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**DETERMINANTS AND DILEMMAS IMPACTING
THE COOPERATION OF FAMILY AND SCHOOL IN
CONVEYING COMMUNITY VALUES FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF THE LITERARY OUTPUT
OF TERESA ŚLIWIŃSKA, A TEACHER FROM
POZNAŃ. BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH**

INTRODUCTION

The biography of Teresa Śliwińska can be divided into three stages: growing up to adulthood, professional work, and retirement. If we consider the “social construct of the course of life,” we can distinguish three social roles that are characteristic of the industrial society: a family member, a working group and the roles performed in leisure time. They are the result and basis for life decisions, and evaluation of the life pattern, thus constituting the process of the implementation of the course of life (Hajduk, 1996, pp. 42-45). This paper shall focus on the middle stage – the professional life of the teacher from Poznań.

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THE SUBJECT AND PROCEDURE OF RESEARCH

The subject of this study are the relationships of school and home environments as they are showing and teaching children about community values, selected from Teresa Śliwińska's publications. The theoretical basis, which however is not elaborated on in the paper, has been found in the abundant multidisciplinary literature, with focus on pedagogical texts dedicated to describing values, their definitions, and divisions, and introduction in the world of values (Olbrycht, 2000; Torowska, 2008). For the purposes of this study, the most appropriate division would be into a community (collectivist) and personal (individualist) values (Żuk, 2016, s. 104; Michałowska, 2013; Czerniawska, 2010; Reykowski, 1992). In regard to methodology, I will use pedagogical and sociological literature on biography and biography research (Lalak, 2010; Hajduk, 1996; Drózka, 2002).

The research material collected includes publications of Teresa Śliwińska, the content of which has been analyzed in terms of introducing pupils to the world of values and developing their relations with parents and teachers. I considered material published throughout her life, between 1965-2012, and this included over 40 publications (some of them being reprints), among which I found relevant texts on introducing into the world of community values, in total 13 items have been taken into account (cf. quoted primary sources). The collected research material was ordered according to selected criteria.

TERESA ŚLIWIŃSKA (1935-2015) – LIFE AND PEDAGOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTPUT

Teresa Śliwińska was born in 1935 in Poznań. There, she spent the times of German occupation with her parents in a tenement that has been miraculously saved. After the war, she stayed in Poznań. As soon as she graduated from pedagogical secondary school at the age of 18 she became a teacher. She graduated from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań with a Master's degree in history. She got married and gave birth to a son, Peter. Between 1965 and 1981 she worked in institutions which professionally trained elementary education teachers. She was constantly developing her qualifications. In 1968 she joined the Freinet Movement, animating and training how to introduce the teaching and educating technique of Célestin Freinet into the everyday life of schools in Wielkopolska. She thus participated in the meetings of animators, workshops, and conferences as well as in international ICEM congresses in France: Aix en Provence (1973), Clermont Ferrand (1976), Nantes (1978) and in Grenoble (1981). She was active during the RIDEF in Płock (1976). A number of her articles on the subject of Freinet education come from this period.

After the political transformation, she left the Freinet movement, which no longer met her expectations. Together with teachers and parents she was actively involved in the formation of a charter school and for almost 10 years (1989-1998) she was the headmistress of St. Urszula Ledóchowska Primary Charter School No. 1 in Poznań, established with the combined effort of the founders. At the same time, for a number of years, she taught classes in the methodology of elementary teaching instructing courses for teachers and students at the Faculty of the Theological University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań.

Throughout her professional life she had been searching for a way to approach a child, the evidence of which is a book published in 1990 under the same title (Śliwińska, 1990), showing many examples of problematic school situations and attempts to solve them. She co-authored a volume of short stories (Śliwińska, Śliwiński, 2000) with her son, which not only proved that she is a great observer, but also a master of the short literary form, which also applies to her son. She also selected and prepared for print an anthology of patriotic poetry *Mysłąc – Ojczyzna (Thinking – Homeland)*, published in 2003 by Bonami. In 2009, the same publishing house printed a booklet for children *Okupacyjna codzienność Tereni (The everyday life of Terenia under occupation)*.

