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# Axiological Contexts of Cooperation among Educational Environments in Poland

Aksjologiczne konteksty współpracy środowisk  
edukacyjnych w Polsce

## ABSTRACT

In times of axiological loss, helplessness in the face of the manifestations of spreading evil, the questions about the possibility of the child's development, supporting him/her in striving for perfection and about the role of the family, school and church in these processes, seems to be justified. The aim of the study was to establish common values of the individuals representing three educational environments and to indicate the possibility of their effective cooperation. Based on participant observation conducted in 2009–2012 (in primary school) and in 2015–2017 (in junior secondary school) some interesting results were collected. The majority of children's and adolescents' caregiver find educational, cognitive, moral, prosocial and family values to be the most important. The main conditions for cooperation, which is possible and necessary, include favourable emotional climate, acceptance, trust, democratic respect of mutual rights, commitment, axiology permitting the ontology of ambivalence.

The second part of the article presents some examples of joint activities undertaken on the initiative of parents, teachers, RE teachers and

## KEYWORDS

cooperation, support,  
values, axiological  
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## SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

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priests, such as class and school celebrations, bonfire parties, trips, theatre and cinema visits, meetings with interesting people, workshops conducted by teachers and parents, church events for children and families, preparations for religious ceremonies.

## ABSTRAKT

W czasach zagubienia aksjologicznego, bezradności wobec przejawów szerzącego się zła, pytania o możliwości rozwoju młodego człowieka, wspierania go w dążeniu do doskonałości oraz roli rodziny, szkoły i Kościoła w tych procesach wydają się być uzasadnione. Celem badań było ustalenie wspólnych wartości osób reprezentujących trzy środowiska wychowawcze oraz wskazanie możliwości efektywnego ich współdziałania. Na podstawie obserwacji uczestniczącej przeprowadzonej w latach 2009–2012 (w szkole podstawowej) i w latach 2015–2017 (w gimnazjum) zebrano szereg interesujących wyników. Za ważne dla większości opiekunów dzieci i młodzieży uznaje się przede wszystkim wartości: edukacyjne, poznawcze, moralne, prospołeczne i rodzinne. Głównymi warunkami współpracy, która jest możliwa i konieczna, są: sprzyjający klimat emocjonalny, akceptacja, zaufanie, demokratyczne respektowanie wzajemnych praw, zaangażowanie, aksjologia dopuszczająca ontologię ambiwalencji.

W drugiej części artykułu przedstawiono konkretne przykłady wspólnych działań podejmowanych z inicjatywy rodziców, nauczycieli, katechetów i księży. Na przykład: uroczystości klasowe i szkolne, ogniska integracyjne, wycieczki, wyjścia do teatru, kina i na spotkania z ciekawymi ludźmi, warsztaty prowadzone przez nauczycieli wspólnie z rodzicami, imprezy przy kościele dla dzieci i rodzin, przygotowania do uroczystości religijnych.

## Introductory remarks

The personality formation of a young person is primarily influenced by natural environments (mainly family and peer groups). However, well-functioning educational institutions, wise, reliable caregivers and RE teachers can also play a significant role in shaping the attitudes of those under their care. Today, more than ever before, the young need role models and authorities. The role model is

“a concrete figure that embodies (usually moral) perfection from the point of view of a given normative system; a person worth imitating; impersonation of specific values.”<sup>1</sup> It can become an individual who is admired by others and who represents the knowledge, skills and attitudes that help others to solve life’s problems.

Contemporary people often have different worldviews, experience, aspirations. They usually differ in personality traits and expectations towards the education system. The cooperation between parents and educators from different backgrounds can be fruitful and satisfactory for all interested parties if it is accompanied by dialogue, mutual understanding and jointly set goals that will be implemented in a consistent manner. It is important to be open to other people and their needs, to enter into a relationship, to act for the benefit of all individuals.<sup>2</sup> When child-oriented adults meet in an area of freedom, they usually look for what unites them, and want understanding. This is especially important in the era of deaxiologisation, which is the process of “marginalizing values in social and personal life, as a consequence of which the negation of objective truths occurs, and human choices are made depending on the requirements of a given situation or circumstances.”<sup>3</sup>

## Basic conditions for cooperation among educational environments

Those who undertake joint actions should respect the following principles:<sup>4</sup>

- the principle of positive motivation;
- the principle of partnership;
- the principle of multilateral information flow;
- the principle of unity of actions;
- the principle of activity and regularity of actions taken;

<sup>1</sup> *Mały słownik etyczny*, ed. S. Jedynak, Bydgoszcz 1994, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> More in: J. Tischner, *Inny. Eseje o spotkaniu*, Kraków 2017.

