KULTURA – PRZEMIANY – EDUKACJA

Tom XVIII

CULTURE – CHANGES – EDUCATION

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Introduction

We present to the Readers a publication dedicated to contemporary challenges in education, upbringing, and support for individuals in a changing social and cultural reality. The presented eighteenth volume is the result of collaboration among researchers representing various Polish universities, whose diverse scientific experiences and research perspectives allow us to look at the issues addressed not only from a pedagogical standpoint but also from an interdisciplinary one.

The collected texts connect a historical perspective with reflections on current issues facing families and schools. The authors address both topics rooted in the tradition of educational thought and issues arising from the dynamic changes of modernity. Special attention is given to matters concerning the relationship between family and school, parenting, the mental well-being of children and adolescents, experiences of individuals with disabilities, as well as challenges related to inclusion, cultural diversity, and technological transformations. The publication attempts to provide a multidimensional view of education as a space not only for the transmission of knowledge but also for building relationships, shaping values, fostering independence, and supporting individuals in their personal development.

It is worth adding that the discussions, analyses, and research findings included in this volume are evidence that contemporary educational problems require dialogue beyond the boundaries of disciplines, academic environments, and research experiences. We hope that this publication will become a source of reflection and new research initiatives undertaken by representatives of the academic community. It will open up space for the development of scientific collaboration and for conducting further, broader-scale research and scientific projects. Furthermore, it will provide support for practitioners involved in education, upbringing, therapy, and social work, offering them guidelines used in their daily professional activities.

Dr hab. Zofia Frączek, prof. UR

Part I

HISTORICAL SOURCES, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

Część I

HISTORYCZNE ŹRÓDŁA, CIĄGŁOŚĆ I ZMIANA MYŚLI EDUKACYJNEJ

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Teofil Lawgmin (1922–2010) – Founder of the Chemists' Circle

Teofil Lawgmin (1922–2010) – założyciel Koła Chemików

Abstract

Teofil Lawgmin played a pivotal role in the advancement of chemical education in Zamość through the integration scientific research with a deep commitment to teaching. As the founder of the Chemists' Club, he established an institutional framework that enabled young scholars to develop their skills and gain practical laboratory competencies.

The present study examines the historical development and educational significance of the Chemists' Circle, with particular attention devoted to Lawgmin's lasting impact on the academic community. The analysis is based primarily on personal recollections of his former students, it explores his pedagogical approach, unwavering dedication, and the personal qualities that made him an inspiring teacher and mentor.

Furthermore, the article evaluates both his scientific and educational contributions and highlights Professor Lawgmin's role in shaping future chemists and his remarkable ability to cultivate scientific passion among youth.

Keywords: Teofil Lawgmin, Chemistry Circle, teacher, master

Streszczenie

Teofil Lawgmin odegrał kluczową rolę w rozwoju edukacji chemicznej w Zamościu poprzez integrację badań naukowych z głębokim zaangażowaniem w działalność dydaktyczną. Jako założyciel Koła Chemików stworzył instytucjonalne ramy umożliwiające młodym adeptom nauki rozwijanie swoich umiejętności oraz zdobywanie praktycznych kompetencji laboratoryjnych.

Niniejsze opracowanie analizuje historyczny rozwój oraz znaczenie edukacyjne Koła Chemików, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem trwałego wpływu Lawgmina na środowisko akademickie. Analiza, oparta przede wszystkim na wspomnieniach jego byłych uczniów, pokazuje jego podejście pedagogiczne, niezłomne zaangażowanie oraz cechy osobowości, które czyniły go inspirującym nauczycielem i mentorem.

Ponadto artykuł przedstawia zarówno jego wkład naukowy, jak i dydaktyczny, podkreślając rolę profesora Lawgmina w kształtowaniu przyszłych chemików oraz jego niezwykłą zdolność do rozbudzania pasji naukowej wśród młodzieży.

Słowa kluczowe: Teofil Lawgmin, nauczyciel, mistrz, koło chemików

Introduction

Despite his significant contribution to the development of chemical education, Teofil Lawgmin[1] remains a relatively little-known figure today. Nevertheless, he served as an inspiration to numerous students, educators, and members of the Chemistry Club he supervised. He educated many Olympiad laureates, future scientists, and specialists, while his dedication and innovative teaching approach were reflected both in his students' achievements and in their lasting memories of his educational work.

The aim of this article is to examine the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Chemistry Club, the pedagogical methods employed by Lawgmin, and his influence on the educational and professional trajectories of his students. The study is based on former students' recollections- Zbigniew Brzózka[2] and Zbigniew Piskorski,[3] archival materials, and Lawgmin's publication *Żołnierska droga i nauczycielski sukces*.

The article is divided into three sections: a biographical overview of Teofil Lawgmin, an analysis of the Chemistry Club and his teaching methods, and a discussion of the significance of his legacy for the local community and the broader development of chemical education.

Biographical Outline

Teofil Lawgmin (born 22 November 1922 in Vitebsk;[4] died in 2010) was a chemist, educator, officer of the Polish Army, and a long-serving secondary school teacher in Zamość. He was the founder and supervisor of the Chemistry Club, the author of publications devoted to the didactics and methodology of chemistry teaching, and a mentor to numerous gifted students in the field of the natural sciences. He was born into a railway worker's family of Polish- Lithuanian origin. His mother, Jadwiga Majewska, was Polish, whereas his father was of Lithuanian[5] nationality. During his

[1] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga i nauczycielski sukces*, Lublin 1979; Private collections of Professor Z. Brzózka; Interview with Z. Brzózka conducted on 26 November 2024; Private collections of M.Sc. Eng. Z. Piskorski; Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024; State Archives in Zamość; Branch Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin.

[2] Prof. Dr. Hab. Eng. Zbigniew Brzózka, Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of Chemistry, Department of Medical Biotechnology; https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9738-6920. Born on 11 February 1953 in Zamość.

[3] M.Sc. Eng. Zbigniew Piskorski, born in 1945, graduated from Wrocław University of Science and Technology in 1969 with a degree in Plastic Processing Technology; former employee of the Pronit Plastics Plant in Pionki, currently retired.

[4] In the territory of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), now Belarus.

[5] AIPN (hereinafter: the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin), Honorary Court, ref. no. IPN BU 0193/8269, p. 2; State Archives in Zamość (hereinafter: APZ), Presidium

childhood and adolescence, he lived in Vitebsk, where he attended a Polish primary school, graduating in 1937. He subsequently continued his education in a Russian-type secondary school and obtained his secondary school diploma in 1940.[6] His formative years coincided with a period of escalating political tensions and the outbreak of the Second World War, which significantly influenced the course of his later life.

In May 1941, Teofil Lawgmin was conscripted into the Red Army, where he served as a telegraph operator. He participated in the defence of Kyiv and took part in military operations on the Eastern Front, including the Battle of Moscow; he also witnessed the Siege of Leningrad. The wartime experiences of the years 1941–1943[7] played a crucial role in shaping his personal values, discipline, and professional sense of responsibility. In 1943, Lawgmin joined the Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow and, at his own request, was subsequently transferred to the 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division.[8] Between 1943 and 1945, he was associated with military education, serving as an instructor in radiotelegraphy.[9] He conducted classes, among others, at the officers' communications school in Ryazan and participated in the organization of a communications school in Zamość. Despite considerable organizational and infrastructural difficulties characteristic of wartime conditions, Lawgmin demonstrated a high level of commitment and diligence in carrying out his assigned duties. In recognition of his exemplary service, he was awarded the Silver Cross of Merit and promoted to the rank of lieutenant.[10] In subsequent years, he served in the Border Protection Troops, attaining the rank of captain and, in 1970, that of major. The deterioration of his health, resulting from his wartime experiences, prompted Teofil Lawgmin to undergo sanatorium treatment and gradually transition from active military service to civilian employment.

In 1949, he was granted Polish citizenship and settled in Zamość,[11] a city with which he remained closely associated throughout his subsequent family and

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of the District National Council in Zamość, Department of Municipal Economy and Housing, ref. no. 148, p. 13; AIPN (hereinafter: the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin), Honorary Court, ref. no. IPN BU 0193/8269, p. 2; Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin (hereinafter: AIPN in Lublin), Honorary Court, ref. no. IPN BU 0858/91, p. 5.

[6] AIPN (hereinafter: the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin), Honorary Court, ref. no. IPN BU 0193/8269, p. 1; T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, Lublin 1979, p. 15.

[7] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, Lublin 1979, p. 14.

[8] See: *70 lat temu rozpoczęto formowanie 1 Dywizji Piechoty im. Tadeusza Kościuszki*, 2013, https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/70-lat-temu-rozpoczeto-formowanie-1-dywizji-piechoty-im-tadeusza-kosciuszki (12.03.2025).

[9] AIPN (hereinafter: the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin), Honorary Court, ref. no. IPN BU 0193/8269, pp. 4–5.

[10] Cf. *Krzyż zasługi*, https://www.prezydent.pl/prezydent/kompetencje/ordery-i-odznaczenia/odznaczenia/krzyz-zaslugi (10.03.2025); AIPN (hereinafter: the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin), Honorary Court, ref. no. IPN BU 0193/8269, p. 5.

[11] In 1949, after a three-month stay in the Soviet Army, Lawgmin was placed at the disposal of the Ministry of National Defence of the Polish People's Republic, and only then did he receive

professional life.[12] He then began his teaching career at the I Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Hetmana Jana Zamoyskiego and at the Economic Technical School, where he initially taught defence education, the Russian language, and science-related subjects.

Simultaneously, he pursued further education in the fields of pedagogy and chemistry.[13] After obtaining a reissued secondary school diploma, he enrolled at the Higher School of Pedagogy in Łódź, where he acquired formal teaching qualifications and subsequently completed first-cycle higher education studies.[14] From 1952 onward, he devoted himself exclusively to teaching chemistry, a discipline which, as he himself emphasized, provided him with particular professional satisfaction.[15] Over time, he became one of the most recognizable chemistry teachers in Zamość.

In 1963, Lawgmin began master's studies at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin while simultaneously pursuing an intensive teaching career. His research, conducted in the Department of Physical Chemistry under the supervision of Andrzej Waksmundzki, focused on chromatography and resulted in a master's thesis of an experimental nature. His collaboration with the academic community facilitated active engagement in scholarly activities and publications. From the late 1960s onward, Lawgmin published works on chemistry education and teaching methodology, contributing to both scientific and popular science literature.[16] He was also deeply involved in the education of gifted students, founding and supervising the Chemistry Club, where he mentored students and prepared them for academic competitions and chemistry Olympiads.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to chemistry education, Lawgmin was awarded the Honorary Badge of the Polish Chemical Society in 1984, as well as the Jan Harabaszewski Medal.[17] Although he formally retired in 1987,

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Polish citizenship following several requests submitted to his superiors. Only after the matter concerning improper conduct toward Senior Rifleman Mleczko had been clarified did Teofil Lawgmin receive an official reprimand, and the Public Security Bureau sent him back to the Soviet Union on 28 June of that year. The document was confirmed by the Head of the Personnel Department of the Main Inspectorate of Border Protection, Major Geringfeld; Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin (hereafter: AIPN in Lublin), Court of Honour, ref. no. IPN BU 0858/91, p. 15.

[12] State Archives in Zamość (hereinafter: APZ), Presidium of the District National Council in Zamość, Department of Municipal Economy and Housing, ref. no. 148, p. 1.

[13] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 14–16.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 17–18.

[16] A. Waksmundzki, T. Lawgmin, *Perspektywa i własności jonowymienne polifosforanu cyrkonylu*, "Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Annals" (Annales UMCS) 1976/1977, Section AA, Vol. 31/32, pp. 355–362.

[17] *Polish Chemical Society*, https://ptchem.pl/pl/honors/honored-with-the-honorary-medal-of-ptchem (20.03.2025).

he continued his teaching activity until 1992, remaining an active member of the educational community.[18]

Teofil Lawgmin died in 2010 and his achievements in the fields of education, scholarship, and mentorship were commemorated with a memorial plaque at the I Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Jana Zamoyskiego in Zamość.[19]

In the collective memory of his students and colleagues, Lawgmin remains a demanding yet exceptionally devoted teacher who combined solid scientific knowledge with practical experience and a strong ethos of service.

Teacher and Founder of the Chemistry Club

Within pedagogical discourse, a teacher is understood as an individual who "must be fully aware of the nature of their guiding role"[20] in the process known as teaching. Teaching itself may be defined as the "organization of learning and the guidance of students' learning processes,"[21] intended to "lead to desired outcomes."[22] It is therefore an exceptionally complex process, as evidenced, among other things, by the "dialectical contradiction – which in reality constitutes the source of didactic progress – between the effort to ensure the teacher's guiding role in this process and, simultaneously, the preservation of students' full independence in thought and action."[23] It was precisely this aspect of education that guided Teofil Lawgmin in his work with gifted students. By broadening his competencies to include psychological knowledge, he recognized that gaining insight into the individual needs and personalities of his students was essential for supporting their intellectual and personal development.[24]

As a chemistry teacher at the I Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Jana Zamoyskiego in Zamość, Lawgmin exerted a profound influence on his students through his distinctive pedagogical approach and his passion for chemistry, as emphasized in an interview by Professor Zbigniew Brzózka. According to Brzózka, Lawgmin was perceived not only as an authority figure in the field of chemistry, but also as a role model who not only taught but also inspired students to pursue deeper intellectual inquiry.

Professor Lawgmin was able to instil a lasting fascination with chemistry, which the author of the recollections identifies as a decisive factor in choosing a scientific

[18] A. Kędziora, *Lawgmin Teofil (1922–2010) nauczyciel chemii, major rez. WP*, 2024, https://www.zamosciopedia.pl/index.php/hasla-alfabetycznie/l/la-le/2624-lawgmin-teofil-1922-2010-nauczyciel-chemii-major-rez-wp (21.03.2025).

[19] A. Kędziora, *Lawgmin Teofil*…

[20] C. Kupisiewicz, *Podstawy dydaktyki ogólnej*, Warszawa 1994, p. 21.

[21] *Ibidem*.

[22] *Ibidem*.

[23] *Ibidem*.

[24] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 29–30.

career path. He employed diverse teaching methods, with particular emphasis on chemical experiments that stimulated students' curiosity and active engagement in learning. He was recognized as a patient educator who ensured a thorough understanding of the subject matter. Lawgmin motivated students through both traditional forms of encouragement and the cultivation of trust-based interpersonal relationships. Through the extracurricular Chemistry Club, he prepared students for chemistry Olympiads and competitions, in which they achieved notable success. He also fostered independent learning skills that proved valuable in their subsequent educational and scientific careers.[25] The author of the memoirs emphasizes that this skill became invaluable in his later academic development:

Professor Lawgmin possessed enormous patience and great authority, and he motivated students to study chemistry in many ways – both through traditional methods such as grades and praise, and through less conventional but equally effective approaches. Beyond his didactic abilities, he was always exceptionally well prepared for his lessons. Some of the more difficult topics he explained several times, but above all we felt that the teacher genuinely cared about whether students understood the material being discussed. This passion was especially evident during the chemical experiments with which he frequently illustrated particular areas of chemistry. It may sound like a truism to say that chemistry is learned most effectively through experiment and demonstration, yet I still remember the Professor's classroom experiments, during which he drew our attention to the colours of compounds and solutions, to the 'smells' of many common volatile substances, and also to laboratory safety. Thanks to such chemistry lessons, many students 'caught the chemistry bug,' which often ended with the Professor encouraging them to attend the Chemistry Club sessions he conducted in the afternoons and evenings.[26]

An interview conducted with another of Professor Lawgmin's former students, engineer Zbigniew Piskorski, indicates that Lawgmin was a person who established clearly defined rules and expected commitment as well as a serious approach to the study of chemistry: "He was uncompromising when it came to educational priorities. He required students to remain fully focused on the subject, which was crucial in developing our skills."[27] Such accounts demonstrate that Lawgmin was perceived not merely as a teacher transmitting scientific knowledge, but also a mentor who inspired students to undertake deeper intellectual exploration and to approach scientific inquiry with seriousness and responsibility. Former students frequently emphasised that his pedagogical authority was grounded both in his extensive subject knowledge and in his personal example.

[25] Interview with Z. Brzózka conducted on 26 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[26] *Ibidem*.

[27] Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

The methods employed by Professor Teofil Lawgmin in his educational work included, among others:

Chemical experiments – he made extensive use of a variety of chemical experiments that stimulated curiosity and promoted experiential learning. He emphasized the importance of sensory aspects, such as the colours and odours of substances, which made lessons more engaging and intellectually stimulating.

Patience and authority – he was a patient educator who repeatedly explained complex scientific concepts, ensuring that students achieved a satisfactory level of understanding the provided material.

Motivation – he motivated students both through traditional methods, including assessment and praise, and through less conventional approaches aimed at fostering trust and authentic interpersonal relationships.[28]

Lawgmin's students achieved considerable success in chemistry Olympiads, which not only confirmed his effectiveness as an educator but also encouraged young people to pursue further intellectual and academic development. As Zbigniew Piskorski stated during an interview: "Professional preparation for Olympiads, based on practical learning and a deep understanding of chemistry, opened the way for students toward further education and scientific careers."[29] Lawgmin was portrayed as a highly demanding and disciplined educator who placed chemistry above all other subjects and did not tolerate distractions. His teaching emphasized practical experimentation, including occasionally risky demonstrations, as a means of reinforcing theoretical knowledge. He maintained high expectations, especially for students preparing for Olympiads, and although he was not openly warm or demonstrative, he motivated learners through rigor, consistency, and a strongly authoritative approach. By organizing supplementary classes and Chemistry Club activities, he created an environment conducive to intensive study and advanced problem-solving. Despite the severity of his methods, they were effective and widely respected, as reflected in his students' success in chemistry competitions.[30]

Lawgmin himself argued that: "A teacher, almost involuntarily, begins to adopt a conformist attitude, quickly falls into routine, and performs his duties mechanically. He obediently follows the curriculum 'from cover to cover' and remains satisfied with himself".[31] He further maintained that: "Young and talented students facing the choice of entering the teaching profession have often heard from such teachers that schoolwork is not creative activity at all, but merely repetitive drilling

[28] Based on the interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024; based on the interview with Z. Brzózka conducted on 26 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[29] Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[30] *Ibidem*.

[31] The same T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 19–20; these words were a statement made by Lawgmin after a reduction in staffing at the Economic Technical School, which in 1955 changed its profile into the Technical School of Industrial Crop Production.

of the same information into successive generations of students. Yet it is clear that in every profession, including teaching, professional **ambition** [emphasis in original R.M.] should prevail, as it constitutes the driving force that pushes one beyond the obligatory norm (…) Everything depends on the teacher: whether he is a **professional** [emphasis in original R.M.], and whether – and to what extent – he possesses the creativity, energy, and ambition to rise above the required minimum and strive toward the highest attainable level."[32]

Chemistry and chemical studies, which had been his passion since secondary school, motivated him to organize the Chemistry Club, officially established on 1 September 1958. However, the club had already begun its activity four years earlier, when the first meetings and classes took place. Initially, it functioned as an extracurricular initiative intended for students who were particularly passionate about chemistry.[33]

The primary aim of the Chemistry Club's activities was to deepen students' knowledge, develop previously formed interests, encourage active participation in the independent acquisition of knowledge, and identify individual talents and abilities among students. Nevertheless, the overriding objective in organizing the club's work and selecting its subject matter was the preparation of students for the Chemistry Olympiad. The Olympiad thus functioned as a means of developing intellectual abilities and shaping active and creative attitudes among participants.[34]

According to Lawgmin's students, the curriculum of the Chemistry Club did not fundamentally differ from regular chemistry lessons. What distinguished it, however, was, above all, "the dedication of time exclusively to this activity, as well as practical engagement in experiencing these chemical wonders and, naturally, understanding the experiments themselves."[35]

The exceptional character of the Chemistry Club classes in comparison with regular chemistry lessons is also confirmed in archival documents from the Państwowe Liceum i Gimnazjum im. Hetmana Jana Zamoyskiego, specifically in the schoolwork plans for the academic years 1954–1955 and 1955–1956, when the author argues that practical student exercises are the most effective method of teaching chemistry because they develop independent thinking and interest in the subject. However, the overloaded curriculum and limited teaching hours often force teachers to use demonstrative methods instead. The text also criticizes shortcomings in the second-year curriculum, particularly the insufficient treatment of hydrolysis and the lack of adequate time for revision and problem-solving activities.[36]

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 20.

[33] State Archives in Zamość (hereinafter: APZ), State Secondary School and Gymnasium named after Hetman Jan Zamoyski in Zamość, School work plan 1954–1955, 1955–1956, ref. no. 131, pp. 2, 8.

[34] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 21–26.

[35] Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[36] State Archives in Zamość (hereinafter: APZ), State Secondary School and Gymnasium named after Hetman Jan Zamoyski in Zamość, School work plan 1954–1955, 1955–1956, ref. no. 131, pp. 36–37.

Lawgmin's observations regarding the chemistry curriculum and the work of the Chemistry Club in first- and second-year secondary school classes remained consistent in 1959. By that time, he had already trained the first laureates of the nationwide Chemistry Olympiad. He was fully aware that the profile of the club's work and the experiences gained there by both students and himself required considerable effort, particularly because no substantial methodological materials existed at the time. It was therefore necessary to rely largely on intuition in determining the general direction and subject matter of the club's work in the context of Olympiad preparation. Students developed practical laboratory skills as well as competence in chemical calculations. Lawgmin prepared them to qualify for district-level competitions and ultimately for the national finals.[37]

Lucjan Nędzyński,[38] a researcher affiliated with Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, examined the issue of fostering students' interest in chemistry, emphasizing the significant educational role of subject Olympiads in the assessment of teachers' work. He argued that students' achievements in the Chemistry Olympiad constitute evidence not only of effective Olympiad preparation, but also of the high overall quality of the teacher's educational practice within the broader school context. Furthermore, Nędzyński maintained that the defining characteristic of an effective teacher lies not merely in the transmission of curricular content, but also in the capacity to cultivate students' genuine intellectual interest in the subject.[39]

The author of the above quotation presents a concept of didactic work with gifted students in which preparation for subject Olympiads constitutes an important element in improving the quality of education and professionalizing the teaching profession. This activity is portrayed as a systematic and purposefully organized process requiring the application of diverse teaching methods, including both individualized instruction and group activities carried out within subject clubs. Particular emphasis is placed on advanced substantive work and laboratory experimentation as fundamental tools for developing students' cognitive competencies.

The chemistry laboratory and the activities of the Chemistry Club played a significant role not only in the development of students' research competences, but also in fostering key personal and intellectual attributes, including responsibility, systematic work habits, independence, and perseverance. Preparation for chemistry Olympiads contributed to the enhancement of analytical thinking and the deepening of scientific interests. Through its regularly conducted extracurricular sessions, the Chemistry Club constituted an important component of the school's didactic and

[37] *Ibidem*.

[38] R.M. Janiuk, *Chemia i dydaktyka w chemii w UP. Sylwetki polskich dydaktyków chemii*, https://uatacz.up.krakow.pl/~wwwchemia/zdch/index.php/zyciorysy-dydaktykow-chemii/115-nedzynski-lucjan (19.03.2025).

[39] *Ibidem*, pp. 23–24. Cf. L. Nędzyński, *Rozwijanie zainteresowań chemicznych uczniów poprzez olimpiady chemiczne*, "Chemia w Szkole" 1976, No. 5, pp. 262–267.

educational mission, supporting the development of students' talents, improving overall educational outcomes, and preparing participants for further academic progression and scientific careers.[40]

The activities of the Chemistry Club, the lessons themselves, and above all, Lawgmin as a teacher, remained deeply ingrained in the memories of his students: "It was our scientific club. I remember his lessons to this day – perhaps not every detail, but I particularly remember the smell after an ammonia explosion during one of the experiments. The Professor had prepared ammonia water. A tube was directing the ammonia into another vertical tube. He, the Professor, stood behind the teacher's desk and ordered us all: 'Step away from the desk!' Then it exploded, the glass shattered across the classroom, and yet no one was harmed. Oh, there were many such chemical experiments."[41]

In *Żołnierska droga i nauczycielski sukces*, Teofil Lawgmin described several methods of orally assessing students' knowledge. These included "individual questioning of students at the blackboard,"[42] not only during Chemistry Club sessions but also in regular chemistry classes, "questioning students from their seats during whole-class discussions,"[43] and "student responses during the introduction of new lesson topics."[44] He regarded individual questioning as "the most methodologically difficult"[45] form of assessment, since it often evolved into a dialogue between teacher and student while the remainder of the class remained passive. In order to prevent this, he "attempted to maintain self-control, divide his attention effectively, and conduct lessons with a watch in hand."[46]

At every lesson, he employed short oral questioning sessions in order to "verify the assimilation of previously covered material"[47] and prepare students for new topics. He also planned which students would be examined thoroughly and which only superficially, paying particular attention to less systematic students in order to "stimulate them toward more effective work."[48] During questioning, he sought to maintain the activity of the entire class – students "were allowed to intervene whenever their classmate provided an incorrect answer."[49] Assessment was conducted continuously, and after each response the teacher "provided a brief evaluation of

[40] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 32–33; APZ, State Secondary School and Gymnasium named after Hetman Jan Zamoyski in Zamość, School organization and academic year 1968–1969, ref. no. 180, p. 9.

[41] Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[42] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, p. 65.

[43] *Ibidem*.

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

[45] *Ibidem*, p. 65.

[46] *Ibidem*.

[47] *Ibidem*.

[48] *Ibidem*.

[49] *Ibidem*.

the student's knowledge, assigned a grade in the register, and announced it aloud before the class."[50] An excellent grade required an answer that was "complete, sufficiently justified, correct, and stylistically well formulated."[51]

Students' knowledge was also assessed during the implementation of new curricular material, when they analysed phenomena, solved problems, and wrote chemical equations. Laboratory exercises and computational tasks constituted additional opportunities to evaluate students' independence and analytical thinking.[52] As one former student recalled: "Written assessments usually lasted from fifteen to twenty minutes – the so-called short quizzes, which the Professor administered quite frequently. There were also hour-long tests; if I remember correctly, perhaps four during the school year."[53]

Lawgmin also applied experimental methods of assessing students' knowledge and practical skills. Experimental evaluation was conducted primarily through laboratory activities and the solving of experimental tasks. Students performed experiments in a manner that enabled the entire class to observe and analyze the occurring phenomena. Such an approach made it possible to assess both their laboratory competencies and their theoretical understanding.

Within this framework, the school played a crucial role in developing students' individual talents, both during regular lessons and through extracurricular activities such as scientific clubs. An especially effective teaching strategy was the problem-based approach, which engaged students in independent thinking and in formulating their own answers. The teacher was expected to provide students with opportunities to express their reflections and ideas freely, thereby strengthening both their interest in the subject and their motivation to learn.

Gifted students required particular attention; therefore, it was considered valuable to devote part of the lesson to discussing more advanced or broader issues. Certain topics could also be assigned for independent study, enabling students to deepen their knowledge through the use of scientific literature. At the same time, it remained important to engage the entire class, including weaker students. This could be achieved by assigning talented students the role of mentors who assisted their peers in learning. Students with average or weaker academic performance often required additional support from the teacher in the form of detailed explanations and guided discussions. Such an approach made learning more effective: students participated more willingly in lessons, asked questions, and actively sought answers to problems that interested them.[54]

[50] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

[51] *Ibidem*.

[52] *Ibidem*, p. 66–67

[53] Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[54] Cf. T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*..., pp. 68–71.

Even after retiring from school teaching, Professor Lawgmin continued his educational activities, among others by conducting additional classes and Chemistry Club sessions, which testified to his dedication to teaching and his enduring passion for chemistry. Lawgmin's influence on his students was also reflected in their professional choices. Many of them chose to continue their education in the field of chemistry, inspired by the intellectual and personal guidance they had received from him.

Master for His Students

A master is capable of perceiving diverse features of ideas, works, and social goals, appreciating both innovative and classical forms. He situates them within their historical and social context while simultaneously communicating their significance to others. Through experience, he recognizes imperfections in creative works and helps refine them, without diminishing the value of the original creator, but rather emphasizing its importance. His evaluation becomes a source of motivation for further development and contributes to the promotion of both the creator and the work itself. At the same time, the master, by engaging in the creative process, develops personally and discovers new areas of knowledge.[55]

Teofil Lawgmin was regarded by his students precisely as such a master. From a retrospective perspective, Zbigniew Piskorski stated that: "He was an authority not only for me, but a master's in chemistry and in the way of transmitting this knowledge to us."[56] When asked about the legacy Professor Lawgmin left to his students and future generations, he responded: "Certainly, a great one. Professor Lawgmin had a significant influence on his students, including Chemistry Olympiad laureates, which is an important part of his legacy. He prepared students for competitions and Olympiads, and some of them achieved high results, which was a source of pride both for the school and for him personally. The Olympiads were, for many students, a gateway to further academic and professional careers, and the success of his protégés testifies to the effectiveness of his methods."[57] It can therefore be concluded that one of the most important aspects of his legacy are precisely those students who, thanks to his demanding teaching, achieved distinction and continued their education at a high level – among them, for example, Professor Zbigniew Brzózka and Zbigniew Piskorski.

[55] Cf. J. Górniewicz, *Mistrz, nauczyciel, wychowawca pokoleń*, "Pedagogika Społeczna" 2017, No. 2(64), p. 20, https://pedagogikaspoleczna.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PS220179-32.pdf (20.03.2025).

[56] Interview with Z. Piskorski conducted on 8 November 2024, in the private collection of the author of the article.

[57] *Ibidem*.

Professor Andrzej Waksmundzki described Teofil Lawgmin as a role model who "like a catalyst acts on a substrate (…) is able to manipulate the human substrate and influence it catalytically in the field of chemical sciences."[58]

Lawgmin left behind not only a solid foundation of chemical knowledge among his students, but also the ability to think analytically and a sustained motivation for intellectual development. During his career, he educated 40 finalists of the national Chemistry Olympiad, including 33 laureates and distinguished participants.[59] Through well-organized extracurricular activities, Lawgmin promoted perseverance, experimental inquiry, and independent thinking. A substantial proportion of the Chemistry Club's activities possessed an almost research-oriented character, as students engaged in work related to chromatography, adsorption, catalysis, and electrochemistry.

Lawgmin's work at the I Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Jana Zamoyskiego, together with his broader didactic activity, contributed to raising the standard of education in the region. By creating a strong scientific environment, he inspired successive generations to pursue higher education and professional careers in chemistry and related scientific disciplines. Moreover, his methods became a point of reference for teachers in the region, while the achievements of his graduates contributed to the academic prestige of both the school and the city of Zamość.

Professor Lawgmin played a key role in shaping the scientific mindset of his students. He introduced them to the principles of experimental investigation and encouraged a creative approach to chemical problems. He did not confine himself to traditional teaching methods – he gave science a practical and engaging character, which prepared students for academic and professional challenges. He was not only an outstanding educator but also he contributed to the professional development of teachers. Through pedagogical publications issued in Poland and abroad, he disseminated innovative teaching methods and reflections on didactics of chemistry. His approach to didactics has been compared to the function of a chemical catalyst, as it stimulated students' intellectual development and facilitated the discovery of their talents. His legacy remains a valuable source of inspiration for future generations of educators, especially those who aim to engage students in learning through practical experimentation and scientific inquiry.[60]

Teofil Lawgmin received expressions of appreciation from his former students emphasising the high level of education and preparation they had received under his supervision. One such testimony was provided in a letter from his former student, Alicja Matias, a Master of Biology, graduate of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in 1972. In her correspondence, she expressed her gratitude

[58] A. Waksmundzki [in:] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, p. 5.

[59] Secondary School named after Jan Zamoyski in Zamość, *Laureates*, http://1lo.com.pl/o-szkole-86/laureaci-123 (19.03.2025).

[60] A. Waksmundzki [in:] T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 5–6.

for his outstanding preparation in chemistry that she had acquired. The following is an excerpt from the letter included by Lawgmin in his book *Żołnierska droga i nauczycielski sukces*: "I would like to thank you for the chemistry preparation I received in secondary school. I appreciated it already during my preparation for university entrance examinations, and later during the exam itself. (…) While attending chemistry lectures at university, I often compare them with lessons in this subject at school. How much better those school lessons were! I often supplement my lecture notes with knowledge gained during Professor's classes, as some topics were covered in secondary school in a significantly better and sometimes even broader way than here."[61]

In his memoirs, Teofil Lawgmin included a letter of gratitude written by his former student Teresa Kuna, who, reflecting on her secondary school education years later, emphasized his exceptional dedication to teaching chemistry and his profound influence on her intellectual and personal development. She highlighted that it was through his teaching methods, commitment, and encouragement of systematic work that she developed a lasting interest in chemistry and ultimately chose to pursue a professional career connected with the subject. Kuna also described Lawgmin as a role model whose example continued to inspire her long after completing her education.[62]

Conclusion

Teofil Lawgmin was an outstanding chemistry teacher and the founder of the Chemistry Club, who, through his passion, high expectations, and innovative didactic methods, inspired students to pursue learning and develop independent thinking. His life experiences, including those shaped by the Second World War, formed his character, making him a disciplined, persevering, and highly committed individual.

As a teacher, he combined knowledge transmission with the development of students' curiosity and experimental skills, which translated into their success in chemistry Olympiads. He was a demanding yet fair mentor who had a significant impact on the intellectual development of his students.

His educational and formative activity left a lasting legacy, and many of his students owe their subsequent academic and professional achievements to his guidance. His pedagogical approach combined high expectations with individualized support, fostering the holistic development of learners. To this day, he is regarded as a model educator who effectively integrated teaching, upbringing, and inspiration.

A concluding reflection, which may be regarded as a tribute to Teofil Lawgmin for his lifelong work, are the words of Professor Zbigniew Brzózka: "Most of us

[61] As cited in: T. Lawgmin, *Żołnierska droga*…, pp. 92–93.

[62] *Ibidem*, p. 93.

encounter, in our lives and professional work, someone who has a significant influence on our achievements and development – someone we call a Master. I was fortunate in my education to have met Professor Teofil Lawgmin, who was my first Master's in chemistry and who permanently instilled in me a passion for it, as well as the conviction that it is worth dedicating one's studies and professional career to this field. Thank you, Professor!"[63]

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Creative exploration of local heritage in regional education: The example of the "Regional Fairy Tale" project

Twórcze odkrywanie dziedzictwa lokalnego w edukacji regionalnej na przykładzie projektu „Bajka regionalna"

Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the "Regional Fairy Tale" project, implemented among students of preschool and early school education at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, and to analyse its significance in developing competences related to regional and reading education. The project was based on activating methods and on the creation of original fairy tales inspired by the culture, history and traditions of Warmia and Masuria. The study used qualitative data collection methods, such as overt observation, individual and group interviews, and analysis of the students' creative outputs.

The research findings indicate that participation in the project contributed to broadening students' knowledge of regional heritage and to the development of pedagogical competences, creativity and teamwork skills. The students became familiar with regional legends, symbols and folk beliefs, and acquired the ability to use the regional fairy tale in didactic work with preschool and early school-age children. The texts they created combined elements of local tradition with issues close to contemporary children, fulfilling both educational and formative functions.

The project confirmed that regional education implemented through creative and literary activities can effectively prepare future teachers for working with children, while also supporting the development of reading interests and a sense of cultural identity.

Keywords: fairy tale, cultural heritage, reading education, regional education, activating methods

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie projektu „Bajka regionalna" realizowanego wśród studentów pedagogiki przedszkolnej i wczesnoszkolnej Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie oraz analiza jego znaczenia w rozwijaniu kompetencji związanych z edukacją regionalną i czytelniczą. Projekt oparto na metodach aktywizujących i tworzeniu autorskich bajek inspirowanych kulturą, historią i tradycją Warmii i Mazur. W badaniach wykorzystano jakościowe metody zbierania danych, takie jak obserwacja jawna, wywiady indywidualne i zbiorowe oraz analiza wytworów studentów.

Wyniki badań wskazują na to, że udział w projekcie przyczynił się do poszerzenia wiedzy studentów na temat dziedzictwa regionalnego oraz rozwoju kompetencji pedagogicznych, kreatywności i umiejętności pracy zespołowej. Studenci poznali regionalne legendy, symbole i wierzenia ludowe, a także nabyli umiejętność wykorzystywania bajki regionalnej w pracy dydaktycznej z dziećmi w wieku przedszkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym. Tworzone utwory łączyły elementy lokalnej tradycji z problemami bliskimi współczesnym dzieciom, pełniąc funkcję edukacyjną i wychowawczą.

Projekt potwierdził, że edukacja regionalna realizowana poprzez działania twórcze i literackie może skutecznie przygotowywać przyszłych nauczycieli do pracy z dziećmi oraz wspierać rozwijanie zainteresowań czytelniczych i poczucia tożsamości kulturowej.

Słowa kluczowe: bajka, dziedzictwo kulturowe, edukacja czytelnicza, edukacja regionalna, metody aktywizujące

Introduction

The "Regional Fairy Tale" project was organised in the academic year 2025/2026 as part of the course Regional and Historical Education, included in the curriculum of the third year of full-time and part-time studies in Preschool and Early School Pedagogy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. A total of 92 people participated in the project, including 91 female students and 1 male student.

The aim of the project was to provide knowledge about the Warmia and Masuria region through the creative exploration of local heritage, as well as to enable students to acquire the skills necessary to create their own regional fairy tales and to work with fairy tales among preschool and early school-age children. Therefore, the specific objectives included familiarising students with Warmian and Masurian fairy tales; the main characters and symbols embedded in tradition and appearing in such works; the structure of fairy tales; and their significance in developing and preserving the cultural heritage of the region for subsequent generations of inhabitants of Warmia and Masuria. The final outcome of the activities was the preparation and presentation of regional fairy tales by student groups. Work is currently underway on the publication of a teaching script that will include all the fairy tales created. The script will be made available in open access through the UWM repository.

I also assumed that the aim was to determine how students' participation in the project contributed to the development of their knowledge of the region and their skills in creatively exploring the heritage of Warmia and Masuria, as well as what emotions accompanied the participants.

Thus, the text focuses both on the impact of literary education on the young reader and on the application of activating methods in didactic work in higher education. In both areas, it refers to regional issues and their use in the education of both children and adults.

Research method

The basic research problems were formulated as answers to the following questions:

1. What knowledge and skills were acquired during the implementation of the "Regional Fairy Tale" project, and what emotions accompanied this process? This concerned the state of knowledge about the culture and traditions of Warmia and Masuria; the skills declared by the respondents as acquired during the project in the field of working with the regional fairy tale among preschool and early school-age children; and the emotions accompanying the process of constructing fairy tales.
2. What characteristic elements can be distinguished in the course of the project? This concerned the organisation of project activities, forms of cooperation among participants, and methods of creative exploration of the heritage of Warmia and Masuria presented by the participants.
3. What is the specificity of the regional fairy tales created by the students? This concerned their themes, characters, links to previously known local stories, and intended age group.

   Qualitative data collection methods were used in the study:
4. Overt observation – of teams composed of students becoming familiar with regional fairy tales and methods of using them in the work of early school and preschool education teachers, as well as creating their own regional fairy tales. Eighteen teams of 3–4 full-time students and ten teams of 3–4 part-time students were observed. Krzysztof Rubacha describes this type of observation as ethnographic observation, during which participants give informed consent to participate in the study. Three consecutive stages of observation are distinguished: orientation, focused observation and selective observation.[1] Since the researcher was also the course instructor, the orientation and focused stages were carried out during earlier contact with the students. The actual research process therefore focused on the selective stage, the aim of which was to obtain answers to the formulated research problems.
5. Individual interviews focused on obtaining information – interviews were conducted with randomly selected students from among all participants in the classes.[2] Out of 91 full-time and part-time students, 15 students were selected. During the interviews, attention was focused on identifying the emotions that accompanied the respondents while jointly constructing regional fairy tales.
6. Group interviews focused on obtaining information[3] – interviews were conducted with two student groups of preschool and early school pedagogy students, totalling 92 people. The interviews were carried out separately among full-time

[1] K. Rubacha, *Metodologia badań nad edukacją*, Warszawa 2016, p. 151.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 125.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 133.

students, numbering 51 people, and part-time students, numbering 41 people. During the interviews, the focus was on determining what knowledge the project participants had acquired and what skills, in their opinion, they had developed in using regional fairy tales in work with preschool and early school-age children.

7. Analysis of secondary sources, i.e. regional fairy tales created by student groups – the analysis of the material was carried out through complex activities subject to analytical induction: data reduction, representation and verification.[4] I adopted analytical categories such as theme, characters, connection with previously known local stories, and intended age group. During the analysis I also focused on determining the increase in the project participants' knowledge.

Reading education as an area of influence on the child reader

Reading education constitutes an important area of educational and cultural influence on the child. Its aim is not only to develop reading skills, but also to shape a conscious recipient of cultural texts. However, the contemporary development of new media and audiovisual communication makes the process of developing reading competences increasingly complex. Gabriela Kapica emphasises that reading culture includes interests, habits and skills that allow individuals to participate actively in culture through contact with the printed word.[5]

Literature enables children to learn about reality, develops imagination, the capacity for self-reflection and metaphorical thinking. Contact with literary texts fosters the independent construction of meanings and the development of creative thinking.[6] Reading education therefore influences not only the linguistic development of the child, but also their emotional, social, and axiological development. As Anna Warzocha observes, literature "orders children's aesthetic chaos" and helps them build their own cultural identity.[7]

A significant problem in contemporary reading education is the declining interest in books among children and young people. According to a report by the National Library, in 2022 only 34% of respondents had read at least one book, while regular reading was declared by only a small percentage of respondents.[8] The contemporary young recipient functions mainly within the culture of the image,

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 259.

[5] G. Kapica, *Kultura czytelnicza priorytetem współczesnego społeczeństwa*, "Eunomia" 2024, No. 1(107), pp. 173–186.

[6] Z.A. Kłakówna, *Bierz i czytaj*…, Kraków 2023, p. 21.

[7] A. Warzocha, *Edukacja czytelnicza w opiniach studentów pedagogiki przedszkolnej i wczesnoszkolnej*, " Humanitas Pedagogika i Psychologia" 2024, No. 2(30), p. 92.

[8] Z. Zasacka, R. Chymkowski, *Stan czytelnictwa książek w roku 2022 w Polsce w drugim roku pandemii (2021–2022)*, Warszawa 2023, pp. 8–10.

which limits the need for contact with the written word.[9] In this situation, reading initiation beginning in early childhood becomes particularly important. Joanna Papuzińska emphasises that a person is "not born a reader" but becomes one through appropriate educational activities.[10]

Reading education should build an emotional bond between the child and literature, while also taking into account the experiences of contemporary children growing up in digital culture. It therefore becomes necessary to seek attractive forms of working with texts while maintaining the high quality of children's literature.[11] Effective reading education should combine the traditional values of literature with the needs of a child functioning in media culture.

Activating methods in higher education

Activating methods and techniques foster the development of creative thinking, cooperation skills and interpersonal relationships.[12] Thanks to them, students learn how to acquire knowledge independently, conduct discussions and communicate effectively. The teacher, in turn, acts as the organiser and coordinator of the didactic process.[13]

David A. Kolb, describing experiential learning, distinguished four stages of the educational process: experience, reflection, the ordering of knowledge and experimentation.[14] This model emphasises the importance of the individual's active participation in the process of acquiring knowledge.

Beata Gola and Dorota Pauluk point out that activating methods support the development of the professionalism of academic teachers.[15] Engaging students in action and emotional experience of content increases the effectiveness of learning and develops creativity and practical competences.[16]

Contemporary higher education increasingly uses the project method, also referred to as problem-based learning. It is based on independent problem-solving and teamwork, and its foundations derive from the concepts of John Dewey and

[9] A. Warzocha, *Edukacja czytelnicza*…, p. 92.

[10] J. Papuzińska, *Inicjacje literackie. Problemy pierwszych kontaktów dziecka z książką*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 32–45.

[11] A. Warzocha, *Edukacja czytelnicza*…, p. 92.

[12] M. Śnieżyński, *Zarys dydaktyki dialogu*, Kraków 2000, p. 43.

[13] O. Jabłonko, *Znaczenie metod aktywizujących w pracy nauczyciela* [in:] *Pedagogika i zarządzanie wobec wyzwań współczesności*, eds. L. Kowalczyk, M.J. Żmichrowska, F. Mroczko, Wałbrzych 2021, pp. 35–50.

[14] B. Gola, P. Pauluk, *Stosowanie metod aktywizujących przejawem profesjonalizmu nauczyciela akademickiego*, "Polish Journal of Continuing Education" 2015, No. 2, pp. 26–38.

[15] *Ibidem*.

[16] K. Szewczuk, *Metody dydaktyczne stosowane w szkole wyższej*, Kraków 2013, p. 12.

Jean Piaget, who emphasised the importance of learning through action and experience.[17]

The project method develops creativity, independence and the ability to use knowledge in practice, while also requiring the integration of knowledge from various fields. It is particularly important in the preparation of preschool and early school education teachers, as it develops the communication, organisational and social competences necessary in pedagogical work.[18] A teacher who has previously participated in projects is better prepared to organise activating educational activities with children. The project method supports learning through action, develops cognitive curiosity and peer cooperation, preparing children for active functioning in the contemporary world.[19]

Knowledge and skills acquired during the implementation of the "Regional Fairy Tale" Project

A. State of knowledge about the culture and traditions of Warmia and Masuria

The analysis of students' statements, collected during group interviews, and of the regional fairy tales they prepared indicates that participation in project activities contributed to a clear broadening of their knowledge of the culture, history and traditions of Warmia and Masuria. At the initial stage of the project, the respondents' knowledge was most often limited to basic associations connected with the region, such as lakes, forests or selected folk figures. Many students also declared limited familiarity with regional children's literature and local legends and tales.

According to the respondents, participation in the project activities enabled them to learn about characteristic elements of the culture of Warmia and Masuria, including regional symbols, rituals, folk beliefs and characters appearing in Warmian and Masurian fairy tales. The discovery of local stories connected with specific towns, historical figures and the nature of the region was of particular significance. The students indicated that the project enabled them to notice the educational potential of regional heritage and its importance in building children's sense of cultural identity.

The analysis of the research material collected during group interviews showed that participants began to perceive the regional fairy tale not only as a literary form, but also as a tool for transmitting values, traditions and knowledge about the "little homeland." The works created included natural, historical and cultural motifs characteristic of the

[17] M. Lubina, *Metoda projektu w procesie dydaktycznym uczelni wyższej* [in:] *Uczelnia oparta na wiedzy. Organizacja procesu dydaktycznego oraz zarządzanie wiedzą w ekonomicznym szkolnictwie wyższym*, eds. T. Gołębiowski, M. Dąbrowski, B. Mierzejewska, Warszawa 2005, pp. 224–231.

[18] M.M. Kowalczyk, *Potencjał metody projektowej w nauczaniu zdalnym na uczelni wyższej na przykładzie przedmiotu „Projekt edukacyjny"*, "Biblioteka Nauki" 2022, pp. 159–172.

[19] J.A. Stephenson, *The Project Method of Teaching*, New York 2010, p. 21.

region, which testified to the conscious use of the information acquired. Students referred, among other things, to Warmian and Masurian landscapes, old beliefs, regional names and elements of the everyday life of the region's inhabitants.

B. Skills declared by the respondents as acquired during the project in the field of working with regional fairy tales among preschool and early school-age children

During group interviews, the respondents emphasised that participation in the project enabled them to develop numerous practical competences related to their future pedagogical work. The skill most frequently indicated was the independent creation of literary texts adapted to the perceptual abilities of preschool and early school-age children. Students pointed out that constructing a fairy tale required the appropriate selection of content, language and characters, as well as the ability to build a simple and comprehensible didactic message.

The project participants also declared the development of competences related to planning educational activities based on regional literature. They indicated that they had acquired knowledge of ways to use fairy tales in didactic, educational and integrative activities. At the same time, they emphasised the importance of activating methods in didactic work in preschool groups and at the early school stage, such as drama, staging, artistic activities, creative storytelling and thematic games inspired by the content of the works.

According to the students, an important area of acquired competences was also the ability to work in a team. The implementation of the project required joint planning of activities, division of responsibilities, negotiation of ideas and shared responsibility for the final result. The respondents indicated that this experience helped them prepare better for future cooperation with other teachers and for organising group work among children.

The analysis of students' statements also showed that the project developed their creativity and openness to non-standard educational activities. Many participants emphasised that they had not previously attempted to create their own literary texts, whereas participation in the project allowed them to overcome fears related to creative activity and strengthened their sense of pedagogical competence.

C. Emotions accompanying the construction of fairy tales

Based on the analysis of statements collected through individual interviews, it can be concluded that during the implementation of the project, students experienced diverse emotions that changed at successive stages of work. Initially, some respondents declared uncertainty and concerns related to the need to write a regional fairy tale independently. The greatest difficulty for them was creating an original story and combining educational elements with a plot attractive to children.

The students emphasised that in the subsequent stages of the project, positive emotions began to dominate, such as satisfaction, interest, and a sense of agency. The respondents noted that the possibility of creating a story together fostered group integration and gave them a sense of participating in a valuable undertaking. Many statements also referred to the discovery of one's own creativity and the joy resulting from the possibility of referring to local culture and tradition.

The students also indicated that the presentation of the completed fairy tales was associated with emotions such as pride, excitement, and emotion. Of particular importance was the awareness that the prepared works could be used in future pedagogical work and made available to a wider audience in the planned publication.

Characteristic elements in the course of the project

A. Organisation of project activities

The project was organised in accordance with the assumptions of the project method and the concept of experiential learning. The activities were divided into several stages, including familiarising students with regional literature, analysing existing Warmian and Masurian fairy tales, planning their own works, creative work in teams, and presenting the outcomes.

An important element of the project organisation was the combination of students' independent work with the role of the academic teacher as coordinator and guide of the educational process. The teacher supported participants in searching for source materials, moderated discussions, and helped refine the concepts of the fairy tales, while at the same time leaving students considerable autonomy.

A characteristic feature of the project was also its practical orientation. Students not only acquired theoretical knowledge concerning regional education and children's literature, but above all, used it in specific creative activity. This made it possible to combine academic knowledge with practical experience and the development of professional competencies of future teachers.

B. Forms of cooperation among participants

The project was based mainly on teamwork carried out in small groups. Based on observation, it can be concluded that such an organisation of activities fostered the exchange of ideas, joint problem-solving, and the development of interpersonal competences. I noticed that participants often spontaneously divided roles according to their predispositions and interests. Some people were responsible for creating the plot, others for editing the text, preparing illustrations, or preparing the presentation.

Cooperation was partnership-based and relied on dialogue and mutual support among participants. The students emphasised that the possibility of working in

a group facilitated the generation of ideas and increased their sense of security during creative activities. At the same time, situations arose that required negotiation of positions and conflict resolution, which fostered the development of communication competencies.

An important element of cooperation was also the exchange of experiences among students. Participants referred to their own family practices, local traditions, and childhood memories, which enriched the stories they created and gave them an authentic character.

C. Methods of creative exploration of the heritage of Warmia and Masuria presented by the participants

Numerous activating methods were used in the implementation of the project, fostering the creative exploration of regional heritage. On the basis of observation, it can be inferred that students analysed literary texts, searched for information about local legends and traditions, conducted discussions, and created mind maps associated with the region. An important element of the activities was also the use of their own experiences and memories connected with Warmia and Masuria.

When constructing fairy tales, participants used elements of creative storytelling, brainstorming, and improvisation. In many groups, artistic activities also appeared, supporting the process of building the plot and creating characters. Students often gave their stories a contemporary character, combining traditional regional motifs with issues close to contemporary children, such as environmental protection, friendship, or cooperation.

A characteristic element of the project was also the integration of various areas of education. The fairy tales created combined literary, historical, natural, and cultural content, which allowed students to notice the interdisciplinary character of regional education. As a result, the project became an example of the practical use of activating methods in higher education and confirmed that creative activities based on local heritage can constitute an effective tool for preparing future teachers to work with children.

Specificity of the regional fairy tales authored by students

The main themes addressed in the regional fairy tales created by students included issues related to the founding of towns, the origins of symbols placed in the coats of arms of particular localities, as well as historical events, including military activities carried out in Warmia and Masuria. There were also works whose leading motifs were friendship, love, truth, the struggle between good and evil, and respect for older people. Among the fairy tales, one also finds texts addressing the

problem of loneliness among children and adults, perseverance, and overcoming one's own weaknesses, both physical and psychological. A small number of works focused on the histories of local castles, churches, and other places important for the region's cultural heritage.

In the works presented by the students, the protagonists are most often children who, thanks to their curiosity, discover the world of local tales and legends. They establish contact with magical figures derived from folk beliefs, such as kołbuki, witches, or spirits, as well as with animals and birds endowed with human qualities. In their journeys and discovery of regional secrets, they are helped by older people, who act as guardians of memory concerning the tradition, history, and culture of the region. Among the main characters, there are also fantastic figures emerging from the waves of lakes and rivers or arising from local vegetation. It is they who tell stories about the histories of towns, the origins of coats of arms, and the meaning of the symbols connected with them.

All the works are based on previously heard legends and folk tales. They refer to places of particular importance to the local community and bear witness to the history of Warmia and Masuria. However, an important element of the students' creative work is the enrichment of traditional stories with new characters and their adventures. As a result, the characters learn to distinguish between good and evil, build their own system of values, develop empathy, and learn respect for the older generation, which provides living testimony to the continuity of regional cultural heritage. These fairy tales, therefore, fulfil not only an entertainment function, but also an educational and formative one, contributing to the preservation of memory about the culture and history of the region.

Conclusions

The implementation of the "Regional Fairy Tale" project makes it possible to state that the project method is an effective tool supporting both the development of students' regional knowledge and the shaping of the pedagogical competences of future preschool and early school education teachers. The use of activating methods and experiential learning fostered students' engagement in the didactic process, increased their independence, and enabled them to use the acquired knowledge in practice.

The research showed that participation in the project contributed to broadening the participants' knowledge of the culture, traditions, and heritage of Warmia and Masuria. The students became familiar with regional fairy tales, symbols, characters, and elements of local beliefs and history. At the same time, they began to recognise the importance of regional education in the process of building children's cultural identity and the role of literature in transmitting values and knowledge about the "little homeland."

Another important outcome of the project was the development of practical competencies related to the respondents' future professional work. Students acquired the ability to create literary texts adapted to the needs of preschool and early school-age children, to plan didactic activities based on regional literature, and to use activating methods in pedagogical work. The project also fostered the development of creativity, independence, and communication and interpersonal competencies related to teamwork.

The analysis of participants' statements also indicates that the implementation of the project was accompanied by strong emotions that influenced the learning process. Initial concerns related to creative activity gradually gave way to satisfaction, a sense of agency, and engagement. The possibility of jointly creating regional fairy tales fostered group integration and the building of positive educational experiences. The students' emotional engagement also increased the durability of the knowledge acquired and their motivation for further creative activities.

The study also showed that the project-based form of work fosters the effective combination of theory and practice. Students not only acquired knowledge concerning regional education and children's literature, but above all, used it in specific creative activities. This made it possible to develop a reflective approach to future teaching work and to shape an attitude of active and conscious participation in regional culture.

The analysis of the regional fairy tales created by students shows that project participants willingly referred to natural, historical, and cultural motifs characteristic of Warmia and Masuria. The stories created combined elements of local tradition with contemporary problems close to children, such as friendship, cooperation, and care for the natural environment. This demonstrates the skilful integration of regional content with educational and didactic aims.

The "Regional Fairy Tale" project also confirmed that regional education can constitute an important element of contemporary reading education. Regional literature offers the possibility of developing children's reading interests, building a bond with their place of residence, and strengthening their sense of cultural identity. In conditions of declining reading levels among children and young people, didactic activities combining attractive forms of work with valuable literature and local cultural heritage have become particularly significant.

The results obtained indicate that projects based on the creative exploration of regional heritage may constitute a valuable element of teacher education. They not only allow students to develop their knowledge and competencies, but also prepare them to organise activating and engaging educational activities in their work with children. The "Regional Fairy Tale" project shows that creative activities based on local heritage can be a valuable tool in preschool and early school education. Creating regional fairy tales fosters the development of children's reading interests, stimulates imagination, and supports the building of bonds with local culture

and tradition. The project also confirmed the importance of activating methods in preparing future teachers to organise creative and engaging educational activities.

The study was qualitative in nature and was conducted among students of one field of study and one university, which limits the possibility of generalising the results. In the future, it would be worthwhile to extend the research to other academic centres and to use quantitative methods. An important direction for further analysis may also be to determine the impact of regional fairy tales on the development of children's reading and cultural competencies.

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Selected examples from the literary legacy of Rev. Col. Józef Joniec (1900–1956) at the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa

Wybrane przykłady spuścizny pisarskiej ks. płk. Józefa Jońca (1900–1956) w Muzeum Parafialnym przy Sanktuarium Matki Boskiej Bolesnej w Limanowej

Abstract

"Let us not forget the mighty deeds of God" (Ps. 78:7)[1].

Every museum is a unique cultural centre. This is primarily due to the direct impact of the exhibits, which bear witness to history and culture. Museums are custodians of values that strengthen the local community's ties to the region. To generalize somewhat, we can say that a museum's primary mission is to collect, catalogue, preserve (conserve), and safeguard its collections. In addition to these fundamental tasks faced by every museum institution, attention should also be paid to additional responsibilities, such as making the collections accessible and disseminating knowledge about the museum and its collections through exhibitions, scholarly publications, and broadly understood academic and popular science discourse. It is important to highlight the educational value of museums, as the heritage preserved within them can serve as a tool for regional and historical education, as well as for fostering respect for cultural heritage.

Church museums also play a significant role among museums, as they are dedicated to preserving and perpetuating the patrimony of the Church. One of these is the Parish Museum operating at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, which serves as a branch of the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów – a natural arrangement, since, in terms of church administration, Limanowa belongs to the Diocese of Tarnów.

The purpose of this article, however, is not so much to describe the Museum itself, nor to provide a detailed analysis of the biography of the famous chaplain from Monte Cassino, Fr. Col. Józef Joniec, a native of Limanowa, but rather to present selected items from the collection associated with him – specifically, the written legacy that Fr. Joniec left behind, which is now housed in the parish

[1] Ps. 78,7. Specifically, the Millennium Bible translates it as: „that they should place their hope in God and not forget the works of God."

museum in Limanowa. In my opinion, this material can serve as an excellent source of inspiration for in-depth scholarly research, which may result not only in extremely interesting editions of primary sources, but also in a deeper understanding of the region, its society, culture, and history – and, from a Church perspective, its heritage of faith.

Keywords: Fr. Józef Joniec (1900–1956), Limanowa, Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, parish museum, literary legacy

Streszczenie

„Wielkich dziel Boga nie zapominajmy" (Ps. 78,7).

Każde muzeum jest wyjątkowym ośrodkiem kulturalnym. Wiąże się to przede wszystkim z bezpośrednią siłą eksponatów, świadków historii i kultury. Muzea są dysponentami wartości, które umacniają więzi lokalnego środowiska z regionem. Dokonując pewnego uogólnienia, możemy powiedzieć, że zadaniem muzeum jest przede wszystkim gromadzenie, opracowanie, ochrona (konserwacja) i zabezpieczenie zbiorów. Obok tych podstawowych zadań, przed którymi stoi każda placówka muzealna, należy także zwrócić uwagę na dodatkowe zadania, jak udostępnianie zbiorów i upowszechnianie wiedzy o muzeum i jego zbiorach poprzez wystawy, opracowania czy też szeroko rozumiana refleksję naukowa i popularyzatorską. Podkreślić tu należy pedagogiczne walory muzeów, bowiem zgromadzona w nich spuścizna może stać się narzędziem edukacji regionalnej i historycznej, a także wychowania do szacunku wobec dziedzictwa kulturowego.

Wśród muzeów znacząca role odgrywają też muzea kościelne troszczące się o zachowanie i utrwalenie *patrymonium Ecclesiae*. Jednym z nich jest Muzeum Parafialne działające przy Sanktuarium Matki Boskiej Bolesnej w Limanowej i stanowiące filię Muzeum Diecezjalnego w Tarnowie, co jest naturalne, wszak w zakresie administracji kościelnej Limanowa należy do diecezji tarnowskiej.

Zadaniem prezentowanego artykułu jest jednak nie tyle opis samego Muzeum ani też szczegółowa analiza biografii pochodzącego z Limanowej słynnego kapelana spod Monte Cassino, ks. płk. Józefa Jońca, ale przedstawienie wybranych zbiorów z nim związanych, a konkretnie spuścizny pisarskiej, którą ks. Joniec po sobie zostawił, a która została zdeponowana w limanowskim muzeum parafialnym. Materiał ten – w moim przekonaniu – może być znakomita inspiracją do prowadzenia pogłębionych badan naukowych, których owocem mogą być niezwykle ciekawe edycje źródłowe, ale też okoliczność bliższego poznania regionu, społeczeństwa, kultury i historii, zaś w perspektywie kościelnej – dziedzictwa wiary.

Słowa kluczowe: ks. Józef Joniec (1900–1956), Limanowa, Muzeum Parafialne przy Sanktuarium Matki Boskiej Bolesnej w Limanowej, muzeum parafialne, spuścizna pisarska

Introduction

When we look at museums around the world, we quickly notice just how diverse their collections are and how varied the activities of these institutions can be. Many of these institutions house extremely specialized collections and sometimes engage in truly remarkable activities. This rich landscape of museums also includes church museums, which – in addition to the broadly understood activities of collecting and making collections accessible, as well as scholarly work – by their very nature also face pastoral challenges; or, viewed from another perspective, they can be put to excellent use in the Church's broadly understood pastoral mission.

By way of introduction, it should also be noted that church museums have their own specific characteristics, most often stemming from their nature and place of origin. Thus, we can distinguish between diocesan museums, as well as religious order museums, shrine museums, parish museums, and thematic museums. Of course, the way church museums operate does not preclude them from also collecting exhibits or collections of a typically civil (secular) nature.

Henryk Pyka notes that "of the forty Latin Rite dioceses of the Catholic Church in Poland, twenty-four have their own diocesan museums (as of 2005, PJ), To this number should also be added other church museums functioning as cathedral treasuries, monastic collections, parish museums, university museums, missionary and ethnographic museums, folk art museums, memorial halls, and museums associated with the religious veneration of specific saints."[2] Among these institutions is also the Sanctuary Museum at the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, which is a branch of the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów.

There is, therefore, an irresistible temptation to begin by asking about the purpose and significance of church museums, including the Limanowa Museum. Władysław Szczebak provides the answer, offering an extremely interesting conclusion: "The issue of the goals and roles of anything or anyone – whether an institution or an individual – is a question of identity. The Tarnów Diocesan Museum is a cultural institution, but also a church institution. Therefore, in defining its own identity – that is, in answering the question of what it is and what purpose it serves – it should take both of these aspects into account. It is customary in the museum field to use the term 'church museum' to refer to a museum administered by the Church – that is, by a diocese, parish, monastery, or other similar institution. The ecclesiastical character of such a cultural institution would thus stem from its title of ownership. Its mission would therefore naturally be the preservation of works of art, primarily due to their former sacred purpose. The museum itself could then serve as a sort of sentimental repository of memory. However, any other museum can fulfil this purpose. The Church has other objectives to fulfil. If, despite this, it has shown an interest in museum activities since time immemorial, one would have to conclude that these activities, too, should in some way fall within the scope of its proper duties."[3]

The establishment of the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów

The Diocese of Tarnów was established on 20 September 1783, by Emperor Joseph II. Pope Pius VI canonically confirmed the emperor's decision in a bull

[2] H. Pyka, *Dzieje muzeów diecezjalnych w Polsce od czasów powstania do chwili obecnej*, "Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne" 2006, No. 85, p. 27.

[3] W. Szczebak, *Muzeum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie wobec celów i zadań muzealnictwa kościelnego*, "Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne" 1997, No. 67, p. 99.

issued on 13 March 1786, titled *In suprema beati Petricathedra*, incorporating the diocese into the Archdiocese of Lviv. Subsequently, Pope Pius VII, by virtue of the bull *Indefessum personarum regia dignitate fulgentium* of 13 June 1805, decided to abolish the Diocese of Tarnów and transfer the cathedral chapter to Kielce, a decision largely dictated by the Third Partition of Poland. By the bull *Operosa atque indefessa* of 24 September 1805, the territories constituting the Diocese of Tarnów were incorporated into the dioceses of Kraków and Przemyśl. On 17 September 1807, the papal decrees came into effect. On 20 September 1821, by the bull *Studium paterni affectus*, Pope Pius VII established the Diocese of Tyniec, and by virtue of Pope Leo XII's bull *Sedium episcopalium translationes* of 23 April 1826, the seat of the diocese was transferred from Tyniec to Tarnów, giving it the name of the *Diocese of Tarnów*.[4]

Virtually from the very beginning of its existence, the Diocese of Tarnów collected documentation that later became the foundation of its historical archive. The dissolution of the Diocese of Tarnów in 1807 led to the transfer of a significant number of documents to Kraków, Przemyśl, and Kielce. After the diocese was re-established, the archival documents of the vicariate general in Stary Sącz and the Tarnów circuit – which had been brought from Przemyśl to Bochnia – as well as the chancery and the consistorial archives, were transferred to Tarnów.[5]

However, these events did not lead to the establishment of a separate archival institution in the diocese. Until the 1950s, all historical documents were stored in the premises of the Diocesan Curia in Tarnów and in the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów. This situation changed in 1959, when Bishop Karol Pękala established an independent diocesan archive.[6]

Much earlier, in 1888, the then-rector of the Tarnów Theological Seminary, Fr. Józef Bąba, founded Poland's oldest diocesan museum,[7] which was initially housed

[4] B. Kumor, *Diecezja tarnowska. Dzieje ustroju i organizacji 1786–1985*, Kraków 1985, pp. 41–54; B. Kumor, *Dzieje polityczno-geograficzne diecezji tarnowskiej*, Lublin 1958, pp. 43–82; M. Łabuz, *Duchowieństwo diecezji tarnowskiej w latach 1886–1918*, Tarnów 2007, pp. 51–54; K. Talarek, *Diecezja tarnowska w latach 1945–1970. Problemy personalno-organizacyjne*, Tarnów 2012, pp. 23–24.

[5] M. Podgórski, *Archiwum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie*, "Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne" 2008, vol. 27, p. 135.

[6] B. Kumor, *Archiwum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie*, ABMK 1961, vol. 2, No. 1–2, p. 59; M. Podgórski, *Archiwum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie*, s. 135; *Archiwum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie. Historia i zasób*, eds. S. Tokarski, J. Słowik, M. Podgórski, A. Sołtys, Tarnów 2015, pp. 9–10; R. Banach, *Archiwum Diecezjalne* [in:] *Encyklopedia Tarnowa*, ed. A. Niedojadło, Tarnów 2010, p. 29; P. Jaworski, P. Juśko, *Problematyka dziejów szkolnictwa i wychowania w zbiorach fotograficznych Archiwum Diecezjalnego w Tarnowie*, "Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne" 2001, No. 117 – numer specjalny, p. 111.

[7] It is worth noting that views – or perhaps merely suppositions – appear in scholarly literature suggesting that the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów is widely considered the oldest Roman Catholic museum in the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was established on 25 November 1888, eighteen years after the Diocesan Museum in Włocławek; however, the Tarnów institution was more widely known due to its openness to visitors. Por. [edb] Ewelina Bednarz (wykonawczyni projektu)

in the seminary building, then in the city hall during the interwar period, and is now housed in historic townhouses next to Tarnów Cathedral. Currently, the museum complex consists of: 1) the former "Akademiola" – as Tarnów's first school was called, since it was a branch of the University of Kraków; 2) Mikołajowski House, built in 1524 by Tarnów burgher Jan Mikołajowski and inhabited by the rector of the aforementioned Akademiola; 3) Mansjonariuszy House and Scholasteria.[8]

A cursory glance at the history of the Diocese of Tarnów quickly reveals that, before the diocesan archive was established, a museum had already been founded which – to use contemporary terminology – combined the functions of both a museum and an archive.

The first parish museum in the Diocese of Tarnów was established in 1949 in Tropie on the Dunajec River, It was founded by Zofia Pawłowska, then a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, in the Department of Art Conservation, naturally with the cooperation of the parish priest at the time, Fr. Władysław Sołtys.[9] Subsequently, more museums were established, including the one in Limanowa.

Establishment of the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa

The chronicle of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa records this extremely important event as follows: "A Marian Hall, or Sanctuary Museum, was established in the Pilgrim House and consecrated by Bishop Piotr Bednarczyk on Sunday, 13 November 1988, at 4:00 p.m. A large portion of the collection is a gift

Tarnów, 1888, Muzeum Diecezjalne, https://muzeumpamieci.umk.pl/?p=6374 (20.06.2026). Piotr Sierzchała of the Diocesan Museum in Włocławek writes: "Priests Zenon and Stanisław Chodyński began assembling the museum collections at the Włocławek Theological Seminary around 1870. Their private artifacts – gathered primarily for academic purposes (such as lectures on Church history) – formed the nucleus of a collection initially known as the seminary museum." P. Sierzchała, *Muzeum Diecezjalne we Włocławku. Historia i teraźniejszość*, "Liturgia Sacra" 2010, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 183. It is also worth noting that the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów has been the subject of an exceptionally interesting monograph authored by Fr. Władysław Szczebak, who served as the institution's director. W. Szczebak, *Muzeum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie na tle dziejów muzealnictwa kościelnego w Polsce*, Tarnów 2003.

[8] T. Bukowski, *Muzeum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie. Dzieje – ludzie – dzieła*, "Muzealnictwo" 2008, No. 49, p. 102.

[9] W. Szczebak, *Muzea parafialne i klasztorne na przykładzie diecezji tarnowskiej*, "Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne" 2006, No. 85, p. 77. Chronological list of parish and monastic museums in the Diocese of Tarnów: 1) 1949 Tropie; 2) 1950 Grybów; 3) 1955 Dobra; 4) 1955 Szczyrzyc; 5) 1965 Mogilno; 6) 1966 Iwkowa; 7) 1970 Szalowa; 8) 1971 Złota; 9) 1975 Tuchów (Muzeum Misyjne); 10) 1986 Bobowa; 11) 1987 Wał – Ruda; 12) 1987 Szczawa; 13) 1988 Limanowa; 14) 1990 Dom św. Kingi; 15) 1991 Odporyszów; 16) 1991 Krynica-Zdrój; 17) 1993 Tuchów (Muzeum kultu MB. Tuchowskiej); 18) 1994 Paszyn; 19) 1995 Rzepiennik Strzyżewski; 20) 1996 Nowy Sącz (SS. Niepokalanki); 21) 1997 Okulice; 22) 1999 Stary Sącz (Centrum Pielgrzymowania); 23) 1999 Chełm; 24) 2000 Łękawica. W. Szczebak, *Muzea parafialne i klasztorne*…, p. 88.

from Bishop Piotr Bednarczyk."[10] Of course, the first exhibits had been collected much earlier. Józef Szymon Wroński, a distinguished expert on the history of the Limanowa region, mentions in his research that "Father Kazimierz Łazarski not only dreamed of a museum but also gave it serious consideration, since the competition guidelines for the church included a requirement that the church have a treasury on the upper floor. The treasury of the newly built church housed precious vestments, liturgical vessels, as well as various curiosities."[11] Tomasz Biedroń and Anna Siwik state that the museum "is the realization of the vision of Monsignor Ludwik Kowalski (…) who collected historic artifacts.[12] Other donors to the museum included Wincenty and Walenty Gawron, Father Jan Rachwał, and Father Jan Ślęk,[13] as well as many lay donors."

Among the museum's extensive holdings, the valuable collection of paintings of both domestic and foreign origin deserves special attention. Among them is a work by the Spanish painter Juseppe Ribere (1591–1652) depicting St. Francis and an angel playing the violin. Józef Szymon Wroński remarks on this masterpiece: "If it was indeed painted by this Spanish artist himself, and not by a member of his workshop, it constitutes an important work of European painting in the Polish collections."[14]

The entire collection has been included in the museum's inventory; nevertheless, it is worth mentioning works by other artists, such as Aleksander Mroczkowski (1850–1927), Franciszek Mrażek (1891–1970), and the talented local painter Wincenty Gawron (1908–1991).

Until renovation work began, the Sanctuary Museum was housed in the Pilgrim House; once the extensive renovation work – inspired by the current parish priest, Monsignor Wiesław Piotrowski – is complete, the valuable exhibits will likely return to their former, now-restored location. It must be acknowledged here, with undisguised emotion, that the large-scale renovation work undertaken by Monsignor Piotrowski, combined with the revitalization of the sanctuary square, will create a beautiful setting not only for the Limanowa Basilica but also for the museum. It is also a wonderful example of how the preservation of historical monuments can be integrated into pastoral ministry.

When writing about the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady in Limanowa, it should also be emphasized that several years before the museum's opening – specifically on 19 October 1980 – the Parish Library was opened, and the Deanery Library, containing rare books from the collection of Father Jan Duszyński,[15] was organized and opened to the public.

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[10] Archive of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, Chronicle of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, p. 296.

[11] J.S. Wroński, *Muzeum Sanktuaryjne w Limanowej*, "Mater Dolorosa" 1999, No. 4(59), p. 14.

[12] T. Biedroń, A. Siwik, *Życie kulturalne miasta w latach 1945–1989. Muzeum Parafialne* [in:] *Limanowa. Dzieje miasta*, Vol. 2, ed. T. Biedroń, Kraków 2002, p. 375.

[13] K. Wojtas, *Nieznane skarby Muzeum Parafialnego, czyli V Spacer Historyczny po Limanowej*, "Echo Limanowskie" 2018, No. 286–287, pp. 29–31.

