



Anna Leszczyńska-Rejchert

orcid.org/0000-0001-5535-2730

e-mail: anna.leszczyńska@uwm.edu.pl

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

Kinga Lisowska

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8404-4363>

e-mail: kinga.lisowska@uwm.edu.pl

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

How to Conduct Preschool value Education in a Transcultural Society?

Jak wychowywać do wartości w przestrzeni
przedszkolnej w społeczeństwie transkulturowym?

KEYWORDS

intercultural
education, regional
education,
transculturalism,
pre-school
education, value
education

ABSTRACT

In the time of rapidly changing reality, it is necessary to look at the values passed on to the youngest generations and to reexamine the theoretical foundations of the teaching process, already at the stage of preschool education. These issues are extremely important from the pedagogical point of view, as they concern the essence of education. The aim of this analysis was to outline the way in which children in state preschools are taught about values, while taking into account the contingency and hybridization of cultural structures. The study was based on two qualitative methods of data collection, i. e. analysis of the existing data (core curriculum for preschool education) and individual, partially guided, problem-focused interviews with 50 parents of children attending state kindergartens in Olsztyn. The research was conducted between April and June 2022. The article presents the issue of fundamental values and value education in the pre-school space. It also focuses on the issue of transculturalism in the pedagogical approach. The analysis of the existing data revealed the need for changes towards combining regional and intercultural education in the theoretical and practical work of kindergartens as they form the

basis for a transcultural process of value-based education. The parents' statements, in turn, indicate the need to introduce fundamental values in the life of a young person, enabling a transition to family values and then to values of respect and tolerance, but also moving towards coexistence and free use of different cultural elements.

SŁOWA KLUCZE ABSTRAKT

edukacja
międzykulturowa,
edukacja regionalna,
transkulturowość,
wychowanie
przedszkolne,
wychowanie
do wartości

W dobie dynamicznie zmieniającej się rzeczywistości należy przyjrzeć się wartościom przekazywanym najmłodszym pokoleniom oraz zrewidować dotychczasowe podstawy teoretyczne procesu edukacji już na etapie wychowania przedszkolnego. Problematyka ta jest niezwykle ważna z punktu widzenia pedagogicznego, gdyż dotyczy istoty wychowania. Celem podjętej analizy naukowej była próba nakreślenia sposobu wychowywania do wartości dzieci w państwowych placówkach przedszkolnych z uwzględnieniem perspektywy przygodności struktur kulturowych i ich hybrydyzacji. Podstawę analiz stanowiły dwie jakościowe metody zbierania danych, tj. analiza danych zastanych (podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego) oraz wywiady indywidualne, częściowo kierowane, skoncentrowane na problemie z 50 rodzicami dzieci uczęszczających do przedszkoli państwowych na terenie Olsztyna. Badania zrealizowano w okresie kwiecień–czerwiec 2022 r. W artykule przedstawiono problematykę wartości fundamentalnych oraz wychowania do wartości w przestrzeni przedszkolnej. Skupiono się także na zagadnieniu transkulturowości w rozumieniu pedagogicznym. Analiza danych zastanych ujawniła potrzebę zmian w kierunku łączenia edukacji regionalnej i międzykulturowej w przestrzeni teoretycznej i praktycznej pracy przedszkoli – stanowią one podstawę transkulturowego procesu wychowywania do wartości. Wypowiedzi rodziców natomiast wskazują na potrzebę wprowadzania w życiu młodego człowieka wartości fundamentalnych, umożliwiających przejście do wartości rodzinnych, a następnie do wartości związanych z szacunkiem i tolerancją, ale także zdążających ku współistnieniu oraz swobodnemu korzystaniu z różnych elementów kulturowych.

Introduction

Education through values is one of the most important challenges of modern times. Values are the basis for the shaping of attitudes toward oneself, other people, the world, and are reflected in thoughts, feelings and behavior. Our values influence what we consider to be the norm. They shape our goals, motivate us to act, drive our ambitions, dreams and desires, and are an end in themselves, by influencing and

improving human nature (Kowolik and Piespiech, 2009, p. 23). Values help ensure mental balance, and contribute to feelings of contentment. Pursuing or achieving values “gives us a sense of duty well done” (Szczepański, 1972, p. 98).

