



7th World Conference on Educational Sciences, (WCES-2015), 05-07 February 2015, Novotel Athens Convention Center, Athens, Greece

Parental values and children's attitude towards reading

Alina Felicia Roman^{a*}, Manuel Luís Castanheira Pinto^b

^aFaculty of Educational Sciences, Psychology and Social Sciences, "Aurel Vlaicu" University, Elena Dragoi no. 2, Arad, 310330, Romania

^bDepartment of Supervision Teaching Practice, University of Applied Sciences of Braganca- School of Education, Campus de Santa Apolonia Apartado 1101, 5301 - 856 Braganca - Portugal

Abstract

The conflict of values is one of the complex values of current educational practice; it promotes the idea that resonance and axiological coherence are desirable in all educating factors. We consider extremely important the manner a child or trainee relates to this exterior scenery of values, which is constantly facing dilemmas and conflicts. Parents' influence and the way they handle in different situations are the premises for the children's future adult behaviours. Family is the most important factor of primary social interaction and it is responsible for developing the habitus (Bourdieu, 1999). Family does not only transfer information which is vital for cognitive or affective autonomy and functionality but also information on social statuses, beliefs and values that guide parents' and children's behaviour. Shaping has an important role in the transfer process. Children, as observers of adult behaviour will include in their relationships similar behaviour to the one they imitate from their parents. Imitation refers to sets of values taken up by parents, to the manner they try to transfer these values to children through various activities and also to the manner parents themselves behave in this system of values. The study tries to link parental values, regarded as parents' beliefs on what is desirable in their children to peculiarities of cultural consumption seen as an attempt to shape them as reflexive readers. Education for reading facilitates autonomous orientation in understanding culture and reflexive relating to polymorphic and open values.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

Keywords: parental values; culture; education for reading; development;

* Alina Felicia Roman. Tel.: +4-0257-219-555 ; Fax.: +4-0257-219-555
E-mail address: romanalinafelicia@yahoo.com, luiscastanheira@ipb.pt

1. Introduction

Human development occurs within a context which is usually a cultural one (Bruner, 1991). Culture is represented by the world a child adapts to by a process of enculturation; culture actually assigns individual and group value. „We are what we are by the language we speak, by historical heritage, by values, traditions and customs we share, by literary, artistic and philosophical creation which formed ourselves. Culture has powerful affective vibrations. It develops feelings of social solidarity, aesthetic senses, allows emotions to emerge, encourages creativity, spontaneity and originality” (Malita, 1998).

Family doesn't transfer only information required by cognitive and affective autonomy and functionality but also information about social statuses, beliefs and values which guide parents' and children's behaviour. An essential role in the transfer process is played by shaping: how parents take up a certain set of values, the way they transfer them to children through various activities, the manner parents themselves relate to these sets of values are aspects which will be imitated by children as observers of parents' behaviour. Thus, they will use similar behaviour in the way they relate to reality.

According to Gallinsky, who has developed a model of parenting one important stage is represented by the interpretive stage. The parents' most important task is to “interpret the world to their children and it involves not only their interpretations but also children's interpretations and the development of their own self-beliefs. Interpretation involves providing answers to children's questions, granting access to information and skills they need and also support in the development of their own values (Gallinsky, 1981).

The child rebuilds the significance system of his cultural environment under parental guidance. This system allows him to interpret the world. Each person needs to build a projection of the world and find his own place in it. Education should help the child create a past and a possible future (Crahay, 2009).

The quality of socio-cultural environment in school and family has a powerful impact on children's identity and their involvement in reading activities. Reading consists of using a set of practices, which are developed gradually as children make progress in knowledge. The practices make a contribution to the building of an individual's attitudes and identity as member of a culture, community and family (McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Roth et al, 2002).

