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The value of work in the perspective of prospective and active teachers

Wartość pracy w perspektywie kandydatów do zawodu oraz nauczycieli

Introduction

The changing modern reality determines the ways humans function in various areas: personal, social, professional, and other. It certainly determines the work of many social groups, especially teachers. This results not so much from some special nature of this profession but rather stems from the importance of teachers' activities in terms of preparing young generations to function in the ever-changing present and future, and at the same time use past experiences to function in the world. Teachers experience these changes which are visible not only in the content taught, more and more innovative methods (of both teaching and learning) applied, but also in the way they understand their work, its value and meaning, and its developmental, social or economic consequences. The role of teachers is to the world of that what changing and

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dynamic but at the same time, rooted in universal human values. In such a dynamic world, the consequences which are directly felt by teachers as those who deal with these experiences and teach others how to deal with them, the questions arise regarding the value teachers assign to their work which is both "the way of life and a form of social co-existence" (Sulima, 2015, p. 122). The value assigned to work results in actions, commitment, attitudes, and the quality of results. According to Roch Sulima, "systems and noble people are strong foundations which are of value on their own (...). The condition of the society and institutions, the quality of social life, as well as interpersonal and family relations depend on which values are considered fundamental" (Bogunia-Borkowska, 2015, p. 20). Work is one the most important of these values. S.M. Kwiatkowski emphasises that it should be understood as a "universal value - the point of reference to other values" (2007, p. 13). Beata Jakimiuk presents similar opinion. She thinks that work is always strongly connected with values. "They determine all choices and actions of a person. Values form an ordered system within which the individual recognises, adopts, and realises them in professional work. It can be referred to the values one can realise by working" (Jakimiuk, 2019, p. 68) and to expectations towards this work.

The paper focuses on the values assigned to work by prospective teachers who begin and finish a complete cycle of professional training and active teachers who have been working for 15 years or more. The goal of the study was to explore and identify what values do studying and working individuals assign to work, and to present the characteristics showing how do they understand these values.

The value of work in theory

For the purpose of this article, rather than present classic definitions of values and value systems, thinking about work as a value in the changing world is outlined. It is this thinking that has set the direction of the research project presented herein, including the methods of analysis and interpretation of the results. Therefore, lack of references to the rich axiological foundations is not a sign of ignorance but only an approach determined by the purpose of the paper and the goal of the study presented. When it comes to understanding values by the teachers, the opinion of Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak is considered important as her approach to work is perfectly aligned with the dynamics of social transformations and the way they are perceived, as well as

reflection and action. She thinks that "work is a force, an agent of liberation, self-realisation and the source of experiencing subjectivity. It is a factor of civilisational progress and the source of educational initiatives. However, it is not that easy in the conditions of dynamic change, especially as new forms and content of work are created and emerging" (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2019, p. 273). In terms of the teaching profession, this perspective locates teachers in their actions and understanding related to themselves, the world and themselves in the occupational and social space, as well as the meaning and values assigned to these elements. Considering the assumptions made by M. Czerepaniak-Walczak in the light of Mills' theory, we can conclude that work quality and productivity will depend on understanding its nature. Thus, the way it is perceived by teachers does, indeed, matter: whether it is a necessity or a source of fulfilment. Work as a necessity means treating it as something externally imposed, forced. It does not facilitate full development or professional satisfaction. Perceived this way, work does not bring any positive experience, perhaps except for financial gratification. Consequently, it does not have the status of valuable activity in socio-emotional, spiritual self-development and other areas. It is accompanied by inner discipline, often with the lack of satisfaction. At the other extreme is work understood as fulfilment. It is a source of self-realisation, a path to personal development, passion thanks to which one can live with dignity and add value to life (Mills 1969, p. 359). A particular attitude towards work gives it a certain status and value (positive or negative). Thanks to it, work can be ranked higher than other values because it is not only a motivator to action (Rokeach 1973, Covey 1992, Peterson & Seligman 2004), but also a value in itself, the basic component of the teacher's value system, setting the general direction of efforts and activities and influencing one's lifestyle and daily decisions. The value assigned by the teacher to work and other activities is "the material of inner life, (...) the light of the deepest needs, references, ambitions and desires" (Popielski 1996, p. 59). It is also "the criterion for all decisions for none of them can be made without referring to values" (Jakimiuk, 2019, p. 73). This is particularly important in teachers' profession due to the unique nature of this work and social responsibility that comes with it. According to Beata Jakimiuk, the value given to the work performed is also linked to experiencing "satisfaction and happiness from performing occupational tasks, which has significant meaning for the functioning not only in the workplace, but also in private life, especially when there are conditions favouring the work-life balance" (2019, p. 79). This perspective allows us to understand the realisation of the value of work in the life of teachers because its high status in the value hierarchy helps us move from the level of ideas to operative action according to the standards and rules set, the attitude of commitment and personal expectations, as well as motivation to act in the learning environment which is unique and full of new challenges (the effect of social change and changing school situations).

