

**POETRY, FAIRY TALES, STORIES AND LEGENDS  
AS A SOURCE OF LINGUISTIC AND CIVIC VALUES  
IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN  
AND THEIR TEACHERS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Education in each case, including the education of children, is based on the values that we can find in the contents of education and upbringing. These contents are most often included in textbooks and in studies constituting their methodical underpinnings. The specificity of children's education makes them appear in multiple situations and events that take place in the surrounding reality with a broad participation of adults. This reality is an extremely important educational space called the Small Homeland, which is inseparable from regional education. In the modern era full of transformation processes and globalization, the issue of educating children around small Homelands is becoming increasingly important. This education should not lack tradition and memory of the past, which are included, among others, in fables, fairy tales or national and regional legends.

Education on the basis of the natural environment can be recognized as a "psychophysical process, as a result of which the individual is able, through a real experience of some values, to master the appropriate sphere of cultural goods, and at the same time to develop an individual personality structure"<sup>1</sup>. The structure of each local environment is a reflection of the mechanisms of general social life in the whole country, and in relation to a given area or region, is a value associated with belonging to the "small Homeland"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Kunowski S., *Wartości w procesie wychowania*. Krakow 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *Mała Ojczyzna*. In: W. Theiss (eds.), *Kultura, edukacja, rozwój lokalny*. Warsaw 2001.

Considerations around regional education will be aimed primarily at elementary (initial) education – according to the proverb “*as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined*”. Acquiring knowledge about the student’s own region – its landscape, architecture, folklore, art, folk music, as well as meetings with interesting people – foster the strengthening of his emotional sphere in the sense of national identity. The immediate reality surrounding the child is an inalienable value for him, constituting both a material and psychophysical space, created as a result of multiple relationships with the immediate environment and his many forms of activity in the local environment.

This article will focus on the issue of the value of literary texts for children, and in particular on the values of legends, fairy tales, stories, and on the values of selected forms of children’s poetry. We will also make an attempt to present our own research on the pedagogical values of these literary studies. In terms of content, our considerations are interdisciplinary – integrating at least four research areas, such as: linguistics, historiography, as well as education and science about it.

### **1. A child in the world of the value of poetry, fables, fairy tales, legends and stories**

The beauty of language and speech as a means of communication is an extremely valuable source of experience for the child as a kind of poetry. Poetry is a beautiful combination of words and their meanings, which the child systematically enriches and at the same time values in the face of the world of adults and the material world. Poetry itself can include the content of the fables, legends, fairy tales, or stories and myths.

A valuable and frequent source of experiences and cognitive development of children are fables and fairy tales. Fables, as a kind of creations for children, fantastic stories about people and animals, are carriers of educational morals. Fairy tales, especially folk ones, aim to bring closer cultural traditions, are imbued with animal behaviour (swan,

frog, bear, wolf etc.) and man's relation with the natural world. This kind of fairy tales often emphasizes characters' personalities, giving up wonderful events and usually complex actions and events from the past. From the times of H.Ch. Andersen, fairy tales are no longer treated as a children's genre, intended solely for entertainment, but became a literary work with a philosophical and deep message.

In fairy tales, legends or in myths, we learn about events allegedly occurred in the past, which include, among others:

1) Lech, Czech (and maybe Rus) as brothers – Slavs,

2) Prometheus, punished for stealing the fire from the gods with chaining to a rock and leaving him at the mercy of an eagle pecking his liver,

3) Atlantis – as a mysterious continent, on which great culture flourished, ahead of later ages with its achievements,

4) King Arthur – according to the legend he was a very just ruler who started law in Britain, and his knights, whose merits were the searches for the Holy Grail,

5) the Wawel dragon or "*the Princess Wanda that did not want to marry a German*".

All these threads, along with many others, are known universally. We usually get to know them not from scholarly books, but first of all from children's literature, as well as from films, comics, stories of ancestors (grandparents) and parents or from children's teachers. Undoubtedly, in modern times, no one believes that Popiel was eaten by the mice, since this ruler in the nascent Polish state died a different way. However, not everything in these stories is only a product of literary fantasies, and thus can be a valuable source of research for researchers, even in linguistics or historiography circles<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Grzesiak J., *Mała Ojczyzna jako świat wartości i przestrzeń edukacyjna dzieci*. In: K. Denek, L. Pawelski, B. Urbanek, A. Żukrowska (eds.), *Wokół małych ojczyzn*. Szczecin 2009; Kurzeja A., *Dziecko w świecie bajek i baśni*. In: B. Dymara (eds.), *Dziecko w świecie zabawy*. Krakow 2009.

