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**FAMILY AND NURSERY – PILLARS OF EDUCATION FOR  
WORK AMONG VIETNAMESE NURSERY CHILDREN**

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AMONG VIETNAMESE NURSERY CHILDREN

**Keywords:** work, preschool child, education for work, traditions, family, kindergarten, education system.

Professional work is one of the key developmental challenges faced by people nowadays, and preparation for entering the world of work requires actions taken from the earliest stages of life. Throughout different historical periods, cultures, and social systems, work has been ascribed different meanings and diverse approaches to preparing individuals for a future professional career have been developed. This article presents an overview of vocational education for preschool children in Vietnam. The family and the education system play a particularly important role in this process. In Vietnam, family interactions are autonomous in nature, whereas the influence of the school system on children is planned and intentional. Although family influences affect all children, only those aged 3-6 who attend preschool are subject to

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systematic educational influences, as preschool education in Vietnam is not compulsory. Educational practices in Vietnamese kindergartens take into account the experiences and patterns learned at home, which is considered the natural and fundamental environment for early vocational education. Institutional education builds upon these experiences, reinforcing them and broadening their impact. Both the family and the kindergarten use children's literature, rich in content related to work and occupations, in their educational activities.

#### RODZINA I PRZEDSZKOLE – FILARY EDUKACJI DO PRACY WIETNAMSKICH DZIECI W WIEKU PRZEDSZKOLNYM

**Słowa kluczowe:** praca, dziecko w wieku przedszkolnym, edukacja do pracy, tradycje, rodzina, przedszkole, system edukacyjny.

Praca zawodowa stanowi jedno z kluczowych wyzwań rozwojowych współczesnego człowieka, a przygotowanie do jej podjęcia wymaga działań podejmowanych już od najwcześniejszych etapów życia. W różnych okresach historycznych, kulturach i systemach społecznych nadawano pracy odmienne znaczenia oraz wypracowywano zróżnicowane sposoby przygotowania do przyszłej kariery zawodowej. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje przegląd edukacji zawodowej dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym w Wietnamie. W procesie tym szczególnie istotną rolę odgrywają rodzina oraz system edukacyjny. W warunkach wietnamskich oddziaływania rodzinne mają charakter autonomiczny, natomiast wpływ instytucjonalny realizowany przez system szkolny jest zaplanowany i celowy. Choć oddziaływanie rodziny obejmuje wszystkie dzieci, jedynie dzieci w wieku 3-6 lat uczęszczające do przedszkoli podlegają systematycznym wpływom edukacyjnym, przy czym edukacja przedszkolna w Wietnamie nie ma charakteru obowiązkowego. Działalność wietnamskich przedszkoli uwzględnia doświadczenia oraz wzorce wyniesione z domu rodzinnego, traktowanego jako naturalne i podstawowe środowisko wczesnej edukacji zawodowej. Edukacja instytucjonalna opiera się na tych doświadczeniach, wzmacniając je i poszerzając zakres ich oddziaływania. Zarówno rodzina, jak i przedszkole wykorzystują w procesie wychowawczo-edukacyjnym literaturę dziecięcą, bogatą w treści odnoszące się do pracy i zawodów.

## Introduction

Vietnam is a country in which the state does not intervene in its citizens' professional activity; therefore, their professional and economic activity is primarily related to their own activity (Hanh 1979). Vietnam is a country of many contrasts. Handicraft and agricultural work that has been practiced for centuries coexists with dynamic social development and the adoption of modern technologies, leading to rapid industrial growth. Still, 78% of the population lives in rural areas. Most inhabitants work in agriculture, forestry and fishing, which employ 73% of Vietnamese workers. Agricultural traditions remain very strong and are systematically referred to in education and upbringing. A significant share of the population is also employed in crafts (13%). The development of industry as an employer for 14% of the population contributes to the development of manufacturing-related jobs. It is based on abundant natural resources and agricultural products (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2021).