Preschool-aged children come under the parenting influence of family members who transmit values to the youngest as role models. Depending on the quantity of time spent with the child and the quality of the relationship, they learn and internalize the values that their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and others favor. However, value systems (including cultural references) are shaped less and less often in the family environment (Kowolik and Pośpiech, 2009, p. 22). Thus, activities carried out by the kindergarten, in particular, become important.

This article analyzes the possibilities and methods of value education in state preschool institutions in terms of the transcultural process of teaching about values. The core curriculum of preschool education and statements of parents of children attending kindergartens were analyzed.

Theoretical and methodological framework of the study

Values are of interest to many sciences. The concept of values originated in economics where they refer to the satisfaction of material needs. Values were introduced into philosophy by R.H. Lotze, who framed them in terms of axiology, which includes morality and aesthetics. In philosophy, values are related to the qualities of a given object (objective view), attributed to it by the subject (subjective view) or defined according to cultural norms (Podsiad and Więckowski, 1983, p. 418). Educators usually adopt a sociological interpretation of the term “value,” and understand it as “any material or ideal object, idea or institution, real or imaginary object, in relation to which individuals or collectivities assume an attitude of reverence, to which they assign an important role in life and which they feel compelled to pursue” (Szczepański, 1972, pp. 97-98).

Values vary from culture to culture, and are determined by history, the traditions that make up a particular culture, socio-economic conditions, interpersonal relations, and the system of governance. In an era of rapid change, new values develop, while existing values acquire a new profile and become destabilized. Individual values and value systems are changing (Talarczyk, 2004, p. 10). “In spite of ... the fact that some values are changeable and transient, which is connected with the current reality of life ..., there are permanent, universal, timeless, immutable values. ... Such timeless values can ... include the right to life, world peace, tolerance, freedom, truth, justice, love, and faith” (Kowolik and Piespiech, 2009, p. 26).

The changes wrought by the Russian–Ukrainian war and the return of emigrants in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic are forcing us to reconsider activities in the field of value education and education preparing for value-based life. Unstable social structures are becoming the ground for changes in organizing preschool education in terms of transmitting permanent values and those that respond to the dynamic needs of coexisting cultures.

“The term transculturalism defines spatial being ‘outside’ the border(s) of specific cultures and cultural shifts that result in the emergence of new cultural structures and formations, made up of heterogeneous networks, containing components that are shared with other transcultural networks and differentiating elements,” (Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 27).

Transculturalism is a scientific theory which says that cultures are formed like puzzles (puzzling forms of cultures) thus, they undergo certain transitions/transversions (Welsch, 1998, p. 213; Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 27). Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz also identify transculturalism with the creation of new cultural qualities characterized by a hybrid structure with constant crossing of cultural boundaries. Cultures are not sharply distinguished from each other then, and interact between “two or more distinct cultural poles in the micro- and macro-social dimensions” (Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, pp. 27–28). Cultural identity is shaped in a transnational space, and belonging to it does not require physical presence (Hastrup, 2008, p. 50; Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28).

It is becoming a fact that cultures are penetrating and engulfing larger and larger populations and areas, thereby creating distinctive “configurations of connections” (Welsch, 1998, p. 204) and “macro-complexes” (Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28). Our cultures have in fact already lost their homogeneity and separate-ness; they are characterized by intermingling and interpenetration right down to the core (Welsch, 1998, p. 204).

The transcultural individual has a “consciousness of contingency” (Welsch, 1998, p. 221; Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28) and recognizes the dynamic nature of the cultural networks that condition the problems and situations he or she encounters in everyday life. A person’s personality and cultural identity is in constant contact with others, and takes the form of an ever-evolving hybrid, except that “it is not as a result of something preordained” (Welsch, 1998, p. 11; Nikitorowicz, Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28). According to Welsch, these “multiple cultural connections are decisive for our cultural formation,” and the work on one’s identity is gradually becoming the work of integrating multiple components with different cultural origins (Welsch, 1998, p. 205).