At the higher levels of school education on the basis of knowledge about the past, information about glorious or ignominious events from our past is transmitted, and on this basis, the views of learners about the national character of Poles are shaped. Legends, stories and other literary genres contribute to the consolidation of their content in human consciousness as facts or real evaluations – true enough that they cannot be questioned. This situation, however, triggers the objections of many researchers. Henryk Samsonowicz – an eminent specialist in the field of historiography, takes the position that in reality these forms of literature can be extremely important and valuable to learn about the past of a given state and nation<sup>4</sup>. This approach confirms our belief about the need to assign the right place to this issue in the area of education and in the sciences about it – especially in the context of language and civic education.

## **2. Myths and truth about the past as a subject of research**

In colloquial language, in discussions, and sometimes in scientific publications, the term “myth” is used interchangeably with the definition of a false view, fable, untruth, and fabrication. Myths, in the colloquial approach, are a false representation of reality, something like a fantasy novel, but claiming to be the truth. Of course, the concept of myth can be defined in that way, but various scientific disciplines – philosophy, history, sociology, cultural anthropology – use this term to define a special category of stories and messages. Among them are those that proclaim the content accepted by various communities as certain and obvious, and which are not confirmed by the results of today’s research. There is therefore a controversy about why, despite the lack of confirmation, they can be accepted by people, and sometimes they shape behaviours, views, values of not only individuals, but also entire communities with different territorial ranges.

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<sup>4</sup> Samsonowicz H. *O historii prawdziwej. Mity, legendy i podania jako źródło historyczne*. Gdańsk 1997; R. Barthes, *Mit i znak*. Warsaw 1970.

Myths are accepted relatively commonly. Based on tradition, they become colloquial knowledge, going beyond the circle of scholarly researchers and belonging to universal general education. This knowledge is not subject to verification and is based on faith, which is an essential feature of every myth. The dogmas of this belief are sometimes undermined by sceptics, and yet the denial of myths generally has no chance of success. It is not about details about the past, but about references to the idea of binding people at the moment.

Myths are a special form of sources for linguistic and historical research. According to Bronisław Malinowski, myths include norms concerning ritual acts, social organization of the tribe, its practical and moral actions. This scholar also postulated research on not only myths, but also fairy tales, legends and historical chronicles<sup>5</sup>. Whereas Antonina Kłoskowska, among the myths, also distinguishes legends and draws attention to the fact that myths constitute complete fiction, while their social functions are real<sup>6</sup>. Almost all researchers draw attention to the role of faith in the social process of accepting the myth carrying – according to the definition of Bronisław Malinowski – content considered by some group to be sacred. This was accurately formulated by Czesław Deptuła, who wrote: “the myth always referred to matters related to the general vision of the universe – the riddles of the cosmos, life, death, the place of man in the universe and society”<sup>7</sup>. He also emphasizes that the myth was not “a primitive science expressed in a specific language (...) it was a revelation in its essence”. Jerzy Topolski, recognizing also the factor of faith as an indispensable element of the myths being built, drew attention to the fact that they were based on general knowledge, constituting an attempt at scientific construction<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Malinowski B., *Mit, magia, religia*. Warsaw, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Kłoskowska A., *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*. Warsaw 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Deptuła C., *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski*. Lublin 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Topolski J., *O pojęciu teorii w badaniu historycznym : teoria a mit*. In: *Pamiętnik XIII Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich*, vol. 1. Wrocław 1986.

The psychologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt described myths as a reflection of reality presented in the form of fantastic images. The historian – František Graus thinks that the concept of a myth has four features: 1) the story of the past is presented in a manner appropriate for contemporary times; irrespective of trifles designed to authenticate the plot, the myth is shown in the robe of the past; 2) the myth refers to specific events, so it is not a folklore, repeating the customs shaped in human consciousness outside of history; 3) the myth cannot limit its existence to one generation, that is, it should be transferred from generation to generation; they are not eternal, reflecting the contemporary needs, they are living signs of several or perhaps several dozen generations; 4) myths, as based on tradition, become colloquial knowledge that is not subject to verification and is based on faith; 5) negation of the myth has no chance of success, because it is not so much about the details of the past, but about the reference to the idea of currently binding people.

Researchers generally clearly separate myths from stories or fairy tales. According to their assumptions, the myths refer to:

- 1) the supernatural sphere, to miracles, deities, to unusual phenomena,
- 2) events beyond historical time and
- 3) events not related to a specific area<sup>9</sup>.

In this approach, especially the second and third characteristics differ myths from stories and legends. It is also worth emphasizing that the term “legend” originally meant the texts of the lessons read in the church during the services, and over time they were texts of the lives of the saints. In the further process they were supplemented by the faithful, as a result of which they became stories that combined various threads, including those passed on by tradition or added by listeners<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Czerwiński M., *Mity, prawda, fikcja*. Wrocław 1964; J. Topolski, *O pojęciu teorii ...* op.cit.

