drawing lessons. Of course, we knew that he drew as well as children in his age. However, we thought that whenever he got interested in anything that activity could foster his ambitions and activate his interests in learning again.

We fostered his attention and interests to drawing when telling him that I wanted to go with to drawing class and waited for him to teach me. At the same time, I went to see the drawing teachers to ask for permission to be with him in the class. The appointment of his 1st drawing class with me aside came after we got equipped with some new papers, pastels oil, eraser, and some good pencils.



The first class went well with the great support from the drawing teachers. One teacher kept telling about him during the lessons last year. She noticed me some techniques to help him use colors better in his pictures. He drew the lines with some samples from the books and then he used his own selection of colors for different items and positions. At the end of the session, when he finished his art, he needed to give the teacher to judge. The result was good because the teacher explained the improved points from his pictures than what he did last year.

After the first lesson, I realized that a paradox was inside him. In the aforementioned lesson of dictation, he tended to be distracted during the tasks; however, in the drawing lessons he could focus and pay attention to his drawing full time in about 3 hours to complete a picture. I knew that he did not have talents in drawing because some children in the center drew very beautiful pictures at their 4 or 6 years old. But we believed that he enjoyed drawing as a hobby and the time to be together with us.

We continued the drawing lessons after a few weeks and I decided to ask for a permission to have lessons of drawing for myself at the same time with his lessons. We were like in a race because our son studied drawing before and I just started. We tried our best to draw the pictures and at the end of each day, he said to me that I drew better than him. I replied that we both tried and these lessons were good chances for us to work and learn together.

Ethics discussions

Talking or watching videos together with children would not be popular in our context. We realized that wrong habits of Vietnamese parents. We collected a series of good and appropriate ethic video lessons for children. Most of these videos are about how to live a good life in the society, stories of honesty, and stories of piety.

In the first day, we attempted to help our son understand some conceptions about life and human relations. We checked on our plans. The aims of this task were to identify his ability of memorizing, formulating the process of his mental changes, and the effects of the interventions through follow-up activities of retelling and writing down the stories. The intervention was the facilitating questions and videos about mental and physical actions for the purpose of promoting positive thoughts.

We used our laptop to open the video after telling him that we were going to watch videos that we like very much. During the technical time for preparing the files, he showed his eager to enjoy the coming activities. When everything was ready, we asked him a question “What do you think we will watch today?” Because this activity was started quite after drawing, dictation, and mathematics, he immediately answered pointing to math and dictations. When he recognized that it was about something relating with the laptop or videos. He looked serious and curious. Then, we asked him what if we focused today about “honesty” and ask him to write down his thoughts of the definition of honesty. He wrote in his notebook that “honesty means not to lie. When he lies, nobody likes him. When he wants to tell the truth, no one believes him.” We kept asking him to confirm his answers and checking whether he wanted to add any details to his thoughts of honesty.



Since we did not want him to follow any definitions, we decided to show him the video and told him before started that he must tell us again his definition of honesty. We watched the video clips in about 6 minutes. During the time watching the video, we observed him carefully. His eyes were ticked on the screen and followed the story very strictly. A situation in the story was that the female shop owner was scrimped to others and at the same time he showed his comment that the lady was too mean. His reactions showed that he understood the story and followed it closely. After the 1st time of watching, we asked him to share his understanding about the story and retell the story with all details that he remembered.

It was surprising that he could exactly mention all the main details of the story in a natural order of the videos. This was surprising because many of his teachers complained and assumed that he could not remember anything in class and he could not concentrate in any class activities too. One more time he showed me that assessment from teachers about him could be wrong or there were a behind story.

He modified a little bit his definition of honesty and was happy with the videos. He said that he liked these kinds of activities. After that time, we continued with other activities and videos with similar strategies once every two days. We selected one video for a lesson and asked him to retell, to write it down, and even to share his ideas with other members of our family. The rest of videos have the following titles and notions.

A son with piety, waking the children up, laziness, father and son, only one difference, a bowl of Pho in the countryside, the scrap picker, rich boy in troubles, thanking words, keeping face, effects of imitating, three pennies for 2 children, sudden happiness, sorry, reason to live, brothers and a dish of food, learning to listen, an empty bowl, life for those only know how to receive, the wonder, the light in the heart, remembering people who serve us, two spots of water, losing their dignity, letting it to tomorrow, the eyes of Buddha, the story of the beans, not my job, son of the sweeper, and mother love.

The final action of this kind of lessons was that we wanted him to randomly tell us a story that he liked. Then, when we realized that he could tell all details of a story which he watched a long time ago at the beginning stage. We decided to ask him keep telling me most of the stories that he could remember and his thoughts about these stories into his situations as a mental application process.

Making toys together

Most children like to play and similar situation is with Kha. We realized that he was more like visual and kinesthetic types of learners rather than audio. And he would study more effective with doing and watching than to suffer one way of communication. We decided to discuss with him our schedule to make cute things together at weekends.

During the first day we played with making toys, we decided to make a boat with shells and a ball of papers. We divided the task into small and visible steps. We focused on the paper ball first. We asked him to buy the ballons; his aunt and I tore the old magazines and newspapers into smaller pieces. Van was preparing the flour glue. After the preparation, we gathered



at the same place and started to blow the balloons and we worked in two pairs. We were patient to tick the smaller pieces of papers into the balloons so that after all dried we could have a new paper ball. We then painted them with different textures and colors.

Our second product together was the boat with shells. One product took us many days to be done. Our final products showed that our son liked these kinds of activities and we could easily see his creativity through his own work on the products. The activity one more time proved that he was able to play and create something like other children if we spent time with him and encouraged him to put some thoughts on the job.

Public security training, writing diary, and messages

We thought that he needed some social activities and training to understand more about cooperation and group work. We decided to send him to a training program for children in one week. It was the training of public security for children. The program included many activities in teams and children learned to be more responsible and to love their parents and family.

During the training, we bought for him a notebook and a diary. We asked him to write what he thought of during the time without us in the camp. We asked him to write letters to us and we promised to pick him up after a week. In this time, we also tried to test his usage of money. We gave him fifty percent of allowed money in the camp for him and waited to see what he did with that money.

A week went by and he got back from the camp with too many stories to share with us. We spent a lot of time to listen to him and read his letters and diary. He asked us to allow him to go to the camp again next summer. He told us that he used his money to buy drinks for the whole team in the last day party.

He also mentioned that he was punished by the officials in the camp two times and he accepted to carry the heavy backpack and ran many rounds around the camp yard. We asked him why he did not fight with the punishment but accepted it. He told me that he made mistakes two times and both time his work affected the final results of his team. He meant that it was worth of the punishment.

In short, all of these lessons that we planned and modified during his real reactions were to help him be able to share his feelings and learn with the repetition of rules and good actions.

Discussions from the case study about education for children in Vietnam – A critical perspective

Education for children has an obvious design in the Vietnamese educational system. In Vietnamese Law of Education (2012), the system includes different categories of kindergarten, basic education, higher education, and post-graduation. While kindergarten is an



optional level for children under 6 years old, basic education containing both secondary and high school is compulsory for the ones from 6 years old or up.

Kindergarten is not compulsory for children under six. Children can learn some basic and social skills with their classmates. They can sometimes learn to know some numbers and letters. And most of the rest time, they play, sing, and sleep. However, only limited number of schools is available for children and it has never been easy to enroll in the public schools. Private schools are available in some big cities so children in the remote areas and in poor family have smaller chances for kindergarten education. For that reason, those who have less advantages in kindergarten may have problems to enroll in the 1st grade of elementary school because these schools sometimes require entrance exam for IQ test or talents.

Different types of schools at two levels of kindergarten and elementary schools usually show the status of parents' income. For the international ones, parents are told that children can play and learn with English instructions at the same time with Vietnamese language. Only children from rich families and those with high-positioned parents can study here. For private schools but without international trademarks, children of parents in the middle class and rich families usually study here. The public schools are usually for children whose parents work as governmental staffs but not very rich. For children those parents are workers, they can go to household keeping children places for kindergarten and public or private schools in the suburban of the areas. For those whose parents living in the countryside, their grandparents keep them during the kindergarten and they have very limited options for elementary level because small area has only one or two schools like that. The quality of training is significantly different among these types of schools and among areas of living.

Vietnamese children have similar characteristics as ones in other countries. They are like new blank original paper. They are innocent, mischievous, curious and thoughtful. They will listen to adults, imitate them, and be influenced by the surrounding living environment. From the aforementioned characteristics, children live in the city are so much different from people in the countryside. Those who live in rich family show the significant differences to the ones in the poor conditions. It is hard to believe but people seem to be overloaded when they have children. Regardless kindergarten, every 6-year-old child must go to school and their parents seem to be trapped in children education. Pupils study for the whole day including the long break-time at noon. In the evening, they have to do some or many exercises at home. Of course, parents have to help them to do or explain so that they can understand and complete the homework.

Children are usually seen as the centers of annoying at the school and at home. They like to do what they want and want to do what other people around them do not want them to do. The reasons for this are that they want to call for attention and keep their secrets of communication when they do not want others to know about them. In the reality, children are creating their own world, signals, and languages through transforming theirs so that adults cannot understand. At the same time, internet and technology are taking them into the virtual world than their real family.

School program is considered very heavy in this context because children have very limited chances to learn with fun. Most of them see schooling as a burden and majority of pupils



hate going to school. If children are asked about their learning, most of them answer that it is boring and wonder when they can stop it. The reasons beyond this fact are that schools focus to teach children with knowledge about almost all fields. The philosophy for children education is that pupils had better learn as much and as soon as possible. Currently, these viewpoints cause conflicts among educational managers, enthusiastic teachers, and children's parents. In fact, a family usually turns upside down when a child is at the age of schooling. The 1st grade pupils are tested in their first days in school. Having good scores is assumed as intelligence and having bad scores means failure. Children with bad scores or something wrong could be laughed at and it may kill learners' motivation. In addition, teachers have power with their knowledge and follow the guides for teaching activities from central educational system or managers. Whatever teachers want to be right is right at school. These normal unwritten educational situations are killing learners' creativity and motivation.

In Vietnam, teachers still have the high respect from students and the society. For the history reasons, teachers have power. When teachers enter the class, every student stands up and greets them. Whatever spoken by the teachers is considered to be the fact. In the new millennium of technology, knowledge is available everywhere. However, the majority of teachers here still use blackboard and lecturing techniques for classes. In many places, classes are very large and only teachers can move around the class. Learners are the ones to listen. The historical manners of a classroom which has been existed up to the recent time are that silence is considered good. Rote learning is more important than application and creativity. Students sometimes have to learn by heart everything and retell the teachers to prove their knowledge.

Currently, teacher has different roles in different schools and for different levels of education. In some schools with advanced and heartfelt trainers, the teachers are facilitators for pupils to grow naturally and learn with joy and comfort. But most of the educational institutes offer teaching machines with one-way of communication among teachers and learners. In these cases, teacher talks to the children. In contrast, children listen, take notes, and learn by heart. If they do not understand something, have wonders about something different from their own acquisition, or have questions, they are told to accept the lessons. It is assumed that they are going to understand thoroughly what they are learning now when they grow up. Besides, whenever teacher talks, no children are allowed to make noise and can speak only when they are permitted to say. Of course, they have to raise their hands for asking permission before that.

In my time of learning in elementary schools, I was left-handed person but I was forced to use my right hand for writing. A punishment would be for me if I kept trying to use my inborn habit of holding the pens by the left hand. Now, more children can use their left hands for pens. However, people still look at those people in a weird way and question for the reasons by themselves. Thanks to the internet and technology, more people like left-handed ones.

In Vietnamese context, making noise is considered to be out of control. A good teacher will never let their classes out of control. A class with noise will be blamed by the school leaders and the neighbouring classes because the noise distracts their students during the talking time of theirs. We were questioned sometimes because of too much noise from our classes whenever we were in a class. People sometimes do not care whether what we were doing for learners. They only pay attention to the effects that we brought to other classes around ours.



Teachers at kindergarten and elementary schools have to do some other tasks at the same time with teaching the children. Teaching is not the only job at school. School with regulation which tends to be bureaucratic cost teachers a lot of time and these activities sometimes distract their real responsibilities of.

All in all, education in this level seems to have perfect structures with a lot of options but all just brings burdens to children. When being asked, children answered that they do not like to go to school. Of course, a limited number of hearted teachers may shape learners in different ways with inspiration and love.