Considering the peculiarities of child development we can state that no other institution satisfies better the child's identity needs than family, no matter how highly qualified the institution is. The child's needs are always associated to certain values. Authors have tried to classify these parental values and the classification is similar to a certain extent. Thus Duval (apud Voicu, Voicu, 2007) mentions two categories: development parental values (children's health, cooperation ability, sharing, love for their parents, desire to learn, self-control and independence) and traditional parental values (hygiene, obedience and respect for adults, care for personal belongings, and raising children as believers, hard-workers and participants in household activities).

2. Literature

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of cultural consumption on personal development of children and teenagers. Attention has been given to values and principles transmitted by cultural products, including media products. Some of these studies are mentioned here: „Usage, attitudes and expectancies of Romanian mass-media consumers” conducted by the Institute of Marketing and Polls– IMAS, in the spring of 2004 and requested by the National Audio-visual Council of Romania (CNA); the study „Children's exposure to radio and TV programmes” conducted by Gallup Romania and Metro Media Transylvania in April 2004 and requested by CNA; a poll conducted on school population from secondary and high schools which was presented by Cucu in „Education and the mass-media” 2000; a study conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences (Bunescu, Negreanu, 2005) which revealed increased consumption of the mass-media, especially television, internet, teen magazines and music among teenagers; „Research on the behaviour of audio-visual programme consumption at pupils (7-10 years of age) and comparative analysis of cultural models on three age segments (7-10 years of age, 11-14 years of age and 15-18 years of age)” (CURS, 2005). The study entitled “Life events and subjective well-being of Romanian school children” analyses the lifestyle of children aged 8 to 10 in Romania in order to identify their educational needs and the level of welfare. Studies conducted by Romanian and foreign researchers highlighted a link between parents' cultural consumption and pupils' school performance (apud Hatos, 2006); reduction of cultural consumption in cases of dysfunctional family behaviours (Sthal, 2002); differences in cultural consumption based on different social scales (Virtanem, 2005; Chan, Goldthorpe, 2004; Mcacrtry & Shrum, 2000; Halmann, 1996) as well as the influence

of cultural consumption on family relationships (Hynes, 2008; Campiche, Kellerhals, 1981). PISA studies conducted in 2000 and 2003 conclude that socio-economic factors which influence families can also explain the variation of school performance by up to 17%. Studies conducted on this issue suggest that parents' support attitudes have a significantly positive influence on the child's reading performance in the 1st grade. The attitude towards reading is partly mediated by the parents' behaviour in a study favourable environment.

3. Method

We would like to present the results of a study conducted in Arad County on a sample of parents with children 6 to 12 years of age. This is the period when children become more conscious and aware of cultural consumption but they are still depending on their parents to access cultural products. On the other hand, family is still significant at this age and it is also a role model for children. Thus we are interested in the parents' values which are actually the values transferred to their children.

Our contribution to the issue of cultural consumption besides reviewing the literature in this field consists of discussing the actions undertaken by parents who guide their children towards quality cultural products and activities. Their aim is to bring up and train their children through reading. We have also taken into consideration a possible link between these activities and the values considered important by parents.

The family's orientation towards certain values is another perspective taken into consideration by our explorative study. Therefore we have tried to identify subtle mechanisms that generate certain parents' behaviours. Research conducted by Kohn and his collaborators (apud Voicu, Voicu, 2007) highlight the idea that parental values reflect parents' ambitions for their children and also their ideas about the most efficient ways of reaching this desiderata.

Consequently, the aim of our research was to create premises for the development of educational acts addressed to parents. The goal of these acts is the enrichment and encouragement of reading.

The objectives of our research were:

- to determine the values of parents with children aged 6 to 12
- to identify the main tendencies in parents' orientation towards the development of values through reading
- to identify the main characteristics of cultural consumption with emphasis on reading offered by parents to their children

Given the objectives, we have chosen a contrasting sample selected on the residency criteria: rural area – urban area. Consequently, the research was conducted on a sample of 420 subjects, namely 210 families: 117 families have rural residency and 93 live in Arad city. Arad is the only city in the county which provides cultural services and access to culture in a significantly different manner from rural settlements.

