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Moral upbringing of children in the context of transformations of modern families : An overview of issues

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MORAL UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATIONS OF MODERN FAMILIES. AN OVERVIEW OF ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

Economic changes in the modern world have entailed the important social transformations. Changes in considering life's priorities, consumerism, hedonism as well as the materialization of society have been caused by emphasis on developing technology and pursuing science and technology studies. Thus, it is essential to reflect on the concept of educating adolescents in new realities surrounded by new technologies and media. Consideration should be given to the impact of teaching methods on the prevention of moral depravity of the younger generation.

The closest family members play an enormously important role in children's personality development, having a significant effect on shaping all spheres of a child's personality, when carrying out various everyday activities. The family is therefore considered to be the primary source of moral values. However, modern families are undergoing transformations as they adapt to an ever-changing world, which brings changes in the family functions, forms and structures as well as the family education model. The amount of time parents spend with their children has been dropping dramatically. As a result, education responsibility has been taken over by institution and other people, which may lead to the deterioration of family constituting the basis of the proper upbringing of children.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

Economic transformations, including the development of modern information technology, have contributed to social and cultural changes across society as a whole. Recent advances in science and technology have facilitated and streamlined daily life activities changing the style and quality of life. Consequently, postmodern culture emerged with its society, characterized by processes such as:

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- social differentiation which is based on departing from tradition, variability and diversity of choice;
- deinstitutionalization which refers to the abandonment of institutional forms of satisfying needs and focuses on new patterns of behavior and ways of life;
- cultural pluralism which relates to diminishing pressures and loosening constraints and means a manifestation of individuality;
- structural individualism which is based on belief that individuals are free to shape their own lives. The cult of self-fulfilment. (Slany, 2002).

Therefore, it can be assumed that profound changes have taken place regarding people's way of thinking, the perception of others, the recognition of values and their priority. Increasing consumerism has gradually led to the materialization of society and perception of values formed on the basis of one's own possessions. On the other hand, making new purchases has become one of the basic human needs and ways to spend free time. Thus, it should be noted that there have been hedonistic tendencies and consumption has become a symbol of freedom and independence. As a result, interpersonal relationships have been weakened mainly due to an increased focus on one's own individual needs as well as self-realization.

New types of values in today's society, moral pluralism and relativism seem to be inevitable consequences of social and cultural change. This is particularly reflected in an intermediate adjustment of traditional values to current trends, which means that the system of new values forms the basis of prescriptive norms imposing sanctions on individuals in a variety of everyday life situations. They also affect the structure and function of modern families (Więckiewicz, 2010).

TRANSFORMATIONS OF MODERN FAMILIES AND THE NEW IMAGE OF PARENTHOOD

Multifaceted transformations of the modern world have had a significant impact on the shape, condition and function of modern families. A key challenge is to create favorable conditions to allow family members to efficiently participate in the process of self-development and self-realization in the light of recent changes. It should be pointed out that relationships among family members, their attitude towards themselves, their parenthood and their children have been transformed because there is a new way of thinking about individuals' place and their role in the family. As a consequence, the educational function is gradually diminishing, whereas there is a tendency to strengthen a family's protective function. Nevertheless, there is some concern about an appropriate process of shaping a child's personality, particularly as regards social and moral aspects of life, because families provide individuals with fundamental norms and values aimed at enabling them to live together in society.

Family upbringing appears to play a key role in children's moral upbringing. In addition, to individuals' preferred value system, individuals' ability to function in their environment is also an important factor affecting relationships among its members, attitudes towards their children, ways of achieving their goals and plans for the children's upbringing. It is generally assumed today that most modern families are typical examples of nuclear families, usually referred to as two-generation families consisting of parents and children. They do not maintain close family ties because of economic difficulties or cultural differences (Marshall, 2006). With the Industrial Revolution, life changed dramatically for the families. The rise of industrialization provided opportunities for both parents to be actively involved in shaping their career, forced them to leave their relatives in order to establish their own household.

The modern family is based on the process of constant modernization which is associated with ongoing economic and social transformation. The deepening widening processes of globalization have changed the family structures, relationships among family members and parents' perception of parental responsibility. It should be noted that there are some tendencies towards transformations of the modern family whose economic situation and its living conditions play an essential role. However, it is emphasized that the most important changes include the individualization and autonomization of family as they are fundamental elements of transformations (Kwak, 2005). The individualization process is related to the idea that the family moves away from wider communities, including reference groups. As a consequence, the family members have become more self-reliant and independent and they can dedicate more time and attention to meeting their needs, their personal development, while saving freedom and autonomy. Therefore, they spend more time reaching their goals, which causes a decrease in family interaction.