<sup>10</sup> Malicki J., *Mity narodowe. Lechiada*. Wrocław 1982; H. Samsonowicz, *O historii ...* op. cit.

### **3. Fairy tales, stories and legends in school publishing for children**

In school education of children and youth, textbooks and didactic materials constituting their methodical underpinning have important functions. In our research, attention was paid to the textbooks for learning the mother tongue and history in terms of reflecting in them the content of fairy tales, legends and myths. In view of the aim of this study, the scope of this analysis covered the last 150 years of the Polish state. It would be worth carrying out comparative research against many other European countries, which could lead to a conceptualization of a civic and linguistic education model that would be compatible with the modern information society. In this part of the article, this issue will be presented synthetically without a detailed qualitative analysis, which deserves the subject of a separate study.

In Poland, during the partitions at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, there are numerous studies worth attention devoted to elementary and secondary school pupils, as well as to adults. Most studies (eleven) of various types have been published in the Kingdom of Poland. Similarly, in civic education in Galicia, both old and newly developed works were used. In the Prussian partition, in the teaching of history and native language, studies were used, which appeared in Greater Poland, as well as in the Kingdom of Poland in Galicia. The authors of these materials were historians as well as teachers and social activists.

The history of Poland, according to stories from Greater Poland, was presented to the largest extent by J. Baczyński, who described Lech's family relations, also referring to his father and sister. All the authors accented Popiel II, while in textbooks for children they most often indicated the dire influence of his wife Gerda, who could be very overbearing. The textbooks for children and adolescents show a negative image of Popiel II, and Piast's character is described very positively, with wider descriptions of these rulers being included in the children's studies.

A very prominent event described by almost all authors was a ritual ceremony related to a feast in the suburbium. Piast (together with his wife Rzepicha) in textbooks for children and youth was created as the hero of the legendary history as a personal model, which was characterized primarily by: piety, diligence, wisdom, honesty, nobility, modesty and also hospitality. In the texts of fairy tales and legends, bravery and courage are emphasized, which manifested itself in the heroes with concern for the effective defense of their own territory and the local population.

In the legends, fairy tales and stories from Lesser Poland, the most common is the figure of Krakus and his descendants, with the attention being paid to the prince and his daughter Wanda (who did not want to marry a German). The prince is acclaimed as a wise and just ruler, showing respect towards subjects, as evidenced by the mound made on the grave after his death.

In textbooks for children, the positive assessment of Wanda – the daughter of Krakus – is displayed as a wise, good, beautiful, brave and sacrificial ruler. Most authors assess Wanda's act (drowning in the Vistula) as the highest sacrifice suffered for the nation and the Polish state, which is also a clear manifestation of her patriotic attitude and love for her homeland.

Literary texts created in Poland during the partitions constitute very valuable sources for linguistic and historical education, and show the importance of the legendary beginnings of the Polish state at all times. During the partitions of Poland, they fulfilled, especially in the materials for children and their parents, extremely important and responsible functions: educational and unifying in the national resistance to the Germanization and Russification policy. In the present age, they also have a significant educational importance in the work of shaping patriotic and civic attitudes in the face of transformational changes and globalization processes in Poland.

The heroes portrayed in fairy tales, legends and stories, and especially from the early Piast dynasty, constitute the richness of civic values and, at the same time, speech in the native language. The descriptions of



legendary events from pagan times to the prehistory of Polish statehood present responsible rulers who, with their sacrifice, heroic valour and great concern for the heritage they performed, were able to provide security to the people and the entire subordinate territory (the future state). In addition, showing in the legends and fairy tales manifestations of cooperation of reigning rulers and subjects, constitutes the ideology of social solidarity, which in contemporary times is extremely necessary and important – specially against the intensifying manifestations of violence and “hate speech” on the scale of local environments, regions, and even on the national scale. This is particularly meaningful, important and valuable in the education of children and in shaping their world of values and the space of education in the context of core curricula<sup>11</sup>.