Lessons drawn from having a “bad” child and implications for parents

In Vietnamese educational system, naughty children or the ones who usually have bad behavior are considered as stupid and ignorance. They will be marked in the black list. When children are put in the black list, they are looked down by other children, teachers, and other people. They tend to be scared of teachers and to irritate with other friends. The importance leading to the problems is that teachers do not pay attention to seek for the real reason that children are naughty or ignorance or for the reasons why they are not concentrated on lessons and make noise.

In most cases, schools pay less attention to ignorant and bad-behaved children. Every school concentrates on nurturing and encouraging best children or those with the gifted. Those children may help build up or increase the schools fame and prestige than those in the black list. Of course, some schools may have other policies but the majority shows this paradox. People who need supports will not get what they need and those who have talents have more chances to prove themselves.

Another problem of education for children is from teachers. Teachers have many roles in teaching. However, in Vietnamese case, they usually require learners to be a good copy of who or what they want them to be. Teachers try their best to lecture children with as much knowledge as possible no matter if the information is still applicable or not in this moving world. The books may be colorful and interesting to children but the ways that teachers guide learners to explore them may lead to opposite effects. For examples, teachers sometimes try to explain the items and notions in the books rather than help learners to seek for what they need to learn. Then, it is better to see how learners apply what they learn into their real life and cases. But, teachers usually ask them to repeat or recall what appear in the class or in the books. Moreover, children often get problems with teachers when they find out the inappropriate points in the books or lectures but the results they get are unacceptable. Children then will be told to accept because the books are the power and all must follow. Although some heartfelt and enthusiastic teachers understand that the books are stupid or written by careless but powerful writers, they secretly change the contents and ask learners not to tell the educational bosses.

The aforementioned problem is partly derived from the law and rules of education which is under a huge objection from open-minded educators and almost 100 percent of



citizen. The rules do not allow teachers to cut off the book content although it has something stupid and irrelevant to the children. The books are prescribed to be written by scholars who may or may not be teachers of that level. Now, the Vietnamese national assembly and the ministry of education and training are collecting uncounted ideas from the citizen and real heartfelt teachers about the possibilities of consulting or writing the books for the next generation of Vietnamese.

Heavy lesson is one of the big problems right now. It seems that the book authors want children to know everything and learn as much as possible at the age of enjoying fun. A paradox appears again to the whole system of education. The book writers want them to know everything in this world and accept the facts, but children learn differently from adults. Lecturing is not a best way for them when teachers and the books just make learners be bored of studying. When many educators and parents have complained about the book contents, the educational officials think of ways to reduce and cut off the unessential parts. Moreover, when children have to study many subjects with many books for each subject, they have to carry them on their bags. They do not want to be listed in the black list so they put everything they have for class into one school bag and do not need to select what they need everyday. This habit leads to the facts that more and more learners in elementary schools got problems with scoliosis. And it is the fact that nobody cares about this problem because if parents do not pay much attention to their children, no one knows until it becomes a real problem.

Children seem to be very noisy and get in an order when they are told or guided. This is a good signal according to neuroscientists. They believe that children are active and want to explore the world around them by themselves. They communicate and play with other children to make a relation as adults. So when they make noisy, it has some meanings which is different from being naughty as most educators usually thought of. For that reason, a class with more than forty children could become a nightmare for any teachers who do not really love the children and do not know how to guide them to stay in the places. Large size class has become the issues of schooling which possibly decrease the quality of training in any educational institution. When the room is big and there are many children in one room at the same time, they always feel that they are not cared well. The size of class can lead to the problems of having more ignorant children in one class. The problems will become minor if Vietnamese teachers do not have more interests and attentions on good students. The reality shows that children are jealous and want to be taken care of as other children.

Many researchers and leaders of education thought that children do not need extra classes in other sessions of the day. However, extra classes for children is apart from a real life, ambition of parents, or just the thoughts of having their children to experienced fair at school. The law prohibits almost all cases of extra classes for children. However, some really needs extra hours for their learning. Parents send them to teachers' house to have more classes with different reasons. One of them is that the children want to be fair in class. Children have experienced the implication from other children who have had extra classes and teachers that going to do what people do is the easy way to study. The problem is difficult to be understood because doing extra classes is good. It becomes a burden only when teachers give the similar form of tests in



advanced for those children to get higher scores in class. It seems to be ridiculous because they learned more and they can earn more good marks. However, the system of evaluation in Vietnam is still focusing on “rote learning and memory”. It turns to be unfair to those who do not go to these extra classes with money. Of course, not all teachers with the heart can do this and force learners to take extra classes for their benefits of earning money. Some teachers are forced by the schools or parents to teach extra hours because some children are thought to be slow in learning in class.

Another issue is that Vietnamese education system has very limited numbers of schools that cares about the learners’ learning styles and talents. In every school, children are thought to be considered the same and all must know mathematics, literature, drawing, singing... and so on though the reality of human beings includes a variety of individuals. Some children like to do what they want to learn, some likes to discuss, and some want to hear. They are not the same with some different talents too. When Vietnamese schools put them together and consider them to have one group of general goals. For example the case of my son, he tends to be more active when talking and sharing vocally than to read and write. He can remember very well what have been discussed and watched. Or some other children only like maths and they hate to study literature or drawing. Some like literature and drawing or singing and they really hate to do maths. The problem turns to be an issue when all children are assumed and forced to be the same in their learning styles, talents, and interests.

Rote learning and low levels of assessment according to Bloom’s taxonomy are the roots of the next problem. Many teachers want to change teaching methods and some has changed theirs. Some has developed their philosophy of teaching which is all for the good of learners. However, the system emphasizes memorizing skills of learners rather than application and productive skills. No matter what learners are learned at school, they need to remember exactly the contents as in the answer keys. No exception is for most of the social science fields. Who can memorize well and do well in the final exam at any levels is considered to be good learners. It is exceeding children’s normal capacity because it was designed by careless research in children education.

Another problem is that learners in Vietnamese education tend to listen to what teachers say and they are well-prepared to obey than to learn silently. What adults say and what teachers say should be paid attention by children. That leads them to become passive. Children change their psychological habit from learning by exploring to accepting what have been told and taught. Children are not frequently trained with critical skills and learning from fun activities. The most common time in class is to listen and listen. If any children have questions, they can be considered to be abnormal. When children do not understand, they are considered stupid but when they understand very quickly, they are considered to be monkeying around.

Imitation which is assumed as one of the best ways in teaching causes many generations of passive learners and citizen. Children are forced to do things, to draw, or even to write as what they are taught by teachers. If the teacher draws a cat, the drawing of cat from children must be similar to the teacher’s one to have high score. Any creative features of that cat would be resulted in low score. This example is a proof for the current generations of Vietnam-



ese nowadays. People always need models or framework for doing anything. The current government and educational systems need guides for every decision or new law to be implemented.

One of other big problems is that children are unintentionally taught to be a liar. It is not their faults. Children are asked to do something exceeding their capacity. A child has a lot of homework but he or she studies in the whole day. Then parents have to help them do the exercises. If children are asked to do art work and the teachers ask them to have a copy of the model, only parents have that ability of completing such a difficult task.

What else can be learned for educating children?

After the interventions of our strategies at the same time with more communication with our son, we have learned many new lessons and answered with more solutions to problems of children through the parents. Parents must have a real role in educating children equally to the schools' and teachers'. However, we wonder: "What happens when both mother and father work and try their best to earn as much money as possible for the better life of their sons or daughters?"

Children turn to be naughtier and try to oppose to what adults ask them to do. At home, they may want to get more attention by doing something that adults never like at all. This period is at the beginning of depressed stage. If parents do not pay any attention to them and they keep thinking that money is the best they can give to their children, these children have a risk to enter life sooner and even before finishing their compulsory schooling. In most cases, when these rich people realized their children's problems, everything becomes too late. It is easy to see that money is very important but it was never the only good thing that parents should give their children. Children need love and care more than money.

Another lesson could be drawn out from the following question "what do children really need from schooling and their parents?"

Children need to play and learn what they want. Children need parents to understand them and they always think that parents do not understand them. It usually happens that more and more parents and children have less than 3 sentences a day. One is "good morning mom and dad". Second is "I am home". Three is "good night". It is also interesting that when children need to ask for permission of anything, only one or two more words for the communication. That is "yes or no" and "you are grounded." When children are seen to be naughty at school, the communication at home is like "do you have anything to tell me", "no", "why do you do that to me?"...

It is hard to understand but children really need to like school to study. Children need to like the teachers to follow the lessons. Children really need feelings of being safe and being understood from others to share what they want and what they think. Children need more time with parents and they want to help back whenever parents use appropriate and encouraged ways to ask them. Children need school to allow them learn the way they can understand.

Children need parents to understand them. Children need parents to play with them and help them explain the situations they cannot explain. Children need parents to give



them a freedom for their own thinking and the permission to speak it out before being stopped. Children need parents to do role play with them. Children need education from parents and to perceive love from their parents.

If the lessons become the concerns for some parents in the family levels, then we have the next inquiry about what teachers, parents, and the society should do for the natural growing conditions to children.

The answer is simple. It is children-oriented cooperation, sympathy, and understanding each other. Children need to go to school and everyone must give them a reason for schooling.

Network: children versus schooling

The network above describes the connections among schools, parents, and society in which children are educated. If all factors are visible to children, they will like school and want to study. If not, they feel scare of classroom and sometimes stop studying to enter life when they are teenagers.

In education and society, every person knows that psychology is important and different from each other and in generations. With different level of acquisition, children need more gentle ways to communicate with and it also requires adults to know what the common characteristic of these children is. It is not too difficult to educate and make children like schooling if we care about their needs. What adults can do is to match children's needs to the educational setting. If what children need match well with the offers of educational setting, children study well and like schools.

Whenever children like school, they would study well and stay focus on lessons. They are happier and open to their parents and relatives. When they are more open, they can easily share with their family what they need and even the teachers. When information is available for all counterparts of the triangles of education (schools, society, and parents), children are cared better. Good communication occurs. Every person is happy and education satisfies its responsibility. Parents have lovely children and children sympathize their parents. When all can have what they want, the society is ready for being explored.

In addition, an inside from the case of our son is noticeable. Children always need their parents to be with them until they want to leave us. Children need to be loved and understood. They like to talk and do anything with us if we respect their contributions. They like to share with us what they think if they have a habit and a need to share. What parents can do is to form a good habit of sharing with their children. When children are naughty, there must be a problem somewhere. When children hate school, do not blame the children first, check the school, parents, their friends, teachers, and the program. When children have problems with understanding anything in class or at home, children should not be blamed. Instead, we should blame ourselves, of our humble skills to be understood by the children. When working with children, adults need to be flexible and be patient at all time.



Conclusions

Listening to children is an important lesson from our case study and perception. We would like to conclude this paper with a story of a kid and its effects which still haunt a girl until today. She told that when she was a kid, she liked reading books and exploring the world around her. Her passions made her to be proud of herself however the reality of Vietnamese education was not always as she wished. It was a time when she was at 6th grade and she was asked to write about a touching story of a person that pupils knew. She spent a lot of time to work hard on writing and editing to have a really good essay. She was proud of her essay and finally it was read in class by the teacher. Some of her friends cried because of the story. A story was about a little girl with tanned skin who earned her own life at the schooling age with a job as a lotto vendor. However, the female teacher has never liked the story and criticized that it did not follow the general outline that she taught the class. The teacher assumed every kid to have a somewhat similar to her sample essay. And it is truth that even now children still have the same problems that prevent them to be different in anyway.

Thien Nhan, a student who does not want her sister to step on similar routes as she had from elementary to high school, signalized the educators, teachers, and the minister of education and training that the development of creative personality is seriously discouraged and creativity needs to be nurtured in every school. She did not like to memorize everything and when she spent time to study and be creative about something which is not on the textbooks; her teachers marked her very low. She dreamed about a system of education for the next generation of her sister that,

“I want my sister to be creative in a freeway. I want her to learn and think at the same time which is rather different from “going to school” or “going to extra/ private classes”. I want her to be herself and be happy when she thinks differently. When she thinks differently, it is not her faults... I dream of a different system of education where my sister or any other learners are free.” Thien Nhan (2014, online newspaper)

The ideas of Thien Nhan is actually compatible with the implied meanings in Guilford (1968) of those which are not appropriate anymore in the new millennium and demands of education,

...the emphasis upon the memorizing of facts sets the wrong kind of goal for the students... Also, we are told by the philosophers who have given thought to the problem that the unfolding of a creative personality is a highly individual matter which stresses uniqueness and shuns conformity...

When children are circled in knowledge for the exams and classes get more extra than ever. Parents seem to have their hands tightened with no useful help to their children. They have to think of taking all other chores of their children at home so that they only need to learn and eat. These actions result that children are not able to do any simple chores at home. What they can do is to go to school, eat, and nothing else.