The aim of this article is to familiarize the reader with the Vietnamese approach to educating preschool children about work and through work within the family. Education for work within the family has centuries-old traditions in Vietnam, deeply rooted in culture (Tran 2022, p. 74).

The inspiration for this discussion came from experiences gained during a study trip in 2016. During the trip, targeted interviews were conducted with parents of preschool children about the role and importance of education for work in Vietnamese culture and about the forms of education through work and for work they provide.

During the first years of life, a person is influenced mainly by the family in the home environment (Wołk 2011, p. 83). In Vietnam, the family is a very important social unit, situated at the heart of educational practice. As in the past, the family and its members are held in high esteem and enjoy very high prestige in Vietnamese culture (Huou 1991). The Vietnamese family also plays a key role in education for work. Education for work in Vietnam is based on two pillars: the family and the education system, which has a tradition spanning more than a thousand years. It begins at an early age. Numerous educational activities are undertaken with nursery-age children to provide them with basic knowledge about work and occupations, and to foster respect for work and for the people who perform it (Hanh 1979).

Work education of Vietnamese children aged 3-6 is aimed at initial professional orientation and providing children with elementary knowledge about work and occupations. During this period, the emphasis is on the children's acquisition of basic knowledge about work, its importance in human and family life, and the people who do the work – their commitment

to the work and the effort involved. In Vietnam, introducing children to the issues of professional work is closely related to parents' references to their own work and to work performed in the local environment (Huou 1991). The child lives in such a place and carefully observes the phenomena and social situations which occur there. They learn about the work done by their parents, uncles, neighbors, and friends through stories and observations. In the residential environment, children often meet people who perform their professional tasks in real-life situations. This is particularly true of common professions, whose observation and understanding do not require extensive knowledge or imagination from the child. Accordingly, Vietnamese nursery schools also refer to the work carried out in the children's local environment (Giang 2010). Both parents and nursery school teachers use children's literature to educate children (Hoàng 2014). It enables them to introduce children to work, familiarize them with it and reinforce basic concepts related to work and occupations.

### **The family as the primary environment for educating nursery children for work and through work**

The family is the first environment in a person's life (Kukułowicz 2024, p. 45; Piorunek 1996, p. 9; Radziejewicz-Winnicki 2019, p. 12; Wilk 2003, p. 174). Each family is unique, with its own traditions and work-related experiences, and this diversity is reflected in education for life and work. Within the family, such education is subjective and spontaneous and therefore not synchronized across society; by contrast, in nursery schools it is conducted synchronously – in Hanoi in particular and throughout the country in general. Family-led work education among nursery-age children is closely correlated with the specific characteristics of the local community. This is a distinctive feature of work-based education in Vietnam. Parents refer to its traditions, to the experiences of work carried out by the inhabitants of their children's village in their everyday educational work, shaping attitudes toward work and providing their children with knowledge about it.

The situations that occur in it are natural, authentic, simulated and planned. All members participate in the relationship, observe each other, get to know each other's behavior and accompanying emotions and experiences. Young children's lives unfold primarily within the family, which is why it plays a very important role in shaping their personality, lifestyle and way of thinking. In addition to care and upbringing, families also participate in the educational orientation of children in general, including professional orientation. Vietnamese families use many approaches to orient their young children toward future work. Common practices include drawing children's

attention to the work of their parents and other family members, using work-related vocabulary on a daily basis at home, drawing on children's literature that addresses work, as well as films, games and play. Conversation is very important in Vietnamese culture. Parents discuss their work with their children, talk about it, share their experiences and the results of their work, their achievements. They also point out that the work involves effort and fatigue. They indicate that the results of the work require knowledge and commitment. Through such conversations, they convince children that those who work deserve respect (Binh 2012).

Tendencies in vocational education provided by Vietnamese families can be structured as follows:

1. familiarizing children with all popular occupations;
2. educating children for occupations traditionally carried out in their families and in their local communities;
3. educating children for occupations that are particularly favored by their parents.