In pedeutology, studies examining the understanding of work as a value were performed in 1989/1990 and 2014/2015 by Wanda Dróżka (2017, p. 116-119). The first of the above studies indicates that in the 1990s teachers viewed their work not only in purely professional categories but the majority of them thought that they had a cultural mission in times when spiritual and moral values were at stake. This belief was rooted in the transformations that took place after the year 1989. Teachers saw the value of their work in the fact that in the situation of rejecting the previous ideology, their role was to shape the conscience and "morale of the young generation" (Dróżka, 2017, p. 112), model patriotism, and prepare the young generation for "working and living in the united Europe and civilisation of the 21st century" (Dróżka, 2017, p. 112). The second study shows that teachers see the main value of their work in the content and results ("diligence in performing one's duties, professionalism, educating open, wise, and healthy generations who can change the world for the better, transfer of knowledge which is understandable, teaching the principles of culture of presence and action, promoting patriotic attitudes" (Dróżka, 2017, p. 116-117). Thus, teachers value the fact that their work is connected with the process of educating and upbringing young generations but they also appreciate self-development and professionalism (according to social expectations towards this profession). They try to meet their basic needs through their work which increases the value they assign to their professional activities. For them, work is a value because through it, in it and thanks to it they have: the possibility of self-fulfilment and self-improvement, the opportunities to gain knowledge, maturity and experience, deepen their self-awareness and knowledge about the world, grow emotionally, morally and spiritually (intellectual and self-creation values of work). In addition, they gain respect and recognition of others, have the sense of satisfaction and well-performed duty (the value of prestige and recognition). Thanks to work, they can also provide for their families, be financially independent, travel within the country and abroad (material value of work) (Dróżka, 2017, p. 117; see: Dróżka, Madalińska-Michalak, 2016a, 2016b). The value of work is also expressed in the formula of professional ethos of teachers. Thus, the value of the teaching profession is determined also by commitment to core values such as student welfare, "striving to be socially useful, self-education, satisfaction from work, respect, well-performed obligations towards the society and the state" (Dróżka, 2017, p. 123). Marcin Rojek obtained similar results in a group of teachers representing the oldest generation (2017, p. 126–140). In the research project presented herein, the results were analysed and interpreted using the value typology by Wanda Dróżka (2017).

Methodological assumptions

It was considered significant to understand how teachers describe and perceive the value of work. This category, described in the first part of this article in terms of theoretical thinking about work and its value, was used in author's own research into value assigned to work by prospective teachers (students of the first year of bachelor's program and the last year of master's program) and professionally active educators (with at least 15 years of experience). This research problem has been explored in pedeutology only occasionally and, actually, it can be stated that only Wanda Dróżka has investigated it before. The initial survey was conducted in October and November 2020 and 2021 among the students of three universities in Krakow. The students (prospective teachers) were asked to write an essay on: Why did I chose to study to become a teacher? For the purpose of this paper, I have analysed 103 essays of students in the teacher education course from an artistic university and a paedagogical university in Krakow (62 written by the students at the end of their education and 41 by the student who have just begun studies). In order to investigate the research problem among the professionally active teachers, I have analysed the content of 93 diaries submitted to a competition (two editions: first - 41 diaries, second – 52 diaries) titled "One month of a teacher's life" (Łukasik, 2011, 2016a, 2016b). The choice of varied narrative sources (essays, diaries), contributed to capturing both the dominant categories within the value of teachers' work, but also made it possible to explore their dynamics of change and differences, emerging with: teachers' age, work seniority and social changes over several years.