The problems discussed here result from the social transformation and relate to the modern family both its outer layer and inner layer which refers to the number of interactions and relationships with the family members. Moreover, the problems have caused a reduced numbers of people in a group having a tendency towards moving away from a wider kinship group. Autonomy of the members, engaged in socializing, has increased but on the other hand, departing from a traditional family model has had an influence on transforming and redefining roles and functions of the family members and the child. As a result, it turns out that there are more and more factors that can affect a child's upbringing. Some of these are external factors such as strangers, institutions and the media expressing their norms, values and beliefs. However, the children seem to have difficulty in learning and understanding the importance of the moral values determining a child's attitudes and behavior (Kułaczkowski, 2010).

These phenomena have had an impact on transforming family relationships, especially between parents and children. The relationships have been deformalized. They have become more direct based on genuine feelings of equality. At the same time, requirements and expectations for children have risen considerably. Modern young parents put much more emphasis on enabling their children to learn quickly at an

early age as well as acquire knowledge and skills providing them with necessary information to possess economic, cultural and educational experiences. It may sometimes appear that the children cannot meet parents' expectations because they significantly exceed the children's individual abilities. A manifestation of high expectations is the so-called "adult program," that is the parents' preferred concept of children's upbringing designed to prepare children from an early age for the life taking into account, especially the specific conditions of modern life. A particular feature of the program is adults' attitude towards children aimed not at their needs, interests, development potential, but rather at parental expectations for their gifts and talent. Furthermore, the fundamental rights of the children, such as the right to freedom (of choice), rest, play and recreation, free social interaction with peers are neglected. Planning specific forms of children's activity, choosing "proper" friends, and organizing their own time, including and arranging their leisure activities are vested according to parents' own discretion (free time). It must be pointed out that both the child's position in the family and the family members' attitude towards them have undergone discernible changes. According to Zygmunt Bauman (2008), there is a noticeable tendency in consumerism to treat everything as if it were a source of pleasurable sensations. Hence, a child can be seen as an object of emotional consumption. Bauman argues that:

objects of consumption satisfy consumers' needs, desires and wishes; so do children. We are willing to have children because of pleasures of parenthood – i.e., the kinds of joys no other object of consumption, however refined and sophisticated, can bring (Bauman, 2008, p. 128).

Thus, it can be assumed that modern parents' decision to have children is associated with their belief about prestige, life satisfaction and important investment. Children are considered both parents' tools to fulfil their dreams or plans and evidence of social status and economic possibilities of the family. Hence, the children become a family member whose behavior gives highest priority to family.

However, the project: "a baby" concerns not only the child's upbringing and education. It begins while planning a pregnancy and involves a period of preparation for conception, pregnancy, childbirth preparation and childbirth. Planning to have a baby may become a source of pride. For many parents, being pregnant proves that they are financially prepared to raise a family. Getting pregnant easily and childbirth may be another reason to be proud, especially while taking into account problems concerning difficulties in conceiving and pursuing treatment. For this reason, M. Olcoń-Kubicka believes that "being pregnant or a mother brings an immense sense of pride as a child may provide «added value» to every woman's life, even if she manages to achieve spectacular career success" (Olcoń-Kubicka, 2009, p. 37). Hence, it should be stressed out that, children facilitate parent's fulfilment of their psychological needs.

Transformations of the modern family do not affect only bonds among family members. The weakening of traditional family forms based on marriage is considered to be the consequence of autonomization and individualism. More and more people are living in alternative forms of marriage and family life. Cohabitation appears to be the most popular form. Cohabitative couples claim that they either do not need marriage or cannot legalize their relationship. Cohabitative relationships do not appear to differ all that much from married couples in terms of living in the same household or raising children (Kocik, 2006).

Family breakdowns and remarriages (reconstituted families), raising a child in a single parent family (monoparental family) are a common phenomenon. If the families can live in harmony, raise children together and celebrate togetherness, they can be called patchwork family (Wiencelewska, 2016). Homosexual relations and single life may also be rated among alternative forms of life.

Changes in the family structure often influence some transformations in its functioning, organization and relations of its members. Nowadays more and more children are being brought up in the families with one non biological parent or they are encountering various forms of a family – a structure created by a “permanent” parent or a “weekend” parent structure (Kwak, 2005). Family relationships created in such a way have an impact on a child, they constitute its image of the world, shape its system of values, attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the child creates the image of himself, its self-value, finds its place in the family and the world surrounding us.

SELF- SHAPING OF THE CHILD’S MORALITY

Bringing up a child is a complex process the aim of which is to trigger some defined and permanent changes in its personality. It has to equip the child with knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs which enable the child to develop and properly function in the social environment later on. That is why a commonly accepted system of values, being the foundation of social norms and rules (Okoń, 2007) should constitute a basis of these activities.

According to Janusz Mariański (2006), the values, norms and assessments, derived from the conceptions of perceiving good and evil, which regulate relations between members of a definite society, should be understood as an individual’s morality. In the author’s opinion, the components of these are goals, norms and moral appraisals as well as patterns of behaviors and sanctions.