In some other situations, people dream of a scientific way to teach their children. However, when some schools decided to change from giving too much homework to none and children must leave all books and notebooks at school. They thought that children may have problems with their spines when carrying too heavy. The ideas were good however schools almost need no cooperation from parents to take care of their children's learning because parents did not know what children need according to the current lessons. In brief, if schools have very advanced ways of teaching without any intervention of parents, it can be a problem too. Parents dream of a normal educational life for young generations.

From that, we draw out the following lessons as the suggestions or shares for those parents who would not want similar things happen negatively to their children.

A first lesson for educators and parents is the reason for children to go to school. Everyone knows that children should go to school so that in the future they can have a better life and be happy with their education. However, not many children have an idea of why they should go to school. They do not even know why they study this course and other course. They do not know why schools are so boring and they should like schools. A lesson is for all of us - stupid adults. We have imposed our thoughts and forced children to follow. We have never asked them what they want to learn. Children have never been told with reasons they should do what adults want them to do. Children have never had a chance to look at or discuss their learning programs. Adults always think that children do not know so they do that job for children.

A second lesson is related to direction for life regardless of talents and interests. Every person knows that sixteen-year-old children still cannot decide which way for their life. What happens to children is that parents and teachers decide for them. We all think that children are too young to give a decision in anything. Parents and teachers lead them to the schooling world and this is the place they hate. Everyday, children ask their parents why you do not go to school and I have to. The answer is simple as "you are young." Children ask why these lottery vendors do not have to go to school as I do. The answer is even simple like "they are poor." Children will notice that schooling is their failure and mistake. When they get older like us, some people think that their learning in the past is a waste of time. The reason is that children like to be a poet and their parents do everything to force them to become a doctor in the future. These children only realize that when they are much older and feel regret of their schooling time.

Another lesson is about valuable time for children. It will not become a lesson if we always care about our children and have more time with them. However, parents seem not to become a good teacher if they always rely their children on the schools and teachers there. When children quarrel and they are asked by parents, why don't you talk to us when you get stuck? No children can answer that because parents are not around them when they really need their presence. For that reason, if parents cannot spend more time with children, children will never tell them what they want. Have any parents in this world asked their children that how tired are they today and do they want a day off? It never happens and parents do not require anything else.

One more lesson is from the children's fear. Vietnamese parents usually think that beating children when they are naughty because they love them. Parents should never raise



their children with fear. If they are too scary with beating, shouting, or even cursing, they are injured and try to lie as they can. Some children can survive with parents' actions like this but they are exhausting day by day and no one notices about that. When their endurance is exceeding their limits, they quit or they become depressed. Some decides to stop their life by suicide. In fact, children have pressure when they are too young and no rights to fight back. We are killing our children silently.

The last lesson is about children's dream. Parents should let their children dream freely and support their preparation for that dream. Children want to do what they need. In this world, if parents understand children, they live in peace, kindness, and love. Education must direct children to the better sides of life. Parents and teachers should lead children to their dream with more and more concerns about piety, honesty, and love. In reality, a lot of people live successfully with their passion rather than their formal education. Parents should let children dream and teach them to select the right way according to their talents, not other ones.

Children need to be understood and sympathized in any situations and cases. Each kid has his own talents and propensities. Parents and the society should never consider children similarly and judge them in the same way. They must know that the world is never fair. Therefore, children should not be forced and assumed that they can do everything others can do.

Children must study for life preparation but pushing too much knowledge is not smart. Educators and parents do not lead their children to study what they do not want to learn. Children must be shared so that adults will understand reasons and chances to help them be fond of schooling. When children like schools, they will study and fix their own problems with more consumed time. In some cases, rote learning is acceptable but when children must do a lot of this, it has the different effects. Children should learn more practical lessons than theory and more hours with cultures, traditions, and differences of a huge world beyond their understanding.

Parents and teachers need to teach children to accept and sympathize with the differences. Children must be consolidated with faiths in a fair society as in their school and at home. Educators, parents, and children should reconsider the knowledge and programs that children have to acquire in their learning and playing time. Programs for children should prepare them to be ready for life at the basic level. They really do not need many complicated calculations of math. In the real life, they never use this knowledge if they do not work in a related field.

When adults feel that children have abnormal expressions, parents should be patient to understand them. Adults must accept them first to listen to their sharing. A good communication with sympathy and understanding will encourage children to tell the truth and what they think. In all cases, children must be allowed to think different and be creative. They must have conditions to holistically develop from their spirit, physiques, and education.

Parents need to know what children want. No one has a right to force children to any models. Children need more time with parents in their learning, feelings, and playing. If parents can help children to develop their critical ideas, creative capacities, and literately skills, children will be adapted well to any environments.



In any situations, parents must be calm when listening to their children and try not to stop their flows of ideas. Parents should not blame children in any cases as wrong or right but they need communication to understand the causes and effects of what have been done. Parents need to be children's teachers for their extra lessons, good learning habits, and ethics training at the same time with the responsibilities of their schools and teachers. All in all, parents must give them trust, love, and independent capacity.

In short, in any society, parents must know how to encourage their children and impact their living styles of legal freedom. There is no bad or naughty kid. There are only parents who do not understand their children and who cannot work as good teachers for their children. Only parents can cooperate with teachers and schools to educate their children in the ways that children can develop themselves in appropriate ways. For that reason, parents are good teachers of their children.

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EN

This paper is dedicated to the issues of verbal punishment of children during the upbringing process. Statistics show that this is the most common type of punishment of children used by parents. Unfortunately, it often takes the form of a humiliating criticism, shouts or intimidation. All this affects negatively the child's psyche. Taking into consideration the amendments which introduced a total prohibition on using corporal punishment towards children to Polish legislation, the issue of the limits of verbal punishments permitted by law still remains unsolved. Apart from a short definition and the description of the scale of this phenomenon, this paper is mainly dedicated to a legal analysis, which takes into account the stances of the doctrines of criminal and civil law. This paper attempts to give a straight answer to the doubts concerning this matter.

Key words: verbal punishment, children, parents, Polish legislation, law

P S P

*„Words hurt
for life“ – legal
aspects of verbal
punishment
of children*

SYLWIA RÓŻYCKA-JAROS

University of Warsaw



Introduction

“Words hurt for life¹” is the title of one of the few social campaigns launched several years ago in Poland. It concerned a phenomenon that often occurs during the process of upbringing, i.e. verbal punishment of children by their parents. Unaware of the negative effects, Polish parents often yell and humiliate their children by using offensive names towards them. This parental behaviour is often dictated by the false belief that an “explicit” description of the child’s reprehensible misconduct will make the child behave in the future. Meanwhile, a humiliated and intimidated child develops and reinforces a belief that they are unworthy of being loved and respected by their family and the most important people to them. This, as a result, affects their self-esteem and the manner of functioning in adulthood.

Although the problem of verbal punishment of children is extremely important from the perspective of their development, few publications, discussions, studies and social campaigns have been dedicated to it, in contrast to different types of the violation of their bodily integrity as part of corporal punishment. There is a false social belief that verbal punishment, even if it takes the form of emotional distress, is the least severe type of punishment. A lot of modern parents seem to understand the negative effects of beating their children, so they give up this „method of upbringing”. Yet, they still find it difficult to understand that words can hurt their children as much or even more than a spank or a hiding.

The definition

Verbal punishment is associated with an inconvenience that is used towards a child violating the established norms or rules; it affects only the child’s psyche (Encyklopedia PWN, 2008; Encyklopedia popularna PWN, 1997; Encyklopedia Pedagogiczna XXI, 2002). A verbal reprimand differs from a physical reprimand (Pilch, 2009) – usually inflicting physical pain – as its aim is to cause „only” some psychological discomfort, which may sometimes become a source of serious distress experienced painfully by the punished person. The verbal reprimand is used not only for chastening children by making them aware of the mistakes they have made. The aim of this type of discipline is often to shame the child; use insulting comparisons; ridicule; humiliate; or frighten, threatening with future punishments (Ochmański, 2001; Pilch 2009). Calling the child names like „lazy”, „dunce” or „hooligan” undoubtedly proves that the reprimanding person has violated the child’s dignity. Also, it is often the case that the words used by parents to their children are commonly considered offensive. Such deeds diminish the child’s dignity and are an example of the so-called non-educational punishments, which arouse feelings such as anxiety, dread, tension, shame, a sense of powerlessness and low self-esteem, terror, fear, sadness, or even depression (Rodzina i dziecko, 1986). Humiliating, sneering or frightening the child as part of his or her punishment is simply a clear example of violation of the child’s hon-

¹[online] <http://fdn.pl/kretyn-czy-takie-imie-wybrales-dla-swojego-dziecka>



our and dignity, confirming the use of psychological violence towards the child (Trocha, 2011). Such violence must be equated with the definition of „domestic violence” as defined in Article 2(2) of the Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence². It specifies, among other things, that any one-time or repeated intentional- act or a failure to act which violates the child’s rights or personal rights, in particular violating the child’s dignity and causing- damage to the child’s mental health, must be considered violence.

However, the term „verbal punishment” should be, above all, associated with such an act of the punishing person that leads to the improvement of the child’s behaviour, but does not diminish the child’s dignity. When using this type of verbal punishment, the child should be given an explanation of why his or her behaviour was improper (for example, because the child was being rude or carried out his or her various duties at home and school carelessly) or a verbal expression of sadness or disappointment, in a manner that does not violate any personal rights of the child, in particular the above-mentioned dignity (Ochmański, 2001; Pilch, 2009).

The scale of the phenomenon

Since the 1990s, numerous sociological studies on the methods of punishing children during the upbringing process have been regularly conducted in Poland. The studies mainly focus on the physical types of punishment of children, in particular their forms, frequency, the reasons of using them, and the experiences and views of the adult members of the society on this issue (Jarosz, 2015). The results of these studies show that despite the fact that an increasing percentage of Poles deny the appropriateness of corporal punishment, at the same time they are not able to remove it completely from the range of punishments used during the upbringing of their own children. Obviously, the tendency for using corporal punishment towards children is decreasing due to raising social awareness; nonetheless, Poland is still a country where spansks and other forms of violation of bodily integrity are part of everyday life for many children. This has been proven by the studies on this aspect conducted in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014; so over four years following the ban on using corporal punishment towards children. The studies show that 60% of Poles still accept the milder types of violating the child’s bodily integrity in the form of the above-mentioned spank, while 40% of respondents do not see anything wrong in more severe corporal punishments of children such as a hiding (Jarosz, 2015). As regards the frequency of using verbal punishments towards children, it is easy to guess that this is an even more common method of upbringing. A study focused only on verbal punishment, which was carried out in Poland in 2012 (Przemoc werbalna wobec dzieci, 2012), shows that every second parent in Poland yells at their children at least once a week. Usually, older children between 12 and 17 as well as younger children between 4 and 7 are exposed to this kind of behaviour – as much as 88% of parents in these two age groups admit that they sometimes yell at their children or raise their voice at them. As regards the youngest children up to 3 years old, this percentage is lower

²The Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence of 29 July 2005 (Dz.U. 2015 item 1390).



by 10 percentage points. Furthermore, it turns out that mothers are twice more likely to choose shouts as a method of punishment of children than fathers. Obviously, this can be explained by the fact that it is the mother who spends much more time with her children than the father.

A much more drastic form of verbal punishment involves calling your own child offensive names such as „moron”, „dope” or „a snotty-nosed brat”. It turns out that one out of every five parents in Poland does this, but much more frequently towards older children between 12 and 17 (33% of the respondents) than the youngest ones (5% of the respondents). It must be emphasised that the older the child is, the more the parents believe that there are some situations when they should punish them verbally using offensive words towards them (from 9 to 25%) (Przemoc werbalna wobec dzieci, 2011).

At this point let me also mention the results of a study conducted in 2010 among randomly selected guardians (Witkowska-Paleń, 2011). Members of this professional group have faced the issue of too frequent punishment of children in the families they work with many times. As their everyday observations show, very frequent shouts, which even turn into „yelling”, are the most common type of punishment of children. In the families which were subject to supervision or oversight, the percentage of children who experienced the types of verbal punishment mentioned above is even higher than in an average Polish family, reaching 67.6% of all cases (Witkowska-Paleń, 2011).

When summing up the briefly described results of the selected studies, it must be strongly emphasised that verbal punishments violating one of the most important personal rights of all people, i.e. their dignity, are the most common method used during the upbringing process. The reinforcement of activities aimed at making Polish parents aware of the negative effects of calling their children names or yelling at them, which only seems less harmful than beating, may be important in this case.