Nowadays, fluid and dynamic cultures, blurring the boundaries that separate them, are moving toward the idea of a cultural trail, in which a search for authenticity, based

on the reconstruction of the past, is the cultural paradigm (Kamińska, 2013, p. 319; Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28). They also are a “dynamic social construction” (Kazimierczak, 2009, p. 39; Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28).

To recognize one’s own transcultural structure, a person must accept the transculturality of the community, whereby their identity is formed, i.e. a so-called “feedback loop” (Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28). In the process of education in a preschool space, the child should experience constant change and must be ready for “transversion”: transition “between different frames of meaning” (Welsch, 1998, p. 31; Nikitorowicz and Guziuk-Tkacz, 2021, p. 28).

The goal of the study was to answer the question: how to conduct value education in preschools in a transcultural society? The study was based on two qualitative methods of data collection according to K. Rubacha (2016, p. 213):

- analysis of the preschool education curriculum;
- individual interviews of partially guided, problem-focused interviews with 50 parents of preschool children aged 4–6 from Olsztyn state institutions: 12 men and 38 women, aged 25–50; who identified their origin as: Polish – 38 people, Ukrainian – 4 people, German – 5 people, Belarusian – 2 people, and other – 1 person.

The material we collected allowed us to obtain answers to specific research problems:

1. What opportunities for value education with transcultural aspects do preschool teachers have under the existing core curriculum?
2. What kindergarten activities in terms of value education in a transcultural society do parents of preschool children notice?
3. What should value education in a transcultural society carried out by the kindergarten look like according to the parents surveyed?

Sampling for individual interviews was non-random purposive and consisted of selecting from the population the respondents who met the criterion included in the research question, i.e. people whose children attend kindergarten. Parents of preschool children were randomly targeted (Rubacha, 2016, p. 234), taking into account the following criteria: a) having a child aged 3–6; b) having a child attending an Olsztyn state kindergarten (Table 1).

Table 1. Age of the child attending kindergarten

Child’s age	Number of parents
3	15
4	8
5	7
6	20

Number of children of preschool age	Number of parents
1	33
2	15
3 or more	2

Interviews were conducted during one-on-one, face-to-face meetings, in rooms provided by the management of the kindergartens, in a casual manner (Palka, 2006: 38). The content was recorded (each interview lasted about 2 hours) and transcribed electronically. The survey was conducted between April and June 2022 in all Olsztyn state kindergartens. Interview prompts (10 open-ended questions) preceded by a personal data form and instructions were prepared.

Coding was used in collecting and analyzing data from the interviews: an Arabic number was assigned to each parent + gender. Numbers from 1 to 50 were assigned according to the order of the interviews (Pilch and Bauman, 2001, p. 120; Rubacha, 2016, p. 240). The coding system allowed the data of parents not to be disclosed in the results reported.

As for the core curriculum and interviews, the method of working with qualitative data was to “transform the text from field notes into a grounded theory text,” i.e. data reduction, data representation, and data verification (Rubacha, 2016, p. 259). Secondary sources and interviews were searched for analytical categories and then assigned meanings. A stratified selection of units was adopted and the variables identified in the research problem were considered to be located in each unit. Once found, the unit was analyzed, making it possible to extract the information in the collected texts and materials that form the context of the data. In verifying the data, the method of analytical induction was used, “which consists in confronting a given hypothetical claim with each case in the studied area” (Rubacha, 2016, p. 280). When inconsistencies were found, the scope of the claim was reduced to use the case under study.

Value education with transcultural aspects and the core curriculum – opportunities for teachers’ activities

According to the guidelines of the core curriculum, the main goal of kindergarten activities is to “support the holistic development of the child” (Regulation..., 2017, p. 2), and one of the tasks connected with achieving this goal is building a socially acceptable value system in the child. A child graduating from kindergarten should be able to recognize values, understand their meaning, accept and respect them. Learning

values is the basis of moral education, which makes it easier to live in compliance with social norms and function properly in social life (Kowolik and Pośpiech, 2009, pp. 29–30).