After returning from work and performing many different activities at home, parents continue to pay attention to their children's education, development of awareness, soul and feelings, because they believe that "the future of children is the work of parents". They consciously lay the foundations for their children's future work from an early age. Every evening before bedtime, parents read books and tell stories, many of which cover a variety of topics, including professional issues. The fairy tales and stories told by parents usually concern traditional occupations, which are usually farming, crafts, and teaching. Due to the specific nature of Vietnam, which is a country with an agricultural tradition, the stories presented to children very often deal with various agricultural issues – rice cultivation and the raising of buffalo and other animals. Vietnamese parents are aware of the hard agricultural work and respect farmers who work hard to grow rice and vegetables and to raise and catch fish and buffalo. With their work they obtain the financial means to support their families. Referring to agriculture not only makes one aware of the agricultural origins but also raises awareness of the profession and teaches children the virtues of perseverance, patience, love of life, and love of work (Le 2011).

In addition to agricultural and craft themes, stories about teachers often appear in children's narratives and literature. Nursery children are small, with a young soul, and they always look at their teachers with respect, trust and love. The tutor is the child's second mother: just as a child is cuddled in his/her mother's arms at home, children at nursery school are

hugged and patted lovingly by the teacher. Listening to stories about the teacher, talking about the teacher, and imitating the teacher are not only the preferences of the child, but are also based on the needs of the child. For this reason, the teaching profession and the teacher figure are two important themes in the stories in Vietnamese children's literature.

In Vietnam, craft traditions are cultivated, which is reflected in the so-called craft villages. There are over 270 traditional craft villages in the Hanoi area. They create favorable conditions for drawing on local work in education, including agriculture, weaving, carpentry, and pottery (Hieu, Rosakowska 2017, p. 223). There are numerous traditional occupations carried out in craft villages and they are a good reference in educating nursery children for work. Children from rural backgrounds learn about traditional crafts from the area where they live mainly through experiencing everyday life and observing the activities of craftspeople.

#### **Nursery as the second pillar – alongside the family – of education for work and through work for nursery children in Vietnam**

In the early years of a child's life, the family is their main environment, which forms the first environmental circle (Giddens, Sutton 2017, p. 298). Over time, this circle expands to include the impacts of the local environment. There are informal interactions from peer groups, neighbors, and other family members. These are supported by formal influences from the education system (Thanh 2009). It affects children aged 3-6 years attending nursery schools in a planned and structured way. Nurseries are not compulsory in Vietnam; however, discussions are underway to extend compulsory nursery education to at least a selected age group. Nursery schools carry out educational activities in accordance with the Pre-School Education Program of the Ministry of Education and Schooling (Tran 2017). The content of vocational education is integrated with educational objectives to develop nursery children's (Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, 2017, p. 28) awareness and cognitive education (*ibid.*, p. 39-40). This program refers to the three age groups for which specific educational and upbringing content is provided.

Based on the targeted content, nursery school principals and teachers directly teaching in nursery schools develop teaching plans adapted to the specifics of the place in which they live. The specificity of the local environment is important, as living environments in Vietnam are often very different from each other. At the same time, they have their own cultural and professional specificities, which are often referred to in the field of education

for work. Nursery education, including work education is provided at three age levels:

- Level I applies to children aged 3-4 years;
- Level II applies to children aged 4-5 years;
- Level III applies to children aged 5-6 years.

These levels overlap, which creates the opportunity for a flexible approach to the tasks of education through work, without the need to maintain a rigid age framework, which allows individualization of work with children and adaptation of the pace of work to their achievements and degree of content understanding.

At level 1, which includes the education of the youngest children, aged 3-4, children are expected to learn the names of the most common occupations, the products obtained by the professionals performing them, and the main characteristics of the most common occupations. As Vietnam is an agricultural country, the most popular occupations are related to farming. The youngest children, even those living in cities, tend to have farming relatives among their immediate family members. They often have the opportunity to observe their work directly, and to listen to stories about it, about their colleagues, and about the experiences involved. This promotes the consolidation of knowledge about agricultural work. Children learn to recognize and name agricultural products and activities related to the farming profession and land cultivation. Similar to agricultural occupations, construction-related occupations are common. This group of occupations is known especially by children living in cities (Pham 2004). Children aged 3-4 should know and correctly name the basic occupations and activities associated with construction and its products. In both cases the correct basic vocabulary for both professional groups is formed.