Analyzing the assumptions of education of children specified in the current core curriculum, we note that the issue of civic education by referring to the past expressed by fairy tales, stories and legends is not widely reflected. This is evidenced by the following records:

“Kindergarten is a place where, through play, the child learns the alphabet of block letters. Fun develops cognitive expectations in the child in this area and is the best methodological solution that supports its development. Preparations to learn to write letters should only lead to the optimization of muscle tone, movement planning exercises when plotting letters of a letter-like character, linear ruler exercises, tracing and recording of a selected graphic sign. During pre-school education, the child does not learn complex activities with the whole group, but prepares to learn to read and write and participates in the process of literacy ...;

The aforementioned core curriculum in the field that interests us is reflected in the fact that at the end of pre-school education the child:

- expresses his understanding of the world, phenomena and things in close surroundings using spoken language, speaks Polish in a speech

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<sup>11</sup> Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 14, 2017 *w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły podstawowej...* Dz. U. 2017, poz. 356.

intelligible to children and adults, speaks fluently, clearly, rhythmically, correctly speaks quiet and loud speech sounds, distinguishes the sounds at the beginning and end of selected phonetically simple words;

- actively listens to music; performs or recognizes melodies and songs, e.g. important for all children in kindergarten, such as the kindergarten hymn, characteristic for national celebrations (national anthem), needed to organize celebrations, e.g. Grandma's and Grandfather's day, kindergarten's holidays (occasional songs) and others;

- names the name of his country and its capital, recognizes national symbols (emblem, flag, anthem), he calls selected symbols connected with regions of Poland hidden in stories, proverbs, legends, fairy tales, for example about the Wawel dragon, he realizes that Poland is one of European Union countries ..."<sup>12</sup>.

In turn, in the part of the core curriculum referring to formation in the grades I-III of elementary school, among the 24 reading proposals for shared and individual reading, there are only two items on the subject of fairy tales and legends, namely:

1) Hans Christian Andersen, *Fairy Tales* (optional);

2) Barbara Tylicka, *Polish cities in fairy tales and legends – about Krakow's dogs and Kleparz's cats*.

Andersen's tales belong to the canon widely known in many countries, but they do not refer to the past of Poland. We will now pay attention to the work of B. Tylicka which includes over thirty various stories and legends derived from all Polish provincial cities as well as several smaller towns. In this collection there are also a few more popular ones, including the legend of King Popiel and mice, the famous Toruń gingerbreads, the salty wound of Saint Kinga and the devil Borut. They are also interesting legends such as the one about the Bytom bell, the silver denarius of Trajan or the enchanted ring, as well as the title legend from the cover of the book entitled "*About Krakow's dogs and Kleparz's cats*". She describes events from the old Krakow surrounded by walls, behind which, according to the legend, a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

smaller town called Kleparz was created. Between Krakowians and Kleparzans, frequent disputes and fights arose due to dogs and cats. The inhabitants of Kleparz were supporters of cats, and the inhabitants of Krakow preferred dogs. However, dogs and cats were indifferent to these conflicts and even had great affection – but unfortunately it did not last long. The book addressed primarily to children and their parents is richly illustrated, with each city accompanied its coat of arms. Noteworthy is also a glossary covering explanations of selected terms used in the text. The book is not a textbook, but it can and should be a perfect element of its methodical underpinning. It depends on teachers in cooperation with their parents to what extent it will become a lively source of content that integrates two children's educational spaces – language and history.

In the course of our longitudinal studies in 2015–2018, quite often there were cases of little or no use of fairy tales and legends in the education of children in kindergartens and then in grades I – III of the elementary school were quite often manifested. This also applies to the education of future teachers of children, especially in the field of practical education by conducting educational classes with children as part of a pedagogical practice. Among the many reasons for this state, we draw attention to the imperfections of textbooks for children (including alphabet books), in which it is difficult to see the right place for even a few threads taken from legends or national tales. This is all the more worrying that children (including students as future teachers) increasingly use smartphones and internet sources – which quite often teachers comment helplessly with the meaningful phrase “such times”.

In view of the prepared diagnosis, the author's conceptualization of designing scenarios for educational classes with children based on small theatre forms on the subject of legends and Polish fairy tales was created. To this end, valuable collections have been used, such as: *Polish fairy tales* (Tomasz Jodełka-Burzecki), *Polish fairy tales and legends* (Elżbieta Brzoza), *The most beautiful Polish legends* (Edyta Wygonik). In the course of classes under my supervision, each student (as a future teacher of

children) transformed the text of the chosen tale – a Polish legend into a staging form, which was later exhibited on the stage as students for students or students for children. Then, during the pedagogical practice, students used selected fairy tales, legends and Polish stories in various forms of staging or audiovisual presentations (own digital or film recordings, etc.). Students involved in quasi-experimental research expressed a lot of flattering opinions and assured that in their future professional work they would strive to display the full pedagogical values inherent in legends, fairy tales and poetry about patriotic topics. It should be hoped that this methodical approach will find an ever-widening reflection in the reality surrounding children every day – focused on displaying and experiencing values that are part of the dream world of each child individually and as a team member. On this occasion, it is worth pointing out the desirability of undertaking evaluation and implementation studies to promote pedagogical progress and improve the quality of education not only at the pre-school or early-school stage.