The essays and diaries were analysed in order to answer the following question: What values are assigned to work by prospective and professionally active teachers? Through the content analysis during the first reading, I identified the prevailing notions which referred to the five main categories of values assigned to work by teachers mentioned in Wanda Dróżka's research.

Sampling did not mean "selection of cases and materials but making choices within the cases and materials" (Flick, 2010, p. 67). It should also be noted that the qualitative approach allows to refer the results to the respondents only, so there were no social trends identified.

Also, due to volume limitations, the respondents' statements and the detailed descriptions of the categories identified will not be provided herein. Only indications identified during the analysis will be presented.

Value assigned to work of teachers in the light of results of original research

Based on the analysis of the content of essays and diaries, in reference to the value categories introduced by W. Dróżka (content of work and its results; intellectual and self-creation; prestige and recognition; material; work ethos), I have identified notions associated with these categories in the perspective of important time categories: preparation for professional work (the value of work after choosing the teaching program in the first year of university and in the two final years of studies) and work experience (the value during the first years of work, in the period of the highest efficiency and after 15 years when other professional and life experiences have been gained - including having own adult children – and have influenced the value assigned to work). The decision to build the sample of groups with different mindsets, attitudes towards work and understanding thereof was motivated by experiences of working in different contexts: from ideal, imagined profession, through actual experiences and meanings assigned to them from the perspective of my own experiences and dynamic changes. The data is presented in Table 1. Given the above mentioned criteria, I believe that the study results presented herein are significant in the context of teacher training, improvement and selfeducation as well as self-determination and re-evaluation of own future and understanding of different aspects of work and personal life in the real and relevant, though dynamically changing conditions.

Table 1 Value assigned to work by prospective and active teachers

Further years of work (after 15 years)	and accomplishment a teacher of students: contests, voluntary activity, social, cultural and educational initiatives etc. socius on quality of students' achievements etcherocus on quality of students' achievements etcherocus on quality of etcherocus outcomes are the confirmation of effective teaching
First years of work (up to Further years of work 15 years) (after 15 years)	- own achievements and accomplishment of students: contests, voluntary activity, social, cultural and educational initiatives etc focus on quality of students' achievements
4th and 5th year of university (master's program)	- supporting young people's creativity and development - creativity in work with students - opportunity for constant self-improvement of students - effective teaching and upbringing - transfer of knowledge using effective methods students' achievements - small successes in work with students - joy of students - joy of students - joy of students - positive relations with students
1st year of university (bachelor's program)	- shaping young minds - transfer of knowledge - students' successes and achievements - classes led in interesting manner - students make me feel that what I do makes sense - fair evaluation - consistency in work with students with students - discovering and developing students' talents - showing students new opportunities for self- improvement - achieving excellent results by students - achieving excellent
Values assigned to work	Content and results of work