[14] J.S. Wroński, *Muzeum Sanktuaryjne w Limanowej*, p. 16.

[15] J. Poręba, *Troska o kulturę i obyczaje regionu* [in:] *Limanowa. Dzieje miasta*, Vol. 2, ed. T. Biedroń, Kraków 2002, p. 467.

Rev. Col. Józef Joniec (1900–1956) – a biographical essay



Imperium Austriae.
Regnum Galiciae.
Districtus Limanovae.

№ 254.

Diaecesis Tarnov
Decanatus Limanova.
Parochia

Testimonium ortus et baptismi.

Officium parochiale ecclesiae ... omnibus et singulis quorum interest aut interesse poterit praesentibus testatur, in libro metrices baptisatorum pro pago ... destinato, tomo V. pag. 24. Nro ser. 8. ... reperiri:

„Anno Domini Milessimo ... mensis Martii
„hoc est ... et die ... ab R. P.
„nat ... sub Nro domus 38. ... baptisat. est:

Pater Mater

Josephus. ... Josephus ... Josephus ... Maria ... Budzik ... agricolae ... Limanovae

In quorum fidem has testimoniales literas sigillo ecclesiae munitas manu propria subscribo

Datum Limanowa 27. VI. 911

Baptismal Certificate of Father Józef Joniec. Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa. Inventory No. 632/VI

The Rev. Józef Joniec was born on 11 March 1900, in Limanowa, the son of Wojciech and Agata (née Ryś). As Jerzy Bogacz writes, "They lived in a house that no longer exists, in what was then known as '*by the station*.' Today it's almost in the center of town, but back then it was Sowliny, because the Mordarka stream marked the town's boundary on that side."[16] He graduated from elementary school

[16] J. Bogacz, *Nasz patron* [in:] *Wędrówka przez lata. Jubileuszowe kalendarium 1965–2005. Publikacja okolicznościowa z okazji 40 lecia szkoły*, ed. J. Bogacz, Limanowa 2005, p. 7.

in Limanowa and then went on to study at the Jan Długosz Middle School in Nowy Sącz, and from 1919 at the Henryk Sienkiewicz No. 4 Middle School in Kraków. After the Polish-Russian War, he returned and on 1 June 1921, received his high school diploma. He subsequently entered the Seminary in Kraków, thereby beginning his theological studies at the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University.



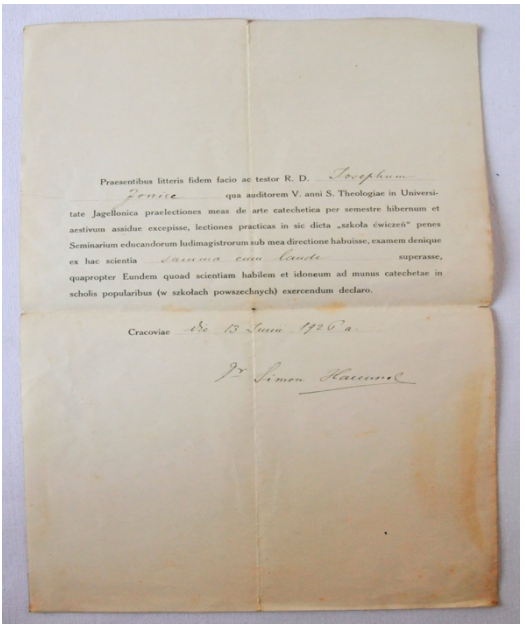
Fr. Józef Joniec student ID card from his time as a student at the Faculty of Theology of Jagiellonian University.[17] Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa. Inventory No. 672/VI

He was ordained a priest on 19 September 1925, by Adam Sapieha, the Bishop of Kraków. He then served as a vicar in Czarny Dunajec for five years, after which he was transferred in 1930 to Balin near Chorzów, where he served as a catechist and later as parish priest. The period of the September Campaign was a time when he actively supported the underground resistance; after the campaign's collapse, he joined the activities of the Service for Poland's Victory and the Union of Armed Struggle. Facing arrest on 23 January, he fled to Hungary across the green border with a group of refugees, where he provided religious services in camps for Polish refugees. Seeking to join the Polish army, he undertook a long journey through Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Palestine, where he enlisted in the Carpathian Rifle Brigade to fight alongside them on the battlefront in Africa. During his stay in Tobruk, he served as a hospital chaplain (it was during this period that he wrote his *Tobruk Sermons*).[18]

[17] A student record book from the time Fr. Józef Joniec studied at the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University – the equivalent of a modern student grade book. It contains a photograph of Fr. Józef Joniec from that period. The first page is written in Latin. The document lists the mandatory subjects of his studies, along with confirmations of his attendance and a few recorded grades.

[18] J. Bogacz, *Nasz patron*, p. 9.

Gradually, in Palestine, his brigade joined forces with soldiers who had arrived from Russia, and thus Father Józef Joniec became the chaplain of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division – the very division that fought at Monte Cassino in April 1944.[19] He then accompanied his soldiers during the battles at San Benedetto, San Elpido, Loretto, Ancona, and Bologna. He remained in Italy after the war ended to establish Polish war cemeteries. In September 1946, he traveled to Great Britain with the Carpathian Rifle Division. It was then that he decided to return to his homeland.



Praesentibus litteris fidem facio ac testor R. D. Josephum Joniec qua auditorem V. anni S. Theologiae in Universitate Jagellonica praelectiones meas de arte catechetica per semestre hibernum et aestivum assidue excepisse, lectiones practicas in sic dicta „szkoła ćwiczeń" penes Seminarium educandorum ludimagistrorum sub mea directione habuisse, examem denique ex hac scientia Summa cum laude superasse, quapropter Eundem quoad scientiam habilem et idoneum ad munus catechetae in scholis popularibus (w szkołach powszechnych) exercendum declaro.

Cracoviae die 13 Junii 1926 a.

Dr Simon Hlasiwiec

Certificate of graduation from the Faculty of Theology at Jagiellonian University awarded to Fr. Józef Joniec. Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa. Inventory No. 641/VI

On 21 April 1948, an order from the last commander of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division (3.DSK) – Gen. Bronisław Duch – was read aloud: "As a result of his appointment by church authorities to pastoral work in the country, Parish Priest Józef Joniec is leaving the ranks of the Carpathian Division (…). While serving abroad, he served as head of Catholic pastoral care, first in the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade and then in the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division. He participated in the campaigns in Tobruk and Libya, as well as the entire Italian campaign. His

[19] It should be noted that Fr. Col. Józef Joniec appears in the record of Gen. Władysław Anders's activities. For further details, see: Dziennik czynności gen. Władysława Andersa 1941–1945 [Diary of Gen. Władysław Anders's Activities 1941–1945], prepared for publication, with an introduction and editorial work by Bogusław Polak, Koszalin University of Technology, Koszalin 1998.

wartime service is inextricably linked to all the hardships, experiences, and traditions of the Carpathian units. In his pastoral work within the Carpathian ranks, he was characterized by deep faith, dedication, and fervent patriotism. These great qualities quickly won him a place in the hearts of the soldiers and earned him the respect of his commanders and superiors. Therefore, this fine figure – a soldier-priest and a trusted friend and confidant to his comrades-in-arms – will always remain in our memory. As I bid farewell to Father Joniec, I commend him on behalf of the Service and express my heartfelt thanks for all of his selfless work."[20]

On June 13, 1948, Father Józef Joniec, a soldier in exile, set foot on Polish soil.[21]

He was assigned to pastoral work in Wola Justowska, and then to Oświęcim, where he became the parish priest.[22] During this period, specifically in 1953, he completed his special work: *The History of the Limanowa Parish.*

The chronicle of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, under the entry for 1955, notes: "A local native, Fr. Józef Joniec, arrived from Oświęcim after having been removed from the rectory by the authorities; he stayed with his family for several months. After some time, he was allowed to return to his post."[23]

Father Colonel Józef Joniec died on 21 December 1956, after a long illness.

A selection of the literary legacy of Father Józef Joniec, housed in the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa[24]

The inventory of the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa has been divided into separate sections so that they correspond to the respective rooms where the exhibits are housed. At the time of writing this article, it is difficult to assess to what extent the large-scale renovation work currently underway will preserve the previous layout of the rooms, display cases, and placement of exhibits. Nevertheless, a review of the aforementioned *Inventory* reveals several extremely interesting avenues for research.

[20] J. Wielek, *Kapelan spod Tobruku i Monte Cassino*, "Echo Limanowskie" 1996, No. 36, p. 9.

[21] J. Bogacz, *Nasz patron*, pp. 8–11.

[22] To date, no comprehensive monograph dedicated to Fr. Józef Joniec has been published. Krzysztof Migacz explored the subject in greater detail in a master's thesis defended in 2000 at the Theological Institute in Tarnów pt. *Życie i działalność ks. Józefa Jońca (1900–1956)*. Promoter: ks. dr Stanisław Salaterski (currently auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Tarnów).

[23] Archive of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, Chronicle of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, p. 130.

[24] The entirety of section 4 of this article was prepared based on the inventory of the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa. See: Archive of the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, Inventory of the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa. Unpaginated.

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to a specific segment of the museum's collection, namely the rich literary legacy of Father Colonel Józef Joniec. The author's intention is not only to present this rich legacy but also to tentatively propose undertaking broader research related to the person of Father Joniec, and perhaps even to encourage the preparation of a source edition of his texts.

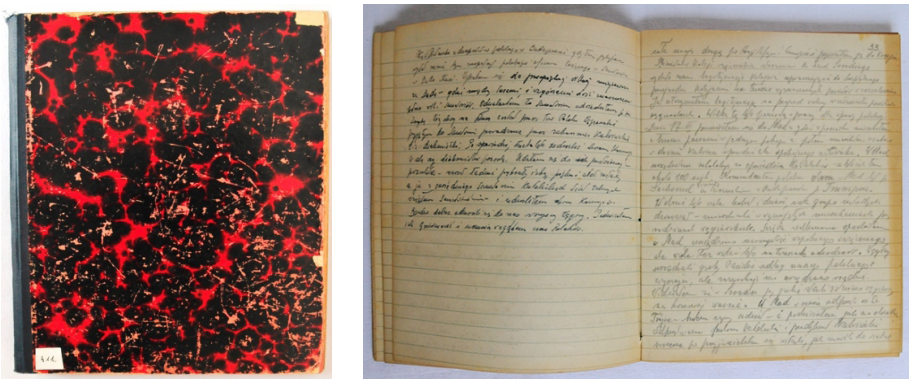
The first item from Father Józef Joniec literary legacy is a manuscript dating from around 1950, titled *An Outline of the History of the Limanowa Regio*n.

The manuscript, measuring 21x17 cm, is an account of the history of the Limanowa region from prehistoric times to World War I. The author draws on numerous sources, describing the earliest settlements, churches, and parishes, as well as events related to the town and its surroundings. The author presents his own hypothesis regarding the origin of the town's name. He lists notable figures, as well as a roster of the local population. He devotes considerable space to the Battle of Limanowa during World War I. There are gaps in the text, and many pages are blank. The manuscript was written in pen and ink in a hardcover notebook with lined pages. Attached to the notebook are numerous notes, sketches, and documents on loose sheets of paper. In good condition.



***An Outline of the History of the Limanowa Region* – a manuscript by Father Józef Joniec from 1950 (cover and title page). Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, inventory number: 676/VI**

The three volumes of *Memoirs* written by Father Józef Joniec constitute an interesting collection. The first volume of Fr. Józef Joniec *Memoirs*, covering the years 1940–1948, is a manuscript that begins with an account of the priest's escape from the country in 1940. It describes his stay in Hungary, his attempts to make his way from there to the Polish Army in France, and finally his departure for the Middle East. The text is written in pencil and ink. Some pages are blank. The notebook contains two postcards, one from Hungary and the other depicting a seashore. The manuscript, measuring 21 x 16.8 cm, was written in the 1940s.



***Memoirs* of Father Józef Joniec from 1940–1948. Vol. I – *manuscript.* The cover and the inscribed page inside the manuscript. Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, inventory no. 683/VI**

The second volume is a manuscript measuring 21.5 x 15.2 cm, titled *Memoirs of Father Józef Joniec from 1940–1948*. Vol. II – *Manuscript*. Date of creation: the 1940s and 1950s. The manuscript contains vivid descriptions of the author's stay in Palestine and the Middle East, alongside Polish troops, during World War II. The volume includes descriptions of places visited, events, people, digressions, and interesting facts. On the reverse side of the notebook are notes from 1952, from the time when Father Józef Joniec served as Dean of Oświęcim. The entries were written in pen; there are many blank, unwritten pages. The notebook is bound in a hardcover. In good condition.



***Memoirs* of Father Józef Joniec from 1940–1948. Vol. II – *manuscript.* Cover and handwritten title page. Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, inventory no. 680/VI**

The third volume of Father Józef Joniec *Memoirs* begins with an account of his time with the Polish troops in Egypt during World War II. The notes end with the events in Tobruk. The volume contains descriptions of the places he visited, events, people, digressions, and interesting facts. Only 23 pages have been written on, while most of the notebook's pages are blank. The entries were written in pen and ink. Loose notes are inserted into the notebook. In good condition.



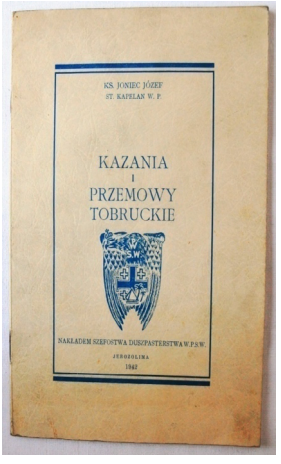
***Memoirs* of Father Józef Joniec from 1940–1948. Vol. III – *manuscript*. Cover and handwritten title page: Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, inventory no. 681/VI**

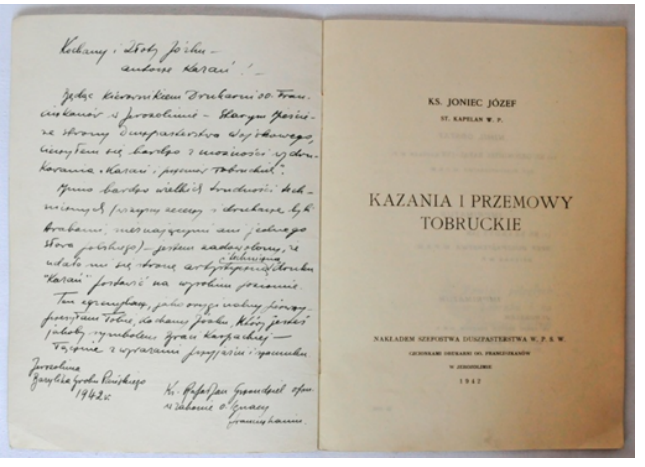


***The diary* of Father Józef Joniec from 1940–1941 – *manuscript*. The cover and the inscribed inside page of the manuscript. Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, inventory no. 682/VI**

Another extremely valuable exhibit is Father Józef Joniec *Diary* from 1940–1941, which also contains notes from a later period. It begins with a description of

the circumstances that forced the priest to leave the country and enlist in the Polish army in the Middle East. In addition to his memoirs, the notebook contains various notes, letters, poems, and lists of people. The text was written in pen and ink, with some passages underlined in pencil. The notebook is worn, and two newspaper clippings are inserted inside. The dimensions of the *diary* are 22.6 x 16 cm. The manuscript was written in the 1940s.





***Sermons and Speeches from Tobruk* by Fr. Józef Joniec. Cover and title page. Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, inventory no. 686/VI**

When presenting the legacy of Father Józef Joniec, housed at the Parish Museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa, one cannot overlook a special publication—namely, the collection titled *Sermons and Speeches from Tobruk* by Father Józef Joniec. The publication was issued in Jerusalem in 1942. It consists of transcripts of sermons and speeches delivered by Father Joniec to soldiers during the battles in Tobruk. They address matters of faith and war, contain patriotic themes, and raise questions about the meaning of fighting and sacrifice for one's homeland. On the inside back cover is a handwritten letter from Fr. Rafał Jan Grondziel to the author of the sermons. This copy is a first edition. It has 32 pages and measures 21.6 x 15.6 cm.

Published in Jerusalem in 1942, this volume contains records of sermons and speeches delivered by Fr. Joniec to soldiers during the fighting at Tobruk. They address matters of faith and war, incorporating patriotic themes and questions regarding the meaning of the struggle and sacrifice for the homeland. A handwritten letter from Fr. Rafał Jan Grondziel to the author appears on the inside of the back cover. This is a first edition. It comprises 32 pages and has a soft cover that shows slight soiling.

Conclusion, cognitive value and educational text

Dorota Folga-Januszewska notes that "the museumification of the world is one of the most dynamic phenomena accompanying civilizational transformations. Museums are the only type of institution that encompasses everything created by humans and everything that arises in their surroundings."[25] Indeed, museums seem to represent the institutional dimension of preserving human heritage – everything created by humans, their surroundings, and the environment in which they lived and worked.

The material presented in the article offers significant educational and cognitive value, portraying the museum not merely as a space for collecting and preserving heritage, but as a venue for disseminating knowledge and fostering cultural awareness. Engaging with the artifacts, documents, and memorabilia housed there enables individuals to discover their own roots, the history of the locale, and the legacy of past generations, thereby helping to shape regional identity. At the same time, local history – revealed through the stories of specific individuals – can serve as a pathway to understanding national history. The example of Józef Joniec – whose legacy has been deposited at the Parish Museum in Limanowa – allows us to link a local perspective with the history of Poland and the experiences of a generation that took part in events of national significance. Exploring the history of one's own region – its inhabitants, traditions, and religious heritage—fosters a sense of rootedness and a responsibility to preserve the memory of the past. Furthermore, highlighting the connections between the local community's history and the history of Poland enables us to view regional identity not as the antithesis of national identity, but as one of its essential foundations. The educational value of the text also stems from the opportunity to use the preserved materials as authentic historical sources. Analyzing them can foster research interests, develop skills in working with source material, and encourage a critical, independent approach to understanding the past.

I am deeply convinced that the goal I set for myself in writing this article will one day be achieved, that is, a researcher will emerge who, to put it colloquially, will knock on the door of the parish museum at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa and undertake not only a detailed archival search but also the editing of the works penned by Fr. Józef Joniec. I believe that this is not only an interesting research proposal but also – and perhaps above all – a contribution to a deeper understanding not only of this priest's life story but also of his extraordinary, charismatic personality. A reflection of this personality can also be found in the museum's rich collection of objects and items that belonged to Father Józef Joniec.

In writing this article, I have deliberately omitted a specific work by Fr. Józef Joniec – namely, *The History of the Limanowa Parish*, written in 1953. I am deeply convinced that this work deserves a comprehensive source edition. I see here a research opportunity for an academic project that might combine the monograph

[25] D. Folga-Januszewska, *1000 muzeów w Polsce*, Warszawa 2011, p. 8.

on the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Limanowa with the monograph *The Son of Limanowa* by Fr. Józef Joniec and his account of the history of the parish community from which he emerged.

In this way, we find yet another essential role of every museum: to preserve and perpetuate memory, and to rediscover and interpret its own identity.

I believe that the words of St. John Paul II – as he is now known – can serve not only as a conclusion to the topic presented here, but also as an inspiration to return to our roots: "Amid the various experiences of my ministry, I am constantly aware of how much I owe to the heritage of faith, culture, and history that I brought with me from my homeland. I am indebted to it because this heritage constantly allows me to open myself to the manifold richness of peoples and nations within the community of the universal Church. My own native heritage does not limit me in itself, but helps me to discover and understand others."[26]

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[26] Jan Paweł II, *Moje rodzime dziedzictwo pozwala mi odkrywać i rozumieć innych. Audiencja dla polskich pielgrzymów w dziesiątą rocznicę pontyfikatu*, "L'Osservatore Romano" (Polish edition) 1988, No. 2(10–11), p. 15.

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Part II

FAMILY AND SCHOOL – COMMON AREAS OF EDUCATION, UPBRINGING AND CARE

Część II

RODZINA I SZKOŁA – WSPÓLNE OBSZARY KSZTAŁCENIA, WYCHOWANIA I OPIEKI

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School and family cooperation as a contemporary challenge to axionormative chaos in society

Współdziałanie szkoły i rodziny, współczesnym wyzwaniem wobec chaosu aksjonormatywnego w społeczeństwie

Abstract

Various social environments consciously and deliberately, or unconsciously, undertake educational goals. A family is the first and extremely important educational environment for a child. The upbringing process in a family in modern times may be hindered by macro-social conditions that affect the risks of parental interactions.

School is also an important educational environment. It conducts educational tasks in a deliberate, conscious, and intentional manner. The analysis of the actual educational role of school is critical because it does not fulfil its assigned educational functions.

Both family and school have similar goals for raising children and students. Therefore, the issues of cooperation between these two entities should function in everyday interactions. Family and school cooperation, on the one hand, optimizes the process of raising children, on the other hand, is an important component of eliminating or reducing the educational threats that dysfunctional social centres can transmit causing axionormative chaos in children and adolescents.

Keywords: family, school, upbringing, social changes, cooperation, values

Streszczenie

Różne środowiska społeczne podejmują w sposób świadomy i celowy bądź nieuświadomiony cele wychowawcze. Rodzina jest pierwszym i niezmiernie ważnym środowiskiem wychowawczym dla dziecka. Proces wychowania w rodzinie we współczesnych czasach może być utrudniony uwarunkowaniami makrospołecznymi, które mają wpływ na zagrożenia oddziaływań rodzicielskich.

Ważnym również środowiskiem wychowawczym jest szkoła. Realizuje ona zadania wychowawcze w sposób celowy, świadomy i zamierzony. Analiza rzeczywistej wychowawczej roli szkoły jest krytyczna, ponieważ nie wypełnia ona swych przypisanych funkcji edukacyjnych.

Zarówno rodzina, jak i szkoła mają podobne cele wychowania dzieci i uczniów. Stąd też zagadnienie współpracy między dwoma podmiotami powinno funkcjonować w codziennych oddziaływaniach. Współdziałanie rodziny i szkoły z jednej strony optymalizuje proces wychowania dzieci, a z drugiej

strony jest ważnym komponentem eliminowania bądź ograniczenia zagrożeń wychowawczych, które mogą przekazywać dysfunkcyjne ośrodki społeczne, powodując chaos aksjonormatywny u dzieci i młodzieży.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, szkoła, wychowanie, przemiany społeczne, współdziałanie, wartości

Introduction

Each human individual in their ontogenetic development, functions in different social environments. Social environments that are especially important for the upbringing of children and young people include family, school and parallel (non-school) upbringing centres such as social media, the Church, community centres, clubs, organisations, associations and local authorities. Educational tasks are to a greater or lesser extent, included in the functions of each of these social environments. Educational entities operating in the local environment (family, school and other institutions) are relatively autonomous institutions.

Each of these social environments undertakes its own system of educational, axiological and socializing interactions. To a small extent, these entities identify themselves in the need for cooperation of jointly adopted educational goals, transmission of values, culture of behaviours and model of social and moral functioning of the young generation. There are serious doubts and reservations in the area of mutual relations and socialization and educational goals undertaken by social institutions responsible, by their nature, for the multilateral development of children and youth. The barrier to the lack of educational cooperation of family, school and social institutions is incompleteness or lack of agreement; even a conflict of interest is manifested in some social situations. Axionormative chaos among contemporary youth is caused by educational interactions, uncoordinated by various social entities, and the transmission of values which are not always recognised in society, social norms and culture of behaviours.[1]

Family as an important entity of educational interactions

In the educational process, a family is the primary social, emotional, cultural and caring environment, which from the moment the child is born, teaches them specific behaviours, recognized values, first words and views adopted by parents. The quality of parental interactions with the child depends, above all, on intra-family conditions, such as educational awareness, emotional and social bond between family members, home atmosphere, culture of family life and the level of satisfying

[1] A.M. de Tchorzewski, *Rodzina w czasach współczesnego chaosu aksjonormatywnego*, "Studia Pedagogica Ignatiana" 2019, No. 2.

the psychosocial needs of the child, as well as cooperation of parents with caring and educational facilities (kindergarten, school) in which the child functions.

Education in a family environment, as Stanisław Kawula states, "can be intentional, planned and conscious on the part of parents (reflective), just like in direct education institutions (e.g. school) and can take place in a random and spontaneous (non-reflective) manner."[2] Deliberate educational interactions in a family are more effective in the implementation of parental tasks; educationally beneficial situations are consciously created in the family community, shaping specific personality traits of children.

Family upbringing is defined in a broad sense by Wincenty Okoń. In his opinion, the educational process in a family consists of "caring and nurturing activities of parents towards children… educational activities in the field of physical-health, mental, moral-social, religious and aesthetic education… Activities such as parents' attitudes and behaviours, the emotional and cultural atmosphere of family life and children's participation in housework, as well as family cooperation with school play an important role in family upbringing."[3]

In the social environment of a family, in which parents have a high level of pedagogical culture, a certain system of educational influence is created in a more or less conscious manner. In the implemented caring and education system, parents adopt certain educational goals and rules of conduct in the family which are recognised in society and local environment towards themselves and their child, as well as pedagogical methods optimizing the child's upbringing.

The importance of family in the child's upbringing is significant, especially during the first years of their lives, because parents are the first and only, emotionally closest people who, through nurturing, caring and playful activities, teach them behaviour worthy of being a family member; they teach them sensitivity, thinking, and culture of family life. During infancy, post-infancy and pre-school life, close emotional ties between parents and a child are more important in the child's upbringing than the upbringing methods used. Emotional and social bonds in a family are expressed through parental love, kindness and accepting parental attitudes, meeting psychological and social needs, including frequent and direct physical contact and verbal dialogue with a child.

The compliance of parental activities undertaken in the family environment, with the recognized values and norms of behaviour in society, is a good example for the child to follow, both as regards behaviour of the family community and among the peer group.

Education in the family environment is indirectly correlated with the atmosphere of home life. A family atmosphere full of kindness, displays of mutual love, respect, dialogue, understanding, emotional and social support, is a liberating motivation for children to take over their parents' educational persuasion, values and social

[2] S. Kawula, J. Brągiel, A.W. Janke, *Pedagogika rodziny*, Toruń 2007, p. 95.

[3] W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 2007, p. 94.

norms. Intergenerational transmission then provides continuity to the behaviours passed on by the family, but also determines the optimal direction of educational interactions by parents in relation to children.

Within the family environment, in addition to socio-emotional relationships between parents and the child, well-thought-out educational methods are undoubtedly an important element in the educational process. From the "youngest developmental periods of the child, through the phase of school life and adolescence, parents should employ educational methods with varying degrees of intensity appropriate to the age and individual mental characteristics of the child."[4]

The most beneficial pedagogical methods in the process of raising a child within a family environment are: rewarding and punishing, educational control, parents' example, creating educational situations, persuasion and dialogue with the child, as well as the cooperation of parents with educational institutions. Consciously used educational methods within the family environment optimize the development of children in various spheres (emotional, social, intellectual, moral, axiological), as well as shapes their personality traits.

In the upbringing of children within a family environment, in conscious and intentional, as well as unconscious interactions, both the mother and the father should fulfil their parental duties with great care. The mother should do this by showing unconditional love for the child in every family situation, by showing care, emotional support and full acceptance of the child, along with satisfying their psychological and social needs. The father, on the other hand, in the course of a friendly and educational dialogue with the child, at the same time creating socially and emotionally beneficial situations in everyday interactions. This provides the child with a sense of security and belonging to the family community, sets a model to follow and inculcates social values.

The quality of educational interactions within a family environment also depends upon the level of parents' pedagogical culture. The high level of this culture is manifested in daily educationally friendly interactions between parents and the child. It is also expressed in the caring and educational responsibility for the life, education and culture of children and skills in supporting their socially positive behaviours and correcting the unfavourable ones.[5]

The process of upbringing within a family, undoubtedly expands its scope and meaning if parents interact with the multilateral functions conducted by school. This applies to didactic, educational, caring, organisational as well as recreational and leisure functions. The cooperation of parents with the teacher – educator and school enhances the authority of parents and school educators on the one hand, and on the other hand, it activates and motivates children to undertake various educational and upbringing tasks, consolidates positive behaviours acquired in primary

[4] H. Cudak, S. Cudak, *Społeczne i emocjonalne funkcjonowanie współczesnej rodziny*, Warszawa 2020, p. 47.

[5] M. Winiarski, *W kręgu pedagogiki społecznej*, Łódź 2017.

family upbringing, and directs joint upbringing activities of the family and school in relation to children.

Many modern families show parental insufficiency. The consequence of this failure may be a dysfunction of the family in the social, emotional, caring, cultural and axiological spheres. The upbringing process in the family environment is threatened by elements of intra-family life such as:

a) increasing conflicts between parents and parents and children in various domestic situations, including caring, social and upbringing situations;
b) the consequence of intra-family conflicts is the creation of an unfavourable, often traumatic home atmosphere, in which there is nervousness, stress, aggression, as well as indifference to the caring and upbringing of children;
c) emotional, social and economic bonds between family members are weakened. Eliminating these bonds results in internal isolation of the child in the family environment and a sense of loneliness;
d) an increase in non-family responsibilities (social, professional, political) of the father and mother causes the formation of avoiding parental attitudes which poses a threat to, or even eliminates, the dialogue between parents and children;
e) low educational awareness of parents; the consequence of this condition is a threat in the sphere of responsibility for the child's life, a low threshold of sensitivity to the psychological and social needs of family members and lack of educational skills;
f) an asymmetry in the educational methods used in the parenting interactions. Parents more often punish, rather than reward the child, which has little pedagogical justification;
g) cooperation of parents with educational institutions, mainly school, is active when the child is in early stages of education (grades I–III). On the other hand, in the older classes of primary and secondary school, cooperation with teachers and class educators is reduced or completely eliminated, both in the area of teaching and raising the child.

School as an entity of educational interaction

After the family, the second most important educational and upbringing environment for a child is the school. W. Okoń presented multilateral and important elements of the school's function as an educational institution. He defined it as an "educational institution dealing with the education and upbringing of children, youth and adults, applying the goals, tasks and educational concepts and curriculum adopted in a given society; These goals are achieved by appropriately trained teaching staff, educational supervision, premises and equipment, as well as budgetary support from the State Treasury, local governments or other sources."[6]

[6] W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, p. 383.

The school as an educational environment, bears responsibility for the students and the level of their upbringing. At school, students expand their individual experience gaining knowledge and shaping norms and patterns of behaviour recognised in the global society. The educational institution educates in an intentional manner, targeted in accordance with specific goals, using the knowledge and pedagogical experience of teachers and school counsellors.

The school institution plays an important role in the development of children and youth in the didactic, caring, cultural and educational areas. First of all, it shows concern by preparing them for independent social participation, for proper performance of professional work and active participation in cultural life, both in the local and macro-social environment. The educational institution influences not only the intellectual sphere of students, but also takes care of shaping appropriate social and moral attitudes. The school teaches and educates in accordance with the applicable statute and curriculum in a planned manner, with the help of specially prepared teaching staff. At school, students establish much wider interpersonal contacts than it is possible in a family environment.

The educational role of school should be primarily focused on the following areas of its activity:

a) cooperation of teachers, educators with non-school institutions (city and municipal governments, social media, cultural centres, clubs, associations, the Church and others operating in the local and macro-social environment;
b) cooperation with parents as an important partner in the education, upbringing, caring and socialization of children and adolescents;
c) improving the educational and social environment of school for the multilateral personal development of students;
d) formulating specific axiological, social, cultural goals and their consistent implementation in the course of educational activities;
e) developing a sense of sensitivity to the need to support individuals and groups at risk in economic, social and health functions;
f) shaping the attitude of care and protection of the natural environment, which is degraded and destroyed by the development of civilisation;
g) developing the ability to recognize moral timeless values, as well as rational dialogue and tolerance towards other views;
h) eliminating in pedagogical activities the functioning axionormative chaos expressed in various social environments, including primarily social media.

The aforementioned functions of the school as an educational institution are quite extensive, but important for the development of global society, local environment, family and students as individuals functioning in society.

The analysis of the activities of modern school is critical in many areas of its functioning. Tadeusz Lewowicki draws attention to "the use of political and administrative supervision over schools that change the basic goals and tasks or

formulate them so vaguely that it allows for various manipulations, curriculum changes, objectionable requirements for students and teachers."[7]

The author also proves that in modern school, there is a growing educational chaos, resulting from ill-considered organisational and curriculum reforms of primary and secondary education.

In addition, attention should be paid to the asymmetry in the implementation of pedagogical activities at school between educational-caring and didactic functions. The tasks contained in the didactic curriculum far exceed the educational problems. There is a visible failure to solve difficult socialisation situations of students. In the process of learning and upbringing, teachers secondarily expose the hierarchy of the system of values, especially the universal ones, such as freedom, tolerance, democracy, justice, support for the weakest and security.

The school's cooperation with the students' parents is insufficient and is usually limited only to parental meetings. This weakens the emotional and social bonds between the school institution and the important educational entity – the family. There is also a serious shortage or lack of cooperation between the school and non-school institutions operating in the local environment. The parents' expectations of school in the field of parental and educational counselling are not fulfilled. Therefore, the pedagogical culture of parents is at a low level.

One of the important functions of the school is to cooperate with the students' family as an important educational environment. The unification of the upbringing process by teachers/educators and parents is an important challenge of modern times, in which axionormative chaos and increasing confusion of values are manifested in society.

Cooperation between school and family as important educational entities

Social environments, educational institutions, including cultural and art centres, social media, school and family are autonomous entities. Each of them pursues its own goals, tasks, cultural, axiological, social, political and educational content, having some importance in the upbringing and socialization of children, adolescence and the adult part of society. However, the main responsibility for the course of life, the hierarchy of values and preparation for functioning in society, belongs to school and family. These two extremely important educational entities have similar goals for the multilateral shaping of the personality traits of a child in the family and a student at school; consequently, they must cooperate with each other. Dorota Smykowska rightly expresses the view that "the issue of school cooperation with students' parents

[7] T. Lewowicki, *Edukacja między utopią a nieutopinym światem. Garść refleksji w nawiązaniu do koncepcji trójjedni: rodzina – szkoła – instytucja społeczna*, "Studia Pedagogica Ignatiana" 2019, No. 2.

should be one of the elements of planning and organising school life. This means that parents and school should, on a partnership basis, be equally responsible for both the child's education and its bio-psycho-social-cultural development."[8]

Smykowska's definition of cooperation embraces an overly general understanding of this concept, but includes its basic significance, which includes partnership in organising and planning education and upbringing and responsibility for the multilateral development of children.

A concept closely related to cooperation is collaboration. It is understood by Henryk Czerniawski as "taking action for a common goal, based on identification with this goal, trust, loyalty and acting in the interest of all participants while maintaining the accepted rules of communication and conflict resolution."[9] The term given by Czerniewski contains content concerning social entities, including individuals or certain human groups. In relation to school and parents, cooperation should be defined as taking multiform actions by these two social institutions, in favour of common educational goals for children, in which there is identification with the adopted goals, expressed in mutual trust, loyalty, equivalence of rights and partnership in actions. The aim of cooperation is to optimize the process of upbringing, education and socialization of children and youth.

When analysing the definition of cooperation, collaboration and partnership, Barbara Lulek[10] treats these concepts in an ambiguous way. A feature of collaboration is the provision of assistance by entities, with one (school) fulfilling the leading role, while the other (parents) being involved in the process of achieving the undertaken goals. On the other hand, cooperation sets a further goal, divided into partial tasks, with mutual communication between the school and the family. Partnership should be understood as the equivalence of rights and obligations in decision-making.

The view should be adopted, despite the ambiguous understanding that between the entities of school and family there should be both cooperation, collaboration and partnership in educational interactions.

Teachers and family in open dialogue should look for ways of mutual relations, upbringing in the family and school environment. In the literature on the subject, three types of cooperation are most often given in the classification in order to optimize upbringing in the family and school environment. Distinguishing them is based on the number of people participating in meetings. These include collective, mixed and individual forms. According to Andrzej Ładyżyński,[11] teachers most often use collective forms of cooperation with parents, during which at least several parents participate at the same time. They can be referred to as a conference, a meeting or a meeting with an expert.

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[8] D. Smykowska, *Współpraca szkoły z rodziną w zaspokajaniu potrzeb rozwojowych dzieci z lekkim upośledzeniem umysłowym*, Kraków 2008, p. 11.

[9] H. Czerniawski, *Współdziałanie potrzebą czasu*, Lublin 2002, p. 12.

[10] B. Lulek, *Współpraca szkoły, rodziny i środowiska*, Rzeszów 2008.

[11] A. Ładyżyński, *Rodzina we współczesności*, Wrocław 2009.

Mixed forms of cooperation include, among others, the activities of parental representatives or parental councils. Individual forms include consultations, home visits or telephone calls. Most often, they complement and enrich collective forms.

In addition, collective forms, in the form of participation (cooperation) of parents with the school, not mentioned by Ładyżyński, also include joint organisation of school celebrations, participation of parents on school open days, school patron days and other school and state holidays.

An interesting form of cooperation is also pedagogical training for parents organised by the school management or class teachers.

The result of cooperation between the family and the educational institution should be the integration of both social environments, and the quality of educational goals depends upon the degree of their integration. When undertaking the difficult task of creating an optimal program of cooperation between school and parents, employees of the educational institution must bear in mind the positive attitude towards parents.

The process of optimizing socialization and upbringing of children is possible when various social institutions, including primarily school and family, have a wide area of mutual understanding, shared educational and caring activities, searching for beneficial ways for the multilateral development of the child's personality in the family environment and the student's personality at school.

However, in the actual educational activities undertaken by school and parents, mutual caution and even distrust in their social and often emotional relationships are observed. Parents fear the school's critical assessment of the upbringing they provide. Parents' assessment of the school's and teachers' educational work is also at risk. Both the negative opinion of the educational role of parents and the educational role of school, are suggested by social media. Critical assessment of the cooperation of educational institutions with the family environment results in the formation of parental attitudes towards the undertaken educational activities of school in the form of adaptation, inertia and opposition. Adaptation of parents is usually limited to following the instructions of the school and the teacher. Inertia manifests itself in the passivity and indifference of parents to the educational requirements of the school. The opposition is the parents' attitude of rejection or conflict in relation to the actions taken by teachers and educators towards students.

Nowadays, various social institutions, including social media, in their cultural, axiological, socialization and educational activities convey, in a more or less purposeful and conscious manner, their own opinions, goals, views, assessments of social, moral and ethical phenomena. These values, in accordance with the interests of autonomous socio-cultural and educational entities, are often implemented in a manipulated manner, appropriate in their content to the needs and recognized values and social norms of a specific institution.

The axionormative message of functioning social environments is often exposed by such behaviours as: striving to acquire a professional or political career,

increasing material goods in order to "have" as much as possible, rather than "be," promoting new traditions and cultural behaviours, consumerism, including the pleasure of consuming, intolerance towards other views and minority groups, conflictual and aggressive behaviour towards weaker human individuals. This causes children and young people to acquire secondary socialization and confusion of the value system hierarchy.

Therefore, in the face of contemporary axionormative chaos, it is necessary for the school and parents to cooperate in order to develop, on the one hand, the unification of upbringing trends, beneficial in the axiological, cultural and moral-ethical sphere; on the other hand, they must, a rational manner, indicate to children and adolescents the threats contained in the messages of social environments, including the mass media, in order to select knowledge and eliminate negative attitudes, social relations, behavioural norms and values conveyed by these centres.

It is in the interest of the family to raise their children in a way that they would identify in their lives the allocentric, social and cultural behaviours and values recognized by the general public, in order that they can function positively in the community in the future. School as an educational institution must also implement universal values in its curriculum: tolerance, freedom, democracy, justice, truth, help for the needy and the weak, care for the natural environment, culture of behaviour, respect for the law and social norms. Similar and even unanimous educational goals of school and family undoubtedly make it necessary to undertake joint cultural, axiological, ethical and social activities, in order to eliminate axionormative chaos in behaviour and consolidate positive personal traits and pro-social attitudes of children and adolescents.

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Artificial intelligence and the family: Emerging threats and educational implications

Sztuczna inteligencja (SI) a rodzina: nowe zagrożenia i konsekwencje edukacyjne

Abstract

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) is exerting an increasingly significant influence on contemporary family life, shaping communication patterns, knowledge acquisition, and the organization of everyday activities. The aim of this article is to analyze emerging threats associated with the use of AI-based technologies within the family environment and to identify their potential educational implications. Particular attention is devoted to issues such as the reduction of direct interpersonal interactions, technology dependence, misinformation, privacy violations, and the weakening of critical thinking skills among children and adolescents. The article also examines the impact of AI on educational and parenting processes, highlighting both the risks involved and the need to foster digital competencies and responsible use of new technologies. The analysis leads to the conclusion that effective preparation of families for functioning in an AI-driven world requires comprehensive educational support and the promotion of attitudes grounded in responsibility, critical reflection, and digital safety.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, family environment, digital threats, digital competence and digital safety, education, law, safety

Streszczenie

Dynamiczny rozwój sztucznej inteligencji wywiera coraz większy wpływ na funkcjonowanie współczesnej rodziny, kształtując sposób komunikacji, zdobywania wiedzy oraz organizacji życia codziennego. Celem artykułu jest analiza nowych zagrożeń związanych z wykorzystaniem narzędzi opartych na sztucznej inteligencji w środowisku rodzinnym oraz identyfikacja ich potencjalnych konsekwencji edukacyjnych. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono problemom związanym z ograniczaniem

bezpośrednich relacji interpersonalnych, uzależnieniem od technologii cyfrowych, dezinformacją, naruszeniem prywatności oraz osłabieniem kompetencji krytycznego myślenia dzieci i młodzieży. W artykule omówiono również wpływ sztucznej inteligencji na proces wychowania i edukacji, wskazując zarówno na ryzyko, jak i na potrzebę rozwijania kompetencji cyfrowych oraz odpowiedzialnego korzystania z nowych technologii. Przeprowadzona analiza prowadzi do wniosku, że umiejętność posługiwania się technologiami cyfrowymi (*digital literacy*) i skuteczne przygotowanie rodziny do funkcjonowania w świecie sztucznej inteligencji wymaga świadomego wsparcia edukacyjnego oraz kształtowania postaw opartych na odpowiedzialności, refleksyjności i bezpieczeństwie cyfrowym.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuczna inteligencja, rodzina, środowisko, zagrożenia cyfrowe, kompetencje i bezpieczeństwo cyfrowe, edukacja, prawo, bezpieczeństwo

Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) represents one of the most significant technological transformations of the twenty-first century, generating profound social, cultural, and educational changes. While technologies based on machine learning algorithms were initially associated primarily with industrial, economic, and scientific sectors, they have now become an integral part of everyday life, increasingly influencing domestic practices, educational processes, and family relationships. Within this evolving landscape, the family emerges as a key context in which the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence intersect with fundamental issues concerning educational responsibility, privacy protection, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the holistic development of children and adolescents.

The adoption of AI-based tools by parents is frequently driven by the demands and complexities of contemporary family life. Parents are increasingly required to balance professional commitments, educational responsibilities, household management, and the need to ensure the well-being and safety of all family members. Such circumstances may contribute to phenomena of cognitive overload, understood as a condition in which the quantity of information and tasks exceeds an individual's capacity to process and manage them effectively.[1] In this context, AI systems are increasingly employed as supportive tools for managing everyday activities, organizing family routines, and facilitating decision-making processes related to parenting and education.[2]

Generative AI applications are progressively assuming the role of digital parenting assistants, providing support in areas such as meal planning, family scheduling, time management, and the identification of educational strategies perceived as effective.[3] However, the significance of artificial intelligence within the family

[1] J. Zieliński, *Przeciążenie informacyjne we współczesnym procesie edukacyjnym*, "Kultura – Przemiany – Edukacja" 2024, No. 14–15, pp. 114–128.

[2] S. Quan, Y. Du, Y. Ding, *Young Children and ChatGPT: Parents' Use of ChatGPT in Parenting* [in:] *Extended Abstracts of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2024, pp. 1–7.

[3] M. Ashraf, *A systematic review on the potential of AI and ChatGPT for parental support and child well-being*, arXiv preprint arXiv:2407.09492, 2024.

extends far beyond its practical and organizational functions. Its most consequential implications emerge when these technologies begin to shape family interactions, educational practices, and children's developmental experiences, thereby influencing the very foundations of the family as a primary socializing institution.

The increasing integration of intelligent systems into family life raises important questions regarding their impact on children's development and on the quality of intergenerational relationships. Although artificial intelligence offers new opportunities for learning, support, and the personalization of educational experiences, it is essential to recognize that no technology can replace the value of human relationships. Children's cognitive, emotional, and social development continues to depend fundamentally on meaningful interactions with significant adults who are capable of listening, interpreting, guiding, and helping them make sense of their lived experiences.[4] Consequently, the central issue is not whether artificial intelligence should replace family relationships, but rather how these technologies can be integrated in ways that support educational functions without diminishing the presence, responsibility, and formative role of parents and other caregivers.

Against this background, the present article aims to examine the major emerging threats associated with the growing presence of artificial intelligence in family life and to explore their educational implications. Particular attention is devoted to transformations in family relationships, risks related to digital dependency, challenges concerning privacy and data protection, the development of critical thinking skills, and the need to promote responsible, conscious, and ethically grounded uses of intelligent technologies within both family and educational contexts.

Artificial intelligence and its impact on family relationships

The growing integration of artificial intelligence into family life is accompanied not only by new opportunities but also by a range of emerging risks and challenges whose consequences may significantly affect family functioning.[5] One of the most frequently discussed concerns is the potential weakening of direct interpersonal relationships. Excessive reliance on digital technologies may contribute to a reduction in face-to-face communication, diminished emotional engagement, weakened family bonds, and a decline in the time devoted to meaningful conversations and shared activities. Children and adolescents, in particular, may be vulnerable to replacing authentic social interactions with engagements mediated by digital devices, thereby limiting opportunities for the development of interpersonal and socio-emotional competencies.

[4] J.H. Chin, S. Lee, M. Ashraf et al., *Young children's creative storytelling with ChatGPT vs. Parent: Comparing interactive styles*, CHI EA 2024: Extended Abstracts of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems 2024, No. 9, pp. 1–7, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3613905.3650770.

[5] S. Russell, P. Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Harlow 2021, pp. 31–33.

Another significant challenge concerns the transformation of the nature of family relationships under the influence of artificial intelligence. Of particular relevance is the gradual blurring of traditional boundaries between human beings and technology. The widespread presence of intelligent voice assistants, AI-driven monitoring systems, and algorithm-based digital devices increasingly positions technological systems as active participants in everyday family life. Rather than functioning solely as tools, these technologies are becoming integrated into domestic routines, communication practices, and decision-making processes, thereby reshaping patterns of interaction within the family environment.

Furthermore, the continuing advancement of AI systems-including social robots, conversational agents, and virtual companions-raises the possibility that technologies may increasingly assume functions that have traditionally been fulfilled through human relationships.[6] Such developments create conditions in which individuals may form emotional attachments to technological entities that are perceived not merely as tools but as companions, partners, or even members of the family.[7] As a consequence, certain aspects of intimate and emotional relationships may gradually shift from the sphere of direct human interaction to technologically mediated environments.

This phenomenon raises important social, psychological, and educational questions regarding the long-term implications of substituting elements of interpersonal relationships with interactions involving artificial intelligence systems. The emergence of emotionally meaningful relationships with virtual agents challenges traditional understandings of intimacy, companionship, and family belonging, while simultaneously encouraging critical reflection on the future role of technology in shaping human relationships.[8] From an educational perspective, these developments highlight the necessity of fostering critical digital literacy and relational competencies that enable children, adolescents, and adults to engage with AI technologies responsibly while preserving the central importance of authentic human relationships within family life.

Artificial intelligence and emerging educational challenges

Artificial intelligence is increasingly transforming contemporary educational environments, creating new opportunities for personalized learning while simultaneously raising important pedagogical and ethical concerns. In traditional

[6] C. Becker, S. Kopp, I. Wachsmuth, *Why emotions should be integrated into conversational agents* [in:] *Conversational informatics: an engineering approach 3*, London 2007, pp. 49–67.

[7] M. Dziergwa, K. Kaczmarek, P. Kaczmarek et al., *Long-term cohabitation with a social robot: a case study of the influence of human attachment patterns*, "Int J of Soc Robotics" 2018, No. 10, pp. 163–176, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12369-017-0439-2.

[8] H. Yamaguchi, *"Intimate relationship" with "virtual humans" and the "socialification" of familyship. Paladyn*, "Journal of Behavioral Robotics" 2020, No. 11(1), pp. 357–369. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/pjbr-2020-0023.

educational settings, even highly qualified teachers may face difficulties in fully adapting instructional methods to the individual needs of every student. AI-powered technologies, however, can analyze large volumes of data related to learning processes and subsequently generate personalized learning pathways that take into account students' knowledge levels, learning pace, strengths, and preferred learning styles. Such capabilities have the potential to enhance intellectual development, support cognitive growth, and improve the overall effectiveness of educational processes. Furthermore, the personalization of instruction may increase student engagement and motivation, as well as lead to greater satisfaction with learning experiences.

Contemporary adaptive learning systems can provide targeted support to students experiencing academic difficulties by offering supplementary educational materials, individualized guidance, and immediate feedback on errors. At the same time, high-achieving learners may benefit from access to more advanced content designed to foster the development of their talents and interests. Consequently, AI technologies can contribute to a more inclusive educational environment in which learning opportunities are tailored to individual developmental needs.

The growing popularity of AI-supported applications extends beyond formal education and increasingly encompasses psychological well-being and self-regulation. For example, platforms designed to support mindfulness and relaxation practices have gained widespread adoption. One notable example is the Calm application, one of the most frequently used mindfulness platforms worldwide, which offers personalized meditation programs, breathing exercises, and tools aimed at reducing stress and improving sleep quality.[9] Similarly, educational platforms such as Duolingo employ machine-learning mechanisms to personalize foreign-language learning by analyzing users' progress and adapting the difficulty of tasks to their current competencies.[10] These innovations contribute to making education more flexible, responsive, and aligned with individual learning trajectories, while facilitating the systematic monitoring of student progress and the identification of areas requiring additional support.

Despite these benefits, it is essential to recognize the potential risks associated with excessive reliance on AI-based educational tools. Overuse of such technologies may limit the development of imagination, originality, and the capacity for independent problem-solving and creative thinking. The routine replacement of independent information seeking, critical source evaluation, and analytical reasoning with AI-generated responses may contribute to the weakening of cognitive competencies, reduced learning motivation, and diminished ability to formulate

[9] J. Huberty et al., *Characteristics and Usage Patterns Among 12,151 Paid Subscribers of the Calm Meditation App: Cross-Sectional Survey*, "Journal of Medical Internet Research" 2019, No. 21(11), e15648, DOI: 10.2196/15648.

[10] B. Settles, B. Meeder, *A trainable spaced repetition model for language learning* [in:] *Proceedings of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL)*, pp. 1848–1858.

independent judgments and conclusions.[11] Particularly concerning is the perception of artificial intelligence as a shortcut to academic success that minimizes the need for intellectual effort, which remains a fundamental prerequisite for cognitive development and the cultivation of intellectual autonomy.[12]

Another significant educational challenge concerns the impact of artificial intelligence on the reliable assessment of students' actual competencies. Contemporary generative AI models are capable of producing essays, presentations, analyses, projects, and other educational materials of remarkable linguistic and substantive quality. This creates the possibility that AI-generated content may be presented as students' own intellectual work, thereby blurring the distinction between independent learning and technologically assisted performance. Although educators are often able to recognize content that has been substantially generated with AI support, unequivocal verification of authorship remains problematic.

At the same time, the development of AI-based technologies opens new possibilities for collaboration between schools and families. Parents increasingly have access to tools that enable them to monitor their children's educational progress, analyze learning activities, and identify areas requiring additional support. AI systems can generate personalized reports on student achievement, detect learning difficulties, and recommend interventions tailored to individual educational needs. Such solutions may strengthen parental involvement in the educational process and contribute to a more effective partnership between families and educational institutions.

One of the most significant risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence in family and educational environments is the possibility of algorithmic bias.[13] AI models are trained on vast datasets created by humans and may therefore reflect existing social, cultural, and cognitive biases. Consequently, artificial intelligence systems may not only reproduce but also reinforce and disseminate stereotypes. This issue is particularly important in the case of children and adolescents, whose beliefs and perceptions may be influenced by biased algorithmic outputs. Within family contexts, where children increasingly rely on AI systems for information seeking, educational decision-making, and worldview formation, algorithmic bias may have especially far-reaching consequences. If AI systems contain biases related to gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other social characteristics, they may shape young people's attitudes and contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypical patterns of thinking.[14]

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[11] *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO 2023, DOI: https://doi.org/10.54675/EWZM9535.

[12] *Digital Education Outlook 2023: Towards an Effective Digital Education Ecosystem*, Paris 2023, p. 63, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/c74f03de-en.

[13] *Ibidem*, pp. 245–257.

[14] S.U. Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, New York 2018, p. 5.

Equally important is the possibility that artificial intelligence may gradually alter functions historically associated with adult caregivers. AI technologies may influence the formation of family rituals and narratives, which play a crucial role in constructing identity and strengthening emotional bonds.[15] The ability of AI systems to generate personalized stories, play scenarios, and suggestions for family activities creates new opportunities for shared symbolic experiences and family engagement.[16] However, when increasing aspects of emotional regulation, family mediation, and conflict resolution are delegated to technological systems, there is a risk of gradually weakening the educational and caregiving role of adults.

Children themselves increasingly perceive intelligent devices as social actors and may develop emotional attachments toward them. Excessive dependence on immediate responses generated by AI systems can reduce opportunities for dialogue with parents, limit occasions for independent thinking, impoverish linguistic experiences, and weaken children's ability to tolerate frustration and delay gratification. Nevertheless, these concerns do not imply that artificial intelligence constitutes an inherent threat to family life. Rather, the crucial issue lies in maintaining an appropriate balance in which technology remains a tool that supports human development rather than replacing human presence, responsibility, and engagement.

It must therefore be emphasized that modern technologies cannot substitute for personal relationships, dialogue-based education, or experiences acquired through direct engagement with the real world. The foundations of healthy cognitive, emotional, and social development continue to rest upon human relationships characterized by closeness, mutual trust, and authentic communication.[17] Preserving the primacy of these values, while recognizing that artificial intelligence can only support rather than replace human relationships, constitutes one of the fundamental conditions for the responsible and safe integration of emerging technologies into family life.

Threats related to privacy protection and data security

Among the most significant challenges associated with the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into family life are those concerning privacy protection and data security. As AI-powered technologies become embedded in everyday domestic

[15] S.J. Wolin, L.A. Bennett, *Family rituals*, "Family Process" 1984, No. 23(3), pp. 401–420, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1984.00401.x.

[16] M. Petsolari, S.B, Ibrahim, P. Slovak, *Sociotechnical imaginaries: Envisioning and understanding AI parenting supports through design fiction* [in:] *Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, eds. F.F. Mueller, P. Kyburz, J.R. Williamson et al., 2024, pp. 1–27.

[17] M.B. Szondy, Á. Magyary, *Artificial intelligence (AI) in the family system: Possible positive and detrimental effects on parenting, communication and family dynamics*, "European Journal of Mental Health" 2025, No. 20, pp. 1–8, DOI: https://doi.org/10.5708/EJMH.20.2025.0038.

activities, family members – and particularly children – are increasingly exposed to risks related to the collection, storage, processing, and dissemination of personal information. Children using AI-based applications and conversational systems may unknowingly disclose sensitive data, including their names, home addresses, telephone numbers, school information, photographs, or other personally identifiable details. Due to their limited awareness of digital risks and their developmental characteristics, children often lack the ability to fully understand the long-term consequences of sharing personal information within digital environments. Consequently, the widespread adoption of AI technologies in educational and family contexts raises important questions regarding the protection of children's digital rights and the responsibilities of parents, educators, and technology providers.

A related concern is the phenomenon commonly referred to as *sharenting*, which describes the extensive sharing of information, photographs, videos, and personal details about children by parents on social media platforms and other online environments.[18] While many parents engage in such practices with positive intentions, including documenting family experiences or maintaining connections with relatives and friends, the long-term implications for children's privacy are often underestimated. Once digital content has been published online, it may remain accessible for many years, even after its removal from the original platform. Information can be archived by search engines, replicated across social media networks, stored on external servers, or downloaded and retained by other users. As a result, children may enter adulthood with extensive digital footprints created without their informed consent.

The permanence of digital records raises important ethical and educational concerns. Individuals may later experience discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological distress when childhood images, personal stories, or sensitive information remain publicly accessible and no longer correspond to their current identity, personal values, or life circumstances. Furthermore, extensive digital profiling may affect future educational, social, and professional opportunities. These considerations highlight the growing importance of digital responsibility and reinforce the principle that protecting children's privacy constitutes one of the fundamental parental obligations in the era of artificial intelligence.[19] The privacy challenges associated with AI technologies extend far beyond the voluntary disclosure of information by users. Contemporary AI systems are not limited to responding to commands; they are increasingly capable of continuously collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data related to users' everyday activities, behaviours, preferences, and interactions. Smart speakers, voice assistants, intelligent home monitoring systems, wearable devices, and connected household appliances generate vast

[18] Ş.B. Tosuntaş, M.D. Griffiths, *Sharenting: A systematic review of the empirical literature*, "Journal of Family Theory & Review" 2024, No. 16(3), pp. 525–562, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12566.

[19] M. Tartari, A. Lavorgna, P. Ugwudike, *Share with care: Negotiating children's health and safety in sharenting practices*, "Media, Culture & Society" 2023, No. 45(7), pp. 1453–1470, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231182002.

amounts of data that can be used to construct detailed profiles of family members. Consequently, establishing clear boundaries between the private sphere and the domain of data collection becomes increasingly difficult. Activities that were once considered entirely private may now become part of complex digital ecosystems in which personal information is continuously generated, processed, and potentially shared across multiple technological platforms.

In this context, issues related to individual autonomy, privacy protection, and the influence of digital technologies on interpersonal relationships acquire particular significance. The increasing presence of AI-driven technologies within domestic environments raises concerns regarding the extent to which everyday family interactions are subject to observation, analysis, and algorithmic interpretation.[20] The home has traditionally been regarded as a protected space characterized by intimacy, trust, and freedom from external surveillance. However, the proliferation of intelligent technologies introduces new forms of data collection that may fundamentally alter perceptions of privacy and personal autonomy within family life.

Particularly controversial is the possibility that AI systems may collect and process highly sensitive information concerning emotional states, interpersonal conflicts, communication patterns, and other intimate aspects of family relationships.[21] Recent advances in affective computing and emotional AI increasingly enable technological systems to infer emotional conditions through voice analysis, facial expressions, behavioural patterns, physiological signals, and interaction histories. While such capabilities may offer benefits in areas such as mental health support and personalized services, they simultaneously raise serious concerns regarding the surveillance of emotional life and the potential misuse of deeply personal information.

The expansion of AI-based technologies therefore blurs the distinction between legitimate data collection and excessive intrusion into private life. As algorithms become more sophisticated and data-driven systems gain access to increasingly comprehensive information about individuals and families, important questions emerge concerning data ownership, informed consent, transparency, accountability, and the limits of technological intervention within the family sphere. These challenges are particularly significant in the case of children, whose developmental vulnerability and limited capacity to provide informed consent necessitate enhanced forms of legal and ethical protection.

From an educational perspective, these developments underscore the urgent need to cultivate digital literacy, privacy awareness, and critical understanding of data practices among both parents and children. Family members should be equipped with the knowledge and competencies necessary to make informed decisions

[20] J.S. Edu, J.M. Such, G, Suarez-Tangil, *Smart home personal assistants: A security and privacy review*, "ACM Computing Surveys" 2021, No. 53(6), pp. 1–36, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3412383.

[21] A. McStay, *Emotional AI, soft biometrics and the surveillance of emotional life: An unusual consensus on privacy*, "Big Data & Society" 2020, No. 7(1), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720904386.

regarding the disclosure of personal information, the use of AI-powered services, and the management of their digital identities. Educational initiatives should therefore promote not only technical skills but also ethical reflection concerning the consequences of data sharing, surveillance, and algorithmic decision-making.

Against this background, the development of coherent legal frameworks and ethical standards becomes increasingly important. Such frameworks should establish clear principles governing the collection, processing, storage, and use of personal and family-related data while ensuring respect for the autonomy, dignity, and privacy of all family members.[22] Ultimately, the responsible integration of artificial intelligence into family life requires a careful balance between technological innovation and the preservation of fundamental human rights, ensuring that advances in data-driven technologies contribute to family well-being without compromising privacy, security, and personal freedom.

Ethical dilemmas surrounding the use of artificial intelligence

Alongside the numerous opportunities offered by artificial intelligence, its growing presence within family environments raises a series of complex ethical dilemmas that extend beyond technological considerations and touch upon fundamental questions concerning human autonomy, responsibility, privacy, and the moral dimensions of family life. As AI systems become increasingly integrated into domestic routines, educational practices, and interpersonal interactions, families are confronted with the challenge of determining how these technologies can be used in ways that enhance human well-being without undermining individual agency, relational authenticity, or ethical accountability.

One of the most significant ethical concerns relates to the collection, processing, and use of sensitive personal data. AI-powered systems routinely gather large amounts of information generated through users' interactions, behaviours, preferences, and communication patterns. Within family settings, such data may include highly sensitive information concerning children's developmental trajectories, educational performance, emotional states, health conditions, and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, important questions emerge regarding who has access to these data, how they are stored and processed, and for what purposes they may ultimately be used. The increasing reliance on data-driven technologies requires families to navigate a complex landscape in which the benefits of personalization and convenience must be balanced against the protection of privacy and individual rights.

[22] V. Wylde, E. Prakash, C. Hewage, J. Platts, *Ethical challenges in the use of digital technologies: AI and Big Data* [in:] *Digital transformation in policing: The promise, perils and solutions. "Advanced Sciences and Technologies for Security Applications" 2023*, eds. R. Montasari, V. Carpenter, A.J. Masys, pp. 33–58, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09691-4_3.

In this context, the development of AI literacy assumes particular importance. AI literacy may be understood as the ability to comprehend the basic principles underlying artificial intelligence systems, critically evaluate the mechanisms through which data are collected and utilized, and recognize the influence that algorithmic systems can exert on human behaviour, decision-making processes, and social relationships.[23] Beyond technical knowledge, AI literacy encompasses critical reflection on the ethical, social, and psychological implications of intelligent technologies. It enables individuals to make informed decisions regarding the use of AI tools and to recognize both their opportunities and limitations.

The cultivation of AI literacy is particularly important in contemporary families, where children and adolescents often become familiar with emerging technologies at an early age and may develop digital skills that exceed those of their parents. This generational asymmetry can create challenges for parental guidance and reduce adults' ability to support children effectively in navigating digital environments. When parents lack sufficient understanding of AI technologies, they may encounter difficulties in identifying potential risks, establishing appropriate boundaries, or promoting responsible technology use. As a result, educational researchers increasingly emphasize the importance of intergenerational learning models that encourage parents and children to explore AI technologies together. Such approaches not only contribute to the development of digital competencies but also strengthen family relationships through dialogue, collaboration, and shared reflection on the ethical dimensions of technological innovation.[24]

Another important ethical dilemma concerns the potential influence of AI systems on human autonomy and independent judgment. The increasing availability of AI-generated recommendations, advice, and decision-support mechanisms may encourage users to rely on algorithmic outputs rather than engaging in independent reflection and critical reasoning. Within family contexts, this tendency may affect educational choices, parenting decisions, and everyday problem-solving practices. While AI can undoubtedly provide valuable support, excessive dependence on algorithmic guidance may weaken individuals' capacity to make autonomous decisions and assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions. This issue is particularly relevant for children and adolescents, whose critical thinking skills and moral reasoning capacities are still developing.

Furthermore, ethical concerns arise regarding transparency and accountability. Many contemporary AI systems operate as so-called "black boxes," making it difficult

[23] S. Druga, F.L, Christoph, A.J. Ko, *Family as a third space for AI literacies: How do children and parents learn about AI together?* [in:] *Proceedings of the 2022 CHI Conference on human factors in computing systems (CHI '22)*, eds. S. Barbosa, C. Lampe, A. Appert, D.A. Shamma, S. Drucker, J. Williamson, K. Yatani, 2022. pp. 1–17. Association for Computing Machinery. https://doi.org/10.1145/3491102.3502031.

[24] M. Salah, F. Abdelfattah, H.A. Halbusi, *The good, the bad, and the GPT: Reviewing the impact of generative artificial intelligence on psychology*, "Current Opinion in Psychology" 2024, No. 59, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2024.101872.

for users to understand how specific recommendations, classifications, or decisions are generated. The opacity of algorithmic processes may limit users' ability to evaluate the reliability, fairness, and accuracy of AI-generated outputs. In family and educational contexts, such limitations can become particularly problematic when technologies influence learning pathways, behavioural assessments, or recommendations concerning children's development. Ethical use of artificial intelligence therefore requires not only technological innovation but also transparency, explainability, and mechanisms that allow users to question and critically assess algorithmic decisions.

In the field of educational applications of artificial intelligence, particular responsibility rests with parents, who play a crucial role in shaping the digital competencies of children and adolescents. Their task extends beyond discussing the opportunities and risks associated with emerging technologies. Parents are also responsible for providing appropriate supervision, establishing clear rules regarding technology use, and encouraging critical engagement with AI-generated content. Effective parental mediation involves helping children understand the limitations of artificial intelligence, recognize potential misinformation, protect their privacy, and develop the capacity to use technological tools in a reflective and ethically responsible manner.

Ultimately, the ethical challenges associated with artificial intelligence cannot be addressed solely through technological solutions. Addressing these challenges requires the development of a broader culture of ethical innovation based on transparency, responsibility, social participation, and awareness of the long-term consequences of technological decisions.[25] They require continuous dialogue among families, educators, policymakers, and technology developers concerning the values that should guide the design and use of intelligent systems. From this perspective, AI literacy becomes not only a technological competence but also a civic and ethical one, enabling individuals to participate responsibly in an increasingly AI-mediated society. The future integration of artificial intelligence into family life will therefore depend not only on technological advancements but also on the capacity of individuals and communities to ensure that innovation remains aligned with human dignity, personal autonomy, social responsibility, and the well-being of future generations.

The need for education for the responsible use of artificial intelligence

In light of the opportunities and risks associated with the rapid development of artificial intelligence, fostering a culture of responsible technology use has become one of the fundamental objectives of contemporary education. Digital education can no longer be limited to teaching technical skills related to the operation of devices

[25] P. Jura, *W stronę ekointeligencji – narzędzia AI w ochronie środowiska i edukacji ekologicznej*, "Studia ad Didacticam Scientiarum Socialium Pertinentia" 2025, No. 424(15), pp. 140–142, DOI 10.24917/20837276.15.9.

and applications. Rather, it must encompass the development of critical reflection, personal responsibility, ethical awareness, and the capacity to navigate increasingly complex digital environments in an informed and autonomous manner. In this context, scholars emphasize that the responsibility for introducing children and adolescents to the world of emerging technologies rests primarily with parents, educators, and educational institutions.[26] Consequently, one of the central educational tasks of the twenty-first century is the cultivation of digital competencies, critical thinking skills, the ability to evaluate the quality and credibility of information sources, and the responsible use of AI-based resources.[27]

The educational significance of artificial intelligence is particularly evident among children and adolescents, who grow up in environments deeply embedded in digital technologies. Unlike previous generations, they are exposed from an early age to AI-powered systems such as recommendation algorithms, intelligent assistants, educational platforms, and generative language models, which have become common tools for learning, communication, and information seeking. As a result, artificial intelligence is transforming both educational environments and the processes of learning and knowledge acquisition.

This transformation challenges traditional models of education based on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. Increasingly, educational systems are adopting adaptive and personalized approaches that use data analytics and machine learning to respond to individual learning needs. In this context, students become active participants in the learning process, while AI systems can monitor progress, identify learning difficulties, and recommend tailored educational activities, thereby supporting both academic achievement and learner autonomy.

However, the benefits of AI in education can only be fully realized when accompanied by the development of appropriate digital competencies. Families play a crucial role in fostering responsible and critical engagement with technology. Essential skills include evaluating the credibility of information, recognizing misinformation and algorithmic bias, understanding the limitations of AI-generated content, and managing one's digital identity. Equally important is establishing clear principles for the educational use of AI, ensuring that technology supports learning, creativity, and independent thinking rather than replacing intellectual effort and personal engagement.

A well-functioning family represents one of the most important protective factors against the risks associated with excessive technology use and digital dependency. Consequently, preventive measures, including media and digital education, assume increasing significance in contemporary family life.[28] Media education

[26] L. Floridi, *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, Oxford 2023, pp. 88–95.

[27] N. Selwyn, *Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates*, London 2021, pp. 102–109.

[28] S. Dzierzyńska-Breś, *Rodzic jako uczestnik profilaktyki uzależnień w szkole* [in:] *Profilaktyka zachowań ryzykownych – dobre praktyki i dowody naukowe*, eds. M. Muskała, H. Karaszewska, Poznań 2023, pp. 7–9.

should support children's healthy functioning within digital environments while promoting balanced habits that contribute to both psychological well-being and physical health. Such educational efforts should not be directed solely at children but should encompass the entire family environment, since the home remains the primary context in which children access and engage with digital media.[29]

Parents occupy a particularly important position in shaping children's first experiences with digital technologies. They introduce children to the digital world, establish rules regarding media use, and define appropriate boundaries for engagement with technological devices.[30] Their role extends beyond supervision and regulation; parents also serve as primary models whose behaviours significantly influence children's attitudes toward technology. Through their own patterns of media consumption and technology use, adults communicate norms regarding responsible, balanced, and purposeful engagement with digital tools.

The modelling of healthy technology-use behaviours constitutes a key dimension of contemporary digital parenting. By demonstrating moderation, critical reflection, and self-regulation, parents shape children's attitudes toward digital technologies. It is therefore important to ensure that technology use does not limit opportunities for social interaction, family communication, physical activity, or educational development.

Another essential aspect of digital education concerns privacy and data protection. Parents should verify whether the applications and AI systems used by their children comply with data protection standards and respect children's privacy rights. At the same time, children should be educated about privacy, informed consent, digital footprints, and responsible data-sharing practices.

Preparing children for life in an AI-driven society requires more than technical skills. It also demands the development of critical thinking, ethical awareness, autonomy, and responsibility. This approach is consistent with broader analyses of the societal consequences of artificial intelligence, which emphasise that future generations will need not only digital competencies but also adaptability, emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and the ability to cooperate effectively with AI-supported systems in both educational and professional environments.[31] By fostering these competencies and maintaining the primacy of human relationships, families can help ensure that artificial intelligence serves as a tool for human development rather than a source of dependency or manipulation.

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[29] R. Matusiak, *Edukacja medialna jako forma kształtowania postaw prozdrowotnych i przeciwdziałania uzależnieniu od mediów*, „Kwartalnik Naukowy Fides et Ratio" 2017, No. 32(4), pp. 176–184.

[30] M. Dinleyici et al., *Media Use by Children, and Parents' Views on Children's Media Usage*, „Interactive Journal of Medical Research" 2016, No. 5(2), e18, DOI: https://doi.org/10.2196/ijmr.5668.

[31] M. Kawa, *The Future of Skills and Labor Market in the Age of AI*, "Studia Ad Didacticam Scientiarum Socialium Pertinentia" 2025, No. 424(15), pp. 168–170, DOI: 10.24917/20837276.15.11.

From the perspective of family safety, Article 95 §1 of the Polish Family and Guardianship Code[32] obliges parents to exercise parental responsibility in a manner that protects children from digital threats, including risks associated with the misuse of artificial intelligence technologies. Furthermore, the legal framework established in Chapter 4 of the Polish Act of 18 July 2002[33] on the Provision of Electronic Services provides safeguards for the protection of personal data within digital services, which is particularly relevant for families increasingly relying on AI-based technologies in everyday life.

Conclusion

The rapid development of artificial intelligence is transforming family life, which remains the primary environment for socialization, education, and emotional development. As AI technologies become increasingly integrated into everyday domestic practices, they offer new opportunities for learning, communication, organization, and personalized support. At the same time, their growing presence raises important educational, ethical, and social challenges that require careful consideration.

This article has shown that the impact of artificial intelligence on families extends far beyond its practical functions. AI systems increasingly influence communication patterns, educational practices, and interpersonal relationships. While they can assist parents in managing daily responsibilities and provide valuable educational support, excessive dependence on technological solutions may weaken direct human interactions, reduce opportunities for meaningful dialogue, and gradually replace functions traditionally fulfilled through family relationships.

Particular attention has been devoted to challenges related to privacy protection, data security, algorithmic bias, digital dependency, and the emergence of emotional attachments to artificial agents. These issues demonstrate that technological innovation is not value-neutral and inevitably raises questions concerning autonomy, responsibility, transparency, and the protection of fundamental rights. Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to these risks due to their developmental stage and intensive use of digital technologies.

The analysis also highlights the importance of AI literacy as a key competence for contemporary families. In an environment increasingly shaped by algorithmic systems, individuals require not only technical skills but also critical thinking, ethical awareness, and informed decision-making abilities. Parents, educators, and

[32] Polish Family and Guardianship Code of 25 February 1964 (Journal of Laws 2023, item 2809, as amended).

[33] Polish Act of 18 July 2002 on the Provision of Electronic Services (Journal of Laws 2024, item 1513, as amended).

schools play a crucial role in helping young people understand both the opportunities and limitations of AI and in promoting its responsible use.