The method selected to collect data on children's culture consumption is the inquiry questionnaire. The concept of cultural consumption suggested to children was operationalized for the questionnaire. The following variables and indicators have been obtained based on theoretical data and according to research objectives and hypothesis.

1. Parents focus on certain cultural services, products and activities: time allotted to reading activities; preference for a certain type of service or cultural activity; attendance frequency at cultural activities.

2. Parents expectancy in terms of children's reading activity; activities considered beneficial, respect towards children's preference for certain cultural contents, parents' satisfaction about children's reading options.

3. Parents involvement in the children's cultural consumption management; information about the offer of cultural-educational services for children; the frequency of consultations with children about their options for cultural consumption; activities suggested by parents; activities enforced by parents; time spent with child supervision; the attendance frequency at cultural-educational activities at home, in the park, at school; financial resources allotted to cultural products and activities for children; efficiency of actions taken to stimulate cultural consumption; difficulty in accessing desired cultural-educational activities; measures taken to improve the book offer for children.

Independent variables: age, occupation, educational level, residency, religion, nationality, income.

Most questions contained closed items elaborated after the Likert Scale. It has been used to reflect either the frequency or the intensity and manner of producing a certain phenomenon. For some questions we have provided answers which correspond to our objectives. The subjects only had to choose according to their own behaviour or opinion.

These six factors correspond to certain values according to which we have set the following typology: material

values, material comfort and achievement; socializing values: friends, social acknowledgement, creativity, pleasures, communication power; reflexive values: independence, self-control, self-confidence, responsibility, trust; emotional values: harmony, affection (love); professional values: professional achievement, dignity; psycho-moral values: politeness, honesty, intelligence, religious beliefs.

4. Conclusions

The hierarchy of parents' values and the cultural consumption they suggest to their children differs according to their residency rural or urban. It has been observed that in urban areas families consider important socializing and professional values more than in rural ones. Rural areas prefer values such as: reflexive, emotional and psycho-moral. In terms of material values there are no differences between urban and rural area. Data has revealed that parents consider material values more important than socializing and psycho-moral ones.

After testing the significance of observed differences, we notice that material, relational and professional values are more important in urban area. Psycho-moral values are more important in rural areas and the differences are not statistically significant at a threshold of $p < 0.5$ but are very close to the threshold ($t=1,826$ to $p=0.69$). Therefore, we can conclude that psycho-moral values are more important in rural areas facing an error possibility of 10% ($p=10$).

We notice also differences between mothers and fathers. The order of mothers' values is: emotional, psycho-moral, material, reflexive, professional and social while fathers rank values as follows: material, emotional, reflexive, psycho-moral, professional and social.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that irrespective of residency, leisure and cultural activities are actually learning activities that continue the children's school tasks and activities. This aspect should be a warning for parents and other education decision makers because overload with such tasks can have negative effects on a child's harmonious development.

Most families are oriented towards intellectual activities (51,5%), followed by families with social-religious orientations (18,8%), lucrative activities (11,9%) and cultural-sport activities (10,8%). We have also families with equal scores for at least two categories: we have called them families equally oriented towards more activities" (6,5%).

We observe the orientation towards different activities in rural area families: most families are oriented towards lucrative activities (41,4%) followed by families with social-religious activities (23,5%), intellectual activities (17,3%) and audio-visual consumption activities (8,5%). The lowest percentage refers to families oriented towards cultural-sport activities, i.e. 0,8%. We identify also in rural areas, families oriented towards "several types of activities" (8,5%). Another finding in our research on cultural consumption suggested by parents to children refers to time spend with the family. We have observed that most of it is used for homework, meals and entertainment. Most frequently, parents suggest activities such as: reading books (mostly fairy tales, stories but there are also families that suggest encyclopaedias, religious books; other literary genres are very rare), learning a foreign language, attend religious activities, going on trips and additional learning. Parents mostly get involved in activities such as: homework, reading, religious activities and trips. Children mostly regard reading as mandatory and not free-willing activities. Therefore, they don't develop their affinity for reading. I consider that parents should support their children in developing their affinity for reading by enhancing the understanding of the text through prediction strategies, questions and summaries.