- personal development - opportunities for lifelong, complex	on and fulfilment - self-awareness and onal development - education - developing teaching ong, complex competencies	- chance to confront university knowledge with practice and noticing areas which	 source of occupational and personal identity source of life inspiration impulse for development and
development - overcoming challenges - lack of routine, monotony	 desire to learn about the work of a teacher opportunities for professional 	need improvement - theory applied in practice allows to fill knowledge gaps	activity - motivation to invest in lifelong learning - source of motivation to
 consistency in self- improvement efforts creativity and opportunities 	development - chance to create the world through work - lifelong learning, self-	- development of different skills and self - opportunity to create educational reality	develop passions and hobbies
	education and self improvement - deepening one's psychological and paedagogical expertise		
students - students' trust and respect - students' gratitude - students thankful for one's work - working with other people - social responsibility - parents' gratitude - parents' gratitude - parents thankful for		- getting employed is the greatest value (life success) - desire for positive recognition (school management, other teachers, parents, students) - desire to show strengths in order to gain acceptance, recognition and prolong the contract for	- source of high status - source of satisfaction and self-realisation in a profes- sional - sense of self-worth - being important for students - sense of success

economic security - conomic stability - creative development provide for one's family - credication to work - calling - calling - creative development or creative development of guaranteed resources to provide for one's family - calling - creative development of creative development or stability - creative development of creative development of performing work of performing music in next generations - calling - creative development of creative development of performing work of performing music in next generations - catharance despite low - catharance despite low - creative development of creative development of performing music in next generations - catharance despite low - creative development of creative of professional and in person next generations - catharance despite low - creative development of creative development of performing music in next generations - creative development of creative development of previous generations - creative development of creative development of previous generations - creative development of creative development of previous generations - stepping beyond creations - stepping beyond creations - stepping beyond creations - stepping beyond creations - creative development of creative developments of previous generations - creative development of creative development of creative development of previous generations - creative development of creative de		 regular salary (regular income) 	source of incomealternative income	source of basic (minimum) income	- it guarantees regular source of income
- calling - dedication to work - dedication to work - diligence in - performing work - endurance despite low - endurance despite low - satisfaction from work - passing on values and - passing on values and - passing others in the - supply beyond - stepping beyond - stepping beyond - transforming music in - passing on values and passion - passing on values and passion - passing on to others what - supply beyond - transforming the - passing on to others what - transforming the - stepping beyond - transforming the - transforming tra	Material		 guaranteed regular income economic security stability guaranteed resources to provide for one's family 	 work guarantees employment economic stability occupational stability 	- source of financial revenue
	Могk ethos	- calling - dedication to work - diligence in performing work - endurance despite low remuneration - satisfaction from work - passing on values and role models - guiding others in the world - stepping beyond standard responsibilities	- creative development of students and the society preserving the tradition of performing music in next generations and transfer of knowledge, experience and passion to next generations bilte mission are passing on to others what I got from my teachers achievements of previous generations achievements of previous generations belying others	- source of satisfaction - source of professional fulfilment and success	- source of meaning in life (meets the need to be useful and important, worthy person) - warranty of being present in students' memories - mission - be a significant other for students - meet students' expectations or face challenges that come with the professional role - source of satisfaction - meaning in life - being needed by students - being needed by students - walues, not only knowledge - sharing one's knowledge and experience - being present in students' - meanories

Notions used by the respondents to describe the five value categories indicate few differences in the way the value of the teaching profession is perceived. During the analyses, it turned out that students graduating from university did not mention in their essays that the value of work is in prestige and recognition. The other value categories, especially work ethos and intellectual and self-creation, were present in the vast majority of texts and were the main values assigned to work, along with the focus on the content and results of work with pupils at school. It is worth pointing out that the respondents associated this last category not only with the teaching process but also with building relations with the students and motivating them to work. In terms of intellectual and self-creation values, they appreciated highly opportunities for self-improvement and development in different areas as well as ability to create the educational reality. They also emphasised the values of work resulting from its ethos, in particular, focus on mission, knowledge and culture transfer, passing on knowledge, skills and the best values on to the next generations. The lack of references to prestige and recognition may be due to the fact that respondents in this group, at this stage of training and after their initial professional experiences (internship), view teaching as mission – being called to transfer knowledge and model attitudes and to self-development, and they do not expect external recognition. Perhaps at this stage, by recognition the respondents mean their own conviction of the value and significance of their work which focuses on the development of learners, transmission of culture and presence in the learners' experience. As for being present in the students' experiences and their memories, the work ethos of the prospective teachers in their senior years of education is similar to the one revealed by the teachers who have been working more than 15 years. Teachers in this group focused most often on the work ethos in the context of mission, transmission of values. leaving a trace in the students' memory and work as the source of meaning in life (by fulfiling the need to be useful and important to others). This group of teachers identified the intellectual and self-creation values in the context of building their personal and professional identity. They also identified the values resulting from development and learning in the same way. In terms of the content and results of work, teachers focus on fulfilment through content – the transfer of knowledge in such a way so that it matters to the students, and results - meaning students satisfied with their learning outcomes. They also appreciate the values of prestige and recognition, identified as the high status