The effective integration of artificial intelligence into family life depends on maintaining a balance between technological innovation and human relationships. AI should be regarded as a supportive tool that enhances educational processes and family well-being rather than a substitute for parental involvement, interpersonal communication, or emotional engagement. The development of empathy, moral responsibility, and social competence continues to rely primarily on authentic human interactions that cannot be fully replicated by technology.

Finally, the growing role of artificial intelligence underscores the need for comprehensive educational strategies, ethical guidelines, and legal frameworks that protect the rights and well-being of all family members. Only through the combination of technological innovation, ethical awareness, and educational responsibility can artificial intelligence become a tool that supports family functioning and contributes positively to the development of future generations.

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The importance of parenting styles for the social development of children and teenagers in the opinions of students of teacher training courses

Znaczenie stylów wychowania w rodzinie dla rozwoju społecznego dzieci i młodzieży w opiniach studentów kierunków nauczycielskich

Abstract

The article focuses on the relationship between the style of upbringing followed by parents and the effects observed in the social development of children and teenagers. Theoretical considerations regarding parenting styles and their consequences for the social growth of children and teenagers are followed with a presentation of the methodological design of the present study. The subsequent part presents the analyses of and attempts to interpret the acquired results. The findings show that a significant majority of future teachers believe that a democratic parenting style is most beneficial for social development, while liberal and authoritarian styles are the least desirable. This is a very optimistic result, as experts specializing in this subject matter argue that it is indeed the democratic parenting style that brings the most positive consequences for the social development of children and teenagers. It is therefore important that future teachers are aware of this fact. The article ends with conclusions from the present study and with pedagogical recommendations for teachers and parents. The recommendations include a suggestion that they should educate themselves about parenting styles in families and for that they should use specialist resources. The importance of teachers, who can provide support to parents in taking informed decisions about the styles of upbringing, has also been emphasised.

Keywords: parenting style, parents, family, social development, students, teachers

Streszczenie

Problematyka poruszana w tekście dotyczy związku pomiędzy stylami wychowania, jakie wybierają rodzice, a tym, co dzieje się w rozwoju społecznym dzieci i młodzieży. W artykule podjęte zostały rozważania teoretyczne dotyczące stylów wychowania w rodzinie oraz ich konsekwencji dla rozwoju społecznego dzieci i młodzieży. Następnie przedstawiono założenia metodologiczne badań własnych. W dalszej części dokonano analizy i prób interpretacji wyników badań własnych. Zgromadzone wyniki

wskazują na to, że w zdecydowanej większości przyszli nauczyciele deklarują, że najbardziej korzystny dla rozwoju społecznego jest styl wychowania demokratyczny, a najmniej pożądany styl liberalny i autorytarny. Jest to bardzo optymistyczny wynik, ponieważ znawcy problematyki przedmiotu wskazują, że właśnie styl demokratyczny przynosi najwięcej pozytywnych konsekwencji dla rozwoju społecznego dzieci i młodzieży. Istotne jest zatem to, że przyszli nauczyciele mają tego świadomość. Na zakończenie opracowania przedstawiono wnioski z badań własnych i sformułowano rekomendacje pedagogiczne dla nauczycieli i rodziców. Wśród rekomendacji dla tych podmiotów znalazło się zalecenie dotyczące podejmowania samokształcenia w obszarze tematyki stylów wychowania w rodzinie z wykorzystaniem profesjonalnych źródeł. Podkreślono również znaczenie nauczycieli, którzy mogą stanowić wsparcie dla rodziców w świadomym wyborze stylów wychowania.

Słowa kluczowe: styl wychowania, rodzice, rodzina, rozwój społeczny, studenci, nauczyciele

Introduction

As suggested by Małgorzata Agnieszka Samujło and Teresa Sokołowska-Dzioba "Since schools do not operate in a social vacuum, they continue the parenting process taking place in a family, and besides that they shape the life in the local community."[1] In their conclusions the authors also point out that: "The quality of parental behaviours significantly affects social performance of their children."[2] Given the above, it seems important from the viewpoint of theory and research to understand future teachers' knowledge of and opinions about the consequences of parenting styles for the development of children and teenagers. This is because interpersonal relations occurring in a family are reflected for instance in the school settings.

Teachers who are aware of the possible consequences of parenting styles for the development of children and adolescents will be able to take various corrective measures, both individually and as a team, to address pupils' behavioural patterns determined by their family background. Certainly, the family plays a fundamental role in satisfying various needs of their children, nowadays however education, childcare and other forms of instruction are more and more commonly provided to children outside home at an increasingly early age. "There are various patterns and interactions between parents and children within the family system, and it is the parents' role to meet the physical, emotional, social and psychological needs of their children within the subsystem."[3] The rapid pace of daily life can often make it difficult for the family to meet a child's needs, especially those of emotional and social nature. The degree to which these needs are satisfied and the way parents communicate with their child are particularly important for the child's social growth which in this article is discussed in the context of parental styles.

[1] M.A. Samujło, T. Sokołowska-Dzioba, *Postawy rodziców a otwartość w zachowaniach uczniów*, "Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny" 2018, No. 4, p. 81, https://journals.umcs.pl/lrp/article/view/7363/6299 (20.08.2025), DOI: 10.17951/lrp.2018.37.4.79-91.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 89.

[3] *Ibidem*.

Spencer A. Rathus, making reference to the psychologist Diana Baumrind, points out that parenting styles make it possible for children to acquire an instrumental competence which is manifested by the fact that they are able to impact their environment in a way which allows them to achieve their own goals. These children are also usually energetic, assertive, self-sufficient, cooperative and curious about the world.[4] Such traits are definitely a desirable effect of upbringing in the family, especially if these are related to the children's social development.

Parenting styles versus social development of children and adolescents – theoretical considerations and research findings reported by experts in the field

Research in parenting styles has a long history. The related issues were first investigated by Kurt Lewin, Ron Lippitt and Robert K. White.[5] The subject matter was then studied by such authors as Diana Baumnind,[6] Earl S. Schaefer[7] as well as the Polish researcher Ryszard Praszkiera[8] and other specialists that I will refer to in this article.

Here is a brief presentation of the results of research conducted between 2009 and 2011 by Barbara Ostafińska Molik and Ewa Wysocka among 210 middle school students aged 14–16.[9] The respondents assessed their families of origin in terms of parenting style. In their study, the authors observed that mothers were more likely than fathers to use a democratic style (a trend towards high scores). As far as autocratic parenting styles are concerned, there was a lack of notable experiences among middle school students related to their parents (mothers and fathers) using this style. The authors also investigated loving and unloving liberal styles. As regards loving liberal styles, the teenagers also predominantly did not think their parents represented this style, but mothers were much more commonly perceived as liberal and loving. As for unloving liberal style, generally it was reported very rarely Here, however, the opposite trend to that observed with regard to loving liberal style

[4] S.A. Rathus, *Psychologia współczesna*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 171.

[5] As cited in: D. Borecka-Biernat, *Style wychowania w rodzinie a agresywne zachowania dzieci*, "Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis" 1992, Prace psychologiczne no. 26, pp. 125–141; *Strategie radzenia sobie młodzieży w trudnych sytuacjach społecznych. Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania*, Wrocław 2006.

[6] D. Baumrind, *Effects of Authoritative Parental Control of Child Behavior*, "Child Development" 1966, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 886, https://www.jstor.org.stable/1126611 (23.08.2025).

[7] E.S. Schaefer, *A circumplex model for maternal behavior*, "The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology" 1959, no. 59(2), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/h0041114.

[8] R. Praszkier, *W głąb szczerości*, Warszawa 1988.

[9] B. Ostafińska-Molik, E. Wysocka, *Style wychowania w rodzinie pochodzenia w percepcji młodzieży gimnazjalnej i ich znaczenie rozwojowe – próba teoretycznej i empirycznej egzemplifikacji*, pp. 224–228, https://rebus.edu.pl/bistreame/20.500.12118/21615/Ostafinska-Molik-Wysocka_Style-wychowania-w-rodzinie.pdf (14.07.2025).

could be seen: fathers were more likely to be perceived as liberal and unloving.[10] Although I did not distinguish between these two types of liberal style in the present study, the results presented by the authors provide an important recommendation for further scientific research related to these issues. Parenting styles are subject to dynamic changes. As I wrote earlier, their classifications and the characteristics describing their specificity are varied and often increasingly detailed.[11]

It is also important to understand why parents or other significant family members choose certain parenting styles. Of course, authors investigating this subject matter point to many issues. Maria Tyszkowa wrote that parents' approach to child rearing may, on the one hand, be transferred from their own family homes, i.e. their families of origin, and may also be a consequence of their personal experiences and personal characteristics. On the other hand, these preferences are also a certain result of the quality of internal communication.[12] Furthermore, parenting styles (especially the liberal ones) can be linked to trends prevailing in the society, particularly those promoted by the media. This is certainly very important from a contemporary perspective.

When attempting to define what parenting style is, one can say that: "The style of child rearing in the family home is a kind of emancipation (…) of the ways and methods used by all family members to affect the child."[13]

The authors investigating the issue of parenting styles mention various approaches, and they most commonly distinguish authoritarian, democratic and liberal styles.

Maria Ryś points out essential characteristics of the aforementioned parenting styles, namely:

1. Consistent autocratic assumption that showing positive feelings towards a child and rewarding him/her adversely affect the development of a strong character. Excessively high expectations towards a child mean that all accomplishments are treated simply as stages of normal growth that do not require reward, while failures are generally noticed and met with punishment.
2. Democratic belief in the importance of building a community life based on mutual trust, respect for rights and feelings, common planning of activities and solving family problems.
3. Liberal approach to building a family life based on a reduced distance and a lack of parental authority, with parents displaying submissive behaviour towards their children. In their opinion, it is appropriate not to make any demands on children, not to restrict their activity and spontaneous development, and to give them complete freedom without even sparing forms of control."[14]

[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 224–228.

[11] *Ibidem*.

[12] M. Tyszkowa, *Jednostka a rodzina* [in:] *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Zagadnienia ogólne*, eds. M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa, Warszawa 2014, pp. 126–128.

[13] M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, Z. Włodarski, *Psychologia wychowawcza*, part 2, Warszawa 2014, p. 127.

[14] M. Ryś, *Systemy rodzinne. Metody badań struktury rodziny pochodzenia i rodziny własnej*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 17–18.

We should also look at the inconsistent parenting style, which is also mentioned in the specialist literature, as it is important from the viewpoint of the current findings presented later in this article. In this case, no predominant parenting style is observed in the family home. Parents choose different styles, with varied and at times random educational impact; the parenting style in this case depends on the parents' current mood resulting from their situation. Such parents may lack consistency in their expectations towards the child and in their assessment of their child's behaviour.[15]

In the literature related to this subject matter, the authors point out that the most desirable is democratic parenting style.[16] One can certainly say that it most effectively prepares children to establish and maintain social relationships in a democratic system and most beneficially impacts the social development of children and adolescents. According to Arkadiusz Wąsiński and Alina Górniak-Naglik: "It is based on openness to and acceptance of democratic principles that are respected by family members on a daily basis, as a result of which in practice the family becomes a community of vision, goals and actions in the process of bringing up the child. A community in which children also have a voice and are aware of their position and the importance of their involvement in everyday dialogue in the family."[17]

Consequences of parenting styles for the child's growth (especially the child's social development)

The following consequences may be identified as regards the parenting styles discussed in this article.

In autocratic style, the consequence of formally imposing one's own authority is a lack of internalisation of the norms and values promoted by the parents, which may lead to egocentricity and selfishness in the child's behaviour while he/she may tend to break rules that are inconvenient for him/her in the absence of external (parental) control. One could say that child rearing in this case is unsatisfactory.[18]

In the liberal parenting style, the child is left completely to his/her own devices, while parents do not interfere in his/her affairs, as a result of which antisocial behaviours may be tolerated. The child raised this way frequently has (inadequately) high self-esteem, may exhibit selfish and egocentric attitudes, and may lack internal discipline, perseverance in action and mental resilience. This style provides good

[15] M. Przetacznik-Gierczak, Z. Włodarski, *Psychologia wychowawcza* (2014), p. 128.

[16] M. Tyszka, *Społeczna przynależność rodziny a sytuacja rodzinna dziecka* [in:] *Rodzina i dziecko*, ed. M. Ziemska, Warszawa 1980, p. 294.

[17] A. Wąsiński, A. Górniok-Naglik, *Style wychowania w rodzinach miejskich i wiejskich. Zderzenie preferencji gimnazjalistów i ich rodziców*, "Wychowanie w Rodzinie" 2016, No. 1, p. 227, DOI: 10.23734/wwr 20161.215.256, https://www.edusfera.press/Numer-1-2026,12923 (30.06.2025).

[18] M. Łobocki, *Teoria wychowania w zarysie*, Kraków 2005, p. 313.

conditions for the child's spontaneous and independent activity, but the traits shaped by the parents make it difficult for the child to adapt to the demands of the peer group, as he/she lacks the ability to cooperate.[19]

In democratic parenting style, which (particularly in terms of consequences) is recognised as the most beneficial from the viewpoint of educational outcomes, parents establish friendly relationships with their children. This approach enables the children to make decisions regarding various issues of family life, to develop independence and the ability to take into account the opinions of others, i.e. decentration.[20]

The term 'inconsistent parenting style' is associated with the approach of parents who may respond to their child's behaviour in excessive and conflicting ways, e.g. they either ignore his/her behaviour or apply harsh punishments, they show interest and affection or they are indifferent or even hostile. In such situations, the child may feel hurt. As a consequence, he/she may exhibit instrumental behaviours (aiming only to satisfy their own selfish interests). The child, who in this situation may feel lonely because he/she often does not get parents' support, consequently exhibits feelings of insecurity, anxiety and even aggression, the latter being a means of coping with the frustration they experience at home.[21]

Reasonable consequences of the specific parenting styles were, many years ago, specified by Baumnind,[22] and although this typology of the three major parenting styles is different than the one discussed in the article and applied in the present study, it is worthwhile to point out a few issues. Firstly, the authoritative style to some extent is consistent with the democratic style, while the authoritarian style certainly corresponds to the one discussed in this article and the permissive style can be linked to the liberal style. Secondly, and most importantly in this context, different parenting styles foster the social development of children and adolescents to varying degrees. Certainly, the development of social skills in the youngest members of the family is most effectively promoted by the authoritative style, in which parents follow the rules and communicate well with their children, are emotionally involved, and treat their children with love and respect.[23] It appears that: "Children of parents who are friendly in their interactions are usually well equipped emotionally and their moral standards are more effectively internalized."[24] It also pays to stick to the rules, if this is balanced with common sense and affectionate attitude towards the child. Children of authoritative parents are more self-sufficient, have higher self-esteem, a greater need for achievement and better social skills than other children."[25]

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[19] *Ibidem*.
[20] *Ibidem*.
[21] M. Przetacznik-Gierczak, Z. Włodarski, *Psychologia wychowawcza*, Warszawa 2002, p. 445.
[22] S.A. Rathus, *Psychologia współczesna*, Gdańsk 2004, pp. 171–172.
[23] *Ibidem*, p. 171.
[24] *Ibidem*, p. 172.
[25] *Ibidem*.

Methodology of the present study

The survey was conducted in April and May 2025 and involved 164 female and male students of university teacher training courses or courses with specialisation in teaching. Detailed data concerning the respondents will be presented and discussed in three tables later in the article. The survey was conducted in direct contact with the respondents with the use of a specially designed questionnaire. The participants did not only provide responses to questions which are presented in this article. Another question was related to parental attitudes.

The research objectives were defined as follows. The theoretical and explorative objective focused on the theoretical analysis of parental attitudes and parenting styles from the viewpoint of their significance for the social development of children and teenagers, and on exploration of the opinions presented by the study participants about the importance of specific parental attitudes and parenting styles for the social development of children and adolescents. On the other hand the practical and implementation-related objective involved drawing conclusions from the present findings and formulating educational recommendations for teachers and parents. The subject matter of the study includes parenting styles and parental attitudes in the context of their importance for the social development of children and adolescents as well as opinions about these issues presented by female and male students of university teacher training courses and courses with specialisation in teaching. The main research question is defined as follows: What is the significance of parental attitudes and parenting styles for the social development of children and adolescents in the opinions of students of teacher training courses and courses with specialisation in teaching? The following detailed research questions were also formulated: What are the respondents' characteristics with respect to their occupational activity related to their course of study and with regard to their experience of being a mother or a father? What opinions are presented by students of teacher training courses or courses with specialisation in teaching about the importance of parental attitudes for social development of children and adolescents? What opinions are presented by students of teacher training courses or courses with specialisation in teaching about the importance of parenting styles for social development of children and adolescents?

Since this was a diagnostic study, the main research hypothesis was formulated. Appropriate parenting attitudes, according to Maria Ziemska, and in particular a democratic style of upbringing in the family, most beneficially impact the social development of children and teenagers. The study used a diagnostic survey method with a questionnaire technique and, as mentioned earlier, it applied a specially-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire contained closed and semi-open questions.

Analysis and tentative interpretation of the present findings

This article presents only the findings related to parenting styles and respondents' characteristics.

Table 1 shows detailed results related to the respondents' characteristics.

Table 1. Respondents' gender

Item	Gender	In numbers and % PESE-MD (5y)[26] full-time and part-time	In numbers and % English studies and foreign language teaching – English and Russian – full-time	In numbers and % TOTAL
1.	Female	115 (70.12%)	35 (21.34%)	150 (91.46%)
2.	Male	1 (0.61%)	11 (6.71%)	12 (7.32%)
3.	Other	0 (0%)	1 (0.61%)	1 (0.61%)
NO RESPONSE	–	1 (0.61%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.61%)
TOTAL	F+M+O+NR	117 (71.34%)	47 (28.66%)	164 (100%)

Source: present findings.

Female students constituted a vast majority of the respondents. This is definitely consistent with statistical data reporting the number of students in teaching courses in Poland in general.[27]

Table 2. Respondents' occupation related to their course of study

Item	Respondents' occupation related to their course of study	In numbers and % PESE-MD (5y)[28] full-time and part-time	In numbers and % English studies and foreign language teaching – English and Russian – full-time	In numbers and % TOTAL
1.	Yes	64 (39.03%)	22 (13.41%)	86 (52.44%)
2.	No	49 (29.88%)	25 (15.24%)	74 (45.12%)
3.	NO RESPONSE	3 (1.83%)	1 (0.61%)	4 (2.44%)
TOTAL	F+M+O+NR	116 (70.73%)	48 (29.27%)	164 (100%)

Source: present findings.

The data in the table above shows that slightly more female respondents than male respondents have an occupation related to their field of study. This is quite understandable, as over 90% of the respondents are women, and some of them (34 individuals) are part-time students.

[26] Preschool and Early School Education, uniform Master Degree course (5 years).

[27] *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Polsce 2024/2025 więcej studentów, mniej absolwentów, te same wyzwania*, (27.08.2025).

[28] *Ibidem*.

Table 3. Being a mother or father

Item	Being a mother or father	In numbers and % PESE-MD (5y)[29] full-time and part-time	In numbers and % English studies and foreign language teaching – English and Russian – full-time	In numbers and % TOTAL
1.	Yes	10 (6.10%)	0 (0%)	10 (6.10%)
2.	No	103 (62.80%)	47 (28.66%)	150 (91.46%)
3.	No response	3 (1.83%)	1 (0.61%)	4 (2.44%)
TOTAL	F+M+O+NR	116 (70.73%)	48 (29.27%)	164 (100%)

Source: present findings.

A vast majority of the respondents do not have children, which means they have no experience of being a mother or father. Generally speaking, in Poland most people in this age group (both women and men, not only individuals in these courses of study) have no such experience.

The respondents were asked to express their opinions on the importance of different parenting styles for the social development of children and adolescents. The question, prepared in a form of a table, presented the specific parenting styles, so that the respondents could refer to these. The following characteristics of parenting styles were included in the table.

I. Democratic style – the child receives support so that his/her development takes place in a natural and spontaneous way. This mainly involves assistance and backing in the process of growing up. By allowing their child to make his/her own choices, parents teach him/her to take responsibility and learn independently, but they still play a supervisory role in these decisions and intervene in an appropriate manner in the event of danger or poor choices. Democratic parenting encourages children to take active part in society, enabling them to function properly within it. The norms and values introduced are respected in a natural and understanding way. The guiding principles in this style include cooperation and partnership between the child and the parent. The parent mainly engages in direct dialogue with the child, provides assistance for and cooperates with the child in the choice of appropriate models of behaviour. It is not about imposing one's own opinions or goals, but about guiding the child by means of dialogue towards appropriate views and self-realisation, in accordance with prevailing social and cultural norms. The democratic style is not about giving children complete freedom, but rather about a need to follow pre-defined rules and norms that are applied in the family and society. The child does not only know these but also understands them and wants to follow them.[30]

[29] *Ibidem*.

[30] M. Łobocki, *Teoria wychowania w zarysie*, Kraków 2007, pp. 12–14.

II. Authoritarian style – the relations between family members tend to be rather cold. Parents do not show affection to their child and maintain a formal tone when interacting with him/her. They focus on giving commands and imposing restrictions. Authoritarian parents do not pay attention the child's needs, abilities or desires. His/her failure to perform the defined tasks or obligations is met with severe punishment. The child is not allowed to express his/her own opinions. Young people raised this way may later exhibit fear, lack of faith in their own abilities, or vulnerability to peer pressure or they may lead a life of a rebel.
III. Liberal style – involves complete freedom for the child, tolerance of antisocial behaviour and a lack of parental supervision. The child is the most important person and all their wishes are fulfilled. No rules or standards are introduced. All decisions are taken from the viewpoint of the child who does not make any effort to work for the benefit of the family. The consequence of this style may include a selfish and self-centred approach to the world. The child may present antisocial behaviour, believing he/she is the "centre of the universe."
IV. Inconsistent style, also referred to as occasional style – the parents exhibit conflicting approaches to raising their child. Parents often change their attitude to their child; in similar situations a specific behaviour of the child may be accepted at one time and punished on another occasion. The decisions taken depend on the parent's mood. There are no specific norms and rules to be followed by all family members. Inconsistent parenting style is associated with the fact that parents are unable to fully cope with their responsibilities, and to define expectations towards their own child. This is due to a lack of adequate knowledge about parenting.[31]

According to a vast majority of the respondents, democratic parenting style is the most beneficial for children and adolescents from the viewpoint of their social development. This is definitely consistent with the results of the studies discussed in the article. It is possible that the respondents had already acquired some knowledge about parenting styles through various educational activities which they had engaged in during their university course, and through self-study and earlier internships in kindergartens and schools. In view of the fact that the respondents are going to work as teachers, it is very important that their knowledge is consistent with what experts specialising in this subject matter write about parenting styles. Analysis of the results presented in Table 4 shows that the highest number of respondents (24.39%) did not provide an answer related to inconsistent or occasional parenting style. It is possible that the respondents were aware of the fact that their knowledge with respect to this style was insufficient and due to this they did not want to express their opinion. As regards the other parenting styles, the respondents were more willing to provide the answers, although liberal and authoritarian styles possibly were not easy for them to assess. either – lack of responses respectively from 17.07% and 15.85% of the participants. As I mentioned earlier, this may

[31] *Ibidem*, pp. 312–314.

reflect a lack of knowledge on the part of respondents and their reluctance to give hasty answers to the questions. It is also possible that students did not fill out the questionnaire very carefully. The lowest number of respondents failed to present their opinion in the case of democratic style (10.97%).

Table 4. Parenting styles and their significance for social development of children and adolescents

Response categories	I[32] Democratic style	II Authoritarian style	III. Liberal style	IV Inconsistent or occasional style
Highly beneficial in the context of social development of children and adolescents (desire to establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, willingness to follow accepted rules and social norms, willingness to engage in pro-social activities, e.g. volunteering, helping colleagues in need, ability to sense other people's mental states and accept their way of thinking (empathy).	44 + 92 = 136 (82.93%)	1 + 8 = 9 (5.49%)	5 + 6 = 11 (6.71%)	0 + 1 = 1 (0.61%)
Moderately beneficial for social development of children and adolescents (desire to establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, willingness to follow accepted rules and social norms, willingness to engage in pro-social activities, e.g. volunteering, helping colleagues in need, ability to sense other people's mental states and accept their way of thinking (empathy).	1 + 3 = 4 (2.44%)	6 + 19 = 25 (15.25%)	16 + 34 = 50 (30.49%)	17 + 11 = 28 (17.07%)
Minimally beneficial for social development of children and adolescents (desire to establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, willingness to follow accepted rules and social norms, willingness to engage in pro-social activities, e.g. volunteering, helping colleagues in need, ability to sense other people's mental states and accept their way of thinking (empathy).	2 + 4 = 6 (3.65%)	37 + 67 = (63.41%)	24 + 50 = 74 (45.12%)	27 + 68 = 95 (57.93%)

Source: present findings.

[32] Numbers corresponding to the parentings styles described earlier.

Conclusion

The main research hypothesis was confirmed by the findings of this study which are presented in this article. The democratic parenting style was considered by an overwhelming majority of the respondents to be the most beneficial for the social development of children and adolescents. The theoretical and explorative objective has been achieved as regards:

a) the theoretical analysis of the issues related to parenting styles in the context of their importance for social development of children and adolescents;
b) investigation of opinions presented by female and male students concerning the degree to which specific parenting styles are important for the social development of children and adolescents.

Likewise, the practical and implementation-related objective has also been achieved. The following conclusions have been drawn from the present study:

1. The respondents predominantly were women (91.46%). Slightly more than half of them were employed, and their occupational activity was related to their field of study (52.44%). Only 6.10% of respondents reported having children.
2. A large majority of the students (82.93%) believe that democratic parenting style is highly beneficial in the context of social development of children and adolescents (desire to establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, willingness to follow accepted rules and social norms, willingness to engage in pro-social activities, e.g. volunteering, helping colleagues in need, ability to sense other people's mental states and accept their way of thinking (empathy). Similar opinions were expressed by only 5.49% of the respondents with regard to authoritarian parenting style, 6.71% of the respondents with regard to liberal parenting style and less than 1% (0.61%) with regard to inconsistent or occasional parenting style. It is highly optimistic that future teachers hold these opinions, in view of the fact that experts specialising in this subject matter suggest that a democratic parenting style is most desirable and it produces the best effects for the social development of children and adolescents. It is therefore very important that young people in these courses of study are aware of this, and it is possible that for this reason they will encourage parents to apply this style and will themselves use a similar approach in their professional work.
3. Like in the previous conclusion, it is also optimistic that as many as 63.41% of the respondents believe that authoritarian parenting style is minimally beneficial for social development of children and adolescents. Slightly fewer respondents (57.93%) expressed this opinion in relation to the inconsistent or occasional style, and 45.12% of respondents with reference to the liberal style.
4. The largest number of respondents did not provide their opinion about effectiveness of inconsistent or occasional style. In this case nearly 1/4 of the respondents did not answer the question.

Based on the conclusions from the present study, the following pedagogical recommendations have been formulated to teachers and parents:

1. It seems reasonable for teachers to engage in self-study throughout their professional careers with regard to parenting styles, especially those that are currently preferable to parents. In this way, teachers will have up-to-date knowledge that can greatly assist them in diagnosing the causes of various behaviours or difficulties in their pupils. As a result the teachers will be perceived by parents as professional educators.
2. Teachers who have up-to-date knowledge about parenting styles and recognise the need to share this knowledge with others, e.g. parents, should do so in various appropriate circumstances at kindergarten or school. This is particularly important in the context of children's and adolescents' social development, since it is educators that often observe students' difficulties in interpersonal relationships, their unwillingness to follow accepted rules and social norms or to engage in pro-social activities, as well as their lack of empathy.
3. It also seems reasonable for parents to use specialist resources and learn about parenting styles. When they see the need to do so, they should also draw on the expertise of teachers, educators and psychologists working at school.
4. It is also important for parents to take an ongoing interest in their child's progress, not only in terms of cognitive development, but also social development, and to maintain regular contact with teachers (especially if their child's current situation requires it).

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Backbiting as a systemic form of indirect communication in the family and its consequences for adults

Backbiting jako systemowa forma komunikacji pośredniej w rodzinie i jej konsekwencje dla dorosłych

Abstract

This article examines backbiting as a systemic form of indirect communication that serves functions such as tension regulation, coalition building, narrative control, and the maintenance of homeostasis in families with low tolerance for conflict. Drawing on Murray Bowen's multigenerational theory, Salvador Minuchin's structural approach, Paul Watzlawick's pragmatics of communication, and narrative perspectives, the analysis explores how speaking negatively about an absent family member shapes relational structures, boundaries, and loyalties. The article discusses the long-term consequences for adults raised in environments where indirect communication was normative, including difficulties with direct expression, fear of confrontation, and the replication of triangulated patterns. The practical section outlines implications for adult education and presents interventions that support direct communication and relational autonomy. The article highlights the importance of understanding backbiting as a systemic phenomenon whose effects extend beyond the family context and influence adult functioning across multiple domains.

Keywords: backbiting, indirect communication, triangulation, family coalitions, adult education

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje zjawisko backbitingu jako systemowej formy komunikacji pośredniej, pełniącej funkcje regulacji napięcia, budowania koalicji, kontroli narracji oraz podtrzymywania homeostazy w rodzinach o niskiej tolerancji na konflikt. W oparciu o koncepcje Murraya Bowena, Salvadora Minuchina, Paula Watzlawicka oraz perspektywy narracyjne przedstawiono, w jaki sposób mówienie o nieobecnym członku rodziny wpływa na strukturę relacji, granice i lojalności. Omówiono konsekwencje dla dorosłych dzieci wychowanych w środowiskach, w których komunikacja pośrednia była normą, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem trudności w bezpośrednim wyrażaniu potrzeb, lęku przed konfrontacją oraz powtarzania wzorców triangulacji. W części praktycznej zaprezentowano implikacje dla edukacji dorosłych oraz interwencje wspierające rozwój komunikacji bezpośredniej i autonomii relacyjnej. Artykuł podkreśla znaczenie rozumienia backbitingu jako zjawiska systemowego, którego

skutki wykraczają poza kontekst rodzinny i wpływają na funkcjonowanie dorosłych w różnych obszarach życia.

Słowa kluczowe: *backbiting*, komunikacja pośrednia, triangulacja, koalicje rodzinne, edukacja dorosłych

Introduction

Backbiting – understood as speaking negatively about an absent person – constitutes one of the most subtle yet destructive communication patterns within family systems. Its impact lies in its indirectness: it avoids confrontation while shaping alliances, redistributing tension and reinforcing covert loyalty structures. From a systemic perspective, backbiting stabilizes the family in the short term but generates long-term relational costs. Drawing on Murray Bowen's concept of triangulation,[1] Salvador Minuchin's structural theory,[2] Paul Watzlawick's pragmatics of communication[3] and contemporary relational perspectives, this article examines backbiting as a mechanism of anxiety regulation, narrative control and boundary distortion. It also explores how these patterns are carried into adulthood and how educators can support learners shaped by indirect communication.

Triangulation as a mechanism of tension regulation

In systemic family theory, triangulation is one of the primary strategies through which a dyad manages emotional tension. Bowen emphasized that triangulation is not inherently pathological; rather, it is a functional adaptation within systems that lack the capacity for direct emotional regulation.[4] By shifting tension from the dyad to a triadic configuration, the system temporarily stabilizes itself, even though the underlying conflict remains unaddressed.

Backbiting fits seamlessly into this mechanism. It allows a family member to discharge frustration without confronting the person involved, seek validation for their perspective, form or reinforce a coalition against a third party and redistribute emotional responsibility within the system. Instead of addressing concerns directly with Person B, Person A turns to Person C. The tension that originally belonged to the A–B dyad is now relocated into the A–C–B triangle.

[1] M. Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, New York 1978, pp. 306–307.

[2] S. Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy*, Cambridge, MA 1974, pp. 53–82.

[3] P. Watzlawick, J.H. Beavin, D.D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, New York 1967, pp. 51–67.

[4] M. Bowen, *Family Therapy*…, pp. 306–307.

From the perspective of communication pragmatics, this shift has significant consequences. Watzlawick's work[5] shows that introducing a third party alters the relational geometry, creating new alliances and redefining the flow of information. Over time, triangulation becomes a habitual pattern – an automatic response to discomfort – rather than a conscious choice.

Coalitions and hidden loyalties

Minuchin's structural family theory[6] emphasizes that families organize themselves around boundaries and subsystems. Backbiting operates as a mechanism that shifts, blurs or reinforces these boundaries depending on who aligns with whom. Coalitions formed through indirect communication are rarely explicit; they emerge through repeated patterns of shared narratives, emotional alignment and mutual validation at the expense of a third party.

Hidden loyalties, described by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy,[7] play a crucial role in sustaining these coalitions. Even when individuals consciously reject the narratives circulating within the family, they may still feel obligated to maintain relational balance by participating in indirect communication. Backbiting thus becomes both a symptom and a stabilizing force: it protects the system from overt conflict while simultaneously perpetuating relational injustice and emotional distance.

Functions of backbiting in the family system

Backbiting performs several key regulatory functions within the family system. Although often dismissed as mere gossip, it operates as a sophisticated mechanism for managing anxiety, maintaining relational balance and preserving the system's preferred patterns of interaction.

One of the primary functions is **tension reduction**, which aligns with Bowen's understanding of anxiety regulation.[8] Another is **coalition building**, central to Minuchin's structural model.[9] Backbiting also facilitates **responsibility shifting**, allowing the system to externalize conflict. Finally, it contributes to **pseudo-harmony**, a phenomenon well described in communication pragmatics,[10] where surface calm masks unresolved tension.

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[5] P. Watzlawick, J.H. Beavin, D.D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human*…, pp. 51–67.

[6] S. Minuchin, *Families and Family*…, pp. 102–128.

[7] I. Boszormenyi-Nagy, G.M. Spark, *Invisible Loyalties: Reciprocity in Intergenerational Family Therapy*, New York 1973, pp. 1–25.

[8] M. Bowen, *Family Therapy*…, pp. 373–379.

[9] S. Minuchin, *Families and Family*…, pp. 102–128.

[10] P. Watzlawick, J.H. Beavin, D.D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human*…, pp. 70–74.

Consequences for adult children

Adults who grew up in families where backbiting was a normative mode of communication often carry deeply ingrained relational patterns into their later lives. In such environments, emotions were rarely expressed directly, and conflicts were routinely managed through third parties rather than through open dialogue. These early experiences shape internal working models of communication, intimacy and conflict, influencing how individuals navigate relationships in adulthood.

One of the most pervasive consequences is **difficulty with direct communication**. For individuals raised in systems where speaking openly was associated with danger, disloyalty or emotional escalation, direct expression becomes intertwined with threat. As a result, they may avoid stating their needs, minimize their feelings or rely on indirect cues to convey dissatisfaction.

A second consequence is **fear of confrontation**. Because conflict in their family of origin was either suppressed or displaced onto third parties, adult children may equate disagreement with relational rupture. Even minor tensions can evoke disproportionate anxiety, leading to withdrawal, appeasement or triangulation in their own relationships.

Another common pattern is **over-responsibility for the emotions of others**. Children who were positioned as regulators of family tension – whether by listening to complaints, absorbing anxiety or mediating between adults – often internalize the belief that they must maintain emotional equilibrium in their relationships. This aligns with systemic observations of parentification and emotional role reversal.[11]

Backbiting also contributes to the **replication of triangulation** in adult partnerships. Instead of addressing issues directly with a partner, individuals may seek validation from friends, colleagues or extended family members. This pattern mirrors the relational strategies learned in childhood and perpetuates cycles of indirect communication.

Finally, many adult children struggle with **blurred interpersonal boundaries**. Growing up in systems where emotions and narratives were shared selectively, strategically or manipulatively can make it difficult to distinguish one's own feelings from those of others. This boundary confusion affects not only intimate relationships but also professional and educational contexts.

Backbiting as a form of indirect communication

Backbiting is a prototypical example of indirect communication – a relational strategy that replaces direct dialogue with circuitous, emotionally safer pathways. In families with low tolerance for emotional tension, explicit statements of

[11] V. Satir, *Conjoint Family Therapy*, Palo Alto 1964, pp. 30–55.

dissatisfaction, anger or unmet needs are often perceived as destabilizing. As a result, members resort to indirect forms of expression that allow them to communicate affect without confronting the relational risks associated with openness.

Watzlawick's pragmatics of communication[12] highlights that indirect communication is characteristic of systems marked by hierarchical rigidity and ambiguous boundaries. In such environments, messages are rarely conveyed at face value. Instead:

a) anger is expressed through hints and insinuations;
b) dissatisfaction emerges through complaints directed at third parties;
c) needs are articulated through intermediaries;
d) conflicts unfold through alliances rather than direct negotiation.

Backbiting functions as a central mechanism within this indirect communication ecology. By speaking about an absent person rather than to them, family members avoid the immediate consequences of confrontation while still releasing emotional pressure. Yet this strategy does not resolve conflict; it merely redistributes it.

Indirect communication also shapes the family's **epistemology** – its shared understanding of what is "true." Because narratives circulate without verification, perceptions become collectively constructed rather than relationally negotiated. This aligns with constructivist perspectives on relational meaning-making.[13]

Backbiting as a tool for narrative control

Backbiting is not only a strategy for regulating emotional tension; it is also a powerful instrument for shaping and controlling family narratives. Every family constructs shared stories about who its members are, how they behave and what roles they occupy. These narratives function as implicit rules that guide expectations, justify behaviours and maintain the system's internal coherence.

Through repeated negative commentary about an absent person, family members gradually construct a stable identity for that individual. The narrative becomes self-reinforcing: once someone is labelled as "difficult," "unreliable," or "oversensitive," subsequent behaviours are interpreted through that lens. This process is consistent with Kenneth J. Gergen's relational construction of identity.[14]

Narrative control serves several systemic functions. It allows the family to:

a) stabilize roles;
b) justify coalitions;
c) protect the status quo;
d) maintain hierarchy.

[12] P. Watzlawick, J.H. Beavin, D.D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human*…, pp. 51–67.

[13] K.J. Gergen, The *Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*, New York 1991, pp. 49–72.

[14] A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Stanford 1991, pp. 36–45.

Backbiting is particularly effective in this process because it operates in the shadows. The absent person has no opportunity to challenge the narrative, correct misunderstandings or offer alternative interpretations. Their identity is constructed in their absence, through the emotional needs and alliances of others.

Family-based relational patterns in adult education contexts

Adult learners bring relational histories shaped by their families of origin, including deeply internalized patterns of communication, emotional regulation and conflict management. In groups composed of adults, these patterns often become visible in subtle ways: through avoidance of direct expression, heightened sensitivity to interpersonal tension or reliance on third-party validation.

Individuals raised in families where indirect communication was normative frequently exhibit **relational caution**. They may hesitate to speak openly, monitor the reactions of others closely or interpret neutral feedback as criticism. These behaviours reflect early adaptations to environments where direct expression carried relational risk.

Another common pattern is **coalition-seeking**. Learners accustomed to triangulated communication may gravitate toward forming alliances within the group, sharing concerns about others rather than addressing issues directly. This dynamic mirrors the coalitions described in structural family theory.[15]

Backbiting also shapes **perceptions of authority**. Adults who grew up in environments where authority figures were discussed indirectly – praised in public but criticized in private – may approach educators with ambivalence. This dynamic resonates with Anthony Giddens' observations on trust and modern identity.[16]

Finally, learners from families marked by indirect communication often struggle with **boundary clarity**. They may overshare personal information, withdraw abruptly when feeling exposed or become entangled in the emotional states of others. These behaviours can affect group dynamics, particularly in settings that rely on collaboration, reflection or interpersonal dialogue.

Recognizing these patterns situates learner behaviour within a broader relational context rather than pathologizing it. When educators understand the systemic origins of indirect communication, they are better equipped to create learning environments that support autonomy, direct expression and relational safety.

Educational interventions supporting direct communication

Adult education settings offer a unique opportunity to counteract relational patterns shaped by indirect communication in the family of origin. While educators

[15] S. Minuchin, *Families and Family*…, pp. 53–82.

[16] U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development*, Cambridge, MA 1979, pp. 3–20.

are not therapists, they play a crucial role in creating environments that promote clarity, autonomy and direct expression. Interventions that support these goals do not require clinical competences – they are based on conscious design of group processes and clear communication norms.

A foundational intervention is the establishment of **explicit communication guidelines**. For learners who come from backgrounds where indirect expression was the norm, clear expectations about how to voice concerns, ask questions or offer feedback provide a sense of safety. Stating these norms openly – such as encouraging direct address, discouraging side conversations about absent participants and normalizing disagreement – helps counteract the implicit rules internalized in childhood.

Another important intervention is **modelling direct communication**. Educators who articulate expectations clearly, acknowledge misunderstandings openly and respond to tension without avoidance demonstrate alternative relational possibilities. This aligns with Satir's emphasis on congruent communication.[17]

Group-based activities can also be structured to **reduce opportunities for triangulation**. Reflective exercises that require participants to speak from their own perspective rather than about others shift the focus from relational speculation to personal experience. Small-group discussions with rotating roles prevent the formation of stable coalitions that mirror family dynamics.

Educators can further support learners by fostering **boundary clarity**. This includes helping participants distinguish between personal reactions and group-level processes, encouraging them to articulate their needs directly and guiding them in recognizing when they are taking responsibility for emotions that do not belong to them. These skills are essential for individuals whose early environments blurred emotional and relational boundaries.

Finally, interventions that promote **meta-communication** – talking about how the group communicates – enable learners to reflect on their own patterns. When participants recognize that indirect communication is not a personal flaw but a learned relational strategy, they gain the freedom to experiment with new forms of expression. This reflective stance supports both individual growth and healthier group dynamics.

Case studies: backbiting in systemic practice

The following case studies illustrate how backbiting functions within family systems as a mechanism for regulating tension, shaping alliances and maintaining established relational patterns. Although each case is unique, all demonstrate the systemic logic of indirect communication and its impact on family dynamics.

[17] V. Satir, *Conjoint Family*…, pp. 30–55.

Case 1: the parent–child coalition

In a family with two parents and an adolescent daughter, the mother frequently confided in the daughter about the father's perceived shortcomings. These conversations occurred when the father was absent and were framed as "sharing feelings" or "seeking support." Over time, the daughter became the mother's primary emotional confidant, absorbing frustrations that were never communicated directly to the father.

This dynamic created a stable coalition between mother and daughter, positioning the father as the problematic outsider. The daughter began to interpret the father's neutral behaviors through the lens of the mother's narratives, reinforcing the coalition and increasing emotional distance within the marital subsystem. Although the mother reported feeling "closer" to her daughter, the alliance placed the child in a developmentally inappropriate role and prevented the parents from addressing their relational issues directly.

Case 2: sibling triangulation

In a family of three adult siblings, longstanding tensions between the two older siblings were routinely managed through conversations with the youngest. Each sibling privately criticized the other, seeking validation and emotional alignment. The youngest sibling became the repository of unresolved conflict, carrying the emotional burden of both sides without the authority to intervene.

This triangulated pattern prevented the older siblings from engaging in direct dialogue and reinforced their mutual avoidance. The youngest sibling reported feeling "stuck in the middle," experiencing loyalty conflicts and chronic anxiety. Despite this discomfort, the pattern persisted because it allowed the older siblings to maintain a façade of harmony during family gatherings.

Case 3: intergenerational narrative transmission

A young adult reported that throughout childhood, extended family members frequently spoke negatively about one aunt who was rarely present at gatherings. She was described as "difficult," "unpredictable," and "emotionally unstable." These narratives were presented as unquestioned truths, despite the young adult having had minimal direct contact with the aunt.

When the young adult eventually met the aunt in adulthood, her behaviour did not align with the family's descriptions. However, the internalized narrative shaped expectations and emotional responses, creating a sense of distance and mistrust. The family's backbiting had constructed a stable identity for the aunt that persisted across generations, influencing relationships even in the absence of direct interaction.

Methodological notes

This article adopts a systemic and interpretive framework grounded in family systems theory, communication pragmatics and relational constructivism. The aim is not to diagnose individual pathology but to analyze patterns of interaction that

emerge within relational contexts. The methodological approach is conceptual rather than empirical, drawing on established theoretical models to illuminate the functions and consequences of backbiting in family systems.

The analysis integrates four complementary perspectives:

1. **Bowen's multigenerational theory**, which explains triangulation, anxiety regulation and the transmission of relational patterns across generations.[18]
2. **Minuchin's structural approach**, which highlights the role of boundaries, subsystems and coalitions in shaping family dynamics.[19]
3. **Watzlawick's pragmatics of communication**, which examines indirect communication, meta-messages and the relational impact of speaking about rather than to others.[20]
4. **Narrative and relational constructivist perspectives**, which emphasize the co-construction of identity and the role of shared stories in maintaining systemic stability.[21]

The case studies presented in this article are illustrative, not clinical reports. They synthesize recurring patterns observed in systemic literature and practice, serving as heuristic examples rather than descriptions of specific families. Their purpose is to demonstrate how theoretical concepts manifest in lived relational contexts.

Shame and guilt as relational regulators

Shame and guilt function as powerful regulatory mechanisms within families marked by indirect communication. In such systems, emotional expression is governed not by explicit rules but by implicit expectations about what can be said, to whom and under what conditions.

Shame operates as a **boundary-enforcing emotion**. Individuals who deviate from the family's preferred narratives or challenge established alliances may be subtly shamed through negative commentary shared with others in their absence. This dynamic resonates with Satir's observations on incongruence and emotional suppression.[22]

Guilt, in contrast, functions as a **loyalty-regulating emotion**. When backbiting positions one family member as the source of tension, others may feel compelled to align with the dominant narrative to avoid being perceived as disloyal. This dynamic reflects the contextual therapy perspective on relational ethics.[23]

Together, shame and guilt create a **self-reinforcing emotional loop**: backbiting defines what is acceptable; shame polices it; guilt ensures compliance.

[18] M. Bowen, *Family Therapy*…, pp. 373–379.
[19] S. Minuchin, *Families and Family*…
[20] P. Watzlawick, J.H. Beavin, D.D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human*…
[21] A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 36–45.
[22] V. Satir, *Conjoint Family*…, pp. 30–55.
[23] I. Boszormenyi-Nagy, G.M. Spark, *Invisible Loyalties*…, pp. 25–48.

Conclusion

Backbiting, often dismissed as a minor interpersonal irritation, emerges in this analysis as a complex systemic phenomenon with far-reaching relational consequences. It functions simultaneously as a mechanism of emotional regulation, a tool for coalition building, a strategy for narrative control and a means of maintaining homeostasis in families that struggle with direct communication.

Understanding backbiting through a systemic lens reveals that it is not an isolated behavior but part of a broader ecology of indirect communication. Families marked by chronic anxiety, rigid hierarchies or ambiguous boundaries rely on such strategies to manage emotional intensity. These patterns are then carried into adult education, professional environments and interpersonal relationships.

For educators working with adult learners, recognizing the systemic origins of indirect communication is essential. Educational settings can become spaces where participants experiment with new relational possibilities – where direct expression is encouraged, boundaries are clarified and meta-communication is normalized. This aligns with contemporary adult education perspectives on relational learning.[24]

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[24] S. Minuchin, C.H. Fishman, *Family Therapy Techniques*, Cambridge, MA 1981, pp. 15–38.

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Resocialization and therapeutic interactions in the education of children and youth

Resocjalizacyjne i terapeutyczne oddziaływania w procesie edukacji dzieci i młodzieży

Abstract

This article highlights the importance of a resocialization and therapeutic approach as one of the components of educational activities aimed at children and adolescents, ensuring their holistic or comprehensive development. The authors also emphasize that modern schools must provide not only an environment for learning knowledge but also support social, emotional, and moral development. Resocialization involves the continuous development of social skills, appropriate attitudes and values, as well as social norms and competencies, while therapy aims to provide extended support in addressing mental health, emotional, and developmental issues. The article also highlights the collective and individual aspects of collaboration between professionals, the relationship between teacher and student, and the timing of intervention. The article addresses a cultural approach that encompasses multiple aspects of therapy, such as music therapy, art therapy, and book therapy, to support young people in self-expression. The authors emphasize that a holistic approach to education is a fundamental requirement.

Keywords: resocialization, development, education, therapy, youth

Streszczenie

W artykule podkreślono znaczenie podejścia resocjalizacyjnego i terapeutycznego jako jednego z elementów działań edukacyjnych skierowanych do dzieci i młodzieży w celu ich całościowego lub wszechstronnego rozwoju. Autorzy podkreślają również, że nowoczesna szkoła musi zapewniać nie tylko środowisko do nauki, wiedzy, ale również wspierać rozwój społeczny, emocjonalny i moralny. Resocjalizacja to ciągły rozwój umiejętności społecznych, odpowiednich postaw i wartości, a także

norm i kompetencji społecznych, podczas gdy terapia ma na celu rozszerzenie pomocy w rozwiązywaniu problemów zdrowia psychicznego oraz kwestii emocjonalnych i rozwojowych. W artykule podkreślono też zbiorowy i indywidualny aspekt współpracy specjalistów, relację między nauczycielem a uczniem oraz czas interwencji. Artykuł odnosi się do podejścia kulturowego, które obejmuje wiele aspektów terapii, takich jak muzykoterapia, arteterapia i terapia książkowa, w celu wspierania młodych ludzi w wyrażaniu siebie. Autorzy podkreślili, że holistyczne podejście do edukacji jest podstawowym wymogiem.

Słowa kluczowe: resocjalizacja, rozwój, edukacja, terapia, młodzież

Introduction

In today's modern society, the challenges facing the education system continue to grow, as does its responsibility to ensure students' healthy development from childhood to young adulthood. Culture is changing rapidly; technology, along with social interactions, and how families look different from previous generations. The way educational environments function has a significant impact on how our upcoming generations of students develop their views on life. The school system (along with families) is still considered two of the largest factors influencing how students learn in their educational environment, and how they learn encompasses much more than just knowledge but also encompasses social, emotional, and moral skills. Therefore, both academic development (knowledge) and non-academic development (social, emotional, or behavioural aspects) should be paramount to ensuring that activities promote students' overall development and prevent these academic/emotional/social difficulties through appropriate support systems. In education, I encounter many cases in which a child/adolescent experiences some degree of difficulty adapting to change, struggles with social interaction, or is socially delinquent. These problems can stem from a variety of causes, such as poor family upbringing, emotional disturbances, traumatic memories, peer influence, or academic difficulties. Actions taken in such cases should not only prevent problems from escalating but also support the youth's normal development and assimilation into society. Therefore, resocialization and therapeutic interventions are a crucial element of this process. Resocialization and therapy are key aspects of modern pedagogy and education, particularly for children and adolescents at risk of social maladjustment or experiencing difficulties with emotional and/or social functioning. These interactions aim to correct inappropriate behaviour, support character development, build self-image, and develop the interpersonal skills necessary for interacting with others in a functional society. Resocialization in the educational sphere is applied to individuals who, to varying degrees, demonstrate an inability to conform to established social norms. This process aims to help the individual relearn values, behaviours, and social rules, as well as develop their capacity to participate in society in a responsible and productive manner. For children and

adolescents, resocialization requires that interventions be supportive and developmental, not controlling or punitive. The development of positive social relationships and coping skills is paramount. Finally, the use of therapeutic processes to support young people's emotional and psychological growth and development is a critical aspect of pedagogy. Therapy in educational settings can take various forms, including individual psychological therapy, educational therapy, group therapy, and occupational therapy.

The main goal of these methods is to help students identify and overcome developmental challenges, build psychological resources, and develop skills to cope with emotions and problems. Over the past few years, the importance of culture in its broadest sense has been increasingly recognized in therapeutic and rehabilitation work. In addition to the therapies mentioned above, all forms of artistic and creative activity (culture), such as art, literature, music, and theatre, offer invaluable resources in educational and therapeutic processes. Culture provides an opportunity for individuals to express their feelings, create something new, develop a sense of self-determination, and build relationships with others. Therefore, it can be used to support the effective development of a young person's personality and overcome social and emotional developmental challenges. Incorporating cultural practices into mental health and rehabilitation programs allows for a more comprehensive approach to children and/or adolescents. Creative activities help develop artistic skills and also allow for reflection on life experiences, emotions, and relationships with others, which is an important complement to traditional education and/or therapy. Implementing rehabilitation and therapy in schools requires the collaboration of many specialists, including teachers, educational specialists, psychologists, and others involved in raising and supporting children's development. An effective way to support these young people in overcoming obstacles and helping them develop positively is to examine all areas of their lives and help them do the same for harmony. In this context, methods must be developed to effectively combine education, therapy, and resocialization, as this will help meet the multifaceted needs of today's students.

Theoretical foundations of resocialization

Resocialization is an important topic in pedagogical, sociological, and psychological thought concerning children and adolescents struggling with social adaptation. The current conceptualization of this issue is based on the results of numerous studies and experience in educational practice, which indicate the need to provide individuals who are being helped to return to more socially acceptable ways of functioning with a multidisciplinary approach to achieve effectiveness in this regard. Resocialization is a state of correcting behaviour that is inconsistent

with social norms, but it is also a developmental process that allows individuals to reconnect with society and build relationships with others within it. The concept of resocialization is primarily defined in educational literature as a process in which an individual is readjusted to life in society by developing attitudes, values, and social skills that allow the individual to function in accordance with the dominant norms of that society. Marek Konopczyński points out that the process of resocialization encompasses not only corrective action against unacceptable behaviour but also constitutes a process of individual development, including their creative potential, enabling them to participate constructively in society.[1] Thus, the concept of resocialization encompasses not only the elimination of negative behaviours but also the development of positive personality traits and social skills. The author emphasized that the effectiveness of resocialization efforts depends on the types of educational strategies and the level of interaction between educator and student, as well as the social framework within which behavioural transformation occurs.

In psychology, resocialization is often understood as the development of new types of behaviours and emotional responses in an individual. Social learning mechanisms have been emphasized in psychology because they significantly influence how individuals develop their attitudes and behaviours. According to Albert Bandura, when children learn from others, they not only imitate others, but the way children are exposed to different types of environments, parents/caregivers, teachers, therapists, and any other authority figures or models of behavior influences their ability to learn socially.[2] A significant aspect of this learning occurs through relationships with adults who can serve as positive role models. This is why the child's social environment and social context are so important. Recently, many resocialization programs and approaches have become much more humanistic and developmental; in addition to resocializing (rehabilitating) youth, many programs have also added a developmental component. The process of resocialization is characterized not only by eliminating negative behaviours but also by providing young people with opportunities to become active, expressive, and develop their self-esteem. According to Konopczyński, effective resocialization will only occur when resocialization professionals support young people in strengthening their positive resources and work on building higher self-esteem. This approach allows for a full understanding of the social and personality changes that occur in individuals undergoing resocialization. Resocialization of children and adolescents is the most critical developmental process, as their developmental stage is characterized by high susceptibility to environmental influences and a very lateral development of social and moral identity. Young people are characterized by a high level of psychological and social development, and appropriate educational activities yield significant results for their future functioning in society. Therefore, resocialization

[1] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna*, Warszawa 2014, p. 2.

[2] A. Bandura, *Teoria uczenia się społecznego*, Englewood Hills 1977, p. 22.

activities for children and adolescents should be focused primarily on supporting their emotional, social, and moral development and developing competencies in solving everyday problems. Defining the goals and objectives of resocialization is its most important aspect. According to pedagogical literature, one of the primary goals of rehabilitation programs is to shape social attitudes that allow individuals to behave in accordance with accepted social norms. The fundamental principles of these attitudes include developing responsibility for one's behaviour, respect for others, and a willingness to cooperate and participate in the community. The rehabilitation process must change an individual's attitude to enable them to act in accordance with the norms and morality of society.[3]

Rehabilitation must also focus on building emotional competencies. Emotional competencies are the skills and awareness necessary to identify, understand, and manage emotions. Often, problematic behaviours in children and adolescents stem from difficulties expressing and managing emotions, such as feelings of frustration, anger, or rejection. Therefore, a crucial aspect of resocialization is providing activities in which individuals can develop their emotional intelligence and learn to resolve conflicts appropriately and constructively. Daniel Goleman noted that the development of emotional competencies profoundly influences how we behave toward others and the choices we make about how we respond to those around us.[4] Another important aspect of resocialization is the internalization of social rules, norms, standards, ethics, etc. As individuals undergo resocialization, they gradually accept social norms as their own standards of belief and behaviour and incorporate them into their daily lives. The process of internalizing norms takes time; education and positive experiences are necessary to confirm the importance of following rules for the good of society. As Travis Hirschi's social control theory suggests, strong connections with other people in society and similar values significantly reduce the chances that a person will engage in deviant behaviour.[5]

In addition to the goal of rehabilitation interventions, which is to prevent future deviant behaviour and reduce risk factors that contribute to deviant behaviour, the available literature suggests that effective rehabilitation involves a combination of remedial and preventative measures to help identify developmental difficulties early in life and implement appropriate remedial measures to address these developmental challenges. When working with minors (children or adolescents), preventive measures in the rehabilitation process are particularly valuable because they provide a means of preventing the continuation of negative behavioural patterns. The educational environment and the social interactions within it between students and professional adults play a crucial role in rehabilitation. The school environment provides children and adolescents with opportunities to develop social

[3] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna*, p. 63.
[4] D. Goleman, *Inteligencja emocjonalna*, Poznań 1997, p. 78.
[5] T. Hirschi, *Causes of delinquency*, Berkeley 1969, p. 16.

skills, form peer relationships, and shape attitudes and values. Therefore, schools have enormous potential to support both rehabilitation efforts and the prevention of social maladjustment. Effective implementation of school rehabilitation strategies involves a variety of specialists, including teachers and related educational specialists, as well as psychologists and social workers, who collaborate to identify student needs and develop comprehensive support strategies with an interdisciplinary approach. John Hattie's research demonstrates that the relationship between student and teacher influences the effectiveness of the educational process, as well as the student's social development. In rehabilitation, the educational relationship between the teacher/rehabilitation specialist and the student/rehabilitation specialist is paramount to the success of the educational process. Mutual respect, trust, and a genuine interest in the needs and problems of the student/rehabilitation specialist form the foundation of the educational relationship.[6]

Childhood experiences motivate students to create changes in their lives by developing a sense of security through positive relationships with adults. Janusz Korczak describes pedagogical work based on respect for children through their individuality.[7] Resocialization is a complex process that encompasses education and social services to help individuals regain their ability to participate in society. From an educational perspective, the process of a child's education encompasses the shaping of social attitudes, the development of emotional competencies, and the internalization of social norms and values. The educational environment plays an important role in achieving these goals, providing effective means to support the developmental needs of at-risk children and adolescents through well-designed educational and therapeutic interventions.

The concept of therapy in working with children and adolescents

Modern teaching methods and the study of child development are creating a growing demand for therapies that can help children and adolescents. Due to the complex psychological and social challenges young people face, teachers will be using more therapeutic methods to help them. Therapy in schools is more than just helping them solve problems; it helps students develop psychologically and socially. A key concept in educational research indicates that effective intervention for children must be holistic to achieve the best academic outcomes. This means that both the emotional and social needs of children must be considered alongside their family life and academic experiences. Therapeia, meaning care, treatment, or assistance to someone in need, is the root of the Greek term therapy. Today, the

[6] J. Hattie, *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, London 2009, p. 119.

[7] J. Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko,* Warszawa 2012, p. 94.

word is widely used in science, including medicine, psychology, and pedagogy, where it describes various interventions designed to reduce or eliminate all forms of developmental disorders and individual impairments. The word "therapy," as used in the educational field, describes a structured process in which interventions are used to improve a child's or adolescent's mental, emotional, and social functioning. The goal of this type of intervention is also to improve the individual's level of functioning in various aspects of their life. Literature studies indicate that therapeutic interventions involve identifying an individual's developmental challenges and providing strategies to reduce the negative effects of these developmental challenges, as well as supporting the individual's normal development.

Another way in which therapy in pedagogy can be understood is by providing students with appropriate teaching methods and psychological communication to support the development of a child's mental and emotional well-being. Traditional teaching typically provides children with knowledge and thinking or reasoning skills. However, therapy aims to improve a child's ability to function at home, at school, and in the social environment by identifying and correcting difficulties that hinder this functioning. In this way, therapy can be considered a unique type of psychological and educational support because it takes into account the individual needs and developmental level of each child. Generally, according to the literature, therapeutic interventions aim to alleviate a child's current difficulties, increase their developmental competencies, and help the child build self-esteem or individual strengths.[8] An integral part of reflecting on the purpose of therapy in working with children and adolescents is clarifying the primary goal of therapy in relation to the educational process. One of the primary goals of therapeutic interventions is to help children develop their emotions. Contemporary psychological research shows that recognizing and managing emotional states can significantly contribute to social well-being and success in school. Goleman argues that by developing emotional skills, one can develop effective coping skills with stress, conflict, and life's difficulties.[9] Therefore, the primary goal of many schools is to help students develop emotional coping skills, create a sense of security, and develop social skills. Another primary goal of therapy is to help children adapt and/or adjust to what is required of them in the academic environment. Learning becomes problematic for many students due to cognitive impairments and/or emotional and social challenges. Educational therapy is an important method of supporting students in their education by identifying the causes of these problems and ways to address them. Pedagogical therapy encompasses various approaches to working with students, such as developing cognitive skills (i.e., memory, concentration, and perception), as well as increasing motivation to learn and building positive relationships with

[8] E.M. Skorek, *Terapia pedagogiczna. Zaburzenia rozwoju psychoruchowego dzieci*, Kraków 2005, p. 42.

[9] D. Goleman, *Inteligencja emocjonalna*, p. 61.

the school.[10] In this sense, therapy is an important complement to the teaching process, as it allows for more individualized instruction based on the student's needs.

In rehabilitation pedagogy, therapy and resocialization are interrelated yet distinct concepts. Both share similar goals: individual growth and development and overcoming social challenges. However, the nature and activities that inform these processes differ. In rehabilitation, the emphasis is primarily on changing individual behaviours and attitudes so that they can function in accordance with social norms and standards. Therapy, on the other hand, focuses primarily on helping individuals develop their emotions and mental health, as well as addressing/reducing challenges experienced due to developmental disorders or traumatic experiences. Although these two concepts typically overlap and complement each other in practice, without addressing the emotional needs and life experiences of clients, rehabilitation practices will not be able to serve them effectively. Different therapeutic approaches are used with children and adolescents, as they differ in both the mechanisms of intervention and the scope of activities. Psychological therapy is arguably one of the primary types of support provided to children in coping with anxiety, depression, emotional problems, and difficulties in social relationships. Psychotherapy for children and adolescents involves regular meetings between the young person and a therapist, during which the young person can express their feelings and reflect on what has happened to them, as well as discover a better way to cope with life's challenges. Contemporary psychotherapy includes many forms of psychotherapeutic approaches depending on the child's age and stage of development, for example, cognitive behavioral therapy, systemic psychotherapy, and humanistic psychotherapy.[11]

Additionally, another important approach aimed at supporting child development in the educational environment is educational therapy, which is also classified under special education. The program's primary goal is to support students with learning disabilities and emotional problems that impair their ability to function in school. Educational therapy primarily involves identifying the causes of learning difficulties and developing appropriate methods to develop cognitive abilities or compensate for developmental deficits. Unlike traditional classroom teaching, educational therapy focuses on the reasons why students experience learning difficulties rather than simply supplementing their knowledge. The individualized nature of this form of therapy allows the therapist and student to utilize a variety of instructional approaches that best suit the student's individual needs and learning style.[12] Group therapy, conducted through therapeutic sessions with small groups of children or adolescents exhibiting similar developmental challenges, is also crucial

[10] *Pedagogika specjalna*, ed. W. Dykcik, Poznań 2010, p. 207.

[11] *Terapia dzieci i młodzieży. Procedury poznawczo-behawioralne*, ed. P.C. Kendall, Kraków 2010, p. 23.

[12] B. Kaja, *Zarys terapii dziecka*, Bydgoszcz 2001, p. 54.

to the therapeutic process. Group therapy helps students develop social skills and resolve conflicts with others in a positive and healthy way. Group therapy gives participants a sense of belonging while also helping to build a social support system. John E. Lochman's research has shown that involvement in group activities can significantly improve adolescents' emotional well-being and reduce aggressive and conflictual behaviours. Occupational therapy is often used in therapeutic work with children and adolescents and involves the use of practical and creative activities to facilitate individual emotional and social development. A wide range of activities, such as art and crafts, drama, and physical activity, can be classified as therapeutic activities. Occupational therapy aims to develop creative skills in adolescents while promoting a sense of empowerment and developing a positive self-image. Engaging in creative activities increases self-expression and releases mental tension. This is crucial when dealing with adolescents experiencing emotional difficulties. The role of therapy in a child's educational process is evident when emotional development is supported.[13] Today's schools are, more than ever, places where students receive help with their academic, emotional, and social challenges. Identifying developmental challenges early allows the therapist to provide appropriate therapy for maximum benefit. This early intervention will allow the individual's social and emotional development to continue, while addressing issues that may lead to further developmental challenges and alleviating any further emotional challenges.

School-based therapeutic intervention also helps alleviate academic difficulties and problematic behaviours that can arise in the educational environment. The academic challenges many students face are often related to negative experiences or stress. Through therapy, young people will better understand their emotions, and thus be able to identify and respond to conflicts or situations more positively. Building self-esteem is another key element of therapy for youth in educational settings. Children and adolescents experiencing social or academic problems will have low self-esteem, which can lead to greater social or academic difficulties. Developing self-efficacy and gradually building a positive self-image are two of the outcomes of all therapeutic programs. Because students at risk of social maladjustment are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours, developing their self-esteem will have a significant protective effect. Therefore, therapy is a key resource for modern interventions and education for children and adolescents. Through therapy, emotional and developmental difficulties can be reduced and a young person's potential can be unleashed. Furthermore, therapy strengthens a young person's social skills, helping them become active and productive members of society. Integrating therapy into our educational practices and systems creates a school environment that empowers students and nurtures their social and emotional development.

[13] J.E. Lochman, K.C. Wells, *Program Coping Power*, Oxford 2002, p. 108.

Cultural methods in the therapy and resocialization of children and youth

Contemporary pedagogy, along with the fields of psychology and resocialization pedagogy, is becoming increasingly aware that culture, considered as a whole, can play a crucial role in supporting children's development. Increasingly, educators, therapists, and those involved in resocialization activities are utilizing artistic expression and creativity as part of their work with children and youth. Cultural methods help young people develop their creative abilities individually while providing them with opportunities to interact with others, which is particularly valuable for those experiencing emotional, educational, or social difficulties. Literature on creative endeavours in pedagogy serves to further support individual development, both in creative expression and in developing social competencies and personal development. Cultural methods of therapy and resocialization encompass educational or therapeutic activities that utilize a variety of creative or artistic means of expression – such as visual arts, writing, music, theatre, or film. These activities create a space for young people to communicate their feelings and needs through symbolic representations of their reality. Culturally informed methods, unlike traditional methods of interaction, allow the therapist to engage with the student through a more relaxed and indirect medium, creating a sense of transparency and comfort between the student and the therapist in the therapeutic relationship.

As Shaun McNiff says, "Creative artistic expression is a natural means by which individuals communicate with the world around them and an important means of self-discovery in developing their ability to understand and express their emotions and experiences."[14] Art therapy, or healing through art, is currently one of the most widely used cultural methods in counselling and rehabilitation practice. The practice of art therapy encompasses many forms of artistic and visual representation (e.g., drawing, painting, sculpting, collage making). The idea behind this process is that creativity helps people express their feelings and experiences that may be difficult to express in words. Much emphasis is placed on the fact that engaging in artistic activities helps reduce emotional distress, helps create a sense of agency and creativity, and helps create a sense of capacity.[15] For children and adolescents, art therapy is an effective therapeutic approach for young people who struggle to verbalize their experiences or have emotional disturbances. Culture has also been used as an important therapeutic tool in bibliotherapy, which combines literary and educational approaches to both therapy and education. Bibliotherapy is based on the premise that access to high-quality literature can inspire individuals to reflect on their own experiences and provide solutions to their emotional and/or social struggles. By providing young people with appropriately selected literary works to

[14] S. McNiff, *Art heals: How creativity cures the soul*, Berkeley 2004, p. 35.
[15] C.A. Malchiodi, *Handbook of art therapy*, New York 2012, p. 41.

read, they can find common ground with the characters in the stories and approach their situations from a safe, symbolic perspective. Evidence suggests that using bibliotherapy can help develop empathy, establish moral standards, and strengthen the capacity for self-reflection.[16]

A teacher can use a bibliotherapeutic approach in individual or group work with children or adolescents. Another teletherapeutic approach to working with children or adolescents is music therapy. The value of music in the therapeutic environment has a long history of being a widely recognized tool for emotional expression and its ability to influence mental well-being. The goal of music therapy is to help individuals develop emotionally, reduce stress, and improve social functioning. The practice of music therapy in therapy can be expressed in many ways, including listening to music, improvising music, singing, and playing an instrument. Kenneth E. Bruscia explains that music provides a distinctive form of communication for expressing feelings and building relationships.[17] Music therapy is often used in therapeutic interactions with young people as a way to calm emotional pressures and develop creativity and identity. Dramatherapy (which uses theatre and drama elements in group work) also plays a significant role in therapeutic interactions. This approach uses improvisation, role-playing, and dramatic scene development to help participants explore different aspects of their personalities and social connections. Through drama therapy, adolescents have the opportunity to try new behaviours and reflect on conflicts while maintaining safety. Research shows that when children participate in drama activities, they improve their ability to cooperate with others, empathize, and communicate with each other.[18]

Along with rehabilitation, drama therapy offers people the opportunity to emotionally and creatively grapple with their experiences. Recently, film therapy has also become popular, using films to help individuals reflect on their own lives and experiences. After watching a film, discussions about its content can spark conversations about their own feelings, values, and relationships with others. Young people often use film characters as role models for developing their own identity. Research suggests that film therapy helps develop critical thinking skills, analyze one's own experiences, and reflect on one's own moral standards.[19] Cultural methods used in therapy and rehabilitation serve many functions in the development of children and adolescents. One of these is expressiveness, which allows children to express emotions and experiences through creative and symbolic means. This helps children not only understand their own experiences but also learn to cope with difficult feelings. The expressive function is not only important, but there are

[16] R.J. Rubin, *Using bibliotherapy: A guide to theory and practice*, Phoenix 1978, p. 59.

[17] K.E. Bruscia, *Defining music therapy*, Barcelona 1998, p. 23.

[18] R.J. Landy, *Drama therapy: Concepts and practices*, Springfield 1994, p. 67.

[19] D. Wedding, R.M. Niemiec, *Movies and mental illness: Using films to understand psychopathology*, Cambridge 2014, p. 37.

other functions related to it as well. The second function of cultural methods found in the literature is therapeutic, namely, reducing emotional tension (i.e., reducing stress) and increasing the psychological well-being of those who participate in or use these cultural methods. Cultural therapy often creates social relationships and promotes the development of social competences, as it is creative work that children typically must perform in collaboration with peers. Finally, the educational aspect of cultural methods has also been identified in pedagogical literature. Through contact with works of art and participation in creative activities, young people have the opportunity to learn about cultural values and develop aesthetic sensitivity. This process promotes the formation of social attitudes based on empathy, responsibility, and respect for others. As Elliot W. Eisner notes, artistic education plays an important role in an individual's cognitive and emotional development because it enables the development of interpretive skills and sensitivity to various forms of cultural expression.[20]

Culturally informed approaches to therapy and rehabilitation have two dimensions. First, they are global in nature, and as such, creativity is accessible to individuals of all ages and developmental stages. This makes them an effective tool for working with high-risk adolescents and children. Culturally informed approaches to therapy and rehabilitation are flexible enough for practitioners to adapt them to individual needs as well as the environment. Culturally informed approaches to therapy and rehabilitation play an important role in interventions with children and adolescents today. Providing a space that fosters their social, emotional, and creative development will allow them to receive the support they need. There are many options available when using art as a methodology. In addition to supporting identity formation, creative self-expression allows individuals to develop interpersonal competencies and helps build self-confidence. Integrating culturally informed approaches to therapy in an educational context also provides teachers with the opportunity to develop a comprehensive relationship with their students, encompassing not only their academic needs but also their emotional and social needs.

The importance of resocialization and therapeutic interventions in education

The school system currently serves not only as a teaching method but also as a method for providing education and caring for students. Educational and caring functions are two of the most important aspects of the school system for a child or young person, as the school environment is one of the most important social groups with which they will interact daily. Therefore, schools provide students

[20] E.W. Eisner, *The arts and the creation of mind*, New Heaven 2002, p. 71.

with numerous opportunities to develop their social attitudes, values, beliefs, and emotional intelligence. Educational literature emphasizes the need for educational processes to encompass more than simply imparting knowledge to students, but also to support the harmonious development of their personality and prepare them for responsible participation in society. Resocialization processes and therapeutic interventions are essential in helping adolescents and young people address developmental, emotional, and social challenges. The importance of resocialization in education stems primarily from the fact that schools are a place of intensive socialization for young people. The educational environment provides the foundation for an individual's social development, where young people first learn to establish relationships with others and behave among them. The process by which individuals develop communication skills in a social context will also result in the formation of an individual's social identity. This learning process is not always smooth, as many individuals struggle to adapt to their surroundings during the transitional period when they begin to develop their communication skills. Some individuals will also develop behaviours that are not considered socially acceptable or appropriate by their peer groups, while others may struggle to conform to the social norms of their group. When individuals develop poor communication skills or exhibit behaviours that are not perceived as acceptable by their peers, various rehabilitation activities that take place in the school environment can serve to prevent further educational difficulties. Resocialization activities can also provide an opportunity to foster positive behavioural changes.