In 2005 she stopped to be acting professionally involved. Despite the fact that she was retired and in poor health, Teresa Śliwińska engaged in helping children suffering from poverty, trying to establish relationships with their parents. She wanted to be useful. Śliwińska died in 2015.

The sources used to determine facts of Teresa Śliwińska's life were as follows: 1) the biography from the archives of the Polish Association of Célestin Freinet Pedagogy Animators; then 2) her books and articles in the specialist press and school newspapers; and 3) interviews with her son, Fr. Piotr Jordan Śliwiński.

The professional life of Teresa Śliwińska can be divided into two stages. The first stage covered her young years, which were spent in the People's Republic of Poland, so the consequence was secular upbringing at school, and the world of values was passed on during regular classes. In the studies she prepared in that period we find content related to respecting parents, other people, work; becoming familiar with the social and natural environment also by using the Freinet pedagogy.

The second stage starts after the political transformation when Śliwińska can go forward with her plans and realize the values she believes in. She becomes the headmistress of the school, which increases her chances of self-fulfillment and enables her to have an impact on the formation of the school community and the values she respects. This second, mature stage offers greater opportunities for work with favorable social and legal conditions. The 1990s. the 20th century is a time of pedagogical creativity, approval of innovation, a period of enthusiasm, suppressed in later years by bureaucracy and subjecting education to current politics.

HOW TERESA ŚLIWIŃSKA SAW THE ROLE OF PARENTS AT A SCHOOL

T. Śliwińska invested much work to create the class and then school community convinced that it is gravely important for parents and teachers to share the same pedagogical course of education. She wrote: "I did not conduct my searches and struggles alone. The most important allies of the teacher-educator are the parents, an agreeable and cheerful family environment of the child providing them with a sense of security. I didn't always succeed in working with the parents. However, I did not give up. I sought this cooperation for the benefit of the child" (Śliwińska, 1990, p. 76).

On the pages of *Przewodnik katolicki* (Śliwińska, 1993, p. 5) she wrote the following in 1994: "We, the teachers, dream that the parents of our pupils will also apply the positive pedagogy methods at home, that they will love their children just for the fact of their existence, for themselves, and not – conditionally – only if they fulfill their parental aspirations. We want there to be no discord between the educational influence, we need a clear system of values that we want to instill in children. The school-home-school dialogue continues [...]."

In the school guide for parents *Razem możeMY więcej* (*Together WE can do more*) (Śliwińska, 1993/94, p. 5), issue 10 of 1993/94, the author, in turn, pointed to the importance of the bond between the school and home environment: "The two environments are complementary and should not be separated. Otherwise, there are tensions, rivalries and even conflicts." In the same issue we find an assertion expressed by one of the mothers, corresponding to the statement of the headmistress, who points out that positive atmosphere is also crucial for effective teaching (and the communication of values): "It seems, however, that the atmosphere that accompanies it is no less important than the process of learning itself. When a school becomes a second home, a home full of warmth and trust, everything becomes simpler. Even if something does not go right, it's not that terrible." She also considers the question, which is of interest to us: "I would like home and all the elements related to it to be important in the life of the children. In our adult life, we often have too little time and we sometimes forget about traditions, which do give us so much joy and make our everyday life more colorful. This school reminds us of this."

Other parents see and emphasize the educational atmosphere of the school: "The atmosphere of the school is an educational goal which the institution has decided to pursue and which it is faithful to. Faithful to the principles that our parents have passed on to us and which we try to instill in our children. We are supported in this by the pursuits of educators. [...] The mass media seem to overlook the Christian upbringing in the spirit of love of God and neighbor, in the spirit of love of our homeland – the fundamentals so important for us. Our children understand these values more and more and they increasingly become a part of their current lives. They live by them" (Śliwińska, 1993/94, p. 7). These words prove that the headmistress, Teresa Śliwińska nurtured the community of values shared by parents and teachers.

But there is a darker side to these efforts, especially in district schools, where Teresa Śliwińska worked during her young years and where there were plenty of pupils lacking support at home: “I owe my own growth to these children, often unwanted in the family home, rejected by peers, the children of the streets – dirty and neglected. They were the reason I did not subside in development and education so that I could reach out to them. But I was not always able to (especially in the first years of work)” (Śliwińska, 1990, p. 4).