<sup>3</sup> J. Mastalski, J. Siewora, *Formacja wychowawców w kontekście przemian cywilizacyjnych*, Kraków 2017, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> M. Łobocki, *Organizowanie pracy wychowawczej z dziećmi i młodzieżą*, Lublin 1994, pp. 15–17.

- the principle of flexible and creative attitude of cooperation partners;
- the principle of tact and discretion.

The decisive role in choosing the paths of cooperation between representatives of various social groups is played by resources and values.<sup>5</sup> The resources of the representatives of educational environments discussed here can be presented in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, empathic abilities, etc. They are usually different, which may hinder cooperation. Similarly, there are some (often considerable) discrepancies between the world of values of teachers, parents, RE teachers and priests. One can say that values are for people something that is important to them, what they want to possess, achieve, multiply, something that enriches the existence of an individual, defining their goals.<sup>6</sup> An individual “lives simultaneously in the world of material values and in the world of spiritual values.”<sup>7</sup> The individual recognizes them (identifies, distinguishes them from others), tries to understand (define) them, prioritize them, accepts (approves) and wants to multiply some and rejects the others.

The Catholic Church clearly links values with the goals of education. And the fundamental role in the development of the individual is to be played by the family.<sup>8</sup> The family bears responsibility for moral education, it teaches the rules and norms of behaviour in society. Here the child develops, and its personality, conscience and will are shaped. Surrounded by love, the child acquires the ability to distinguish good from evil, truth from lies. The overriding goal of the actions undertaken by caregivers is to make the young person “become more mature, that is a person who will aim at perfection and fully realize all their abilities and skills. It is achievable through

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Z. Bauman, *Socjologia*, transl. J. Łoziński, Poznań 1990, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E. Kobylecka, *Nauczyciele i uczniowie gimnazjum wobec wyboru wartości. Między pewnością a wątpliwością*, Zielona Góra 2009, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Paweł II, “Przemówienie wygłoszone na XXXIV Sesji Zgromadzenia Ogólnego ONZ, 2 X 1979,” in: *Siła wiary i umysłu. Jan Paweł II*, selected by M.E. Bunson, transl. by A. Gomola, Poznań 2011, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Winiarski, *Rodzina – szkoła – środowisko lokalne. Problemy edukacji środowiskowej*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 95–97. John Paul II devoted much attention to education in his works, indicating that it is the first and fundamental task of culture. Cf. *Wychowanie w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, ed. A. Wiczorek, Warszawa 2000.

patient deepening and gradual absorption of absolute, lasting and transcendent values.”<sup>9</sup>

School is also a place of realizing and multiplying values. The student can learn to live together in a group, build lasting bonds, make friends, respect their own and others’ dignity and shape attitudes of tolerance and altruism by helping others. Educational institutions are to shape an individual as a social being. “The ethical education interpretation—wrote the researcher of the issue—refers to the whole of ethical norms derived from socially established cultural norms. (...) Universal values and moral norms are essentially global and universal for human existence, while cultural values and ethical norms are local and relative.”<sup>10</sup>

The Church is a special community that offers support to families. Help is provided here for the carers of children and adolescents in solving various problems (including those related to upbringing). Priests, nuns and lay people in parishes can significantly support the intellectual, social, psychological, emotional and spiritual formation of subsequent generations. Skills distinguishing the community leader that inspires the cooperation of individuals include:

- communication skills (including an ability to listen to oneself and others);
- the ability to respect the freedom of another person and their right to own opinions and views;
- the ability to set high expectations;
- the ability to think positively;
- the ability to adapt to new situations;
- organizational skills;
- the ability to manage conflicts that are solved in a creative way.<sup>11</sup>

In times of the axiological chaos and moral relativism of neoliberal reality many parents, who are overworked, sometimes helpless in the face of multiplication of existential problems, are looking for

<sup>9</sup> Jan Paweł II, “Przemówienie na uniwersytecie w Padwie, 12 września 1982,” in: Jan Paweł II, *Wiara i kultura*, eds. M. Radwan, S. Wylęzek, T. Gorzkula, Rzym – Lublin 1988, p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> A.E. Szoltysek, *Filozofia edukacji. Kształtowanie umysłu*, Kraków 2013, p. 163.

