

Abstract of the doctoral dissertation entitled "Axiological foundations of innovative preschool institutions" written by Agnieszka Podbilska-Kłosowska in the Department of Early Education under the supervision of University Marie Curie Skłodowska Professor dr hab. Jolanta Andrzejewska, assistant supervisor Dr Małgorzata Centner-Guz

This thesis is focused on the issues of educational innovations and the axiological foundations of their implementation.

The research undertaken studies in detail the innovative activity of public kindergartens. This activity is analysed in multi-aspect and multi-stage ways. The analysis also includes the axiological foundations of both the teaching staff of innovative and non-innovative public kindergartens, as well as the axiological content of the documentation regulating their activities.

During three stages of empirical research, the author analyses the activities of the innovative kindergartens (through the studies of the documentation of these innovative activities, as well as participative observation). The detailed analysis of the documentation of innovative and non-innovative preschool institutions allows the author to identify discover the values that guide the teaching staff in creating of the statutes and concepts of kindergartens. The use of the standardized research tool PVQ-RR-f by S. H. Schwartz (in the Polish adaptation by J. Ciecuch) makes it possible to conduct the research among both the innovative and non-innovative teachers and principals, and then to present the values they prefer. The research was carried out by individual interviews with teachers and directors of innovative pre-school institutions in order to find out their opinions on the reasons for and benefits of the undertaken innovative activities. The results obtained are analysed in the quantitative and qualitative ways. It paints a picture of the innovative (and also the non-innovative) preschool institutions in the Podkarpackie voivodeship.

The practical aim of the doctorate is to analyse the data collected in the empirical research, and present the innovative activities in kindergartens in the Podkarpackie voivodeship, which can be considered as the inspiring examples of good educational practices.

The structure of the thesis consists of theoretical and practical parts, arranged in six chapters. The first three chapters propose the theoretical considerations on the values of the pre-school education and of the innovative activity.

Chapter 1 focuses on the issues related to the axiological foundations of education. It presents the values and their classifications. Then, the values are discussed in the light of

selected disciplines within arts and humanities, and of the social sciences. The next point of consideration is the hierarchy of values. As the last, the investigations related to the process of upbringing towards values in preschool education are presented.

Chapter 2 presents pre-school education in Poland. It begins with an outline of the essence and development of pre-school education in Poland. Subsequently, the following are presented: legal regulations related to the activities of kindergartens in Poland; as well as the objectives, functions and principles of pre-school education; and the selected methods of work in the kindergarten.

Chapter 3 presents innovations in kindergartens. After the introduction, it presents conceptual instruments related to innovations, pedagogical innovations and their types. The following subchapters refer to the pedagogical work of teachers; pedagogical innovation; schools, courses, and original programs; legal regulations related to the introduction of pedagogical innovations; as well as the context related to teachers and kindergarten principals as creators of innovative activity. The final reflections focus on the individual value preferences of teachers and principals in the context of their innovative activities.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology of the conducted research. It describes the subject and purpose of research; as well as research problems, variables and indicators. Also, it describes the methods, techniques and research tools that are used to collect the research data and the procedures of the analyses undertaken. The chapter closes with the characteristics of the research area, sample choice and surveyed people.

The final two chapters present the analyses of the collected empirical data from both quantitative and qualitative research. Chapter 5 is concentrating on the innovations. It contains a detailed report from the three stages of the research. This report is related to the qualitative analysis of individual interviews with teachers and principals. It presents the reasons for starting the innovative activities in the surveyed kindergartens, types of innovations, description of the activities carried out, the number of children covered by pedagogical innovation and the benefits of this type of activity in relation to five subjects: children, teachers, headmasters, parents and kindergartens as institutions and organizations.

Chapter 6 shows the axiological conditions of pedagogical innovations in the light of the author's own research. It presents the results of the analyses (both quantitative and qualitative) obtained from the individual surveys of the kindergarten teaching staff; as well as from the documentation analyzed. The chapter opens with the presentation of the values preferred by the principals and teachers of innovative and non-innovative kindergartens,

conducted by surveys in various configurations. Then, an extensive analysis of the values articulated in the mission, vision and goals of each kindergarten is presented.

The analysis of the research data shows that the conducted innovations concerned various areas, were most often of a programmatic or organizational and methodological nature, and continued to a significant extent in subsequent years. Teachers and principals cited numerous benefits of the implementations for the children themselves, employees and the institution's position in the community. In regard to the axiological foundations of the values preferred by the teaching staff in the surveyed kindergartens and the values inherent in the documents regulating their work, interesting results were obtained (often similar, but with differences in individual ranges).

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