Therefore, moral upbringing is the process of introducing the child to the world of values and moral norms. It is about a mutual influence of a tutor and the child in order to shape the child’s specific psychological predispositions, being the foundation of attitudes and moral behaviors of an individual. For the process to be effective, the specific goals should be pursued in a planned, well thought out and systematic

way. Beginning from the earliest years of the child's life, the right values, views and attitudes should be emphasized, and various methods, forms and means of influence should be considered.

It is important to adjust the activities to the developmental possibilities of the child – its cognitive skills, the level of emotional and social development as well as its abilities to moral reasoning (Okoń, 2007).

There can be distinguished certain stages in the moral development of the child – they are strictly connected to the level of development of all spheres of the child's personality. Jean Piaget isolated four phases of the child's moral development. He distinguished the phase of anomie, moral realism, moral relativism and moral autonomy. During these phases the child goes gradually from the unreflective acceptance of the adults' norms and bans through the stage of perception of specific interrelations referring to defined goals and behaviors. In the end there appears the autonomic morality, expressed by certain stability of norms and rules, regardless of a situation or circumstances (Łobocki, 2007).

The phases of a moral development formulated by J. Piaget, refer mainly to the level of understanding and judgement of certain behaviors and occurrences. That is why educational activities have to be focused on the perception possibilities of the recipient. Considering the developmental specificity of the young child, who in the first phases of shaping moral thinking attempts to copy the adults' recommendations, and for whom the adult is an authority and an example to follow, educational activities should be most often aimed at the method of modeling, that is emphasizing the right role models. These are frequently examples taken from the nearest child's environment – parents, grandparents or other family members. There can also be used some examples from the child's environment: literature, films or mass media. However, the adults – most frequently present in the child's environment – have the biggest influence on shaping the child's views and attitudes, thus building relationships and an emotional relation. The adults accompanying the child stimulate the child, express their own opinions, views and attitudes, provide it with self-transformed information about the world, social relations as well as norms and rules (Kuleczka 2014). That is why it should be emphasized that the family has the essential influence on the child's moral sensitivity and its moral reasoning. Achieving by the young generation abilities to understand rightly and assess the occurrences and social relations in the world surrounding us inextricably depends on attitudes and behaviors of the family members.

MORAL UPBRINGING IN THE MODERN FAMILY

Family is a part of a social and cultural surrounding that plays an essential role in shaping the child's personality (Szczepański, 1993). Its educative function is mainly to introduce the child to the widely understood social and cultural life together with

rules, values and moral standards related to it (Adamski, 1984). In order to fulfil that function, the family has to meet the basic biological and psychological needs of the child, the need to be loved, feel safe, appreciated and accepted. It should also provide the child with socially required patterns of behavior and emphasize values, norms and rules of coexistence typical in the society.

Parents are the first role models of moral behaviors for children. The process of their personal development takes place in the atmosphere of norms, rules and moral principles which are followed in the family. The child observes what is going in the family environment and follows certain patterns of behavior. Thus, it can be stated that the moral system of the child is shaped through observation and imitation of conducts which were presented to the child in the course of a family upbringing in which the process of personality shaping takes place during various life activities. This is education through participation in everyday life situations, connected with both economic sphere as well as cultural and social life of the family (Langier, 2012).

Educative activities of a modern family are more seldom focused on the emotional, social and moral sphere of children. They are mainly based on shaping competences enabling the child to act efficiently in order to achieve successes in certain fields in a fast way. According to Anna Kwak:

a modern family is a basis preparing a young generation for independent life – it helps to gain education, supports individual development of a person taking into consideration the person's talents, needs and interests. In the modern family material goods, family traditions or moral values are not traditionally handed down from generation to generation (Kwak, 2005, p. 24–25).

It happens due to limited, close everyday contacts between parents and children who are more often in the keeping of other people: babysitters, coaches and teachers presenting their own system of norms and values thus having an impact on views and attitudes of their charges via their personality. Furthermore, parents involved in their own matters, fulfilment of own needs and desires, more rarely spend their free time with children playing with them, talking to them or explaining the complexities of everyday life in the society. It leads to the weakening of parental bonds and limitation of educative influences from the parents' side.

An important aspect of upbringing the child in the family is its autonomization. Drifting apart of a nuclear family from the other family members limits the transmissions of tradition and culture based on family values. Modern grandparents are more often deprived of the opportunity of upbringing their grandchildren. It happens due to various reasons: their permanent involvement in work, spending their time and power on following their dreams or because of far distances from the place of living of their children and grandchildren.