<sup>11</sup> J. Mastalski, J. Siewora, *Formacja wychowawców w kontekście przemian cywilizacyjnych*, op. cit., pp. 238–239.

support from teachers, school advisors, psychologists and RE teachers. Together, the following questions are asked: “Who is the student going to become?”; “What is good and bad for the student?”; “Who is responsible for the student’s future?”; “What should they be educated to?” Social expectations towards educational institutions are increasing. They are expected to teach life in its various areas, make accurate choices of what is valuable and desirable for the individual and acceptable and useful for society. Teachers-educators support the socialization process of children, co-organise, coordinate and integrate the activities of various groups. These tasks can be taken up by individuals who are cordial, kind, direct, empathic, thoughtful, consistent, authentic in actions, open to the needs of others, self-controlled and autonomous, which requires high self-esteem and civil courage. They also need optimism, cooperative behaviours and the ability to win people over and to win their trust.

The most important common objective of the cooperation among the representatives of educational environments is the comprehensive development of a young individual who will be able to communicate peacefully with another person at any time and space. Universal values can form the basis of all team activities undertaken for the common good.

### Axiological agreement and search for common values

There is no agreement without the acceptance of the other person, honesty and willingness to cooperate. In the partnership, the following values are important:

- myself and my partner – their and my independence, rights and duties (Me and You);
- purpose of cooperation and cooperation itself (experiencing: Me and You – It);
- its results (Me and You in It).<sup>12</sup>

Any agreement between people depends on the communicative competence of those who undertake dialogue. It is revealed in: (1) the level of verbalization and communication of their own opinions, beliefs, views, emotions; (2) the level of understanding and application

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<sup>12</sup> M. Mendel, *Partnerstwo rodziny, szkoły i gminy*, Toruń 2000, p. 12.

of various communication systems, various systems of signs and symbols (spoken and written language, “language” of music, dance, philosophy, etc., computer language); (3) the level of mastery of the critical reception of data, information and knowledge transmitted by people and the media; (4) the level of skills related to the effectiveness of influencing in the communication process.<sup>13</sup>

An axiological agreement can be understood as a clear division of positions with observance of the principle of proportionality or equivalence; recognition of contradictory arguments as worth being considered, which involves: understanding—to the extent it is possible—different positions regarding values or agreeing on positions on an intellectual level.<sup>14</sup> It becomes real when a person is able to get rid of subjectivism and egocentrism. An essential role in the process of axiological agreement is played by the need for emotional contact, which opens the world of people’s values, brings them closer, encourages people to engage in dialogue. Egocentrism is not conducive to cooperation, as the individual focuses on oneself and does not see the needs of other individuals, avoids altruistic actions, and often treats others objectively.

Can one indicate any common values of the representatives of various educational environments that are important in the process of interpersonal communication, and conducive to socialization and education of children and youth? Educational programmes include humanistic (universal) values, including moral ones, for example: peace, respect, love, happiness, freedom, responsibility, honesty, modesty, tolerance, simplicity, cooperation, unity.<sup>15</sup> Many people consider aesthetic values and religious values to be of great importance.