their profession gives them, satisfaction from being important to their students and sense of career success. Teachers who have been working less than 15 years determine the prestige and recognition values slightly differently. The very fact of being employed as a teacher (getting a job) indicates life success. Individuals who begin their career want to make positive impression, show their strengths to be accepted and appreciated, to get/prolong their contracts thanks to effective, diligent work and recognition from the management, other teachers, students and their parents. Strongly emphasised prestige and recognition are connected with the content and effectiveness of work. It explains the strong focus on preparing students to competitions in order to obtain success and recognition, as well as engaging them and self in voluntary or cultural and educational activities. Teachers at the beginning of their career believe that these activities will help them achieve success and recognition from others. The quality of work exemplified in the quality of students' achievements is the important aspect of the value related to content and results. The intellectual and self-creation value is visible in the development of one's skills and self by confronting theoretical knowledge (from university and other trainings) with practice, focusing on self-development and improving the educational reality. Teachers in this group are more oriented on development in terms of greater achievements and recognition rather than treating work in ethos categories. Of course, this value is also visible but it is identified mainly with satisfaction and career success. Respondents who describe the value of work in the most idealistic manner are students of the first year. The strongest are values resulting from the work content and results, described as focus on educating, upbringing and shaping the students as well as certain work standards and rules, for example, fair evaluation, consistency, breaking the work stereotypes by using non-standard teaching methods. Such approach ensures learners' successes and gives satisfaction to teachers. The intellectual and self-creation values are also extremely important. They are identified with the focus on selfimprovement, passion, deepening knowledge and overcoming the challenges of the ever-changing reality. Respondents from this group see the advantages of the teaching profession and their chances for development in this lack of stability and monotony. As for prestige and recognition, they identify these values with social recognition, responsibility for the work performed and the gratitude of students and parents. These values are also consistent with the value found in work ethos. For them, teaching means calling, mission,

dedication, diligence in performing work duties, endurance and commitment despite low wages. It can be stated that prospective teachers – students of the first year see work and its value by creating the image of themselves as teachers who carry out their mission with excellence. They are inspired by their teachers-authorities and want to change the methods experienced from those educators who were anti-authorities, thus, they perceive teaching and learners' development as the supreme value. Idealistic approach to work is a great starting point to developing the potential of the prospective students during their academic education and using their strengths, the values the assign to work, their awareness of and positive attitude towards changes. This category was emphasised only by the respondents from this group; for them, it was the advantage of the teaching profession. The others did not see themselves as that much flexible and willing to face the unknown or whatever remains beyond schemes and routine. First-year prospective teachers also assigned the least values to the financial aspect of work, treating it rather as regularly received salary. The others pointed out that work is their source of income, regular, though minimum remuneration allowing them to make a living or an alternative to other, less regular revenue.

Comparing the above presented analyses with the data obtained by Wanda Dróżka (2017) and Wanda Dróżka and Joanna Madalińska Michalak (2016a, 2016b), one can notice some similarities connected with work, regardless of the generation or age represented by the respondents. The universal values indicated by the teachers in our study and the respondents from Wanda Dróżka's research refer to the content and results (desire to provide the best possible education to young generations) as well as to self-development and overcoming self in efforts to achieve full professional competency. Work allows teachers to experience self-fulfilment and improvement (of themselves and their students), gain respect and recognition from others, feel personal and professional satisfaction or provide the minimum existence thanks to financial gratification or stable income. In terms of differences between the generations, there are some similarities with the results obtained by Rojek (2017, p. 138). This refers to the youngest group of respondents for whom self-improvement and small but regular remuneration was a value, and to the oldest respondents for whom work constitutes the meaning of life and is a value per se.