Resocialization pedagogy advocates for effective pedagogical strategies to eliminate negative behaviours while simultaneously fostering positive ones. According to Konopczyński, the concept of creative resocialization is a modern modality used in the resocialization process. This concept is used to enhance an individual's creative and social abilities, helping to develop their potential.[21] The educational environment should facilitate the development of students' social skills so that they can actively participate in the academic community. Another key goal of rehabilitation and educational therapy is to support children and adolescents' ability to express their feelings. Recent psychological research has shown that emotions are a key aspect of learning and social interaction. The ability to identify and manage one's own feelings, and to identify the feelings of others, is essential for the social and ethical development of young people. According to Goleman, the development of emotional intelligence directly influences an individual's ability to overcome challenges and the quality of their relationships.[22]

Therefore, most therapeutic interventions aim to address and develop students' emotional competencies while teaching them how to manage stress and conflict. The existence of therapeutic interventions in the educational domain helps

[21] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna*, p. 93.

[22] D. Goleman, *Inteligencja emocjonalna*, p. 95.

minimize difficulties related to students' academic lives. Most often, aggression, social withdrawal, lack of motivation to learn, and so on, are the result of unmet emotional needs or experiences that are frustrating for the young person. Pedagogical-psychological therapy identifies the root of the problem and provides solutions to gradually overcome it. Kazimierz Pospiszyl believes that effective education requires knowledge of the psychological mechanisms of student behaviour and knowledge of that particular student's life experiences.[23] Therapeutic interventions play a crucial role in building students' self-esteem. Self-esteem is one of the key elements that determine whether an individual is developing well psychosocially. Low self-esteem often appears when a child or adolescent has experienced difficulties at school or interacting with peers; as a result, they may continue to experience adjustment difficulties. The literature shows that therapeutic interventions can have a positive impact on restoring individual self-perception, along with developing effective concepts of self-efficacy.[24]

Therefore, creating a school environment that provides an accepting and supportive atmosphere helps develop a sense of security and a reason to embrace educational challenges. Resocialization and therapeutic activities conducted at the school level aim to protect students from social exclusion. Contemporary societies are characterized by high rates of social and cultural change, which leads to the emergence of educational and learning opportunities, and therefore social disparities. Youth from low-income families often experience greater stress in the educational environment due to the disadvantages associated with coming from a poor family. When this occurs, resocialization and therapy can provide an excellent opportunity to support individual integration into society and prevent youth marginalization. An effective therapeutic and resocialization program in the educational system involves a multidisciplinary team of specialists collaborating in their approach to the child. The structure of current schools is shifting towards a more multidisciplinary approach, in which teachers, counsellors, psychologists, and other specialists collaborate to support student development. Due to this collaborative effort, they are able to more holistically identify the child's needs and develop more differentiated support plans to address various aspects of the child's life. According to Hattie's research, the effectiveness of the teaching process depends on the quality of the teacher-student relationship and the degree of individualized attention paid to the individual needs of students.[25]

The type of educational relationship fundamentally influences both the resocialization and therapeutic processes. The relationship between instructors and students builds effective instructional practice on a foundation of trust, empathy, and respect. Humanistic models of resocialization are often emphasized in instructional literature

[23] K. Pospiszyl, *Resocjalizacja. Teoria i praktyka pedagogiczna*, Warszawa 2008, p. 128.
[24] C.R. Rogers, *O stawaniu się osobą*, Poznań 2002, p. 45.
[25] J. Hattie, *Visible learning*…, p. 119.

working with adolescents, which leads the instructor to consider the child as the focal point of the instructional process, thus taking into account the child's personal desires and potential for personal development. It is also important to remember that therapeutic and remedial efforts in education are long-term processes. The results of these efforts are not always immediately visible, as they require considerable time to induce changes in students' attitudes and behaviors. Sustained efforts to support students' emotional and social development will be associated with significant improvements in students' functioning in the educational environment and into their future adult lives. In summary, therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions are highly beneficial to the educational experience of children and adolescents. These services support students' emotional development, provide support in overcoming academic challenges, and help students develop positive self-beliefs. Furthermore, they help foster positive social relationships among students and combat social exclusion. Adding therapeutic and rehabilitation programs to educational practices allows for the development of a school environment that nurtures learning and supports students' overall development.

Conclusions and summary

Rehabilitation and therapeutic interactions in the education of children and adolescents constitute a critical reflection within contemporary pedagogical and socio-scientific thought. Rapidly changing society, culture, and technology are reflected in the growing number of young people struggling with emotional, social, and/or educational challenges. Consequently, schools are also called upon to ensure children's overall development (including emotional and social aspects). Therefore, an analysis of the existing literature on this topic, along with the content of this article, supports the position that rehabilitation and therapeutic interventions can play a significant role in supporting students (children and adolescents) in their educational environment. Furthermore, one of the main conclusions of this study is that the resocialization process should be viewed as a stage of development, not as an opportunity to recreate institutions. Contemporary resocialization pedagogy emphasizes the development of potential and the strengthening of personal resources. Konopczyński notes that effective resocialization requires activating creative abilities and developing the ability to function constructively in society.[26] This means that educational institutions should foster appropriate environments in which social competences, responsibility, and the ability to cooperate with others are fostered. Another conclusion from this study was the importance of therapeutic interventions in working with children and youth. Providing therapy in an educational

[26] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna*, p. 104.

setting plays a crucial role in supporting students' emotional and psychological development. Various forms of psychological and pedagogical support can be used to early identify developmental difficulties and implement strategies to prevent the escalation of emotional and social problems. According to psychological research, emotional competence is one of the most important factors determining how well a person will function socially and cope with the challenges of everyday life.[27]

Rehabilitation and therapeutic interventions are also important components of this discussion. Although there are some differences between the two processes in terms of what they do and their overall goal, they often overlap in their application of pedagogy. The goal of rehabilitation is to change an individual's attitudes and behaviours to help them adapt to society's expectations. Therapy, on the other hand, aims to help an individual cope with emotional challenges that may result from developmental difficulties or traumatic events. By combining these two approaches, professionals can have a more holistic impact on a young person's development and, therefore, achieve greater success with their educational strategies. The use of culturally relevant methods in therapy and rehabilitation has significant value in supporting the development of children and adolescents. Various creative activities can aid in the therapeutic or educational process, as described earlier in this series (for example, by using art as a form of communication through methods such as art, bibliotherapy, music therapy, and drama therapy). Artistic expression helps individuals communicate their feelings, encourages creativity, and helps build self-esteem through a positive self-image. Through activities that require participants to collaborate with others, young adults will be able to reflect on their past experiences and develop their social skills. Research has shown that creative activities can play a crucial role in building identity and strengthening a sense of empowerment in young people.[28]

Analyzing the role of therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions in education, we can conclude that the effectiveness of these interventions largely depends on the quality of the educational relationship between teacher and student. To develop a strong learning relationship (pedagogical interaction) between teacher and student, three elements are necessary: trust, respect, and empathy. Modern teaching philosophies encourage teachers to adopt more humanistic philosophies, thus viewing students as individuals engaged in their own learning. Rogers stated that if a teacher can create an environment of acceptance and interest, they have created excellent opportunities for student intellectual development and will increase their willingness to participate in the educational process.[29] Collaboration between various professionals who work together on the development of children and adolescents is also crucial. Schools are becoming multidisciplinary settings, as teachers collaborate

[27] D. Goleman, *Inteligencja emocjonalna*, p. 102.
[28] C.A. Malchiodi, *Handbook of art therapy*, p. 48.
[29] C.R. Rogers, *O stawaniu się*…, p. 71.

with school counsellors, psychologists, and other specialists to effectively address student challenges. This type of collaboration provides a more holistic approach to addressing educational challenges and increases the effectiveness of the support provided. Hattie's study noted that individual attention to students and the quality of interpersonal relationships between them is probably the most important determinant of overall success in the teaching/learning process.[30]

The findings from this study led us to conclude that improving the preventive aspect of rehabilitation and therapy will be crucial to providing better preventive services in the future. Early identification and addressing new emotional and social challenges in students can be crucial in preventing additional educational challenges later on. The ultimate goal of schools is to provide an environment that supports both academic and psychosocial development for young people. Beyond their primary role as educational institutions, schools become places where children can receive rehabilitation and therapeutic services to improve their mental health and well-being. Rehabilitation and therapy in the education system have been proven to improve students' overall emotional and social development and ultimately improve academic achievement by supporting young people's self-esteem. We are creating a school system that not only teaches students what they need to know academically but also provides a system that supports the overall development of all students and prepares them to become responsible citizens of the planet, based on rehabilitation and therapy available to all students at all times. It is crucial to create new methods of teaching children and young people that will combine academic, rehabilitation and resocialization interactions needed to meet the complex needs of today's students.

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[30] J. Hattie, *Visible learning*…, p. 120.

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Music-supported informal learning in primary education: A socio-pedagogical framework for communication and social inclusion

Nieformalne uczenie się wspierane muzyką w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej: socjopedagogiczne ramy komunikacji i inkluzji społecznej

Abstract

This conceptual paper addresses a gap in research on semi-structured music-supported activities that can foster communication and social inclusion in primary education. It proposes Music-Supported Informal Learning (MSIL), integrating socio-cultural theory, experiential pedagogy, and social pedagogy. The framework comprises collaborative rhythm exercises, vocal expression, creative movement, and media-supported storytelling, using music as a mediator of interaction rather than an artistic end in itself. MSIL is distinguished from formal music education, music therapy, and unstructured play through semi-structured participation and subtle teacher facilitation. The paper defines five core principles and an operational matrix, remains conceptual and presents no empirical findings. It establishes a basis for future quasi-experimental and qualitative validation.

Keywords: communication, Music-Supported Informal Learning, primary education, social inclusion, social pedagogy

Streszczenie

Artykuł identyfikuje lukę w badaniach nad codziennymi, półstrukturalnymi działaniami muzycznymi wspierającymi komunikację i inkluzję w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej. Proponuje model *Music-Supported Informal Learning* (MSIL) łączący teorię społeczno-kulturową, pedagogikę doświadczenia i pedagogikę społeczną. Obejmuje on ćwiczenia rytmiczne, ekspresję wokalną, ruch twórczy oraz storytelling wspierany mediami, a muzykę traktuje jako środek interakcji, nie cel artystyczny. Różni się od formalnej edukacji muzycznej, muzykoterapii i niestrukturyzowanej zabawy poprzez półstrukturalny charakter oraz subtelną facylitację nauczyciela. Artykuł przedstawia pięć

zasad i matrycę operacyjną modelu, ma charakter koncepcyjny i nie zawiera wyników empirycznych. Stanowi podstawę przyszłej walidacji quasi-eksperymentalnej i jakościowej.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja wczesnoszkolna, inkluzja, komunikacja, pedagogika społeczna, uczenie nieformalne

Introduction

Modern primary education operates within a rapidly evolving socio-cultural landscape characterized by intensive digitalization, changing patterns of child socialization, and heightened awareness of emotional well-being in classroom settings.[1] While digital platforms offer unprecedented access to information, educational researchers increasingly observe diminished opportunities for spontaneous, unmediated peer interaction among children.[2] Consequently, primary school educators face the persistent challenge of addressing communicative hesitation, social isolation, and fragmented peer dynamics within increasingly diverse student populations.

Traditional educational structures often rely on formal instructional methodologies to achieve academic and communicative milestones. However, rigid classroom environments may inadvertently heighten performance anxiety among children who struggle with verbal self-expression, language acquisition, or social adaptation. In response to these limitations, contemporary educational discourse has increasingly recognized the pedagogical value of informal, non-formal, and semi-structured learning spaces within the broader school ecosystem.[3]

Music, as an intrinsic human medium of expression and interaction, holds significant socio-pedagogical potential. Yet, within mainstream primary education, music is frequently relegated to either highly technical forms of music instruction or passive background entertainment. This conceptual paper addresses this critical gap in the literature by synthesizing perspectives from social pedagogy, informal learning theory, and communicative development. It introduces Music-Supported Informal Learning (MSIL) not as a system for formal technical musical training, but as a structured socio-pedagogical framework designed to enhance communicative confidence, active participation, and social inclusion among primary school students.[4]

[1] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe*, Luxembourg 2023, pp. 3–4, DOI: https://doi.org/10.2797/443509; M. Żylińska, *Neurodydaktyka. Nauczanie i uczenie się przyjazne mózgowi*, Toruń 2013, pp. 174–182, DOI: https://doi.org/10.12775/978-83-231-6058-8.

[2] G.J. J.Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*, Boulder, CO 2015, pp. 1–4.

[3] L. Green, *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*, Aldershot 2008, pp. 23–28, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315248523; K. Illeris, *How We Learn: Learning and Non-Learning in School and Beyond*, London 2007, pp. 75–95, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203958544.

[4] S. Hallam, *The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people*, "International Journal of Music Education" 2010, No. 3, pp. 275–278,

Theoretical background and critical literature eeview

The conceptualization of Music-Supported Informal Learning is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework incorporating socio-cultural theory, experiential learning, and contemporary social pedagogy.

Synthesis and critical analysis of foundational theories

Lev S. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory posits that cognitive and communicative development is fundamentally mediated through social interaction and cultural tools. In the context of primary education, shared creative activity serves as a mediator, allowing children to negotiate meaning and practice collaborative interaction. Complementing this, John Dewey's experiential education underscores active engagement and reflective experience, while Lucy Green and Knud Illeris emphasize learner autonomy and informal peer learning in music.[5]

However, a critical comparison of these foundational frameworks reveals significant conceptual tensions.

Green's Informal Learning vs. Institutional Structure: While Green advocates for implicit, unguided peer imitation in popular music contexts, mainstream primary education requires structured developmental goals. Purely unguided informal learning often risks reinforcing pre-existing peer hierarchies or marginalizing less socially confident students.

Vygotsky's Scaffolding vs. Peer Autonomy: Vygotskian frameworks rely heavily on "more knowledgeable others" (teachers or advanced peers), which can unintentionally recreate performance pressure and anxiety during creative tasks.

Illeris's Incentive Dimension vs. Institutional Constraints: Illeris notes that learning fails when emotional incentives are disconnected from institutional tasks. Formal music education often prioritizes aesthetic technicality over emotional safety, discouraging reticent learners.

MSIL addresses these theoretical gaps by proposing a semi-structured, socio-pedagogical middle ground. It incorporates Green's emphasis on playfulness and

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761410370658; C. Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Hanover, NH 1998, pp. 8–13.

[5] L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Cambridge, MA 1978, pp. 52–57; J. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, New York 1938, pp. 25–31; L. Green, *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*, Aldershot 2008, pp. 180–186, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315248523; K. Illeris, *How We Learn: Learning and Non-Learning in School and Beyond*, London 2007, pp. 84–98, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203958544.

informal interaction, but embeds subtle teacher facilitation to maintain emotional safety, thereby transforming informal creative activities into accessible spaces for social inclusion.

Social pedagogy, inclusive education, and contemporary empirical insights

Social pedagogy historically emphasizes the holistic well-being of the individual within their social environment, focusing on community cohesion and the mitigation of social inequalities. Contemporary scholarship frames the primary school as a living social micro-system where relational dynamics directly shape child development.[6]

Empirical studies in primary music education and social inclusion provide compelling insights into non-formal creative modalities.

Prosocial Behaviour and Communicative Ease: Research in developmental psychology indicates that joint music-making and movement synchrony can promote cooperative and helpful pro-social behaviour among young children.[7]

Inclusive Policy Guidelines: European policy benchmarks emphasize that multi-sensory and non-formal activities serve as vital bridges for children experiencing language hesitation or social adjustment challenges.[8]

Despite these advancements, existing literature tends to treat musical activities either as clinical interventions or as formal artistic curriculum subjects. There remains a paucity of theoretical models explaining how semi-structured, informal music-supported activities function as everyday socio-pedagogical mechanisms in primary schools. The MSIL framework bridges this gap.

The MSIL socio-pedagogical framework

The proposed Music-Supported Informal Learning (MSIL) framework systematically connects structural inputs, socio-pedagogical mediating processes, and developmental outcomes.

[6] T. Pilch, *Grupa rówieśnicza jako środowisko wychowawcze* [in:] *Pedagogika społeczna: człowiek w zmieniającym się świecie*, eds. T. Pilch, I. Lepalczyk, Warszawa 2003, pp. 174–186; H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wrocław 1961, pp. 17–35; J. Smyła, *Organizowanie indywidualizacji kształcenia w klasie wielokulturowej* [in:] *Nauczyciel wobec wyzwań nowoczesności. Kierunki, koncepcje i dylematy*, eds. J. Szempruch, A. Ratajek, J. Smyła, Wrocław–Kielce 2018, pp. 111–124.

[7] S. Kirschner, M. Tomasello, *Joint music making promotes pro-social behavior in 4-year-old children*, "Evolution and Human Behavior" 2010, No. 5, pp. 354–364, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2010.04.004.

[8] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Promoting diversity*…, pp. 69–74.

Structural overview

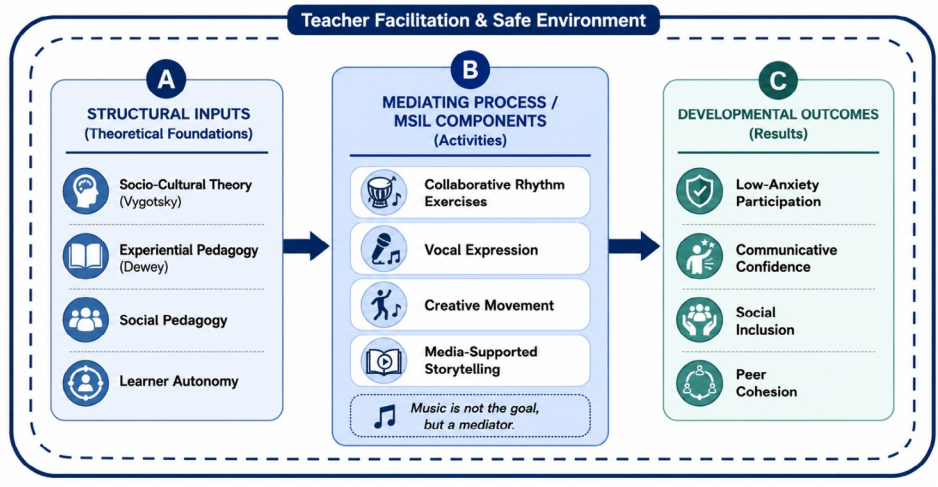


Figure 1. Structural diagram of the MSIL socio-pedagogical framework

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Theoretical novelty: delineating MSIL from neighbouring paradigms

To establish the distinct conceptual identity of MSIL, it is essential to delineate it from formal music education, music therapy, and unstructured play.

MSIL vs. Formal Music Education: Formal music education prioritizes aesthetic precision, notation literacy, and technical performance skills. In contrast, MSIL treats music as a secondary mediator for primary socio-communicative development; musical accuracy is subordinate to peer interaction and communicative expression.[9]

MSIL vs. Music Therapy: Music therapy represents a clinical application of music, whereas MSIL is a pedagogical framework designed for general primary school settings, facilitated by generalist educators to enhance everyday classroom climate and peer inclusion.[10]

MSIL vs. Unstructured Informal Play: While unstructured play relies entirely on spontaneous peer dynamics (which can inadvertently lead to exclusion), MSIL provides a semi-structured socio-pedagogical framework where subtle teacher facilitation ensures equitable participation.

[9] L. Green, *Music, Informal Learning*…, p. 10.
[10] S. Hallam, *The power of music*…, pp. 275–278.

Core principles of the MSIL framework

Low-Anxiety Participation: Activities are explicitly non-evaluative and non-competitive. Mistakes are conceptualized as creative variations, eliminating performance anxiety and encouraging participation from reticent learners.

Collective Creativity: Engagement is built upon group synchrony and shared artistic exploration rather than individual solo performance, reinforcing a sense of collective cohesion.

Embodied Communication: Rhythmic movement and physical gesture precede or accompany verbal articulation, providing alternative, pre-verbal channels of peer connection.

Inclusive Interaction: Tasks are structured to ensure equal access and participation regardless of students' prior musical training, linguistic background, or neurodevelopmental profile.

Reflective Facilitation: The educator acts not as an authoritative instructor, but as a socio-pedagogical facilitator who creates safe boundaries, monitors group dynamics, and subtly guides peer interactions.

Operational matrix of MSIL components

Table 1 outlines the structural components of MSIL, detailing their specific socio-pedagogical functions and expected developmental outcomes within primary education.

Table 1. Operational matrix of MSIL framework components

MSIL component	Core activity focus	Socio-pedagogical function	Expected developmental outcome
Collaborative Rhythm	Pulse games, body percussion, group drumming	Fosters interpersonal synchrony and active listening	Enhanced non-verbal coordination and peer attunement
Vocal Play & Expression	Sound exploration, chanting, vocal improvisation	Reduces vocal inhibition and speech anxiety	Increased verbal confidence and expressive freedom
Creative Movement	Rhythmic movement, spatial group games	Facilitates bodily self-expression and cooperative space sharing	Improved social bonding and physical peer integration
Media-Supported Storytelling	Digital audio tools, music-assisted narratives	Integrates creative technology with narrative expression	Strengthened communicative participation and digital literacy

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Discussion and pedagogical implications

Practical Implementation in School Ecosystems

The integration of MSIL into primary school ecosystems offers versatile, pragmatic pathways for fostering inclusive educational environments. Educators can deploy short, semi-structured MSIL modules during classroom transitions, morning assemblies, after-school creative clubs, or integrated arts sessions. Because MSIL prioritizes process over product, it avoids the temporal and financial burdens associated with formal musical productions, rendering it highly adaptable for diverse institutional settings.

Institutional Climate, Teacher Agency, and Facilitation

The successful implementation of MSIL relies heavily on teacher agency, professional confidence, and a supportive institutional school climate. Primary school educators do not require advanced technical musical mastery to facilitate MSIL effectively; rather, they require socio-pedagogical competence, openness to creative play, and institutional encouragement. School leadership plays a critical role by legitimizing informal learning spaces and fostering a school culture that values social inclusion alongside academic achievement.[11]

Limitations of the Framework

Lack of Direct Empirical Validation: While grounded in robust contemporary literature, the MSIL model requires rigorous empirical testing across diverse classroom settings.

Contextual and Developmental Variability: The operational efficacy of MSIL may vary according to age subgroups (e.g., early primary vs. upper primary), class sizes, and cultural background factors.

Institutional Resistance: Standardized curriculum demands and high-stakes testing cultures may present institutional barriers to allocating time for informal learning activities.

Directions for Future Research

Quasi-Experimental Longitudinal Studies: Implementing pre-test/post-test designs comparing primary cohorts exposed to MSIL intervention modules against control groups undergoing standard formal curricula.

Qualitative Case Studies: Conducting in-depth observational and interview-based studies to explore teachers' lived experiences, implementation barriers, and socio-pedagogical decision-making.

Assessment Scale Development: Designing and validating specialized observational rubrics to measure subtle shifts in communicative confidence, non-verbal peer interaction, and classroom social inclusion over time.

[11] J. Smyła, *Organizowanie indywidualizacji*…, pp. 111–124.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced Music-Supported Informal Learning (MSIL) as an integrative socio-pedagogical framework designed to address contemporary communicative and inclusive needs in primary education. By synthesizing socio-cultural learning theories, experiential pedagogy, and contemporary social pedagogy, the framework demonstrates how semi-structured, creative musical interactions can serve as effective socio-pedagogical mediators for peer integration, communicative confidence, and active social participation. While theoretical in nature, the MSIL framework provides a structured foundation for future empirical research and offers practical guidance for educators seeking to build more communicative, empathetic, and inclusive primary school communities.

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Part III

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE FACE OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL AND UPBRINGING PROBLEMS

Część III

PSYCHOLOGIA WOBEC WSPÓŁCZESNYCH PROBLEMÓW EDUKACYJNYCH I WYCHOWAWCZYCH

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The process of scientific cognition in the face of the everyday challenges of a young therapist

Proces naukowego poznania wobec wyzwań codzienności młodego terapeuty

Abstract

This article presents the process of scientific cognition based on the experiences of a therapist. The aim of the work is to demonstrate the formation and development of the therapist itself in the space of personal experiences, exploring humanity in confrontation with the concept of an objective specialist.

The assumption of the research process was to conduct qualitative research according to Anna Wyka's empirical research model – research through shared experience, also named by Teresa Bauman as participant observation. By identifying the individual phases of research – experiencing and acting, reflection, and integration – in the process of engaging with *otherness*, the young therapist embarked on a path of self-discovery and self-development.

Creating the possibility of a perspective look on the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience becomes an encouragement to take up challenges and face problems encountered along the paths of the therapeutic process.

Keywords: shared experience research model, participant observation, therapy disability, empathy, Self-discovery

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje proces poznania naukowego w oparciu o doświadczenia terapeuty. Jego celem jest zaprezentowanie kształtowania się i rozwoju terapeuty w przestrzeni doświadczeń osobistych, odkrywanie człowieczeństwa w konfrontacji z pojęciem obiektywnego specjalisty.

Założeniem procesu naukowego było przeprowadzenie badań jakościowych według modelu badań empirycznych Anny Wyki – model badań poprzez wspólne doświadczenie, określany również przez Teresę Bauman jako obserwacja uczestnicząca. Wyłaniając w procesie obcowania z innością poszczególne fazy badań: doświadczania i działania, refleksji oraz integrowania młody terapeuta wszedł na ścieżkę samopoznania oraz samorozwoju.

Stworzenie możliwości perspektywistycznego spojrzenia na integrowanie wiedzy teoretycznej z doświadczeniem praktycznym staje się zachętą do podejmowania wyzwań i stawiania czoła problemom napotykanym na ścieżkach procesu terapeutycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: model badań poprzez wspólne doświadczenie, obserwacja uczestnicząca, terapia, niepełnosprawność, empatia, samopoznanie

Introduction

The primary focus of psychology researchers is inextricably related with human. The subject of study is an action as targeted, purposeful and organized behaviour, the subject of which is a human being. Therefore, the art of conducting scientific psychological research takes man and his behaviour as its subject of study.[1]

The subject of the research upon which this work is based is the experience of *otherness* as experienced by a young therapist, in personal contact between the therapist and *the Other*. Many factors influenced the choice of this research topic. The most important was my interest in, curiosity about, and desire to explore, understand, and engage with *the Other*. The real opportunity to encounter, be with, and learn about *the Other* also played a significant role. The goal of my research is to explore my feelings and thoughts as a young therapist, as well as the actions I undertake in my daily contact with *the Other*.[2]

Scientific knowledge

Scientific research, which forms the foundation of the cognitive process in the social sphere, aims to expand and enrich knowledge about the individuals, objects, or phenomena that become the subject of study. The aim of research is to scientifically understand and describe reality, existing phenomena, real situations, institutions, and people as individuals. This goal supports the cognitive function and the practical and useful function of scientific research.[3]

To be classified as a scientific process, research methodology must achieve specific goals. Psychological sciences have two primary goals:

a) external – integrating science into the social sphere by learning and understanding the environment, surroundings and their specificity, as well as explaining the phenomena that occur in it, striving for the most effective possible action;
b) internal – purely cognitive goals, set individually by an individual, learning the truth; internal goals become a tool for achieving external goals based on their practical nature.

The correlation between internal and external goals is seen as a process of describing reality, explaining it, and then enabling the possibility of predicting new phenomena, rationally understanding them, and transforming them in practice. Therefore, the foundation of a properly formulated research goal in

[1] J. Brzeziński, *Metodologia badań psychologicznych*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 29–30.

[2] M. Gackowska, *Pozwól się oswoić. Moje doświadczanie inności*, Łódź 2022, p. 31.

[3] W. Dutkiewicz, *Podstawy metodologii badań do pracy magisterskiej i licencjackiej z pedagogiki*, Kielce 2000, p. 50.

psychological research methodology should be a reliable description of reality in a given area.[4]

In my work I do not pose hypotheses because as the qualitative approach forces the researcher to give up research hypotheses and assumes a certain lack of assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon being studied, resulting not from the lack of any assumptions on the part of the researcher, but from the attitude he has programmatically adopted cognitively naïve. The use of qualitative methods allows for research on little-known problems that the researcher has a better feeling about than knowledge about. This situation naturally prevents the formulation of precise hypotheses, as hypotheses cannot be formulated if the issue being researched is little-known.[5]

In the case of my work, in addition to document analysis, I used Anna Wyka's proposal for an empirical research model – the model of research through shared experience, also defined by Teresa Bauman as participant observation.

The characteristics features of the shared experience research model are:

a) subjectivity of the research relationship – the term "research subject" or "research interaction partner" is adopted, and the term "research object" is rejected;
b) active participation of both the researcher (the cognizing subject) and the researched person (the research interaction partner, the research subject) in identifying the research problem (phenomenon, process, etc.);
c) the researcher's involvement in the situation being studied and its direct experience (the researcher becomes part of the phenomenon, becomes a participant in the situation being studied and not an observer).

It is also important that the research subject is informed about the research process and is considered an integral part of it.

In the shared experience research model, the researcher co-creates the research process with the research subject, revealing them himself as a human being, and thus risking losing their position as a scientist. During the research process, the researcher may experience previously unknown emotional experiences that can significantly impact them and their world of values. Cognitive categories such as knowledge through insight, intuitive knowledge, knowledge through emotions, and knowledge through the body play a significant role here. The possibility of non-intellectual knowledge and being a participant experiencing the reality being studied excludes the researcher's objectivity. The researcher matters to the entire study. A crucial element of this research is the researcher's reflection on both themselves as a participant in the phenomenon being studied and on the phenomenon itself. Initially, the researcher draws on their own experiences gained from participating

[4] J. Brzeziński, *Metodologia badań psychologicznych*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 30–34.

[5] T. Bauman, *O możliwości zastosowania metod jakościowych w badaniach pedagogicznych* [in:] T. Pilch, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych*, Warszawa 1995, p. 57.

in the study and ignores theoretical knowledge. Personal reflections are combined with theoretical knowledge by the researcher in the next stage.[6]

Wyka distinguishes the following phases of the research cycle in the research model through shared experience:

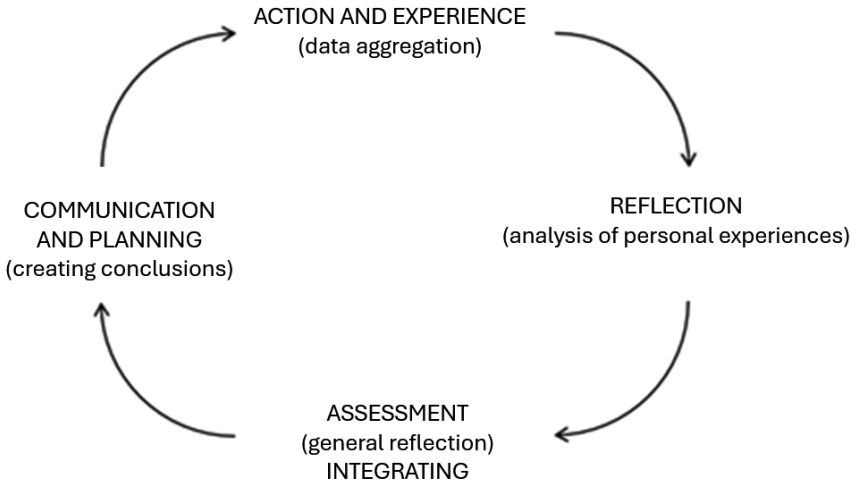


Figure 1. Combining experience with theoretical knowledge

Source: A. Wyka, *Model badań poprzez wspólne doświadczenie, czyli o pewnej empirii „jakościowej"*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1985, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, p. 103.

Presentation of the results of my own research process in this paper, will be based on above-presented shared experience model.

Experiencing *the Other…*

The unreal becomes the empirical through personal experience.
K. Hastrup

The description presented below is a record of my experiences and reflections related to experiencing *otherness*, to my entry into the world of *the Other*. By deciding to cross over to the other side, to the side of *the Other*, citing Barba's statement from Wyka's publication, I am taking a certain risk of lynching my own

[6] Cf. A. Wyka, *Model badań poprzez wspólne doświadczenie, czyli o pewnej empirii „jakościowej"*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1985, Vol. XXIX, No. 2; T. Bauman, *O możliwości zastosowania…*, pp. 72–73.

intelligence. Barba believes that such an attitude requires moral, physical, and especially intellectual courage from the researcher, in this case, me. This becomes an account of an extraordinary personal adventure of confronting the reality of *the Other*, of venturing into unknown lands.[7]

My adventure with *the Other* began in October 2008, born from a desire to act, to help, to do something for others. I took the opportunity and accepted an offer to care for a boy with autism, knowing little about the boy, his daily life, which I would be part of, or the autism spectrum disorder itself (I had acquired general information about autism during my studies, but it was very abstract and difficult for me to apply to reality).[8]

Phase I – experiencing and acting

The first phase of the research cycle is based on collecting data without thinking in theoretical terms.

I obtained my first data on October 21, 2008, during a meeting with the mother of *the Other* – Kuba, who was then fourteen. The meeting was brief. We arranged the meeting at Kuba and his mother's apartment, which would soon become my "research site," the place where I would spend most of my time with Kuba. Kuba's mother proved to be a very warm and welcoming person. She briefly told me about Kuba, his disorder, his daily life, and how she spent her free time with Kuba. She showed me the teaching aids needed for Kuba's ongoing educational, therapeutic, and upbringing process (by choosing to be with Kuba, I should also be involved in this process). I left that meeting with enormous enthusiasm and determination. I wanted to get to know Kuba as soon as possible and begin being with him – to begin the process of learning, experiencing, and familiarizing myself with him…

When the possibility of experiencing otherness became completely real to me, I had no preconceptions, no plan of action. For the first time in my life, I was about to meet in person someone with autism. I only assumed that Kuba and I would learn, get to know each other, and experience each other. I accepted Kuba as he was before I even met him, relying on his full acceptance, subjectivity, flexibility in my actions, and adapting to Kuba's individual needs and abilities.

Data collection was based on taking notes from each meeting with Kuba, which became a record of my initial experiences, feelings, thoughts, and actions. I decided to present the notes in their original form because I believe that written notes best reflect what I was experiencing at that time.

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[7] A. Wyka, *„Talbot", czyli badacz społeczny jako przedmiot i podmiot zarazem* [in:] *Kulturowy wymiar przemian społecznych*, eds. A. Jawłowska, M. Kempy, E. Tyrakowska, Warszawa 1993, pp. 202–203.

[8] M. Gackowska, *Pozwól się oswoić*…, p. 53.

24.10 My first meeting with Kuba

13.00

Observing classes at the center Kuba attends – the therapist told Kuba to say hello to me – he said "good morning" and shook my hand.

Conversation with Kuba's therapist.

Mom picked Kuba up from the centre, they were returning home on their usual route, I was following them like a shadow.

At home, his mom showed me what Kuba was doing, how he worked (binders, puzzles, a timer), what rewards he received (music, ham), and how he rested (lying on the couch, listening to stories). Kuba paid me absolutely no attention, as if he didn't even see me, as if I were air. He was calm, did everything Mom asked, cuddled up to her, and it was clear he was very attached to Mom. A child like an angel.

For 1.5 hours I was a shadow, observing everything, observing what Kuba's everyday life looks like.

Kuba's therapist, whom I spoke with that day, guided me in my interactions with Kuba. He warned me about Kuba's outbursts of aggression, instructed me how to handle such situations and advised me to always keep my hair tied back in Kuba vicinity, just in case.

I couldn't believe that Kuba, this slim, quiet boy, was capable of the aggressive outbursts I'd heard about from the therapist. I had the impression he was exaggerating the issue, but I couldn't see the purpose behind it. Did he want me to be afraid of Kuba?

Kuba's therapist also drew my attention to communication – Kuba speaks very quietly and indistinctly. He told me that I had to get used to his speech to understand him. This made me anxious. What if I can't understand him? What if he needs something and I'm helpless?

Throughout the observation, Kuba was "off." I had the impression that he was absent, completely uninterested in what was happening around him. All he said was "you don't want to" or "yes," and even then, his answers were often inadequate to the question.

I returned home full of fear and anxiety, with a constant question: Will I be able to cope? Am I taking this on too seriously? Various thoughts raced through my mind: that Kuba needed someone experienced, that I wouldn't be able to help him in any way, that I wouldn't be able to communicate with him. But deep down, I was full of hope that maybe it would work out, that it wouldn't be so bad. I was also encouraged by the assurances from my therapist and Kuba's mother that I could always turn to them if I needed anything, if I didn't know something.

My time with Kuba was supposed to be while his mother was away. I was supposed to pick him up from the Centre and be alone with him, completely alone, until Kuba's mother returned from work…

27.10 My first time being alone with Kuba

15.00–17.30

I arrived at the Centre early and waited for Kuba. Kuba came with a therapist who helped him get dressed. I was worried whether Kuba would go with me, after all, I was a complete stranger to him. He grabbed my arm and we left. Kuba's mother called me and said that if it rained (it was bad rainy autumn weather), we should take the bus home. Fortunately, it didn't rain. We walked home in silence. I didn't know what to talk to Kuba about or how to talk. I was also very focused so I wouldn't lose my way. At home, I helped Kuba undress and told him to wait for dinner. He sat on the couch and waited patiently. After eating dinner, I prepared a schedule for him, which he followed perfectly and then he went to bed. He only got up when his mother arrived.

03.11

15.00–17.30

I think I'm starting to understand the need for consistency and routine in autistic people. Today's routine is exactly the same as last time. We sing songs on the way home, and then we get home and have dinner, make plans, and lie down. The only thing Kuba surprised me with today was a change of song – he wove "Hey Sokoły!" between "Pieski małe dwa!" which really surprised me, but it took me a while to recognize the song. While I was resting, I read a story to Kuba. I don't know if he was listening; he seemed absent…

That's how my experience with Kuba began. For those first three days, I didn't know what to do, how to behave, how to talk to him. I thought I was only an observer. I knew so little about Kuba that I couldn't even predict his simplest reactions. I didn't know how he would behave on the bus, during a walk, or at home waiting for dinner. I was afraid of every moment, every situation that deviated even a little from the established ritual. Kuba's therapist's warning about outbursts of aggression still lingered in my mind and perhaps deep down, I was waiting for such a moment to know what to expect from Kuba. Those first days were one big unknown for me. Kuba was a huge mystery. I was very surprised that he didn't treat me like a stranger, that he trusted me from the very first day, going with me without hesitation. Was he really that indifferent to his surroundings? He didn't make eye contact at all; in the apartment, he walked past me as if I weren't even there. He only turned to me when he wanted something, but he didn't look in my direction. After just three days, I began to understand his speech, understanding when he said "do you want a drink" or "do you want ham" (he referred to himself in the third person). I was fearing what might happen. I complied with all his requests. Until then, my only action had been to take Kuba home, serve him dinner, and create a plan. I had created the plan according to the recommendations of Kuba's therapist and his mother's instructions. I placed various binders with tasks (e.g., matching pictures, colours, object recognition) and puzzles (jigsaw puzzles, matching pieces, etc.) in

boxes marked with symbols. Kuba knew these tasks by heart and completed them very efficiently. The biggest challenge for him was the multi-piece puzzles, which I had to help him with. Kuba was accustomed to announcing, "I want music," and then lying down on the bed as soon as he finished the plan. I didn't yet have enough courage to motivate him to get up and take further action.[9]

07.11 That day I visited Kuba twice, it was necessary.

7.30–9.00

I came to Kuba's house in the morning to get him ready and take him to the center. When I arrived, he was already awake but still in his bed. Kuba's mother gave me quick instructions and went to work. I made him a breakfast, Kuba got up, ate, I helped him get dressed, he brushed his teeth, and we watched TV for a while. We left for the centre early (I was still afraid of the bus ride because it always involved waiting and a lot of people, to whom Kuba can react differently). The walk to the centre was exceptionally long; we walked in a circle because we had plenty of time. Kuba didn't protest; he walked calmly, agreeing to the route I had planned. We walked in silence.

15.00–19.00

Four hours with Kuba was a long time. I didn't know how to manage that time yet. It started as usual – a walk home, dinner, a plan. And then it began! Kuba attacked me! He grabbed my hair unexpectedly, very forcefully. I tried to free myself, but he wouldn't respond to any commands. He ripped out some of my hair, then grabbed my shirt. I struggled with him for a good dozen or so minutes until I managed to grab his hands and stand him facing the closed door. After a while, Kuba calmed down. I was all shaken and tired. He attacked me for no reason. I think he was testing me. After a moment, I took a breather, and we went for a walk. Kuba's mood improved dramatically, he started jumping and running, and at one point, he ran up to me, looked at me, and said, "I'm glad." I was shocked! We returned home, and after a while, Kuba's mother arrived.

A day full of excitement, a day that was, in a sense, a turning point. I experienced Kuba's first attack of aggression. It was terrifying! What strength he has! At first, I panicked a bit; I wasn't prepared, I didn't know what to do. I only knew I couldn't scream. I managed to control my panic and nerves, and thanks to that, I managed to control Kuba. I was completely shaken and couldn't calm down for a long time. Even during the walk, I still felt everything inside me shaking. I had mixed emotions: on the one hand, anxiety, fear, anger, and on the other, pity – I felt sorry for Kuba, but he wasn't aware of it, he wasn't doing it on purpose. If only I knew what caused this attack! It dawned on me that Kuba's therapist hadn't been exaggerating… I hope such an attack never happens again!

Next surprise was when he said "I'm happy." It was the first time he looked at me, the first time he noticed me, and on top of that, he spontaneously said he was

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 57.

happy. I think the aggression allowed him to release the tension, and that's why he felt so good later.

What happened today made me even more eager to get to know Kuba, to enter his world…

17.11

15.00–17.30

Kuba had a rough day today. When I came to pick him up at the centre, I learned he'd had attack of aggression and ended up in time-out (a place of isolation and quiet). When I helped him get dressed before leaving, he grabbed my hair. One of the therapists helped me, and Kuba directed all his aggression at her, which led to Kuba being taken back to time-out. Watching from the side as two people tried to hold Kuba, I was shocked at where he got all his strength from. After a few minutes, Kuba returned and we went home. At home, he ate dinner, made a plan, and started bouncing the balloon. At some point, Kuba started stimulating himself. I tried to interrupt him one by one, taking the program steps, but it didn't help. Kuba also started masturbating. He alternated between biting his hand and masturbating. After another attempt, I tried to interrupt him, and he grabbed my hair, tugged, and tried to bite me. I fought with him for about an hour. When I finally managed to get him under control, he lay down on the bed and I sat down exhausted next to him.

That was Kuba's second attack of aggression I'd experienced. Just like before, I was terrified and shaken, but also proud of myself for controlling my panic and nerves. I didn't let Kuba know I was afraid. With outward composure, I calmed Kuba down. The hardest part after an attack is getting back to "normal," treating Kuba as if nothing had happened…

19.03 Shopping mall

Today I was with Kuba as additional support. My friend (who goes to Kuba's in shifts with me) was taking care of him and asked me for help because she wanted to take Kuba to the mall and wasn't sure if she could handle it if something would happen. From the start, Kuba was "out of character," a bit irritable. Maybe it was because we were two of us. We're completely different, we have completely different lifestyles, and we treat Kuba completely in a different way. Perhaps Kuba was confused, unsure how to behave, even though I tried to be a shadow.

We did some shopping, and Kuba was a great runner in line. However, when we were getting ready to leave, Kuba attacked my friend – he grabbed her hair. She panicked and started screaming, so I "took over" Kuba. His aggression transferred to me. I don't know how many times he grabbed my hair. I tried to control him for about 10 minutes! Every time Kuba "came back," some distraction would appear (e.g., a voice from the loudspeakers), and Kuba was attacking again. I completely shut myself off from the world. It was just me and Kuba. From my later conversation with my friend, I learned that this lasted about 10 minutes, that a crowd of "gawkers" gathered around us, and even the security guards didn't offer help.

The situation seemed so strange because neither of us shouted – "Kuba doesn't scream, I can't." When I finally managed to control him, we walked him home. Only then did I feel how much my scalp hurt, which was a sign of how much hair I had lost in this "fight"…

Another three months have passed. A lot has happened in that time. My relationship with Kuba is getting better and better. I feel very connected to him. Our time together brings me a lot of joy and satisfaction. I feel like Kuba trusts me more and more, that he's become accustomed to me, knows how to behave around me, and what not to do (for example, masturbation –thing I wrote about in last note). I've gained a lot from Kuba. He's taught me patience and flexibility (it wasn't always the way I wanted), and he's shown me that *Others* also have needs and feelings, even though they sometimes struggle to express them. Throughout this time, I've been opening up to Kuba, and Kuba has bridged the distance I initially felt towards him. Hugging and stroking Kuba is no longer a problem for me. I've started showing him affection, being truly with him instead of just being there for him. Although Kuba's aggression and stimulation haven't stopped (but their intensity has clearly decreased), I no longer feel anxious, fearful, or angry. I've learned to recognize Kuba's behaviours, and thanks to this, I'm often able to anticipate them and prevent them from happening. I think Kuba benefits from this as well.

After approximately seven months of data collection, it was time for a brief summary of Phase I of the research cycle. I considered the data collection phase was completed and could move on to reflection.

It was a time very rich in experiences, getting to know each other, learning from each other, and it was aimed at creating bonds – taming.

During this time, I learned many things about my *Other* – Kuba, his *otherness*, as well as about myself.

As I mentioned, autism was an abstract concept for me, learned in university. I also had a certain image of it from movies, which, as I later learned, had no connection to everyday reality. Initially, Kuba evoked ambivalent feelings in me: both concern and a desire to help, but also anxiety, fear of him and whether he would accept me or reject me. I approached Kuba more intuitively than with experience (Kuba was the first child with autism I'd ever met, so I had no experience). Although Kuba demonstrated many difficult feelings and behaviours (anxiety, tension, overstimulation, aggression, self-harm), my intuition told me there were layers of goodness within him that could be tapped into. This conviction gave me the strength to continue experiencing, even though it was sometimes difficult. I didn't give up and I didn't quit.

Experiencing *otherness* affects both the person being experienced and the one experiencing it. Time spent with Kuba was an important time for me to get to know myself, thinking that another person can become a mirror. During those seven months I spent in Kuba's world, I learned to understand him, his speech, his needs,

the signals his body sent (moments of tension, symptoms preceding an attack of aggression). I stopped being afraid of otherness, I stopped being afraid of Kuba. I no longer panicked during attacks, I was no longer afraid of changing plans, or of spending too much time with him (I stopped asking in terror, "What are we going to do?"). I learned to be more flexible and open to him, but I also recognized myself as a consistent, demanding, and decisive person (when a task needed to be done, I stood my ground and often interrupted Kuba's laziness, even though it could cause an attack of aggression). I learned the therapeutic and educational principles of working with people with autism not from books, but from experience. Over time, I gave up the binders and puzzles, and limited my tasks to household chores and speech therapy, placing a greater emphasis on being together and talking. I learned to treat Kuba not as *an Other*, but as a friend, someone important to me. I opened up to him, showing him a lot of love, warmth, and understanding (as evidenced by his consent to massages, playing with me, and cuddling). My fear and anxiety disappeared. I'm convinced Kuba also opened up to me, accepted me (although the time he tested me, the first outbursts of aggression, will forever remain fixed in my memory), began to make eye contact, listen when I read a story, and respond when we talked. Kuba began to notice me. I felt needed and important to him. Incredible feelings overwhelmed me when he woke up, grabbed my hand, and checked on me. He learned my name (when I asked for my name, he replied "Martusia"), which was a great joy for me.[10]

Phase II – reflection

The reflection phase assumes that the researcher withdraws from experiencing and focuses on the analysis of lived experiences based solely on their own experiences and experiences gained from participating in the research situation.[11]

The data collection period was a time of many reflections and considerations. Some of them were already included in the first phase of the research process. In fact, after each meeting with Kuba, I reflected on various things, and the reflection was constantly present in anticipation of the next meeting.

Initially, our meetings seemingly followed the same pattern, order, and routine, yet there were so many different details, crucial to building our relationship and creating bonds, that they required considerable flexibility on my part.

Going to Kuba's, I could never predict how our meeting would unfold, what we would do outside of our regular schedule. Each meeting was a mystery, a secret that unfolded through experience. During our time together, I tried to read Kuba's needs, desires, and moods. I wasn't always successful. Sometimes I felt as if Kuba

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 72.

[11] A. Wyka, *Model badań*…, p. 103.

sensed his own impotence, his inability to communicate, to express his desires and needs. In such moments, aggression and self-harm would emerge. I felt completely helpless. All I could do was control Kuba, calm him down, and I still didn't fully understand the reason for his outburst, although it certainly served partly to release the internal tension stemming from this very impotence. Kuba seemed locked in his own world, as if behind an invisible pane of glass, and despite my enormous willingness and effort, I couldn't penetrate it.

Kuba's speech was very formulaic, rehearsed. Initially, I couldn't read Kuba's emotions either from his speech or his behaviour (except for challenging behaviours). Kuba is taught to remain polite and to keep his hands calm. These are steps taken as part of therapy, which continue outside the centre, in his daily life. This is intended to prevent challenging behaviours, but I had the impression that this often inhibited Kuba from expressing emotions, including positive ones. As soon as Kuba started laughing, he had to control himself because laughter led to stimulation ("silly"). Over time, I learned to recognize Kuba's joy. When he was happy, his facial expression changed; he would jump, run, and get excited. However, all of these behaviours had to be constantly monitored.

Touch was a key element in our getting to know each other. Initially, it was limited to returning from the centre arm in arm. Over time, as we got to know each other, we gained trust. Kuba began to hold my hand, most often in new situations that evoked uncertainty and fear (e.g., on an overpass), which showed he felt safe with me. My presence gave him courage. Holding my hand during sleep, illness, and making sure I was there was another step in building a bond. We became important and needed to each other. This was very reassuring, because I noticed that when I held his hand, Kuba "forgot" about stimulation and difficult behaviours. The next step was Kuba agreeing to a back massage, which he really enjoyed; he started asking for it. It was so much fun! Once Kuba warmed up to me, we began cuddling, fooling around, frolicking, and tickling. It gave us both a lot of positive feelings, and I was happy that Kuba accepted me, that I was becoming someone important to him, and that a process of familiarization had taken place between us, which, according to Beata Chrzanowska, is a gradual reduction of the spatial distance, until we touched and shook hands, and then had a massage.[12]

Over time, Kuba became the decisive figure, deciding where we would go and what we would do. I began to notice the signals he gave me about his needs, which gradually diminished his frequent outbursts of aggression. We began to communicate better, and gradually I crossed the glass dividing us…

Being with Kuba, I had to demand from him. I couldn't just be kind and compassionate. Dietmar Zoller's words came to mind: "I can't do anything without demands. I'll never learn anything if you're only kind and compassionate,"

[12] B. Chrzanowska, *Wyzwolił mnie śmiech* [in:] *Drugie opowieści terapeutów*, eds. H. Olechnowicz, Warszawa 2000, p. 98.

which partially illustrate my attitude towards Kuba. I set demands tailored to his abilities. I wanted him to work, complete tasks, and behave appropriately. I often encountered rebellion on his part, but after a while, he accepted my conditions and began to adhere to them, pleasantly surprising me. In the final months of data collection, Kuba, at my request, would get up without any problems, follow through with his plan, and I was proud of him. I think this attitude also played a significant role in Kuba's masturbation. He learned that I didn't accept it, and after a while, I didn't have to "fight" him; a meaningful look or a word of warning to him to stop was enough. However, the demands I placed on him affected not only Kuba but also myself. I had to be consistent and composed. I started focusing on Kuba's successes, not his difficulties. I introduced social motivation – I praised him very often, almost at every moment, telling him he was a nice guy, that he was super polite, that I liked him when he did this or that. I noticed and appreciated Kuba's every effort. This clearly motivated Kuba to continue working on himself, to control his behaviour. This was a huge success in our journey of becoming more comfortable.

There were also many difficult moments for me that didn't directly concern Kuba. In public places, in various situations, shame crept up. The fear of "what will people say?" I wasn't ashamed of Kuba, but of what I had to do. At first glance, Kuba's disability was invisible. I encountered different looks and comments from people, for example, when I tied Kuba's shoe on the sidewalk, or on the bus, when I held both his hands. I worked hard to overcome negative emotions, to walk with Kuba on the promenade and out loud, to boldly sing children's songs, or to run hand in hand. So much is said about the rights of people with disabilities… yet the fear of public opinion paralyzed me. Thanks to Kuba and situations like these, I learned to distance myself from the world and people. My value system changed. I stopped worrying about what others would say, how they would look at me, what they would think. I saw what was truly important – not the opinions of "well-wishers," but other people!

When I think about Kuba now, I'm amazed at how much he's revealed to me over that time, how much closer we've become. I've never established such a connection with a person with a disability before. Kuba showed me that words aren't everything, and that it's not enough to just stand by. You have to enter the other person's world to get to know them, to enter and simply be with them, because "inside, where no one can see, there's a being with their own feelings and thoughts, their own world and their own language, which can be the language of God."[13]

I have also experienced that the best cure for all fears, anxieties, and worries is the closeness of another person, their acceptance, understanding, love, and the

[13] D. Terakowska, *Poczwarka*, Kraków 2007, pp. 128–129.

goodness that comes from closeness. Everyone, not just *the Other*, needs a friend. The absence of that other person, the absence of a friend, is a problem that creates a dividing wall and prevents the call for love from being heard. The need for love is enormous. "People must be loved, then they blossom," and a person is "like a plant, fertilized with love and tenderness."[14]

At the end of this phase of the research cycle, I will repeat after Barry Nail Kauffman that I received the wonderful gift of participating in the life of Kuba…[15]

Phase III – integration

After completing the activity and reflecting on the experience of *the Other* – Kuba, it was time for the next phase of research – integration, which involves combining the experiences gained and the knowledge resulting from them with theoretical and intellectual knowledge that goes beyond the personal experiences gained in the research process.[16]

In my case, this phase began much earlier, at the time of my first encounter with the concept of autism. I gained my first, very general understanding of autism from watching television films on the subject. My knowledge was partially reinforced during classes (lectures and special education exercises) I attended during my studies. The integration phase began to fully unfold with my first conversation with Kuba's therapist, who outlined the nature of autism and its specificity in the context of Kuba's functioning. I then had the opportunity to familiarize myself with Kuba's therapeutic and educational programs, psychological opinions, and the medical history of his condition. I also learned the main principles and assumptions of the behavioural therapy he receives. During the operational and data collection phase, I also had numerous consultations with specialists treating Kuba. I found the consultations with the speech therapist particularly valuable, along with her guidance and suggested exercises (hence the frequent mentions of speech therapy sessions with Kuba in my notes), which improved my communication with Kuba. Over the past seven months, I've also had the opportunity to participate in training in behavioural therapy and verbal and social behaviour training. I've continually expanded my knowledge by delving into the literature on autism and working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder. I've sought guidance and suggestions from all these sources on what I can do with Kuba, how to act, and how to plan each day to ensure our time together is productive and to contribute, as much as possible, to Kuba's improved functioning, which is consistent with his continued therapy.

[14] D. Zoller, *Gdybym mógł*…, pp. 63, 113.
[15] B.N. Kaufman, *Przebudzenie syna. Terapia dzieci autystycznych*, Warszawa 1990, p. 143.
[16] A. Wyka, *Model badań*…, p. 103.

In my work, I became Kuba's therapist, a term derived from the Greek word "therapon," which essentially means "helper," "fellow fighter,"[17] all to help Kuba understand the world and the world to understand him.

Concluding the integration phase, I would like to, citing Magdalena Grodzka and Katarzyna Marchewka, note that despite everything, love, acceptance, and understanding play the most important role in all forms of help and therapy, and only when combined with home therapy can they bring results. The foundation of every relationship with a person should be a belief in which we trust ethically, which we would like to be valid for us as well. Following Małgorzata Grodzka, I have tried to be guided in my actions by a simple, evangelical belief based on three pillars:

1. Love your neighbour as yourself.
2. Do not do to others what you would not want done to you.
3. Speak the truth.

This premise reveals that one simply must know how to love, which includes service, understanding, and compassion. Love combined with patience, time, laughter, and kindness is the best form of therapy.[18]

Conclusion

Understanding *otherness* can only come through personal experience, which is part of the scientific process of cognition. My exploration of *otherness* took place precisely through his personal experience. Experience begins with an encounter. It is entering the world of another person, it is experiencing their being, their way of being. I experienced *otherness* through encountering and interacting with *the Other*. I met with Kuba regularly, several times a week. I participated in his daily life, in his routine, and learned about his way of being, his favourite activities, and his needs. Experiencing Kuba's *otherness* required me to delve into his world through companionship, through ordinary, everyday being with him, which also became my daily routine…

Through the process of experiencing Kuba, I learned to understand others, to understand *the Other*, to develop an empathetic attitude, and I also began to try to understand myself. Thanks to Kuba, my perception of the world and other people changed, and my hierarchy of values was reorganized.[19]

The beginnings were not easy.

This work reveals my humanity in the face of an objective specialist. I open myself up – my soul, my emotions, my thoughts… I discover fears, uncertainties,

[17] B.N. Kaufman, *Przebudzenie syna*…, p. 55.

[18] Por. M. Grodzka, *Płacz bez łez. Listy rodziców dzieci autystycznych*, Gdańsk 1995, pp. 14–15; K. Marchewka, *Dzieci z Zespołem Aspergera*, "Światło i Cienie" 2002, No. 4(38), p. 44.

[19] M. Gackowska, *Pozwól się oswoić*…, p. 82.

moments of doubt, sometimes gaps in knowledge (despite initial qualifications), a lack of experience, and moments of helplessness in action.

After many years of continuing the process of experiencing, shaping myself as a therapist, a professional, a person… after numerous training and development processes, after years of deepening my knowledge, improving my qualifications, but above all, gaining professional and personal experience, I have a great desire for this publication to become a source of comfort and respite for those who are at the beginning of their therapeutic journey and are facing many professional and emotional difficulties.

Let this work fill you with optimism, hope and faith that it is worth it…

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Etiology and epidemiology of depressive disorders in children and adolescents

Etiologia i epidemiologia zaburzeń depresyjnych u dzieci i młodzieży

Abstract

Issues related to depressive disorders in childhood and adolescence, including the aetiology of these disorders and their epidemiology, point to the enormous complexity of the problem, both in able-bodied individuals and those with disabilities. Based on a meta-analysis of existing research on the epidemiology of depressive disorders among children and adolescents in the general population, it can be assumed that they affect 2.6% of this group. Among children and adolescents with disabilities, the rate is usually significantly higher. Empirical research to date shows that the following factors are important in the aetiology of depressive disorders: genetic conditions, neurobiological factors, stressful life events, negative cognitive patterns, problems with self-regulation and the specificity of interpersonal relationships, as well as interactions between these factors, are also important.

Keywords: depressive disorders, children and adolescents, disability, aetiology, epidemiology

Streszczenie

Zagadnienia dotyczące zaburzeń depresyjnych w okresie dzieciństwa i adolescencji, w tym etiologii wspomnianych zaburzeń oraz ich epidemiologii, wskazują na ogromną złożoność prezentowanej problematyki, i to zarówno u osób pełnosprawnych jak i z niepełnosprawnościami. W oparciu o metaanalizę dotychczasowych wyników badań dotyczących epidemiologii zaburzeń depresyjnych wśród dzieci i młodzieży w populacji ogólnej można przyjąć, że dotykają one 2,6%. Wśród dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnościami wskaźnik jest zwykle wyraźnie wyższy. Z dotychczasowych badań empirycznych wynika, że w etiologii zaburzeń depresyjnych znaczenie mają: uwarunkowania genetyczne, czynniki natury neurobiologicznej. Istotne są również stresujące wydarzenia życiowe, negatywne schematy poznawcze, problemy w zakresie samoregulacji oraz specyfika relacji interpersonalnych, a także interakcje między wymienionymi czynnikami.

Słowa kluczowe: zaburzenia depresyjne, dzieci i młodzież, niepełnosprawność, etiologia, epidemiologia

Introduction

It is currently accepted that depressive disorders in children, adolescents and adults are essentially the same, and what distinguishes them is a certain specificity of symptoms resulting from the developmental period. Therefore, it is assumed that disorders in childhood and later in adolescence are an early manifestation of disorders occurring in adulthood. The specificity of disorders in earlier stages of development is limited to atypicality and clinical ambiguity of the disorder.[1] The current ICD-11 classification distinguishes the following depressive disorders: single episode depressive disorder (6A70), recurrent depressive disorder (6A71), dysthymic disorder (6A72), mixed depressive and anxiety disorder (6A73), other specified depressive disorders (6A7Y), depressive disorders, unspecified (6A7Z), symptomatic and course presentations for mood episodes in mood disorders (6A80), other specified mood disorders (6A8Y), mood disorders, unspecified (6A8Z).[2]

It should be noted that for a long time, the possibility of depressive disorders in children was not even considered, as in the early stages of development, children are unable to describe their own experiences, including symptoms reported later, such as low mood, lack of prospects, feelings of guilt and hopelessness.[3] However, observable behavioural indicators remain, which allowed, as early as the 1940s, for the distinction of so-called anaclitic depression, associated with the loss of support.[4] This anaclitic depression is a reaction to separation from significant others. This set of symptoms was also known in the past as psychological deprivation, orphan's disease or hospital disease. In general, it can be said that it is a state of the body resulting from a specific life situation in which a child is deprived of the opportunity to satisfy their basic psychological needs for a long period of time.[5] The described symptoms and mechanisms of the development of depressive disorders in infancy have been confirmed in later clinical studies, which observed the fundamental role of relationship disorders, especially in

[1] J. Bomba, *Depresja młodzieńcza* [in:] *Psychiatria dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. I. Namysłowska, Warszawa 2005, pp. 266–279.

[2] WHO, *ICD-11. International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision. The global standard for diagnostic health information*, 2022, https://icd.who.int/browse/2025-01/mms/en#1563440232 (4.01.2026).

[3] P. Majewicz, *Zaburzenia depresyjne w okresie dzieciństwa i adolescencji* [in:] *Kiedy boli dusza i życie traci sens: przełamywanie tabu: wspólne działanie w walce z depresją*, eds. W. Błażejewski, M. Leżucha, Jaroslaw–Łódź 2025, pp. 37–56.

[4] R.A Spitz, K.M. Wolf, *Anaclitic depression; an inquiry into the genesis of psychiatric conditions in early childhood, II*, "The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child" 1946, No. 2(1), pp. 313–342, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1946.11823551.

[5] M. Suffczyńska-Kotowska, *Reakcje adaptacyjne u małych dzieci* [in:] *Psychiatria wieku rozwojowego*, eds. A. Popielarska, M. Popielarska, Warszawa 2000, pp. 96–100.

the first two years of life. As the results of the studies indicate, these problems precede the disorders in the child.[6]

Epidemiology of depressive disorders in childhood and adolescence

The literature on this subject presents varying results regarding the prevalence of mental disorders, including depressive disorders, among children and adolescents. These discrepancies have a number of sources, such as: the methodological procedure used, because it is not only important to select the right sample for the study, but also how the data is collected, whether it is a self-report study, whether individuals are examined by specialists, or whether it is a compilation of data obtained from reports from treatment centres. In addition, the age group covered by the research is important, as is the classification used as a basis, e.g. whether it is the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders developed by the American Psychiatric Association) or the ICD (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, which is also used in practice in Poland) and which version.[7]

A review of existing epidemiological reports shows that the prevalence of mental disorders in the general population in European Union countries is 17.3%.[8] However, it is most often indicated that approximately 10–20% of all children and adolescents have various mental disorders.[9] Based on a meta-analysis of 41 selected publications from 27 countries,[10] an attempt was made to determine the percentage more accurately, and it turned out that 13.4% of the population of children and adolescents suffer from mental disorders. A similar percentage is indicated by the results of the EZOP II project – "Comprehensive study of the mental health of the population and its determinants – EZOP II," which surveyed 15,000 people from all over Poland, including 3,000 children and adolescents. The results indicate that

[6] M.J. Cordeiro, P. Caldeira Da Silva, T. Goldschmidt, *Diagnostic classification: Results from a clinical experience of three years with DC: 0–3*, "Infant Mental Health Journal" 2003, No. 24, pp. 349–364, DOI: http://hdl.handle.net/10400.17/2487.

[7] P. Majewicz, J. Sikorski, *Uczeń z zaburzeniami psychicznymi. Wybrane zagadnienia wsparcia psychologiczno-pedagogicznego*, Kraków 2022, p. 36.

[8] IHME, *Global Health Data Exchange*, 2018, www.healthdata.org/, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/health_glance_eur-2018-4-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/health_glance_eur-2018-4-en (29.11.2021).

[9] WHO, *Child and adolescent mental health*, https://www.who.int/mental_health/maternal-child/child_adolescent/en/ (10.05.2020).

[10] G.V. Polanczyk, G.A. Salum, L.S. Sugaya, A. Caye, L.A. Rohde, *Annual research review: A meta-analysis of the worldwide prevalence of mental disorders in children and adolescents*, "Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines" 2015, No. 56(3), pp. 345–365, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12381.

among children and adolescents aged 7–17, mental disorders occur in 13.4%, which is as many as 568,100 people.[11] Therefore, advanced statistical analyses of a range of results from different countries are consistent with the results of the Polish EZOP II study. It can therefore be assumed that mental disorders occur in slightly more than 13% of children and adolescents.

Against this background, an attempt can be made to determine the prevalence of depressive disorders in the child and adolescent population. Based on a meta-analysis of data from 27 countries, it can be concluded that the global prevalence of depressive disorders in children and adolescents is 2.6%.[12] It is worth adding that data collected from various sources in the USA between 2005 and 2011[13] indicate that 2.1% of children and adolescents aged 3–17 were diagnosed with depressive disorders. In contrast, the prevalence of depression in preschool children is estimated at around 2%.[14] Other authors[15] report that depression affects 1% of preschool children over the age of 2 and 3, while in the 6–12 age group, the percentage is already 2%. It should be added that in the group of children, symptoms of depression occur at a similar level in girls and boys. The incidence of depression increases between the ages of 13 and 18 and becomes similar to the prevalence of these disorders in adults. During adolescence, a higher incidence of depression is observed in girls than in boys.

The epidemiology of mental disorders, including depression, looks slightly different among children and young people with disabilities. In the case of neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as many as 70–80% of people also suffer from mental disorders. It is worth noting that 40–50% of adolescents and adults with ASD meet the criteria for two or more disorders.[16] In turn, in the population of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities, the co-occurrence of mental, behavioural and neurodevelopmental disorders is 39%.[17] Other studies[18] observed that individuals with higher IQ or better academic

[11] K. Ostaszewski, M. Kucharski, J. Stokwiszewski, *Wyniki badania dzieci i młodzieży (wiek 7–17 lat)*, Konferencja projektu EZOP II, Warszawa, 15–16 listopada 2021.

[12] G.V. Polanczyk, G.A. Salum, L.S. Sugaya, A. Caye, L.A. Rohde, *Annual research*…, pp. 345–365.

[13] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Key Findings: Children's Mental Health Report*, 2013, https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/kf--childrens-mental-health-report.html (10.05.2020).

[14] L. Popek, B. Remberk, *Zaburzenia depresyjne u dzieci i młodzieży* [in:] *Psychiatria dzieci i młodzieży*, Vol. 1, eds. M. Janas-Kozik, T. Wolańczyk, Warszawa 2022, pp. 472–493.

[15] P. Gałecki, A. Szulc, *Psychiatria. Rozpoznania według ICD-11*, Vol. 1, Wrocław 2023, p. 259.

[16] A. Słopień, A. Rynkiewicz, M. Janas-Kozik, *Zaburzenia ze spektrum autyzmu* [in:] *Psychiatria dzieci i młodzieży*,Vol. 1, eds. M. Janas-Kozik, T. Wolańczyk, Warszawa 2022, p. 284.

[17] E. Emerson, *Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in children and adolescents with and without intellectual disability*, "Journal of Intellectual Disability Research" 2003, No. 47(Pt 1), p. 54, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2788.2003.00464.x.

[18] M. Rutter, *Pathways from childhood to adult life*, "Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines" 1989, No. 30(1), p. 42, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1989.tb00768.x.

performance are less likely to develop mental disorders later in life. Therefore, a higher IQ is a protective factor. It is therefore not surprising that as intellectual ability declines, the percentage of co-occurring mental disorders increases. There are more such disorders in people with mild intellectual disabilities than in the general population, with an estimated rate of 24–25%, while in people with an IQ below 50 on the Wechsler scale, the rate is already around 50%.[19]

In turn, among children and young people with hearing impairments, the prevalence of mental disorders is estimated to reach 50%. The ability to use speech appears to be a protective factor, followed by knowledge of sign language. In children and young people with visual impairments, the prevalence of mental disorders is estimated to be at a similar level, at around 45%. A similar percentage of children and adolescents with mental disorders is also reported among people with cerebral palsy, ranging from 40% to 60%.[20]

Depressive disorders occupy a significant position among the mental disorders listed above. This is particularly evident in people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).The prevalence of mood disorders in the form of depression and dysthymia, depending on the study, ranges from 1% in children to over 30% in adolescents and adults.[21] As indicated by the results of a meta-analysis of numerous publications in this field, the lifetime prevalence of depressive disorders in people with ASD is 14.4%. Nevertheless, compared to typically developing individuals, people with ASD are at least four times more likely to experience depression during their lifetime.[22]

In the case of another neurodevelopmental disorder, namely intellectual disability, it is estimated that depressive disorders affect 1.5% of the population of children and adolescents.[23] Another study, conducted by Marielle Dekker and Hans Kooot,[24] showed a higher frequency, namely 4.4%.

In turn, research conducted by Irene Leigh[25] among young people with hearing impairments showed mild depression in 40% and moderate or severe depression in

[19] K. Bobińska, P. Gałecki, *Zaburzenia psychiczne u osób upośledzonych umysłowo*, Wrocław 2010, p. 17; J. Rola, *Współczesne podejście do problemu obecności depresji i zaburzeń zdrowia psychicznego u osób upośledzonych umysłowo*, "Psychiatria Polska" 2007, No. 41(2), p. 205.

[20] T. Wolańczyk, *Zaburzenia psychiczne w chorobach somatycznych* [in:] *Psychiatria dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. I. Namysłowska, Warszawa 2005, pp. 382–405.

[21] A. Słopień, A. Wojciechowska, N. Pytlińska, *Zaburzenia ze spektrum autyzmu* [in:] *Zaburzenia psychiczne dzieci i młodzieży*, eds. A. Gmitrowicz, M. Janas-Kozik, Warszawa 2018, p.43.

[22] C.C. Hudson, L. Hall, K.L. Harkness, *Prevalence of Depressive Disorders in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Meta-Analysis*, "Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology" 2019, No. 47(1), pp. 165–175, DOI: 10.1007/s10802-018-0402-1.

[23] E. Emerson, *Prevalence of psychiatric*…, p. 54.

[24] Ch. Stavrakaki, Y Lunsky, *Depresja, lęk i zaburzenia adaptacyjne* [in:] *Zaburzenia psychiczne i zaburzenia zachowania u osób niepełnosprawnych intelektualnie*, eds. N. Bouras, G. Holt, Wrocław 2010, p. 125.

[25] D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Problem depresji wśród osób niesłyszących i niewidzących* [in:] *Nawracające zaburzenia depresyjne. Etiologia, diagnoza i terapia*, eds. A. Orzechowska, P. Gałecki, T. Pietras, Wrocław 2017, p. 138.

10% of the respondents. In contrast, in the group of students with hearing impairments, mild episodes of depression were recorded in 43% of cases and moderate depression in 8% of cases. Young people with visual impairments also showed a higher incidence of depressive tendencies, with an average level of 13.65, compared to 7.10 among sighted young people.[26] However, it is difficult to conclude on this basis that depressive disorders are more prevalent in this group of people, as there are also research results that do not confirm this difference. For example, studies conducted in Turkey[27] among visually impaired and sighted adolescents indicates that the level of depressive tendencies and self-esteem in both groups is similar, while the level of anxiety in adolescents with visual impairment is significantly higher than in sighted adolescents.

Etiology of depressive disorders

The factors determining and conditioning the occurrence of depressive disorders in children and adolescents, in general terms, do not differ from those in adults with similar problems, but the specificity of the period of intensive development is clearly visible here. Suffice it to mention, for example, attachment disorders in early childhood, the possible phenomenon of 'programming' of the HPA axis (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal), the dynamics of puberty, the development of the nervous system and the resulting different ways of responding in different periods, or the enormous importance of abnormalities in family and peer relationships for children and adolescents and the course of their development. It is highly likely that the influence of biological, psychological and environmental factors is mainly interactive in nature, and it is difficult to identify a single group of conditions that is responsible for the onset of depressive disorders in children and adolescents. The vulnerability-stress model, which also takes protective factors into account, seems to be the most appropriate here. As Archibald Hart[28] vividly put it, stress in childhood can be described using five terms:

a) "too much, too soon";
b) "too much of a good thing";
c) "too little good";
d) "too much stress – too little family";
e) "too much excessive stress."

[26] S.G. Koenes, J.F. Karshmer, *Depression: a comparison study between blind and sighted adolescents*, "Issues Ment Health Nursing " 2000, No. 21(3), pp. 269–279, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/016128400248086.

[27] N. Bolat, B. Doğangün, M. Yavuz, T. Demir, L. Kayaalp, *Depression and anxiety levels and self-concept characteristics of adolescents with congenital complete visual impairment*, "Turk psikiyatri dergisi = Turkish Journal of Psychiatry" 2011, No. 22(2), pp. 77–82.

[28] W. Pilecka, J. Fryt, *Teoria stresu dziecięcego* [in:] *Psychologia zdrowia dzieci i młodzieży. Perspektywa kliniczna*, ed. W. Pilecka, Kraków 2011, pp. 32–33.