The views on the limits of permitted verbal punishments taken by legal doctrines

For many years, in the doctrine of criminal law there was a view that the punishing of children is a circumstance revoking the illegality of the deed due to the justification for punishing minors (Andrejew, 1961; Gardocki, 2009; Cieślak, 1994; Indeck, Liszewska, 2002; Marek, 2007; Bojarski, 2002). This means that in some circumstances parents were not subject to criminal liability³ for deeds which met the criteria of acts such as, in particular, the crime of insult (216 § 1 CC), the crime of violation of bodily integrity (217§ 1 CC), the crime of deprivation of liberty (189 § 1 CC), or the crime of forcing to a specific act (191 § 1 CC). The situation described above fundamentally changed when the Act Amending the Act on Counteracting

³Punishment was to be used for educational purposes only. The use of punishment could be a response only towards the child's specific unwanted behaviour. Punishment was permitted only in the parent-child relationship (Gubiński, 1960). The reason for revoking the illegality of punishment was the need to limit oneself only to the so-called „mild punishment” (V. Konarska – Wrzosek, 2003). Only the child whose parents had parental responsibility towards him or her could be subject to punishment (L. Lernell, 1969).



Domestic Violence and Some Other Acts of 10 June 2010 entered into force⁴. Article 2 of the act in question amended the Family and Guardianship Code by inserting the following Article 96¹ after Article 96: „Persons with parental responsibility and those who serve as a guardian of the minor shall not use corporal punishment”. Under this regulation an explicit prohibition on using corporal punishment towards children was introduced to Polish legislation. It is clear that today in the doctrine of criminal law there is a strongly established view that due to the existence of the justification specified above, the right to use corporal punishment towards children has been excluded from the array of permitted acts.

L. Gardocki points out that the scope of acts permitted by law within the justification for punishing minors has indeed been limited. In his opinion parents, within their parental practices, still have the right, for example, to use threats or ground their children so as to implement the ban on leaving home, but they have lost the right to use corporal punishment towards them (Gardocki, 2010). M. Mozgawa takes the same view. He argues that this regulation „categorically settles that the use of corporal punishment towards children is illegal”, which does not mean that the non-statutory justification for punishing minors does not function anymore (Prawo karne materialne. Część ogólna, 2011). A. Marek said that beating children is seen as unacceptable, and the parents who violate this law may be held liable for the crime of abuse (Marek, 2011). According to M. Morawska, it is also clear that any forms of corporal punishment have been excluded from the non-statutory justification for punishment (Morawska, 2012). J. Warylewski took a slightly different view on this matter. He thinks that punishment, even corporal, is not the same as beating children, „and if one does not use some elements of pressure, or even violence” in specific situations, it is difficult to keep the child safe. This author, in the contrast to the views cited above, indicates that the justification for the educational punishment of minors still excludes the illegal violation of the child’s physical integrity by parents (Warylewski, 2012). However, when taking into account the vast majority of views, we may conclude that the fact that parents are no longer allowed to use corporal punishment towards their children within the justification for punishing minors is undeniable in the doctrine of criminal law. This context raises the following question: Do the applicable provisions of law only limit the scope of acts permitted within the justification for punishing minors, eliminating the option of corporal punishment from the upbringing process, or do they completely exclude the use of such punishment methods by parents as they violate the provisions of criminal law by taking, e.g., the form of verbal punishment? First, it is worth examining the intention of the Polish legislator. Leaving aside the various proposals which occurred over the years, it must be noted that originally Article 96¹ of the Family and Guardianship Code was to introduce a ban on both corporal punishment and the infliction of psychological suffering and other forms of humiliation used towards children. Nonetheless, in the Resolution of 28 May 2010 the Polish Senate amended the text by deleting the following: „the infliction of psychological suffering and other forms of humiliation of the child”, on the grounds that the acts listed above have already been established in other applicable

⁴Dz. U. 2010, No. 125, item 842.



regulations. According to a direct oral statement made by Małgorzata Kochan, a Polish MP who supervised the legislative process of these amendments at that time, Polish senators decided that the adoption of the provision in question in full would be a too far-reaching interference in the parental rights given to parents under their parental responsibility.

It must be emphasised that a lot of European countries, where the scope of the methods of upbringing permitted by law is clearly regulated in their legislations, unlike Poland, did not limit themselves only to the acts prohibiting the use of corporal punishment towards children. An analysis of the legal regulations on punishment of children in European countries shows that a comprehensive approach to this issue is preferred. The examples of civil regulations in countries such as Austria⁵, Bulgaria⁶, Croatia⁷, Denmark⁸, Finland⁹, Iceland¹⁰, Latvia¹¹, Germany¹², Romania¹³, Hungary¹⁴, or Sweden¹⁵ (a precursor in this matter) clearly indicate that an equal focus is put both on the prohibition of corporal punishment of children and the prohibition of any other methods of upbringing which violate their dignity. The humiliating of children has been directly prohibited.

Thus, O. Trocha rightly pointed out that the legislator undoubtedly did not intend to prohibit any punishments -leading to the psychological abuse of the child” (Trocha, 2011), which, e.g., may take the form of verbal punishment. This view is shared in literature on criminal law, indicating that during the process of upbringing the use of verbal punishments towards the child – even if they meet the criteria of the forbidden acts such as insults or defamation – is permitted by law within the above-mentioned justification, provided that such punishments are

⁵ Article 146(a) of the Civil Code of 1989: “Minor children must follow their parents’ orders. When giving and implementing the orders, parents must take into account the age, the level of development and the personality of their children; the use of force and the infliction of physical or emotional distress is forbidden”.

⁶ Article 11(2) of the Act on the Protection of Children of 2000, as amended in 2003: “All children have the right to be protected from any methods of upbringing which violate their dignity, involve physical or psychological violence or any other kind of violence, as well as from any forms of influence unfavourable for them”.

⁷ Article 88 of the Family Act of 1998, which entered into force in 1999: “Parents and other family members shall not expose the child to any humiliating treatment, psychological or physical punishments or abuse”.

⁸ The Act on Parental Custody and Care: “Children have the right to care and safety. They shall be treated with the respect owed to every human being. The use of corporal punishments towards children or any other forms of humiliation is forbidden”.

⁹ Article 1(3) of the Childcare Act of 1983, which came into force in 1984: “Children should be brought up in the atmosphere of understanding, safety and love. The use of force, corporal punishments or any other forms of humiliation towards them is forbidden. Children must be encouraged, supported and given help in their efforts at becoming independent, responsible and adult”.

¹⁰ Article 28 of the Act on Children of 2003: “Parents are obliged to protect their children against any forms of physical or psychological violence and any other degrading or humiliating acts”.

¹¹ Article 9(2) of the Act on the Protection of Children’s Rights of 1998: “Children shall not be treated cruelly, tortured or punished physically, and the child’s dignity and honour shall not be violated”.

¹² Article 1631 of the Civil Code: “Children have the right to be raised without violence. The use of corporal punishment, physical violence or any other methods humiliating children is forbidden”.

¹³ Article 28 of Act No. 272/2004 on the Protection and Promotion of Children’s Rights: “(1) The child’s personality and individuality must be respected, the use of corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment towards children is prohibited. (2) The disciplinary measures towards children may be taken only if such measures do not diminish the child’s dignity, and under no circumstances may they take the form of physical punishment or a punishment which affects their physical or psychological development or emotional state in an unfavourable manner”.

¹⁴ Article 6(5) of the Act on the Protection of Children: “The child’s dignity must be respected, children must be protected against abuse in the form of physical, sexual and psychological violence as well as protected against the lack of care from their closest environment and the damage caused by improper information”.

¹⁵ Article 6(1) of the Family Code: “Children have the right to care, safety and a good proper upbringing. Children shall be treated with the respect owed to every individual. The use of corporal punishment and any other humiliating methods towards children are prohibited”.



used by a parent or a guardian for educational purposes and concern a specific misconduct of the child (Konarska-Wrzosek, 1999). In the doctrine of criminal law we can easily find examples of views indicating that the forms of verbal punishment listed above may be used not only by the parent or the guardian but also by „a teacher, a class tutor or even a stranger” (Pohl, 2013). According to T. Bojarski verbal punishment cannot be prohibited in the relation between the child and the person who is fulfilling an educational role towards him or her at a specific moment, in particular if such punishment is only a reprimand for the child because he or she is being naughty, rude or vulgar. An argument for the view that the justification for punishing minors, within which parents can verbally insult or humiliate their children in a specific situation must be maintained is to consider the core of this justification, which comes down to the lack of social harmfulness of the deeds cited above since their aim is to improve the behaviour of the child who is being punished that way (Prawo karne materialne. Część ogólna i szczególna, 2012).

The doctrine of civil law presents a view which is contrary to the doctrine of criminal law. According to T. Sokołowski only a physical suffering which results from a specific life situation and does not humiliate the child is permitted. He provides the example of a situation in which parents must inform their child about an unpleasant experience the child is going to face, that is a painful medical treatment. In addition, the author points out that Article 96¹ of the Family and Guardianship Code establishes specific standards of a child’s care, while punishment „is an improper performance of such care”. This, on the other hand, may justify the intervention of a family court made under specific provisions of family law.

T. Sokołowski explicitly supports the view that the way of expressing a disapproval towards the child – if the milder form of influence, i.e. persuasion, has given little effects – cannot pose any threat for the objectively defined dignity of the child. Furthermore, the person punishing the child should emphasise that the content of the disapproval does not concern the child himself/herself but only his or her specific behaviour so that the child is able to understand it (Kodeks rodzinny i opiekuńczy. Komentarz, 2013).

In the doctrine of civil law the view taken by T. Smyczyński is supported. He argues that the methods of upbringing used in the process of developing the child’s personality should be selected in such a way so as to persuade the child that the decision and the conduct of his or her parents are right. Persuasion seems to be the best method (Smyczyński, 2009).

The aspect which must be strongly emphasised is the fact that civil lawyers did not have any doubts that the wording of Article 96¹ of the Family and Guardianship Code has definitively removed corporal punishments from the array of permitted punishments, considering them inhumane and improper for „a child’s misconduct” for a long time. Furthermore, apart from such a clear position, they also assumed that „under no condition may the punishment of children violate their dignity or cause harm to their mental health” (Kodeks rodzinny i opiekuńczy. Komentarz, 2012).

Summing up the deliberations above, it must be pointed out that according to the doctrine of criminal law the non-statutory justification for punishing minors has not been abolished and it still functions, while the prohibition on the use of corporal punishment towards children, introduced to family law, has only limited its scope (Prawo karne. Część



ogólna, szczególna i wojskowa, 2014). This means that in the opinion of criminal law theoreticians, the use of verbal punishments towards children, even those violating their personal rights, is a method of upbringing permitted by law if the conditions laid down in the structure of this justification have been met. However, if the borders of this justification have been crossed, that may become a tort under civil law or even an act prohibited by criminal law. Civil law takes a different view on the forms of punishment permitted by law; it is definitely more child-friendly. Thus, the following question must be asked: Based on what provisions has this issue been explicitly solved?

Applicable regulations

The amended article 95 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code¹⁶ must be considered the provision establishing that parents do not have the right to use verbal punishments which violate the personal rights of their children; it reads as follows: „Parental responsibility covers in particular parents’ obligation and right to care for the child and manage the child’s assets, and raise the child, respecting the child’s dignity and rights”. According to this article parents are responsible for respecting the child’s dignity and rights during the entire process of upbringing. This, on the other hand, means that the use of punishment which violates the child’s dignity and rights must be given up as it is incompatible with the wording of the provision cited above. This regulation is crucial in assessing the borders of verbal punishments permitted by law. At this point the opinions of the Supreme Court (Paper Ps-149/08 of 13.06.2008) and the Ministry of Justice, which were issued before the Family and Guardianship Code was amended, should be mentioned (Paper Ps-149/08 of 23.06.2008). L. Gardocki, the First President of the Supreme Court at that time, took the view (Paper BSA I-021-84/08 of 11.07.2008) that the criminal and civil regulations applicable in Polish law provide a full protection against the violation of any personal rights of any person, regardless of their age. Thus the use of punishments violating these rights has already been prohibited. L. Gardocki also pointed out the fact that the amended Article 95 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code clearly stipulates that parents are obliged to respect the child’s dignity and rights. This provision is broad and concerns the entire process of upbringing, including the issue of verbal punishment of children. On the other hand, the Ministry of Justice (Paper DL-P-I-023-103/08 of 9.09.2008) emphasised in its statement that Article 95 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code „will allow to eliminate the cases invoking the so-called non-statutory justification for punishing minors” each time.