#### **4. Regional legends and the Little Homeland as a child's realm of values**

The Little Homeland, including the family home, neighbourhood, cultural environment, the closest natural surroundings and many other native facilities, is, for every child and adult, a starting point for shaping the attitudes and choosing the way of behaving in their lives. Exploring and understanding your origins affects the formation of an individual's personality and teaches respect towards the surrounding world and love towards your patrimony (family home and its surroundings). In addition, it raises curiosity about the past, promotes the commemoration of one's own experiences in local surroundings and also motivates search and specific local creativity<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Dymara B., K. Denek, W. Korzeniowska, *Dziecko w świecie wielkiej i małej Ojczyzny*. Krakow 2009; see also: A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*. Warsaw 1996.

In the light of the above, it is not difficult to notice how important it is for children to experience joy and satisfaction, which is a very important value for them. The concept of value has many meanings and is defined in a number of ways, depending on the nature of the discipline where it is considered. The word is derived from Latin *valor* or *valere*, in our culture, it is understood as a thing that a person or a social group values, considers to be good, important and thus experiences what is the goal of human aspirations<sup>14</sup>. Values in regional education can take the form of phenomena, systems of beliefs popular in a given society, objects that meet the needs of individuals and can have a symbolic character as well as goods, ideas, thoughts, attitudes, concepts. Frequently, the name ‘value’ is regarded as a measure (criterion) for assessing people, things, phenomena or norms we are interested in. In this case, value is the basis or an important reference point for considering something as good or bad<sup>15</sup>.

Demonstrating the world of values to the children during their learning process includes shaping specific attitudes, needs and preferences, inspiring for search for the truth, developing creative capacities and support in the choice between good and evil. Each of these activities is to contribute to the formation of a sensitive, mature, stable personality ready to cope independently in the surrounding world. Education takes place by means of acceptance or rejection of the proposed value<sup>16</sup>. The child’s world of values is for them an indispensable factor in their individual, social and identity development, understood as the ability to overcome difficulties on their own, as well as to cope with problematic situations more and more independently.

The adapted values are rooted in the child’s needs with respect to life, development (improvement of personality and self-esteem) and activity

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<sup>14</sup> Pilch T. (eds.), *21st century pedagogical encyclopedia. Volume VII*, Warsaw 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Denek K., *Wartości i cele edukacji szkolnej*. Poznań – Toruń 1994; J. Mastalski, *Samotność globalnego nastolatka*, Krakow 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Mastalski J., *Aksjologiczne przestrzenie spotkania w edukacji*. In: K. Denek, T. Koszczyc, P. Oleśniewicz (eds.) *Edukacja jutra*. Wrocław 2009; see also: J. Gajda, *Wartości w życiu człowieka. Prawda, miłość, samotność*. Lublin 2004.

(manifested in contacts with others and reflected behaviour)<sup>17</sup>. They are motivating factors, that is, they direct all activities. They also have an important place in the process of world exploration. They stimulate cognitive processes (impressions, perceptions, thinking, imaginations, speech, emotions etc.), by a person can experience reality. Every person carries a value that commands them to respect their own dignity as well as the dignity of another persons. They want to be treated as an important person, respected, and always seen as an individual, free to act and with their own vision for the future. The values also confirm a person (and even more so a child) in their beliefs, and also occupy an important place in social and cultural life, being a factor that shapes the relationships: person – person, group (in school class) – person or the environment – person<sup>18</sup>.

In children education, values may also appear as a system of norms regulating the behavior of pupils and teachers, performing the function of behavior's regulator, i.e. something that tells us what is and what is not allowed, what the limits of freedom are. The importance of values in the upbringing and in education is indisputable, their essence lies in the very idea. They play an important role in shaping the attitude towards people, laws, the world and the rules that govern it, as well as in formulating the plan for the life. People who have an opportunity to experience the values, may get convinced of their power and keep an indelible mark as a souvenir after experiencing such values<sup>19</sup>.

Education to values related to Small Homelands helps to discover the meaning of life, teaches children how to control themselves, makes them internally better and is a source of inspiration for children while playing and not only. K. Denek is right in emphasizing that “abandoning the axiological compass of values in education and outside it” leads to a disturbance in the relation between logos and ethos, to brutalization of life, crisis of self-awareness, disappearance of the sacred, expansion *of the*

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<sup>17</sup> Denek K., *O nowy kształt edukacji*. Toruń 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Jezierski P., *Jakie wartości w wychowaniu ?*., *Edukacja i Dialog*” 2000, No. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Banach Cz. *Wartości w systemie edukacji*. ‘Lider’ 2001, No. 3.

*profane* with science at the forefront, which ceases to be an instrument and becomes a kind of value<sup>20</sup>.