In her works, Śliwińska (1990, pp. 8, 26, 50, 53, 57, 60, 67-68, 71) also shows examples of individual contacts with parents, presents how the problems of children were solved together, offers ideas on how to establish relationships and build mutual trust.

The framework outlined here points to the multiplicity and diversity of objectives and forms of contact between parents and teachers, which expects – mainly the teachers – to be patient, tactful, kind and skilled in dialogue.

COMMUNITY VALUES IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATING PUPILS TOGETHER BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS. SELECTED EXAMPLES

RELIGIOUS VALUES

Religious values viewed in a pedagogical sense were identified by Teresa Śliwińska with formulating religious life (e.g. daily prayer at school), Christian personalism (treating your neighbor with love, in a dialogic way) as well as with cultivating holiday traditions and learning about the life of the school patroness, St. Urszula Ledóchowska.

This area of cultural communication at school was only possible after 1989 after the political transformation and active believers felt the inner need to guard the values they respected. The reflections on these subjects can be found in one of the short literary pieces dedicated by the author to St. Francis. “In 1989 I started teaching a group of six-year-old children and together with their parents I arranged a rented room so that it resembled a real classroom as much as possible. Above the blackboard, we hang the national emblem – an eagle wearing a crown, and a cross above it. I could not conceal my joy in the daily practice before and after class” (Śliwińska, 2000, p. 34). The children were, of course, interested why she was experiencing this joy, so the teacher told them about the post-war times when the communists gave orders to remove crosses from schools and answered curious students’ inquiries about who prohibited praying and why. In this way, the new classroom and the fact that the cross was hanging on the wall gained its historical justification and roots and became part of the cultural message began by the parents gathered in the Educational

Association (STO) and the teacher. And contemporary facts, supported by a story, have become a form of this message. The Charter Primary School No. 1 in Poznań has become a kind of construction site on which a child-friendly institution with Catholic foundations and goals was being built. The school was growing, every year there were more pupils and parents interested in joining the institution. Parents, who enrolled their children in the school held its Catholic aspect in high regard. "We, the parents expected the school which has been chosen by us to have a clearly pro-Catholic character. We believe that these values are crucial for the development of young people, because, after all, what youth is used to... So far we have not been disappointed (Śliwińska, 1993/94, p. 6).

School pilgrimages were also a form of passing on the values of cultural heritage and religious education. Śliwińska writes: "We very much wanted the celebration of the anniversary [the anniversary of First Communion – own footnote] contributed to the friendship with Jesus growing even stronger for children and their families. With the help of wonderful, committed parents, we managed to organize a pilgrimage of third-graders to the Holy Mountain in Gostyń. The pilgrimage itself was preceded by a period of preparations (during the lessons of religion, Polish, visual arts, music, at home, and in the church)" (Śliwińska, 1993, p. 6).

At some other point, she recalls the ceremony of dedicating the school banner, designed by one of the mothers. A school built with such love and effort, formulating own school culture becomes itself a cultural value and heritage for future generations (Śliwińska, 1993, p. 5).

A significant element of the school's operation and at the same time a form of evaluation was speaking to alumni, first graduates of the school. The Headmistress does not conceal any critical voices from the school community, although they strike at the very essence of school philosophy and its foundation: the Catholic upbringing/education. "Thank you for trusting me. I truly appreciate it. Your statements are sincere and brave. Unsparingly honest" (Śliwińska, 1997, p. 6). The Headmistress deals with various aspects of criticism, including views on religious education and understanding of tolerance. She thus asks: "Why can't I confess my faith at school, admire the Patroness of the school and follow her example? Am I harming anyone with this? Am I disrespecting someone's beliefs and views? Tolerance does not mean we agree to everything, we agree to accept evil. Notice how much the word tolerance and meaning of this word are abused nowadays" (Śliwińska, 1997, p. 7). The former pupils, however, criticize: "Unfortunately, I also have a negative opinion on the Catholicism of our school. I think that the values «professed» are wonderful, but I think that they are taught to pupils in the wrong way. Different opinions on faith are not respected, the problems are not being solved in the idea of Christian spirit and tolerance. I would like to see the pupils' opinion based on real-life views being taken into account more in the future. In my opinion, for example, the retreats for older children should not be combined with the ones for younger classes, because the older pupils do not learn anything valuable there and become even more convinced that it all makes no sense" (Ewa Poniecka, in Śliwińska, 1997, p. 12).