In addition to the factors mentioned above that contribute to the onset of depressive disorders in children and adolescents, it is also worth mentioning the concept of bottom-up and top-down explanations of aetiopathogenesis.[29] In the first case, i.e. the bottom-up approach, biological processes, including, for example, neurotransmitter secretion disorders, are the cause of mental states such as low mood and anxiety. In the second situation, i.e. the top-down approach, a mental state, such as a feeling of hopelessness or anxiety, causes specific consequences in the functioning of the body, including various types of vegetative symptoms. These phenomena can interact with each other in a spiral manner, therefore leading to the development of disorders. Adopting this interpretation of the etiopathogenesis of depressive disorders, it can be assumed that they may already be present in the youngest age group, where bottom-up mechanisms will trigger the pathological process. Therefore, the presence of such disorders cannot be ruled out even in the youngest age group.

It is currently widely accepted that disorders in childhood and later in adolescence are early manifestations of disorders occurring in adulthood. The specificity of disorders in earlier stages of development is limited to atypicality and clinical ambiguity of the disorder.[30] Assuming that depression is essentially the same construct throughout development, similar or even identical causes should underlie the disorder at any age. Hence, most research on the aetiology of depressive disorders in children is based on extending theories developed to explain depression in adults. Empirical research to date suggests that the following groups of factors are important in this regard: genetic determinants, neurobiological factors, and within these: psychoneuroendocrinological determinants related to neurotransmitters, brain structure and function, and sleep disorders. In addition, stressful life events, negative cognitive patterns, problems with self-regulation, and the specifics of interpersonal relationships, as well as interactions between these factors, are also important.[31]

It is also worth noting additional possible factors contributing to the onset of depressive disorders in children and adolescents with disabilities. In the case of children with neurodevelopmental disorders in the form of intellectual disabilities, four different variants contributing to the co-occurrence of mental disorders are proposed.

Robert Goodman and Stephen Scott[32] indicate four possible variants justifying the co-occurrence of intellectual disability and mental disorders, including depressive disorders. It should be noted that each of these variants is possible in different cases, so one person may have variant "A", while another may have variant "B", "C" or "D."

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[29] M.E.P. Seligman, E.F. Walker, D.L. Rosenhan, *Psychopatologia*, Poznań 2017, p. 22.

[30] J. Bomba, *Depresja młodzieńcza*…, pp. 266–279.

[31] J. Garber, K.M. Gallerani, S.A. Frankel, *Depression in Children* [in:] *Handbook of depression*, eds. I.H. Gotlib, C.L. Hammen, New York 2009, pp. 405–443.

[32] R. Goodman, S. Scott, *Child and Adolescent*…, pp. 236–237.

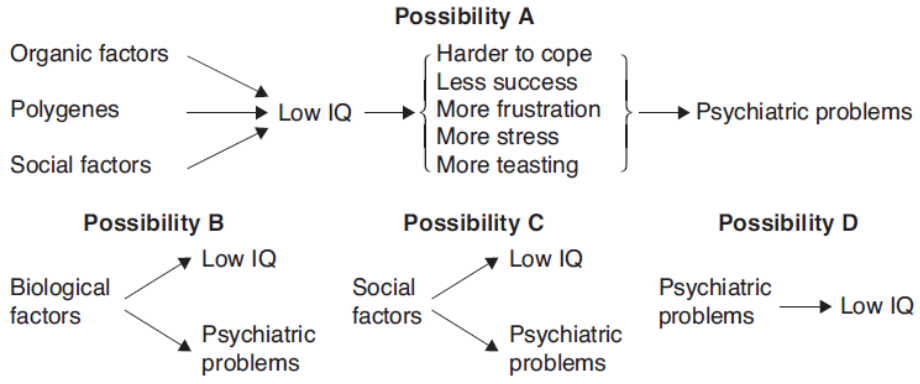


Figure 1. Why are intellectual disability and psychiatric disorder associated?

Source: R. Goodman, S. Scott, *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Oxford 2012, p. 236.

Additional factors contributing to the development of depressive disorders in children and adolescents with sensory disabilities (visual and hearing) include, above all: the experience of disability itself, a frequent sense of loss (trauma), especially in the case of acquired hearing and visual impairments, and a sense of varying degrees of oppression, understood as experiencing the social consequences of disability, such as stigmatisation, discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion, suffering, violence, exploitation, and, in addition, increased restrictions on leaving the home, which results in limited social contact. It can therefore be assumed that in the case of people with impaired vision or hearing, the above-mentioned categories of secondary effects of disability may increase the subjective sense of disability and be a source of negative emotions and long-term distress, which in turn correlate with depressive disorders.[33]

Therefore, depressive disorders in children and adolescents with disabilities, apart from common factors such as those found in the general population, also have additional factors that increase the predisposition to the onset and development of these disorders.

Conclusion

Due to the significant prevalence of depressive disorders among children and adolescents, both able-bodied and disabled, it is necessary to take remedial action. In addition to traditional solutions such as psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, it is worth supplementing any type of support provided with psychoeducation. Psychoeducational classes addressed not only to those directly affected, but also to their

[33] D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Problem depresji*…, p. 132.

families and friends, currently constitute the third pillar of therapy. Currently, it is recommended that the treatment of depressive episodes in children and adolescents should begin with non-pharmacological measures and, if possible, be limited to psychoeducation and psychotherapy.[34] In the case of mild depressive symptoms, the main methods of intervention are psychoeducation and psychosocial support, which limit the impact of environmental stressors, and physical activity is also recommended.[35]

Therefore, contemporary treatment of depressive disorders in children and adolescents is based on three fundamental pillars: psychoeducation, psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy. It should be emphasised that non-pharmacological treatment, mainly in the form of psychoeducation and psychotherapy, is the first-line treatment and, in many cases, especially those involving mild disorders, it is sufficient.

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[35] F. Rybakowski, *Zaburzenia depresyjne, choroba afektywna jednobiegunowa* [in:] *Zaburzenia psychiczne dzieci i młodzieży*, eds. A. Gmitrowicz, M. Janas-Kozik, Warszawa 2018, pp. 123–129.

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From challenges to solutions: "Returning students" from abroad in Polish schools – based on participatory workshop results and expert opinions[1]

Od wyzwań do rozwiązań: „uczniowie powracający" z zagranicy w polskich szkołach – na podstawie wyników warsztatów partycypacyjnych i opinii ekspertów[2]

Abstract

Children returning to Poland with their parents face numerous challenges related to adapting to Polish schools and the education system. The aim of this article is to identify and analyze the challenges associated with "returning" to school in Poland, as well as to suggest solutions that support the adaptation process from the perspective of the school, the family, and cooperation between them. The article is based on the results of empirical research conducted as part of a project funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (UMO-2020/39/D/HS6/00162). The data analyzed come from participatory workshops with teachers and parents, as well as expert interviews. The research findings indicate that the most significant adaptation challenges concern linguistic, cultural, social, and psychological areas. The article also presents recommendations developed during the workshops for supporting students from returning migrant families.

Keywords: return migration, remigration, school adaptation, students with migration experience, educational support, cooperation family and school

Streszczenie

Dzieci powracające wraz z rodzicami do Polski mierzą się z licznymi wyzwaniami związanymi z adaptacją do polskiej szkoły i systemu edukacji. Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja oraz analiza wyzwań związanych z „powrotem" do szkoły w Polsce, a także wskazanie rozwiązań wspierających proces adaptacji z perspektywy szkoły, rodziny oraz współpracy między nimi.

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Artykuł opiera się na wynikach badań empirycznych zrealizowanych w ramach projektu finansowanego przez Narodowe Centrum Nauki (UMO-2020/39/D/HS6/00162). Analizowane dane pochodzą z warsztatów partycypacyjnych z udziałem nauczycieli i rodziców oraz wywiadów eksperckich. Wyniki badań wskazują na to, że najważniejsze wyzwania adaptacyjne dotyczą obszarów językowego, kulturowego, społecznego i psychologicznego. W artykule przedstawiono także wypracowane podczas warsztatów rekomendacje dotyczące wsparcia uczniów z rodzin migrantów powrotnych.

Słowa kluczowe: migracje powrotne, reemigracja, adaptacja szkolna, uczniowie z doświadczeniem migracji, wsparcie edukacyjne, współpraca rodziny i szkoły

Introduction

Migration is often analyzed in academic literature in the context of children's and youth education and the challenges associated with functioning in a new school environment. However, the topic of educating students from Polish families after their return to Poland is much less frequently addressed, despite its importance from the perspective of both the students themselves and their families, as well as the functioning of the education system. Children returning to Poland with their parents face numerous challenges, particularly those related to adapting to Polish schools and the Polish education system. Some of these challenges have been addressed in Polish education law, but these have limitations in terms of effectiveness and practical application.

The aim of the article is to identify and analyze the challenges related to the "return" to school in Poland and to the Polish education system, as well as to indicate effective solutions, both from the perspective of the school system and of child support at home and cooperation between the school and parents.

This article draws on the results of empirical research generated as part of a project on the school adaptation of children from returning migrant families in Poland.[3] The research focused on the students' adaptation process at the primary school level and considered experiences in both public and private education. Data from participatory workshops with teachers and parents, as well as expert interviews, form the basis of the analysis.

The term "school adaptation," crucial to the research presented in this article, refers to the general understanding of adaptation, derived from natural sciences and psychology, where it denotes the process of an individual adapting to changing environmental conditions.[4] In the educational context, school adaptation refers to the process of a student adapting to the requirements, norms, and expectations

[3] Research project entitled "School adaptation of children from returning migrant families. Perspectives of parents and teachers" for 2021–2026, led by K. Stankiewicz.

[4] J. Berry, *Immigration, acculturation, adaptation*, "Applied Psychology" 1997, No. 46(1).

associated with functioning in a new school environment.[5] This process is particularly evident during transitions between subsequent stages of education, but also when changing schools. Migration is a special case, which involves not only a change of educational institution but also a change of residence, sociocultural context, and language.[6] From the perspective of ecological systems theory, the process of school adaptation can be viewed as the result of mutual interactions between the student and the surrounding environmental systems.[7] The literature indicates that school adaptation primarily encompasses cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions, which reflect key areas of student functioning at school. These dimensions also provide an important context for analyzing the adaptive challenges experienced by students from return migrant families.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature on return migration and the education of "returnee" children in the context of educating other groups with migration experience. This is followed by a broader discussion of the research's methodological assumptions. The first part of the text, presenting the research results, discusses the challenges related to the school adaptation of children from return migrant families, organized according to specific thematic areas. It then presents recommendations for supporting students in their initial period in Polish schools, developed during participatory workshops and consulted with experts. The article concludes with a summary that relates the research findings to the relevant literature.

A student from a family of return migrants in the light of the literature

Return migration (also known as re-emigration) refers to resettling in one's country of origin after a period of residence abroad, although the length of this period is defined in various ways in the literature. A return migrant, or re-emigrant, is a person who returns to their country of origin after a period of emigration, regardless of the reasons for departure and return.[8]

It is worth noting, however, that the contemporary category of return is becoming increasingly ambiguous and analytically ineffective. Due to the changing

[5] S.E. Rimm-Kaufman, R C. Pianta, *An ecological perspective on the transition to kindergarten: A theoretical framework to guide empirical research*, "Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology" 2000, No. 21(5), pp. 491–511, DOI: 10.1016/S0193-3973(00)00051-4.

[6] Cf. K. Stankiewicz, A. Żurek, *Children of Return Migrants in a Polish School. Linguistic and (Inter)cultural Challenges*, "Polish Journal of Educational Studies" 2023, Vol. 75, No. 1, DOI: 10.2478/poljes-2023-0009.

[7] U. Bronfenbrenner, *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*, Cambridge, MA 1979.

[8] W. Danilewicz, *Rodzina ponad granicami. Transnarodowe doświadczenia wspólnoty rodzinnej*, Białystok 2010, p. 99. Cf. R. King, *Generalizations from the History of Return Migration* [in:] *Return Migration: Journey of Hope or Despair?*, ed. B. Ghosh, Geneva 2000.

dominant nature of migration movements, and in the context of increasing mobility and transnationalism, migrations are increasingly less linear, leading from departure to definitive return.[9] Return, therefore, does not have to be the final conclusion of the migration experience, but can constitute one stage in an individual's migration biography.[10]

Return migration is a specific type of migration, as it involves returning to the country of origin and a familiar socio-cultural environment. On the other hand, people returning after a period of living abroad are no longer the same as before leaving. The migration experience influences their value systems, expectations, and perceptions of reality. Simultaneously, the country of origin is also undergoing transformations, although these changes may not be immediately apparent to the returnees. Returning undoubtedly requires reintegration.[11]

Re-emigration affects the entire family as a system and each member of that system individually, especially children. In their case, the very concept of "return" can raise doubts. Children return to a country strongly connected to their parents' biographies, not necessarily to their own experiences. It's worth remembering that some of them may have been born abroad or left Poland early in life. For younger children, before the decision to re-emigrate, Poland is often treated primarily as a place for relatives to live and spend their holidays and vacations. For them, it's an "unfamiliar" space, not fully understood, with which they have little emotional connection. However, young people who have grown up and attended school in the host country from an early age often feel "at home" there, having become familiar with the socio-cultural context necessary for everyday functioning.[12]

For many of them, their parents' return migration becomes simply a migration to a new place of residence, a new social environment, and a new school. It also means having to establish new relationships, adapt to unfamiliar cultural norms, and meet the requirements of the Polish educational system.[13] For this reason, when referring to children from returnee families, the term "returning student" is used in quotation marks in this text.

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[9] I. Grabowska- Lusińska, M. Okólski, *Emigracja ostatnia?*, Warszawa 2009, p. 323.

[10] K. Iglicka, *Powroty Polaków po 2004 roku. W pętli pułapki migracji*, Warszawa 2010, p. 10. Cf. A. White, *Polish Return and Double Return Migration*, "Europe-Asia Studies" 2014, Vol. 66, No. 1.

[11] R. King, *Generalizations from...*

[12] K. Stankiewicz, A. Żurek, *From Poland to Germany and back: Return migration in the context of education – A case study*, "Acta Baltico–Slavica" 2025, No. 49, article 3477, pp. 5–6, DOI: 10.11649/ abs.3477.

[13] H. Grzymała-Moszczyńska, J. Grzymała-Moszczyńska, J. Durlik, P. Szydłowska, (*Nie)łatwe powroty do domu? Funkcjonowanie dzieci i młodzieży powracających z emigracji*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 28–30.

The scale of returns from emigration to Poland remains difficult to estimate and monitor, especially since a large portion of migration takes place within the European Union.[14] The main countries from which Polish citizens return correspond to the most important migration destinations from Poland, led by the United Kingdom and Germany.[15]

Methodological basis of research

As part of a broader research project, this article aims to identify and analyse the challenges associated with a child from a return migrant family returning to a Polish school and to propose solutions that can support effective adaptation within the school and family systems, as well as cooperation between them.

The following main research problem was formulated: What are the challenges related to the school adaptation of children from return migrant families, and what solutions can support this process, taking into account systemic changes, teacher interventions, parental support, and cooperation between schools and parents? Specific problems, identified based on a review of the relevant literature, concerned specific dimensions of the challenges, such as linguistic, cultural, social, and psychological.

The data analyzed came from participatory workshops conducted in May 2026 in Warsaw, Poland, with the participation of fifteen people, including teachers, parents of returnees, and experts. The workshops served to gather participants' opinions, discuss the project's results, and jointly develop recommendations for supporting the school adaptation of children from returning migrant families.

Additionally, five semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with representatives of institutions and organizations supporting returnees and educating children with migration experience, including returning students.[16] All participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity during the presentation of the results to create a comfortable environment for expressing their opinions.

The data were subjected to qualitative thematic analysis, focusing on identifying the main adaptation challenges and solutions supporting the school adaptation process of children from return migrant families. Analytical categories were derived from the literature and empirical data.

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[14] M. Dziekońska, *'There is time to leave, and there is time to come back'. Polish migrants' decisions about returning from international migration*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies" 2023, Vol. 50, No. 18, p. 4, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2023.2245157.

[15] K. Stankiewicz, A. Żurek, *Children of Returning*…, p. 95. See e.g., current statistical data available on the website migracje.gov.pl.

[16] The group of experts included people working in teacher training institutions, involved in non-governmental organizations and conducting training activities.

Challenges in school adaptation of students from returnee families – analysis of research results

Based on the literature and the participants' responses, four main dimensions of the challenges associated with the school adaptation of students from returning migrant families can be distinguished: linguistic, cultural, social, and psychological. Interestingly, the workshop participants' responses made relatively few references to the cognitive dimension, understood as difficulties resulting from differences in curricula or educational requirements. It can be concluded that, from the participants' perspective, these issues are less significant than the challenges related to the students' linguistic, social, and emotional functioning in the new school environment.

Linguistic challenges

For "returning" students, language difficulties typically concern not so much everyday communication as the language of schooling and specialized vocabulary. Each school subject uses specific terminology that young people from returning families often haven't encountered before. As a workshop participant puts it, "The Polish language [in Polish schools] isn't the same as at home" [WS].[17] Children growing up outside Poland may struggle with writing, reading, and especially understanding more complex texts. Polish spelling and even calligraphy can also be a challenge, especially in the younger grades.

Understanding instructions in textbooks, homework assignments, and tests also poses significant difficulties. The vocabulary and grammatical structures used in these textbooks exceed the language familiar to the child through everyday communication. Language challenges arise upon returning to Poland regardless of whether the young person attended a Polish community centre abroad, although a Polish community education may partially mitigate these challenges. While children from Polish communities often speak Polish quite fluently, their language skills are not always sufficient for effective learning in a Polish school in the first months after the move. As one workshop participant notes, "The student knows the language [Polish], but it's not true that they don't need support" [WS].

Experts also point to problems stemming from language interference. Students draw on the languages they used in their previous education when attempting to formulate statements in Polish. As a result, linguistic calques emerge, a consequence of incomplete language competence.

One expert notes that "at home, the language of first contact with parents is usually Polish," and therefore, it can be assumed that the student "will have

[17] WS stands for quote from a participatory workshop.

a communicative knowledge of Polish" [EI2F].[18] This distinguishes this group of students from foreign children, for whom moving to Poland usually means entering a completely new linguistic environment. However, the respondents unanimously emphasize the significant diversity of "returning" students, also in terms of their Polish language proficiency, pointing to the need to assess these competencies at the initial stage of adaptation.

Cultural challenges

Workshop participants also identified a number of cultural challenges related to the school adaptation process for children from returning migrant families. One participant shared a reflection combining linguistic and cultural challenges: "Language is the biggest barrier. However, the second barrier we see is actually culture. And these things are closely intertwined. They cannot be separated" [WS]. Experts emphasized that difficulties in this area stem primarily from the experience of migration and affect not only returning students but also foreign children. For both groups, arriving in Poland and starting school in a Polish school may involve experiencing culture shock, stemming, among other things, from limited knowledge of the norms and practices of the school and social environments.

While children of Poles returning to Poland may learn certain patterns, values, and norms characteristic of Polish culture from their family homes and Polish schools, this doesn't necessarily prepare them for all the situations they encounter in everyday social and school life. One expert noted that returning students function "as if between two cultures" [EI2F]. During the workshops, it was also emphasized that "students bring with them cultural awareness, knowledge, and attitudes" [WS] formed in the country of migration, which don't always reflect the realities of Polish society.

An additional challenge can be the discrepancies between the image of Poland, formed during summer stays and contacts with the country, and the everyday life children encounter after moving. Polish schools, along with their norms and rules, can also differ significantly from those familiar to children in their previous country of residence. During the workshops, attention was focused, among other things, on relationships between students and teachers, emphasizing the cultural determinants of the degree of distance present in these relationships. According to workshop participants, this distance is relatively large in Polish schools: "Of course, in every school abroad (…) there are different relationships with teachers. (…) Well, in Poland – and this is not so obvious – there is distance" [WS].

The respondents also pointed to different communication patterns and differences in the norms and principles that organize school life. In this sense, school

[18] Quotes from interviews are marked with the following symbols: E – expert, I – interview; M – man or F – woman; the number indicates the interview number.

becomes not only a place of learning for students but also a space for learning and interpreting Polish culture, serving as a kind of "laboratory" for social life in Poland.

Social challenges

Another dimension of the challenges associated with returning to Poland are social difficulties, primarily related to functioning within a peer group. Changing country of residence and school requires finding one's footing in a new social environment and building relationships from scratch. As emphasized during the workshops, "children had to re-enter a new school" [WS], which meant finding their place within the class and school community.

This process can be particularly demanding, as children often enter a class where relationships between students are already well-established and informal peer groups have established structures. New students must not only meet academic requirements but also gain peer acceptance and find their place within the group. As one workshop participant noted, children "have to catch up on previous material and still find their social place in it all…" [WS]. Consequently, "returning" students may experience a sense of otherness and alienation stemming from both different cultural experiences and the need to integrate into existing social structures.

According to the participants in the study, "returning" students may be perceived as "different" despite their Polish citizenship and Polish origin. This difference can be seen in their behaviour, communication, accent, and social norms. In extreme cases, this can lead to stereotyping, ridicule, or exclusion from peers, hindering the process of adaptation and building a sense of belonging within the school community.

At the same time, participants emphasized that a child's positive reception by the school community significantly facilitates the adaptation process. As one expert noted, "A child finds it easier to engage in the learning process when there is a good atmosphere in the classroom and at school, and they are welcomed there. This learning process depends largely on the atmosphere built within the [class] team" [EI2F]. The research findings therefore indicate that building a sense of belonging and supportive peer relationships is one of the key conditions for effective school adaptation for children from return migrant families.

Psychological challenges

"Returning" students also face psychological and emotional challenges. Workshop participants emphasized that return migration is not limited to a change of residence or school, but is associated with the loss of their previous living

environment, social relationships, and sense of stability. For many young people, coming to Poland means leaving their perceived home and having to navigate a new reality.

As workshop participants noted, and experts confirmed, from a child's perspective, Poland is often not a country to which one returns. Therefore, "a returning student is very often not a returnee" [WS]. For many children, home is outside Poland, and moving means migrating to a new country rather than returning to a familiar environment. As emphasized during the workshops: "A child who grew up abroad, returning to Poland, thinks about returning to their homeland" [WS]. This is accompanied by longing, sadness, and regret related to the loss of previous relationships and a place of residence. One expert highlighted the consequences of such a situation: "For children [returning to Poland, moving] is a big deal (…), they miss their friends very much (…). After returning, the children often experienced significant repercussions, as they were supposedly so different…" [EI1F].

An additional burden is the fact that the child participates only indirectly in their parents' migration decision. As one workshop participant noted, "They're only there incidentally. They're only with them [their parents]" [WS]. The situation becomes even more difficult when the return to Poland occurs in crisis circumstances, such as illness, the death of a loved one, or the parents' divorce.

Workshop participants also noted that return migration is, to some extent, a crisis for the entire family, even if it was planned in advance. As one participant emphasized, "this situation is always, to some extent, a crisis" [WS], because it represents a change in the family's current functioning conditions. It is, in fact, "a change of place, of the context in which the entire family functions" [WS]. In such circumstances, adaptation involves not only finding one's place at school and in a peer group, but also the need to rebuild a sense of security and define one's own identity.

"Returning" students can't always count on psychological support in Polish schools, although it seems essential. As one expert notes: "And of course, in my opinion, psychological and pedagogical support is very important, and I also know what it looks like in practice… I mean, theoretically, we should take care of the new child here, but the school counsellor or psychologist has a group of children who need help. So, this child will obviously be one of many who needs help. (…) They are unattended" [EI3M].

Additionally, it's often assumed that children of "Polish parents" will cope with the adjustment on their own. Experts have even coined the term "silent needs," referring to students' needs that remain invisible to both the school and the students themselves. One such need is emotional support: "I think that these children returning have silent needs, in the sense that they [these needs] are less visible, if only because of the language, if only because of this… perhaps some kind of imperative, that you have to adapt on your own, that you're back at home…" [EI5M].

As a result, children from return migrant families may experience emotional tension, a sense of uncertainty and adaptation difficulties, which affect not only their well-being but also their motivation to learn and their school functioning.

Recommendations from parents, teachers and experts

Analysis of the material gathered during participatory workshops and expert interviews allows us to identify key areas of action to support students from returning migrant families during their initial period in Polish schools. It is worth noting that the recommendations developed by workshop participants largely aligned with the experts' proposals.

In the educational sphere, particular importance was attached to systemic support for the Polish language, encompassing both the development of language skills upon arrival in Poland and strengthening contact with the language abroad through Polish education. As workshop participants emphasized, "support in Polish (…) is extremely important" [WS], and language preparation can be enhanced through "ongoing contact with the home country [before return]" [WS]. The need for individualization of the educational process and the recognition of developing language skills as a responsibility of all teachers, regardless of the subject taught, was also emphasized. The need for "individualized education, an individualized approach to the child" and the fact that "we all teach Polish" [WS] were emphasized.

In the cultural area, attention was drawn to the need to prepare the entire school community to be co-responsible for the adaptation outcomes of children from reemigrant families and to develop intercultural competences for all students. The importance of counteracting stereotyping of "returning" students and building attitudes based on empathy and understanding their experiences was emphasized. It would be important, even before a new student arrives in the classroom, to "prepare the class to welcome this child" [WS]. This includes introducing the country from which the student is moving and working on stereotypes associated with it. One participant offered a specific suggestion: "I also imagine scenes in which, for example, a Polish child begins to speak with a slightly strange accent. And they observe how their peers react. And the child sees how someone with this experience [of migration] might feel. (…) It's about stepping into the shoes of such a returnee" [WS].

A key recommendation was activities aimed at building students' sense of belonging within the school community. The importance of supportive relationships with teachers and peers, developing empathy, and avoiding labelling young people based on their migration experiences was highlighted. As one teacher noted, "The group, the peers, are crucial. And here, of course, there's also the role of

educators, who can support this integration in some way, prepare the group for the arrival of someone who is slightly different and will also require this integration process" [WS].

The importance of psychological support was also emphasized during the workshops. It was recommended to provide psychological and pedagogical assistance to students and their parents, create support groups for returning families, and develop cooperation between psychologists, pedagogues, and teachers: "We really need a team at school that is specifically attentive to these children (…), a team of specialists who would provide psychological and pedagogical support, and for [these people] to learn to cooperate, talk to each other, and share information about the child, but in order to support the child, not to label them, because that's often what happens…" [WS].

Experts also pointed to the need for systematic monitoring of a student's adaptation process, beginning with a reliable diagnosis. As one expert noted: "And I imagine that such a diagnosis, a kind of multidisciplinary assessment, is then carried out. Such a diagnosis should include: Has this student, for example, had any contact with a particular school? What system? What grading system? What is their language level? What is their communication level? What is their school language level, and so on…" [EI3M].

The final important area of activity is strengthening the competencies of teaching staff. Workshop participants emphasized the need to deepen teachers' knowledge of the specifics of return migration experiences and their role in supporting students and families in the adaptation process: "It's crucial that teachers understand their role. It's their job to prepare the ground for a safe transition for a child from a different culture, language, or just returning [to school]" [WS].

All the recommendations mentioned are united by the belief that effective support for students from returning migrant families requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account their educational, social, cultural and emotional needs, the cooperation of teaching staff and the involvement of parents, preferably before their return to Poland.

Conclusion

The results of the conducted research largely reflect the themes discussed in the first, theoretical part of the article. They confirm that the adaptation of children from returning migrant families is multidimensional and goes beyond issues related to educational achievement. This process encompasses the student's social, cultural, and emotional functioning, as well as their adaptation to the demands of the new school environment. At the same time, the research findings indicate that linguistic aspects are particularly important for children from return migrant families, as they

are for students with other types of migration experience. It is also worth noting that the study participants relatively rarely addressed cognitive difficulties and curriculum differences, focusing primarily on challenges that directly impact the student's daily functioning at school.

The results also confirm the conclusions drawn from the literature on return migration, according to which returning to the country of origin does not automatically mean re-entry into a familiar socio-cultural environment. For many children, "returning" to Poland turns out to be, in fact, a migration to a place that has not previously been an important part of their lives. Research shows that young people often operate between different cultural orders, and the adaptation process involves not only learning about Polish schools and their requirements, but also negotiating one's identity and building a sense of belonging.

The research findings also support the assumptions of ecological systems theory, according to which school adaptation is the result of mutual interactions between the student and the environments in which they function. Analysis of the empirical material shows that the adaptation process depends both on the child's individual resources and on the quality of support offered by the family, school, and peer group. The recommendations developed during participatory workshops and confirmed by experts emphasize the importance of comprehensive and multidimensional support, including developing language skills, strengthening a sense of belonging to the school community, emotional support, and close cooperation between school and family. The findings of the present study not only confirm conclusions reported in the existing literature but also extend current knowledge on the specific needs of children from return migrant families and point to possible directions for supporting their effective adaptation in Polish schools.

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The role of children's literature in supporting emotional growth

Jak literatura dziecięca może wspierać rozwój emocjonalny dziecka

Abstract

Books are an essential part of childhood. They have a way of deeply embedding themselves in memory. Through the content they contain, children learn about the world, prepare for life, enrich their vocabulary, and develop their imagination. Today, they hold particular value because reading to and with a child provides an opportunity to build closeness and impacts emotional competencies and skills, which are crucial in life. The aim of this article is to highlight the emotional aspect of development and the role of the teacher in this process. This topic seems open and highly relevant in the context of the realities of the 21st century, requiring action from educators.
Keywords: emotions, children's literature, family, child development, educators

Streszczenie

Książki są nieodzownym elementem dzieciństwa. Mają to do siebie, że głęboko zapadają w pamięci. Poprzez zawarte w nich treści dziecko poznaje świat, przygotowuje się do życia, wzbogaca słownictwo, rozwija wyobraźnię. Współcześnie nabierają szczególnej wartości, ponieważ czytanie dziecku i wspólnie z dzieckiem jest okazją do budowania bliskości, wpływa na kompetencje i umiejętności emocjonalne, które są niezbędne w życiu człowieka. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na aspekt emocjonalny w rozwoju oraz rolę nauczyciela w tym procesie. Temat zdaje się być otwarty i bardzo istotny w obliczu realiów XXI wieku i wymaga podejmowania działań przez wychowawców.
Słowa kluczowe: emocje, literatura dziecięca, rodzina, rozwój dziecka, wychowawcy

Introduction

Emotions – a term frequently invoked in recent times within both the public discourse and parental circles. However, do parents truly reflect upon the emotional development of their children? While they readily observe and celebrate milestones such as a child's first steps or first words, they seldom analyze or prioritize the

progression of emotional capacities. Nonetheless, these very competencies constitute the fundamental pillars of our later life. It is essential, first, to comprehend the nature of emotions as phenomena inherent to every human being. They manifest independently of volition or conscious effort, functioning in a nearly automatic manner. We do not acquire them through learning; they are innate biological endowments, which underscores their significant functional role in human existence.

Genesis of the concept

The term "emotion" originates from the works of Thomas Willis, while the word itself derives from the Latin *movere* – to move.[1] Neurobiologist Ralph Adolphs believes that "an emotion is a functional state of mind that puts the brain into a specific mode of operation, which adjusts our goals, directs attention, and modifies the weights we assign to various factors during mental calculations."[2] Lazarus assumes that "emotions are processes that result from a specific relationship between the organism and the environment."[3] Neither the environment nor the organism alone triggers emotions; a relationship between the person and their surroundings is necessary. A condition for the emergence of an emotion is physiological arousal caused by a situation. Every emotion is triggered by specific stimuli from the outside world and causes specific behaviours. Among many definitions is this one: "Emotions are subjective reactions to significant events, characterized by physiological changes as well as changes at the level of experience and behaviour visible to others."[4] Emotions signal that an event is important to a person. Their source lies in the satisfaction of biological, psychological, and social needs. "Emotions can be understood as a process of signalling that something significant is happening from the perspective of an individual's well-being, as well as the tasks performed by the cognitive system and behaviour."[5] If we were deprived of all emotions, we would not be able to function. Guilt, shame, empathy, jealousy, gratitude, and pride – emotions referred to as social emotions – are the foundation of a moral sense; they are key to our ability to function in society and to cooperate.

Frustration, contentment, hunger, love, and pain are also emotions. They help satisfy needs, help the organism survive, stay alive, avoid threats, and achieve goals. There is no human being who has not felt fear, joy, or displayed anger. Fear appears in situations where we are exposed to real danger. It is a necessary feeling because

[1] L. Mlodinow, *Emocje*, trans. T. Lanczewski, Poznań 2023, p. 31.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 104.

[3] J. Strelau, *Psychologia*, Vol. 2, Gdańsk 2000, p. 408.

[4] H.R. Schaffer, *Rozwój społeczny. Dzieciństwo i młodość*, Kraków 2006, p. 148.

[5] N.H. Frijda, *Emocje są funkcjonalne – na ogół* [in:] *Natura emocji*, eds. P. Ekman, R.J. Davidson, Gdańsk 1998, p. 103.

it protects and warns us. Thanks to it, we can avoid threats. If we avoid situations that trigger fear, we will isolate ourselves from our surroundings and, consequently, not develop fully. Anger appears when we cannot have what we want. Expressing unwanted, so-called negative emotions is considered uncivilized from a social perspective. It should be remembered, however, that hiding emotions contributes to increased anxiety and constant dissatisfaction, which adversely affects our health. Emotions have a huge impact on our daily lives, thoughts, and decisions. They play a fundamental role in every person's life, accompany us in various situations, and are responsible for our relationships with the outside world.

Functions of emotions

Emotions serve many functions, the most significant of which are:

a) adaptive,
b) social,
c) motivational.[6]

The adaptive function is related to preparing the body for action. Emotions are most often triggered in situations requiring adjustive actions, and their arousal is accompanied by autonomic nervous system activity that supports the action induced by the emotion. The adaptive function of emotions ensures that an individual can act effectively when needed. They allow for mobilization to complete a task.

The social function involves facilitating interaction with the environment. It helps people predict the behaviour of those around them, which is essential in interpersonal relationships.

The motivational function is very closely linked to emotions. If emotions evoke satisfaction or joy, they can incline a person toward active involvement; if they evoke disgust, they lead to discouragement. Motivation often influences how experienced emotions are displayed, their intensity, and how they direct behaviour.

Emotions are characterized by: evaluation, creativity, generalization, and scaling. They can lead to approach or withdrawal, cause a sense of well-being or distress, and help in avoiding threats. Depending on what is happening in our lives or at a given moment, a specific incident can cause various feelings to overwhelm us, as "emotional reactions are influenced by preceding events."[7] Every emotion-evoking event either facilitates or hinders the achievement of a set goal.[8] The thought process is heavily dependent on what a person feels at a given moment, and our emotional state influences how we think about a particular matter.

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[6] A. Gałuszka, *Emotions – Their Meaning and Tasks*, "Journal of Education, Health and Sport" 2022, No. 12(1), p. 155.

[7] L. Mlodinow, *Emocje*, p. 135.

[8] N.H. Frijda, *Emotions Are Functional*…, p. 104.

Every person is expected to behave in a way that is socially deemed appropriate for the situation and place. Any "different" reactions are grounds for concluding that we lack emotional competence.

The essence of emotional competencies

According to H. Rudolph Schaffer, emotional competence is an individual's ability to cope with both their own and others' emotions.[9] Emotional competence consists of:

a) awareness of one's own emotional state, including the possibility of feeling multiple emotions simultaneously;
b) the ability to perceive others' emotions;
c) knowledge of vocabulary and expressions related to emotional states available in a given (sub)culture;
d) the capacity for empathetic engagement in response to emotions experienced by others;
e) the ability to realize that internal emotional states do not have to correspond with their external signs, both in oneself and in others;
f) the capacity to adaptively cope with distressing and unpleasant emotions;
g) the awareness that the nature of a relationship is largely determined by the way emotions are communicated and the emotional reciprocity within the relationship;
h) the ability to control emotions and acceptance of the emotional states experienced.[10]

Many researchers view these skills as components of emotional intelligence, understood as the ability to perceive and express emotions, understand and utilize them, and manage them to support an individual's development.[11] However, emotional abilities are not the same as competencies. "Abilities determine the efficiency of cognitive processes that allow a person to acquire effective ways of functioning; competencies are already mastered, specific skills for coping in various situations."[12] It is important to be aware of one's emotions and express them in an appropriate way. This ability is linked to so-called emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive feelings, name and express them, understand their causes, consequences, and interconnections, and manage them. A high level of emotional

[9] H.R. Schaffer, *Psychologia dziecka*, Warszawa 2013, p. 148.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 171.

[11] P. Salovey, P.T. Bedell, J.B. Detweiler, J.D. Mayer, *Aktualne kierunki w badaniach nad inteligencja emocjonalną* [in:] *Psychologia emocji*, eds. M. Lewis, J.M. Haviland-Jones, Gdańsk 2005, p. 165.

[12] K. Matczak, A. Knoop A., *Znaczenie inteligencji emocjonalnej w funkcjonowaniu człowieka*, Warszawa 2013, s. 16.

intelligence promotes social well-being and facilitates the individual's handling of interpersonal problems. The most common source of emotions is contact with others[13] and interacting with people. They manifest during shared conversations, when we begin to exchange ideas and take action. By knowing our own emotional reactions to various situations, it is easier to recognize them in others.

Nevertheless, to understand emotions, we must also remember that every person is raised in a different environment and has different life and social experiences.

The influence of parents on a child's emotional development

The family is the primary environment where a child functions and acquires initial skills and experiences. Jean Liedloff – creator of the continuum concept, suggests that optimal physical, intellectual, and emotional development depends on positive emotional experiences in early childhood.[14] During this period, the foundations for emotional regulation are established. As a child is entirely dependent on caregivers, they rely on a calming presence to learn how to regulate their body within a relationship, forming a bond. Through feeding, changing, and affection, a caregiver builds a child's sense of security, love, and acceptance.[15] The type of bond formed serves as the foundation for emotional, social, and cognitive development.

Many psychologists view attachment as a pivotal event in human emotional development, serving as the source of a child's security, self-esteem, self-control, and social skills. Through this intimate relationship, an infant learns to identify their own fee others.[16]

The emotional bond created with both parents during early life is extremely significant. How parents respond to a child's needs – such as crying or anger – affects their sense of security. These interactions serve as a model for future relationships; the feelings and behaviours between parents often become a prototype for the child's later interactions. Children learn through imitation and modelling, observing how parents express emotions and cope with challenges. "Imitation is also important because it serves as the basis for the development of empathy, the ability to experience what another person feels."[17] By observing the way family problems are solved, the communication patterns between parents, and their behaviour, there is a very high probability that a child will transfer such patterns of conduct into other

[13] P. Salovey, J.D. Mayer, D. Caruso, *Pozytywna psychologia emocjonalna* [in:] *Psychologia pozytywna. Nauka o szczęściu, zdrowiu i cnotach ludzkich*, ed. J. Czapiński, Warszawa 2008, p. 159.

[14] M. Kwiatkowska, *Podstawy pedagogiki przedszkolnej*, Warszawa 1988, p. 171.

[15] H.R. Schaffer, *Psychologia dziecka*, p. 167.

[16] L. Eliot, *Co tam się dzieje?*, Poznań 2010, p. 417.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 409.

relationships and situations. By observing their parents, a child also determines whether the expression of emotions in a given situation will be beneficial for achieving a desired goal or not. Even in infancy, a child sees how parents show and express their emotions, and how they cope with emotionally charged situations. By observing its parents, a child learns to react similarly. Learning through imitation is one of the stages in the process of emotional development. It is impossible to avoid modelling. In the first months of life, a child stays with parents or other caregivers, and it is they who constitute the matrix for the child's future behaviours.

Factors influencing the predominance of specific emotions include:

a) the home atmosphere;
b) the prevailing parenting style;
c) mutual relations between family members;
d) the parents' attitude toward the child;
e) the parents' aspirations for the child.[18]

The role of the educator and pedagogue

The second, equally important educational environment is the kindergarten and school. In kindergarten, a child enters their first world, gaining experience in expressing and receiving emotions and feelings. The teacher-educator is the first person after the parents who influences the formation of attitudes, social skills, and the child's moral and emotional development. Thus, shaping the emotional sphere becomes an essential element of education; one must know the sources of emotions and what they entail. A teacher's goal should not be to suppress emotions but to maintain their balance and control, as every emotion has its own value and significance. The teacher's task is to support the child's development. What can be helpful? I'll give you a hint: a book. The song lyrics:

Courage floks from a book,
a book helps you through life
are timeless.

Although there are no universal prescriptions, the message embedded in literature is always an effective tool for readers, regardless of their age. By identifying with the characters, a child has the chance to explore emotions alongside them, learning to recognize and name them, cope with various feelings, and experience stories while receiving guidance on how to effectively solve problems. The verbal message stimulates processes of comparison, analysis, inference, and cause-and-effect understanding, fostering cognitive operations. By reading, the child learns strategic behaviour. When they find themselves in a similar situation, they will try to

[18] E.B. Hurlock, *Rozwój dziecka*, Warszawa 1985, pp. 402–403.

act exactly like the character they met in the book. Often, children even say in such moments, "I will do just like…". By interacting with literary heroes, a child often identifies with them and finds similar traits within themselves. Stories, tales, and poems provide opportunities for the child to learn how to function among friends, handle different situations, and build good relationships. Authors use stylistic devices – such as epithets, metaphors, similes, and exclamations – to accurately and vividly describe the emotions shifting within characters and to speak to the reader, as every human life is inseparably linked to emotions. Appropriate vocabulary allows for the precise naming of what a character feels, through which the child learns the words used to express feelings. Possessing a certain vocabulary enables the child not only to convey what they feel but also to listen to the experiences of others.

Fairy tales are of invaluable worth. The world of fairy tales helps show the child reality so that they can experience and understand it as their emotional development progresses.[19] Through their content, a child learns to distinguish good from evil, empathize with the wronged, rejoice in the victory of good, and feel concern when dangers mount. They learn to act according to accepted norms, what to value in life, and what a value system is. The moral within them provides guidance on how to live in society. Furthermore, a narrated event evokes real experiences in the child; the word has a magical influence on the child's imagination and feelings, immediately becoming "flesh" and triggering a complete and real reaction, as if it were reality. Only with time does the child learn moderation in reacting to fictional reality, gaining the ability to resist the suggestion of the word and creating two basic categories of perceiving phenomena: fictional and real.[20]

However, they act most strongly on the child's emotions and feelings. It is worth reaching for "prescription" fairy tales, including *Fairy Tales That Heal* by Doris Brett, *Fairy Tales for a Good Night's Sleep* by Gerlind Ortner, *Fairy Tales Help Children: Stories that Heal, Comfort, and Give Courage* by Cornelia Nitsch, and others. In therapeutic and educational fairy tales, the characters usually face problems similar to those the child is experiencing.

Emotional balance appears in a seven-year-old child. They begin to have better control over their emotions and become less emotionally excitable. According to Lev S. Vygotsky,[21] the process of "intellectualizing feelings" – the transition from unconscious emotions to higher feelings – occurs when a child adopts an emotional attitude toward thought-of and imagined facts and events, rather than just reacting to a direct emotional situation. Keeping the child's well-being in mind, it is worth considering this connection in the educational process.

[19] A.M. Basak, *Wpływ bajek czytanych przez rodziców na rozwój dzieci w wieku szkolnym*, "Pedagogika Rodziny" 2012, No. 2/4, p. 46.

[20] S. Szuman, *Wpływ bajki na psychikę dziecka*, Warszawa 1960, p. 60.

[21] L.S. Wygocki, *Nauczanie i rozwój w wieku przedszkolnym* [in:] *idem*, *Wybrane prace psychologiczne*, Warszawa 1971, p. 537.

Books come to the rescue. They are a goldmine of situations taken from everyday life. The relationships of book characters often perfectly reflect a daily reality that is not always easy. In scenes and conversations, one can find themselves. No one is perfect. The attitudes of young children often mirror the emotions of characters with different temperaments; their behavior can be a pretext for a conversation about how we are all different. Properly selected literature can help a child understand themselves and the world they live in.

Wojciech Kołyszko and Jovanka Tomaszewska's series *Bajki o uczuciach* [*Fairy Tales about Feelings*] is a complete set of tales about anger, jealousy, joy, fear, sadness, and shame. They contain not only stories but also practical ways of dealing with feelings, games, and exercises to help get to know them better – sort of "user manuals" for feelings. The authors show that feelings are natural; both joy and anger are needed. They write: "anger also helps find the strength to overcome an obstacle or defend oneself against a threat – as far as possible." They describe what an angry person looks like using various comparisons, through which the child learns to recognize feelings and expands their vocabulary.

From the series *Moc uczuć* [*The Power of Feelings*] by Katarzyna Miller, we also learn that we are not devoid of feelings; rather, everyone feels them with different intensity and in different situations.

In the book *Powiedz mi dlaczego… Nie mogę oglądać telewizji?* [*Tell Me Why… I Can't Watch TV?*], Sara Agostini and Marta Tonin remind us of timeless advice – one must talk to children. We cannot skip awkward topics or pretend that unresolved, complicated matters have been settled. Children have an extraordinary power to see through those close to them and perfectly sense when things are not as they hear from their parents. The book also offers tips on how to persuade children, as prohibitions and commands achieve little and often only trigger arguments.

Agnieszka Pawłowska's *Kraina uważności* [*Land of Mindfulness*[series makes children aware of how important the way we talk to someone is. By listening to the stories, the child has the opportunity – along with the inhabitants of the Land – to learn how to talk to others and see that communication is an important and necessary life skill.

Mała i jej świat. Uczucia [*Mała and Her World: Feelings*] by Anna Obiols describes various feelings. It includes suggested exercises on what to do to experience different feelings and what triggers them. It also features maxims and a Guide for Parents. Furthermore, it highlights that knowledge about feelings and emotions is just as necessary as knowledge about the world.

The benefit of interacting with a book is invaluable. A book not only develops imagination and enriches vocabulary or accompanies one in moments of loneliness, but it also shapes awareness and sensitivity toward others, allowing one to understand oneself and the world. Through characters in books, a child learns how others deal with troubles and problems, how they solve them, and the consequences of the decisions they make. While listening or reading, a child has the chance to

become someone else, live an unforgettable adventure, and experience something different and previously unknown. A book has the quality of allowing a person to develop their inner self, showing that people can experience the same event in different ways – that every person is different and reacts differently to stimuli, signals, and words.

The influence of a book on human behaviour is not seen immediately. However, it should be considered that books help create a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Skillful use of them will allow a child to develop fully and make their childhood richer in experiences and skills. Regardless of the positive role they play, they cannot replace contact and conversation with the primary educational environment – the parents. The family is the natural educational environment. "It is the family, and not the kindergarten or school, despite their unique importance in education, that constitutes the first source of symbolic transmission; in it, the young child learns to express feelings and thoughts, as well as appropriate reactions and behaviours."[22] Clinical psychologists have discovered that conversation works most effectively, but it should be conducted with someone important to us or a trusted friend – and at the right time and place, so the listener can truly hear us.[23] After reading a literary work, it is worth sitting down with students and talking about what they felt while listening or reading, what emotions accompanied them, and how they understand what happened. Such a dialogue helps develop reflectiveness, allows them to imagine themselves in a similar situation, and helps them understand the needs of another person. Instead of just informing, it is better to point out how others have handled various situations, as this teaches alternative ways of acting. Understanding the emotions of others is an element of social cognition that enables behaviour appropriate to the situation.

According to many psychologists, the fundamental factors influencing the quality of emotional development are peace, tenderness, and a sense of security, which contribute to the creation of an appropriate "educational climate." Such a climate is indispensable both in the family home and in educational institutions, as an atmosphere of peace, kindness, and a full sense of security fosters the gradual expansion of a child's social contacts.[24]

Conclusion

From a pedagogical, psychological, and sociological perspective, emotions should be the key because, as J.J. Campus states, they are processes that "establish, maintain, change, or terminate relations between the individual and the environment

[22] B. Milerski, B. Śliwerski, *Pedagogika. Leksykon*, Warszawa 2000, p. 192.
[23] L. Mlodinow, *Emocje*, p. 261.
[24] M. Kwiatkowska, *Podstawy pedagogiki przedszkolnej*, Warszawa 1988, p. 24.

in matters significant to the individual (…) emotions bind what is important to us with the world of people, things, and events."[25] The most important aspect is the ability to cope with and manage one's own emotions. There are no positive or negative emotions; all are good and necessary. Only their intensity or the way they are expressed poses a problem. Although they are an essential element of human existence, they are discussed only occasionally, and there are no specific curricula for them. Learning about emotions is not difficult, but it requires commitment and significant support from the closest adults, as well as the awareness that a person's later behaviour and functioning depend on earlier experiences and behaviours shown to the child.

Emotions do not appear without a reason. All of them perform many functions. „Emotions lead us into the depths of sadness, but also to the heights of joy. They are the main driver of our choices and behaviours, the reason why we formulate and achieve our goals."[26] Emotions form the foundation of the relationship between an individual and the environment, linking our internal values with the external word. It is emotions that direct the processes occurring in the human mind, and they determine how a person lives.

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[25] C. Saarni, *Kompetencje emocjonalne i samoregulacja w dzieciństwie* [in:] *Rozwój emocjonalny a inteligencja emocjonalna*, eds. P. Salovey, D.J. Sluyter, Poznań 1999, p. 122.

[26] L. Mlodinow, *Emocje*, p. 248.

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Refugee children from Ukraine in a Polish school – psychological, cultural and educational challenges

Dzieci uchodźcze z Ukrainy w polskiej szkole – wyzwania psychologiczne, kulturowe i edukacyjne

Abstract

Forced migration means that a migrant not only has to cope with language barriers and cultural differences, but also often with traumatic experiences. Adaptation in the host country encompasses many areas of social life, among which education is of particular importance in the case of children. The article addresses the issue of the functioning of a refugee student from Ukraine within the Polish Education System after 2022. The aim of this study is to present the most significant challenges in this area, based on an analysis of the relevant literature and research findings from the years 2022–2025, with reference to psychological, cultural, and educational dimensions.

Keywords: migration, refugeehood from Ukraine, refugee children, refugee experience, education, cultural differences, educational challenges

Streszczenie

Migracja przymusowa oznacza dla osoby migrującej nie tylko mierzenie się z barierą językową czy różnicami kulturowymi, ale często również z doświadczeniami traumatycznymi. Adaptacja w kraju przyjmującym obejmuje wiele obszarów życia społecznego, wśród których w przypadku dzieci niezwykle istotna jest edukacja. W artykule podjęto tematykę funkcjonowania ucznia uchodźczego z Ukrainy w polskim systemie kształcenia po 2022 roku. Celem opracowania jest przedstawienie najważniejszych wyzwań w tym zakresie w oparciu o analizę literatury przedmiotu oraz wyników badań z lat 2022–2025 w odniesieniu do takich obszarów, jak psychologiczny, kulturowy i edukacyjny.

Słowa kluczowe: migracje, uchodźstwo z Ukrainy, dzieci uchodźcze, doświadczenia uchodźcze, edukacja, różnice kulturowe, wyzwania edukacyjne

Introduction

The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, triggered intensified migration flows. Poland, as a neighbouring country, became one of the

main destinations for Ukrainian refugees. According to data from Polish Office for Foreigners, at the beginning of 2025 nearly one million Ukrainian citizens were benefiting from temporary protection in Poland, with a significant number being women and children.[1] The scale of migration required the development and implementation of solutions regulating the situation of refugees, while simultaneously addressing their basic needs, as well as issues related to labour market access, healthcare, and education for school-aged children.[2]

The demographic structure of migrants led to a sharp increase in the number of Ukrainian refugee students in Polish schools. Their presence has generated multiple challenges for the Polish education system as well as for the students themselves. These challenges are primarily connected with the specific nature of forced migration experiences, which significantly affect children's functioning in the school environment.[3]

The aim of this article is to present the challenges related to the functioning of Ukrainian refugee students in Polish schools in three dimensions: psychological, cultural and educational. The main research question is: What psychological, cultural and educational challenges are identified in the literature and research reports concerning Ukrainian refugee children in Polish schools?

The article is a review in nature and is based on an analysis of the literature and empirical studies concerning the situation of Ukrainian children who were incorporated into the Polish education system as a result of displacement after 2022. The method applied is a traditional review of literature and research findings from disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy, sociology of migration, and intercultural education.

The source material includes academic publications, research reports, guidelines on refugee children in Polish schools, expert analyses, and policy briefs.[4] Sources published between 2022 and 2025 were analysed. The results are presented against a theoretical background drawn from relevant academic literature.

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[1] Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców [Polish Office for Foreigners], *Obywatele Ukrainy w Polsce – aktualne dane migracyjne*, 24.02.2025, https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/obywatele-ukrainy-w-polsce--aktualne-dane-migracyjne2 (11.04.2026).

[2] Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa (Dz.U. 2022, poz. 58, ze zm.) [Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country (Journal of Laws 2022, item 583, as amended)].

[3] K. Stankiewicz, A. Żurek, *Edukacja dzieci uchodźczych w Polsce*, „INFOS – zagadnienia społeczno-gospodarcze" 2022, No. 5(297), pp. 1–4.

[4] It should be noted, that existing reports are based on fragmentary data covering selected regions or individual educational institutions. The limited number of studies combining psychological, cultural, and educational perspectives on the functioning of refugee children justifies undertaking a review analysis. This article is subject to limitations resulting from a relatively small number of available empirical studies conducted on large representative samples.

Ukrainian students in Polish schools in 2021–2025

In recent years, the Polish education system has undergone dynamic changes driven by the increasing number of children with migration experience. At the end of 2021, Ukrainian children accounted for approximately 55,000 students in the Polish education system.[5] By the end of 2024, this number had risen to nearly 200,000.[6] Even before the escalation of the conflict, Ukrainian students constituted the largest group of foreign pupils in Polish schools, and the war significantly intensified this trend.

Migration from Ukraine prior to the war was primarily labour-related and occurred on a smaller scale than the later refugee migration. The main reasons for leaving the country included economic conditions and the material situation of families. Migration involved both women and men, and in some cases entire families.[7] A key feature of labour migration was its planned nature, voluntary decision-making, and preparation prior to departure. As a result, children's adaptation process could unfold in a more predictable way. Knowledge of the language and culture of the host society, as well as relative family stability, contributed to more effective integration in the new country.[8]

Forced migration, by contrast, concerned Ukrainian children who arrived after February 2022. This type of migration can be defined as „movement resulting from pressure and the lack of possibility to remain in a country, territory or region affected by military conflict."[9] The context surrounding migration significantly shapes the child's adaptation process in the school environment and redefines their needs.

Ukrainian students currently present in Polish schools form a highly diverse group. Research conducted by the Foundation Centre for Citizenship Education in 2024 distinguishes two main categories: children of migrants present before 2022 and refugee children who arrived after the escalation of the conflict.[10] A third

[5] Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej [Ministry of National Education], *Dane otwarte: Liczba uczniów cudzoziemców według kraju pochodzenia – dane SIO według stanu na 30 września 2021 r.*, https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/1426/resource/62739/chart?page=1&q= (11.04.2026).

[6] Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, *Dane otwarte: Uczniowie uchodźcy z Ukrainy w podziale na typy szkół, klasy i powiaty. Stan na 31.12.2024 r.,* https://dane.gov.pl/en/dataset/2711/resource/67945/table?page=1&per_page=20&q=&sort=((11.04.2026).

[7] I. Yeleyko, I. Yeleyko, *Specyfika migracji zarobkowej ludności na Ukrainie*, "Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy" 2007, No. 11, pp. 401–410.

[8] E. Kozdrowicz, B. Walczak, *Postawy wychowawcze rodziców-migrantów wobec dzieci*, "Pedagogika Społeczna" 2008, No. 3(29), pp. 163–181.

[9] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR, *Uchodźca czy migrant? Tłumaczymy różnice i wyjaśniamy ich sens*, https://www.unhcr.org/pl/wiadomości/uchodzca-czy-migrant-tlumaczymy-roznice-i-wyjasniamy-ich-sens (11.04.2026).

[10] E. Świdrowska, K. Stano, *Uczniowie z Ukrainy z doświadczeniem uchodźstwa w polskich szkołach. Co zmieniło się w roku szkolnym 2024/2025? Raport z analizy danych* (stan na październik 2024), Warszawa 2025, p. 2, https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Raport-z-danych-SIO-UKR_CEO_UNICEF_10.2024_PL-1.pdf (11.04.2026).

category includes refugee children who remain in the Polish education system temporarily. Migration circumstances are crucial for identifying students' educational needs, as well as for designing and evaluating the effectiveness of systemic solutions supporting education and integration.[11]

For Ukrainian children and families, refugeehood represents a new experience involving unfamiliar situations embedded in a new social reality shaped by forced migration. Functioning in a new environment, entering the education system of the host country, and coping with traumatic experiences, including separation from family members, affect psychosocial functioning.[12]

The role of the peer environment is essential for a successful integration. Establishing peer relationships is often hindered by the lack of proficiency in the host country's language, cultural differences, and the formation of linguistically or nationally segregated groups within classrooms.[13]

The identified changes in the structure of Ukrainian students indicate that the Polish education system faces challenges arising from a rapidly increasing cultural diversity. This requires institutional, organisational and social adjustments. Despite the implementation of numerous initiatives, including systemic ones, many of the described challenges remain relevant, albeit to varying degrees. Difficulties across the three analysed dimensions constitute an important area requiring further detailed research, both in terms of individual student experiences as well as systemic solutions.

Psychological challenges

War may be defined as "an armed conflict between states, nations, or blocs of states (…) a continuation of politics (…) through violent means (…) aimed at achieving specific political, economic, or ideological objectives."[14] However, Ukrainian children themselves tend to define war through the emotions they experience. A disrupted sense of security, uncertainty about their own and their relatives' safety,

[11] P. Chrostowska, *Uczniowie z Ukrainy z doświadczeniem uchodźstwa w polskim systemie edukacji*, Warszawa 2024, p. 5, https://www.unicef.org/eca/pl/media/35631/file/Uczniowie%20z%20Ukrainy%20z%20doświadczeniem%20uchodźstwa%20w%20polskim%20systemie%20edukacji.pdf (11.04.2026).

[12] A. Jurek, *Psychologiczne aspekty doświadczeń migracyjnych u dzieci i młodzieży* [in:] *Migracja, tożsamość, dojrzewanie. Adaptacja kulturowa dzieci i młodzieży z doświadczeniem migracyjnym*, eds. N. Klorek, K. Kubin, Warszawa 2015, pp. 27–64, https://roznorodnosc.pnwm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Migracja-to%C5%BCsamo%C5%9B%C4%87-dojrzewanie.pdf (11.04.2026).

[13] M. Tędziagolska, B. Walczak, K.M. Wielecki, *Uczniowie i uczennice z Ukrainy w polskiej szkole. Raport*, Warszawa 2024, p. 29, https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/UKR-uczniowie-w-PL-szkole_raport-CEO_UNICEF_PL-1.pdf (24.03.2026).

[14] *Wojna* [in:] *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodo*wego, ed. B. Zdrodowski, Warszawa 2008, p. 158.

a sense of loss, grief for a life left behind, and forced migration, have all become sources of difficult emotions that remain embedded in their identity.[15]

The experience of war is closely linked to difficulties in psychosocial functioning. UNICEF studies on the attitudes of Ukrainian children toward mental health, clearly indicate barriers in access to psychological support. These barriers stem both from the form of assistance itself (including language barriers and limited availability of services) and from internal constraints rooted in cultural norms of the country of origin, as well as the influence of peer and family environments.[16] The family, as the primary environment of socialization, constitutes a foundation for an individual's functioning in society. A significant emotional burden placed on parents often translates into reduced involvement in the child's life, which in turn affects the fulfilment of educational, social, and emotional-support functions.[17]

The Polish education system provides psychological and pedagogical support based on identified needs, including difficulties related to adaptation resulting from "cultural differences, change of an educational institution, including education in another country," as well as "crisis or traumatic situations," which directly apply to children from Ukraine who arrived after the outbreak of war.[18] However, difficulties in identifying, diagnosing, and responding to students' needs were often linked to the lack of adequately adapted tools for working with refugee populations. Language barriers and limited practical experience among specialists in working with children affected by war-related trauma further intensified these challenges. Cultural differences, peer group dynamics, and the attitudes of close family members also acted as additional obstacles limiting the use of available psychological support services.[19]

It is important to note that existing support mechanisms within educational

[15] A. Popławska, O. Bocharova, *Doświadczanie wojennej traumy w narracjach dzieci ukraińskich*, "Edukacja Międzykulturowa" 2025, No. 1, pp. 76–88.

[16] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Understanding attitudes of Ukrainian youth toward mental health and psychosocial support in Poland*, Warsaw 2024, p. 7, https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/35661/file/MHPSS%20raport%20w%20wersji%20polskiej.pdf.pdf (24.03.2026). Cf. M. Jeżowski, T. Rajabova, P. Myśliwiec, *Rodzice dzieci cudzoziemskich w kontaktach z polskimi szkołami. Analiza wyzwań i barier*, 2024, pp. 21–22, https://ocalenie.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/raport_rodzice-dzieci-cudzoziemskich-w-kontaktach-z-polskimi-szkolami.pdf (14.09.2026).

[17] Z. Tyszka, *System metodologiczny poznańskiej szkoły socjologicznych badań nad rodziną*, Poznań 1997, p. 24.

[18] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad organizacji i udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach (Dz.U. 2023, poz. 1798) [Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the organization and provision of psychological and pedagogical support in public kindergartens, schools, and institutions (Journal of Laws 2023, item 1798)], https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20230001798/O/D20231798.pdf (23.03.2026).

[19] O. Ovcharenko, *Zachowanie zdrowia psychicznego uchodźców w warunkach ucieczki przed wojną do Polski z Ukrainy*, „Przegląd Krytyczny" 2024, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 31–50, DOI: https://doi.org/10.14746/pk.2024.6.1.3.

institutions had primarily been designed for children of labour migrants rather than refugee students. In the case of labour migration, families typically undertook various forms of preparation to ensure a smoother transition into a new educational system. By contrast, individuals with refugee experience often enter a new school environment without prior planning or preparation. Cultural and mental barriers to using mental health services, the persistence of stereotypes, and limited proficiency in Polish further hindered their integration into the host society.[20]

Cultural challenges

Despite their geographical proximity, Poland and Ukraine represent culturally distinct societies. As Immanuel Wallerstein notes, "culture is the sum of those ways in which groups differ from one another."[21] These differences manifest in social norms, values, and communication styles. Although certain similarities between Poles and Ukrainians are often emphasized, awareness of cultural differences remains crucial, as they significantly affect the process of refugee integration and are particularly visible in educational settings.[22]

One area that posed challenges for Ukrainian parents of young children concerns differing child-rearing norms. These differences relate, among other things, to the degree of children's independence (with Ukrainian children functioning more independently sometimes raising concerns in Polish society) and to the status of the parent as an authority figure. Ukrainian families more often follow a hierarchical parent–child model, whereas Polish families tend to emphasize greater individualism and partnership in these relationships.[23]

Language barriers constitute another major cultural challenge, particularly in the context of education. Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian all belong to the Slavic language group, which paradoxically may contribute to specific types of interference errors that are difficult to eliminate.[24] Proficiency in the language of the host society is essential for building interpersonal relationships, yet it remains problematic in

[20] M. Piegat-Kaczmarczyk, K. Czerwińska, A. Kosowicz, *Dzieci-uchodźcy. Standardy, narzędzia diagnozy i wsparcie psychologiczne*, Warszawa 2022, pp. 18–68, https://forummigracyjne.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Dzieci-—-uchodzcy.-Standardy-narzedzia-diagnozy-i-wsparcie-psychologiczne.—-online-2.pdf (23.03.2026).

[21] I. Wallerstein, *Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System* [in:] *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. M. Featherstone, London 1990, pp. 31–32.

[22] A. Jurek, *Psychologiczne aspekty*…, pp. 27–64.

[23] M. Baran, H. Grzymała-Moszczyńska, M. Zjawińska, V. Naritsa, Y. Ovsiienko, L. Sugay, I.I. Pujszo, J. Niedziałek, *Superbohater w spódnicy. Odporność psychiczna Ukrainek uciekających przed wojną w Ukrainie do Polski – raport z badań i rekomendacje dla trzeciego sektora*, 2023, pp. 53–55.

[24] G. Przechodzka, W. Hudy, *Interferencje leksykalne w wypowiedziach pisemnych Słowian ze Wschodu (na podstawie pisemnych prac certyfikatowych z roku 2019, poziom B1)*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Kształcenie Polonistyczne Cudzoziemców" 2021, No. 28, pp. 133–143.

situations of limited linguistic competence within intercultural peer environments. It should be emphasized that refugee children generally did not possess sufficient knowledge of Polish to enable effective learning or smooth communication. Their relatively high numbers within classrooms did not facilitate interaction between Polish-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking students. Instead, this often contributed to the formation of two parallel language groups within the same class or school.[25] Knowledge of the host country's language constitutes a key resource: for children, it enables more effective integration within the education system, while for parents it facilitates participation in the local labour market.[26]

Another significant challenge concerns the preservation of cultural identity. Functioning between two cultures can be particularly demanding. On one end lies Ukrainian culture – language of origin, traditions, and family values – while on the other lies Polish culture, including the language of the host country, the school and peer environment. "Simultaneous functioning within two cultures, where it is difficult to determine which is dominant and which is supportive," fosters the development of a "hybrid identity."[27] Such a hybrid identity is characterized by bilingualism, functioning at the intersection of cultures, and drawing from both with increased openness toward others. Whether this position is perceived as a resource or a challenge depends largely on the surrounding environment and the integration policies implemented in the host country.

The presence of refugee children in schools has made existing cultural differences more visible – not only in terms of education, social functioning, and identity, but also in peer relationships between Polish students, Ukrainian migrants present before the war, and refugees who arrived after 24 February 2022.[28]

Educational challenges

In the years preceding the war in Ukraine, citizens of Ukraine and Belarus constituted the largest groups of migrants in Poland, according to data from the Office for Foreigners.[29] A similar structure was reflected in the population of foreign children within the education system. However, the admission of a large number of refugee students from Ukraine after outbreak of the war on 24 February 2022,

[25] M. Tędziagolska, B. Walczak, K.M. Wielecki, *Uczniowie i uczennice*…

[26] A. Ager, A. Strang, *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*, "Journal of Refugee Studies" 2008, No. 21(2), pp. 166–191, https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/21/2/166/1621262 (25.03.2026).

[27] Nikitorowicz, *Hybrydowa tożsamość na kulturowym pograniczu – potencjał i problem osobisty i grupowy?*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio J" 2019, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, pp. 11–22.

[28] P. Chrostowska, *Uczniowie z Ukrainy*…, p. 5.

[29] Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców, *Cudzoziemcy w Polsce po 2020 r.*, https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/cudzoziemcy-w-polsce-po-2020-r (26.03.2026).

posed a significant challenge not only for the education system itself, but also for students, teaching staff, and school management.[30]

One of the first difficulties observed in the education of refugee children was the recommended dual-track learning model „following both the host country's education system and, simultaneously, online education in the country of origin or within institutions run by the Ukrainian community", as advised by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science.[31] This approach, however, was not without its drawbacks. A key issue was the increased burden placed on students, who often prioritized learning within the Ukrainian system. As a result, their engagement in both the educational process and social integration within the Polish system tended to be lower.[32]

Another major challenge in education involved curriculum differences between the Polish and Ukrainian systems. These differences compounded previously discussed issues related to limited language proficiency and contributed to disparities in subject-specific competencies among students. In some cases, this resulted in educational gaps among Ukrainian children, while in others they demonstrated knowledge exceeding the Polish curriculum. For many years, Poland functioned primarily as a country of emigration. The teaching staff had limited opportunities to develop competencies related to working with large groups of refugee students within a single classroom. Earlier educational experiences simply did not require such an approach.[33]

Communication between teachers and refugee students also posed a significant challenge, stemming from differences in the organization of the teaching and learning process in the two countries. Expectations placed on students with refugee experience were often inconsistent and not always clearly understood. Respondents in the study *Students with migration and refugee experience in Polish schools 2004–2024*, conducted by the Educational Research Institute under the editorship of Anna Dolińska, highlighted difficulties in understanding the requirements set by teachers.[34]

The integration process of refugee children depended largely on the level of staff engagement, communication practices, interpretation of students' situations, and their individual experiences. An important factor supporting more effective

[30] Najwyższa Izba Kontroli [Supreme Audit Office], *Kształcenie dzieci cudzoziemców*, 4.03.2024, https://www.nik.gov.pl/najnowsze-informacje-o-wynikach-kontroli/ksztalcenie-dzieci-cudzoziemcow.html (16.04.2026).

[31] Т. Одноліток, *Лісовий розповів, скільки школярів розпочинають очне навчання і чи буде "дистанційка"*, 2023, https://www.unian.ua/society/lisoviy-rozpoviv-skilki-shkolyariv-rozpochinayut-ochne-navchannya-i-chi-bude-distanciyka-12379293.html (26.03.2026).

[32] M. Tędziagolska, B. Walczak, K.M. Wielecki, *Uczniowie uchodźczy w polskich szkołach. Gdzie jesteśmy u progu kolejnego roku szkolnego? Streszczenie raportu*, Warszawa 2023, p. 3, https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Uczniowie-uchodzczy-w-polskich-szkolach_CEO_-STRESZCZENIE-1.pdf (16.04.2026).

[33] M. Tędziagolska, B. Walczak, K.M. Wielecki, *Uczniowie i uczennice*…

[34] *Uczniowie i uczennice z doświadczeniem migracji i uchodźstwa w polskich szkołach 2004–2024*, ed. A. Dolińska, Warszawa 2025, p. 101, https://www.ibe.edu.pl/files/BIBLIOTEKA/IBE-PIB/uczniowie-i-uczennice-z-doswiadczeniem-migracji-i-uchodzstwa-w-polskich-szkolach-2004-2024.pdf (16.04.2026).

integration within peer environments was the development of intercultural competencies and the implementation of intercultural education initiatives. However, such practices were not consistently applied. In classes already facing internal difficulties, the arrival of refugee children often intensified existing problems, whereas in more cohesive groups, integration tended to proceed without major disruption.[35]

A further challenge affecting the effectiveness of inclusive education was the limited presence of cultural assistants in Polish schools.[36] The insufficient number of intercultural assistants led to unequal access to this form of support, and in some schools to its complete absence. Although their presence increased after 2022, this did not apply universally across all institutions.[37] This situation resulted partly from a lack of awareness among school administrators regarding the possibility of obtaining funding for such positions, as well as from negative decisions by local government authorities.[38]

As indicated in the report *Education of children and students with migration experience arriving from Ukraine – good practices and recommendations* by the Educational Research Institute, the role of intercultural assistants significantly facilitated the process of admitting refugee students, provided essential support, and acted as a bridge in communication between teachers, students, parents, and peers.[39]

Conclusion

The increased presence of refugee children in Polish schools has constituted, and to a large extent continues to constitute, a systemic, institutional, and individual challenge. The analysis of psychological, cultural, and educational difficulties related to the functioning of Ukrainian students in Polish schools, highlights their

[35] M.R. Centrone, A. Gromada, I. Posylnyi, *„Bez wątpienia jest tu fajnie; ale prawdziwy dom, to własny dom…" Badanie subiektywnego dobrostanu dzieci i młodzieży mieszkających w Polsce w obliczu wojny na Ukrainie*, 2023, pp. 6–9, https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/98/2023/11/Bez-watpienia-jest-tu-fajnie-ale-prawdziwy-dom-to-wlasny-dom.pdf (18.04.2026).

[36] B. Papuda-Dolińska, T. Knopik, K. Wiejak, A. Błaszczak, S. Styrkacz, K. Mykowska, *Edukacja dzieci i uczniów z doświadczeniem migracyjnym przybyłych z Ukrainy – dobre praktyki i rekomendacje*, Warszawa 2024, https://www.ibe.edu.pl/pl/aktualnosci/2628-publikacja-ibe-edukacja-dzieci-i-uczniow-z-doswiadczeniem-migracyjnym-przybylych-z-ukrainy-dobre-praktyki-i-rekomendacje (28.03.2026).

[37] *Uczniowie i uczennice z doświadczeniem migracji i uchodźstwa w polskich szkołach 2004–2024*, ed. A. Dolińska, Warszawa 2025, p. 159.

[38] E. Mirga-Wójtowicz, *Asystenci międzykulturowi w polskich szkołach – klucz do inkluzji i równości w edukacji. Raport z badania z asystentami kulturowowymi*, Kraków 2024, p. 8, https://asywszkole.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025_FundacjaSonderTime_Raport_BadAM_v2.pdf (12.04.2026).

[39] B. Papuda-Dolińska, T. Knopik, K. Wiejak, A. Błaszczak, S. Styrkacz, K. Mykowska, *Edukacja dzieci i uczniów z doświadczeniem migracyjnym przybyłych z Ukrainy – dobre praktyki i rekomendacje*, Warszawa 2024, pp. 22–25, https://www.ibe.edu.pl/pl/aktualnosci/2628-publikacja-ibe-edukacja-dzieci-i-uczniow-z-doswiadczeniem-migracyjnym-przybylych-z-ukrainy-dobre-praktyki-i-rekomendacje (28.03.2026).

interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature. From a psychological perspective, the context of migration and the individual's subjective experience remain key determinants of psychosocial functioning within the host society. In cultural terms, the student's presence in a culturally different environment represents a strategic challenge, potentially leading to difficulties in adaptation, education, and integration. Within the educational dimension, system-level responses introduced in reaction to the sudden and large-scale influx of refugee students have exposed existing gaps, particularly in terms of coherence of actions and insufficient preparation of teaching staff to work in increasingly culturally diverse classrooms. Equally significant is the limited availability of intercultural assistants and the absence of standardized approaches to working with refugee students. These shortcomings continue to affect the effectiveness of educational and integration processes.