Content on the issue of values in a child's life can be found in various sections of the core curriculum for preschool education. They are mentioned in the introduction (the values of truth, goodness and beauty are listed) and in the tasks of the kindergarten, learning values is linked to the development of the child's identity in partnership with educational environments, such as the family and "communities, organizations and institutions, recognized by parents as a source of important values." One of the tasks that the curriculum specifies is the creation of conditions that facilitate the development of the child's identity, by "Creating, jointly with the above-mentioned entities, situations that lead to the child's learning of values and social norms, the source of which is the family, the group in the kindergarten, other adults, including older people, and the development of behavior resulting from values that are possible to understand at this stage of development" (Regulation... , 2017, s. 3).

In preschool education, transculturalism is reflected in regional education, in which the child is expected to acquire competence in the culture and language of their own group through learning and understanding of themselves and their immediate culture, including the values of that culture. This includes instilling respect for cultural heritage. The child should also learn the ability to perceive the differences of others, of another culture, to understand these differences, as this serves mutual understanding and cooperation (Nikitorowicz, 2011, pp. 24–26).

Regional education is linked to intercultural education, whose organizational basis is defined by international law, the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and separate provisions and regulations of the Minister of National Education, as well as the Law on Foreigners of December 12, 2013. Intercultural education constitutes

all mutual influences and interactions of individuals and groups, institutions, organizations, associations, unions, which promote such development of a person that he or she becomes a fully conscious and creative member of the family as well as of local, regional, religious, national, continental, cultural and global planetary community and is capable of active self-actualization of his or her own unique and permanent identity and individuality (Nikitorowicz, 2003, p. 934).

The curriculum for preschool education indicates that kindergarten should develop in children a sense of belonging to their cultural community and ties to the region. Kindergarten teachers should create conditions for shaping children's sensitivity to Poland's cultural heritage, its protection and growth. To this end, they are supposed to organize educational situations that make it possible to learn the culture and language of a national, ethnic minority or/and regional language and encourage children

to discover other cultures. With reference to the developmental areas of preschool children, it stipulates that:

- in terms of cognitive development, the children should acquire the ability to: define the signs, elements and national symbols of Poland (they should know the name of the country and the capital, the emblem, the flag, the anthem, they should know that Poland is a member of the European Union), including those typical of certain regions, such as the emblem (symbol) of their ethnic community; identify stories, proverbs and regional legends; recognize melodies, tunes and songs of the Polish nation and local communities;
- in terms of social development: children should have a sense of belonging to their family and preschool community, as well as regional and national identity (Regulation..., 2017, pp. 2–8).

Regional education, embedded in the core curriculum since 2009, can be a prelude to introducing the values of respecting so-called cultural hybrids. It can be a transition from what we call individual identity toward cultural identity, up to multicultural identity, and ultimately to a sense of coexistence in a transcultural space. Kindergarten value education with transcultural aspects may involve, for example, organizing situations in which the child will be able to define their personal identity, which may be constantly changing in the space of diverse cultural elements working simultaneously and overlapping with each other.

Kindergarten activities in value education in a transcultural society in the experience of parents

Parents notice kindergarten activities in terms of value education in a transcultural society. However, how intensive these activities are, according to them, depends on the age of the child and the skills of the teachers. Parents of children aged 3–4 cite more examples of value-oriented teaching efforts in the area of transculturalism, which may be due to increased work on essential preschool skills in groups of 5–6 year olds and less work on other educational activities. Respondents, however, do not report that teachers attempt to design their own educational plans in the area of transculturalism: this is probably a result of their inability to obtain such knowledge.

In the opinion of the respondents, some of the typical elements of kindergarten's activities include the following: teachers' attempts to introduce different cultures after children of a different nationality or children who have lived abroad for many years have joined the kindergarten group; talks during meetings with parents about the need to establish cooperation between the institution and the family in terms of preparing children for political and social changes in the world and Poland; episodic

activities in the field of interculturalism and multiculturalism; a strong teaching focus on Poland-oriented patriotic values and the formation of local identity.