For education to be effective, conscious, purposeful, for it to motivate its subjects for reflection and, as a result, shape the personality of a pupil, preparing him for adult life, responsible functioning within the society, which involves choosing between different ways, it must introduce the youngest children into the world of values – values worth acknowledging and motivating them to purposeful behavior towards their own joy (and above all, to the joy of their parents).

Education in the context of small Homelands using legends, fairy tales or poetry is very highly ranked in a multicultural society in which differences in spiritual and material achievements, transmitted from generation to generation, hamper educational impact on young children. As a consequence, they cause a kind of indecisiveness in professing morally desirable values or their total or partial negation. This brings the danger of getting lost in this large variety of attitudes, positions towards norms and principles of childrens' social competences in the adult world. On the other hand, because of direct contact with people of different religions, nationalities, it is possible to teach children acceptance, respect and tolerance towards a different way of perceiving the world and values<sup>21</sup>.

From an early age, it is necessary to raise the awareness of children's belonging to the local community and to the nation. Such approach towards giving meaning to childrens' lives from an early age means that small homelands in children's education should be the basic foundation for an ever broader penetration into reality and truth about the surrounding world. The child's sense of bond with the heritage of his own place of origin as a very valuable value in human development. A child's primary education, including pre-school education and early school education, should constitute a content and organizational background for sensitizing

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<sup>20</sup> Denek K., *Aksjologiczne aspekty edukacji szkolnej*. Toruń 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Dymara B., *Wydobywanie wartości z informacyjnego chaosu-aksjologiczne bogactwo świata*. In: B. Dymara, M. Łopatkowa, MZ Pulinowa, A. Murzyn, *Dziecko w świecie wartości*. Krakow, 2003.

and developing basic cognitive and instrumental competences as well as social competences through contacts with the child's local environment<sup>22</sup>.

In the syllabus guidelines issued by the Ministry of National Education in 1999 under the name "*Cultural heritage in the region*" there were valuable proposals for optional classes (so-called educational paths), which involved bringing children and schoolchildren closer to the region where they live, especially in terms of cultural heritage, history, living tradition, folklore, folklore and native language, which should be learned equally with native language.

Heritage is a legacy, a good of material and non-material culture, which subsequent generations should cultivate, multiply and pass on to future generations. The transfer of cultural heritage takes place by adopting values inherent in the natural and cultural environment of man, taking into account that the dimension of the region's value and regional attitude is:

- 1) a community that provides a kind of security, protection against uniformity and unification of the local community,
- 2) the sense of having origins, identification with close environment in natural, geographical and historical aspects<sup>23</sup>.

The process of teaching and educating, using a string of educational situations with legends, fairy tales, poems, as well as the immediate surroundings and experiencing things by children on everyday basis favors the young man's growing into the culture of the region, a little homeland. One should be concerned with the fact that the published textbooks, supporting materials and methodological guides are too narrow and schematical as to what should be the subject of social and regional education. Diagnostic tests conducted by us in randomly selected schools and kindergartens show that most teachers first refer to the implementation of the content contained in the so-called "work sheets". There are also too

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<sup>22</sup> See e.g. M. Jakowicka, *Wzbogacanie doświadczeń uczniów klas początkowych w kontaktach ze środowiskiem*. Warsaw 1982; L. Pawelec, *Tradycja wartością przedszkolnej edukacji regionalnej*. In: M. Królicza (eds.), *Edukacja przedszkolna i wczesnoszkolna*. Częstochowa 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Grzesiak J., *Mała Ojczyzna ...*, op.cit.; Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 17 stycznia 2012 r. w sprawie standardów kształcenia przygotowującego do wykonywania zawodu nauczyciela. Dz. U. 2017, poz. 131.



rare cases of “reviving” textbook materials by incorporating regionalism and the idea of “live teaching”<sup>24</sup>. In kindergartens in particular, there are signs of strengthening ties with local communities – by attending kindergartens, children have excellent opportunities to experience contact with the immediate environment (meetings with artists and folk artists, participation in regional events and rituals, dances and artistic activities related to folklore and the region, theaters, meetings with stories and fairy tales, etc.). Upbringing in a family home plays an extremely important role in the artistic and regional education of children, where the child is very sensitive to penetrate the world of cultural and social values (what is good and what is bad). The stabilization of relations prevailing in the structure of each family plays a major role in these interactions, and above all in balancing the cognitive and emotional structures of young children. This influence is strengthened and intensified by the teacher’s high authority<sup>25</sup>.