In the opinions of 24 April 2009 (Szymańczak, 2009) and 25 June 2009 (Kościelny, 2009), the Sejm’s Office of Analyses indicated that the above-mentioned Article 95 § 1 specifies that children must be raised with respect for their rights and dignity, and no methods of punishment violating these values may be used.

¹⁶The amendment to Article 95 of the Family and Guardianship Code was implemented by the Act Amending the Act – the Family and Guardianship Code and some other acts – of 6 November 2008 (Dz.U. of 2008 no. 220, item 1431), entered into force on 13 June 2009.



It is worth mentioning A. Sakowicz's opinion (Sakowicz, 2010) issued due to the doubts concerning the introduction of a ban on using corporal punishment, inflicting psychological suffering and any other forms of humiliation towards children, which occurred during the legislative process, to Polish legislation. The author stressed, e.g., the fact that the adoption of the ban on using specific punishment methods towards children does not entail any substantial changes in the protection of the child, which has already been established under the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. In addition, in his opinion, Article 95 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code specifies that children must be raised with respect for their rights and dignity, which means that the use of any forms of discipline causing psychological suffering or humiliating the child is prohibited.

The contemporary doctrine of civil law explicitly lays down that the respect to the dignity of the child during the process of upbringing is crucial. Following the above-mentioned principle is one of the most important criteria for assessing the right performance of parental responsibility (Andrzejewski, 2013), which – as already mentioned – should be exercised by parents with respect for the personal rights of their children. The violation of this standard during the execution of parental rights, in particular if it takes the form of power abuse, will be a justification for the family court to intervene, or even deprive such parents of their parental responsibility (Kosek, 2011). Also, it must be always kept in mind that when assessing the execution of parental responsibility, the child's welfare and the social interest should be taken into account. If the child's welfare and the welfare of other persons are different, the former is the priority¹⁷.

Summing up the opinions given above, it must be explicitly stated that the provision of Article 95 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code lays down a ban on using any methods of upbringing violating the child's rights and dignity. Therefore, the upbringing of children may not involve humiliating them or inflicting suffering, since this would be an obvious offence of human dignity. On the other hand, according to the applicable law the offence of the child's dignity or the violation of the child's rights is a misconduct which requires a family court to intervene in the manner of executing parental responsibility by such parents.

Due to the „reduced” wording of Article 96¹ of the Family and Guardianship Code – as it concerns only corporal punishment – the provision of Article 95 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code is now extremely important¹⁸. This means that the use of corporal punishment towards children is prohibited under Polish law, but it is also prohibited to use any psychological punishments, including verbal punishment which humiliates the child and violates their personal dignity. This law is additionally reinforced by a number of other home and international regulations, which have already been described in the literature of the subject multiple

¹⁷Decision of 7 judges of the Supreme Court of 7 April 1952, C. 487/52, LexisNexis no. 363844, NP 1952, no. 8-9, p. 75; justification of the decision of the Supreme Court of 12 December 2000, V CKN 1751/2000, Lexis.pl no. 7275163, [in:] Jędrejek G. (2014), Komentarz do art. 95 k.r.o., SIP; justification of the verdict of the Supreme Court of 5 January 2001, V CKN 915/2000, LexisNexis no. 350400, OSP 2001, no. 6, item 92.

¹⁸Article 30: “The inherent and inalienable human dignity is a source of freedom as well as human and citizen rights. It is inviolable, and public authorities are obliged to respect and protect it”.



times. Undoubtedly, Article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland is the most significant among them. This provision specifies dignity as an inherent characteristic of all individuals, existing irrespective of whether or not it is confirmed by law in the adopted regulations. Any regulations which conflict with this principle lose their legitimacy. The legislator and the entities that obey law are obliged to respect it¹⁹. Furthermore, the principle of dignity is inviolable, so it cannot be abolished, limited or suspended by taking legislative actions. Dignity is a fundamental human right owed to every person, regardless of their conduct and behaviour. The role of the state is to protect this dignity, both in relations with others and authorities, which means that neither an individual nor a public body has the right to deprive any person of their dignity or limit it (Constitutions of the Republic of Poland and the Commentary to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997, 1998). It must be emphasised that all people have the equal right to dignity. Thus, any diversifications or the „grading” of dignity, depending on various factors such as age, are unacceptable.

We should keep in mind that the principle of respecting and protecting the dignity of all people is the foundation of the entire constitutional order and, as a result, the entire legal order in Poland. This principle must therefore affect the system of values followed by the Polish legislator²⁰. This means that the norms, principles and values contained in the Constitution and other regulations applicable in Poland must be created, interpreted and used in accordance with the principle of dignity.

Thus, the prohibition on treating a person in the way which may violate this dignity has its origins in the principle of dignity. Taking into account the interpretation of Article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland cited above, it must be concluded that the consent for verbal punishment of children which violates their dignity is incompatible with the constitutional right of human dignity.

The proper provision for the enforcement of the child's rights in this matter is undoubtedly Article 109 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code. It specifies that if the child's welfare is threatened-, a family court should make proper decisions, e.g., to oblige such parents to work -with a family assistant, send them to- a family therapist,- appoint a guardian to supervise the execution of their parental responsibility, and – in extreme cases – -place the minor- in a foster family, -a children's home or an institutionalised -foster care facility.

Conclusions

For the psychologists and teachers working with children on daily basis, it is obvious that today the term „verbal punishment” should refer only to such forms of punishment which are permitted by contemporary educational studies, i.e. such forms which do not violate the child's personal rights, aim at achieving proper educational effects and, in addition,

¹⁹Verdict of the Constitutional Court of 4 April 2001, K.11/00.

²⁰Decision of the Constitutional Court of 23 March 1999, K.2/98.

make the child is really willing to change his or her behaviour. However, taking into account the current wording of Article 96¹ of the Family and Guardianship Code, one may assume that Polish parents are more likely to use verbal punishments violating the child's dignity, as they believe that the prohibition on using some methods of upbringing is only limited to corporal punishment. This view is supported, to a great extent, by the doctrine of criminal law. Despite the regulations of family, criminal and constitutional law and the commonly known standards provided by contemporary educational studies, it must be strongly emphasised that there is still an uncritical consent for treating the humiliating verbal punishment as harmless to the child, and even as necessary for the proper course of their upbringing. A lot of parents still believe in the beneficial effects of a harsh criticism, the raised voice, shaming or ridiculing the child. However, it is undeniable that the use of verbal punishments which diminish the child's dignity is an act violating the protected rights in the form of the right of all people to the non-violation of this dignity, and it should be equally protected both for adults and children. Thus it is time to launch a major campaign to make parents aware of the effects of insulting and humiliating their children in everyday parental practices and the fact that this behaviour is incompatible with the applicable legal standards.

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*Professional
working mothers.
On the sidelines
of the publication
Contemporary
Work Spaces*

**KATARZYNA
RYCHLICKA-MARASZEK**

University of Warsaw

Professional working mothers is a project currently implemented at the Chair of Social Pedagogy of the Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialization of Warsaw University. Its objective is to identify and describe the categories of mothers who experience their motherhood in a particular manner, combining professional work in a corporation with raising at least two children. The research – narrative and biographical interviews with mothers holding managerial positions is fixed in a widely understood issue of contemporary work spaces, referred to in the 2016 book of the same title (Rychlicka - Maraszek, Ostaszewska, Jaworska, Sławecki, Krenz). Work space is therein defined not as a territory, place of work, but rather as a public space with its process of construction and reconstruction of identity, social roles, creation and modelling of professional narrations and giving meaning to professional activity. The publication presents these work environments that best and most efficiently illustrate modernization changes taking place in postmodern societies: from underwork – work below women - migrants' qualifications, through work in social co - operatives, to university or supranational corporation positions of a high social value. Each of these environments is a space of work not understood as performing solely specific activities, but also biographical work or identity work and women emancipation.

Experiences of women clearly demonstrate that combining the role of a mother and an employee is particularly difficult and requires addressing numerous cultural and structural constraints, especially while holding managerial positions in corporations (which is, inter alia, the subject matter of the first chapter of the publication (pages 16-44)). Professional working mothers are subjected to numerous mutually excluding pressures resulting from the roles they perform: the role of a skilled employee and the role model of an ideal mother deeply rooted in the social discourse on parenthood. They are additionally enhanced by ubiquitous neoliberal discourse which is particularly clear in such work places like corporations. It regards motherhood as a project, an undertaking the aim of which is reaching a multidimensional success. This success is perceived as raising a child who will have appropriate skills that will enable them to reproduce the status of the parent, allowing the parents to have a feeling of satisfaction and “return on investment” as well as raising a sensitive, emphatic, outgoing and gregarious person.



Corporations, huge international companies, not without reason seen as the outpost of modernization, which by passing through the boundaries introduce to local markets not only the products and services but also newest technologies, principles of work organization, styles of life and consumption. It is the corporations that create and disseminate free - market principles, values and norms; it is them that demand continuous improvement of qualifications and meeting strict norms of efficiency and productivity. A corporate job requires not only appropriate qualifications but also sacrifices related with restriction of other activities. Working in a corporation means prestige, high salaries, an opportunity to develop and continuously improve one`s qualifications, nevertheless, it requires availability, efficiency, unconditional surrender to the principles of corporate culture.

Thus, corporations require intensive commitment to work; social discourse (including postmodern one) gives mothers an entirely different pattern: a model of “intensive motherhood”, which should characterize well – educated middle class women. This term, introduced and popularized by Sharon Hays (1996) in the 1990s, means mother`s maximum commitment to raising her child: direct care, enhancing emotional contact, inseparability of the mother and her child and a permanent involvement in the child`s intellectual, emotional and social development. In the intensive motherhood, “the child is at the centre of attention, and the child`s needs are at the top of hierarchy; whereas emotionally absorbing and requiring intensive work and high costs are the methods of raising children based on the authority of experts” (Bieńko 2015, p. 95). The model of a perfect mother, Polish Mother who is still the focal character of the hegemonic discourse of womanhood (Hryciuk 2012) is here confronted with a model of a perfect employee, a flexible, mobile person always ready to work for their organization, who entirely accepts neoliberal values: profit, business, competition, investments. Raising children in the middle class environment is a parenting – project (Lisowska – Magdziarz 2010 p.73), success – oriented, viewed not only in the framework of material success but also obtaining a high level of self - fulfilment. Hence, motherhood is more and more often a project that is well designed and implemented according to a previously established plan, a “biographical, self-implementing and competence - related plan” (Ibidem, p 73), which has its target, strategy, stages and tasks just like a marketing plan.

Professional working mothers are then entangled in two exceptionally intensive, strong social roles that require competence, continuous care and learning and foremost time and attention. Classic concepts of social roles indicate that roles are “others` expectations related to a specific conduct linked with an organisational task” (Katz, Kahn 1979), implemented according to “a less or more clearly established pattern, expected by a group from its members” (Szczepański 1963, p.76). The relations between two dominating roles - a familial role and an occupational role may be shaped via two channels: may lead to a role conflict or their enrichment (work - family enrichment). In the first case tension and a role conflict may result from time, stress, conflict of requirements, related with expected behaviour within the roles performed (we have different expectations from a mother and still different ones from a manager). In the family enrichment – the work by Jeffrey H. Greenhaus and Gary N. Powell indicates three spheres which may positively affect better performance of the two roles: firstly, aggregated family expe-



rience and work experience positively influence the general well – being; secondly, the roles that individuals perform at work and in the family decrease negative consequences of the problems resulting from performing them; lastly, the experience and competence obtained in one role may have a positive influence on performing the other. Thus, the positive role may result both from instrumental resources (experience, knowledge) and affective resources (positive emotions, self - esteem, self - fulfilment).

With this in mind, what is the situation of mothers holding responsible positions in a corporation; how do these most important social roles interpenetrate and condition each other? How do professional mothers cope with the need to meet the demand from such two roles? What is the model of “double intensive” commitment like. Do corporation mothers see the family and work role in the category of conflict or facilitation and how does it manifest itself? What do they learn at work, what is it that they use in family relations, and which of the skills required in the family do they take advantage of at work? What the picture of motherhood in mothers` narrations? Do they accept and approve of the maternity role imposed in the social and professional discourse or perhaps they themselves create it, establish it and negotiate on their own? (cf. the concept of role in symbolic interactionism). What is the role of partners / significant others in raising children? Finally, what is maternity capital of working professional mothers and how is it produced? Is it a mere sum of capital: family capital (skills and traits obtained in the process of upbringing in the family of origin and created during the process of learning the role of the mother in one own’s family) and the professional capital. How do these two important components condition each other in the opinions of mothers (enhancing, weakening or excluding each other?) These are some of the questions that provide better insights into the essence of the increasingly frequently experienced “high quality” parenting – project.