School contributes significantly to the multiplication of educational and cognitive values. Typically, parents and teachers want the children to get education, acquire knowledge and skills that will be useful in adult life. Getting to know the secrets of science brings one

<sup>13</sup> T. Hejnicka-Bezwińska, *Pedagogika ogólna*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 287–288.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. E. Kobyłecka, “O niektórych możliwościach porozumienia aksjologicznego nauczycieli, uczniów i rodziców w przestrzeni edukacyjnej,” in: *Edukacja. Jakość czy równość?*, eds. E. Kobyłecka, I. Nowosad, M.J. Szymański, Toruń 2010, p. 200.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. D. Tillman, *Wychowanie w duchu wartości. Poszerzanie świata 8–14 lat. Program edukacyjny*, transl. R. Zawadzki, Warszawa 2004.

closer to the truth. To understand oneself, other people and the surrounding reality one does not only need knowledge, but also the ability to reflect. In educational institutions, the importance of pro-social values (democracy, the rule of law, solidarity) is also emphasized. They are conditioned by the socio-cultural existence of the human being and they are the “justification for the moral rightness of actions that concern the good of other people, realized (...) at the expense of the good of the acting individual.”<sup>16</sup> Family values are also considered very important.<sup>17</sup> Family satisfies the most important psychological needs of the individual, especially the need for safety and close contact.

## Examples of good practices

Universal (fundamental) values set the direction on the path of human development and improvement. They facilitate cooperation between educational entities and promote joint creation of the future. It is worth pointing out some examples of activities undertaken by caregivers for the comprehensive development and well-being of children. One example is the initiatives of parents, teachers and RE teacher of students at the initial level of primary school education in Zielona Góra.<sup>18</sup> The attitude of the class teacher was of great importance in building positive interpersonal relationships. Jola, the teacher, represented the type of raising personality. She was widely respected and liked due to her altruistic and empathic behaviour, high level of moral sensitivity and over twenty years of work experience in the profession. She successfully activated the family members of the students, encouraged them to create very good learning and playing conditions for the students.

Actions taken on the initiative of the students' parents:

- integration bonfire parties (Drzonków – visit to the open-air museum, Drzonów – visit to the Polish Army Museum, Przylep – visit to the airfield);

<sup>16</sup> J. Mariański, *Kryzys moralny czy transformacja wartości? Studium socjologiczne*, Lublin 2001, p. 220.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Diagnoza społeczna 2007. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków. Raport*, eds. J. Czapiński, T. Panek, Warszawa 2007, p. 190.

<sup>18</sup> Author's own research. Participant observation in 2009–2012.



- trips for the children, their parents and teacher to Bolesławiec (porcelain factory), Pławna (puppetry and pottery workshops), Wrocław (opera, zoo), Berlin, etc.;
- trips to the theatre, cinema and meetings with interesting people (to Falubaz Speedway Club, Municipal Library, Sports Centre, etc.);
- picnics and other social events;
- Teacher's Day celebration and Christmas party prepared by the children's mothers.

Actions taken on the initiative of the form teacher:

- preparing three theatre plays (performed at competitions, reviews, at school, in the philharmonic hall, in the municipal library, Marshal's Office, etc.);
- events and class/school celebrations (e.g. on Mother's and Dad's Days, school's patron's day, St Nicholas' Day);
- workshops conducted together with parents (cooking, sewing, creativity, journalism workshops);
- games and activities for children run by university students (fancy dress parties, dance workshops);
- sleepovers in the school gym;
- participation of the whole class in competitions (e.g. preparing two films);
- renovating and furnishing a theatre room with a stage and a dressing room (joint activities of parents whose children were in two classes and their teachers).

Actions taken on the initiative of RE teachers and priests:

- preparing a nativity play in the church;
- children's and parents' pilgrimage to Rokito;
- meetings at the cafe "Under Angels" (e.g. making Christmas decorations, singing carols, family Easter egg painting);
- preparations for religious ceremonies (First Communion, Corpus Christi Feast);
- events for children and families organised at the church (e.g. Children's Day fairs, picnics, sleigh rides, etc.).

For parents and teachers, children are always the most important value.<sup>19</sup> The cooperation was aimed at providing the children with the

<sup>19</sup> B. Śliwerski, *Pedagogika dziecka. Studium pąjdocentryzmu*, Gdańsk 2007.

best possible conditions for comprehensive development. Common concern about the future generation made the caregivers unite to act.