Another pupil speaks about the following issues: “The school is very good, but there are some drawbacks. The negative aspects about the school include the fact that the headmistress manages the school without taking into account the opinion of the pupils, who are by far the majority in relation to the staff and teachers [...] Definitely, too much attention is paid to talking about our patroness. [...] Contrary to what one may expect, I like the approach to religion, but often there is too much pressure regarding it. Everyone has the right to his or her own opinion!” (Antek Roszak, in Śliwińska, 1997, p. 12). It appears to have been very difficult at that time to create an institution that respects religious values. The clear-cut ideas on how to implement such education, how to train teachers and gain experience were simply missing at the beginning of the 1990s.

Nevertheless, Teresa Śliwińska spoke about Catholic schools in 2003 (Śliwińska, 2003, pp. 69-72). She saw the need to establish them as a remedy for the disturbing social and moral occurrences related to the dubious home upbringing not instructing children on how to distinguish between good and evil. The sources of relativism are connected with the secularization of values, the individualization of religion, the emergence of new customs. “Thus, it is necessary to establish various types of secular Catholic schools, which will provide pupils with a sense of security, belonging and love. By fostering dialogue with the parents, they will seek support for their work” (Śliwińska, 2003, p. 71).

FAMILY VALUES

Family values could be communicated directly during school celebrations taking place on mother’s, father’s, grandmother’s and grandfather’s days (Śliwińska, 1979, 1984) teaching the feeling of love and respect, even if those exact names are not used. Moreover, they are passed on during personal meetings with parents, individual or group ones, or are reached indirectly through published articles, columns, and books, which makes this a multi-stage process. T. Śliwińska (2016, p. 28) writes in one of the columns in the parish magazine: “The parents of Basia, a fourth-grade student, came to see me. They are young, responsible people and they want to raise their children in the best possible way. They asked how they can meet the needs of the child so that it was developing properly. I answered immediately: – Love her, of course! Show her true love. They looked at me with amazement.”

The author also speaks a little about setting a good example for children. As a teacher, she felt offended when she saw that parents let a child wear a T-shirt saying: “School is like a toilet. I don’t want to go there, but I have to.” This text depreciates school and teachers as well as the school community, to which the parents also belong. Is this dubious “joke” a good example for pupils to follow? – the author asks.

Which group of values does the dialogue belong to? It is a value, and at the same time demonstrates these values. I have decided that it is a cultural heritage, and thus

has a broader scope than the family itself, including politics, intergenerational relations, relations with material culture, with the environment and relations between educational environments. The school, however, embraces its narrower, community scope. In one of her columns, Śliwińska recalls that with one of her classes she experienced establishing relationships with the pupils and parents during one year. "I regularly met the parents of my pupils. However, they did not want to help me build a class community, they were hermeneutical and satisfied with their children, and the source of educational difficulties was deemed to come from the outside. I was very hurt by the lack of cooperation with the parents, their self-satisfaction and lack of sincerity. [...] One of the class meetings helped me to change the attitude of the parents" (Śliwińska, 2016, p. 42). At this meeting, the author read aloud an interesting text on children (Canfield, Hansen, 1995), which caused the "bursting of the dam" and the dialogue was finally established. We can assume that sincerity and dialogue is always a value in interpersonal relations between teachers and parents and, as a result, adults, and children.