In this context we have considered relevant not only what is considered important for children, but also what parents offer their children in terms of developing positive attitudes towards reading. In this perspective, only 38,9 % of families from our sample offer a wide variety of home reading materials (magazines, newspapers, illustrated books, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, exercise books and other reference materials). Only 8,5 % of parents involve children in the acquisition and selection of reading materials according to their interests. An insignificant percentage of 0,3% have accustomed their children with the library and the activities offered by the local library.

A high percentage (67,8 %) of questioned families state that they frequently read with and for their children or guide their independent reading abilities. Pleasant family moments can be created while reading a book when each member reads a paragraph. This activity can be continued with discussions on reading materials, literary and inferential questions, as well as a conversation about the content of the story. Unfortunately, few families organize such activities (3,4 %) which have a positive impact on the attitude towards reading and the development of abilities for cognitive understanding and text exploration. They can also transfer information considered relevant for

life and the improvement of interrelating among family members.

The very low percentage (11,8%) of parents who state that they read for pleasure almost daily is also linked to the above mentioned situation. We notice that few children benefit from a positive example; few come to realize the importance of reading in their parents' lives and few can transfer the parents' emotions and interest for reading and also be aware of the importance of reading in their parents' lives.

A significant impact on the attitude of children towards reading can be generated by systemic appreciation and recognition of a child each time s/he decides to read something or to present information acquired through reading.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1999). *Ratiuni practice (Political reasons)*, Bucuresti, Editura Meridiane.
- Bruner, J., (1991). *La culture donne forme a l' esprit*. Paris, Retz.
- Bunescu, Gh., Negreanu, E. (coord.). (2005). *Educatia informală si mass-media (Informal education and the mass-media)*, Bucuresti, Institutul de Stiinte ale Educatiei.
- Campiche, R., Kellerhals, J. (1981) *Community Values and Societal Values in Family Exchange Coexistence or Conflict?* in *Social Compass*, Sage Publication
- Chan T. W., Goldthorpe, J. H. (2005). *Social Stratification of Cultural Consumption Across Three Domains: Music, Theatre, Dance and Cinema, and the Visual Arts*, Stanford University Press.
- Crahay, M. (2009). *Psihologia Educatiei*, Colectia: Psihologie-Psihoterapie. (p. 481). Bucuresti, Editura TREI.
- Halman, L., (1996). *Individualization and the Fragmentation of Work Values*. Evidence from the European Values Study Paper submitted to International Review of Applied Psychology. An International Review on Values and Work.
- Hatos, Adrian, (2006). *Sociologia educatiei* (Education Sociology), Iasi, Polirom.
- Hynes, A., (2008), *Global Trend in Culture, Infrastructure, and Values in The Futurist*. World Future Society
- Galinsky, E. (1981). *Between generations: The six stages of parenthood*. (p. 178). New York: Times Books.
- Malita, M. (1998). *Zece mii de culturi, o singură civilizatie (Ten thousand cultures, one civilization)*, (p. 37). Bucuresti, Editura Nemira.
- McCarty, J. A., and Shrum, L. J. (2000). *The measurement of personal values in survey research: A test of alternative rating procedures*. (pp. 271/298). *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64(3).
- McCarthy, S. J., & Moje, E. B. (2002). *Identity matters*. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(2), 228-238.
- Stahl, H.P. (2002). *Familia si scoala. Contributii la sociologia educatiei (Family and school. ontribution sto education sociology)*, Bucuresti, Editura Paideia.
- Virtanen, T. (2005). *Dimensions of Taste for Cultural Consumption– An Exemplar of Constructing a Taste Pattern* in The 7th ESA Conference, Research Network "Sociology of Consumption".
- Voicu, B., Voicu, M. (coord.) (2007). *Valori ale românilor 1993 – 2006 (Values of Romanians 1993-2006)*, (pp. 206, 207). Iasi, Institutul European.