Support for refugee students in Polish schools should therefore focus on the development of consistent standards of practice based on proven models, integrating psychological, cultural, and educational dimensions. These areas should be treated as inseparable, as they are fundamental to the successful integration of students into both the school environment and the broader Polish society.

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Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, *Uczniowie uchodźcy z Ukrainy w podziale na typy szkół, klasy i powiaty. Stan na 31.12.2024 r.*, 2024, https://dane.gov.pl/en/dataset/2711/resource/67945/table?page=1&per_page=20&q=&sort= (11.04.2026).

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Part IV

EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Część IV

EDUKACJA I WSPARCIE OSÓB Z NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNOŚCIAMI

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Empathic sensitivity toward students with special needs in the era of inclusion, disability studies, and inclusive education

Wrażliwość empatyczna wobec uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami w czasach inkluzji, *disability studies*, edukacji włączającej

Abstract

In inclusive activities, empathic sensitivity is particularly important, as it forms the basis of mutual relationships and inclusion, especially in peer relationships between students without disabilities and those with special educational needs. The aim of this study was to determine whether empathic sensitivity towards students with special educational needs occurs among non-disabled peers in inclusive education. The study included 80 non-disabled students in grades 1–3 of inclusive education. The research hypothesis assumed that one of the effects of inclusive education is a high level of empathic sensitivity among non-disabled students. The leading methods adopted for conducting the research were a survey and a pedagogical test. The research tools used were the Helene Borke Interpersonal Awareness Test, interpreted by Janusz Rembowski, and a questionnaire. The research confirmed a significantly high level of empathic sensitivity among non-disabled students, especially girls, which confirms their satisfaction with mutual peer relationships, understanding the needs of the weaker and sick, and the willingness to help those who require additional support in education and school functioning.

Keywords: inclusion, inclusive education, empathic sensitivity

Streszczenie

W działaniach inkluzyjnych szczególne znaczenie przypisać należy wrażliwości empatycznej, która stanowi podstawę wzajemnych relacji i włączenia, i to już w relacjach rówieśniczych uczniów pełnosprawnych oraz uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi. Celem prowadzonych badań własnych było poznanie tego, czy w edukacji inkluzyjnej w grupie pełnosprawnych kolegów ma miejsce wrażliwość empatyczna wobec uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi. Badaniami objęto 80 uczniów pełnosprawnych klas 1–3 edukacji włączającej. Przyjęto hipotezę badawczą zakładającą, że jednym z efektów funkcjonowania edukacji włączającej jest wysoki poziom wrażliwości empatycznej uczniów pełnosprawnych. Wiodącą metodą przyjętą do realizacji badań była metoda sondażowa oraz testu pedagogicznego. Jako narzędzie badawcze zastosowano Test Świadomości Interpersonalnej Helene Borke w interpretacji Janusza Rembowskiego oraz ankietę. Badania

potwierdziły zdecydowanie wysoki poziom wrażliwości empatycznej uczniów pełnosprawnych, szczególnie dziewczynek, co potwierdza zadowolenie z wzajemnych relacji rówieśniczych, zrozumienie potrzeb słabszych, chorych oraz chęć pomocy tym, którzy oczekują dodatkowego wsparcia w edukacji i szkolnym funkcjonowaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: inkluzja, edukacja inkluzyjna, wrażliwość empatyczna

Introduction

The dynamic transformations taking place in contemporary special education –particularly regarding its subject, that is the person with a disability, and the social space in which he or she functions – necessitate a closer look at the factors that are particularly vital in terms of mutual relationships, education, and competent assistance. Contemporary shifts have led to the creation of new legal frameworks aimed at meeting individual needs and promoting equality of opportunity for people with disabilities across many areas of life, most notably in education. Inclusion as the opposite of exclusion and the Disability Studies movement, preceded by the determination of people with disabilities themselves toward their autonomy and self-determination within the social model of disability, currently create the conditions for inclusive education and developmental support, while ensuring necessary aid and assistance. In all these endeavours, it is essential to focus on mutual relationships rooted in respect and, at the same time, maintain a particular empathic sensitivity toward the individual needs or difficulties of persons with special needs from the earliest stages of their development.

Transformations in the situation of people with disabilities driven by processes of inclusion, disability studies, and inclusive education

The Salamanca Statement, followed by subsequent international documents such as the Madrid Declaration, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and various UN and European Union documents, became the foundation for identifying the special needs of people with disabilities and creating inclusion policies, particularly within education. The declarations formulated at the Salamanca conference called upon all governments to adopt inclusive policies, specifically emphasizing the right of all children to receive education in mainstream schools as close to their place of residence as possible. In seeking an answer to the question of what inclusion is, Magdalena Tomaszewska acknowledges that numerous definitional approaches to this term can be found in the literature. As she notes, in English-language literature, it signifies: maintenance, inclusion, belonging, and a new perspective not only on education but on the human being

and their place in society. Notably, the term opposite to inclusion is exclusion.[1] The author also posits that "social exclusion is a real threat to the idea of inclusion."[2] Inclusion means incorporating. As David Mitchell writes, the very idea of inclusion and inclusive education encompasses more than just those with disabilities;[3] it refers to the "sources of a person's disadvantaged situation and marginalization."[4] Citing Mel Ainscow and Susie Miles, Grzegorz Szumski argues that this term "goes far beyond the traditional understanding of special education," as it also covers other groups at risk of exclusion.[5]

A significant shift in this regard was introduced by the social model of disability, in which persons with disabilities themselves – driven by determination and an awareness of their rights – identified exclusionary practices within the then-dominant medical model of disability. The social model of disability has brought about numerous beneficial changes in the situation of persons with disabilities, contributing to the elimination of many social barriers and stereotypes, and to the combating of discriminatory and exclusionary tendencies.[6] The foundations of inclusive education are rooted in a philosophy of accepting students' individual capabilities and securing support systems for them, ensuring that everyone has equal chances for education and development. This approach assumes that every student possesses the same inherent value and is entitled to the same rights.[7]

Furthermore, the trends within the contemporary, interdisciplinary field of Disability Studies confirm the socio-economic contexts of disability as a refusal to accept the violation of the rights of certain communities and individuals particularly at risk of discrimination. It addresses the consequences of negative social attitudes and behaviours, defined as "the improper treatment of specific individuals due to their group affiliation."[8] In her article, entitled *Areas of Interest and Research Trends in Contemporary European Disability Studies – Reflections from Academic Discourse Analysis*, Jolanta Rzeźnicka-Krupa acknowledges that research in this field highlights

[1] M. Tomaszewska, *Inkluzja – teoria i praktyka pedagogiczna, Gdzie tkwi jej początek i sukces?* [in:] *Edukacja inkluzyjna i terapia dzieci i młodzieży ze specjalnymi potrzebami*, eds. K. Barłóg, M. Kocór, Jarosław 2017, pp. 11–13.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 15.

[3] D. Mitchell, *Sprawdzone metody w edukacji specjalnej i włączającej. Strategie nauczania poparte badaniami*, Gdańsk 2016, p. 351.

[4] I. Chrzanowska, *Pedagogika specjalna. Od tradycji do współczesności*, Kraków 2015, pp. 554–555.

[5] G. Szumski, *Wokół edukacji włączającej. Efekty kształcenia uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu lekkim w klasach specjalnych, integracyjnych i ogólnodostępnych*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 13–14.

[6] A. Twardowski, *Społeczny model niepełnosprawności -analiza krytyczna*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2018, No. 48, p. 112.

[7] K. Barłóg, *Introduction* [in:] *Edukacja inkluzyjna i terapia dzieci i młodzieży ze specjalnymi potrzebami*, eds. K. Barłog, M. Kocór, Jarosław 2017, p. 7.

[8] M. Wlazło, *Disability Studies wobec natury postaw dyskryminujących*, "Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej" 2017, No. 16, p. 121.

the aspects of exclusion and inclusion of persons with disabilities, alongside legal solutions designed to counteract discrimination.[9] Citing Bill Hughes, she confirms that emotions are a source of judgment and a way of assigning value. In this context, it is crucial to analyse the feelings of non-disabled people toward persons with disabilities and special needs. A significant role is played here by emotions such as pity and fear – or even more extreme reactions like disgust[10] – as well as particularly positive emotions, such as joy or the satisfaction derived from mutual relationships.

Empathic sensitivity toward persons with disabilities as a foundation for competent assistance and satisfying mutual relationships

Empathy, as *Einfühlung*, is a phenomenon as old as humanity. Even in antiquity, although not yet defined by this specific term, it was presented as a connection with emotional, moral, and social development.[11] Among others, Arthur Schopenhauer referred to this phenomenon as *compassion*.[12] Empathy is a dynamic phenomenon, developing and shifting alongside changes in personality. It is the ability to emotionally identify with someone else; it is a fundamental existential basis for every human being. Empathy is not merely "stepping into" the world of another person, but moving from one's own individuality and perspective toward the recognition of the other person's identical nature.[13] As Edyta Stein writes,"in feeling, I experience not only objects but also myself; I experience feelings originating from the depths of the SELF."[14] Empathy is thus a reaction that arises from understanding someone else's psychological state and is similar to what that person is feeling. It is one of the key elements of socio-emotional development, influencing behaviour toward others – especially those who find themselves in a difficult situation. Children with higher levels of empathic sensitivity exhibit pro-social behaviours; they are open to helping, caring, cooperation, and kindness directed toward another person. They are eager to comfort and sympathize, while simultaneously exhibiting lower levels of aggression.[15] The development of empathic sensitivity in children is a progressive process of learning

[9] J. Rzeżnicka-Krupa, *Obszary zainteresowań i nurty badawcze we współczesnych europejskich studiach nad niepełnosprawnością – refleksje z analizy dyskursu akademickiego*, "Niepełnosprawność" 2011, No. 5, p. 79.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 72.

[11] A. Gasiulowa, *Wrażliwość empatyczna dzieci z dysfunkcją narządu ruchu a ich środowisko rodzinne*, Bydgoszcz 1993.

[12] A. Schopenhauer, *O podstawie moralności*, Kraków 2005.

[13] Z. Uchast, *Empatia jako postawa egzystencjalna*, "Roczniki Filozoficzne" 1996, Vol. 44, No. 4. p. 42.

[14] E. Stein, *O zagadnieniu wczucia*, Kraków 1988, p. 41.

[15] A. Lasota, *Empatia i zachowania prospołeczne małych dzieci w percepcji rodziców*, "Studia z Teorii Wychowania" 2023, Vol. XIV, No. 1(42), p. 247.

emotions through the imitation of adults, discussing feelings, and asking about needs.[16] It can be assumed that empathy is a sensitization to the emotions of others. There is a confirmed strong link between empathic sensitivity and pro-social behaviours, such as helping and comforting, which is of particular value in relationships with children with special needs, such as those with Down syndrome, ASD, ADHD, or others.

Research methodology

The primary objective of this research was to determine whether empathic sensitivity toward students with special educational needs exists among their non-disabled peers. The specific objectives were divided into two categories: theoretical-cognitive, aimed at providing knowledge and identifying the level of empathic sensitivity among students in inclusive classrooms; and practical-implementational, aimed at developing conclusions for pedagogical practice regarding the potential for fostering empathic sensitivity in students who interact with peers with special educational needs. The main research problem is the question of the level of empathic sensitivity among students in inclusive education. The following specific research problems were also established: What feelings and emotions do the studied children experience? Do they empathize with the emotional states of others? What is their overall level of empathic sensitivity? Are there gender-based differences in empathic sensitivity? Do students effectively differentiate between the emotional states of others? It was hypothesized that the level of empathic sensitivity among the vast majority of students in inclusive education is high. It was further assumed that these students primarily experience positive feelings and emotions, such as joy, happiness, and satisfaction; that they empathize with the emotional states of others; and that their level of empathic sensitivity ranges from medium to high. Additionally, it was hypothesized that girls in these classes exhibit higher levels of empathic sensitivity and that the vast majority of students in inclusive education can distinguish between different emotional states in others. The research utilized the diagnostic survey method and a pedagogical test. The research tool employed was the Helene Borke Interpersonal Awareness Test, as adapted by Janusz Rembowski.[17] The study was conducted at the turn of 2025/2026 in the Podkarpacie region among early childhood education students from rural environments. It was assumed that research in such a setting would be particularly interesting, as it might reveal potential shortcomings in the implementation of inclusive education. The study included 80 early childhood students, consisting of 41 girls (51.3%) and 39 boys (48.7%).

[16] A. Filip, A. Mróz, I. Ocetkiewicz, *Dlaczego warto i jak można rozwijać empatię u dzieci we wczesnym i średnim dzieciństwie*, "Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce" 2024, Vol. 19, No. 2(73), pp. 39–49.

[17] J. Rembowski, *Empatia*, Warszawa 1989.

Presentation of results

In analysing the results from the first scenario of Borke's Interpersonal Awareness Test – which reads: "Imagine it is morning, the sun is shining, and you realize you have to go to school; what do you feel then (joy, happiness, satisfaction, sadness, fear, anger)?" – one can observe the presence of positive emotions and feelings among the surveyed students.

Table 1. Students' feelings and emotions after listening to Scenario No. 1

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	32	40.0
	Happiness	24	30.0
	Satisfaction	24	30.0
In total		80	100.0
Negative	Sadness	–	–
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	–	–
In total		–	–

Source: present findings.

In the studied group of students, all participants (100.0%) confirm that school is associated with positive feelings and emotions. Specifically, 40.0% of the respondents indicate that school triggers joy, while 30.0% state it is a source of happiness, and the remaining 30.0% report a sense of satisfaction.

Subsequently, the research used the content of Scenario No. 2: "Imagine you are on the school playground; the weather is beautiful, and the teacher has brought out an animation scarf and balls, inviting everyone to play together. What do you feel in this situation?".

Table 2. Feelings and emotions exhibited by children after listening to Scenario II

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	38	47.5
	Happiness	12	15.0
	Satisfaction	30	37.5
In total		80	100.0
Negative	Sadness	–	–
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	–	–
In total		–	–

Source: present findings.

Similarly to the findings in Table 1, the research confirms that students in inclusive schools primarily exhibit positive emotions and feelings regarding the

organization of shared activities and play. Joy was the most prevalent emotion, reported by nearly half of the respondents (47.5%), followed by satisfaction (37.5%), and happiness (15.0%). It can therefore be assumed that children do not mind the company of students with special educational needs, as all participants (100.0%) exhibited positive emotions toward the planned activities and play. Furthermore, no students (0.0%) reported negative emotions or feelings for this reason.

The content of the third scenario focused on students' shared presence and their relationships with peers who have special educational needs. Its content was as follows: "Imagine you are sitting on a rug with your friends; you are playing together, it is fun and you are all having a good time together. What do you feel?". The students' responses are presented below in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' emotions after the presentation of Scenario No. 3

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	65	81.2
	Happiness	15	18.8
	Satisfaction	–	–
In total		80	100.0
Negative	Sadness	–	–
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	–	–
In total		–	–

Source: present findings.

The research confirms that despite the presence of students with special educational needs in the classroom, the students still present very positive feelings and emotions toward the situation of shared presence and various play-based relationships (100.0% of those surveyed). Simultaneously, none of the surveyed students present negative feelings and emotions toward this type of situation (81.2% present joy, and 18.8% happiness from mutual presence and mutual relationships).

Next, the students were presented with a scenario with the following content: "Imagine you are entering the school and you see your teacher. What do you feel?".

The research shows that in a meeting with the teacher, students in inclusive education primarily feel joy (100.0%), which constitutes positive emotions and feelings. This is of particular value, as the teacher is the organizer of the process of both teaching and the shared activities that integrate the group of non-disabled students and those with special educational needs. It should be noted that none of the surveyed students studying in inclusive education indicated negative emotions from this type of relationship, which undoubtedly proves the positive atmosphere in the school classroom and the accompanying positive, mutual relationships.

Table 4. Emotions experienced by the surveyed students after listening to the content of Scenario No. 4

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	80	100.0
	Happiness	–	–
	Satisfaction	–	–
In total		80	100.0
Negative	Sadness	–	–
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	–	–
In total		–	–

Source: present findings.

The content of the next scenario focused on the empathy for emotional states among early childhood education students. Scenario Five by Borke: "Imagine you are playing with your friends on the rug and you see two people suddenly start fighting and pulling each other's hair. What do you feel?".

Table 5. Emotions accompanying the children after listening to the content of Scenario No. 5

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	–	–
	Happiness	–	–
	Satisfaction	–	–
In total		–	–
Negative	Sadness	59	73.8
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	21	26.2
In total		80	100.0

Source: present findings.

The surveyed students confirmed that in a situation where another person, another child, is being harmed, they strongly want to help them, and they are accompanied by such emotions as: sadness (73.8%) and anger (26.2%). The sadness is caused by empathizing with the classmate's difficult situation, while the anger stems from helplessness and the fact that the classmate was harmed.

Subsequently, the students were presented with the content of the next scenario: "Imagine you are playing with blocks with your friends; you are all happy and having a pleasant time, when suddenly you notice that one person is crying. How do you feel in such a situation?". Empathy for these types of emotional state is presented in the next table, Table 6.

Table 6. Emotions accompanying the children after listening to Scenario No. 6

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	–	–
	Happiness	–	–
	Satisfaction	–	–
In total		–	–
Negative	Sadness	80	100.0
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	–	–
In total		80	100.0

Source: present findings.

The research unequivocally confirms the empathy of students in a situation where their classmate is crying; they also experience deep sadness (100.0%).

The content of the next scenario was the statement: "Please imagine that you are sitting in a classroom at school and you witness someone borrowing a pen from another person, which they destroy after a moment. What do you feel?". The surveyed students' statements regarding this situation are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Emotions and feelings accompanying the children after listening to Scenario No. 7

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	–	–
	Happiness	–	–
	Satisfaction	–	–
In total		–	–
Negative	Sadness	–	–
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	80	100.0
In total		80	100.0

Source: present findings.

Among the felt emotions, the surveyed students chose negative emotions in the presented situation (100.0%); they indicated anger when someone destroys another person's property, empathizing with their emotional states. In the next scenario, the surveyed students were asked: "How do you feel when you see someone who is sick and complains that something hurts?". Empathy regarding the illness and the poor well-being of a classmate is presented by the data contained in the next table, Table 8.

As the obtained results indicate, all surveyed students, when they notice that someone-their classmate-is sick, present sadness, but also a desire to comfort them and provide them with help and support (100.0%). The surveyed students feel a correct, negative emotion adequate to the situation, i.e., the illness, pain, or disability of a classmate.

Table 8. Emotions accompanying the children after listening to Scenario No. 8

Emotional tone	Manifested emotions	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	Joy	–	–
	Happiness	–	–
	Satisfaction	–	–
In total		–	–
Negative	Sadness	80	100.0
	Fear	–	–
	Anger	–	–
In total		80	100.0

Source: present findings.

Subsequently, the empathy levels of the children were identified. Each correctly identified emotional state of the character in the corresponding scenario was assigned one point, while each incorrect answer was assigned zero points. This was done by calculating the threshold values and summing all points in horizontal columns for each surveyed person. To determine the level of empathy, data considering the number of correct answers was used. A three-point scale was adopted, which depended on the number of points obtained in the range from 0 to 8.

The empathy levels were established as follows:

a) high: 8–7 points;
b) medium: 6–5 points;
c) low: 4–0 points.

In the surveyed group of non-disabled children, there is a lack of a low level of empathy, and the surveyed students present medium and high levels of empathic sensitivity (100.0%). It is the girls who primarily present a high level of empathic sensitivity (56.1%), while for boys it is 33.3%. A medium level was presented by 64.1% of boys, while 2.6% showed a low level. The research confirms that girls also present a medium level of sensitivity (43.9%) with a complete absence of a low level of empathic sensitivity. The surveyed non-disabled children from inclusive classrooms also correctly distinguish emotional states in people, including joy (100.0%), sadness (97.6%), fear (97.6%), and anger (92.8%).

Conclusions

Modern international and interdisciplinary transformations in implemented inclusive actions and within the field of Disability Studies find confirmation in practical applications within inclusive education. The diagnosis of empathic sensitivity among early childhood education students, conducted as a result of research using Borke's technique, fully confirms the students' sensitivity to the special needs of

their classmates. The results confirm manifestations of understanding presented by the students – not only acceptance but also the willingness to provide help in educational situations and in many other difficulties faced by students with special needs.

The aim of the research conducted among non-disabled students studying in inclusive education with students with special educational needs was an attempt to answer the question: what is the empathic sensitivity of these children? In many situations, it is these children who determine the well-being of a student with special needs in the school classroom, as well as their self-esteem, sense of acceptance, and peer support. The research confirms that the level of empathic sensitivity among students who study with peers with special educational needs in inclusive education is, in the vast majority, high. Most of the surveyed children experience positive emotions such as joy, happiness, and satisfaction; they feel positive emotions when going to school, which may indicate that they are also satisfied with their relationships, mutual friendships, shared games and activities, the atmosphere of safety, and the joy derived from contact with their peers and teacher.

At the same time, students experience negative emotions when they participate in their classmates' difficult experiences or events - when a child is harmed by a peer, when he or she cries, or feels lonely or defenceless. Similarly, they feel anger when they notice a classmate being harmed, someone destroying their property, or when a peer is sick, in pain, or suffering. The research also confirmed that girls are more empathic than boys. The vast majority of girls present a high level of empathic sensitivity, while among boys, the level of empathic sensitivity also ranks at a medium level. It can therefore be assumed that the surveyed children positively interpret the emotional states of others, which is of particular importance regarding the special needs of students with disabilities, as well as their peer relationships and acceptance of childhood difference. This constitutes an understanding of their difficulties but also their rights, with respect for their autonomy and the right to integration and inclusion, in accordance with the trends of inclusion and normalization, and against tendencies toward exclusion. It is also a recognition of equal rights to education and development. The fight against discrimination is also one of the goals of the European Union, which calls for equal treatment, sensitisation to the rights and needs of people with special needs, and the prevention of social marginalization and exclusion.[18]

The results of many studies confirm that the emotional sensitivity of girls is associated with empathy directed toward another person, with comfort, anxiety, and compassion – which is not observed in boys.[19] It is precisely the inclusive education environment that can play a unique role here in the "emerging prosociality of the child, moral reasoning, building satisfying In order for a person with a disability

[18] E. Wapiennik, R. Piotrowicz, *Niepełnosprawny – pełnoprawny obywatel Europy*, Warszawa 2022, pp. 43–45.

[19] A. Lasota, *Empatia i zachowanie*…, p. 247.

to function on equal terms with non-disabled peer relationships, and preventing aggressive behaviours."[20]

For a person with a disability to function in the same way as non-disabled people, or to similarly achieve life goals and have the possibility of control over their own life, it is essential to create conditions, a proper climate, and acceptance of diversity, including empathic sensitivity, which foster building faith in one's own abilities, self-esteem, autonomy, or self-determination.[21] As Szumski writes: "inclusive education is a concept so innovative in relation to school practice that changes to the framework conditions of functioning are insufficient for its implementation,[22] it requires a change in the school climate, attitudes, and empathic sensitivity to the special needs of students who, despite their difficulties, expect acceptance, kindness, and empathic support."

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[20] A. Filip, A. Mróz, I. Ocetkiewicz, *Rozwój empatii*…, p. 40.

[21] M. Ciechomska, J. Gruczek, V. Khisamutdinova, M. Lejzerowicz, K. Popowska, A. Posielężna, *Niepełnosprawność. Normalizacja. Włączanie*, "Człowiek. Niepełnosprawność. Społeczeństwo" 2021, No. 1(51), p. 123.

[22] G. Szumski, *Wokół edukacji*…, p. 35.

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The evolution of the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects in Polish pedagogical reflection (2017–2025). A metatheoretical model

Ewolucja rozumienia edukacji włączającej i jej podmiotów w polskiej refleksji pedagogicznej (2017–2025). Model metateoretyczny

Abstract

The aim of this article is to reconstruct the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects in Polish pedagogical reflection between 2017 and 2025. The analysis encompassed scholarly articles, identifying dominant ways of conceptualizing inclusion and their transformation over time. The findings indicate a shift from a compensatory – legal approach, focused on pupils with disabilities, toward a systemic – community and civic model in which inclusion in education is understood as designing learning environments for all and building a culture of responsibility and co-participation. Simultaneously, the subject of inclusive education evolves from a recipient of support into a relational, networked, and ecosystemic participant in the school community. The evolutionary model was validated by reference to the typology proposed by Kerstin Göransson and Claes Nilholm.

Keywords: inclusive education, subjectivity, metatheoretical model

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest rekonstrukcja rozumienia edukacji włączającej oraz jej podmiotów w polskiej refleksji pedagogicznej w latach 2017–2025. Analizie poddano artykuły naukowe, identyfikując dominujące sposoby konceptualizacji inkluzji i ich przemiany w czasie. Wyniki wskazują na przejście od ujęcia kompensacyjno-prawnego, skoncentrowanego na uczniu z niepełnosprawnością, ku modelowi systemowo-wspólnotowemu i obywatelskiemu, w którym inkluzja w edukacji oznacza projektowanie środowiska uczenia się dla wszystkich oraz budowanie kultury odpowiedzialności i współuczestnictwa. Równolegle podmiot edukacji włączającej ewoluuje od adresata wsparcia do relacyjnego, sieciowego i ekosystemowego uczestnika wspólnoty szkolnej. Model ewolucyjny został zwalidowany przez odniesienie do typologii Kerstin Göransson i Claes Nilholm.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja włączająca, podmiotowość, model metateoretyczny

Introduction

Inclusive education (educational inclusion) constitutes one of the key issues of contemporary pedagogy, no longer limited solely to special education. Grzegorz Szumski, analysing the multiplicity of approaches to inclusive education, distinguishes two groups of definitions: descriptive and prescriptive. In these approaches, inclusion is defined either through descriptions of inclusive practices implemented by schools and educational institutions or presented as an idea – a reform project of the education system aimed at building a high-quality school for all pupils.[1] The significance of educational inclusion[2] extends beyond organizational solutions within the education system and concerns fundamental anthropological, axiological, and social issues. In recent years, Polish academic discourse has revealed clear shifts in the understanding of inclusion and its subject. The present analysis is metatheoretical in character – it does not merely summarize positions and practical implementations but reconstructs their logic and the direction of the evolution of the concept of inclusive education.

The research material consists of theoretical and empirical publications from 2017–2025 on inclusive education. The adopted time frame – from 2017 to 2025 – was determined by significant changes in the Polish education system that directly influenced the shaping of conditions and ways of understanding and implementing inclusive education. The year 2017 marked an important moment in Polish educational law, as three key regulations governing support for students with special educational needs (SEN) were introduced.

First, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017, "on the principles of organizing and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public preschools, schools, and institutions" specified in detail the forms and conditions of assistance as well as the rules of cooperation of between pupil support teams with the pupil's environment, the school, and psychological-pedagogical counselling centres.[3]

Second, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017, "on the conditions for organizing education, upbringing, and care for children and youth with disabilities and those at risk of social maladjustment" defined, among other things, the conditions for implementing special education in institutions of various types and specified the responsibilities of entities providing support.[4]

The third significant act was the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 September 2017, "on issuing rulings and opinions by adjudicating teams operating in public psychological-pedagogical counselling centres", which

[1] G. Szumski, *Koncepcja edukacji włączającej* [in:] *Edukacja włączająca w przedszkolu i szkole*, eds. I. Chrzanowska, G. Szumski, Warszawa 2019, p. 14.

[2] In the article, I will use the terms "educational inclusion" and "inclusive education" interchangeably. In Polish academic literature, these terms are considered synonyms.

[3] Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1591.

[4] Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1578.

standardized the system of issuing decisions regarding the need for special education, opinions on the need for assistance, and other diagnostic-support documents.[5]

Selecting 2017 as the starting point of the analysis makes it possible to comprehensively capture the discourse of inclusive education from the moment when the existing system of psychological and pedagogical support and adjudication procedures was structured and embedded within a legislative framework that became a reference point for school practice and pedagogical research.

The year 2025 was adopted as the closing boundary due to ongoing and planned systemic reform projects of major importance for inclusive education. In 2025, the Ministry of Education submitted for public consultation a draft regulation concerning rulings and opinions issued by adjudicating teams operating in psychological-pedagogical counselling centres.[6] Moreover, in 2025 work began on implementing legal forms related to the functional assessment of pupils, which is to be introduced in the coming years as a mandatory element of the education system, enabling a more holistic diagnosis of barriers and planning of educational support (proposed regulations of the Ministry of Education/educational projects of 2025/2026).

Adopting this time frame makes it possible not only to reconstruct transformations in the discourse of inclusive education in response to specific legal regulations but also to account for breakthrough moments in shaping the institutional and practical conditions of inclusion. Establishing 2017 as the initial reference point and 2025 as the beginning of a subsequent phase of systemic change ensures coherence of the analysis in terms of the impact of regulations on the understanding of inclusive education and the definition of its subjects.

In the past decade, inclusive education has become one of the central issues in Polish pedagogy. This discourse has developed in the context of dynamic social transformations: educational reforms, the COVID-19 pandemic, the digitalization of education, and changes in policies supporting pupils with special educational needs.

In the literature from 2017–2025, clear shifts can be observed not only in the understanding of inclusive education itself but, above all, in the way its subjects are defined. The article advances the thesis that the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects evolves from a compensatory model (within a biological paradigm) toward a civic-ecosystemic model (within a humanistic paradigm).

An important reference point for contemporary debates on inclusive education is the critical analysis conducted by Kerstin Göransson and Claes Nilholm.[7] The authors

[5] Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1743; t.j. Dz.U. 2023, poz. 2061.

[6] Draft dated 1.08.2025. Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji z dnia 29 sierpnia 2025 r. w sprawie orzeczeń i opinii wydawanych przez zespoły orzekające działające w publicznych poradniach psychologiczno-pedagogicznych.

[7] K. Göransson, C. Nilholm, *Conceptual diversities and empirical shortcomings – a critical analysis of research on inclusive education*, "European Journal of Special Needs Education" 2014, No. 29(3), pp. 265–280.

attempt to systematize the diverse definitions of educational inclusion and assess the quality of its empirical foundations. Their analysis leads to the conclusion that the concept of inclusive education is heterogeneous and imprecise. Göransson and Nilholm distinguish four basic understandings of inclusion: 1) as the placement of pupils with disabilities in mainstream classrooms; 2) as meeting the social and academic needs of pupils with disabilities; 3) as meeting the social and academic needs of all pupils; 4) as the creation of communities characterized by specific normative features.

The authors emphasize that these definitions reflect different visions of the function of school and different philosophical assumptions regarding its aims. In this sense, inclusion is not merely a technical organizational solution but an expression of a particular philosophy of education. At the same time, they point to serious shortcomings in research on inclusion. When inclusion is defined rigorously – especially in terms that encompass the creation of communities – it becomes difficult to find studies that reliably identify factors leading to inclusive processes in schools. The authors highlight the lack of clear indicators of the outcomes of inclusive practices, insufficient consideration of the perspectives of all pupils, and the rare use of research designs that allow changes over time to be captured. Consequently, they call for greater operational precision in defining inclusion and for the development of new types of empirical research. Their analysis also serves as a warning against equating declarative support for inclusion with its actual implementation and underscores the necessity of closely linking normative reflection with methodological rigor.[8]

Methodological foundations of the analysis

The study is qualitative and metatheoretical in nature. Its aim is to reconstruct the ways in which the concept of inclusive education is understood in Polish pedagogical discourse and to identify and describe how the subjects of inclusive education are defined in the analysed publications. The analysis focuses on the conceptual and argumentative layers of the texts rather than on evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation.

The process of organizing the research material and conducting the preliminary grouping of thematic codes involved the use of an artificial intelligence – based tool – ChatGPT 5.2 (paid version). This tool served a supportive function in organizing textual data, identifying recurring motifs, and synthesizing content. Final interpretative decisions, code assignments, reconstruction of theoretical models, and research conclusions remain exclusively the result of the author's work. The use of the AI tool aligns with the growing body of research on collaboration between humans and artificial intelligence systems in creative and analytical processes.

[8] *Ibidem*.

As Aleksandra Przegalińska and Tamilla Triantoro[9] indicate, cooperation with AI may be understood not as replacing human reflection but as a form of "interpenetration of minds," in which technology supports the generation of new interpretative perspectives and the organization of complex data. In the present study, AI functioned as a tool supporting the qualitative analysis, while full research responsibility remained with the author.

The research material consisted of 76 scholarly articles by Polish authors published in Polish pedagogical journals between 2017 and 2025. Representative material most closely aligned with the research questions was selected for further analysis. Articles were searched in Google Scholar using the keywords: *inclusive education*, *inclusive schooling*, *educational inclusion*. The selection of material was purposive and subordinated to the aim of the study, namely, capturing the ways of conceptualizing inclusion and changes in defining its subjects. Texts included in the analysis met the following criteria: a scholarly article (peer-reviewed publication), Polish authorship and publication in a Polish pedagogical journal, explicit reference to inclusive education in the title, keywords, or content, and the presence of definitions, descriptions, or interpretative reflections concerning inclusive education and/or its subjects.

The analysis proceeded in stages, in accordance with the logic of qualitative content analysis. In the first step, the texts were read in their entirety in order to identify fragments referring to: a) definitions of inclusion and b) subjects of inclusive education. The second step involved qualitative coding encompassing two main fields of codes:

1. Understanding of inclusive education – the codes included, among others, inclusion understood as:
   a) presence/placement in mainstream classrooms;
   b) meeting the needs of pupils with disabilities/SEN;
   c) a school for all (diversity as the norm);
   d) designing learning conditions (e.g., UDL, accessibility);
   e) creating community and school culture;
   f) social/civic transformation.
2. Subjects of inclusive education – the codes included categories such as:
   a) pupil with a disability;
   b) pupil with SEN;
   c) all students (in the "all means all" approach);
   d) teacher (competencies, attitudes, reflexivity);
   e) class/school as a community (relationships, organizational culture);
   f) institutions and system (law, counselling centres, coordination);
   g) networked subject (family–school–institutions; intersectoral cooperation),
   h) civic/ecosystemic subject (inclusion as the foundation of a democratic community).

[9] A. Przegalińska, T. Triantoro, *Przenikanie umysłów. Potencjał twórczy współpracy z AI*, Warszawa 2024, pp. 16–32.

In the third step, the codes were compared diachronically (2017–2025) in order to capture the direction of change in the discourse and to identify dominant definitional and subject configurations.

In the section synthesizing the results, a metatheoretical perspective was applied, which means that the interpretations concerned understandings of inclusive education (both theoretical and empirically grounded) and the relationships between the individual, the community, and the system. Additionally, in order to validate the comparisons, the typology of understandings of inclusive education proposed by Göransson and Nilholm[10] was used.

The research procedure applied is subject to limitations characteristic of qualitative literature analysis. The selection of material was purposive and based on search results from Google Scholar, which means that the analysed set of publications does not fully exhaust the entire corpus of available texts. However, these limitations do not undermine the cognitive value of the study, as its aim was to reconstruct ways of conceptualizing inclusive education and the directions of their transformation, rather than to ensure statistical representativeness of the material.

Results of the qualitative analysis. The evolution of the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects in Polish pedagogical reflection (2017–2025)

The analysis of scholarly articles published in Polish pedagogical journals between 2017 and 2025 makes it possible to identify a clear trajectory of change in the understanding of inclusive education and in the definition of its subjects. These changes are both semantic in nature (an expansion of the scope of the concept of educational inclusion) and ontological (an evolution in the understanding of the subject of inclusive education).

1. From inclusion in education as the implementation of the right to Inclusive education as a cultural project

In the earliest texts that were analysed (2017), inclusive education is defined primarily as the implementation of the right of pupils with disabilities to education within the mainstream system and as a means of counteracting exclusion. Authors such as Krystyna Barłóg,[11] Agata Bogumiła Jardzioch,[12] Beata Skotnicka,[13] and Agnieszka Szpak[14] focus on ensuring access to school, organizational conditions,

[10] K. Göransson, C. Nilholm, *Conceptual diversities*…, p. 268.

[11] K. Barłóg, *Inkluzja społeczna, edukacyjna a problemy młodych osób z ograniczeniami sprawności*, "Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny" 2017, Vol. XXXVI, Issue 2, pp. 171–183.

[12] A.B. Jardzioch, *Edukacja włączająca w Polsce*, "Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna" 2017, No. 3, pp. 193–205.

[13] B. Skotnicka, *Szkoła inkluzyjna jako organizacja ucząca się*, "Niepełnosprawność – zagadnienia, problemy, rozwiązania" 2017, No. III(24), pp. 75–85.

[14] A. Szpak, *Edukacja włączająca uczniów niepełnosprawnych – aktualne wyzwania*, "Zbliżenia Cywilizacyjne" 2017, Vol. XIII, No. 4, pp. 12–45.

and support. Inclusion here has a normative-legal character and constitutes either a development of or a correction to the earlier integrative model.

In 2018–2019, a clear shift in emphasis could be observed. Authors (including Iwona Chrzanowska,[15] Grażyna Dryżałowska,[16] Zenon Gajdzica,[17] and Beata Antoszewska and Małgorzata Moszyńska[18]) reflected on the social model of disability and on the tensions between declarative inclusion and its practical implementation. Inclusion ceased to be identified solely with a pupil's presence in a mainstream classroom and began to be understood as a transformation of school culture and as an axiological project grounded in diversity as a norm. A critical distinction between integration and inclusion in education emerged, along with reflection on the responsibility of the state for the success of inclusive education.

2. Inclusive education as environmental design and a systemic process

In 2020 texts (including Dorota Chimicz,[19] Jolanta Rzeźnicka-Krupa,[20] and Renata Kołodziejczyk[21]), a further deepening of the concept of inclusive education is visible. It becomes linked to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), accessibility, the use of assistive technologies, and the deconstruction of the category of the norm. Inclusion begins to be understood as a philosophy of designing the learning environment rather than solely as support for a specific group of pupils.

In 2021–2022 (Chrzanowska,[22] Ewa Domagała-Zyśk,[23] Dorota Podgórska-Jachnik,[24] Barbara Dobrowolska,[25] and Gajdzica[26]), inclusion is framed as a multi-level

[15] I. Chrzanowska, *Edukacja włączająca – wyzwanie dla kompetencji pedagogów specjalnych*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2018, No. 48, pp. 23–32.

[16] G. Dryżałowska, *Wyobcowani w integracji a edukacja włączająca*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2018, No. 29, pp. 28–42.

[17] Z. Gajdzica, *Wybrane aspekty czasu w dwóch koncepcjach edukacji włączającej uczniów z niepełnosprawnością*, "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny" 2019, No. 3(253), pp. 42–55.

[18] B. Antoszewska, M. Moszyńska, *Doświadczenia nauczycieli szkół przyszpitalnych w paradygmacie inkluzji ucznia ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi*, "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny" 2019, No. 3(253), pp. 194–206.

[19] D. Chimicz, *Wykorzystanie technologii wspomagających uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami w edukacji włączającej*, "Szkoła Specjalna" 2020, No. 3, pp. 175–187.

[20] J. Rzeźnicka-Krupa, *Konstruktywizm i pedagogika różnorodności w kontekście edukacji włączającej*, "Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji" 2020, No. 4(51), pp. 153–166.

[21] R. Kołodziejczyk, *Gotowość nauczycieli do pracy w systemie edukacji włączającej*, "Roczniki Pedagogiczne" 2020, Vol. 12(48), No. 3, pp. 125–142.

[22] I. Chrzanowska, *Kultura szkoły – wyzwanie dla włączającego kształcenia*, "Pedagogika Społeczna Nova", 2021, Vol. 1, No. 2, s. 13–28.

[23] E. Domagała-Zyśk, *Mentoring w kształceniu pedagogów dla edukacji włączającej*, "Edukacja" 2021, No. 1(155), pp. 31–41.

[24] D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Polski system oświaty a edukacja włączająca – bilans otwarcia 2020 w świetle raportu badawczego Ośrodka Rozwoju Edukacji*, "Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze" 2022, No. 5, pp. 5–16.

[25] B. Dobrowolska, *Szkoła a działania inkluzyjne – stanowiska teoretyczne, uwarunkowania prawne a edukacja rzeczywistości*, "Student Niepełnosprawny. Szkice i Rozprawy" 2022, No. 22(15), pp. 26–42.

[26] Z. Gajdzica, *Nieobecne lub zaniedbane w polskiej szkole formy wspierania nauczycieli w edukacji włączającej*, "Studia z Teorii Wychowania" 2022, Vol. XIII, No. 3(40), pp. 13–28.

process – encompassing the level of the class, school, system, and social policy. In the texts analysed, the formula "all means all" appears, and educational inclusion is extended to pupils with experiences of migration, poverty, or other forms of marginalization. This signifies a departure from a categorical approach toward a systemic–cultural model.

3. Inclusive education as a network of shared responsibility and a civic project

Publications from 2023–2024 (including Amadeusz Krause,[27] Joanna Kossewska et al.,[28] Zenon Gajdzica, Edyta Widawska, and Beata Jachimczak,[29] Małgorzata Zaborniak-Sobczak,[30] and Patryk Gutowski[31]), contain a strong critical component. The authors point to discrepancies between declarations of inclusivity and actual school practices, as well as to the need for intersectoral cooperation (education–health–social assistance). Inclusive education is defined as a strategy requiring the coordination of actions, the management of complexity, and the consideration of accessibility, including digital accessibility.

In 2025 (Monika Chełchowska,[32] Dagmara Kubiak-Kazuła and Jolanta Rzeźnicka-Krupa,[33] Agnieszka Olechowska,[34] and Stanisława Nazaruk et al.[35]), inclusion in education takes the form of a mature systemic paradigm. On the one hand, the importance of teacher professionalism and the role of psychological-pedagogical counselling centres as institutions co-creating support pathways are emphasized; on the other hand, inclusion is linked to the building of a civil society and a democratic culture. The school is presented as a microcosm of the community in which the values of equality, pluralism, and shared responsibility are enacted.

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[27] A. Krause, *Edukacja włączająca w cieniu ideologii zachwytu i opresji*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2023, No. 50, pp. 11–21.

[28] J. Kossewska, K. Rofiah, V.K. Herviani, K. Sheehy, *Postawy nauczycieli wobec edukacji włączającej. Przegląd systematyczny*, "Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja" 2023, No. 2, pp. 69–91.

[29] Z. Gajdzica, E. Widawska, B. Jachimczak, *Współpraca wewnątrz- i międzysektorowa jako element wsparcia edukacji włączającej*, "Forum Nauk Społecznych" 2024, No. 2, pp. 113–124.

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[31] P. Gutowski, *Dostępność cyfrowa jako aspekt edukacji włączającej*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2024, No. 52, pp. 47–62.

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[35] S. Nazaruk, H. Konowaluk-Nikitin, J. Waszczuk, A. Majewska, K. Sienkiewicz, *W stronę edukacji włączającej. Doniesienie z badań poradni psychologiczno-pedagogicznyc*h, "Społeczeństwo. Edukacja. Język" 2025, Vol. 21, pp. 138–150.

Evolution of the subjects of inclusive education

Parallel to definitional changes, a transformation occurs in the understanding of the subject of inclusive education.

1. **Protected subject** – the pupil with a disability as the holder of the right to inclusion (Barłóg; Jardzioch).
2. **Relational subject** – every pupil within the context of the classroom community; the teacher as a mediator of values (Chrzanowska; Gajdzica).
3. **Agentic and constructivist subject** – the student as a co-constructor of knowledge, the teacher as a designer of the learning environment (Chimicz; Rzeźnicka-Krupa).
4. **Systemic subject** – the student, the teacher, the school, and state as elements of a multi-level system (Podgórska-Jachnik; Dobrowolska).
5. **Network and institutional subject** – the student together with his/her family and support institutions; counselling centres and co-organizers as co-creators of inclusion (Gajdzica, Widawska, and Jachimczak; Zaborniak-Sobczak).
6. **Civic and ecosystemic subject** – the student as a future citizen, the teacher as a key agent of change, the school as a democratic community (Kubiak-Kazuła and Rzeźnicka-Krupa; Olechowska).

In summary, the qualitative analysis indicates a clear evolution from inclusive education understood as incorporating students with disabilities into the education system toward inclusion conceived as a transformation of school culture and a civic project. At the same time, the subject of inclusive education transitions from being a recipient of support to becoming a co-responsible participant in the community and an element of the educational ecosystem. These changes confirm that in the years 2017–2025, inclusion ceased to be merely an organizational solution and became a normative and systemic category, redefining both the role of the school and the relationships among its participants.

An attempt to redefine inclusive education

Based on the analyses conducted, inclusive education may be redefined as a "multi-level, systemic, and axiologically grounded process of designing a learning environment, the aim of which is to ensure each person's genuine participation, agency, and recognition within a diverse educational community."

Inclusive education is not merely an organizational strategy or a set of solutions dedicated to a specific group of pupils. It constitutes a dynamic paradigm of shaping the school, in which diversity is treated as the norm rather than a deviation from the norm. This represents a departure from the compensatory model – focused on "fixing" the individual – toward a transformative model, in which the system, the

school culture, and the teaching practices are subject to continuous modification in response to the diverse needs and potentials of learners.

In this perspective, inclusion signifies not only the right to attend school but the right to full participation, encompassing access to knowledge, social relationships, opportunities for co-decision-making, and co-creation of the learning environment. It is simultaneously a pedagogical project and, more broadly, a civic one; it shapes a culture of mutual recognition, responsibility, and cooperation, preparing individuals to function in a pluralistic society.

The redefinition of inclusive education is accompanied by a transformation in the understanding of its subject. The subject of inclusive education is not solely a pupil with a disability, nor even a "pupil with special educational needs." The subject is relational and ecosystemic in character. It includes: the pupil as a person with individual needs, capacities, and aspirations; the teacher as a reflective professional and co-creator of the environment; the school community as a space of shared responsibility; support institutions; and the education system as an organizational and normative framework.

Subjectivity in inclusive education signifies the capacity for participation, influence, and co-creation. It is not given once and for all but is constructed within relationships, practices, and institutional structures. In this sense, inclusive education redefines both who the pupil is and what the school is – transforming it from a selective institution into a community-based environment open to diversity and responsible for the developmental conditions of each participant.

Comparison of the evolutionary model (2017–2025) with the typology of inclusive education in the concept of Göransson and Nilholm

In order to validate the developed model of the evolutionary understanding of inclusive education in Poland between 2017 and 2025, its assumptions were compared with the analysis conducted by Göransson and Nilholm. By examining highly cited European and North American articles, the authors demonstrated significant definitional heterogeneity in the concept of educational inclusion and distinguished four dominant understandings, discussed in the Introduction. A comparison of this typology with the results of the present analysis indicates a high degree of structural convergence, while simultaneously revealing a different developmental dynamic. In the Polish pedagogical discourse of the 2017–2025 period, these understandings not only coexist but also form a clear evolutionary trajectory.

In the years 2017–2018, the dominant approach is close to category (a) and focuses on the needs of pupils with disabilities – inclusion is defined as the implementation of the right to education in mainstream schools and as counteracting exclusion. In the years 2019–2022, we observe a shift toward understanding inclusion as a transformation of school culture and a response to the needs of all pupils,

which corresponds to the third category (c) identified by Göransson and Nilholm. In 2023–2025, however, the understanding of inclusion increasingly takes the form of building a community and a civic project, corresponding to the fourth category (d) – the creation of communities.

The 2017–2025 evolutionary model confirms Göransson and Nilholm's thesis regarding the multidimensionality of the concept of inclusive education and the need for a precise operational definition of the term in empirical research. The model also indicates that within the analysed national discourse, the various understandings of inclusion form a sequence of shifts – from a compensatory – legal approach toward a systemic – community model.

An important point of convergence between the two analyses is the tension between inclusion as a normative ideal and its research operationalization. Göransson and Nilholm observe that, under a narrow and rigorous understanding of inclusion, it becomes difficult to identify solid empirical evidence for the factors leading to inclusive processes. A similar tension appears in Polish publications, where developed theoretical and axiological reflections do not always translate into clearly defined indicators of practice.

Particularly significant is the comparison regarding the understanding of the subjects of inclusive education. The typology of Göransson and Nilholm implies a broadening of the subject of inclusion: from the pupil with a disability, through all pupils, to the community as a whole. The analysis of material from 2017–2025 confirms this direction. The subject evolves from a "recipient of support" to a participant in relationships, then to an element of the system, and most recently – to a co-responsible citizen functioning within the educational ecosystem. Thus, the evolutionary model does not only align with the four categories distinguished by Göransson and Nilholm but also extends them by adding a dynamic and systemic dimension.

In summary, the comparison indicates a directional convergence between the international analysis and the findings of research on Polish pedagogical discourse. At the same time, the evolutionary model (2017–2025) demonstrates that the broadening of the meaning of inclusive education is accompanied by a parallel expansion in the understanding of its subject – from an individual requiring support to a community and ecosystem responsible for the conditions of participation.

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Inclusive education and the risk of sham activities toward students with more severe intellectual disabilities

Edukacja włączająca a ryzyko działań pozorowanych wobec uczniów z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną

Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyse selected manifestations of a hidden curriculum in relation to the education of students with more severe intellectual disabilities implemented in mainstream schools. The starting point was the category of symbolic violence as coined by Pierre Bourdieu, with particular emphasis on one of its forms, namely the hidden curriculum. Then, the risks of teachers engaging in selected sham activities, their determinants. The strategies used by teachers were also identified, drawing on Erving Goffman's concept of "face." The considerations undertaken are based on the analysis of selected publications, mainly in the field of special pedagogy, showing dilemmas related to inclusive education.

Keywords: sham activities, inclusive education, student with moderate or severe intellectual disability, teacher

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza wybranych przejawów ukrytego programu w odniesieniu do edukacji uczniów z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną realizowanej w szkole ogólnodostępnej. Jako punkt wyjścia przyjęto kategorię przemocy symbolicznej w ujęciu Pierre'a Bourdieu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jednej z jej form, a mianowicie ukrytego programu. Następnie poddano analizie ryzyko podejmowania wybranych działań pozorowanych przez nauczycieli, ich uwarunkowania. Określono również strategie stosowane przez nauczycieli, odwołując się do kategorii „twarzy" w ujęciu Ervinga Goffmana. Podjęte rozważania osadzono m.in. w analizie wybranych publikacji, głównie z zakresu pedagogiki specjalnej, ukazujących dylematy związane z edukacją włączającą.

Słowa kluczowe: działania pozorowane, edukacja włączająca, uczeń z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu umiarkowanym lub znacznym, nauczyciel

Introduction

It seems obvious that the school, like any educational institution, is a place where students experience themselves and others, explore and experiment, and form their own identity. In a sense, they build their future by acquiring competencies that should pay off not only "here and now" but also in the future. And yet, school is cited as one of the main sources of feelings of social exclusion.

As Zenon Gajdzica writes, the essence of inclusive school culture is "the transformation of educational conditions (utilizing the resources of the institution and the environments supporting it) so that they serve the development of each student and change with their needs."[1] He emphasizes that the values and other determinants of inclusive school culture are not always fully reflected in school practice, which, according to the author, is the case in Polish mainstream schools. Here, the culture of inclusion is fragmented and closer to the trend of reconstructive inclusion.[2] It's worth explaining, following the author, that the reconstructive inclusion approach applies more specifically to students with disabilities. Deconstructive inclusion, on the other hand, more broadly addresses student diversity, encompassing cultural, religious, gender, economic status, and ability differences. In countries with limited cultural diversity, or where resistance to cultural and religious differences exists, the first approach predominates. The second approach, on the other hand, is developing more intensively in countries with greater diversity in these respects.[3] Regardless of the beliefs and experiences of researchers, teachers and specialists, the issue of inclusive education requires and will continue to require constant reflection on the effectiveness and optimization of school activities for children/students. Do these actions support their development, or on the contrary, are they merely superficial and serve to mask ineffective or inept actions? The literature on the subject emphasizes that students with intellectual disabilities constitute the group that raises the greatest dilemmas, but also challenges from the perspective of mainstream schools, including teachers themselves.[4]

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[1] Z. Gajdzica, *Uczeń z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w szkole ogólnodostępnej. Nauczyciele o (nie)zmienianej sytuacji w kontekście kultury szkoły inkluzyjnej*, Warszawa 2022, p. 45.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 46.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 30.

[4] See, e.g.: I. Konieczna, K. Smolińska, *Dokąd zmierza edukacja? Kontekst zmian systemu kształcenia uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, "Szkoła Specjalna" 2022, No. 83(5), pp. 345–358; T. Żółkowska, T. Parafiniuk, *Wsparcie uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w edukacji włączającej – wybrane obszary analizy z perspektywy koncepcji Roberta Schalocka*, "Roczniki Pedagogiczne" 2023, No. 15(3), pp. 33–34.

Symbolic violence in the educational environment

School is a place where symbolic violence operates, a discreet form of manipulation, a hidden and veiled form of domination.[5] Pierre Bourdieu explains this fact as the "arbitrary imposition of cultural arbitrariness."[6] This means, among other things, imposing a specific type of knowledge, attitudes and values, the adoption of which is linked to advancement or success achieved in school. Therefore, this is the so-called legitimate culture, the culture of the upper class, which is pursued in school through socialization. In other words, education directed at members of dominated classes is a process of cultural colonization.[7] Pierre Bourdieu believes that domination operates only in its so-called elementary form, meaning that between individuals it cannot be open, but rather hidden "under the guise of enchanted relationships."[8] Domination will only be recognized if it is unrecognized. Relations of domination "can only be established, maintained, or renewed at the cost of strategies that must transform, reshape, in short – *euphemize*, otherwise they risk annihilation by the exposure of their truth."[9] The culture in schools, previously developed by society, is instilled, transmitted, and imposed on others.[10] As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron note, one of the most important goals of teachers' activities is to create homogenized habituses, that is, to speak with the voice of an arbitrary culture, which they often do unconsciously, having been shaped by such a culture. Through the mechanism of selection, schools maintain the pre-existing order, also as differences between students equipped with unequal amounts of cultural capital, conducting various acts of selection.[11] In this way, they sustain pre-existing social differences.[12] Mariola Chomczyńska-Rubacha and Krzysztof Rubacha emphasize that the structure of subordination can generate symbolic violence alongside physical, psychological, and structural violence. This manifests itself, for example, in the devaluation of the cultural foundations of a student's social identity, or in imposing interpretations of school texts or historical and social events. They draw attention to various forms of symbolic violence in the educational environment, where, alongside those already signalled, one must highlight the hidden curriculum[13] which, as Martyna Pryszmont-Ciesielska writes, is a tool that shapes the habitus of

[5] A. Suchocka, *Przemoc symboliczna jako element ukrytego programu kształcenia polskiej szkoły*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Marynarki Wojennej" 2011, No. 4(187), p. 295.

[6] After: P. Mikiewicz, *Socjologia edukacji. Teorie, koncepcje, pojęcia*, Warszawa 2016, p. 166.

[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 165–167.

[8] P. Bourdieu, *Zmysł praktyczny*, Kraków 2008, p. 171.

[9] *Ibidem*.

[10] M. Falkiewicz-Szult, *Przemoc symboliczna w przedszkolu*, Kraków 2007, p. 20.

[11] R. Pęczkowski, *Funkcjonowanie klas łączonych w polskim systemie edukacji*, Rzeszów 2010, p. 26.

[12] P. Bourdieu, *Rozum praktyczny. O teorii działania*, Kraków 2009, p. 30.

[13] M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha, K. Rubacha, *Przestrzeń aksjologiczna szkoły I. Konstrukt teoretyczny*, "Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych. Educational Studies Review" 2016, No. 23(2), p. 154.

educational participants and an agent in the reproduction of specific cultural and social capital.[14]

The issue of symbolic violence seems particularly important for special education. The fundamental reason, as Dorota Podgórska-Jachnik points out, is the target of symbolic violence itself, that is, the person susceptible to exclusion, which stems from, for example, lower social competences, including communication skills. Public discourse, which acquires a sense of importance and legitimacy, can spill over into the intrapersonal dimension.[15] A common phenomenon observed among people with disabilities, especially those with incomplete and uncertain identities, is self-marginalization and self-exclusion. These processes undermine the personal resources necessary to unlock the potential for self-fulfilment.[16] Unfortunately, the education system, through its inherent structure, organization, and functioning, reinforces unequal opportunities for individuals, including those with disabilities, as Jolanta Rzeźnicka-Krupa points out.[17]

The hidden curriculum in education

In the field of pedagogical research, the issue of the hidden curriculum is most frequently addressed in the context of schools, but also in other educational institutions. As it turns out, explaining the concept of the hidden curriculum is not a simple task. Explaining the essence of the hidden curriculum is achieved by juxtaposing it with the explicit curriculum. Such an approach, while obvious, does not – contrary to appearances – clearly resolve the nature of this mutual opposition. M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska notes that separating these terms would make them impossible to understand, as their relationship indicates both opposition and coexistence and complementarity. They complement each other, creating an inseparable whole.[18]

From a sociological perspective, the hidden curriculum in education is distinct from the formal, explicit curriculum defined by the arrangement of subjects and topics. The hidden curriculum is expressed in the way cultural values and attitudes are transmitted through the structure of teaching and school organization.[19] Referring to Philip W. Jackson's book *Life in Classrooms* (1968), the author distinguishes

[14] M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Ukryty program edukacji akademickiej*, Wrocław 2010, p. 37.

[15] D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Deprecjacja osób z niepełnosprawnością w dyskursie publicznym za pośrednictwem mediów* [in:] *Człowiek z niepełnosprawnością w rezerwacie przestrzeni publicznej*, ed. Z. Gajdzica, Kraków 2013, pp. 75–76.

[16] L. Cierpiałowska, after: D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Deprecjacja osób z niepełnosprawnością*…, p. 76.

[17] J. Rzeźnicka-Krupa, *Edukacja i niepełnosprawność – wyrównywanie szans czy reprodukcja społecznych nierówności*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2019, No. 33, p. 57.

[18] M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Ukryty program*…, p. 14.

[19] *Słownik Socjologii i Nauk Społecznych*, ed. G. Marshall, scientific ed. of the Polish edition M. Tabin, Warszawa 2008, p. 409.

three aspects of the hidden curriculum: crowds, praise, and power. A student in a classroom is one of many, someone from the crowd, and is thus subjected to limitations and self-denial, constant evaluation and competition, while the teacher is the students' primary superior.[20] Piotr Mikiewicz, emphasizing one of the effects of the school experience – namely, adaptation to power, or more specifically, to being subordinated – references Erving Goffman's concept of total institutions. The teacher exercises control over students, who have significantly limited freedom in relation to him or her, and compulsory schooling itself creates coercion.[21] In school we often find "a conflict of interests and expectations of students, parents, teachers, society, a specific test of strength of individual educational entities, as well as strategies for adapting to the hidden dimensions of school life."[22]

Roland Meighan identifies the dimensions of the hidden curriculum, which include: the school space and its surroundings, the organization of activities, the formal curriculum, school organization, teachers' expectations, language, as well as assessment, testing, and examination.[23] The hidden curriculum in schools consists of the three unofficial R's: rules, routines, and regulations.[24] Crowding, waiting, routine, and teacher power are just some of the elements of everyday school life.[25]

The hidden curriculum in school – some reflections in the context of students with more severe intellectual disabilities

It seems that the phenomenon of the hidden curriculum in the context of students with more severe intellectual disabilities is strongly present in the implementation of broadly defined inclusive education. Researchers present the hidden curriculum through the lens of apparent/sham activities. Grażyna Dryżałowska[26] writes about these sham activities and their apparent effects in educational integration. In her opinion, there is still a clear division between students with and without disabilities, and the only change has been the renaming of the latter group as students with special needs. The focus on providing specialized support has become a sine qua non for enabling education in mainstream education. There has been a lack of greater focus

[20] *Ibidem*.

[21] P. Mikiewicz, *Socjologia edukacji*…, p. 222.

[22] M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha, K. Rubacha, *Przestrzeń aksjologiczna*…, p. 153.

[23] After: P. Mikiewicz, *Socjologia edukacji*…, p. 227. See: A. Przybysz, *Ukryty program – zakres treści i przegląd wybranych badań empirycznych*, "Przegląd Pedagogiczny" 2011, No. 1, pp. 183–184.

[24] P.W. Jackson, after: A. Korzeniecka-Bondar, *Lepsze to, niż zamulanie w domu? Krótka rzecz o wyćwiczeniu ucznia w kulturze pozoru* [in:] *Sprawcy i/lub ofiary działań pozornych w edukacji szkolnej*, eds. M. Dudzikowa, K. Knasiecka-Falbierska, Kraków 2013, p. 331.

[25] M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha, K. Rubacha, *Przestrzeń aksjologiczna*…, p. 155.

[26] G. Dryżałowska, *Integracja edukacyjna z innej perspektywy*, "Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej" 2017, No. 16, p. 40.

on transforming negative attitudes into attitudes of acceptance of difference. The dominance of institutional integration has, in some ways, contributed to the transition of students with disabilities into special education. This sham situation is created by the existence of segregation in integrated education, where the type and degree of disability determines the acceptance of a student with a disability for education with students without disabilities. Students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities are the most frequently identified group predisposed to education in special schools. The sham activities of integrated education are evidenced not only by changes in schools, especially at higher levels, but also by complete abandonment of further education. Strategies employed by headmasters and teachers to deter disabled students and their parents from being educated alongside their able-bodied peers, and making their attendance dependent on fulfilling school demands, provide further proof of sham integration. Katarzyna Parys discusses the sham integration of special education in Poland.[27] It is difficult not to agree with the author that the possibility of choosing a form of education – though guaranteed by legislative provisions – proves to be sham, as it is frequently unavailable within the local community.[28]

Inclusive education often becomes its own hostage, which means its rightful and valuable ideas disappear in the real world of schools, or are distorted and take on the form of segregationist, exclusionary, and marginalizing practices. The reality we observe in mainstream schools distorts the essence, or rather the very idea of inclusive education. It assumes a somewhat grotesque vision under the slogan of "a school for everyone," filled with the paradox of artificial or inept struggles of teachers facing the ministerial obligation to adapt educational requirements. The hidden curriculum of schools affects not only education but also the individuals participating in it. "Pretending to follow the script imposed by the ministry, they manoeuvre between the command and fictitious compliance, naturally with an eye to profit."[29]

Listening to public debates and discourses in various forums, both official and unofficial, one gets the impression that a critical approach to inclusive education is sometimes perceived as a pedagogical faux pas. It is a kind of anxiety expressed through fears that it is "inappropriate" to speak ill of this form of education. Otherwise, one might risk being accused of being intolerant, backwards or uneducated. This is especially true since the issue of inclusion reaches us from everywhere, through scientific and popular science publications, courses and training sessions organized by teacher training centres, and the mass media (which often reveal societal indifference towards people with disabilities). While inclusive education

[27] *Ibidem*, pp. 41–46.

[28] K. Parys, *Zjawisko pozoru w systemie kształcenia uczniów niepełnosprawnych*, "Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej" 2014, No. 4, p. 34.

[29] M. Groenwald, *Standardy moralne czy standardy wymagań? O moralnych aspektach pozoru w szkole* [in:] *Sprawcy i/lub ofiary działań pozornych w edukacji szkolnej*, eds. M. Dudzikowa, K. Knasiecka-Falbierska, Kraków 2013, p. 143.

remains only in the sphere of theoretical analyses, and therefore unsupported by personal experience, it is easier to support the arguments in its favour. When faced with the inability to effectively educate a student with an intellectual disability in a mainstream classroom, usually at higher educational stages, arguments "against" are no longer hard to find. Teachers find themselves in various interactive situations almost every day. They interact with their students daily or, to use Goffman's words,[30] adhere to their roles. Other participants in these encounters and interactions include fellow teachers and students' parents. Role adherence is regulated by "face." "The concept of *face* can be defined as the positive social value attributed to a person in a given encounter situation when others assume that this person adheres to a specific role."[31] Following Goffman's thought, it can be assumed that teachers save face if the role they perform creates a coherent image of themselves in a given situation and is confirmed by the participants of the meeting, i.e., in this case, the students during educational activities. A role is generally legitimate and institutionalized. A meeting participant with specific attributes can expect that others present will cooperate in playing their role, viewing it as both their moral duty and their right. Referring to selected analyses of social interactions by Goffman,[32] I would make a certain comparison. As the author writes, "a given person will have two points of view – a defensive attitude towards preserving one's own face and a protective attitude towards preserving the face of others. Some practices are primarily defensive, others primarily protective, although both attitudes can usually be expected simultaneously. In trying to protect the face of others, a person must choose a course that does not jeopardize their own, while in defending their own face, they must consider the possibility of depriving someone else of face."[33] Therefore, a teacher who, for various reasons, struggles with the education of a student with an intellectual disability, saves face by employing certain strategies, including rituals, to deprive the student of face (examples are provided later in the text). Sławomira Sadowska explains the distance of mainstream school teachers from inclusive education precisely by attempting to avoid guilt and humiliation stemming from fears of failing to meet the competence and effectiveness requirements of new tasks.[34]

From the perspective of the teaching process, it can be concluded that while pedagogical optimism allows us to believe that these struggles will trigger actions that will sooner or later create sensible and effective educational solutions, previous experiences are still closer to the tendency to lower or simulate educational requirements. During

[30] See E. Goffman, *Rytuał interakcyjny*, Warszawa 2012, p. 5.

[31] *Ibidem*.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

[33] *Ibidem*.

[34] S. Sadowska, *Kształcenie integracyjne dzieci z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną – krytyczny bilans pierwszych strukturalnych zmian w systemie edukacji*, "Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych. Educational Studies Review" 2016, No. 2(23), p. 128.

lessons, this tendency manifests itself in many ways, which should be interpreted as: minimizing teacher-student and teacher-student-students interactions, unjustified student involvement in other activities or tasks (e.g., math classes de facto turn into art classes), and limiting the teacher's role solely to caring for the student with a disability, thus assigning him or her a limited role in the classroom and in the school environment, including peer group. Regardless of whether this situation stems from the teacher's lack of competence in working with a student with a disability, or from an unfortunately guided educational path, the student remains trapped in a closed reality. He or she operates within a context with clearly defined boundaries that have nothing to do with pedagogical guidelines for safe, conducive learning environments. This raises the question of the category of the Other's developmental potential. Quite often, the perception of a "student with a statement of special educational needs," his or her cognitive and broader psychosocial functioning is dominated by a negative diagnosis, which is interpreted as an inevitable failure from the very start. A positive diagnosis, on the other hand, is a kind of educational mirage. As an aside, it's worth considering the extent to which we use our students' strengths in pursuing educational and pedagogical goals in Polish schools. The position of a student with a more severe intellectual disability in a mainstream classroom can be compared to a mirage.

The phenomenon of the emergence of a false image of a distant subject fits into the context of the apparent education of a student with a statement of educational needs, i.e., "difficult" or "problematic." The presence of the Other is reduced to a physical presence, not a mental, intellectual, or even emotional one: "you are among us, but you are not with us." Failure, overlooking, or even worse, downplaying the need to meet a student's educational needs, often irreversibly impedes his or her cognitive development. A teacher's disregard for the educational potential of any student, particularly those with more severe intellectual disabilities, leads directly to stigmatization. Such a student starts to be perceived through the prism of a problem, complicated, burdensome, or impossible to solve. The teacher's strategy is to avoid, even justify the avoidance of meaningful education for the adolescent. Rationalization of such action manifests itself in pointing out, for example, a sense of lack of competence to work with a student with a disability, too little time during a lesson or teaching unit, a different core curriculum [as K. Parys writes, one teacher in a class group and two different core curricula is a situation that in practice isolates a student with this disability from the possibility of real education[35]] and the difficulties associated with its implementation, large class sizes, and the varying abilities within the group of able-bodied students themselves. A student isolated from rational educational activities inevitably experiences confusion, loneliness, a sense of being inferior, and not fitting into the social group in which they normally participate. Furthermore, the teacher's limited, or even infantilized,

[35] K. Parys, *Zjawisko pozoru*…, p. 37.

approach towards a student with a more severe intellectual disability again impacts the specific perception of the student by their peers.

Dryżałowska formulated the key questions in the context of inclusive education, which also give meaning to undertaking further multifaceted actions (in the areas of scientific research, legislation, implementation, and practice) in the field of education and upbringing of students with disabilities: "First, whether inclusive education is a form of education for all students with disabilities, and second, whether the special education pathway maintained within the Polish integrative education system is truly inclusive, or rather exclusive – to a greater extent than was anticipated before the popularization of integrative forms of education?"[36] Zdzisława Janiszewska-Nieścioruk and Marzenna Zaorska drew attention to the totalization of solutions in the education of students with disabilities. Thus, integrated classes established in the 1990s became an alternative to monothematic segregated education, which was discredited and, in the opinion of parents, began to be perceived as isolating and stigmatizing their child. Integrative forms, despite their rightful aspirations, were reduced to rather homogenous solutions that – practically alongside special education – constituted the only educational offer for students with disabilities. In subsequent years, a totalization of the pro-inclusive approach was observed. Inclusive education stands in opposition not only to segregated education but also to integrated education, despite its clear weaknesses, especially in the context of people with intellectual disabilities, taking the form of sham activities.[37]

The perception of individuals with more severe intellectual disabilities in the role of a student, particularly regarding their future prospects, takes on a specific suspension phase. Its characteristic feature is a survival strategy, which is more often observed in mainstream schools, but this is not the rule. Teachers, especially at higher levels of education, unable to meet their educational obligations towards this student (for various reasons, not always within their control), initiate strategic actions. Using military terminology,[38] the teacher, assuming and anticipating a losing battle, tries to survive and suffer as few losses as possible. This also refers to Goffman's approach to saving face. Strategies vary. Focus can be placed solely on promising students, while those who are not promising are often left to their own devices, believing they are, after all, victims of the system. Another way of functioning on the battlefield is to aim for simple goals, setting demands that the student will certainly meet, but which essentially contribute nothing to their development. These will therefore be activities

[36] G. Dryżałowska, *Wyobcowani w integracji a edukacja włączająca*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2018, No. 29, p. 29.

[37] Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, M. Zaorska, *Prowłączające zmiany w systemie polskiej edukacji – nowe możliwości, ograniczenia i wyzwania*, "Interdyscyplinarne Konteksty Pedagogiki Specjalnej" 2014, No. 4, pp. 15–19.

[38] The rationale for and application of the tools constitute a military metaphor in the description of school culture Maria Dudzikowa in: *Wstępnie o metaforze (także militarnej)* [in:] *Twierdza. Szkoła w metaforze militarnej. Co w zamian?*, eds. M. Dudzikowa, S. Jaskulska, Warszawa 2016.

aimed solely at filling class time. A common practice is to exclude a "problematic" student from certain educational activities and provide them with activities of a different nature during this time, most often rehabilitative/revalidating or therapeutic (removing the weak individual from the battlefield). The rationale behind this is that since the student will benefit little or nothing from the lesson, it would be better for them to work with a specialist during this time. Sometimes, the student is "taken care of" by a teacher at an after-school club or a school counsellor. These strategies for "coping" with a student who undoubtedly requires significant involvement on the part of the teacher also show forms of excluding the student from educational activities, and therefore from the peer and school community.

Returning to the issue of perceiving the role of a student with a more severe intellectual disability, which I have called the suspension phase, I would like to offer yet another perspective that explains it. Basically, every student, both able-bodied and with various special educational needs, progressing through subsequent educational stages and standing on the threshold of the next one, is viewed through the prism of their competencies, which will allow them to move on and meet specific requirements. For this first group, the goals and the path to achieving them are very clear. What does this mean? Teachers, parents, and ultimately the non-disabled students themselves know, or at least can assume with a high degree of probability, what their educational path will be. They know at what age they will complete a given stage of education and which school (such as a general secondary school, technical school, or vocational school) they will attend next, based on their previous performance, including grades on the school certificate and external exam results. Contrary to appearances, the situation of a student with a more severe intellectual disability is not as clear-cut as it may seem. Firstly, the chronological age and the actual time of completing a given educational stage can vary significantly within this group. This is dictated by, as I mentioned, the postponement of compulsory schooling and the extension of educational stages. Secondly, the frequent phenomenon of changing schools is observed, most often from inclusive to special education, which also exemplifies uncertainty and errors in choosing educational options. The repeated adaptation process, characterized by constant uncertainty regarding its outcome, combined with the effort to make up for missed opportunities prolongs the state of suspension for both the student and his/her parents. Thirdly, educational goals and procedures for achieving them formulated for students with more severe intellectual disabilities are much more dynamic than for students without disabilities (this involves, for example, the need to extend the implementation time,[39] change the method, or implement additional methods).

[39] The results of Piotr Plichta's research [*Occupational burdens of special educators working with intellectually disabled students*, "Medycyna Pracy" 2014, No. 65(2), p. 245] on the subjective measurement of the professional burdens of special educators working with students with intellectual disabilities show that the feeling of waiting too long for the effects of one's own actions, understood as positive changes in the functioning of students with intellectual disabilities, is one of the stressors that ranks high in the ranking of burdens of the surveyed teachers.

Teachers working with students without disabilities can generally easily determine what educational content they will cover in a given semester, or at least in a given year. Even from a single-lesson perspective, the process for achieving the intended outcomes can be quite predictable. They quickly begin to understand the capabilities of individual students, predicting their semester-long, or even year-long achievements with a high degree of probability.

Reflections on the education of students with intellectual disabilities in mainstream classrooms are filled with concerns about its effectiveness and efficiency. These concerns grow with descriptions of school practices observed in typical classrooms, where teachers operate under the influence of directives contained in ministerial regulations. Maria Groenwald presents an outline of such practices, which fit students into an "educational uniform." Thus, teachers teach according to the curriculum and the corresponding textbook, most often exam-oriented, and according to the methodological guide. They do not address topics stemming from students' interests, nor do they implement their own teaching innovations because they lack the time. They attribute this to the overloaded curriculum they must complete.[40] This pessimistic view of educational illusion, which distorts its essence, inevitably forces questions about the real time available to students with intellectual disabilities.