Traditions, rituals and customs are associated with regional education, which value and favor children and young people. They make up its local pride and her story created by achievements, legends, fairy tales, poetry, stories, memories, memory as well as chronicles and diaries<sup>26</sup>. The native land should be treated as the greatest textbook<sup>27</sup>. By using children’s curiosity and constant readiness to learn and experience – you can form a sensitive nature of the child so that in his life he always speaks with meaningful words “Pole” and “Homeland.” The child’s involvement, as well as his life experiences, contribute to subsequent experiences, searches and activities aimed at raising awareness of belonging to communities (family, kindergarten, local environment). In addition, it shapes identity and promotes the perception of “Little Homeland” as a value from an early

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<sup>24</sup> Grzesiak J., *Nauczanie „żywe” i karty pracy we współczesnej szkole*, in: K. Denek, T.Koszczyk, P.Oleśniewicz (eds.), *Edukacja Jutra*, vol. 2. Wrocław 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Piaget J., *Równoważenie struktur poznawczych*. Warsaw, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Denek K., *W stronę szkoły jutra i jej nauczyciela*. in: J. Grzesiak (eds.), *Ewaluacja i innowacje w edukacji nauczycieli*, volume II. Kalisz 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Kuleczka P., *Krajoznawstwo i turystyka, czyli dialog w przestrzeni*, in: J. Grzesiak (eds.), *Ewaluacja i innowacje w edukacji*. Kalisz 2008.

age. Regional unity and the bond with traditions are a valuable clamp connecting the past with the present.

In the above considerations, a model of the local civil society was outlined, in which competent and responsible teachers should lead and coordinate pedagogical interactions. The teacher's main task is to prepare the child for independent life so that he can manage it independently. Otherwise it can be said that the pedagogue in his work should strive to make children aware of important values and help in the process of individual hierarchy creation through participation in action<sup>28</sup>. In order for the methods of parenting education (civic education) to bring the expected positive effects, great importance should be attached to the competences and responsibilities of teachers. This raises the importance, among others, of their knowledge of value issues, as well as their diagnostic skills and level of knowledge in the structure of the class team<sup>29</sup>.

### **5. On the need for evaluation studies on civic education**

The introduction of education standards (qualifications frameworks) at universities and core curricula in school education should, by definition, be effective in improving the quality of education. Meanwhile, in recent reforms of Polish education and in the procedure of creating conditions for the implementation of reforms, there is a clear gap between the theory and its implementation. For this reason, it is justified and even necessary to undertake and conduct more extensive diagnostic and evaluation tests, which are also based on teaching experiments. They require from researchers objective and non-politicized evaluation of didactic and educational effects in the climate of social dialogue around little Homelands. It is only on this basis that it will be possible to construct rational new solutions aimed at improving the diagnosed state of education in the spaces of the small and great homeland.

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<sup>28</sup> Baraniak J., *Wychowanie do tolerancji.* "Życie Szkoły" 2009, No. 9

<sup>29</sup> Grzesiak J., *Lekcje i diagnostyka psychopedagogiczna dziecka.* Konin 2014.

Our research conducted among students of teaching faculties in randomly selected scientific centers showed that too much content of education requires from them tedious memory acquisition. Meanwhile, expectations from future teachers turn out to be eloquently large as to the content particularly useful for performing in the course of teaching at school in contact with children and with the local environment<sup>30</sup>.

In the search for ways to improve quality, more attention should be paid to the issue of triangulation, which requires, among others, a multitude of research methods and techniques. Our research has shown that in student diploma papers, the survey technique is very often utilised as the only method, and the analysis of collected data takes schematic quantitative indicators without taking into account context variables.

Our research also covered the issues of student research clubs associating students specialising as teachers of “pre-school and early school education” and “elementary education” (with additional specializations). It turned out that the issue of children’s education in the world of the little and greater homeland is reflected only in traces in their activities and in the documentation of the achievements of the research clubs. This causes obvious concern, and consequently indicates the need for a radical improvement in the preparation of people to work as a teacher, taking into account the system of pedagogical practices.

Future teachers of all subject specialties, including teachers of elementary education of children, cannot be deprived of opportunities to fulfill themselves on the basis of a little and great homeland with the wide participation of children and the entire local community. On one hand, the teacher-to-be acts as a recipient of cultural elements, on the other hand, he or she should be personally prepared to disseminate and multiply cultural achievements at school and in out-of-school environments, and also be able to effectively influence the shape of cultural education of students from an early age of school (and regional) education. Teacher’s work

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<sup>30</sup> Compare: M. Jakowicka, *Wzbogacanie doświadczeń uczniów ...* op. cit.; J. Grzesiak, *Problemy integracji kultury i edukacji szkolnej*. In: J. Grzesiak (eds.), *Edukacja i kultura*. Kalisz 2002.

should be more and more of a “*living process*” – requiring adaptation to educational situations and thus limiting the role of the textbook as the primary source of learning content<sup>31</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The discussed issues as well as many other issues not addressed in this paper indicate that literary texts such as legends, fairy tales and stories should constitute permanent linguistic and historical values in the civic and patriotic education of the young generation. From a pedagogical point of view, they are very up-to-date and valuable, especially in the upbringing of children both in family homes as well as in pre-school and early school education – also at subsequent, higher levels of national education.