Parents recognize the need to look for new solutions in making children aware of the possibility of the coexistence of different cultural spaces, as well as the possibility of combining these spaces and their constant fluidity. Current measures, in their opinion, are insufficient in view of the changes that are taking place in the social, economic and political space. They believe that we should look for such theoretical and practical solutions that will increase the possibility of using fundamental values in molding their children into adults who are aware of the dynamism of socio-cultural structures.

Value education in a transcultural society in kindergarten – the parents' perspective

For parents, transculturalism is a little-known concept, and the co-occurrence and overlap of different cultures tends to be understood in the context of I-We-They and multiculturalism or interculturalism. Despite the lack of sufficient information about the origin of the term, the respondents note a significant shake-up of the cultural structures in the communities where they live. They recognize an increasing presence of members of other nationalities, Poles returning after economic emigration, and followers of different religions in their spaces: local neighborhoods, workplaces, and children's educational institutions. Accordingly, they construct the need for a different approach to upbringing in the family and educational environment.

- They do not call for a shift in terms of the fundamental values in human life: "Family should be the basic value in upbringing, and in the family there should be love, respect, friendship and help" (26/K). They focus on making children aware (to a greater extent than before) of the multifaceted nature of the world around them, while recognizing the variability of the culture that is entrenched: "Our culture, in which we grow up, gives us a framework for life. The history of our ancestors is important. The world is moving forward quickly, changing, so we need to teach children that they too can absorb things from other cultures into their lives" (15/M).

According to parents, value education in a transcultural society should consist of:

- combining regional education with intercultural education or replacing regional education with intercultural education altogether;
- dedicating a portion of teaching hours to talks on the importance of values such as equality, empathy, respect and tolerance;

- providing an opportunity for children and their parents who come from different cultural backgrounds to speak about their traditions and history;
- parents working together with kindergartens to make children aware of that people from different cultural areas live side by side in their neighborhoods, and that their immediate community (their “little homeland”) is made up of different cultural groups that determine how these communities function.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

The findings add to the knowledge of values considered from the point of view of the contingency and hybridization of cultural structures. So far, transcultural research oriented on values has not been attempted on a larger scale; most often there have been empirical studies on values or studies of transculturalism separately.

The core curriculum for preschool education provides general guidelines for value education. Teachers are required, for instance, to educate their pupils in accordance with the three values of truth, goodness and beauty. They must also implement regional education, which includes teaching kindergarteners about the culture of their “little homeland” and region. The core curriculum instructs teachers to show preschoolers the culture of Poland, as well as to encourage children to learn about elements of other cultures. There is no mention of intercultural, multicultural and transcultural education. The core curriculum defines the essential goals of educational activities, while each kindergarten can expand its own educational curriculum to include these aspects, and the teacher can include them in their proprietary teaching program.

Transculturalism enters everyday kindergarten practice naturally, since the group of preschoolers is more and more culturally heterogeneous as a result of ongoing social changes. Therefore, there is a need to supplement the core curriculum with issues strictly related to intercultural education and pedagogical approaches to transculturalism. Regional education will help children understand themselves and define their place in the closest social space, while intercultural education will help raise their awareness of cultural coexistence and diversity, which can penetrate the reality of each child and lead to vigorous changes at each stage of their lives.

Parents' statements indicate the need for preschool education in accordance with the ideas of regional education, as well as intercultural education, striving for transculturalism. In fact, most of the respondents have noticed changes in social life caused by the Russian invasion on Ukraine, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. In their opinion, these changes are also reflected in kindergartens (among other things, there is an increasing cultural diversity of preschool groups) and teachers should reference them in their educational practice.

Based on parents' statements, value education in a transcultural society should instil in children such values as truth, goodness and beauty, as well as values that are important in family life and relevant to the presence of members of different cultures in the same social space. In their opinion, intercultural education with aspects of transculturalism should be implemented in kindergarten alongside regional education. It is imperative that kindergarten educators take action to make children aware of the fact that their immediate community, the so-called "little homeland," is made up of various cultural groups that have a significant impact on the functioning of their community.