Conclusion

The reflections presented in this article are rooted in long-standing considerations in pedagogical literature. They also stem from personal reflections and recurring events that are fragments of educational reality. Despite recent changes in the organization of education and support for students with special developmental and educational needs in Poland, aimed at optimizing the effectiveness of these processes, it seems that the discussion on these areas will continue. Each socio-cultural change inevitably shapes the discussion. The continuation of research on inclusive education for students with more severe intellectual disabilities and on the entities responsible for this process should aim to answer the questions: what future perspective are we envisioning for students with this disability, whether we are considering it at all, and to what extent is it consistent with the perspective they themselves create?

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Between safety and inclusion: Experiences of youth with adaptation difficulties in residential rehabilitation institutions

Między bezpieczeństwem a inkluzją. Doświadczenia młodzieży z trudnościami adaptacyjnymi w instytucjach resocjalizacyjnych

Abstract

The article examines the relationship between safety and inclusion in residential rehabilitation institutions, focusing on the experiences of youth with adaptation difficulties residing in an Okręgowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy and a Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy. The study is based on the assumption that institutional safety cannot be understood solely in formal terms but should be conceptualized as a subjective, relational experience shaped by everyday interactions and the social climate of the institution. The research adopted an empirical approach and employed author-developed instruments designed to assess youths' sense of safety within institutional settings. The findings reveal distinct patterns of safety and inclusion across the two types of institutions. In the OOW, a high level of structural safety was observed alongside the risk of subtle social marginalization. In contrast, in the MOW, safety was primarily psychological in nature and strongly influenced by emotional vulnerability and organizational stability. The comparative analysis demonstrates that safety is a necessary but insufficient condition for social inclusion, which requires stability, dialogue, and a reflective professional staff. The article concludes with practical implications for rehabilitation institutions.

Keywords: safety, inclusion, social rehabilitation, socially maladjusted youth, residential care institutions

Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje problem relacji między bezpieczeństwem a inkluzją w instytucjach resocjalizacyjnych, analizując doświadczenia młodzieży z trudnościami adaptacyjnymi przebywającej w Okręgowym Ośrodku Wychowawczym oraz Młodzieżowym Ośrodku Wychowawczym. Punktem wyjścia jest założenie, że bezpieczeństwo w warunkach instytucjonalnych nie ma wyłącznie charakteru formalnego, lecz jest doświadczeniem subiektywnym, silnie osadzonym w relacjach i klimacie społecznym. Badania miały charakter empiryczny i zostały przeprowadzone z wykorzystaniem autorskich narzędzi pomiaru poczucia bezpieczeństwa, dostosowanych do specyfiki badanych placówek. Wyniki wskazują na odmienne konfiguracje bezpieczeństwa i inkluzji w OOW i MOW. W OOW dominowało bezpieczeństwo strukturalne przy jednoczesnym ryzyku „cichej" marginalizacji części wychowanków. W MOW poczucie bezpieczeństwa miało głównie wymiar psychologiczny i było

silnie zależne od wrażliwości emocjonalnej oraz stabilności organizacyjnej. Analiza porównawcza potwierdza, że bezpieczeństwo stanowi warunek konieczny, lecz niewystarczający dla inkluzji społecznej, która wymaga stabilności, dialogu i refleksyjnej postawy kadry. Artykuł formułuje również wnioski praktyczne dla instytucji resocjalizacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, inkluzja, resocjalizacja, młodzież niedostosowana społecznie, instytucje wychowawcze

Introduction

Contemporary resocialization institutions operate within a space of conflicting systemic and social expectations. On the one hand, they are obliged to ensure safety, understood as maintaining order and preventing threats; on the other, they are expected to support development, subjectivity, and the social inclusion of young people with adaptive difficulties and experiences of exclusion. The tension between control and subjectivity constitutes one of the key dilemmas of contemporary resocialization pedagogy.[1]

A particularly sensitive group in this context comprises juveniles with adaptive difficulties and disabilities, whose functioning is shaped by prior experiences of violence, deprivation, and unstable relationships. Research indicates that young people residing in educational and resocialization centres demonstrate heightened vulnerability to stress related to the organization of institutional life, the relational climate, and the style of educational interventions.[2] In this sense, safety cannot be analyzed solely in terms of formal procedures but should be understood as a subjective experience embedded in relationships and everyday educational practices.[3]

The literature emphasizes that inclusion under institutional conditions is not a straightforward consequence of declared values, but rather a relational process requiring stability, trust, and genuine participation in group.[4] Inclusion understood in this way does not imply the removal of boundaries or the abandonment of control; instead, it involves creating conditions that enable experiences of acceptance,

[1] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna wobec (re)socjalizacji młodzieży w „rzeczywistości poszerzonej”*, "Resocjalizacja Polska" 2020, No. 19, pp. 9–33; P. Szczepaniak, *Inspiracje inkluzji społecznej dla resocjalizacji i penitencjarystyki*, "Profilaktyka Społeczna i Resocjalizacja" 2014, Vol. 24, pp. 143–169.

[2] M. Bernasiewicz, M. Noszczyk-Bernasiewicz, *Efektywność resocjalizacji nieletnich prowadzonej w środowisku zamkniętym w Polsce*, "Chowanna" 2019, No. 2(53), pp. 49–68; M. Dobijański, *Włącza(nie) społeczne dzieci i młodzieży w instytucjach opiekuńczo-wychowawczych i resocjalizacyjnych*, "Student Niepełnosprawny. Szkice i Rozprawy" 2016, No. 16(9), pp. 41–60.

[3] M. Bernasiewicz, M. Noszczyk-Bernasiewicz, *Efektywność resocjalizacji*… Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Equity and inclusion in education: Finding strength through diversity*, Paris 2023.

[4] Cf. M. Mółka, *Między inkluzją a ekskluzją w resocjalizacji. Perspektywa biograficzna*, Kraków 2018; P. Szczepaniak, *Inspiracje inkluzji społecznej*…

predictability, and agency while maintaining a framework of safety.[5] The absence of this dimension fosters phenomena of apparent adaptation and "silent" marginalization of residents, despite their formal presence within the institutional structure.[6]

At the systemic level, this issue is embedded in broader discussions on child-friendly justice and equal access to safe and supportive educational environments. International analyses indicate that a lack of organizational coherence, staff overload, and intra-institutional tensions significantly reduce both young people's sense of safety and the actual level of inclusiveness within.[7]

In this context, it becomes pertinent to ask whether – and under what conditions – a resocialization institution can be both safe and inclusive. This article addresses this question by treating safety and inclusion not as opposing demands, but as interrelated dimensions of the quality of functioning of resocialization institutions.

Theoretical framework of the analysis: safety and inclusion in resocialization institutions

Safety from institutional and psychological perspectives

Safety in resocialization institutions is most often conceptualized primarily in formal terms, referring to regulations, procedures, and control systems designed to prevent violence and risky behaviors. Although formal safety constitutes a necessary condition for the functioning of residential facilities, it does not determine residents' subjective sense of safety. A high level of institutional control may foster stabilization, but it may also be associated with increased anxiety, tension, and emotional withdrawal, depending on the quality of relationships and the social climate of the institution.[8]

From a psychological perspective, safety has a relational and emotional character, embedded in everyday interactions with peers and educational staff. It encompasses a sense of predictability, clarity of rules, and the availability of adults who respond in a consistent and appropriate manner. Of key importance are trust in educators and the conviction that the institution fulfils a protective function rather than a purely controlling one.[9]

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[5] A. Łuczyński, M. Socha, *Edukacja włączająca w procesie resocjalizacji podopiecznych młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych*, "Resocjalizacja Polska" 2022, No. 2, 405–425.

[6] M. Bernasiewicz, M. Noszczyk-Bernasiewicz, *Efektywność resocjalizacji*…

[7] Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Equity and inclusion*… Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Child-Friendly Justice Framework: Building a people-centred justice system*, Paris 2023; L. Pilnik, *Improving health and safety as youth and young adults leave the justice system: State implementation of policies to strengthen continuity of care at reentry*, Health & Reentry Project 2025.

[8] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna*… Cf. L. Pilnik, *Improving health*…

[9] M. Bernasiewicz, M. Noszczyk-Bernasiewicz, *Efektywność resocjalizacji*… Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Equity and inclusion*…

Experienced (perceived) safety plays a significant regulatory role in emotions and behaviour. Its deficit among young people with histories of violence and environmental instability fosters impulsivity or withdrawal, whereas a stable and predictable institutional environment enables a reduction of tension and the development of self-regulation competencies. In this sense, safety constitutes a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for effective resocialization interventions.[10]

Inclusion as a relational process

Inclusion in resocialization institutions is often reduced to formal access to education, therapy, or group activities, which does not reflect its complex nature under conditions of institutional compulsion. The literature emphasizes that inclusion does not mean abolishing boundaries or abandoning control, but rather creating conditions conducive to treating residents as subjects while maintaining a clear structure and rules.[11]

Understanding inclusion as a relational process highlights the importance of everyday interactions and real opportunities for participation in group life. It includes access to relationships based on acceptance, the possibility of attributing meaning to one's own experiences, and a sense of agency within institutional roles.[12] The absence of these elements leads to situations of formal belonging without genuine inclusion, resulting in the marginalization of residents within the group.

A crucial condition for inclusion is maintaining a balance between demands and support. Excessive control based solely on a system of sanctions fosters exclusion, whereas excessive relaxation of norms leads to chaos and a diminished sense of safety. Inclusion becomes possible when the institutional structure supports relationships rather than replacing them with formalism.[13]

The tension between control and subjectivity

Resocialization institutions simultaneously perform protective and developmental functions, which generates a persistent tension between control and the subjectivity of residents.[14] An institution may be a source of stabilization and safety, but also a space in which mechanisms of exclusion are reproduced.

A particular manifestation of this tension is the phenomenon of "silent marginalization," which involves residents functioning on the periphery of group life without

[10] Cf. L. Pilnik, *Improving health…*

[11] P. Szczepaniak, *Inspiracje inkluzji społecznej…*; A. Łuczyński, M. Socha, *Edukacja włączająca…*

[12] Cf. M. Mółka, *Między inkluzją…*

[13] A. Łuczyński, M. Socha, *Edukacja włączająca…*

[14] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna…*

open conflict, yet also without genuine inclusion. This form of marginalization often remains invisible in formal assessments of functioning, despite its significant impact on the sense of safety and the effectiveness of educational interventions.[15]

Analyzing the tension between control and subjectivity allows safety and inclusion to be understood as two poles of the same institutional dynamic. Excessive movement toward control leads to formal safety devoid of a relational dimension, whereas neglecting the need for structure weakens both safety and inclusiveness within the institution. From the perspective of resocialization pedagogy, a key task becomes the search for solutions that enable the simultaneous strengthening of young people's sense of safety and their genuine inclusion in the social life of the institution.[16]

Research objectives and research questions

The aim of the present study was to gain an in-depth understanding of how young people with adaptive difficulties experience safety under institutional conditions, as well as to analyze the relationship between the sense of safety and social inclusion in resocialization facilities. The point of departure was the assumption that safety within an institution is not solely formal in nature, but is subjectively experienced and shaped by relationships, the social climate, and the organization of the institution's everyday functioning. At the same time, it was assumed that inclusion is not a simple consequence of being present within an institutional structure, but rather a process requiring the genuine involvement of residents in group life and dialogue with adults.[17]

The main objective of the study therefore comprised:

a) understanding how young people with adaptive difficulties and/or disabilities experience safety in institutional settings;
b) analyzing whether, and to what extent, the sense of safety co-occurs with the experience of social inclusion in resocialization facilities.

The implementation of the main objective was specified through the formulation of the following specific objectives:

a) identifying factors that foster residents' sense of safety and social inclusion;
b) identifying barriers that hinder the social inclusion of young people under institutional conditions;

[15] M. Bernasiewicz, M. Noszczyk-Bernasiewicz, *Efektywność resocjalizacji*… Cf. M. Mółka, *Między inkluzją*…

[16] P. Szczepaniak, *Inspiracje inkluzji społecznej*… Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Child-Friendly*…

[17] Cf. M. Mółka, *Między inkluzją*…; P. Szczepaniak, *Inspiracje inkluzji społecznej*…; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Equity and inclusion*…

c) comparing the experiences of residents of the District Educational Centre (a residential resocialization institution for court-referred juveniles) and Youth Educational Centre (a court-mandated residential resocialization institution for adolescents) with regard to safety and inclusion.

Based on these objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do residents of resocialization facilities perceive and experience safety under institutional conditions?
2. Which elements of institutional functioning facilitate, and which hinder, the experience of social inclusion among young people with adaptive difficulties?
3. Whether and in what way is the sense of safety related to residents' experience of social inclusion?
4. What similarities and differences occur between the experiences of residents of OOW and MOW in the analyzed areas?

The objectives and research questions formulated in this way defined the methodological framework of the study and constituted the basis for further analysis of the results, taking into account both the specificity of individual types of facilities and the broader institutional context of the functioning of socially maladjusted youth.

Research methodology

The study was empirical and conducted in two types of resocialization institutions operating within the system of care for socially maladjusted youth. Its aim was to examine the subjective sense of safety and the conditions facilitating or hindering social inclusion in everyday institutional functioning. Although different research instruments were applied in each facility, the core research assumptions and analytical framework were consistent, allowing for a comparative interpretation of the findings.

Characteristics of the studied institutions

The research was carried out in a District Educational Centre for boys and a Youth Educational Centre for girls, both functioning as residential resocialization institutions providing educational and therapeutic support to juveniles placed there by court decisions. Despite similar formal objectives, the institutions differ in organizational and psychosocial contexts. The District Educational Centre is characterized by a clearly structured organization, group stability, and predictable rules, whereas the Youth Educational Centre is marked by greater relational dynamics and higher emotional sensitivity among residents. These contextual differences influenced everyday functioning and justified the use of differentiated research approaches, while maintaining a common focus on relational and subjective dimensions of safety.

Research sample

The research sample consisted of residents present in the institutions at the time of data collection. In the District Educational Centre, participants were boys experiencing behavioural disorders, difficulties in emotional regulation, and problems with internalizing social norms. In the Youth Educational Centre, the sample included girls with adaptive difficulties, experiences of violence, a reduced sense of emotional safety, and interpersonal problems.

Although the sample was homogeneous in terms of gender within each institution, it was heterogeneous with regard to individual experiences and types of difficulties, which enabled the analysis of safety and inclusion within typical institutional conditions.

Research Instruments and Measurement Areas

Different diagnostic instruments were used, adapted to the organizational context and functioning of residents in each institution. In the District Educational Centre, measurements focused on group climate, peer and staff relationships, and the overall institutional atmosphere. In the Youth Educational Centre, tools addressed psychological aspects of safety, including emotional tension, experiences of violence, and individual adaptive resources. All instruments were author-developed and designed to capture safety as a multidimensional phenomenon embedded in institutional structures, relationships, and subjective experiences. This approach reflected the assumption that standardized questionnaires inadequately capture the specific conditions of resocialization facilities, where safety is closely linked to everyday interactions, organizational practices, and relational contexts. [18] The exploratory use of the PBwOW instrument enabled the collection of data adequate to the research context and research questions, focusing on qualitative dimensions of safety and inclusion rather than standardized psychometric diagnosis.

Research results – District Educational Centre (DEC)

Group climate and relationships

The analysis of results obtained in the District Educational Centre indicates a relatively high level of positively evaluated social relationships and a sense of safety in both formal and relational dimensions. The majority of surveyed residents declared acceptance by the peer group and the availability of educators whom they could trust. At the same time, the data reveal the existence of a group of residents functioning on the periphery of the institution's social life.

[18] D. Macomber, *Education in juvenile detention facilities*, "Journal of Correctional Education" 2010, No. 61(3), pp. 223–261.

Table 1. Assessment of group climate and relationships in the DEC (self-eported results)

Area of analysis	Indicator	Percentage of positive responses
Group climate	Perception of the group as cohesive	75
Peer relationships	Sense of acceptance within the group	72
Relationships with staff	Sense of acceptance by educators	89
Trust	Having an educator one can trust	86

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The results indicate that the DEC creates a relational environment conducive to a sense of stability and protection. At the same time, not all peer relationships are inclusive in nature, which suggests the presence of mechanisms of selective acceptance and differentiated levels of integration among residents within the group.

Safety and adaptation

In the next stage of the analysis, attention was focused on the relationship between the declared sense of safety and residents' engagement in group and institutional life. The results show that a high level of formal safety does not always translate into active participation in group activities or a sense of belonging.

Table 2. Sense of safety and adaptation of DEC residents

Area of analysis	Indicator	Percentage of positive responses
Safety within the group	Sense of safety in the residential group	89
Institutional safety	Sense of safety throughout the institution	83
Engagement	Lack of engagement in group life	40

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The interpretation of the results points to a significant discrepancy between safety understood as the absence of direct threat and emotional and relational safety. A considerable proportion of residents, despite declaring a sense of safety, remain passive in relation to group life and do not engage actively in social relationships. This phenomenon can be interpreted as functioning under conditions of formal safety without full emotional inclusion.

The findings suggest that institutional safety in the DEC fulfils its protective function, but does not always lead to the genuine inclusion of residents in the social life of the facility. Some young people function "alongside" the group, maintaining emotional distance and limiting their participation to the minimum required by regulations. In this sense, safety appears as a necessary condition for adaptation, but an insufficient one for building an inclusive educational environment.

Research results – Youth Educational Centre (YEC)

Psychological sense of safety

The analysis of results obtained in the Youth Educational Centre indicates that the residents' sense of safety is largely psychological in nature and is strongly linked to individual cognitive resources and relational experiences. In particular, significant associations emerged between cognitive flexibility, the level of dogmatism, and the subjective sense of safety.[19]

Table 3. Psychological determinants of the sense of safety among YEC residents

Area of analysis	Indicator	Direction of the relationship
Cognitive resources	Cognitive flexibility	Higher flexibility → higher sense of safety
Cognitive styles	Dogmatism	Higher dogmatism → greater tension and anxiety
Relational experiences	Experience of violence (primarily psychological)	Reduced sense of safety

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The results indicate that cognitive flexibility functions as a protective factor, enabling residents to cope more effectively with institutional demands, reinterpret difficult experiences, and seek alternative ways of adaptation. In contrast, a high level of dogmatism was associated with greater rigidity of responses, increased emotional tension, and difficulties in utilizing the support offered by the institution.

An important element of the psychological picture of safety was also the experience of violence. Some residents reported previous or current experiences of violence, primarily of a psychological nature, which significantly reduced their sense of protection and fostered the consolidation of distrustful attitudes toward their surroundings. At the same time, the majority of respondents indicated the presence of at least one staff member to whom they could turn in a difficult situation, which constituted an important protective resource.

Barriers to inclusion

The second area of analysis concerned organizational and relational factors identified by the residents as barriers hindering both the sense of safety and genuine social inclusion under institutional conditions.

[19] K. Radzki, *Otwartość i elastyczność myślenia oraz poziom dystansu społecznego wśród młodzieży niedostosowanej społecznie z subkultury przestępczej*, "Humanitapp. Pedagogika i Psychologia" 2025, No. 2(32), pp. 85–104.

Table 4. Barriers to inclusion and safety in the YEC – residents' perspective

Organizational area	Identified barrier	Subjective effects
Daily organization	Overloaded daily schedule	Fatigue, tension, lack of space for recovery
Living conditions	Lack of privacy	Sense of constant control and reduced psychological comfort
Stability	Frequent changes of groups and dormitories	Disorganization, difficulties in building relationships
Institutional climate	Conflicts among staff	Decreased trust, sense of inconsistency of rules

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The results indicate that barriers to inclusion in the YEC are largely organizational and structural in nature. An overloaded daily schedule and the lack of private space were experienced by residents as factors generating chronic tension and limiting opportunities for emotional regulation. Organizational instability, manifested, among other things, in frequent changes of residential groups and accommodation, hindered the development of lasting relationships and strengthened a sense of temporariness and lack of rootedness.

Conflicts among staff emerged as a particularly significant factor lowering the sense of safety, as they were noticed by residents and interpreted as signals of inconsistency and ambiguity of the norms operating within the institution. As a result, despite its declared protective function, the institution was at times perceived as an environment that was not fully predictable, which hindered the process of inclusion and reinforced attitudes of withdrawal or heightened vigilance.

Comparative Analysis of the District Educational Centre (DEC) and the Youth Educational Centre (YEC)

The comparative analysis of results obtained in the District Educational Center and the Youth Educational Center reveals different configurations of safety and inclusion, resulting both from the organizational specificity of the institutions and from the psychosocial conditions shaping residents' functioning. Although the formal objectives of resocialization interventions in both institutions are similar, the ways in which safety is experienced and the mechanisms of social inclusion take distinctly different forms.

In the District Educational Centre, everyday functioning was highly structured, which supported order and a sense of safety. Clear rules and group stability facilitated adaptation; however, they also risked marginalizing some residents who remained emotionally withdrawn and engaged only minimally. In this context, exclusion took the form of passivity and relational distance rather than open conflict.

Table 5. Comparison of experiences of safety and inclusion in the DEC and YEC

Dimension of analysis	DEC (boys)	YEC (girls)
Organizational structure	High stability, clear rules, predictability	Greater variability, frequent reorganizations
Sense of safety	High in formal and relational dimensions	Differentiated, strongly dependent on emotional state
Dominant risk factor	"Silent" marginalization, withdrawal from group life	Emotional tension, experiences of violence
Adaptation mechanism	Adjustment to rules without full engagement	Heightened vigilance, need for relational support
Character of inclusion	Selective, not always encompassing all residents	Fragile, vulnerable to organizational overload

Source: Author's own elaboration.

In contrast, the Youth Educational Centre was characterized by higher emotional sensitivity and tension. Here, safety was primarily psychological and depended on relationship quality, staff stability, and opportunities for emotional regulation. Inclusion proved fragile, as organizational overload, lack of privacy, or staff conflicts quickly undermined residents' sense of protection and trust.

A comparison of both institutions shows different barriers to inclusion: in the DEC, excessive structuring favoured formal adaptation over emotional engagement, while in the YEC insufficient organizational stability hindered the sustainability of inclusive practices. In both settings, safety emerged as a necessary but insufficient condition for genuine social inclusion.

Comparative analysis, discussion, and practical implications

The comparative analysis of the District Educational Centre (DEC) and the Youth Educational Centre (YEC) reveals distinct configurations of safety and inclusion shaped by organizational and psychosocial conditions. In the DEC, a highly structured environment fosters formal adaptation and a relative sense of safety, but may also lead to the silent marginalization of some residents who remain minimally engaged despite the absence of overt conflict.

In contrast, in the YEC safety is primarily psychological and strongly dependent on emotional sensitivity, relationship quality, and organizational stability. Elevated tension, experiences of violence, and structural instability make inclusion fragile and easily disrupted, with even minor inconsistencies in educational interventions reducing residents' sense of security.

Overall, the findings indicate that different pathways to (non-)inclusion operate in each setting: in the DEC, excessive structuring limits relational engagement, while

in the YEC insufficient organizational stability undermines inclusive processes. Safety thus emerges as a necessary but insufficient condition for sustainable social inclusion in resocialization institutions.

The discussion of the results leads to the conclusion that inclusion under institutional conditions should be understood as a process requiring organizational stability, dialogue, and a reflective stance on the part of staff. Of key importance are the quality of educator–resident relationships, the coherence of rules, and the predictability of the institution's everyday functioning. An important systemic factor is also the psychological condition of staff – organizational burnout reduces the capacity of personnel to respond in a supportive and consistent manner, which directly affects young people's sense of safety.[20]

Based on the obtained results, the following practical conclusions can be formulated as relevant for the functioning of resocialization institutions: the need for systematic strengthening of educator–resident relationships; the provision of psychological support for staff; and the promotion of cognitive flexibility as an adaptive resource among residents. Equally important are limiting group rotation and organizational chaos, maintaining a balance between systems of sanctions and rewards, and creating safe – though institutionally bounded – private spaces that allow for emotional recovery. These measures foster the simultaneous strengthening of safety and inclusion, treated as two interrelated dimensions of the quality of resocialization interventions.

Conclusion

The conducted analyses confirm that safety and inclusion in resocialization institutions do not constitute separate or competing categories but rather remain in a close and dynamic relationship. Safety deprived of an inclusive dimension is reduced to control and formal order, which may ensure organizational stability but does not lead to genuine developmental change. Conversely, inclusion detached from a sense of safety remains an illusion – unable to be sustained under institutional conditions and insufficient as a foundation for educational interventions.

The research findings indicate that effective resocialization requires the simultaneous consideration of structure, relationships, and the subjectivity of residents. The humanistic core of resocialization interventions is expressed in treating safety as a condition that enables development, rather than merely as a mechanism of control.[21] Within this perspective, inclusion becomes a process realized through relationships, dialogue, and predictability, rather than through formal declarations or purely organizational solutions.

[20] Cf. L. Pilnik, *Improving health*… Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Equity and inclusion*…; *idem*, *OECD Child-Friendly*…

[21] M. Konopczyński, *Pedagogika resocjalizacyjna*…

The article emphasizes that the human being – their experiences, needs, and resources – should remain at the centre of the resocialization system, rather than the institution itself or its procedures. Only such an approach makes it possible to create educational environments in which safety and inclusion mutually reinforce one another, fostering durable and meaningful changes in the functioning of socially maladjusted youth.

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Self-image of young adults with moderate intellectual disability from a qualitative research perspective

Obraz siebie młodych dorosłych z umiarkowaną niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w perspektywie badań jakościowych

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse self-perception among young adults with moderate intellectual disability. The theoretical framework is based on literature concerning autonomy, identity, self-esteem and self-concept, with particular emphasis on young adulthood. The study was conducted within a qualitative paradigm using a case study method, including individual interviews, observation and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The sample consisted of seven participants aged 18–24. The findings indicate predominantly low self-esteem and a differentiated self-image shaped by social experiences, family relationships, independence and opportunities for self-determination. The results highlight the importance of environmental support for positive self-concept and psychosocial functioning.

Keywords: self-image, self-esteem, intellectual disability, young adulthood, case study

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza postrzegania siebie przez młodych dorosłych z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu umiarkowanym. Dokonano przeglądu literatury dotyczącej autonomii, tożsamości, samooceny oraz obrazu siebie osób z niepełnosprawnością. Badania osadzono w paradygmacie jakościowym pedagogiki społecznej i specjalnej. Zastosowano metodę studium przypadku oraz techniki – wywiad, obserwację i Skalę Samooceny Rosenberga. Grupę badawczą stanowiło siedem osób w wieku od 18 do 24 lat z umiarkowaną niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Wyniki badań wskazują na dominację obniżonej samooceny oraz zróżnicowany obraz siebie badanych, kształtowany przez

doświadczenia społeczne, stopień samodzielności, relacje rodzinne i możliwość podejmowania decyzji. Podkreślono znaczenie wsparcia środowiskowego w budowaniu pozytywnego obrazu siebie i jakości życia psychospołecznego badanych.

Słowa kluczowe: obraz siebie, samoocena, niepełnosprawność intelektualna, młoda dorosłość, studium przypadku

Introduction

An analysis of the existing body of research indicates a clear shortage of studies devoted to the self-perception of individuals with moderate intellectual disabilities, particularly during the period of young adulthood. This situation results both from the limited accessibility of this research group and from significant methodological difficulties associated with the need to construct research tools appropriate to the cognitive capacities of the participants. At the same time, the literature emphasizes the importance of conducting in-depth analyses in this area, as self-perception, self-esteem, and the development of autonomy are of fundamental importance for the psychosocial functioning of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Self-image constitutes an important regulator of individual behaviour, influencing decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and readiness to undertake developmental challenges. In the case of individuals with intellectual disabilities, this process is additionally shaped by environmental factors, including social attitudes, educational experiences, family relationships, and the level of support provided. In this context, the period of young adulthood is of particular significance, as it is a time of intensive developmental changes and the formation of identity, autonomy, and a sense of agency.

Despite the growing interest in the issue of adulthood among individuals with intellectual disabilities, the subjective self-perception of young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities remains an insufficiently explored area. For this reason, the present study was undertaken with the aim of analyzing how young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities perceive themselves and identifying the factors that shape their self-image. The article presents the theoretical foundations of the research, its methodological assumptions, and the results of qualitative empirical studies, situating itself within the field of special and social pedagogy focused on strengthening the subjectivity and autonomy of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Young adulthood of individuals with intellectual disabilities

Intellectual disability does not determine the course of the maturation process itself, nor does it alter its fundamental developmental direction. The differences between individuals with intellectual disabilities and their typically developing peers

primarily concern the ways in which they cope with developmental changes and challenges characteristic of this stage of life. For this reason, particular importance is attached to supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities during adolescence, in order to enable their adequate preparation for the transition into adulthood.

Despite gradual changes in social attitudes, there is still a tendency to infantilize individuals with intellectual disabilities, which results in the failure to recognize their status as persons entering adulthood. Meanwhile, young adults with intellectual disabilities possess diverse resources that enable them to cope with everyday challenges. Danuta Wolska identifies key competencies that determine the functioning of this group, including: interpersonal and communication skills, the ability to make decisions and assume responsibility, the development of self-awareness and self-care, the formation of one's own value system and self-direction, stress management, and engagement in paid employment.[1]

One of the key life competencies is the ability to make decisions about oneself, which constitutes the foundation of individual independence. With regard to individuals with intellectual disabilities, Ewa Pisula emphasizes the importance of strengthening this competence through intentional support of decision-making processes and a sense of agency, thereby fostering the development of:

a) awareness of one's own preferences, needs, abilities, and limitations;
b) the ability to make choices and to analyze available options and their consequences;
c) the skills necessary to initiate actions, set goals, and work toward their achievement;
d) the ability to regulate one's own behaviour and take responsibility for decisions made;
e) the pursuit of independence while understanding social relationships and dependencies;
f) the capacity to represent one's own interests, self-belief, perseverance, and flexibility in action.[2]

Parental overprotection may significantly limit the development of skills necessary for independent functioning in adult life, which consequently leads to an underutilization of the child's developmental potential. Beata Cytowska distinguishes four basic manifestations of overprotectiveness toward children with disabilities: infantilization, excessive assistance, excessive concern for the child, and an excessive focus on needs resulting from the disability.[3] These attitudes may contribute

[1] D. Wolska, *Rozwijanie umiejętności życiowych wpływających na aktywizację zawodową osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną* [in:] *Psychoedukacja w procesie wspomagania rehabilitacji osób z niepełnosprawnością*, eds. P. Majewicz, M. Kościółek, E. Dyduch, Kraków 2017, pp. 223–226.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 160.

[3] B. Cytowska, *Trudne drogi adaptacji. Wątki emancypacyjne w analizie sytuacji dorosłych osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim*, Kraków 2012, pp. 328–329.

to the development of learned helplessness in individuals with disabilities, encompassing three components:

a) the expectation of failure in any situation that remains beyond the individual's control,
b) a lack of spontaneous reactions to unexpected stimuli;
an inability to reattempt tasks in which failure has occurred.[4]

Learned helplessness constitutes a significant barrier to achieving independence and self-sufficiency. Therefore, it is crucial to develop the ability to make even minor decisions and to take responsibility for their consequences.

Limiting opportunities for the full experience of adulthood may lead to social withdrawal and increase the risk of feelings of failure and emotional distress.[5] Shara Ally and her colleagues emphasize the need for early support of young people in the transition to adulthood. They recommend the involvement of families, caregivers, and professionals in creating an integrated support model that takes into account both the challenges and the normative patterns of the developmental life cycle. This support should include emotional, behavioral, and social assistance, as well as the development of stress resilience and coping skills. Furthermore, they suggest developing, together with families, a life plan for adulthood that includes strategies to support individuals in both social and vocational domains.[6] The systematic development of life skills is of key importance and significantly affects the quality of life of adults with intellectual disabilities.[7]

Determinants of the development of autonomy, identity, and self-perception in individuals with intellectual disabilities

Autonomy is understood as an individual's capacity to responsibly direct their own behavior, to shape social relationships based on reciprocity, and to make decisions that take into account both personal and others' needs.[8] According to a pedagogical dictionary, the term *autonomy* derives from Greek (*autos* + *nomos*) and denotes "independence, self-reliance, and the capacity for self-determination."[9]

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[4] W. Pilecka, *Psychoruchowy rozwój dzieci o obniżonej sprawności umysłowej* [in:] *Stymulacja psychoruchowego rozwoju dzieci o obniżonej sprawności umysłowej*, eds. W. Pilecka, J. Pilecki, Kraków 2008, p. 22.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[6] S. Ally, K. Boyd, K. Abells, K. Amari, Y. Hamdani, A. LoH, U. Niel, S. Sacks, S. Shea, W. Sullivan, *Improvingtransition to adulthood for adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities*, „Canadian Family Physician" 2018, No. 64, after: M. Kościółek, D. Wolska, *Przygotowanie do samodzielności osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w biegu ich życi*a, Kraków 2022, p. 157.

[7] *Ibidem*.

[8] W. Pilecka, J. Pilecki, *Warunki i wyznaczniki rozwoju autonomii dziecka upośledzonego umysłowo* [in:] *Społeczeństwo wobec autonomii osób niepełnosprawnych*, ed. W. Dykcik, Poznań 1996, p. 31.

[9] C. Kupisiewicz, M. Kupisiewicz, *Słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 2009, p. 15.

From the perspective of the social sciences, autonomy constitutes both a holistic characteristic of the human being and a feature of specific areas of human functioning or development. An autonomous individual is characterized, among others, by:

a) possessing a personal system of values, principles, goals, and a personal life concept;
b) independently striving toward defined goals;
c) making decisions about one's own life (self-determination);
d) making decisions that are beneficial for oneself;
e) controlling one's emotions, thoughts, and actions;
f) independent thinking, feeling, and acting, free from excessive influence of others;
g) functioning independently in everyday life, with a limited need for assistance from others.[10]

Thus understood, autonomy constitutes both a developmental achievement and the result of educational and social influences.

Thus understood, autonomy constitutes both a developmental achievement and the result of educational and social influences.

Autonomy is a multidimensional concept encompassing six types: behavioural, emotional, identity-related, economic, instrumental, and cognitive–self-evaluative.[11] Engaging in autonomous actions and behaviours reflects an individual's subjectivity – namely, their „autonomous agency oriented toward subjectively meaningful goals and readiness to take responsibility for choices and actions."[12] Therefore, the development and recognition of autonomy in individuals with disabilities play a crucial role in shaping their personality and self-image, as it is intrinsically linked to their subjectivity.[13]

Władysława Pilecka and Jan Pilecki emphasize the ecological and biological conditions of autonomy development in individuals with intellectual disabilities.[14] However, the factors that directly determine the development of autonomy include personal resources, social skills, the ability to cope with difficult situations, and the use of available support.[15] Interactions with the environment also play a significant

[10] M. Penczek, *Autonomia osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną z perspektywy etyki troski* [in:] *Specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne. Wspomaganie rozwoju – wielość obszarów, wspólnota celów*, eds. B. Grzyb, G. Kowalska, Gliwice 2016, pp. 56–57.

[11] B. Łapiński, *Rola rodziny w osiąganiu autonomii przez dziecko w okresie dorastania*, "Psychologia Wychowawcza" 1988, No. 31(5), pp. 499–507; L. Myszka-Strychalska, *Autonomia jako zadanie (auto)edukacyjne młodzieży*, "Roczniki Pedagogiczne" 2020, No. 12(48), pp. 107–120.

[12] M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Podmiotowość jako kategoria pedagogiczna u edukacyjna* [in:] *Podmiotowość w wychowaniu. Między ideą a realnością*, ed. E. Kubiak-Szymborska, Bydgoszcz 1999, p. 77.

[13] *Ibidem*.

[14] W. Pilecka, J. Pilecki, *Warunki i wyznaczniki rozwoju autonomii dziecka upośledzonego umysłowo*, [in:] *Społeczeństwo wobec autonomii osób niepełnosprawnych*, ed. W. Dykcik, Poznań 1996, p. 32.

[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 36–37.

role. Personality-related determinants include cognitive factors such as self-acceptance, self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Instrumental determinants refer to practical skills and social competencies (e.g., social insight, communication, empathy). Social factors are associated with active participation in social life and everyday responsibilities, support from family and peers, and educational practices involving the transmission of values, acceptance, and encouragement of initiative while respecting individual needs.[16]

Identity, as a key component of individual autonomy, is multidimensional and can be analyzed in two dimensions: the content dimension, referring to identity itself, and the phenomenological dimension, encompassing the subjective sense of identity.[17] The sense of identity results from self-perception and the accumulation and processing of information about oneself, whereas identity refers to relatively stable traits attributed to the individual that enable personal and social identification.[18] Identity begins to develop in childhood; therefore, all experiences from this period contribute to its formation. Elżbieta Minczakiewicz emphasizes that without fostering responsibility for oneself, others, and the surrounding environment in children, identity cannot fully develop.[19] Support for individuals with intellectual disabilities includes creating a stable environment, building subject-subject relationships, ensuring emotional security, and helping to establish personal boundaries and self-awareness.[20]

Self-awareness develops on two levels: the individual level, involving subjective knowledge about oneself, and the external level, resulting from objective social feedback. Individuals with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to stigmatization and stereotyping, which significantly affects their self-perception.

Piotr Majewicz defines self-image as a multifunctional construct that regulates various behaviors toward oneself, others, and tasks.[21] Self-image consists of many components. Janusz Reykowski distinguishes between the sense of the self-beliefs concerning one's appearance, skills, abilities, and capacities; and the conscious self, which involves deliberate opinions about oneself derived from social expectations and one's position among others.[22] Janusz Kirenko conceptualizes self-perception

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 37.

[17] E. Goffman, *Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego*, Warszawa 1981, after: Ż. Stelter, *Dorastanie osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Warszawa 2009, p. 75.

[18] *Ibidem*.

[19] E. Minczakiewicz, *Dorastanie osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w obszarze zainteresowania nauk o zdrowiu i wychowaniu* [in:] *Wątki zaniedbane, zaniechane, nieobecne w procesie edukacji i wsparcia społecznego osób niepełnosprawnych*, eds. Z. Gajdzica, A. Klinik, Katowice 2004, p. 75.

[20] M. Kościelska, *Wniosek wdrożeniowy. Upowszechnienie metody pomocy psychoterapeutycznej dla dzieci z ryzykiem upośledzenia i ich rodzin*, "Nowiny Psychologiczne" 1991, No. 1–2, pp. 45–53, after: Ż. Stelter, *Dorastanie osób*…, pp. 83–84.

[21] P. Majewicz, *Obraz samego siebie a zachowanie młodzieży niepełnosprawnej ruchowo*, Kraków 2002, p. 56.

[22] J. Reykowski, *Obraz własnej osoby jako mechanizm regulujący postępowanie*, " Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny" 1970, No. 3, p. 47, after: P. Majewicz, *Obraz samego siebie*…, p. 33.

as awareness of oneself expressed in beliefs about the self, emphasizing its multidimensional character, including imaginative, sensory, and abstract dimensions.[23]

Self-perception is closely linked to self-esteem, understood as self-evaluation. These concepts influence an individual's attitude toward themselves, others, and reality.[24] According to Paweł Borowiecki, self-esteem constitutes a form of self-concept, primarily related to internal factors that individuals refer to when pursuing their goals.[25] Self-esteem consists of two interdependent components: belief in one's own effectiveness and self-respect, manifested in the conviction that one deserves happiness.[26]

Individuals with intellectual disabilities often exhibit reduced self-criticism, which may result in inflated and unrealistic self-esteem.[27] They also more frequently experience stressful situations that evoke difficult emotions. Persistent beliefs about their limited independence contribute to excessive control and over-assistance, which may lead to learned helplessness and hinder the development of their potential.[28] Counteracting this phenomenon requires supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities in sociocultural activities while respecting their autonomy, identity, and dignity, as well as creating conditions for developing self-care skills and self-awareness, which are essential for their independence.[29]

Outline of the methodology of the author's own research

The research was situated within the paradigms of social and special pedagogy, adopting a qualitative approach to exploring educational and social reality.[30] Such

[23] J. Kirenko, *Indywidualna i społeczna percepcja niepełnosprawności*, Lublin 2007, after: D. Kołodziej, *Spostrzeganie siebie i przystosowanie społeczne osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu lekkim*, "Szkoła Specjalna" 2018, No. 1, p. 47.

[24] P. Borowiecki, *Samoocena osób z niepełnosprawnością w świetle wybranej literatury i badań własnych*, "Niepełnosprawność – zagadnienia, problemy, rozwiązania" 2015, No. II/(15), p. 91.

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 112.

[26] N. Branden, *6 filarów poczucia własnej wartości*, Łódź 2022, p. 41.

[27] K. Pająk, *Poczucie własnej wartości uczniów z lekką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną* [in:] *Psychoedukacja w procesie wspomagania rehabilitacji osób z niepełnosprawnością*, eds. P. Majewicz, M. Kościółek, E. Dyduch, Kraków 2017, p. 91.

[28] W. Dykcik, *Warunki i możliwości kulturowej transmisji postaw i zachowań społecznych wobec autonomii i izonomii osób niepełnosprawnych umysłowo* [in:] *Społeczeństwo wobec autonomii osób niepełnosprawnych*, ed. W. Dykcik, Poznań 1996, p. 219.

[29] D. Wolska, *Rozwijanie umiejętności życiowych wpływających na aktywizację zawodową osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną,* [w:] *Psychoedukacja w procesie wspomagania rehabilitacji osób z niepełnosprawnością*, eds. P. Majewicz, M. Kościółek, E. Dyduch, Kraków 2017, p. 230.

[30] A full description of the methodology can be found [in:] K. Szafruga, *Postrzeganie siebie przez młodych dorosłych z umiarkowaną niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, unpublished master's thesis, Katowice 2025, pp. 37–49.

an approach makes it possible to examine the subjective experiences, meanings, and interpretations that participants attribute to their own lives.[31] This strategy allows for capturing the complexity of the processes involved in shaping self-image within a sociocultural context, which is particularly important in research concerning individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The subject of the study was the self-perception of young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities. The aim of the research was to understand how the participants perceive themselves and to identify the factors influencing the formation of their self-image, with particular emphasis on the role of family, peers, and support institutions. One main research question was formulated: *How do young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities perceive themselves?* This question was further specified through subsidiary questions concerning self-image, experienced challenges, the consequences of positive and negative self-perception, and the factors determining this process. Due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of the study, no research hypotheses were formulated.

The case study method was adopted as the main research approach, enabling a holistic and in-depth analysis of the participants' individual experiences within their natural contexts of functioning. This method allows for an understanding of the studied phenomenon while taking into account personal and environmental conditions.[32] The research techniques applied included individual interviews, observation, and a questionnaire.

The primary research tool was an original individual interview questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions thematically grouped around areas such as self-esteem, autonomy, social relationships, communication, vocational activity, and leisure time. The interview was supplemented with an individual and group observation sheet used to record behaviours, interactions, and patterns of functioning in educational and social situations. Additionally, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES), in its Polish adaptation, was used to assess the general level of self-esteem of the participants.

The research sample consisted of seven individuals (four women and three men) aged 18 to 24, diagnosed with moderate intellectual disabilities and receiving institutional support. The sampling was non-random and purposive, resulting from the possibility of obtaining information relevant to the research objective.[33] All participants gave informed verbal consent to take part in the study.

The applied methodological solutions enabled the collection of empirical material and the formulation of conclusions of both cognitive and practical significance.

[31] S. Juszczyk, *Badania jakościowe w naukach społecznych. Szkice metodologiczne*, Katowice 2013, p. 109.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 118.

[33] *Imidem*, p. 112.

Research findings

The conducted research aimed to explore the ways in which young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities perceive themselves, with particular emphasis on their level of self-esteem, self-image, the consequences of positive and negative self-perception, and the factors shaping this process. The analysis of the results was based on data obtained through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, individual interviews, and observation.[34]

The results obtained using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale indicate a clear tendency toward low self-esteem among the participants. Of the seven individuals, only one achieved a score within the range of high self-esteem, while the remaining participants obtained results indicating a low level of self-worth. None of the participants achieved a score typical of an average level of self-esteem. This suggests that reduced perceptions of personal value, competence, and effectiveness predominate within the studied group. These findings confirm that young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable to critical self-perception, which may affect their emotional and social functioning.

The qualitative analysis of data from the individual interviews allowed for a multidimensional understanding of the participants' self-image. Their self-perceptions were described in relation to areas such as self-esteem, independence, autonomy, communication, social relationships, vocational activity, and leisure time. The results indicate considerable diversity in individual experiences; however, most participants exhibited difficulties related to evaluating their own abilities and coping with emotions in situations of failure.

Some participants assessed themselves critically, emphasizing their limitations, difficulties in task performance, and tendencies toward anger and frustration when facing challenges. These statements correspond with the low self-esteem scores obtained on the Rosenberg Scale. At the same time, in some cases, despite low scale results, a relatively positive self-image emerged, based on recognizing personal strengths and achievements. This suggests that self-esteem measured by standardized instruments does not always fully reflect the subjective self-image of participants and may be influenced by personal experiences and environmental support.

In the area of independence, participants pointed to activities they could perform without assistance, such as preparing meals, dressing, and completing minor household tasks. At the same time, differences were observed in the scope of this independence – some participants experienced limitations resulting from parental overprotection, which affected their sense of agency and independence. These accounts demonstrate that independence plays a significant role in shaping self-image and self-worth.

[34] K. Szafruga, *Postrzeganie siebie*…, pp. 51–74.

The autonomy of the participants was mainly manifested in their ability to make small everyday decisions, such as choosing clothing, leisure activities, or hobbies. Most participants declared that they enjoyed making decisions independently and experienced a sense of satisfaction as a result. Conversely, situations in which others made decisions for them evoked negative emotions such as anger or sadness, highlighting the importance of autonomy for their sense of dignity and subjectivity.

In the sphere of communication and social relationships, the findings revealed varied levels of social competence. Some participants reported no difficulties in conversations and forming relationships, while others pointed to problems with expressing their needs, being understood, and fear of new social contacts. These experiences influenced their self-perception, particularly in the context of social comparison and fear of social judgment.

For most participants, family relationships constituted an important source of emotional support and a sense of security. They emphasized the importance of spending time together, having opportunities to talk, and receiving help in difficult situations. At the same time, some participants experienced difficulties in sharing their problems, which could lead to the accumulation of negative emotions and an increased sense of loneliness.

The analysis of the consequences of positive and negative self-perception indicates that individuals with a more positive self-image were characterized by greater openness to new experiences, higher motivation for action, and a stronger tendency to engage in social relationships. Positive self-perception facilitated taking on challenges, deriving satisfaction from activities, and making better use of personal developmental potential. In contrast, a negative self-image was associated with reduced self-confidence, fear of failure, avoidance of new situations, and difficulties in emotional regulation.

The factors shaping the participants' self-perception were both individual and social in nature. The most significant included experiences of success and failure, social comparison, emotional support from family and peers, the level of independence, and the ability to make decisions. Positive school and family experiences were particularly important, as they fostered a sense of acceptance and self-worth. Conversely, negative social experiences, such as ridicule or lack of understanding, contributed to lowered self-esteem and a negative self-image.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that self-perception among young adults with moderate intellectual disabilities is complex and multidimensional, and its development depends on individual experiences, social relationships, and the level of support and autonomy they receive. Low self-esteem, difficulties in emotional

regulation, and limited independence constitute significant developmental barriers, whereas positive relationships, opportunities for self-determination, and social support contribute to strengthening self-image and overall functioning.

These findings are consistent with other studies, which point to a diverse picture of self-esteem among individuals with disabilities.[35] People with mild intellectual disabilities often present a positive, and sometimes inflated, self-image, while adolescents with physical disabilities more frequently experience lower assertiveness and differences in self-perception compared to their able-bodied peers.[36] This highlights the importance of social context and the type of disability in shaping self-perception.[37]

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[35] D. Kołodziej, *Spostrzeganie siebie*…, pp. 43–53.

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[37] P. Majewicz, *Obraz samego siebie*…, p. 160.

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Independent functioning of adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities in L'Arche Homes and residential care homes

Samodzielność dorosłych osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w domach L'Arche i w domach pomocy społecznej

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities perceive themselves as independent, the degree to which they exercise this independence in everyday life, and whether these perceptions differ depending on their living environment. The research involved 31 residents of L'Arche homes (M = 46.41; SD = 7.46) and 40 residents of three residential care homes (M = 46.00; SD = 13.88). A diagnostic survey method was applied using an author-designed *Interview Questionnaire for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities*. Data analysis indicated that residents in both settings rated their independence relatively high. However, differences emerged in relation to specific activities. Residents of residential care reported greater independence in performing basic self-care tasks compared to those living in L'Arche homes, whereas L'Arche residents demonstrated a significant advantage in carrying out more complex activities.

Keywords: adults with profound intellectual disabilities, independence, L'Arche homes, residential care homes

Streszczenie

Celem badania było ustalenie, w jakim stopniu dorosłe osoby z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną czują się samodzielne i w jakim stopniu realizują tę samodzielność w codziennym życiu oraz czy jest ona różnicowana przez rodzaj zamieszkiwanego środowiska. Badaniami objęto 31 mieszkańców domów L'Arche (M = 46,41; SD = 7,46) oraz 40 osób z trzech domów pomocy społecznej (M = 46,00; SD = 13,88). Posłużono się metodą sondażu diagnostycznego i wykorzystano autorski

Kwestionariusz wywiadu z dorosłą osobą z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Na podstawie analizy danych skonstatowano, że mieszkańcy obu środowisk wysoko oceniają swoją samodzielność. Różnice pojawiają się w odniesieniu do konkretnych czynności. Pensjonariusze domów pomocy społecznej deklarują większą samodzielność w odniesieniu do podstawowych czynności samoobsługowych niż osoby żyjące w domach L'Arche, ale w przypadku bardziej skomplikowanych aktywności mieszkańcy domów L'Arche mają istotną przewagę.

Słowa kluczowe: dorosłe osoby z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną, samodzielność, domy L'Arche, domy pomocy społecznej

Introduction

The independence of adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) is one of the key issues in contemporary special education. In recent decades, alongside social transformations, changes in approaches to disability, and Poland's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012, awareness of the need to support these individuals toward the greatest possible independence and social participation has increased. Independence – understood as the ability to carry out daily tasks with limited support – has become one of the most important educational and therapeutic goals in working with individuals with moderate and severe ID. The literature increasingly emphasizes that independence does not imply complete self-sufficiency, but rather the capacity to function based on one's own abilities with support tailored to the individual's needs.[1]

The concept of independence

The concept of independence occupies an important place in pedagogy, psychology, and the educational sciences, particularly in special education. It is understood both as a personality trait and as a developmental process that leads individuals toward increasing independence and responsibility for their own actions. In Irena Mudrecka's approach, independence refers to an individual's ability to regulate their behaviour and function in everyday situations. It encompasses not only the performance of basic activities but also the ability to cope with the demands of daily life based on one's own capacities, while simultaneously making use of appropriate support from the surrounding environment. From a psychological perspective, independence is linked to the concepts of self-regulation and life competencies. According to Self-Determination Theory proposed by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci,[2] the development of independence

[1] M.L. Wehmeyer, S.B. Palmer, *Adult outcomes for students with cognitive disabilities three years after high school: The impact of self-determination*, "Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities" 2003, No. 38(2), pp. 131–144.

[2] E.L. Deci, R.M. Ryan, *The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self--Determination of Behavior*, "Psychological Inquiry" 2000, No. 11(4), pp. 227–268.

arises from the need for autonomy, understood as the striving to be the agent of one's own actions. Independence thus constitutes the practical dimension of this need – it manifests itself in concrete decisions and behaviours undertaken in everyday life.

The literature identifies several dimensions of independence: the cognitive dimension concerns the ability to solve problems, assess situations, and anticipate the consequences of actions; the emotional-motivational dimension is associated with self-esteem, a sense of agency, and responsibility for decisions made; the social dimension, in turn, is manifested in the ability to assume social roles, cooperate with others, and respect the principles of communal life; finally, the practical dimension encompasses everyday life skills, including self-care, spatial orientation, money management, and the performance of household tasks.[3]

The independence of individuals with ID is relative in nature, as it is closely linked to the scope of environmental support.[4] It is not equated with complete independence, but rather with the ability to undertake actions and carry out everyday tasks in accordance with one's own capabilities. Beata Cytowska[5] points out that, in this perspective, independence denotes the capacity to function within the social environment with support provided, yet without total dependence on other people. At the same time, the significant role of the environment – both familial and institutional – is emphasized in creating conditions conducive to the development and maintenance of independence, which may either foster or limit its development.

Developing independence does not entail the withdrawal of support, but rather a change in its nature – from substitutive to supportive. The literature emphasizes that the goal of interventions is not to make a person with a disability independent of others, but to create conditions that enable active participation in social life and decision-making in accordance with one's own capabilities.[6]

In conclusion, independence constitutes both a goal and a key indicator of the effectiveness of support provided to individuals with ID. It is not limited solely to the ability to perform specific tasks, but also encompasses an attitude of responsibility, agency, and active participation in social life. Contemporary approaches in special

[3] I. Mudrecka, *Samodzielność* [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, Vol. 5, ed. T. Pilch, Warszawa 2006, pp. 597–601.

[4] R.L. Schalock, I. Brown, R.A. Cummins et al., *Conceptualization, measurement, and application of quality of life for persons with intellectual disabilities*, "American Journal on Mental Retardation" 2002, Vol. 107, No. 6, pp. 457–470.

[5] B. Cytowska, *Dorosłość z perspektywy osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną – wątki emancypacyjne*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2019, No. 34, pp. 159–175.

[6] J. Głodkowska, *Być podmiotem i stawać się autorem swojego życia – paradygmat wsparcia w przygotowaniu osób z niepełnosprawnością do budowania własnej tożsamości i wzbogacania dobrostanu*, "Człowiek – Niepełnosprawność – Społeczeństwo" 2014, No. 4, pp. 9–44; M. Gołubiew-Konieczna, *Wspieranie osób z głębszą i głęboką niepełnosprawnością intelektualną i ich rodziców w drodze przez całe życie na przykładzie działalności Polskiego Stowarzyszenia na rzecz Osób z Upośledzeniem Umysłowym, koło w Gdańsku*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2016, No. 24, pp. 169–182.

education assume that every person – regardless of the degree of disability – has the right to develop their independence and to participate in social life in a manner appropriate to their abilities and with appropriate support provided.[7]

Independence and autonomy: Relationships and differences

The concepts of independence and autonomy are often used interchangeably; however, the literature points to important differences between them. In psychology, autonomy refers to the capacity for self-governance based on one's own values and beliefs, as well as the freedom to make decisions.[8] It is an intrinsic need, rooted in a sense of agency, independence, and the alignment of undertaken actions with one's own goals. In pedagogy, by contrast, autonomy is often conceptualized as one of the key aims of education, signifying the capacity for self-directed learning, personal development, and decision-making within prevailing social norms and relationships with others.[9] By contrast, independence refers to the practical aspect of functioning – the ability to perform activities and tasks without the direct assistance of others. Thus, autonomy can be said to concern motivation and decision-making, whereas independence relates to action and execution. The two concepts are, however, interrelated: the development of independence fosters the strengthening of autonomy, while the experience of autonomy motivates individuals to undertake independent actions.[10]

Contemporary pedagogical concepts move away from viewing independence as complete self-sufficiency, emphasizing its relational nature – an individual becomes autonomous in relation to others, within an environment that supports their right to make choices and take responsibility.[11] Supporting the independence of adults with ID does not involve isolating them, but rather enabling them to make choices, even if this requires assistance in understanding the consequences of their decisions.

Independence of adults with more severe intellectual disabilities

Developing independence in adulthood is one of the primary goals of rehabilitation and lifelong education for individuals with moderate and severe ID. This process is associated with a shift in the social perception of disability – from

[7] B. Cytowska, *Dorosłość z perspektywy*…, pp. 159–175; R.L. Schalock et al., *Intellectual Disability: Definition, Classification, and Systems of Supports*, Washington, D.C. 2010, pp. 1–23, 45–67.

[8] E.L. Deci, R.M. Ryan, *The "What" and "Why"*…, p. 245.

[9] *Ibidem*; J. Swędrak, *O autonomii w pedagogice*, "Studia Sieradzana" 2014, No. 5, pp. 22–34.

[10] M.L. Wehmeyer, S.B. Palmer, *Adult outcomes*…, pp. 131–144.

[11] D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *(Nie)pełnosprawność a (nie)samodzielność w kontekście autonomii relacyjnej*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2018, No. 32, pp. 59–75.

a care-based model, centred on control and dependency, to a supportive model that promotes participation, responsibility, and the right to make decisions. Just two decades ago, individuals with moderate and severe ID were largely deprived of opportunities for independent functioning – their life decisions were made by parents, teachers, or caregivers. Today, there is a growing awareness among both professionals and families, with individuals with ID increasingly recognized as full--fledged citizens, capable of personal development and active social participation.

Cytowska points out that fostering the independence of adults with ID is the responsibility of both the family environment and social support institutions, and that this process has a socio-institutional dimension.[12] In Poland, two types of environments play a particularly important role in this regard: L'Arche communities (Ark) and residential care homes (RCH). L'Arche communities operate on the principle of partnership – individuals with disabilities live together with assistants, sharing responsibilities and daily life. This model fosters the development of independence within relationships, through practical participation in community life: cooking, cleaning, organizing time, and, above all, co-deciding on everyday matters. Here, independence is understood relationally – as the capacity to co-create the community based on one's own abilities and will.[13]

The situation in residential care homes is often more complex. The institutional nature of these facilities – while providing safety and care – can limit the scope for practicing independence. Organizational decisions, schedules, and regulations frequently result in residents functioning under conditions of structural dependency, a phenomenon often referred to as the institutionalization of daily life. However, contemporary standards of practice in RCH increasingly promote the creation of so-called supportive micro-environments, in which residents can make minor decisions, participate in daily planning, co-organize activities, or influence the appearance of their surroundings.

In both L'Arche communities and RCH, the development of independence among individuals with ID largely depends on the attitude of caregivers – specifically, their ability to balance between providing support and overprotectiveness. As Jami Petner-Arrey and Susan Copeland[14] emphasize, fostering independence requires courage and trust: excessive protection can lead to passivity and a diminished sense of agency and responsibility.

Contemporary research confirms that individuals with more severe ID – despite cognitive limitations – demonstrate a need for independence and strive for active

[12] B. Cytowska, *Dorośli z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w labiryntach codzienności. Analiza badań, krytyka podejść, propozycje rozwiązań*, Toruń 2011.

[13] J. Vanier, *Community and Growth*, London 2014, pp. 87–104.

[14] J. Petner-Arrey, S. Copeland, „*You have to care." Perceptions of promoting autonomy in support settings for adults with intellectual disability*, "British Journal of Learning Disabilities" 2015, No. 43(1), pp. 38–48.

participation in social life. The development of these competencies, however, depends on an environment that supports learning through action, reinforces positive behaviours, and fosters collaborative relationships with supporting individuals.[15]

Research problems

1. Is there a difference in self-assessed independence among adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities depending on the type of residence (L'Arche community vs. residential care home, RCH)?
2. To what extent are individuals with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities independent? And is their independence influenced by the type of residential environment?

Method, research tool, and research procedure

The study utilized a diagnostic survey method, employing a direct standardized questionnaire interview (PAPI – Paper Assisted Personal Interview). The *Interview Questionnaire for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities*[16] comprised 33 items covering daily life, sense of safety, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, and personal development. Most items were closed-ended, using either a four-point scale (1 – No, 2 – Rather No, 3 – Rather Yes, 4 – Yes) or a dichotomous Yes/No scale, with supplementary open-ended questions for elaboration. The instrument demonstrated acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.68.

The team of interviewers consisted of individuals with experience working with people with ID and who were appropriately trained. Participation in the study was voluntary; participants were informed about its purpose, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time.

The empirical data were analyzed using Statistica 13.3. While these results are part of a larger research project reported in the monograph *Selected aspects of the quality of life of adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities* (2024), the present article adds value by providing an in-depth analysis of independence among adults with moderate and severe ID residing in residential care homes (RCH) and L'Arche communities. Statistical analyses, including the Mann–Whitney U test and chi-square test, were conducted to identify significant differences between groups, a procedure not applied in the original monograph. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was adopted.

[15] M.L. Wehmeyer, S.B. Palmer, *Adult outcomes for*…, pp. 131–144; D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *(Nie) pełnosprawność a (nie)samodzielność*…, pp. 57–71; I. Dimitriadou, *Independent living*…, pp. 153–159.

[16] A. Franczyk, W. Kurcz, *Wybrane aspekty jakości życia dorosłych osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, Opole 2024, pp. 143–145.

Characteristics of the study group

The study included 71 adults with ID, classified as moderate (18.3%) or severe (81.7%), aged 23 to 68 years (M = 46.19; SD = 11.25), including 43 women (60.6%) and 28 men (39.4%). The sample was non-randomly selected. Participants were individuals capable of independently responding to questions posed during the direct standardized questionnaire interview.[17]

Table 1. Level of intellectual disability among adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities by type of residence

Degree of disability	Residents of residential care homes		Residents of L'Arche communities		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Moderate	10	25.0	3	9.7	13	18.3
Severe	30	75.0	28	90.3	58	81.7
Total	40	100.0	31	100.0	71	100.0

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 2. Sex of adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities by type of residence

Type of residence	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Residential care homes	24	55.8	16	57.1	40	56.3
L'Arche community	19	44.2	12	42.9	31	43.7
Total	43	100.0	28	100.0	71	100.0

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

More than half of the respondents (56.3%) were residents of three residential care homes (RCH) located in the Opole Voivodeship, while the remaining 43.7% were residents of seven L'Arche communities operating in Poland. The average age of respondents in both groups was 46 years.

Results

The first step was to determine whether there were differences in self-assessed independence between residents of residential care homes (RCH) and residents of L'Arche communities. The data are presented in Table 3.

Based on the data analysis (Table 3), it can be concluded that both residents of residential care homes (RCH) and residents of L'Arche communities rate their independence similarly and relatively high. No statistically significant differences

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 9.

were observed between the groups ($p > 0.05$). Respondents were also asked about the tasks they are able to perform independently (Figure 1).

Table 3. Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test comparing residents of residential care homes and L'Arche communities in terms of perceived independence

Question	Residents of residential care homes (N = 40)			Residents of L'Arche communities (N = 31)			Z	p
	M	Me	SD	M	Me	SD		
Do you feel independent?	3.53	4	0.78	3.48	4	0.99	–0.251	0.802

M – mean, Me – median, SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

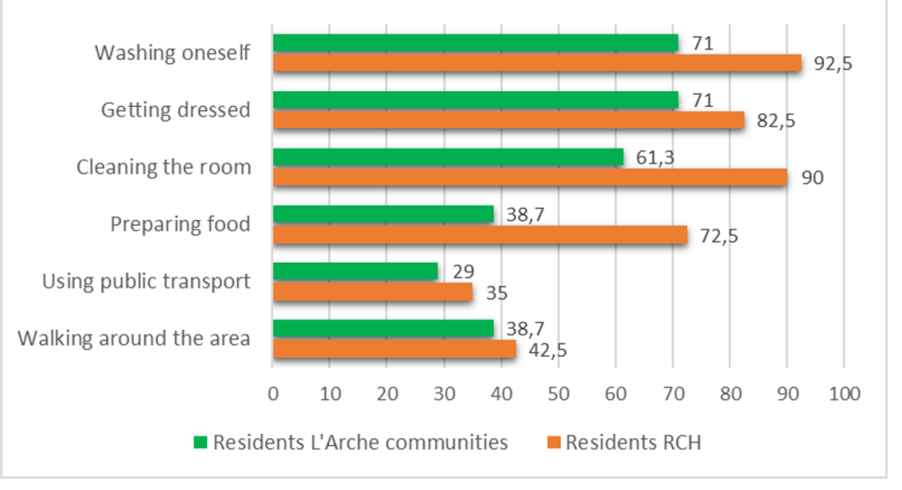


Figure 1. Self-reported abilities of adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities regarding tasks they can perform independently

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 4. Self-reported responsibilities of adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities by type of residence

Do you have any daily responsibilities?	Residents of residential care homes		Residents of L'Arche communities		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	30	75.0	29	93.5	59	83.1
No	10	25.0	2	6.5	12	16.9
Total	40	100.0	31	100.0	71	100.0

$Chi^2 = 4.28$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.04$

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Analysis of the results illustrated in Figure 1 indicates that residents of residential care homes (RCH) more frequently than residents of L'Arche communities reported being able to bathe, dress, and clean their rooms independently. These skills were declared by the vast majority of RCH residents and by three-quarters of L'Arche community members. Most RCH residents (72.5%) reported being able to prepare meals, compared to 38.7% of L'Arche community members. Activities performed significantly less frequently in both groups included using public transportation and walking independently around the neighbourhood.

Three quarters (75%) of residents of residential care homes reported that they have responsibilities, whereas in the group of L'Arche community residents, the vast majority (93.5%) did. The results of the chi-squared test indicate a statistically significant association between having responsibilities and the type of living environment ($\chi^2 = 4.28$; $p = 0.04$). Individuals with ID were asked: *What do you do? What responsibilities/shifts do you have?* The following statements were noted: *I help fold laundry into the wardrobe, I clean my room, I clean the stairs* (RCH, F, 25); *I peel potatoes, set out plates, put plates in the machine and put them away in the cupboard. I have a lot of work* (RCH, M, 61); *I wipe the tables on Thursdays, and sweep the floor on Saturdays* (RCH, M, 46); *In the kitchen – I prepare plates, wash pots* (RCH, M, 52); *I clean the corridor, in the dining room I arrange plates and cutlery* (RCH, F, 51); *According to the schedule: household, prayer, cleaning, bringing vegetables and fruits from a friendly foundation* (L'Arche, M, 31); *Collecting dishes after lunch, operating the dishwasher* (L'Arche, M, 41); *Cleaning common areas and my own room (e.g., mopping the floor), laundry, ironing, washing dishes* (L'Arche, F, 52); *I put dishes in the dishwasher, mop the floor, pray* (L'Arche, M, 47). In summary, in both groups, there are shifts assigned according to a set schedule.

Table 5. Declarations regarding shopping among adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities by type of residence

Do you go shopping?	Residents of residential care homes		Residents of L'Arche communities		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	22	55.0	27	87.1	49	69.0
No	18	45.0	4	12.9	22	31.0
Total	40	100.0	31	100.0	71	100.0

$Chi^2 = 8.41$, df = 1, $p = 0.004$

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Among residents of residential care homes, slightly over half (55%) reported that they do shopping, whereas in L'Arche communities this percentage was significantly higher, at 87.1%. Residents of L'Arche communities engage in this activity significantly more often than residents of residential care homes ($\chi^2 = 8.41$; $p = 0.004$).

Table 6. Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test comparing residents of residential care homes and L'Arche communities in terms of meal preparation

Question	Residents of residential care homes (N=40)			Residents of L'Arche communities (N=31)			Z	p
	M	Me	SD	M	Me	SD		
Do you participate in preparing your own meals?	1.85	1	1.25	3.16	4	1.21	–3.864	< 0.001

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Analysis of the results of the group differences test regarding meal preparation indicates that residents of L'Arche communities (M = 3.16; Me = 4) participate in preparing meals for themselves to a significantly greater extent ($p < 0.001$) than residents of RCH (M = 1.85; Me = 1). Respondents were also asked which tasks they perform independently. The following statements were recorded: *Sometimes I make jelly or pudding. The staff prepares the food, but I serve myself, except for soup because it's hot* (RCH, F, 45); *I make sandwiches on my own* (RCH, F, 63); *Only sandwiches; I can get cold cuts from the canteen and make sandwiches in the kitchenette myself, I also make tea* (RCH, F, 46); *I often prepare my own breakfast, help with cooking lunch, and sometimes make salads* (L'Arche, F, 43); *In the morning I prepare breakfast for myself and help prepare it for those who get up later* (L'Arche, F, 50); *I set the table, sometimes peel or cut something* (L'Arche, M, 50). Analysis of other statements shows that in RCH, staff often perform all the tasks. In contrast, in L'Arche communities, residents are actively involved in preparing meals for the entire community.

Summary

In seeking an answer to the question, *Is there a difference in self-assessed independence among adults with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities depending on the type of residence?*, it was found that both residents of RCH and residents of L'Arche communities rate their independence similarly and relatively high. However, clear differences were observed with regard to specific activities. Residents of RCH reported higher levels of independence in bathing, dressing, and cleaning their rooms than individuals living in L'Arche communities. This is likely facilitated by the structure and organization of institutional care, which requires greater self-reliance in daily tasks due to the relatively low staff-to-resident ratio. These differences may also be explained by the fact that L'Arche communities included a slightly higher proportion of residents with severe intellectual disabilities (95%) compared to the RCH included in the study (75%). Nevertheless, it cannot be conclusively stated that residents of RCH are more independent than those living in L'Arche communities. This may be true for basic self-care activities, but

for more complex tasks – such as performing daily responsibilities, preparing their own meals, or going shopping – residents of L'Arche communities appear to have a significant advantage.

The results obtained confirm the importance of the residential environment for the level of independence and activity of adults with moderate and severe ID. They align with a broad body of research examining the role of the living environment in shaping independence. According to Michael Wehmeyer and Sheryl Palmer,[18] as well as Robert Schalock and colleagues,[19] the independence of individuals with ID is relational and contextual – it depends not only on the individual's competencies but largely on organizational conditions, institutional culture, and the attitudes of supporting persons.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Cytowska,[20] Ioanna Dimitriadou,[21] and Janice Sandjojo[22] and colleagues, which indicate that independence among adults with intellectual disabilities is not a one-time achievement but a developmental process dependent on available forms of support, opportunities for social participation, and the quality of relationships with supporting individuals. Both the present study and prior research emphasize the importance of environments that encourage decision-making, shared responsibility, and the gradual replacement of substitutive assistance with supportive guidance.

In conclusion, the independence of adults with moderate and severe ID should be understood as a dynamic and contextual process, the quality and extent of which are largely determined by the living environment. The research findings confirm that both residential care homes (RCH) and L'Arche communities provide distinct yet complementary conditions for the development of independence, and their experiences may serve as inspiration for further efforts to promote a dignified, person-centered, and as autonomous as possible life for individuals with ID.

Recommendations

Based on the obtained results and analysis of the literature, the following recommendations can be formulated:

[18] M.L. Wehmeyer, S.B. Palmer, *Adult outcomes*…, pp. 131–144.

[19] R.L. Schalock et al., *Intellectual Disability: Definition, Classification, and Systems of Supports*, Washington D.C. 2010.

[20] B. Cytowska, *Dorośliz niepełnosprawnością*…, pp. 15–35.

[21] I. Dimitriadou, *Independent living of individuals with intellectual disability: A combined study of the opinions of parents, educational staff, and individuals with intellectual disability in Greece*, "International Journal of Developmental Disabilities" 2018, No. 64(2), pp. 97–106.

[22] J. Sandjojo, A.M. Zedlitz. E.E., Gephardt., J. Hoekman, *Self-management by people with intellectual disabilities: perspectives from people with intellectual disabilities, representatives, and support staff*, "Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities" 2018, No. 1, pp. 138–150.

1. **Expanding residents' decision-making space in RCH** – not only in the area of self-care, but also regarding daily planning, meal preparation, organization of tasks, and shopping, which fosters the development of more complex forms of independence.
2. **Reducing overprotectiveness in favour of supporting independence** – staff should assist residents gradually, accompanying them in activities and gradually withdrawing support, rather than performing tasks on their behalf.
3. **Drawing on the experience of the L'Arche community model** – particularly regarding shared responsibilities, accountability for common spaces, and building partnership-based relationships, which can also be adapted in institutional RCH settings.
4. **Incorporating the perspective of individuals with intellectual disabilities in evaluating support quality** – in line with the participatory approach, subjective perceptions of independence and agency should serve as important indicators of the effectiveness of educational and care interventions.

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Relational approaches in special education for students on the autism spectrum

Podejścia relacyjne w pedagogice specjalnej wobec uczniów w spektrum autyzmu

Abstract

The aim of this article is to present a theoretical analysis of the relational approach in contemporary special education in the context of educating students on the autism spectrum. The paper is review-based and draws on an analysis of pedagogical, psychological, and interdisciplinary literature concerning the importance of relationships in the processes of development, learning, and emotional regulation. The article discusses the philosophical and psychological foundations of the relational approach and its significance in the context of changing ways of understanding the autism spectrum – from a deficit-oriented perspective toward a subject-centred approach. Particular attention is devoted to the role of the special education teacher as a co-creator of an educational relationship grounded in empathy, attentiveness, and reciprocity. The article emphasizes the importance of relationships as a foundation for effective and ethical pedagogical practice.