More often young parents choose young people as babysitters for their children, considering the older generation as old-fashioned and thus not able to bring up children in a modern, presently binding way of upbringing. Such deprivation or lim-

itation of contacts between grandparents and grandchildren have a negative effect on children's development, depriving them of many valuable experiences. Spending the time with people from the older generation children can broaden their knowledge, get to know moral norms, learn empathy and understanding for others.

The older generation is like a treasury of life knowledge and interpersonal relationships for their grandchildren. Grandmothers and grandfathers, who draw on their own experiences and reflections, and are aware of own educative mistakes, are predisposed to become some kind of a teacher of the world. They are prepared to teach their grandchildren how to perceive others' needs, respect or tolerance. They can teach them values which they see from the angle of their own life experiences as valuable, they can shape the younger generation's moral attitude (www.czaszdziecmi.pl, 2016). A close contact with grandparents may have an essential influence on building the child's world of values and shaping its moral attitudes. That is why from the perspective of the child's education, it is important for the modern nuclear family to have as frequent contacts with the older family members as it is possible.

Upbringing in the family takes place in an intended way through intentional, planned educational activities (reflexive education), and in an unintended way, in the course of everyday activities, accidental conversations or spontaneous behaviors in certain situations (unreflexive education). Education gained by the child in such situations facilitates acquiring new skills and competences in order to express own beliefs and views regarding the surrounding reality and interpersonal relations. Values, norms and rules found in the family environment decide about the way the young generation enters the adult life and its normal functioning in the society.

CONCLUSIONS

Moral upbringing is a key element of the child's personality development. That is why shaping normal attitudes and behaviors towards the world, other people and oneself, becomes the most important aspect of the family education. Transformations of the modern family, economically and socially conditioned, limit the opportunities of a proper and full educational influence on the young generation. Drifting apart of its members from one another, focusing on self-realization and delegating educational duties to others – strangers may significantly limit the educative efficiency of the family environment. Lack of right role models in the nearest environment causes searching for other sources of them, not always being under tutors' charge. Weak bonds with the family may lead young people to emotional instability and moral confusion. That, in turn, may result in dangerous activities, self-destruction, aggression and brutal behaviors.

Modern young generation lives in the world dominated by knowledge, practical skills and a fast flow of information. It often grows up and develops in the emotional distance from the nearest family members, in the full confidence that it has to be per-

fect and go-getting, and that is not always in conformity with its needs and possibilities. It easily gives in to negative influences and the mass media facilitate the contact with anti-values. So only a well axiologically prepared young person can resist such negative influences. That is why entering the world of values must take place from the earliest years of life of the child in its family environment, and should be based on normal relationships between all its members.

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MORAL UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATIONS OF MODERN FAMILIES. AN OVERVIEW OF ISSUES

Keywords: family, education, values, morality, postmodernity

Abstract: Economic transformations of the modern world caused significant changes in the social life of people. Basic terms describing the present time are: speed and change. These terms define both the way of life of modern man and also occurrences that take place around him. They refer to the style of life, social contacts, work, upbringing and education. These changes caused transformations in the life of modern man, influencing his professional and personal life. The consequence of such progressive changes are transformations of the modern family, especially in terms of upbringing and forms of taking care of children. It plays a significant role for the development of the child's personality, in the emotional and moral sphere in particular. The purpose of this article is to present the main tendencies in the changes of forms, structure and functions of the modern époque family. There has been emphasized the impact of these changes on the educative condition, and especially the role in the process of getting to know the world of values and development of moral sensitivity of offspring.

WYCHOWANIE MORALNE DZIECKA W KONTEKŚCIE PRZEMIAN WSPÓŁCZESNEJ RODZINY. ZARYS PROBLEMATYKI

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, wychowanie, wartości, moralność, ponowoczesność

Streszczenie: Przemiany gospodarczo-ekonomiczne współczesnego świata spowodowały istotne przeobrażenia w życiu społecznym ludności. Podstawowymi pojęciami charakteryzującymi współczesność są: szybkość i zmiana. Terminy te określają zarówno sposób życia współczesnego człowieka, jak i zjawisk, jakie wokół niego zachodzą. Dotyczą zatem stylu życia, kontaktów społecznych, pracy, wychowania i edukacji. Zmiany te spowodowały przemiany w życiu współczesnego człowieka, oddziałując na jego życie zawodowe i osobiste. Konsekwencją postępujących zmian są przeobrażenia współczesnej rodziny, szczególnie w zakresie wychowania oraz form sprawowania opieki nad dziećmi. Ma to ogromne znaczenie dla rozwoju osobowości dziecka, zwłaszcza w sferze emocjonalnej i moralnej. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie głównych tendencji zmian form, struktury i funkcji rodziny epoki ponowoczesnej. Podkreślono wpływ tych zmian na jej kondycję wychowawczą, a szczególnie na rolę w procesie poznawania świata wartości i rozwój wrażliwości moralnej potomstwa.