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Professional competence as social educational capital

PETRO HUSAK

Lesya Ukrainka Eastern
European National University

LUDMYLA GUSAK

Eastern European National
University

Standardization of the content of the educational branches is one of the key aspects of modern development of higher education, because it requires creating separate formations that allow to solve certain educational problems in the training of specialists. Such formations are competences. They let us standardize the level of training of future specialists in higher educational institutions.

In Western European science the concepts of «competencies» have no clear definition and they have not been clearly separated. The process of active development of certain competences as standardized formations in education began after the signing of the Bologna Declaration (1999). Its adoption in the context of the formation of common European educational space caused the appearance of new approaches that satisfy harmonization of institutional, national, supra-national and pan-European formations - competencies.

The international Commission of the Council of Europe considers the concept of «competence» as general (or key), basic skills, basic methods/ways of learning, key skills, cross-training abilities or skills, key views, support, supporting knowledge (Strategy Paper on Key Competencies An Overarching Frame of Reference for An Assessment And Research Program 2002).

The project of European Commission «Tuning Educational Structures in Europe TUNING Project» (project setting) on the institutional level provides the definition of points of convergence and common understanding of qualifications: competencies-learning outcomes (Gonzales, Wagenaar 2005: 75). In a hierarchical structure outcomes are sets of competences that include students' knowledge, abilities and skills.

Among the scientists who developed the concept of «competence», are the following N. Bibik, V. Buriak, T. Dementieva, L. Dybkova, I. Zymnaia, N. Nikandrov, V. Liedniov, J. Raven, M. Ryzhakov, T. Tkachenko, M. Choshanova, A. Hutorskyi and others.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine presented the programme of the «National qualifications framework in higher education», where competences are defined as knowledge and skills that characterize a student's ability to perform, understand, reflect and get to know the things outlined by educational qualification characteristic of a specialist (Balyubash 2008:77). According to this interpretation intrapersonal context is



added to classic knowledge/abilities/skills argumentation of the competencies. That is, competences in this definition appear as a personal trait of a specialist, implemented in knowledge and skills.

The concept of «competence» has been presented by the American scientist E. Short in a multifaceted way. He believes that there are four general concepts of competence. The first is that competence is seen as a behavior or action (the acquisition of appropriate abilities and skills). The second concept treats competence more widely, including not only the abilities and skills, but primarily the knowledge that a person uses to select an activity. This knowledge ensures the understanding of the activity implementation process. The third concept considers competence as the level of professional qualification: «as the extent or level of abilities, which is considered to be sufficient». The fourth one interprets competence as a personal achievement of a human or his way of being. E. Short believes the mentioned concept the most objective and suitable to implement in practice, since the process of its evaluation, therefore, is the easiest.

Thus E. Short defines the competence at meaningful, procedural, productive, and personal levels. From his point of view, «competence» ought to be understood basically as the existence of certain person's qualities and states that usually do not guarantee their practical application, that is, possible implementation (Short 1984:211). In his understanding it is only personal and professional capacity.

This is also the opinion of some other scientists. So L. Bezkorovaina in the aspect of higher education follows the notion that «competence makes up a resource (potential) of the university graduate (2006:12-14). In her interpretation competence is only the inner potential that is determined by the functional specificity. According to A. Taisova, competence should be considered as the ability of the individual to an active, responsible life activity, performed on the basis of the value of self-determination, the ability to actively interact with the world (http://gcon.pstu.ac.ru/pedsovet/programm/-section=13_8.htm). Competence as only the sphere of powers (its procedural part) is treated by N. Gluzman (2008: 67-69). In his understanding of competence it is not only the ability to perform certain professional tasks, but also a procedural ability. In the context of the competence approach N. Bibik highlights the notion of «competence» as the issues in which the person is knowledgeable, has the knowledge and experience; and the concept of «competences» as the possession of appropriate knowledge and abilities, which enable to thoroughly judge about a certain sphere and effectively act in it (2004: 24-37).

The most common in both Ukrainian and foreign researches is knowledge/abilities/skills approach, according to which new competence formations are considered as a certain kind of formations in the form of knowledge, abilities and skills. So, Noam Chomsky and Walo Hutmacher emphasize that the notion of «competence» is closer to the conceptual area of the «know how» than to the area «know what» and is manifested in the activity (1997: 247). Almost from the beginning of its appearance competences have been interpreted from the position of the psychological concept of behaviorism and have been understood as simple, practical skills that are generated as a result of making knowledge automatic.



The problem of harmonization of domestic pedagogical terminology and science in general regarding interpretation of professional competence is that scientists mostly use traditional and easily comprehensible triad «knowledge–habits–skills», from which a number of categories and concepts arise. The concept of competence also naturally arises from the relationship between knowledge, abilities and skills in a specific area of professional activity. This scientific approach is acceptable, but not the only one, as it has been evidenced by the international scientific studies (B. Oskarsson, S. Sho, W. Hutmacher, H. Halazh, J. Raven, and others).

I. Zymnia claims that «... the competences paradigm does not deny knowledge, abilities and skills, and complements it with the necessity of forming axiological attitude to the world, the inclusion of motivational-cognitive and emotional-volitional components» (1996: 20-30).

The investigation of the nature of «competence» in scientific researches suggests that it can be interpreted as the result of acquiring knowledge, abilities and skills, adding to it the methods and experience, personal and mental qualities and features (attitude, certain aptitudes, interests and aspirations, values, value judgments, individual abilities, etc.) and the experience of activity, in which they appear. The concept of «competence» has been considered by the majority of scientists whose work we have analyzed, as a preassigned requirement to training (assimilation of knowledge, abilities, skills, ways of activity, initial experience, personal relations, etc.). Integration of all components of competence is mediated by the personal value-evaluative attitude. So, on the basis of the theoretical and methodological analysis of scientific and pedagogical achievements of scientists the concept of competence can be generally introduced as the trend (a norm, standard, preassigned requirement) in educational and professional training of the individual, the standard of experience, actions, knowledge, habits, skills, creativity, emotional and value activity; the preassigned requirement for educational training.

I. Yermakov points out that «despite the disagreements and different interpretations of the term «competences», we can see that for all countries its system part is made up with the skills necessary for real life: professional skills of adequate application of knowledge, gaining information, updating of knowledge and continuing education, self-education, social and communication skills, the ability to solve problems and disputes or conflicts, to work in a team, to feel responsible, etc.» (2005: 3-4). Supporting overall knowledge/abilities/skills approach, the author notes the importance of the communicative component in the competences formation that is formed on the basis of the corporate «team» activity of the educational process participants. Such understanding and interpretation of professional competences, in our opinion, turns our attention to ascertaining of this phenomenon in the meaning of social educational capital.

We believe that in contrast to the purely knowledge/abilities/skills approach, which involves the formation of individual knowledge, abilities, skills, in the context of social educational capital the formation of professional competence involves their integrative communicative interaction. That is, competence is not separate knowledge, it is not a separate ability etc., but it is their simultaneous integrative combination in terms of implementing individual tasks, in our understanding – professional functions.



The formation of professional competence in the context of its interpretation as a social educational capital is relevant at the present stage of development of pedagogy of the higher school. This is confirmed by the position of G. Becker, who claims that productivity of each member of social community and all members together does not depend solely on the available physical or financial capital. The effectiveness of social capital is affected primarily by the qualifications, competences (Becker 1975).

According to Bourdieu (1986: 248-249), «social capital is the combination of modern or potential means which are related to long-term more or less industrialized collective relationships that provide each member of the group with growth through the integration of collective bonds as capital». Social capital means that it fulfils mediation functions (Portes 1998), due to which it becomes possible to join the funds that belong to other participants of social interaction. Social capital ensures the achievement of the goals that everyone is not able to realize without the existence of communicative achievements in the respective social environment (Putnam). «Social capital can be defined as a set of informal values and ethical norms common to members of a certain group, and which provide their effective interaction» (Fukuyama 2003: 169).

Social capital is an achievement as a result of interaction between the individual and the social group in which its formation takes place. We consider social capital as a social acquisition as a result of communicative interaction of each member of social community, built on mutual trust and tolerance that involves the integration achievements and the potential possibilities that everyone may use in the solution of professional tasks independently or in a corporate activity.

Thus the formation of professional competence involves not only individual knowledge, habits and skills, but it becomes a certain integrative formation due to the involvement of certain institutions as well as the participants of communicative interaction in educational achievements. After all, the classic interpretation of social capital (Van Deth 2003) suggests its interpretation at the structural (contacts, relations, systems) and at the normative level (cognitive, perceptual, communicative, and cultural areas). In addition, according to Putnam and Bourdieu, social capital is created at direct and indirect levels. The first version means that in the educational process of higher school the acquisition of certain educational and professional achievements (competences) is the result of direct contact of participants of educational process (teachers, colleagues, books, funds, etc.). In the second version the operation depends on individuals and institutions with whom there is no permanent direct connection (the heads of higher educational institutions, academic traditions, socio-cultural environment, etc). This explains the fact that the acquisition of professional competence by future specialists in various universities and institutions are often quite different even with the same educational standards. In terms of educational autonomy of universities and competitive professional environment the formation of professional competences of future experts is crucial because in such conditions not only an expert in a certain field (specialty) is formed, but also a specialist with a certain professional status.

When it comes to the preparation of the expert in the context of mastering competences, the semantic content of the latter presupposes certain educational achievements. In

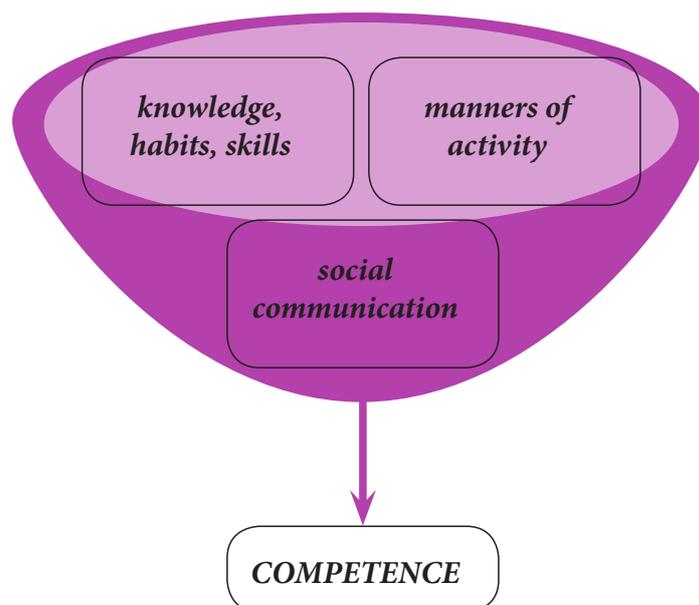


the traditional interpretation they are knowledge, habits, skills (KHS). If competence is functional, it provides for certain variations in the acquisition and use of knowledge/habits/skills. They are respectively manners of activity. Any educational training is the verbal and non-verbal communication between the participants of the educational process. We define this communication as social communication. Social communication as an integral part of competence can be interpreted as an exchange of complete sign messages, which contain information, knowledge, ideas, emotions, etc., between people or other social entities. This exchange is due to a number of socially significant estimates, specific situations, communicative fields and communicative norms adopted in a particular environment. It is the transmission of information, ideas, emotions in the form of signs and symbols; the process that links parts of social systems with each other: a technique to define the behavior of the other person.

Social communication in the context of social capital is a system making component of professional competence, as it defines not only its content and procedural component, but also the level of formation of this competence and the specifics of its functionality depending on the socio-cultural environment of professional training of the future specialist. In this case competence is a new professional formation of every person as a result of the interchange of the means of social communication.

Thus, competence in semantic content includes 3 integrated components: a set of KHS; manners of activity; social communication (Fig. 1).

Fig.1. The structure of competence as social educational capital





Competence is always more than the sum of its parts, because it includes functional integration context. According to the meaningful content competence actually becomes such only when the combination of its parts assumes functional nature. Competence really becomes the competence if the combination of the components acquires functional certainty. It can be represented by the formula $CC=f((Kn+Hb+Sk)+MA+SC)$, where: CC – the competence; Kn – knowledge; Hb – habits; Sk – skills; MA – manner of activity; SC – social communication; f is a professional function that requires certain interaction of the components of competence in the solution of individual professional problems. Competence is a system of knowledge, habits, skills, manners of activity, social communications, which involves the implementation of certain educational functions.