The notions of values identified during the analyses of essays and diaries are very idealistic. The respondents view their profession in terms of mission,

calling, self-realisation, self-improvement and development of others, recognition for their own accomplishments and achievements of others. This may result from the unique nature of the narratives and reflections of the authors of essays and diaries which were written voluntarily, without extra gratification (the diaries, however, were written for the contest so in this case, there was potential financial or material gratification in view). Individuals who decide to produce this type of texts are better communicators, tend to reflect more deeply on themselves and their experiences, are more self-aware, have high linguistic and writing competencies and feel the greater need to share their experiences.

Conclusions

Occupational work has great personal, social and educational significance for the respondents. It gives them sense of satisfaction and fulfilment. They are most often found in didactic or educational relationships with the students and in the meaning that prospective and active teachers find in their work (due to the sense of recognition and importance of their professional activities). This is connected with the idea revealed in the research of Wanda Dróżka. The meaning and value are found in the "work where there is a moral code; teacher has to deserve social recognition, respect and gratitude of parents and students" (Dróżka, 2018, p. 613). The latter is guaranteed by the quality of the teaching work and its value. In addition, the meaning and value of work are also expressed by the respondents in the statements about their professional identity which is exemplified in their thinking, actions and reflectiveness.

The data presented herein can be translated into solutions for teacher education or training in the area of self-development. The values assigned to work, the way it is perceived – in particular in the context of teacher-student relations – can be used to facilitate positive attitude towards work in the changing school environment and inspire inner motivation for self-improvement so that occupational activity and self-development is the source of value and dignity for future teachers. Then, they can naturally implement these activities into their work improvement through conscious lifelong learning.

Abstract: The paper focuses on the value of work from the point of view of prospective and active teachers. Referring to the emancipatory and axiological understanding of the categories of work and value of work, a study in the qualitative paradigm was conducted among 196 teachers and candidates to become teachers. The method of text analysis of essays and diaries was used to answer the following research question: What values are assigned to work by prospective and professionally active teachers? The research material was analysed regarding the category of work as understood by W. Dróżka. The purpose of it was to show similarities and differences in the values assigned to work by different age groups and students at different stages of teacher training and active teachers. These values were generated by certain professional experience or image of the work. The conclusions focus on practical solutions that may be applied to teacher education.

Keywords: teacher, work, value of work

Streszczenie: W artykule skoncentrowano się na wartości pracy w ujęciu kandydatów do zawodu nauczyciela oraz nauczycieli czynnych zawodowo. Odnosząc się do emancypacyjnego i aksjologicznego rozumienia kategorii praca oraz wartość pracy przeprowadzono badania z w paradygmacie jakościowym wśród 196 nauczycieli i kandydatów do zawodu. W artykule wykorzystano metodę analizy treści esejów oraz materiałów pamiętnikarskich w celu uzyskania odpowiedzi na pytanie badawcze: Jakie wartości nadają pracy kandydaci do zawodu i czynni zawodowo nauczyciele? Materiał badawczy przeanalizowano w perspektywie kategorii wartości pracy w ujęciu W. Dróżki dla ukazania określeń i znaczeń różnych grup wiekowych oraz osób na różnych etapach kształcenia do zawodu nauczyciela i czynnych zawodowo w kontekście uchwycenia podobieństw i różnic przypisywanych pracy wartościach, generowanych określonym doświadczeniem zawodowym lub wyobrażeniem o pracy. We wnioskach końcowych wskazano aplikacje do praktyki w zakresie edukacji nauczycieli.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel, praca, wartość pracy

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