PATRIOTIC VALUES

Disseminating cultural values calls for proper tools. And one of these tools includes reading, both an educational and cultural value. Śliwińska in her column *Czytanie* describes the situation of an altar boy who wanted to read during a mass, but the priest made this task dependent on the boy improving his reading comprehension skills. Reading seems a boring task to the boy, but his mother, nevertheless, encourages him to continue. Śliwińska writes (2016, pp. 47-48): "Even with the best intentions of the teacher, the school is not able to spend so much time on reading exercise. We need the help of parents and guardians. [...] Reading proficiency means fluent, individual and conscious reading at proper speed, which enables the reader and listener to grasp not only the individual words which have been read smoothly and understood fluently, but also to comprehend the logical meaning of the whole sentence." Thus, the essence of reading, continually developed by the efforts of teachers and parents, does not only mean enabling the child to succeed in education, but also to actively participate in learning and experiencing cultural values, not only the holy service, but the entire literary, historical and civilizational heritage, which is acquired gradually in accordance with their age.

One of the mothers stresses her delight: "It is with great satisfaction that I see the children learn the currently unfashionable patriotism [...], positivist values, and see that the traditional rituals are observed and celebrated at school. [...] Children and parents become more aware of their principal community by participating in Nativity plays or other structuring activities" (Śliwińska, 2016, p. 7).

In the annual and semi-annual work plans prepared by Śliwińska during the times of the People's Republic of Poland, we find a lot of narratives devoted to patriot-

ic issues, outstanding figures, cultural monuments, anniversaries (Śliwińska 1979, 1984). We can assume that these subjects were introduced during the lessons with the participation of parents.

The effect of using literary texts in educational work, a summary of many years of teaching, was included in a collection of patriotic poetry published in 2003: *Mysłac – Ojczyzna (Thinking – Homeland)*, selected and prepared by Teresa Śliwińska.

DETERMINANTS AND DILEMMAS IMPACTING THE COOPERATION OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN CONVEYING COMMUNITY VALUES

Based on the studied materials, we can see that the essence of the efficient parent-teacher communication lies in the area of conveying community values, which requires both parties to have a similar world of values, impulses based on historical reality, the same educational goals and an agreement on how to achieve them.

Moreover, it appears that such cooperation is dynamic, which means reviving efforts every year, sometimes even starting from the beginning and verifying goals, which also transform over time.

However, dilemmas arise when the parent-teacher team is just starting to cooperate and trust as well as knowledge about mutual expectations is still unknown. Moreover, some issues may also occur, when the expectations are not the same, or there is a “new” group of parents, seeing things differently.

The dilemmas also arise when the parents and teachers do not follow the same course in the education of the children, a very important aspect Śliwińska sought to maintain, or the selected methods of proceeding are inadequate to the needs of students (“old-fashioned” religious education).

Parental anxiety also relates to the bond between the school and its surroundings. One of the couples speaks about their fears as follows: “How will our children react when they end up in high school, facing aggression and not cooperation? [...] What sometimes worries us at school is the lack of discipline. Raising with love is beautiful, but sometimes the teacher must be more potent. Impudence, disregard for teachers, constant disruption of lessons should be punished more severely. Not only pupils but also their parents should be aware of the consequences” (Śliwińska, 1993/94, p. 14).

The building of the community is also accompanied by other problems. The vice-president of the association, Anna Kmiecik (Śliwińska, 1993/94, p. 3) speaks about the subject of parents’ work at school, as set out in the principles of the association. Unfortunately, we are not always efficient in enforcing the school work participation of a certain group of parents. The work is based on volunteering, thus usually the same parents are involved with the ongoing tasks. Regrettable, the Chair takes part of the blame for allegedly poorly organized work. She recommends parents

sign up voluntarily to the groups of their choice. Passing on the values – as we can comment on this situation – is also determined by this daily arrangement of school life and common responsibilities arising from the tasks assumed.

The fact that the school newspaper was handed over to the parents also resulted at the end of its publication. But the committed Śliwińska founded another paper – *W naszej szkole (At our school)* (Śliwińska, 1996).

However, the main determinant impacting the process of passing on community values, as the author's publications indicate, is constant vigilance and sensitivity, observation and dialogue, as well as the physical presence of the teacher at moments of importance for parents and pupils. Moreover, judging by the research material collected, one can see that religious education is a challenge in contemporary times, a challenge difficult to meet due to the requirements expected to fulfill. The liberal world, mass culture and uncontrolled access to information and media, offering students – as they understand it – simple entertainment, freedom of choice and life without compulsion and duty, becomes more attractive to them than the traditional ways and a list of values.