Thus, competence is an integrative phenomenon that implies the features of social educational capital, and is defined by the professional functional ability of the specialist.

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*The specificity
of oral history
research in the
Warmia and
Mazury.
The concept of
interdisciplinary
project*

IZABELA
LEWANDOWSKA

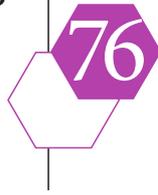
University of Warmia and
Mazury in Olsztyn

The north-eastern part of Poland, commonly identified with the territory of present day Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, consists of several smaller historical and ethnographic regions: Warmia, Mazury, On-the-Vistula River Province /*Powisłe*/, Lubawskie Province /*Ziemia Lubawska*/, a small part of Suwalskie Province /*Suwalszczyzna*/ as well as of so called relic regions /*Natangia, Barcia, Sasinia*/, 'existing' only in the collective memory of Prussian tribes which used to populate the area.

Until 1945 former East Prussia /*Ostpreußen*/ was relatively homogenous in terms of culture. Germans, native Mazurians and Warmiaks dominated, Poles lived in the southern part of Warmia and Mazury, the Jewish minority inhabited towns and the Old Believers /*'starovyery'*/ lived in the area of the Piska Forest /*Puszcza Piska*/ . The evacuation of German civilians fleeing the advancing Red Army in January 1945 marked the beginning of a post-war expulsion of Germans from East Prussia, which was endorsed at Potsdam Peace Conference in July/August 1945 by the Big Three (Stalin – Churchill – Truman). Those who decided to stay here were soon forced to 'claim' their nationality. Polish authorities, just like their German predecessors, were aiming at an ethnic unification of the region. Following some political decisions the majority of the remaining German population were displaced and Warmiaks and Mazurians had to pledge their allegiance: either German or Polish. At the same time Polish settlers began to pour in. By the end of 1948 ca. 330 thousand had come from central Poland and slightly over 115 thousand of so called 'resettlers' had arrived from pre-war Eastern Borderlands /*Kresy Wschodnie*/ . In addition, 55 thousand Ukrainians were later relocated to the region under so called 'Operation Vistula'. Considerably smaller representations of Belorussians, Lithuanians and Romani community members closed the list of new settlers¹ . Germans had to conceal their national identity.

As a result of the migration mentioned above, four basic groups with different sense of identity and with different historic background formed in the post-war Olsztyńskie Voivodeship. The first (autochthonous) group consisted of people with Polish or German roots as well as of Warmiaks and Mazurians who had been living in this land for generations and

¹A. Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, Poznań 1998, passim.



generally did not subscribe to any standard 'nationality' model. They considered themselves 'locals'. Poles from the Eastern Borderlands /*Kresowiacy*/, predominantly from Vilnius or Lviv area, who were forcibly relocated by the Soviets after the territory became part of the Soviet Union formed the second group. The most ethnically, politically and culturally diversified and the strongest group were Polish resettlers from other parts of the country, mainly from central Poland. Among many others there were the Kurpies /*Kurpiel*/, who came from the Northern Masovia /*Mazowsze*/. The last group were the Ukrainians and the Lemkos forcibly evicted from their homeland.

In spite of many years of efforts undertaken with the aim to unify the culture and tradition of Warmia and Mazury, the region's homogeneity had not been attained. On the contrary, today multiculturalism is emphasized and cultivated as a factor which enriches our local identity.

In recent years the multicultural approach displayed by the authorities as well as the openness of the local communities have been creating favourable conditions for cultivating cultural, linguistic and religious distinctiveness. Since the 1990s the German minority in Warmia and Mazury has registered over 20 cultural associations, which cultivate national and cultural identity of its members, teach German and maintain ties with the country of their ancestors. They organize cultural and social events such as summer festivities, painting and photography exhibitions, music and dance performances. They hold charity events, run hospices, maintain ties between Polish and German towns and schools, organize tourist exchange, summer camps for teenagers, both in the region and in Germany. They also consider celebrating the Holy Mass for local German communities and regular broadcasting some of their outstanding achievements in German on Polish Radio Olsztyn².

Ukrainians are particularly active in the domains of culture and education. Two school complexes with Ukrainian as the language of instruction – one in Bartoszyce and the other in Górowo Iławeckie – have been operating in Warmia and Mazury. Ukrainian is also taught in 40 other primary schools and in one inter-school Ukrainian unit for teenagers in Olsztyn. As far as cultural activity is concerned Ukrainians have their Orthodox Church music choirs, they organize the Ukrainian Culture Festival, Ukrainian Theatre Festival and other Ukrainian fairs and festivities. Folk dance groups from Górowo Iławeckie, Węgorzewo and Bartoszyce and music groups from Górowo Iławeckie and Olsztyn take part in many cultural events at home and abroad and are quite popular. 'Enej' and 'Horpyna' are widely recognized. Two regional periodicals appear in Ukrainian and Radio Olsztyn features broadcasts for Ukrainian minority twice a day³.

Belorussians came to the northern part of post-war Poland on their own accord and their ethnicity did not provoke such controversies as it was often the case with Germans, Ukrainians, or Warmiaks and Mazurians. They have not formed local communities. They are

²B. Domagała, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Warmii i Mazurach. Rodowód kulturowy, organizacja, tożsamość*, Olsztyn 1996.

³B. Domagała, *Ukraińcy na Warmii i Mazurach. Studium procesów asymilacji*, Olsztyn 2009.



dispersed in the region and they do not manifest their Belorussian national sentiment as a group. Most of them live in Olsztyn, Barczewo and Sorkwity⁴.

The Romani people /Gypsies/ settled in Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship after 1945. Their biggest colonies can be found in Olsztyn, Szczytno, Lidzbark Warmiński, Ostróda and Bartoszyce. A majority of the Romani live in difficult conditions caused by high rate of unemployment, lack of any education or even illiteracy and by high rate of social pathologies such as alcoholism, drug abuse, begging or homelessness. Romani customs, traditions and the language are cultivated in clans and family circles. Folk dance and song groups 'Hitano' and 'Romanca' have gained well-deserved notoriety in the region. Employment stimulation of Romani adult population and education of Romani children are top priorities of the Romani Culture Association Hitano /*Stowarzyszenie Kultury Romskiej Hitano*/⁵.

The Russian minority /*starovyery*/ is diminishing; the older generation is dying out and they do not have any successors willing to continue the traditions and to cultivate the religion. *Starovyery* live in isolation, but they still have their parishes in Wojnowo, Suwałki and some other locations. Numerous invaluable works of their art, such as icons or religious scriptures have vanished. The only museum in Poland in which some precious artefacts have been preserved is the Museum of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn⁶. The Russian Minority Association in Poland called 'Mała Rosja' has been acting in the region for several years. Its statutory aims are cultivating customs and traditions, promoting valuable projects, cooperation and cultural exchange.

The indigenous Warmiaks and Mazurians have perished⁷. The totalitarian systems that were endured between 1933–1989, first German then Soviet, did not tolerate ethnic distinctiveness. Both oppressive systems did not recognize 'local' national sentiment. After WW II majority of Mazurians claimed German nationality. At present they live dispersed on the territory of Warmia and Mazury and only the oldest generation speak original Mazurian dialect and follow the old customs and traditions. "Mazurian Association. The Polish-German Union" /*Stowarzyszenie Mazurskie. Związek Polsko-Niemiecki*/ brings together only a fraction of people who identify themselves as Mazurians.

Interestingly, a new community of the descendants of post-1945 settlers, or neo-Mazurians /*Nowi Mazurzy*/, as they tend to call themselves, came into being. Their 'Mazurian Community' /*Wspólnota Mazurska*/ is an association settled in Giżycko. Neo-Mazurians claim that the new Mazurian ethnicity has formed. It relies on intellectual affinity of its members and on their respect for tradition and for the variety of their cultural heritage. It is based on a three-level sense of national identity: Warmiak/Mazurian – Polish – European. Neo-Mazurians are actively involved in cultural as well as *pro publico bono* and pro-ecological activity in

⁴A. Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe...*, passim.

⁵*Ibidem*, passim.

⁶Z. Jaroszewicz-Pieresławcew, *Starowiercy w Polsce i ich księgi*, Olsztyn 1995.

⁷The indigenous Warmiak and Mazurian community was described by: A. Sakson, *Mazurzy – społeczność pogranicza*, Poznań 1990 and A. Szyfer, *Warmiacy. Studium tożsamości*, Poznań 1996.



the region. Characteristically, Association of Cultural Commonwealth 'Borussia' /*Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota Kulturowa Borussia*/ with its seat in Olsztyn, 'The Centre Borderland of Arts, Cultures and Nations' /*Ośrodek Pogranicze – sztuk, kultur, narodów*/ from Sejny and Olecko's 'Cultural Association Atributed to the North' /*Przypisani Północy*/ – all rely on the same (i.e. Neo-Mazurian) premises for their functioning.

The contribution of *Kresowiaczy* to the economy of the region after WW II was significant. They also brought Polish culture here. Now The Friends of Vilnius and Vilnius Province Association /*Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej*/ organizes annual *Kaziuki* (St. Kazimierz, patron Saint of Vilnius) festivities in Lidzbark Warmiński and in Olsztyn, as well as Borderland Culture Festival /*Festiwal Kultury Kresowej*/ in Mrągowo. The Friends of Lviv and South-Eastern Borderland Association /*Towarzystwo Miłośników Lwowa i Kresów Południowo-Wschodnich*/ focuses its activities on 1) holding meetings, distribution of press and books from Lviv, passing on the knowledge of Lviv and the area, 2) maintaining ties with scout teams and schools from behind eastern border, 3) supporting Polish families, organizations and folk dance groups⁸.

Guidelines for an interdisciplinary project

In Poland *oral history* is a new and still evolving approach to scientific studies. It originates from a deeply ingrained human need to view oneself as submerged in history and in the present from an interdisciplinary perspective. *Oral history* draws mostly on the humanities and on social studies. It depends upon good practices already applied in related scientific fields of study in order to interpret a testimony of a single person on his/ her experience from variety of perspectives. On the other hand this new approach is an inspiration for numerous related scientific studies dealing with a human and his/ her inner world.

This 'new' qualifying approach in trans-disciplinary methodological discourse has been widely discussed in scientific circles for several years now. One of the conclusions already reached is that whether they study history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, pedagogy, art, medicine, or architecture, scientists who subscribe to qualifying approach studies, may and even should cooperate, because their common subject under investigation is a human and his/ her environment⁹.

Such cooperation requires specific forms of organisation: trans-disciplinary associations, conferences, dictionaries, joint publications, journals and research and didactic projects. The first challenge to meet is the research project entitled 'Oral history. Oral testimony digital database for Warmia and Mazury'.

⁸H. Murawska, *Przesiedleńcy z Kresów Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w Olsztyńskim*, Olsztyn 2000.

⁹Such trans-disciplinary approach to oral history studies is presented in *Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society*. See the commentary in Polish to one of the issues dealt with: I. Lewandowska, *Historie i problemy kobiet na łamach czasopisma Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society – przegląd artykułów*, *Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej*, Vol. 3, 2013, pp. 282-290.



The project research work is designed to be carried out on two planes: theoretical and practical and with respect to the macro- and micro-scale division.

The theoretical part of the project focuses on methodological considerations on *oral history* as an independent domain of research studies, since so far the methodology for research work of the kind has not gained full approval (as verifiable). Thus, some fundamental questions have to be posed. What is *oral history* narration from the point of view of literary studies, ethno-sociology or history? Is it an independent literary genre or historical source? How important is the autobiographical context of the narration? What is the relationship between real experience and the oral or written testimony? To what extent should the researcher engage personally in field research and to what extent he/ she should rely on already available *oral history* archives? If perceived as specific cultural phenomenon, what translation and interpretation problems does oral testimony bring about?

The main objective of this project is practical. The research work is planned to be carried out in Warmia and Mazury, i.e. in micro-scale. The project aims at creating oral testimony digital database for Warmia and Mazury with wide representation of individuals, institutions, organizations and associations, that collected or have still been collecting oral accounts given by people from our region. Apart from already available people's testimony, project team members will interview chosen representations of ethnic and national minorities inhabiting this multicultural region of the north-eastern Poland.

Data and material gathered, in the form of an Internet database, scientific dissertations and methodological research papers, will create empirical basis for further research into Polish national heritage, of which oral testimony, both collective and individual, is an important manifestation. It is the last opportunity to record the accounts by seniors, still intellectually capable, who remember the post-war years and the birth of the neo-Warmiak and neo-Mazurian generation.