At level 2, which refers to children aged 4-5, the requirements are more advanced. Children are challenged to learn more about the work of their parents and family members. They are required to take an interest in the work performed by their loved ones. They must familiarize themselves with the activities they carry out, the tools they use and the products they produce. They should learn the terminology used in these professions. The educational impact in nursery schools makes children sensitive to the work of their parents and other family members. It demonstrates the importance of their work and the significance of their professions. It is also conducive to learning about workplaces and forms of professional activity found in their living environment.

At this stage, children are also introduced to the teaching profession. The teaching profession is highly respected in Vietnamese culture, so considerable attention is paid to it in work education. Children know their nursery school teachers. They learn from them, remain under their care, and share their emotions with them. For children in the middle age group, the teacher is portrayed as having a difficult and responsible job so that children can learn about the world and prepare for their future independent lives. By familiarizing themselves with the work of their teacher, other teachers and nursery school staff, nursery children learn about the main characteristics of occupations focused on working with people.

Level 3 applies to children aged 5-6. At this level, the knowledge they have acquired so far is further developed. Children become more familiar with the content of their parents' and family members' work. They can correctly name the jobs performed and describe how the work is carried out, including the tools and machines used, as well as the outputs of the work. In addition, their knowledge is extended to other professions found in the local community. They learn about the most popular and traditional occupations in the area. They acquire general knowledge about them. The professions performed in the local community show children the importance of work and its usefulness to all people. Children are also introduced to the need for a division of labor between members of the community, which involves different people doing different jobs. They also learn about other popular professions they hear about in everyday life, including soldiers, doctors, nurses, janitors, machinists, weavers, police officers, nurses and carpenters.

These occupations appear in various forms of children's literature, including fairy tales, fables, poems, songs, films, in mind games. In nursery classes, their knowledge is made more specific, deepened and broadened. We can find many different stories, poems, songs, quizzes written about common professions in society. However, vocational guidance of children at school and at home takes place apart from the direction of the Ministry of Education through the nursery curriculum, the school through the school's teaching plan, teachers in classes, and moreover, there is also the guidance of publishers. Literature works on the profession are chosen by the authors for the purpose of the topic of the given profession. Based on the orientation of literary works on professional topics of publishers, teachers and parents of learners select publications with content corresponding to the professional orientation of their children.

## Conclusion

Work education in contemporary Vietnam takes into account advances in technology and new technologies, especially information technology; however, it is based on traditional centuries-old representations of work mainly in agriculture and crafts. In the family environment, children observe the work of their parents, neighbors and friends from an early age. They experience respect for both physical and mental work on a daily basis. The professions of farmers and teachers are of key importance in this respect.

Within family upbringing, work occupies a significant place, shaped over centuries. Parents try to introduce their nursery-age children to the professions and the content of their work. This applies to the most popular, traditional professions, preferred by parents and the ones they particularly like.

Education for work is carried out spontaneously in families, while nursery schools do it systematically. In this way, they support the influence of families. In spite of the central recommendations concerning education for and through work of nursery children, the establishments have a great deal of freedom in this area, allowing reference to be made to local culture and traditions. Their importance in the lives of the Vietnamese is very high.

Education for work in Vietnam is organized and implemented from the first years of life, initially within the family and then as people get older, other actors become involved in the process. The children are familiarized with work, learn about the meaning of work, the occupations of their parents, and systematically expand their vocabulary related to work and manufacturing. They also learn about the importance of work in people's lives and learn to respect both, the work and the people. Acquiring a foundation of knowledge about work at nursery school age is a strong foundation for their future careers.

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