A teacher being a guide and a leader for his students in the construction of their world of values should have a specific sensitivity towards beauty and spirituality, increase their competences by an aesthetic and cultural aspect. All this in order to cope with the challenges faced throughout the processes of shaping sensitivity to beauty (including language), goodness, regionalism and patriotic values in their pupils. Education concentrated around little homelands should sensitize children to values inherent in the local environment and to their own values; it should also teach how to recognize the beauty of nature, native speech, cultural monuments, as well as arouse reflection on the experienced beauty of their own country – region<sup>32</sup>.

On one hand, a modern school should form patriotic attitudes within the atmosphere of internationalism and multiculturalism, and on the other hand, it should counteract any attitudes contrary to the patriotism and identity of every person – a nation. With scientific pride and satisfaction, one should refer to all manifestations or attempts to search for optimal solutions for education around little Homelands, including legends and other texts of regional and even international scope.

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<sup>31</sup> See e.g. J. Grzesiak, *Podstawy teorii i metodyki kształcenia praktycznego nauczycieli*. Konin 2010; Z. Mysłakowski, *Nauczanie żywe a podręcznik szkolny*. Lviv 1936.

<sup>32</sup> Compare: I. Wojnar, *Humanistyczne intencje edukacji*. Warsaw 2000.

At the end of our considerations, we draw the following conclusions and desiderata:

- as a result of transformational changes, the traditional understanding of patriotism and education around little Homelands is undergoing changes and the spread of the disturbing tendency of their gradual “undervaluation” in favor of the preference and domination of mass culture of global nature over regional education,

- for the sake of preserving and surviving native local cultures and proper patriotic upbringing, the education of children in every kindergarten and in every modern school should sensitize them to the beauty, the good inherent in the resources of little homelands as laid down in the proverb “*what youth is used to, age remembers...*”

- to ensure the continuity of local cultures and multiculturalism, regional research is necessary, as well as organizational efforts of educational and local authorities to preserve or restore valuable components of these cultures;

- there is a need for changes in teacher education – including pedagogical practices – for the mandatory development of real competences for them in the field of cultural education and patriotic education in the world of values inherent in small homelands, as well as in poetry, fairy tales, legends or even myths;

- it is advisable to do diagnostic, evaluation and design research on regional, language and civic education both in the course of teacher studies and as part of statutory research conducted by academic centers,

- basing on reliable methodological foundations, care should also be taken to shape the research competences of students in the roles of future teachers – ready and willing to undertake pedeutological research, as well as research on the quality of education, including education around small Homelands,

- regional traditions and education focused on little homelands should be subject to particular care for cooperating local governments, teachers and culture activists.

Elementary education of young children and their teachers in the realms of little homelands is of fundamental importance for forming civic society of today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. The realisation of the above desiderates may lead to a gradual, although authentic and non-politicized, good change for the better both in education and in the system of education sciences.

## **SUMMARY**

The subject of this article is education of children and their teachers in the light of civic and regional education and closely tied with legends, fairy tales, poetry and with myths as literary texts addressed to children (and to adults at the same time). In this context the author's on-merits considerations have an interdisciplinary character and at the same time integrate the main four research areas – linguistics, historiography, as well as education and sciences.

The text sequences highlighted in the text are focused on issues:

- 1) a child in the world of poetry, fairy tales, legends and stories,
- 2) truth and legends and myths about the past as the subject of research,
- 3) fairy tales, stories and legends in children's publications,
- 4) regional legends and a little homeland a world of values towards the child as well
- 5) about the need for evaluation studies on civic education in the context of caring for the beauty of the language of the child and its teachers. Forming "little homelands" based on the fullest possible knowledge of one's own cultural traditions favors the formation of a civic society which, on the one hand, can appreciate the value of mass culture and its own regional culture, and on the other, with forgiveness, can recognize and tolerate the differences and values of cultures of other nations, ethnic groups and other local communities. With the experience in the form of beliefs, ideas, views acquired within the realm of litthe Homeland, the child creates his own, individual, hierarchical – and specific system of values expressed in the categories of *want, have, act and be*. An ordered hierarchy of values indicates the direction of the aspirations of each individual and social

groups. In the era of social transformation, in the face of the knowledge society, the issue of the value system is the subject of constant scientific research. The author briefly presents the results of his own research and outlines the conceptualisation of language and civic education integrated with regional education of children and their teachers. Finally, the author postulates that all concepts for a real improvement in the education of children around small homelands should be constructed on the basis of a mature methodology of reliable research relating to education, as well as towards the sciences.

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