Research team of specialists from universities in Olsztyn, Warsaw, Poznań, Wrocław and Łódź will be formed. There will be: a historian, an archivist, a theory of history teaching specialist, a media specialist, a literary scholar, a linguist, an anthropologist, a sociologist, an educationalist, a psychologist and an IT specialist to supervise the digital aspect of the project. The reflections and theoretical conclusions drawn by the representatives of various scientific fields of studies will be applicable in numerous fields of contemporary – interdisciplinary science.

Taking into consideration the long-term horizon of the project and its wide cognitive spectre, a variety of research methods will be indispensable in the process of the project implementation and execution. They may be aggregated into three sets: 1) gathering information at source, 2) source information analysis methods, 3) interpretation of source information methods.

Gathering information at source may be conducted with the application of the narrative interview method, with a pedagogical experiment (carried out in Olsztyn tertiary level schools) and with the observation method. Source information, i.e. people's testimony, will undergo 1) critical analysis, 2) structural method analysis of the language, 3) conversational analysis. Finally, the methods of induction, comparison, biography, the case study and, the last but not least (highly valued by some historians) the 'silent source' method, will all serve source information interpretation.



This project will fit in with the implementation of a wider policy initiated by UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Convention was ratified by Poland and deemed binding in August 2011. According to the Convention "the 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity"¹⁰.

Under the project the already existing database will be reviewed according to its content and divided into individual categories such as: customs, language, local dialect (so called *gwara*) and rituals, rites with which traditions are passed on from one generation to the other. Project team members are also planning to 'elicit' more accounts of the kind, by interviewing chosen locals (or new-locals), for example the people 'discovered' by the Folk Architecture Museum and Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek, or by the Museum of Folk Culture in Węgorzewo, or the people who sell their local produce and artefacts on local fairs. Until now such undertakings have not been initiated as there was no plan as to the future of the accounts potentially collected.

The project will also serve the purpose of strengthening the sense of national identity among teenagers participating in a pedagogical experiment. Engaging youngsters in active interaction with witnesses of historical events which have shaped our present will improve young people's abilities to process source information and to investigate complex phenomena thoroughly. The introduction of oral sources of information to teaching history to youngsters will eliminate at least some of the negative consequences of the generation gap. It will also serve the purpose of wider recognition of the important role older generation has to play in education as well as it will reaffirm older generation's authority and bring back well-deserved respect for them¹¹.

Local media play crucial role in the process of shaping national identity and promoting multiculturalism. Radio and television keep record of human memories and store materials documenting historical events. Both institutions can serve specific purposes defined by the state or by local community. Radio Olsztyn and Olsztyn Regional Poland Television archive stories about national minorities and ethnic communities like 'Little Homelands' /*Małe Ojczyzny*/ and 'Between us' /*Między nami*/.

The accounts on deportations from East Borderland ('Deported to Siberia' /*Sybiracy*/) and on Warmiaks' tragic fate during 1944-1946 political transformation period (serial broadcast 'You, Warmia' /*Warnijo!*) are also to be found there. All of these documentaries provide very personal stories by the victims of oppressive systems. Sadly, the sources in question are rarely investigated and only few know of their existence.

¹⁰Dziennik Ustaw RP, 2011, nr 172, poz. 1018. Journal of Laws of the Polish Republic, 2011, No. 172, item 1018.

¹¹I. Lewandowska, Źródła oralne w warsztacie badawczym historyka dziejów najnowszych i w edukacji historycznej, w: Źródła w edukacji historycznej. III Toruńskie Spotkania Dydaktyczne, ed. S. Roszak, M. Strzelecka, A. Wieczorek, Toruń 2006, pp. 155-161.



Under the project an Internet database will be created. People's testimony will be divided into the following categories: 1) the interviews collected by the project team members before the project was initiated and those stored in private archives, 2) the interviews obtained from associations, organisations, institutions and individual collectors, 3) the interviews collected by project team members, doctoral degree students and students from the University of Warmia and Mazury, 4) the accounts collected by tertiary level school students. Afterwards a special academic database guide will be compiled.

Research work into the theory of *oral history* as an interdisciplinary scientific field of study and exchange of views on the matter have also been planned under the project. The above processes will find their culmination in a nation-wide conference held in Olsztyn. After being discussed and sometimes improved on, collected papers contributed by the project team members will be published. We are also planning to publish a scientific collection of research papers on *oral history* in Poland, with exhaustive Polish bibliography from various fields of studies, aimed at wider circles of researchers in and outside Europe. Finally, two books with scientific analysis and interpretations of empirical data are to be published.

Assemblage and systematization of vast foreign literature on the topic is an integral part of our project. Our team would like to acquire several dozen of publications on *oral history* in English, German, French and Polish in each language as well as several publications in Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, Czech, Spanish and Italian respectively. The publications in question will be thoroughly studied and stored for future reference.

In our opinion, *The Voice of the Past. Oral history* (1978) by Paul Thompson is an exceptional book, as it deals with the origins of *oral history* as a separate field of study and explains its main concepts and notions. The book has been reprinted several times, yet it still has not been translated into Polish. In our country the book is available only in two libraries: one in Warsaw, the other in Toruń. The book is indispensable for future researchers, as well as for teachers, students or pupils some of whom may not understand the specialized vocabulary of the English original. Polish translation will be supplemented with preface, footnotes and commentaries for a Polish reader.

Summary

The unique character of *oral history* research work in Warmia and Mazury stems from the region's ethnic, national and religious diversity. Only profound knowledge of the history of the region and its people guarantees the success of *oral history* project to be undertaken here.

Taking into consideration the already mentioned diversity, the researcher should approach specific community members in different ways. It is necessary to know their past, where they came from and when. What events may have they experienced? And are they actively involved in their community's life?



For example, the indigenous Warmiaks and Mazurians are usually reserved and distrustful. This is because they were treated as enemies (i.e. 'Poles') by nazi Germans and again as 'Germans' by Stalin oppressive regime. They still may not feel safe on their own land. A few *starovyery* survivors, who have inhabited the Piska Forest since the 1850s, are also reluctant when it comes to giving oral testimony. Romani community members are usually stand-offish. They safeguard their language and customs. *Kresowiacy* are different: open and willing to cooperate. After WW II they were a big group of educated Poles – the intelligentsia: teachers, doctors, cultural activists. They were exceptionally active re-Polonisators in all spheres of life in Warmia and Mazury. However, the recollection of deportations from the land of their ancestors is traumatic. That is why the fact they have already known the project team members is so important.

The project introduced above was submitted to Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the National Programme for the Development of Humanities alongside with the application for funding. Sadly, the project was not approved. We will continue our search for financial backing, since we are absolutely convinced of its exceptional character and value. Paraphrasing the words of the distinguished Polish poet, philosopher and priest, Jan Twardowski, we can say, "Let us hurry to listen to people, they depart so quickly".

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ALICJA
ZBIERZCHOWSKA

University of Gdansk

A REVIEW OF

*Marry Patrice Erdmans,
Timothy Black (2015)
Becoming a teen mom.
Life before pregnancy
University of California Press
Oakland, California, pp. 330.*

In the countries of western culture raising a family by adult persons is a typical aspect. Besides, for 20 years we have been observing a trend of age increasing when women first become mothers in Poland approximately at the age of 27 (J. Stańczak, K. Stelmach, M. Urbanowicz 2016). As a consequence, teen maternity can be defined as an unpunctual event. As we know, teenage mothers (and fathers too) constitute a specific category of parents who become mothers having no social and psychological maturity yet (f.e. Izdebski, Niemiec, Wąż 2011, Skowrońska-Zbierzchowska 2010; Cherry, Dillon, Rugh, 2001). They are also often characterized by low economic and social capital. In the former literature we can notice many negative consequences of early motherhood such as: school drop, life in poverty, experience of lonely maternity. As a result, many states (especially in the United States) maternity of teenagers is interpreted as a public problem, which is an object of the interests of some politicians, sociologists, pedagogues and doctors.

Among books including issues of teenage parents, the reviewed work is standing out with the approach to the subject, and it shows a new look at the phenomena. Marry Patrice Erdmans and Timothy Black recognized that the treatment of teen motherhood as undesirable conduces to the ostracism of the following mothers. Consequently, teen moms are frequently regarded as “a problem rather than people with problems” (p.3) who need special help.

Thus, instead of researching the whole experiences of teenage mothers about pregnancies, birth and consequences of an early motherhood, the authors have focused on the analysis of girls' lives from the period before they were teen mothers. As a result, they made a critical analysis of the experiences preceding this event. Hav-



ing done this, they presented in a new light a group of teenage mothers, revealing them more as victims of the system and shifting the burden of responsibility from the individual to society. Therefore, this particular book should be of interest not only to researchers directly examining these issues, but also to educators, sociologists and social workers working on family and youth's dilemmas.

In the book

From the methodological point of view, the book constitutes the example of extensive, thoroughly conducted quality research, by using the life-story method. In 2002-2003- Marry P. Erdmans and Timothy Black interviewed 108 mothers who gave birth to the first child before the age of 20. All the young women were living in Connecticut, with a little more than one-half residing in large and small cities, and the others in towns and rural areas" (p.36). The interviewed women were also ethnically and racially diverse.¹ Among researched women 59% gave birth to the first child before the age of 18 (6% of them at the age of 13-14). In Appendix A, the authors in detail present the way of conducting interviews, the work of the research team on preparing the research material, its qualitative analysis and the construction of life-story vignettes. All the pieces of work are characterized by deep analyses of the appeal to rich literature what is attesting to extensive notes, references and index of notions set at the end of the book.

Each of the 6 chapters of the research begins with the extensive quote narrative of - some girls, which introduces in the typical for some of the teen mothers' experiences. The deep sincerity of girls in this interview deserves attention. Crowded quotations are a description of drastic traumatic experiences, full of pain and suffering , because, what the authors have written „The lives of these girls are mired in violence, deprivation, humiliation, and oppression" (p.4).

Based on narrations about childhood of young mothers, Marry P. Erdmans and Timothy Black show step by step how their traumatic experiences and the narrowed possibilities of the choice of activities shaped their trajectories of inquiry to the situation in which they become underage mothers. They also disprove the stereotypes of teen mothers pointing at difficult public processes as their primary causes of their problems and financial public situation.

In chapter 3 the authors discuss child sexual abuse. Based on the analysis, they presents two pathways from child sexual abuse to young motherhood. One trajectory where trauma is externalized: this is from child sexual abuse, risky sexual behavior as an adolescent, school failure, abuse of alcohol or drugs, to relationship with older men and finally pregnancy and motherhood.

And the second trajectory where "the violence reverberates inward" (p. 94-96) from rape experience, mental illnesses, self-destructive behavior (e.g., depression, self-mutilation), to older partners who often abuse their victims again. Such behaviors result in teen pregnancy.

Chapter 4 is about violence (psychological, physical, sexual) which was often experienced by young women in family of origin, their communities and relationships. The stories of examined women show how violence shapes life chances and choices of these girls.

¹ Amongst examined teen mothers were: "36 non-Hispanic white, 36 Puerto Rican, 18 African American, 11 biracial, three other Latina (that is, not Puerto Rican), two West Indian, and two Asian mothers" (Erdmans M. P., Black T. 2015, p.36) .



The issue about teen mothers' education was shown in 5 chapter. The authors do not agree with the statement that early births cause school dropout and in consequence, "having a baby early, they are "repeating the cycle" of poverty. [Such thesis is offensive because] it makes young mothers morally culpable for their own poverty and life trajectories [as well as] ignores the fact that for teenagers who are not poor or educationally unskilled, having a baby usually does not derail their school trajectories" (p.174). The educational experiences of teenage mothers are indeed very differentiated. Some girls drop out school still before the incident in their pregnancy, the others successfully continue education after the birth of child. There are also girls who fail and quit school because of a child care but continue it later.

Conclusion

In general, some conclusions about teen mothers' experiences from the period of their childhood presented in the book correspond with the theses described by the Polish researchers of this subject (for example, the differentiation of educational experiences, access to the contraception and sexual education, economic inequality (Bidzan 2007; Skowrońska-Zbierzchowska 2010, Izdebski, Niemiec, Wąż 2011). Other experiences of the forces and of a childish sexual abuse are, however, rarely shown in the native literature. They might be cultural experiences or racial inequalities. The problem requires thorough examinations.

However, a great value of this book is to show wide connection of negative experience of these girls' lives before pregnancy with economic, sexual, racial and class inequality functioning in their communities. Thus, what the authors have emphasized themselves „We have written a book about child sexual abuse, gendered violence, structural violence in neighborhoods and institutions, racial and class inequality in education, and gender inequality in sexual relations. We are writing about these problems because they were prominent in the young mothers' stories (p. 174).

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