CONCLUSIONS

Teresa Śliwińska was working on the development of relationships with parents in two experiment groups, functioning in two different political systems, and she approached it from two different positions: teacher's and headmistress' of the school. After the political transformation, previous experiences may have resulted in the will to build and manage a school in a well-conceived manner for almost a decade. This is all the more to be respected as research shows that after the period of transformation, when the situation called for the promotion of values, the teachers were very concerned, but with time, the world of values yielded to the existential anxiety and disruption of the sense of social security (Dróżka, 2016, p. 71). Nevertheless, Teresa Śliwińska followed her beliefs and continued to be active.

Building a community of parents and teachers is not a simple matter even in a charter school, founded together with the parents. Being the headmistress of this school, Teresa Śliwińska, was patiently launching new platforms for dialogue, such as school newspapers, opportunities for individual and group consultations during gatherings, meetings and school celebrations, as well as asking questions as to why evaluation questionnaires were used, requesting written statements, the content of which was then made public, even if they expressed criticism, constantly resuming the effort to talk, cater to the needs of the school community, and consistently implementing the plan to create a Catholic school that would make the ideas of St. Ursula and St. John Bosco come true. These forty years show how much the passing on of values depends on the conditions from the outside, which can fuel enthusi-

asm and motivation, but also suppress and marginalize it. However, the research material provides evidence that T. Śliwińska continued throughout her life to be an active educator, and an optimistic teacher developing pedagogical work in practice as well as literary sense. Thus, we can believe, that this hard-working and creative teacher did succeed in realizing her professional life project despite political and existential constraints.

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DETERMINANTS AND DILEMMAS IMPACTING THE COOPERATION OF FAMILY AND SCHOOL IN CONVEYING COMMUNITY VALUES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LITERARY OUTPUT OF TERESA ŚLIWIŃSKA, A TEACHER FROM POZNAŃ. BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Keywords: relations, dilemmas, passing on values, family environment, school environment

Abstract: Researching biography does not only mean exploring the course and trajectory of human life but also understanding people's life projects, see goals that have been achieved or abandoned and the legacy if there remains any. The article presents one of the areas of pedagogical activity of Teresa Śliwińska: a teacher, headmistress, methodological advisor and community activist, which is a concern for building a school community. The subject of our paper in view of T. Śliwińska's literary output is the selected examples on passing on commu-

nity (collective) values to students, such as religious, family and patriotic values by teachers and parents together. We have not only analyzed values themselves, but also the conditions and dilemmas accompanying the process of passing on the values and the cooperation of the school and home environments.

UWARUNKOWANIA I DYLEMATY WSPÓŁPRACY RODZINY I SZKOŁY W PRZEKAZYWANIU UCZNIOM WARTOŚCI WSPÓLNOTOWYCH W ŚWIETLE PISARSTWA POZNAŃSKIEJ NAUCZYCIELKI TERESY ŚLIWIŃSKIEJ. BADANIA BIOGRAFICZNE

Słowa kluczowe: relacje, dylematy, przekaz wartości, środowisko rodzinne, środowisko szkolne

Streszczenie: Badanie biografii to nie tylko poznawanie przebiegu i trajektorii życia człowieka, ale też poznanie projektu jego życia, osiągniętych lub porzuconych celów, spuścizny, jeśli ją po sobie zostawił. Artykuł przedstawia jeden z obszarów działalności pedagogicznej Teresy Śliwińskiej – nauczycielki, dyrektorki szkoły, doradcy metodycznego i działaczki społecznej – jakim jest troska o budowanie szkolnej wspólnoty. Przedmiotem rozważań w świetle pisarstwa Teresy Śliwińskiej są tu wybrane przykłady przekazywania uczniom wartości wspólnotowych (kolektywistycznych), jakimi są wartości religijne, rodzinne i patriotyczne, przez nauczycieli wspólnie z rodzicami. Uwaga została poświęcona nie tylko samym wartościom, ale też uwarunkowaniom i dylematom towarzyszącym przekazowi wartości oraz współpracy środowiska szkolnego i domowego.