Another example is the cooperation in the junior secondary school.<sup>20</sup> An important role in this school environment was played by the Parents' Council, which worked well, had significant competences, and supported the activities of the teachers. As the School Regulations say:<sup>21</sup>

1. Putting the good of the student and the school first, the Council accomplishes its goals through:

- stimulating the parents' activity and organizing various forms of activity for the development of the school;
- giving the parents possibility to affect the school's activities by expressing and communicating to the Head Teacher, other school bodies, the governing body and the authority in charge of pedagogical supervision, their opinions and positions in matters related to the school's activity;
- financial and organizational support for the statutory activity of the school;
- supporting the activities of the Students' Parliament;
- organizing cooperation with the Head Teacher and other school teachers in order to improve the quality of the school activity.

2. In particular, the Parents' Council should support pupils in everything that is creative and noble, which serves the development of their personality, which gives a decent entertainment and rest, as well as support student organizations actively and financially.

These were not empty declarations. The head teacher played an important role in the integration of joint activities, as he maintained constant dialogue with the students' parents. All important decisions to improve the functioning of the institution (e.g. adopting the school educational and preventive programme, revision of the schedule of the educational efficiency improvement) were made together by the parents' and teachers' councils.

Another example of the cooperation are parishes, at which Parish Councils were established. Lay individuals and priests together

<sup>20</sup> Author's own research. Participant observation in 2015–2017.

<sup>21</sup> Regulations of the Parents' Council at Primary School no. 2 with junior secondary classes, <[www.radarodzicowgim1.cba.pl](http://www.radarodzicowgim1.cba.pl)> (access: 08.01.2018).

participate in debates about the spiritual condition of young people, they implement beneficial changes. Pilgrimages, bonfire parties and other integration events are organized together.

Differences in positions may be conducive to the exchange of views and discussions on axiological topics among individuals from different backgrounds in the spirit of tolerance and understanding. However, this is only possible if one listens to another person and treats them as a partner in negotiations. Individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence are more likely to establish contacts and cooperate with each other. They are social activists and they willingly carry out tasks set by groups and communities, accepting responsibility in accordance with the postulate of the philosopher: "To be responsible means to be responsible for succeeding to realize good or for the failure to realize evil."<sup>22</sup>

## Summary and conclusions

The cooperation of educational entities is both possible and necessary. The attitudes and personality predispositions (kindness, openness, generosity, solidarity) of teachers, parents, and RE teachers have a significant impact on the activity of caregiver supporting the education of future generations. The main conditions for cooperation are as follows:

- favourable emotional climate (acceptance, consent, respect);
- sense of community, trust;
- democratic respect for mutual rights (cooperation, co-decision);
- knowledge of the cooperation objectives;
- undertaking dialogue and negotiations;
- considerable knowledge of teachers, parents, RE teachers, students about themselves and the world (self-knowledge, self-understanding);
- commitment, interaction;
- high self-esteem of entities;
- axiology permitting the ontology of ambivalence.

<sup>22</sup> J. Tischner, "Gra wokół odpowiedzialności," *Znak* 1995, no. 10(485), p. 50.

Man has a natural ability to perceive and live values, and to improve oneself when in contact with them.<sup>23</sup> Adults provide the young generation with the necessary knowledge about the ethical life. School needs teachers with high axiological competencies. They include knowledge about values used in the education process, the ability to recognize, prioritize, choose, and understand them, the attitude of respecting and accepting them, as well as actions that foster the creation of axiological situations in the classroom, in which young people will stand for values, distinguishing them from anti-values.<sup>24</sup>

John Paul II pointed out that upbringing is the most important task of culture and is of great importance for shaping social relations. The point here is that an individual should rather “be” and not just “have” more—so that through everything that the individual “has”, what he/she “possesses” one could be more human—that is one could “be” more for “others” and not only with “others.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> K. Serafin, *Doświadczenie i urzeczywistnianie wartości w ujęciu Józefa Tischnera. Studium z antropologii filozoficznej*, Wrocław 2010, p. 100.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. E. Kobyłecka, “Kompetencje aksjologiczne nauczycieli jako problem społeczny,” in: *Arytmia egzystencji społecznej a wychowanie*, ed. T. Frąckowiak, Warszawa 2001, pp. 509–520.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Paweł II, “W imię przyszłości kultury. Przemówienie w UNESCO, Paryż, 2 czerwca 1980,” in: Jan Paweł II, *Wiara i kultura*, op. cit., p. 58.

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