Parents' comments and suggestions on the need to include intercultural education and aspects of transculturalism in the educational process respond to the needs of a rapidly changing social reality and should be reflected both in the core curriculum for preschool education and in the preschool education curricula of kindergartens and in teachers' own educational programs.

References

- Hastrup, K. (2008). *Droga do antropologii. Między doświadczeniem a teorią* [The road to anthropology: Between experience and theory] (E. Klekot, transl.). Jagiellonian University Publishing House.
- Kamińska, K. (2013). Szlak kulturowy – nowa strategia uobecniania przeszłości. [Cultural trail – a new strategy for making the past present]. *Zeszyty Naukowe Ostrołęckiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, 27, 321–329.
- Kazimierczak, M. (2009). Kilka refleksji nad „autentycznością” w kontekście książki Anny Wiczorkiewicz – apetyt turysty. O doświadczaniu świata w podróży [Some reflections on “authenticity” in the context of Anna Wiczorkiewicz’s book – the tourist’s appetite: On experiencing the world in travel]. *Turystyka Kulturowa*, 7, 32–39.
- Kowolik, P. and Pośpiech, L. (2009). Istota wartości i ich znaczenie w edukacji [The essence of values and their importance in education]. *Nauczyciel i Szkoła*, 3–4(44–45), 21–33.
- Nikitorowicz, J. (2003). Edukacja międzykulturowa [Intercultural education]. In T. Pilch (ed.), *Encyclopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku* [Pedagogical Encyclopedia of the 21st Century] (vol. 1, pp. 934–941). Żak Academic Publishing House.
- Nikitorowicz, J. (2011). Edukacja regionalna jako podstawa kreowania społeczeństwa obywatelskiego [Regional education as a basis for the creation of civil society]. In A. Cudowska (ed.), *Kierunki rozwoju edukacji w zmieniającej się przestrzeni społecznej. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana profesorowi doktorowi habilitowanemu Michałowi Balickiemu* [Trends in education development in the changing social space: Book dedicated to Professor Michał Balicki] (pp. 23–32). Trans Humana University Publishing House.
- Nikitorowicz, J. and Guziuk-Tkacz, M. (2021). Wielokulturowość – międzykulturowość – transkulturowość w kontekście pedagogicznym

- [Multiculturalism – interculturalism – transculturalism in pedagogical context]. *Edukacja Międzykulturowa*, 2(15), 23–36. <https://doi.org/10.15804/em.2021.02.01>
- Podsiad, A. and Więckowski, Z. (1983). *Mały słownik terminów i pojęć filozoficznych* [Small dictionary of philosophical terms and concepts]. Pax Publishing Institute.
- Palka, S. (2006). *Metodologia. Badania. Praktyka pedagogiczna* [Methodology. Research. Pedagogical practice]. Gdańsk Psychological Publishing House.
- Pilch, T. and Bauman, T. (2001). *Strategie badań ilościowych i jakościowych* [Strategies of quantitative and qualitative research]. Żak Academic Publishing House.
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 14, 2017 on the core curriculum for kindergarten education and the core curriculum for general education for elementary school, including for students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, general education for a vocational school of the first degree, general education for a vocational special school, and general education for a post-secondary school. Journal of Laws. 2017, item 356 (2017). Poland.
- Rubacha, K. (2016). *Metodologia badań nad edukacją* [Methodology of research on education]. Editions Spotkania Publishing House.
- Szczepański, J. (1972). *Elementarne pojęcia socjologii* [Elementary concepts of sociology]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Talarczyk, M. (2004). Znaczenie wartości [The importance of values]. *Wychowawca*, 6, 8–10.
- Welsch, W. (1998). Transkulturowość. Nowa koncepcja kultury [Transculturalism: A new concept of culture]. In R. Kubicki (ed.), *Filozoficzne konteksty rozumienia transwersalnego. Wokół koncepcji Wolfganga Welscha* [Philosophical contexts of transcultural reason: On the concept of Wolfgang Welsch] (pp. 195–222). Humaniora Foundation Publishing House.