Keywords: special education, autism spectrum, relational approach, teacher–student relationship, inclusive education

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie teoretycznej analizy podejścia relacyjnego we współczesnej pedagogice specjalnej w kontekście edukacji uczniów w spektrum autyzmu. Artykuł ma charakter przeglądowy i opiera się na analizie literatury pedagogicznej, psychologicznej oraz interdyscyplinarnej dotyczącej znaczenia relacji w procesie rozwoju, uczenia się i regulacji emocjonalnej. Omówiono filozoficzne i psychologiczne podstawy podejścia relacyjnego oraz jego znaczenie w kontekście zmieniających się sposobów rozumienia spektrum autyzmu – od perspektywy deficytowej ku podejściu podmiotowemu. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono roli pedagoga specjalnego jako

współtwórcy relacji edukacyjnej opartej na empatii, uważności i wzajemności. Artykuł podkreśla znaczenie relacji jako fundamentu skutecznej i etycznej praktyki pedagogicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika specjalna, spektrum autyzmu, podejście relacyjne, relacja nauczyciel–uczeń, edukacja włączająca,

Introduction

Special education, as a subdiscipline of educational sciences, develops its theoretical and practical foundations in response to dynamic social, cultural, and scientific transformations.[1] A particularly important place within this field is occupied by issues related to the autism spectrum (Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD), due to the complexity and diversity of functioning among diagnosed individuals.[2] Contemporary approaches to individuals with ASD go beyond the framework of traditional therapy and corrective education, increasingly focusing on relationships, individuality, and the subjectivity of the student.[3] In this context, the relational approach is gaining increasing importance, as it responds to the need for a deeper understanding of the student as a person capable of forming bonds, co-participating, and actively shaping their identity through interaction with Others.[4]

The autism spectrum (ASD), as a diagnostic category, encompasses a wide range of differences in social, communicative, and cognitive functioning. Traditional models of working with individuals with ASD have often focused on reducing deficits and correcting undesirable behaviours. However, the latest research in neuropsychology, developmental psychology, and inclusive pedagogy indicates that a key factor supporting the development of individuals with ASD is the quality of interpersonal relationships, including the teacher–student relationship.[5] The relational approach draws on the assumptions of dialogical philosophy (Martin Buber,[6] Emmanuel Levinas[7]), humanistic psychology (Carl R. Rogers[8]) as well as attachment theory (John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth), as well as contemporary concepts of the social brain and relational neuroscience (Daniel J. Siegel,[9] Colwyn Trevarthen[10]).

[1] J. Jukiewicz, *Wprowadzenie do współczesnej pedagogiki specjalnej* [in:] *Współczesne kierunki w pedagogice specjalnej*, ed. J. Jukiewicz, Warszawa 2021, pp. 10–12.

[2] E. Pisula, *Autyzm i przywiązanie. Perspektywa rozwojowa*, Gdańsk 2016, s. 17–19.

[3] G. Szumski, M. Włoch, *Uczeń z autyzmem w klasie ogólnodostępnej*, Warszawa 2023, pp. 21–24.

[4] H. Olechnowicz, *Dialog, rozwój, wychowanie*, Warszawa 2011, p. 13.

[5] U. Frith, *Autism: Explaining the Enigma*, Oxford 2014, p. 90.

[6] M. Buber, *Ja i Ty*, Warszawa 2002, p. 42.

[7] E. Levinas, *Totalité et infini*, Paris 1998, p. 81.

[8] C.R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*, Columbus, OH 1969, p. 104.

[9] D.J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, New York 2012, p. 211.

[10] C. Trevarthen, *What young children give to their learning relationships*, "European Early Childhood Education Research Journal" 2011, Vol. 19(2), p. 145.

All of these approaches emphasize that relationships constitute the foundation of learning, self-regulation, and the formation of individual identity.

In the context of educating students on the autism spectrum, particular importance is attached to the ability of the teacher/special educator to initiate and sustain relationships, as they fulfil the role of a guide, mediator, and participant in the developmental process. Building relationships requires from the educator not only substantive knowledge but also high social and emotional competencies, flexibility, and attentiveness to the student's individual way of experiencing the world.[11]

The aim of this article is to present the significance of the relational approach within modern special education in relation to students on the autism spectrum. The paper provides an analysis of the theoretical foundations of the relational approach as well as its practical implications for the everyday work of teachers and special educators. The article constitutes an attempt to justify the need for a paradigm shift toward education based on relationships and reciprocity as a condition for effective support of the development and integration of individuals with ASD.

Theoretical foundations of the relational approach in special education

Contemporary special education increasingly emphasizes a relationship-oriented model of education, which assumes that the processes of teaching and upbringing cannot be carried out effectively without taking into account the emotional and interpersonal context. The teacher is no longer merely an implementer of the core curriculum but a companion in the student's development – especially for those who experience cognitive, emotional, and/or social difficulties.[12]

The pedagogical relationship is gaining importance in the context of neurodiversity and individualized approaches. Students with special educational needs – including individuals on the autism spectrum – require not only appropriately selected teaching methods but, above all, the presence of an adult who is capable of building a relationship based on predictability, empathy, and reciprocity.[13]

In the subject literature, it is noted that the building of an educational bond is based on emotional attunement and the teacher's openness to the student's individual style of functioning. It is precisely within everyday micro-interactions that a space of trust emerges, which becomes the foundation of the student's readiness for cooperation and exploration.[14] The teacher thus fulfils the role of an intermedi-

[11] A.M. Zawadzka, *Relacyjna pedagogika specjalna* [in:] *Współczesne kierunki w pedagogice specjalnej*, ed. J. Jukiewicz, Warszawa 2021, p. 140.

[12] K. Knoppik, *Relacyjność w pracy wychowawczej*, Kraków 2018, pp. 23–25.

[13] P. Petry, *Pedagogika serca – w trosce o relację w edukacji*, Lublin 2017, pp. 65–67.

[14] M. Kostrzyński, *Relacyjność jako podstawa działań edukacyjnych*, "Forum Pedagogiczne" 2020, No. 10(1), pp. 147–149.

ary between the child and the demands of the school environment. Through their presence, the teacher can regulate tension, explain social rules, and create a "bridge" between the student's inner world and educational reality.[15]

This approach gains particular significance with regard to individuals on the autism spectrum. Although children/students with ASD often exhibit difficulties in social communication, this does not imply a lack of need for relationships – on the contrary, many of them demonstrate a need for closeness and attachment, although they are not always able to express it adequately.[16] A teacher who is able to read subtle signals and adapt to the student's style of communication becomes a key mediator in the process of social development.

Research confirms that a high quality of the teacher–student relationship correlates with greater motivation to learn, better emotional self-regulation, and a greater readiness to engage in social interactions.[17] This is particularly true for students with developmental difficulties, who function more effectively in environments characterized by a high level of emotional support and predictability.[18]

In Polish pedagogical thought, a current has developed that emphasizes education through dialogue, attentiveness, and the ethical presence of the teacher. Pedagogical work is understood in this approach as a dynamic process of shared coexistence rather than a one-sided influence.[19] The teacher–student relationship is therefore not a tool for achieving didactic goals, but a value in itself, fostering the student's subjectivity and agency. At the core of this approach lies the assumption that a child – regardless of developmental difficulties – has the potential to co-create the educational space, provided that conditions based on empathy, respect, and emotional stability are ensured.

Contemporary models of inclusive education therefore promote not only the adaptation of physical space, but also a change in the quality of the teacher's contact with the student.[20]

It is worth emphasizing that Polish educational law regulations also indicate the importance of relationships in the processes of education and upbringing. The Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the principles of providing psychological and pedagogical support highlights the necessity of

[15] A.M. Zawadzka, *Relacyjna pedagogika*…, pp. 144–146.

[16] S. Roffey, *Positive Relationships: Evidence Based Practice across the World*, Dordrecht 2012, pp. 100–101.

[17] D.A. Hughes, *Attachment – Focused Parenting: Effective Strategies to Care for Children*, New York 2009, pp. 51–52.

[18] B. Jankowiak, *Pedagogika dialogu jako fundament relacyjnej edukacji*, "Paedagogia Christiana" 2018, No. 1(41), pp. 48–50.

[19] L. Florian, K. Black-Hawkins, *Exploring inclusive pedagogy*, "Cambridge Journal of Education" 2011, No. 41(4), pp. 415–417.

[20] European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, *Empowering Teachers to Promote Inclusive Education*, Odense 2015, pp. 13–14.

adapting methods and forms of work to the individual needs of the student, which in practice means creating space for a relational approach within the school.[21] Thus understood, individualization also encompasses the quality of interpersonal contact – the building of relationships that enable the student to engage in the educational process on their own terms and at their own pace.

Autism spectrum and the need for relationships

The initial descriptions of autism by Leo Kanner[22] and Hans Asperger[23] focused on specific behavioural characteristics and difficulties in social interactions. For many years, a deficit-based approach predominated, which viewed autism as the result of neurological and psychological dysfunctions, concentrating on the elimination of "undesirable" behaviours and the teaching of "missing" skills. With the development of research and a deeper understanding of the complexity of the autism spectrum, a paradigm shift occurred. The concept of the spectrum proposed by Lorna Wing and Judith Gould[24] emphasized the continuum of symptoms and the diversity of functional profiles. Attention began to be paid not only to difficulties but also to the strengths and potential of individuals with ASD, which contributed to the search for more individualized and relational forms of support.

Contemporary diagnostic classifications – such as DSM-5-TR[25] and *ICD-11*[26] – have replaced earlier, separate diagnostic categories (e.g., childhood autism, Asperger syndrome), unifying them within a single category: autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This approach takes into account the variability of symptoms, levels of functioning, and support needs, and promotes a broader, more individualized diagnostic perspective. Such an approach provides a starting point for a deeper understanding of individuals with ASD – not only through the lens of their limitations, but also their developmental and relational needs.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are characterized by difficulties in social communication and by repetitive patterns of behaviour. However, contrary to

[21] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach (Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1591).

[22] L. Kanner, *Autistic disturbances of affective contact*, "Nervous Child" 1943, No. 2, pp. 217–220.

[23] H. Asperger, Die *„Autistischen Psychopathen" im Kindesalter*, "Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten" 1944, No. 117, pp. 76–81.

[24] L. Wing, J. Gould, *Severe impairments of social interaction and associated abnormalities in children*: *Epidemiology and classification*, "Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders" 1979, No. 9(1), pp. 11–15.

[25] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR)*, Washington, D.C. 2022, pp. 56–59.

[26] World Health Organization, *International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (ICD-11)*, Geneva 2019, cod 6A02.

stereotypical beliefs, individuals with autism are not devoid of the need for contact with Others; on the contrary, they often need it in their own way, yet do not know how to initiate and maintain it.[27]

Many researchers emphasize that children with ASD demonstrate certain forms of attachment from a very early age, particularly toward individuals who show them understanding and predictability. From Simon Baron-Cohen's perspective, the lack of spontaneous social responses in individuals with autism does not necessarily indicate an inability to form bonds, but rather difficulties in communicating and expressing them.[28] Michael Tomasello notes that the abilities for cooperation and for expressing communicative intentions in children on the autism spectrum do not disappear, but rather develop at a slower pace and require purposeful support through appropriately adapted social interactions.[29] At the educational level, the need for relationships is manifested in many aspects of the functioning of a student with ASD: a sense of safety, motivation to learn, and the ability to cooperate – all of these elements depend on the quality of contact with the teacher and peers. A child on the autism spectrum who does not understand social rules needs a teacher as a "translator" of the social world – someone who not only instructs, but also models, supports, and attunes to the child's way of experiencing and perceiving reality.

Research conducted by Lori A. Zoller and Suzanne Macari indicates that preschool-aged children with ASD are more likely to initiate eye contact and respond to an adult's facial expressions when the adult adjusts the intensity and rhythm of expression to the child's mode of sensory processing.[30] Adapting the style of communication—such as using a slower pace, neutral intonation, and limiting distracting stimuli—can foster the building of trust and increase a child's readiness to cooperate.

In Polish primary and special schools, there is an obligation to individualize the teaching process, which is reflected, among other things, in Article 44c (1)(2) of the Education Law Act (Journal of Laws 2023, item 900), which stipulates the duty to adapt teaching methods and forms of work to the psychophysical needs of the student.[31] In practice, this also entails the necessity of building relationships as an element supporting communication and the emotional development of students with ASD. It is also extremely important to take into account the sensory specificity of students on the autism spectrum. Hypersensitivity to sounds, light, or touch may cause attempts by a teacher to establish a relationship – although intentionally positive – to be perceived as overwhelming or threatening. For this reason, the relationship with a student on the spectrum should be based on patient

[27] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Arlington, VA 2013, pp. 50–51.

[28] S. Baron-Cohen, *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*, Oxford 2008, pp. 87–89.

[29] M. Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 44–47.

[30] L.A. Zoller, S. Macari, *Social attention in toddlers with autism*, "Development and Psychopathology" 2019, No. 31(2), pp. 675–678.

[31] Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe (Dz.U. 2023, poz. 900), art. 44c ust. 1 pkt 2.

observation and attunement, rather than on assumptions derived from neurotypical development. In accordance with the relational approach, the responsibility for creating the conditions in which a relationship can emerge rests with the teacher. As noted by Hanna Olechnowicz, the pedagogical relationship is not static – it requires continuous construction, development, and maintenance, particularly in work with students on the autism spectrum, where this process may take longer but yields significant effects in the form of increased trust, improved emotional functioning, and greater readiness to learn.[32]

The role of the special education teacher in building relationships

Within the relational approach, the special education teacher fulfils not only the role of an instructor, but above all that of a person who establishes and maintains a bond with the student, which constitutes the foundation of effective teaching and developmental support. This relationship is particularly important in the case of students on the autism spectrum, who experience difficulties in understanding social intentions, nonverbal communication, or emotional expression. By attempting to enter into a relationship with such a student, the teacher becomes a "bridge" between the student's inner world and the external reality of the school environment.[33] The literature identifies a range of competencies necessary for building effective relationships with students with special educational needs. Among the most important are: empathy (the ability to recognize the student's emotions and states), didactic flexibility (modifying teaching methods according to the student's needs), the ability to engage in active listening, emotional self-awareness, and patience.[34] It is also important to understand the sensory and communication processes characteristic of individuals with ASD – such as preferences regarding physical distance, tone of voice, pace of speech, and responses to stimuli.[35]

Research conducted by Robert MacKenzie and Chris Williams demonstrates that a positive teacher–student relationship in inclusive classrooms correlates with better outcomes in prosocial behavior and greater independence among students with autism.[36] In practice, this means that the teacher should go beyond standard didactic frameworks – devoting time to conversation, shared rituals, supporting emotional regulation, and responding to challenging behaviors not as "didactic

[32] H. Olechnowicz, *Dialog, rozwój, wychowanie*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 96–99.

[33] *Ibidem*.

[34] M.J. Guralnick, *Why early intervention works*, "Infants & Young Children" 2011, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15–16.

[35] S. Rogers, G. Dawson, L. Vismara, *Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Guide to Early Intervention*, New York 2012, pp. 102–105.

[36] R. MacKenzie, C. Williams, *The impact of teacher-child relationships*, "Educational Psychology" 2021, Vol. 41, No. 6, pp. 635–637.

obstacles," but as signals of the student's needs. In accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the organization of psychological and pedagogical support[37] (Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1591), the special education teacher is required to co-develop individual educational and therapeutic programs (IEPs) and to participate in teams planning student support. This means that the teacher–student relationship should not only be personal in nature but also systemically supported – through the actions of teams of teachers, specialists, and parents.[38] An important aspect is also professional reflexivity – the readiness for self-reflection and for learning from the relationship with the student.

As emphasized by Danuta Elsner, an effective teacher does not limit themselves to the role of a provider of knowledge or support services, but actively participates in the relationship with the student, co-creating the conditions for the student's development while simultaneously learning through reflection on their own actions.[39]

In the educational process of students on the autism spectrum, the teacher/special education teacher performs a multidimensional role that goes beyond the traditional understanding of the educator's function. Their task is to shape a relational environment in which the student not only acquires knowledge but also experiences themselves as a person who is understood and accepted. A key competence of the special education teacher thus becomes the ability to observe social processes occurring in the classroom and to recognize subtle signals coming from the student – often nonverbal, irregular, and requiring interpretation within the context of the autistic way of experiencing relationships.[40] Moreover, the teacher should possess the ability for self-reflection and the conscious management of their own presence within the relationship, which includes, among other things, attentiveness to the impact of their own emotions, communication style, and even the organization of space on the quality of contact with the student. In this perspective, the relationship is not a set of techniques, but a dynamic process in which both parties influence one another – requiring both professionalism and a readiness for authentic encounter.[41]

As noted by Karen Guldberg, building a relationship with a child on the autism spectrum does not consist in "teaching social skills" in isolation from real-life contexts, but rather in creating conditions in which these skills can emerge in a natural

[37] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach (Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1591).

[38] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 28 lipca 2020 r. w sprawie warunków organizowania kształcenia, wychowania i opieki dla dzieci i młodzieży niepełnosprawnych, niedostosowanych społecznie oraz zagrożonych niedostosowaniem społecznym § 6.1 (Dz.U. 2020, poz. 1309).

[39] D. Elsner, *Kompetencje nauczyciela wobec wyzwań współczesnej szkoły*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 111–114.

[40] L. Holliday Willey, *Pretending to Be Normal: Living with Asperger's Syndrome*, London 1999, pp. 83–85.

[41] J. Nind, *Inclusive Education: Making Sense of Everyday Practice*, London 2020, pp. 147–150.

and meaningful way.[42] In turn, Craig Goodall emphasizes that a relational teacher is a person who recognizes the impact of the school system on the individual and is able to act consciously in favour of an inclusive classroom environment.[43]

Thus, the role of the special education teacher within the relational approach consists not only in supporting the student, but also in initiating processes that transform the educational environment toward greater openness, empathy, and social sensitivity. It is precisely the quality of the relationship established by the educator with the student that constitutes the real foundation of effective education and inclusion. In this perspective, the ability to accompany, attune, understand, and co-participate becomes not an addition to the work of the special education teacher, but its very core.[44]

Practical examples of the application of the relational approach

The relational approach is not merely a theoretical construct – it finds broad application in educational practice, particularly in work with students on the autism spectrum. Its fundamental assumption – that individual development occurs within the context of interpersonal bonds – is implemented through specific strategies, methods, and forms of practice that place the teacher–student relationship at the centre of educational and therapeutic activities.[45]

One of the most well-known and extensively researched relationship-based methods is the DIR/Floortime model (Developmental, Individual-Difference, Relationship-Based Model), developed by Stanley Greenspan and Serena Wieder. It assumes that a child's development occurs through emotionally meaningful interaction with an adult who "enters the child's world" and supports the child by following their initiatives.[46] In school practice, this approach is implemented through the teacher's engagement in the child's symbolic world of play, the construction of shared attention, the establishment of stable frameworks for communication and contact, and the treatment of interaction as an end in itself rather than merely a tool for achieving curricular objectives.

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[42] K. Guldberg, *Developing Inclusive Practice for Young Children with Autism: A Model for Training Early Years Professionals*, "Early Child Development and Care" 2010, No. 180(9), pp. 1203–1211.

[43] C. Goodall, *Inclusion is a Feeling, Not a Place: A Qualitative Study Exploring Autistic Young People's Conceptualisations of Inclusion*, "International Journal of Inclusive Education" 2018, No. 22(10), pp. 1116–1130.

[44] A.M. Nowicka, *Relacyjność w edukacji – wyzwanie dla nauczyciela w przestrzeni szkoły włączającej* [in:] *Edukacja włączająca w teorii i praktyce*, eds. A. Krause, D. Wajsprych, Poznań 2021, pp. 101–105.

[45] M. Głodkowska, *Zrozumieć innego człowieka – edukacja w podejściu relacyjnym* [in:] *Relacje w edukacji włączającej*, eds. A. Krause, A. M. Nowicka, Poznań 2022, pp. 59–66.

[46] S.I. Greenspan, S. Wieder, *Engaging Autism: Using the Floortime Approach to Help Children Relate, Communicate, and Think*, Cambridge, MA 2006, pp. 57–63.

Another example of a relational model of practice is SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support). It is a comprehensive system for supporting children with ASD in educational settings, based on collaboration among teachers, specialists, and parents. The SCERTS model emphasizes the development of communication and emotional competencies through everyday educational and social situations, rather than exclusively during therapeutic sessions.[47] Importantly, this model is recommended by many European educational systems as an alternative to strictly behavioural interventions, which often fail to take into account the emotional context of development. In Polish schools, the RDI method – Relationship Development Intervention – is also increasingly being used. It involves the creation of so-called shared relational experiences, in which the adult models social behaviours for the child while simultaneously adapting to the child's abilities and needs. RDI is based on the hypothesis that the primary deficit in autism is not language or behavior, but rather the capacity for cooperation and shared attention with another person.[48] In the school context, this involves, among other things, working in pairs, building shared rituals, and planning everyday activities as joint actions rather than tasks performed "for the child." Under this assumption, the student on the autism spectrum is expected to be an active participant and co-creator of the relationship, rather than its passive recipient.

In Poland, many special and inclusive schools implement the relational approach within the framework of internal support programs. Increasingly, so-called "relationship zones" are being created – designated areas within the school environment (e.g., in the classroom or hallway) that enable students with ASD to engage in calm and predictable interactions with the teacher, thereby fostering a sense of safety and supporting emotional regulation.[49] It is also worth emphasizing the importance of the relational approach in everyday teaching practice – even beyond specialized methods. Teachers who intentionally begin lessons with brief conversations with students, employ drama-based methods, project-based learning, or "gratitude circles" strengthen students' sense of belonging, shared responsibility, and attentiveness to others. Such practices, although not necessarily formally included in the curriculum, constitute tangible expressions of relational pedagogy.

Summary

The relational approach in special education is not merely one of many theoretical concepts, but rather emerges as a coherent and ethically grounded response to the complex developmental needs of students on the autism spectrum.

[47] B.M. Prizant, A.M. Wetherby, E. Rubin, A.C. Laurent, *The SCERTS Model: A Comprehensive Educational Approach for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, Baltimore 2006, pp. 42–47.

[48] S.E. Gutstein, *The RDI Book: Forging New Pathways for Autism, Asperger's and PDD with the Relationship Development Intervention Program*, Houston 2009, pp. 91–94.

[49] *Raport: Efektywność indywidualizacji w pracy z uczniem z ASD*, Warszawa 2021, pp. 33–36.

An analysis of contemporary pedagogical, psychological, and interdisciplinary perspectives clearly indicates that the teacher–student relationship plays a fundamental role in the educational process. Its significance extends beyond academic achievement to encompass key aspects of student functioning, including emotional regulation, a sense of safety, motivation to learn, and readiness to participate in social relationships.

An effective pedagogical relationship, grounded in trust, empathy, attentiveness, and the stable presence of the teacher, becomes for a student with ASD an important point of reference and a source of regulatory support. Relationality does not imply a reduction of educational expectations or a withdrawal from curricular goals; rather, it situates them within a framework of partnership, dialogue, individualization, and respect for the student's subjectivity. As demonstrated by relational models such as DIR/Floortime, SCERTS, and RDI, it is possible to implement educational and support strategies that integrate developmental objectives with authentic interpersonal encounters, thereby fostering meaningful and sustainable learning.

Within this perspective, the role of the special education teacher undergoes a significant redefinition. Instead of functioning solely as a transmitter of knowledge or an implementer of curricular requirements, the teacher becomes a companion in the student's process of development, maturation, and exploration of the world. The teacher assumes the role of a mediator between the student and the educational environment – a "bridge" connecting the student's individual way of experiencing reality with social and school-related expectations. Relational competencies, such as the ability to attune, engage in reflective practice, demonstrate empathy, and maintain emotional presence, acquire a status equal to that of substantive professional knowledge.

In the context of the Polish educational system, the implementation of a relational approach requires further consistent and systemic actions. These include, among others, the development of teachers' relational competencies through training and supervision, the creation of spaces conducive to relationship-building (such as quiet zones or support rooms), the strengthening of the role of the support teacher, and the inclusion of a relational component within individual educational and therapeutic programs. While existing legal frameworks provide formal support for such initiatives, it is everyday school practice that ultimately determines the quality and effectiveness of their implementation.

In conclusion, the relationship is not an addition to the educational process – it constitutes its core. It is within the relational space that the potential for genuine social participation, agency, self-determination, and a dignified quality of life for students on the autism spectrum is realized. For this reason, modern special education should not merely acknowledge the relational dimension of education, but rather adopt it as a fundamental point of reference and a starting point for further theoretical reflection and practical development.

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Motherhood on the spectrum

Macierzyństwo w spektrum

Abstract

The author has attempted to present a very specific aspect of parenting an autistic child, namely being an autistic mother raising an autistic child. Starting with a personal narrative about her experiences, including how her son's autism led her to discover her own, she analyses positive aspects of being a mother on the spectrum such as a specific way of communication, a unique relationship between a mother and a son or understanding sensory needs. Among the challenges she points out possible overwhelm, problems of communication with neurotypical representatives of various institutions or lack of specific instructions. Since autism is genetic, it would be a good idea for the professionals to take into consideration the possibility that one of the parents (or both) may be on the spectrum.
Keywords: autism, mother, motherhood, genetics, positives, challenges

Streszczenie

Celem autorki było przedstawienie bardzo specyficznego aspektu bycia rodzicem autystycznego dziecka, a mianowicie przypadek, kiedy autystyczna matka wychowuje autystycznego syna. Swoje rozważania rozpoczyna opowiadaniem o swoich osobistych doświadczeniach, a w szczególności o tym, jak diagnoza jej syna doprowadziła ją do jej własnej. Autorka analizuje takie pozytywne aspekty bycia matką w spektrum, jak specyficzny sposób komunikowania się, wyjątkowa relacja między matką a synem czy rozumienie potrzeb sensorycznych. Wśród wyzwań wskazuje na możliwe przytłoczenie sytuacją, problemy z komunikacją z neurotypowymi przedstawicielami różnych instytucji czy brak konkretnych i szczegółowych instrukcji postępowania z ich strony. Skoro autyzm jest uwarunkowany genetycznie, byłoby dobrym pomysłem, gdyby osoby pracujące z autystycznymi dziećmi wzięły pod uwagę to, że jedno (lub oboje) z rodziców również jest w spektrum.
Słowa kluczowe: autyzm., matka, macierzyństwo, genetyka, pozytywne aspekty, wyzwania

Introduction

The issue of parenting autistic children has been in the centre of researchers' attention for some time. It is crucial to note their hard work, their struggle, their need for support. There are books on general parenting e.g., how to raise a happy

child etc. However, there are no publications on how to raise an autistic child that would be a contributing member of society and a content, even happy adult. It seems like a mission impossible to some. And it is admirable to find ways to support those parents made to embark on this mission by fate rather than by their own choice.

However, it does not go without notice that the problem of parents who are autistic themselves and who raise their autistic children has not been addressed yet. More and more studies confirm the hypothesis that autism spectrum disorder (the author of this article does not approve of the term 'disorder;' it is rather a different way of existing and functioning in which being a part of society is not always easy or even possible) is genetically based. Thus, it is not at all uncommon to meet a mother or a father of an autistic child who is not entirely quite easy to talk to, who seems to be extremely resistant to, for example, accepting the diagnosis, or who knows the subject matter of autism inside out during the second session with a specialist. Parents do pass their genes to their children, including the genes of autism. Studies point out that the occurrence of ASD is caused by a combination of genes rather than just one.[1]

Therefore, it would be interesting and beneficial to consider whether autistic parents' style of upbringing differs from that of neurotypical ones. Is it more difficult for them to raise such a child, since they know painfully well what it is like to be the odd one in society? Or perhaps they naturally and subconsciously choose the right way of communication which is more efficient even in case of non-verbal autistic children? And what about the sensory make-up of both the parent and the child? Do they contradict making it difficult to co-exist or do they contribute to mutual understanding and respect?

There are many issues to be studied in case of autistic parents raising autistic children. However, research into this area would not be very easy since the parents are too often undiagnosed. When they themselves were children, the set of criteria was different and they would often get away with their little weird behaviours due to the overall intelligence, being able to somehow deal with social demands well hiding at what cost it happens.

It is not uncommon to see hidden undiagnosed autistic parents to be so fixated on fulfilling social demands that it becomes hard for them to accept that their children are autistics, not to mention accepting the signs from their own behaviours. It often happens that changing the parents' way of thinking and, what follows, acting may be the key to their child's progress.

Researching this aspect of autism could result in profound conclusions concerning communication, level of understanding, tolerance etc. And these may contribute to creating a platform for co-existence of autistics and neurotypicals within society on the appropriate level of dignity and respect for both parties.

[1] R. Muhle, S.V. Trentacoste, I. Rapin, *The Genetics of Autism*, "Pediatrics" 2004, No. 113, e476.

Since there are obvious obstacles to conducting proper scientific research into these problems, the author proposes observation and conclusions based on her own experience. Of course, it may be a starting point for further, scientifically proper investigations. A personal narrative will be used to show the way to diagnosis of both the son and the mother. That will be followed by possibly the most objective analysis leading to conclusions. Autistic brains love to analyse everything and they love the truth. That is why the method applied here could be considered close to participant observation, although the subjects observed have been the son and the author – his mother. Hopefully, the considerations in this article will be beneficial to better understanding the functioning of at least certain autistic people. Perhaps thanks to this autistic people will be less invisible, they will not be called 'it' as has been very emotionally pointed out by one of female participants of the show entitled *Autentyczni*,[2] or denied their feelings.

Our journey

My son, Alex, was born in 2008. We had some problems with the labour due to pre-eclampsia resulting from metabolic issues I had. The pregnancy was a huge change for me. My body was out of my control. I had no idea then that autism may be in fact my own reality. Now I know that I was trying to deal with change by overeating ad reaching for my favourite comforting food. Tha was my stimming, but my family perceived it as a way of taking care of the baby ('eating for two'). Unfortunately, that led to the metabolic syndrome – probably pregnancy diabetes developed in the end of the third trimester along hypertension. Alex was born with signs indicating that he was oxygen deprived and four weeks before the term but because of his size (60 cm long and weighing 4.6 kg) he was assumed a mature baby despite his low Apgar score in the first minute (5, then 7 in the 3rd minute after administering oxygen). Now I could argue that size does not equal maturity of the nervous system but unfortunately, we do not yet have tools to measure that. So, he was not placed in the incubator and soon he was brought to my room. That was my great joy.

I had always wanted to have children apart from the times of teenage depression caused by bullying at school. Later on, despite problems in relations with men and generally with other people I was quite determined to become a mother. When that finally happened, I was on cloud nine. I had a baby and I wanted all that was best for him.

When he was two or three months old, our paediatrician noticed that his muscle tension was rather weak. So, he was referred to OWI (Eng. CEI – Centre of Early Intervention) where he was evaluated by the doctor first, then by a psychologist and rehabilitated to improve his muscles. The psychologist saw him every few months to

[2] Episode with Agnieszka Chylińska broadcasted on 25 December 2025 in TVN channel.

check his development. It was then when the suggestion was made that Alex might be autistic. Unfortunately, this suggestion was made in a very unpleasant manner – the psychologist said something like 'if his autism is confirmed, that will be very bad'. I believe that my own undiagnosed autism rebelled against the statement said in this way. I could not understand why my son's autism should be treated as the end of the world, especially by me. That was one among many things I found really hard to understand when facing the institutions of diagnosis and therapy.

I was in two minds about continuing with the CEI, especially that his physical rehabilitation was over. He started sitting correctly at the right time and then the same was with crawling and finally with walking. I did listen to my family who said that he should be given time to develop in his own time. I would like to say that it was a mistake but as I later found out about autistic people, we would not cooperate with people whose attitude we do not like. Observing my son throughout his life I know that he does not like people whom I do not like either. Perhaps he picks my micro-expressions of disapproval, but I choose to think that he has his own mind and it just happens that we dislike similar vibes.

When he was one year old and started walking, there was what I call a brain reset. He stopped reacting to his name and seemed to be focused on his newly acquired skill of walking and especially running. It was difficult for me to pay a lot of attention to that since I had a newborn in my arms. On the day of Alex's first birthday his younger brother was born. And I was a single mother. Although we were married, my husband was not much around, so I was dealing with everything on my own with the help of my parents (especially my mother taking over decision-making process when I was weak after the second pregnancy and childbirth, so my executive functions were not in top shape). And no speech developed. When Alex was a baby and then a toddler, my husband would come to visit first quite often, then the frequency was steadily decreasing. So, we used quite a lot of English at home, and I researched that bilingual children tend to have their speech development delayed. After all I did not have any idea how to get proper help in that matter. No one gave me instructions, and I could not develop the right procedures. I waited until he went to kindergarten. Then even more signs were noted and another suggestion about him being autistic was made. This time I was instructed clearly enough so I pursued the process of diagnosis. When Alex was four, it became official that he was autistic.

The surprising thing was that I never pulled my hair out and asked dramatically, 'why me?'. That was never the issue for me. I was focused on what I could do to make things better. Of course, as many parents, I had the period of 'there must be a way of curing autism,' I even made a few appointments with a homeopath specialising in autistic children. Luckily, the doctor (yes, she was a doctor, but I am not sure if she still is one) was also a psychologist and a good one. She taught me one very important thing – that I should approach Alex on an instinctive

level. If I wanted him to do what I did – speak, behave well socially etc., I had to become the 'alpha' of my family herd. For example, the fact, very characteristic in our culture, that we serve food to children first, is confusing as it puts a child in a position they are not equipped to. When relying on instinct who should eat first? The hunter because they must have strength to hunt for more. Children are too weak to hunt. They do not have the skills necessary to bring food to the table. So, they should not be served first. I must say I was convinced by the logic of this argument and although reluctantly at first, I started following this rule. I know now that my autism helped me here to overcome years of cultural conditioning in the upbringing of girls in our country. I believe that there are still quite a significant number of women, especially older ones, who would never agree with the rule that they should put the oxygen mask on their own face first and then on their child's.

The changes were subtle, but they happened. Over time Alex started noticing me more. There were still meltdowns, especially when things did not go his way. I reacted intensely to them and once I looked at a situation from a distance. Alex was screaming and hitting the TV. And he liked the TV. I was trying to get to him by shouting. I was trying to be louder than him so that he could hear me. It hit me how pointless and ridiculous it was. As I was getting louder, he was getting louder. Afterwards I thought the whole situation through. I decided to change my own behaviour, to become calm. It was the more difficult that I knew that I could not pretend to be calm. Alex would know the difference right away. I had to BE calm, find a place where I could find a little bit of peace and let it overtake my mind completely. I was successful only after a few attempts because during his meltdowns automatically my emotions kicked in and I would forget about the plan (thanks to my ADHD). That was a game changer. Now at the age of 17 Alex practically does not have meltdowns. Of course, he might get frustrated when things do not go his way (just like anybody), but he learned to deal with it by running or jumping. He murmurs, sometimes, quite loudly and angrily but it is easier and easier to explain things to him.

Another game changer for us was when he learned to write. He did it from TV. First things that he learned to write were TV programmes titles. He learned it on his own. I did not treat it as anything wrong, just provided paper (a lot) and colourful pens to write (even more). Later on, when I lost hope that he would learn to speak, I invested into another game changer – a tablet with the Mówik software. He had had experience with using a tablet before and he had liked it a lot (especially the aspect of being able to have control over watching the things that he liked on YouTube, for example, and even playing them over and over again). Another tablet was not anything new to him and he got used to the beauty of communication very quickly. I took care of the settings so that he wouldn't use it for different purposes.

Now he freely communicates his needs, although I must confess he was spoiled by me quite significantly in this respect. I always knew what he was all about. I was the first to figure out what change led to his meltdown. I knew what he wanted.

I observed him and drew conclusions. For me his every move communicated something. Maybe this has not really contributed to his speech development, but it has built his trust in me. He is able to go to the doctor with me, he allows for the examination, he was even able to put up with cutting out a suspicious pigment nevus from his back, he allowed me to restrain him so that the surgeon could act and then he allowed me to remove his stitches (I was trained by the surgeon!). I know that when he has a problem, he will come to me and show it to me hoping I would solve it. Of course, first he will try to solve it on his own.

Alex cannot make his own decisions about the legal and financial matters, does not always know right from wrong (e.g. it took us a long time to understand the notion of somebody's personal property) but right now he can make a sandwich for himself, heat food in the microwave, have a shower, get dressed. He is fairly easy to live with, he is not a threat to anybody in the family (although he is 1.95m tall and weighs about 120kg), he follows instructions and helps around the house. He is very happy and knows how to be affectionate. I am very curious what he will be like in the future.

When Alex was diagnosed, I started reading everything I could about autism. I read both in Polish and in English. As I was doing this research, I noticed that more and more things were not only about Alex but also about me. He was doing something and I remembered the sensation just from watching him. He was putting something into his mouth (when he was a few years old) and I could easily recall the taste. I started thinking that we were more similar that one would guess from the first glance.

Then I decided to face the facts and did some tests online. At first, they indicated that I was at the threshold, but I felt that there was something wrong with my answers. It took me some time to go beyond my own 'fit-at-any-cost' mask and be totally honest with myself. When I managed to do that, I got results that I should seek specialist's counselling and professional diagnosis. So, I did it because, as a real autistic, I needed confirmation of my suspicions. I got it. In 2024 I was diagnosed with atypical autism and in 2025 with ADHD. I know where Alex's autism comes from. And my life makes a lot more sense now. I understand myself better, my close friend understands me better and I do not doubt that I really understand Alex, his way of communication and his reactions.

Autistic mother – positives

The author's experience shows that the parent's autism (mother in this case – perhaps it would be advisable to take into account the specificity and disparity of female autism[3]) may positively influence the quality of relations between her and the child and in consequence also the relations between the child and other members of society.

[3] E. Furgał, *Autentyczna w spektrum*, Warszawa 2023, p. 19.

The first and the most obvious observation is the quality of communication between the autistic parent and child. On the one hand, it may foster even longer delay in speech development, but on the other hand, it may add to building trust. It is the author's conviction that autistic people need in their lives somebody who helps them make sense of the world, of all the confusing, chaotic sensations that attack them from all directions and all the time. A high-functioning adult can do that for their child and that leads to decreasing the level of anxiety. The world may become a little friendlier place.

This is, of course, closely connected with the sensory imbalances in both the mother and the child. As it has been mentioned in Introduction these may be contradictory or complementary. For instance, the mother may be visually oversensitive and the child – visually undersensitive. What consequences may it have in their life? The child may try to fill their room (if they have one) with various LED lights, often blinking, bright and in sharp colours. The mother may have problems with staying in the child's room as the lights give her headache and nausea. The child may focus better with the lights on. The mother must work on the child's skills when they are really focused. The situation seems to be impossible to solve.

However, this kind of situation may be treated as a perfect opportunity to teach mutual respect. It is always a good idea to talk about all those sensations and come up with solutions which would be beneficial for both parties. The child may limit the lights to one mobile blinking thing that they may place out of their mother's sight (e.g. under the desk). In time it may evolve to the situation that just the presence of this object will be enough for them.

Let us not be deceived by this apparent imbalance that only child gives way. The mother must do it as well. She has to disregard those glimpses of light that may appear under the desk. And for autistic people ignoring something that is frustrating is not an easy task. Especially that there is always a danger of anxious fixation on the area where it occurred and may occur again.

The crucial thing here is that the mother understands that the light is important for the child just as, for example, loud music or certain perfume would be for her. She understands how certain sensory input may increase or decrease focus, may bring pleasant and relaxing or unpleasant and stressful sensations. They may relate their oversensitivity or undersensitivity within different senses to each other.

It is possible to explain those things even to non-verbal autistic children, as the author managed to do with her son. He respects her oversensitivity to sound (wearing headphones and releasing his loud expressions of pleasure from watching favourite adverts on his tablet in the bathroom, where they do not seem so loud), and she respects his oversensitivity to touch (hugs only for a second or two, always releasing at his very first attempt to move away).

This sensory awareness makes it possible for the parent to pick the child's oversensitivities earlier and, thus, act in a way that can prevent possible meltdowns

due to sensory overload. Also, the autistic adult may more easily notice when the child is getting close to the meltdown point and ease the situation with the child's favourite stims, for example.

Self-stimming activities are also the area of mutual understanding. The parent may use here their experience of what is acceptable in the world and direct the child's stimming into such activities which are both acceptable and in accordance with the child's sensory profile. An autistic adult who manages to go beyond their own camouflaging will not discourage the child's self-stimming as they are well-aware of the benefits the specific nervous system of autistic individuals gets from such activities.

An autistic parent would subconsciously understand that their autistic child needs clear and unambiguous boundaries. Youngsters need very distinct lines between right and wrong. They need honest feedback about their behaviour. If something they do, is bad, they need to hear it and then hear what they should do instead to make it good. For neurotypical people this behaviour may seem a bit harsh as they do everything in their power (especially women) not to seem mean or angry. This is the cultural conditioning in our society. The autistic people, however, do not perceive it as being mean or angry. It is just giving honest information. And the instruction what to do better is a necessary condition to restore the sense of security.

What is more, when difficult behaviours occur, the parent on the spectrum is less likely to seek escape. They would rather view such behaviours as problems to solve. And when one has a problem to solve, one needs to find the cause for the behaviour. In many cases once the cause is found, the behaviour disappears. This adds to the total non-judgemental acceptance an autistic parent may offer their child.

Many parents on the spectrum do all those things without even thinking about them. It seems to them that they and their child speak the same language. This cannot be overestimated as a factor contributing to the development of the child and perhaps even the parent. Knowing that a person is understood by somebody in the world makes life a lot easier and decreases the risk of depression as it often stems from the feeling of being alone and misunderstood in the world.

Autistic mother – challenges

It should be kept in mind that the decision of an autistic woman to have a child is not an easy one. The sensory side of the pregnancy, the labour, the care of the newborn may be a problem for an individual with various over- and undersensitivities. The mother may be so overwhelmed that it becomes impossible to stay with the child. This kind of situation was beautifully depicted in the film *The Hours*.[4] The

[4] *The Hours* (2002) directed by S. Daldry.

poet's mother, Laura, played by Julianne Moore who leaves her husband and her son to work as a librarian shows quite strong characteristics of an autistic woman. The family was too much for her, she had to get away to breathe.

What is more, supporting a new autistic mother may be a bit complicated. Part of autism is the need to maintain control. It is the basis for the sense of security. Making plans, doing research, making decisions is the proof that things go right and may indicate that there is nothing wrong with the child. However, new mothers are often exhausted, sleep deprived, full of hormones unpleasantly dropping after the birth. All these factors may lead to problems with executive functioning. The woman seems to be one thousand percent confident in how she is handling the baby (because she has read everything she could on the subject) and then there comes one drop that spills the spell, everything is too much, and she is unable to make any decision even whether to use the toilet. This imbalance in functioning is often frustrating and unclear to people surrounding the mother. Nevertheless, a person who can responsibly and in the right timing take over the executive functions is a real treasure.

Another huge issue may be the relations with the external world, with the neurotypical people, the taking care of official and institutional matters, talking on the phone, talking to people, trying to read between the lines. In the author's experience even qualified professionals in the field of psychology may disregard the fact the parent may be or is autistic. Parents are often given information about what would be 'good to do' without specific details. Vague messages like 'maybe it's this or maybe it's that' are useless for autistic individuals. And when they do not specifically know what to do, when, where and with whom, they will not do that. The author was told about her suspected ADHD and that the diagnosis had to be paid for. That was not detailed enough. The author needed to know where she should go and who she should talk to. When she got these details, she was able to act.

The autistic adults also have problems with literal understanding of especially legal regulations. That may contradict the neurotypical understanding. When they are not told that those requirements should be accompanied by additional e.g. documents, they will not provide them. When the author applied for the next disability certificate for her son, she submitted all the documents listed on the application form. Then, during the interview the psychologist told her off for not submitting all the required documents. It was unpleasantly surprising. When things are untrue or go in a dishonest way, autists often freeze as if they have huge difficulty with processing something wrong happening in the world or someone saying something very far from the truth. That is why they keep their silence and do not say anything as there is usually no time left to process the wrong information. The author of this article managed to speak up in her defence saying that the documents from school were not listed on the application form. In response she heard that all parents submit them and the legislators did not take them into consideration but hey should.

Autistic people are unable to figure something like that out on their own, but they learn from their mistakes. The author will never forget the school documents again.

It has been stated before that not all autistic parents will benefit from their own autism while parenting an autistic child. The biggest obstacle that may even be harmful to the well-being of the child, not to mention the mental health of the parent themself, is camouflaging of the adult. When its level reaches the point of being completely unrecognised by the adult, it may result in many negative consequences, such as low self-esteem in both the parent and the child, loss of identity, the parent could obsess about what other people think and, thus, reject the child as being different. There is also the danger of not accepting the diagnosis and not providing suitable therapy for the child.

Conclusions

Drawing from personal experience leading from the author's son's diagnosis to her own diagnosis, the author has attempted to analyse how being an autistic mother helped or challenger her in the upbringing of her son. She pays attention to the following positive aspects of motherhood on the spectrum:

a) better communication with the son;
b) absolute acceptance of the child;
c) problem-solving attitude towards difficult behaviours;
d) understanding sensory problems;
e) allowing for and directing self-stimming;
f) setting clear boundaries;
g) ability to change the parent's behaviour for the sake of the child.

In the following way motherhood on the spectrum may be challenging:

a) parenting may be overwhelming;
b) camouflaging and rejecting their own autism may be harmful to both the child and the parent;
c) communication with neurotypical world in their child interest – lack of specific instructions, not following legal regulations in a strict way.

It is hard to be a parent in today's world. It is even harder to be a parent of an autistic child. However, when the parent can find at least some genetic traces of autism in themself, it may have surprising results in the life of the whole family.

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The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS) as a tool for measuring attitudes toward people with disabilities – characteristics and examples of its use in research

Wielowymiarowa Skala Postaw Wobec Osób z Niepełnosprawnościami (MAS) jako narzędzie do pomiaru postaw wobec osób z niepełnosprawnościami – charakterystyka i przykłady zastosowania skali w badaniach

Abstract

The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS), developed by Liora Findler, Noa Vilchinsky, and Shirli Werner in 2007, assumes that attitudes consist of three dimensions: feelings, cognition, and behaviour. Respondents are asked to imagine various situations involving a person in a wheelchair and indicate the intensity of emotions, thoughts, and potential behaviours that a person without disabilities might experience in these situations. The scale also allows for the identification of the domains of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours. The Polish versions of the MAS scale: PL-MAS, MAS-PL and MAS- POL are a reliable tool for examining attitudes toward people with disabilities in Poland. There are also adaptations of the scale in other languages, including, among others, Spanish (Spanish MAS), German (G-MAS), French (F-MAS), and Korean (MAS-K), which allow for comparison of research findings across different populations or cultures. This article presents the characteristics of the MAS scale and examples of its use in research.

Keywords: MAS scale, attitude, disability, inclusion

Streszczenie

Wielowymiarowa Skala Postaw wobec Osób z Niepełnosprawnościami (MAS), opracowana przez Liorę Findler, Noa Vilchinsky i Shirli Werner w 2007 roku zakłada, że postawy składają się z trzech wymiarów: uczuć, poznania i zachowania. Respondent proszony jest o wyobrażenie sobie różnych sytuacji z udziałem osoby poruszającej się na wózku inwalidzkim i wskazanie natężenia emocji, myśli i potencjalnych zachowań, których może doświadczyć osoba bez niepełnosprawności zaangażowana w te sytuacje. Skala umożliwia także wyróżnienie obszaru emocji, przekonań i zachowań. Polskie wersje skali MAS: PL-MAS, MAS-PL oraz MAS-POL stanowią wiarygodne narzędzie do badania postaw

Polaków wobec osób z niepełnosprawnościami. Istnieją również adaptacje skali w innych językach, m.in. w języku hiszpańskim (hiszpański MAS), niemieckim (G-MAS), francuskim (F-MAS) czy koreańskim (MAS-K), co pozwala na porównanie wyników badań tą skalą wśród różnych populacji bądź kultur. W artykule zaprezentowano charakterystykę skali MAS i przykłady jej zastosowania w badaniach.

Słowa kluczowe: skala MAS, postawa, niepełnosprawność, inkluzja

Introduction

The literature contains over 30 definitions of the term "attitude"[1] which have been proposed over the years. As early as in the mid-20th century, Jack Granofsky[2] argued that three criteria should be considered when studying attitudes toward people with disabilities: feelings toward them, cognitive attitudes, and social behaviours.[3] Although there is still no universally accepted definition, most researchers agree that attitudes are constructs containing affective (the amount of positive or negative feelings), cognitive (ideas, thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, opinions), and behavioural (individual intentions or desires to behave in a certain way or to actually behave) components.[4] There are numerous self-assessment tools of adequate quality for assessing attitudes towards people with disabilities.[5] Original questionnaires are often used, created specifically for the needs of author's own research, which allow for a comprehensive, rich characterisation of behaviour towards people with disabilities.[6] The most well-known and longest-used tool is the Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP), developed in 1960 by Harold E. Yunker, James R. Block and William J. Campbell,[7] which measures affective and behavioural

[1] S. Rao, *Faculty Attitudes and Students With Disabilities in Higher Education: A Literature Review*, "College Student Journal" 2004, No. 38(2), pp. 191–198.

[2] J. Granofsky, *Modification of Attitudes Toward the Visibly Disabled: An Experimental Study of the Effectiveness of Social Contact in Producing a Modification of the Attitudes of Non-disabled Females Toward Visibly Disabled Males*, Yeshiva University 1955.

[3] E.M. Kulesza, *Polish adaptation of Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS) By L. Findler, N. Vilchinsky, S. Werner* [in:] *12th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation. ICE RI2019 Proceedings (2697–2703)*, IATED 2019.

[4] S. Nowak, *Pojęcie postawy w teoriach i stosowanych badaniach społecznych* [in:] *Teorie postaw*, ed. S. Nowak, Warszawa 1973, pp. 17–88; M, Marody, *Sens teoretyczny a sens empiryczny pojęcia postawy – analiza metodologiczna zasad doboru wskaźników w badaniach nad postawami*, Warszawa 1976; J.M. Olson, M.P. Zanna, *Attitudes and Attitude Change*, "Annual Review of Psychology" 1993, No. 44, pp. 118–120.

[5] Y.Y. Palad, R.B. Barquia, H.C. Domingo, C.K. Flores, L.I. Padilla, J.M. Ramel, *Scoping review of instruments measuring attitudes toward disability*, "Disabil Health J" 2016, No. 9(3), pp. 354–374.

[6] *A literature review of methods used to measure attitudes towards disability*, https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/A-literature-review-of-methods-used-to-measure-attitudes-towards-disability-PDF.pdf (6.01.2026).

[7] H.E. Yuker, J.R. Block, W.J. Campbell, *A scale to measure attitudes toward disabled persons*, Albertson, NY 1960.

domains. The ATDP has become a benchmark for many other scales, including the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS).

One of the tools for examining attitudes based on the above criteria, i.e. multidimensionality – which, in the opinion of many researchers[8] is necessary to obtain accurate data – is the multidimensional MAS scale: Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Towards Persons with Disabilities, developed in Israel by Liora Findler, Noa Vilchinsky and Shirli Werner in 2007.[9] MAS is increasingly used as a tool for measuring attitudes in various situations, including after educational intervention and with respect to people with various types of disabilities, by modifying the scenario of the illustration that begins the study, as is the case, for example, in the Japanese version. As a reliable, multidimensional tool with solid psychometric properties that has been thoroughly tested and verified, the MAS scale can be used to develop educational programmes and test their effectiveness.[10]

General characteristics of the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Towards Persons with Disabilities (MAS)

The original MAS scale was developed to examine attitudes toward people with physical disabilities.[11] The tool presents a scenario vignette, which is often used as a direct or, as in the case of the MAS, indirect measure of attitudes, examining implicit prejudice. Vignettes are a research method that involves presenting respondents with short, descriptive scenarios (sketches) simulating real-life events involving hypothetical characters. The goal is to elicit responses and opinions about how respondents would behave or how they evaluate a given situation. Vignettes are particularly useful when logistical or ethical reasons prevent direct observation or contextualisation of the participant.[12] Vignettes can be presented in various formats – text, visual (images, videos) – and can take the form of single scenarios or a sequence of unfolding stages.[13] A vignette typically consists of two key elements:

[8] R.F. Antonak, H. Livneh, *Measurement of attitudes towards persons with disabilities*, "Disability and Rehabilitation: An International, Multidisciplinary Journal" 2000, No. 22(5), pp. 211–224.

[9] L. Findler, N. Vilchinsky, S. Werner, *The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS): Construction and Validation*, "Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin" 2007, No. 50(3), pp. 166–176.

[10] I. Radlińska, M. Kożybska, B. Karakiewicz, *Attitudes of polish medical and health sciences students towards persons with physical disabilities using the mas-pl scale*, "Int J Environ Res Public Health" 2021, No. 18, 7787.

[11] L. Findler, N. Vilchinsky, S. Werner, *The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale*…, pp. 166–176.

[12] P. Fleming, M. Stalker, *In Focus: Using Vignettes in Public Health Research* [in:] *Public Health Research Methods*, eds. G. Guest, E. Namey, Thousand Oaks, CA 2015, pp. 611–614; A. Benedetti, J. Jackson, L. Luo, *Vignettes: Implications for LIS research*, "College & Research Libraries" 2018, No. 79(2), p. 222.

[13] A. Benedetti, J. Jackson, L. Luo, *Vignettes*…, p. 222.

an initial description of a hypothetical situation and a measure of the participant's response to it. After familiarizing themselves with the scenario, respondents answer open-ended or closed-ended questions with predefined response categories.[14]

The MAS scale presents a scenario vignette describing a situation in which a person, "Joseph" or "Michelle," unexpectedly spends several minutes with a person in a wheelchair and explores their interactions. Joseph or Michelle went to lunch with friends. During lunch, a person in a wheelchair (male or female) joins the group. After the friends leave, they are left alone (waiting for transportation) with the man/woman in the wheelchair. Respondents are asked to rate the likelihood that Joseph or Michelle might experience different attitudes in this situation. Attitudes encompass three dimensions: affect, cognition, and behaviour. The affect dimension includes items related to unpleasant (e.g., "fear" or "disgust") and pleasant (e.g., "calm") emotions. The cognitive dimension includes items related to positive thoughts (e.g., "He/she seems to be an interesting guy/girl"). Additionally, the attitudinal behaviours dimension includes items related to approach (e.g., Joseph/Michelle will "start a conversation"), avoidance (e.g., Joseph/Michelle will "continue what he/she was doing"), and escape (e.g., Joseph/Michelle will "move to another table").[15]

Participants are then asked to answer 34 questions indicating how and to what extent the person without disabilities in the scenario feels (16 items, including 3 negative, 11 positive, and 2 neutral), thinks (10 items – all positive), or behaves (8 items – 6 negative and 2 positive). The questions are not directed at the respondent directly, but are based on a projection mechanism that ensures greater honesty in responses. This also allows respondents to distance themselves from the topic, making it easier to answer and eliminate feelings of embarrassment.[16] Respondents act as the "narrator" and are tasked with guessing the attitudes of the "main character" (Michelle or Joseph). The gender of the "main character" is usually matched to the gender of the respondent. Respondents indicate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means "not at all" (disagree) and 5 "very much" (agree). The Likert scale makes it easier for respondents to answer the question because they are not forced to provide a definitive answer but can indicate their level of agreement. Positive items require reverse scoring. Higher scores indicate greater negative attitudes toward people with disabilities. In addition to the overall score, the scale allows for differentiation in terms of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours.

[14] J. Andersson, R. Luthra, P. Hurtig, M. Tideman, *Employer attitudes toward hiring persons with disabilities: A vignette study in Sweden*, "Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation" 2015, No. 43(1), pp. 41–50.

[15] M. Tsujita, M. Ban, S.-I. Kumagaya, *The Japanese Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons With Autism Spectrum Disorder*, "The Japanese Psychological Association" 2021, No. 63(3), pp. 129–139.

[16] J. Finch, *The Vignette Technique in Survey Research*, "Sociology" 1987, No. 21(1), pp. 105–114; N.E. Schoenberg, H. Ravdal, *Using vignettes in awareness and attitudinal research*, "International Journal of Social Research Methodology" 2000, No. 3(1), pp. 63–74.

Adaptations of the MAS scale in other languages and research samples

Besides the original version, there are also adaptations of the scale in other languages: e.g., Serbian (Serbian MAS),[17] Spanish (research conducted in Colombia – MAS),[18] French (F-MAS autism),[19] Korean (research conducted in South Korea – MAS-K),[20] Persian (research conducted in Iran),[21] German (G-MAS),[22] Turkish (Turkish MAS),[23] Chinese (C-MAS),[24] Japanese (J-Mass),[25] Portuguese – research was conducted in Mozambique (MAS-PT),[26] Greek (Greek MAS),[27] Ukrainian (MAS-UA),[28] Hungarian (MAS-H),[29] which allow for comparison of

[17] N. Dragojević, I. Milačić-Vidojević, N. Hanak, *Attitudes Toward People With Physical Disabilities, their structure and correlating variables*, "Special Education and Rehabilitation Science and/or Practice" 2010, pp. 29–51.

[18] L.F. Stevens, M.A. Getachew, P.B. Perrin, D. Olivera, S.L. Plaza, *Factor analysis of the Spanish Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities*, "Rehabilitation Psychology" 2013, No. 58(4), pp. 396–404.

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[20] J. Lu, K.H. Kim, *Understanding self-report Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward People with Disabilities: An exploratory analysis*, "Rehabilitation Psychology" 2017, No. 62(2), pp. 110–118.

[21] N. Vakilizadeh, S. Faramarzi, *Investigating psychometric properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Attitudes Towards People with Disabilities in students of Isfahan University in 2015*, "Journal of Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services" 2017, No. 15(12), pp. 1119–1132.

[22] J. Wöhrle, S. Franke, R. Kissgen, *The German Multidimensional Attitude Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities (G-MAS): A factor analytical study among high-school students*, "Rehabilitation Psychology" 2018, No. 63(1), pp. 83–91.

[23] İ. Yelpaze, A. S. Türküm, *Adaptation and Validation of Turkey Version of Multidimensional Attitudes toward Persons with Disabilities*, "OPUS International Journal of Society Researches" 2018, No. 8(14), pp. 167–187.

[24] Mh. Lu, Ff. Pang, J. Luo, *Chinese Validation of the Multidimensional Attitude Scale toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS): Attitudes toward Autism Spectrum Disorders*, "J Autism Dev Disord" 2020, No. 50, pp. 3777–3789.

[25] M. Tsujita, M. Ban, S.-I. Kumagaya, *The Japanese Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons With Autism Spectrum Disorder*, "The Japanese Psychological Association" 2021, No. 63(3), pp. 129–139.

[26] L.R. de Vera Mouliaá, J. Muria Ângelo, A.B. López Martínez, *Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons With Disabilities (MAS): tradução e adaptação à língua portuguesa (MAS-PT)*, "Motricidades: Revista Da Sociedade De Pesquisa Qualitativa Em Motricidade Humana" 2020, No. 4(2), pp. 84–99.

[27] O. Govina, M. Polikandrioti, G. Vasilopoulos, T. Adamakidou, S. Plakas, I. Kalemikerakis, P. Galanis, G. Fouka, *Validation with nursing students of the Greek version of the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale (MAS) towards people with disabilities*, "Archives of Hellenic Medicine" 2020, No. 37(4), pp. 521–528.

[28] A. Szpakow, K. Kowalczuk, J. Baj-Korpak, D. Sokołowska, Y. Antonova-Rafi, I. Khudetskyy, O. Detsyk, M. Hryshchuk, O. Fedorciv, A. Bazylevych, O. Hdyrya, L. Vilchynskaya, *Multidimensional attitudes scale toward persons with disabilities: Factor and exploratory analysis for a Ukrainian version (MAS-UA)*, "Med Sci Pulse" 2023, No. 17(4), pp. 56–66.

[29] P. István, B.K. Beáta, *A fogyatékossággal élőkkel kapcsolatos attitűdök, társadalmi marketing teendők*, "Marketing & Menedzsment" 2024, No. 58(3), pp. 5–14.

research results using this scale across different populations and cultures. Examples of comparative studies using the MAS scale include a comparison of the attitudes of students from Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia toward people using wheelchairs,[30] and an analysis of student attitudes toward people with disabilities in Palestine compared to their peers in Norway.[31] A group of Israeli researchers[32] analysed cross-cultural differences in attitudes toward people with disabilities among Jewish and Arab students in Israel, as well as the role of religion (fear of divine punishment) and respect in Arab attitudes. Figure 1 illustrates linguistic adaptations of the MAS scale, in the order in which they were developed.



Figure 1. Linguistic adaptations of the MAS scale in the order in which they were developed

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Studies using the MAS scale have focused primarily on university students (e.g., Turkish MAS, Korean MAS-K, Persian MAS, Chinese C-MAS, Ukrainian MAS-UA, Greek MAS, Polish MAS-POL, Hungarian MAS-H), but have also included other adult samples (e.g., original MAS, Japanese J-MAS, Portuguese MAS-PT, Serbian MAS, Polish PL-MAS, and MAS-PL). German researchers have investigated the validity of this psychometric tool for use with a different age group, namely adolescents and high school students.[33]

[30] A. Szpakow, J. Jurikova, A. Pokorná et al., *Students' Attitudes Toward Wheelchair Users in Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia: A Cross-Sectional Study During Wartime and Social Change*, "Bratisl. Med. J." 2025, Vol. 126, pp. 3208–3218.

[31] E. Gustafsson, N. Alawi, P.N. Andersen, *University students' attitudes toward the physically disabled in Palestine and Norway: A multidimensional, comparative and quantitative study*, "An-Najah University Journal for Research – B (Humanities)" 2019, No. 33(11), pp. 1881–1897.

[32] N. Tal-Alon, Y.S. Roitman, A. Cohen, W. Masalha, N. Almog, *Cross-Cultural Differences in Attitudes Towards Persons with Disabilities: A Study of Jewish And Arab Young Adults in Israel*, "American J Sci Edu Re" 2024, No. 153, pp. 6–8.

[33] J. Wöhrle, S. Franke, R. Kissgen, *The German Multidimensional Attitude Scale*…, pp. 83–91.

Factor structure of language adaptations of the MAS scale

In most population-based studies, the remaining language versions exhibited the same factor structure – i.e., three internally consistent and mutually independent factors, corresponding to the three attitude components. However, some studies have suggested the possibility of a different approach to the MAS domains, for example, introducing linguistic changes involving the addition, deletion, or division of various elements, e.g., items, and the identification of a larger or smaller number of factors.[34] The number of factors and items in selected language adaptations of the MAS scale is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of factors and items in individual linguistic adaptations of the MAS scale

Language version of the scale	Number of factors	Number of items
original version	3	34
Turkish	3	31
Polish (MAS-PL)	3	34
Polish (PL-MAS)	3	30
Spanish	4	30
French	4	20
German	4	16
Chinese	4	34
Korean	4	27
Japanese	4	25
Greek	4	33
Polish (PL-MAS)	4	29
Ukrainian	5	34

Source: Author's own elaboration.

An alternative, five-factor solution with a limited set of items (22 instead of 34), proposed by Vilchinsky et al.,[35] demonstrated better and adequate model fit. This solution divided the single emotion factor into three, more narrowly defined factors: calmness, negative emotions, and interpersonal stress. The Ukrainian MAS-UA also has a five-factor structure (classical domains – cognitive, affective, and behavioural – and two subscales of the affective component: "negative emotions" and "calmness," alongside a fifth component called "willingness to communicate"), with 34 items. In research over the past few years, researchers using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) have demonstrated a better fit of the four-factor model. In the

[34] I. Radlińska, A. Starkowska, M. Kożybska, K. Flaga-Gieruszyńska, B. Karakiewicz, *The multidimensional attitudes scale towards persons with disabilities (MAS) – a Polish adaptation (MAS-PL)*, "Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine" 2020, No. 27,4, pp. 613–620.

[35] N. Vilchinsky, S. Werner, L. Findler, *Gender and attitudes toward people using wheelchairs: A multidimensional perspective*, "Rehabil Couns Bull" 2010, No. 53(3), pp. 163–174.

four-dimensional MAS, the affect factor was further divided into two new factors labelled calmness and negative emotions (negative emotions, calmness, positive cognition, avoidance behaviour). This model, with modified items, was first introduced in the Spanish version in 2013 (30 items) and subsequently implemented in the French version in 2015 (20 items), the German version in 2018 (16 items), and the Japanese version in 2021 (25 items). The Greek adaptation is also four-dimensional, but the emotion factor is divided into three subscales, totalling 33 items. The Chinese version contains the original number of items but four factors. Some adaptations, such as the Serbian one, ultimately distinguished two subscales for each factor, taking into account their positive and negative aspects as follows: affects (negative but potentially positive emotions/strong negative emotions), cognitions (positive/troublesome), and behaviours (avoidance/approach).

Application of the MAS scale to measure specific disability

To date, few attempts have been made to adapt the MAS scale to measure attitudes toward specific disabilities. In French studies, a four-factor model was used to measure attitudes toward people with autism. Studies have shown that the Chinese four-factor MAS is suitable for assessing attitudes toward people with autism spectrum disorder in a Chinese context.[36] The Japanese Model (J-MAS) also provides a reliable assessment of attitudes toward persons with autism spectrum disorder among typical Japanese people.[37] In Chile, a modified Spanish version of the MAS for deaf individuals was developed, with a four-factor structure, consistent with the earlier version of the scale in that language.[38] In Dutch studies,[39] an attempt was made to apply a three-factor model to assess attitudes toward people who are deaf, blind, paralyzed, or have intellectual disabilities. As a result, a separate questionnaire was created for each disability. Because there was no clear factor structure applicable to all four types of disabilities, further analysis of the MAS was not conducted.[40] Recent American research[41] focused on modifying the original version of the MAS to assess

[36] M.h. Lu, F.-f. Pang, J. Luo, *Chinese Validation of the Multidimensional Attitude Scale toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS): Attitudes toward Autism Spectrum Disorders*, "J Autism Dev Disord" 2020, No. 50, pp. 3777–3789.

[37] M. Tsujita, M. Ban, S-I., Kumagaya, *The Japanese Multidimensional Attitudes Scale*…, pp. 129–139.

[38] V. Campos, L. Luengo, R. Cartes-Velásquez, *Factor analysis of the cross-cultural adaptation of the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale towards Deaf persons in Chilean dental students*, "Brazilian Journal of Oral Sciences" 2021, pp. 1–10.

[39] İ. Yelpaze, A. S. Türküm, *Adaptation and Validation of Turkey Version*…, pp. 167–187.

[40] I. Radlińska, A. Starkowska, M. Kożybska, K. Flaga-Gieruszyńska, B. Karakiewicz, *The multidimensional*…, pp. 613–620.

[41] J. Park, A. Levine, H.J. Kuo, B. Lee, P.N. Beymer, *Validation of the multiple disability multidimensional attitudes scale toward persons with disabilities*, "Rehabilitation Psychology" 2023, No. 68(2), pp. 194–203.

attitudes toward individuals with anxiety disorders, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), blindness, and schizophrenia. New scenarios were developed describing situations of interaction with a person with each type of disability (multiple disabilities). The resulting four-factor scale, MD-MAS (*multiple disability multidimensional attitudes scale toward persons with disabilities*), allows researchers to compare attitudes across disability types. This will have significant implications for research and practice in understanding the nature of different attitudes depending on disability type.

Polish adaptations of the MAS scale

PL-MAS, the first Polish version of the MAS scale, was developed and presented by Ewa Kulesza in 2019,[42] followed by the MAS-PL scale by Iwona Radlińska, Anna Starkowska, Marta Kożybska, Kinga Flaga-Gieruszyńska, Beata Karakiewicz[43] in 2020 and the MAS-POL scale by Stanisława Byra and Ewa Domagała-Zyśk in 2022,[44] as reliable tools for examining Poles' attitudes toward people with disabilities. The authors of all three versions conducted research on an adult population, primarily students of Polish universities (in the fields of education (PL-MAS), medicine (MAS-PL), and social sciences and humanities (MAS-POL)). The first two Polish adaptations contain three components: PL-MAS (behaviour, knowledge, and affect) and MAS-PL (affect, beliefs/thoughts, behaviour). The reliabilities of all these dimensions are high and similar to those of the Israeli version. The difference lies in the number of items. The PL-MAS version contains 30 items (affect – 14; knowledge – 10, behaviour – 6), while the MAS-PL contains 34 items, identical to the original MAS. Furthermore, the Polish versions used different names in the description of the situation. The PL-MAS used Maria/Jan as popular Polish names during the adaptation period, the MAS-PL used Adam/Ewa, and the MAS-POL used Joanna and Maciek (two people, not one to choose from), as names more popular in Poland than the original Michelle and Joseph. The MAS-PL version does not use personal pronouns, only the term "person in a wheelchair" to refer to the person being described, and in one item replaces the English-sounding word "OK" with the typically Polish "w porządku" (fine). The MAS-POL scale, developed by Byra and Domagała-Zyśk, includes separate versions measuring attitudes toward people experiencing different, but most representative, types of disabilities: people with

[42] E.M. Kulesza, *Polish adaptation…*; *eadem*, *Polska Wielowymiarowa Skala Postaw Wobec Osób Z Niepełnosprawnościami (PL-Mas) – Adaptacja Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities (Mas) L. Findler, N. Vilchinsky, S. Werner (2007)*, "Studia z Teorii Wychowania" 2022, Vol. 13, No. 3(40), pp. 239–250.

[43] I. Radlińska, A. Starkowska, M. Kożybska, K. Flaga-Gieruszyńska, B. Karakiewicz, *The multidimensional…*, pp. 613–620.

[44] S. Byra, E. Domagała-Zyśk, *Wielowymiarowa Skala Postaw Wobec Osób z Niepełnosprawnościami – sprawdzenie właściwości psychometrycznych polskiej wersji*, "Studia z Teorii Wychowania" 2022, Vol. XIII, No. 3(40), pp. 219–238.

motor, intellectual, and sensory disabilities, deaf, and blind people. It consists of 29 items that form four subscales (attitude dimensions): positive beliefs and behaviours initiating contact, avoidance behaviour, calmness, and negative emotions. The sum of the individual subscales yields an overall score.

Examples of studies using the MAS scale

Research using the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward Persons with Disabilities, either as a sole tool or in conjunction with a second tool, has been conducted primarily by the authors of their language adaptations, immediately after completing the validation process. Therefore, the most recent studies are conducted in countries where language adaptations of the scale were developed relatively recently. They mainly focus on the analysis of attitudes of students of various universities and fields of study towards people with disabilities,[45] including students of social sciences and humanities,[46] students of physical education universities, in the fields of tourism and recreation, physical education and physiotherapy,[47] students of medical fields,[48] mainly nursing.[49]

The subject of the research was, among others, to examine the relationship between the student teachers' self-esteem and their attitudes towards inclusive education,[50] to determine the relationship between attitudes towards people with disabilities

[45] A. Szpakow, J. Jurikova, A. Pokorná et al., *Students' Attitudes Toward Wheelchair Users*…, pp. 3208–3218.

[46] D. Tomczyszyn, A. Pańczuk, A. Szepeluk, *Attitudes of Students of Social Sciences and Humanities towards People with Physical Disabilities (MAS-PL)*, "International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health" 2022, No. 19(3), 1544.

[47] A. Leś, M. Lipko-Kowalska, *Postawy studentów uczelni sportowych wobec osób z niepełnosprawnościami – badania pilotażowe*, "Studia Periegetica" 2023, No. 40(4), pp. 71–82.

[48] I. Radlińska, M. Kożybska, B. Karakiewicz, *Attitudes of polish medical and health sciences students towards persons with physical disabilities using the mas-pl scale*, "Int J Environ Res Public Health" 2021, No. 18, 7787; T. Sinha, A. Parish, D.H. Jr Lein, E. Wylie, C. Carver, W.S. Brooks, *Integration of Disability Awareness Improves Medical Students' Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities*, "Medical Science Educator" 2024, No. 34(3), pp. 561–569.

[49] M. Polikandrioti, G.Basilopoulos , O. Govina, T. Adamakidou, S. Plakas, I. Kalemikerakis, P. Galanis, G. Fouka, *Nursing students' attitudes towards people with disabilities*, "International Journal of Caring Sciences" 2020, pp. 480–488; D. Tomczyszyn, A. Pańczuk, A. Ławnik, A. Szepeluk, K. Łaskarzewska, E. Kobos, Z. Sienkiewicz, L. Marcinowicz, E. Szlenk-Czyczerska, E. Krupińska, K. Jaracz, *Nursing students' attitudes towards persons with physical disabilities. Cross-sectional study,* "Journal of Health Inequalities" 2023, No. 9(2), pp. 185–193; S. Yilmaz, Y. Kitis, *Nursing Students' Attitudes towards Disabled Individuals: A Descriptive Study*, "International Journal of Caring Sciences" 2024, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 1266–1276; V. Rozani, S. Zur-Peled, A.A. Aharon, *Caring for people with intellectual disabilities: Insights from a cross-sectional study among nursing students*, "Nurse Education Today" 2024, Vol. 138, No. 106187.

[50] S. Byra, E. Domagała-Zyśk, *Multidimensional assessment of student teachers' self-esteem and attitudes towards inclusive education and people with disabilities*, "Teach. Educ." 2021, No. 33(3), pp. 237–253.

and personality traits such as agreeableness, extroversion, conscientiousness and openness,[51] to examine the relationship between problematic use of the Internet and attitudes towards people with disabilities,[52] or the importance of the influence of direct contacts with these people and the need for social approval on the formation of attitudes.[53] A team of American researchers[54] examined the importance of using an intervention in the form of an educational programme containing, among others, disability etiquette, interprofessional learning sessions, and a debriefing session. The MAS was also used to determine the impact of volunteering as a camp counsellor or leisure time animator for people with disabilities on attitudes toward them.[55] Research was also conducted on samples other than university students. One example is a study of attitudes toward persons with disabilities among people holding managerial positions in various departments of community centres.[56] Another example is a study of factors that may influence the attitudes of people working or training as mental health professionals.[57] Attitudes towards specific disabilities were also examined in order to assess the attitudes of people from different age groups towards people with intellectual disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic,[58] to notice the evolving social attitudes towards people with physical disabilities – people using wheelchairs – in the face of the ongoing armed conflict,[59] to assess the perception of people with visual impairments by non-disabled people and determine the role of personality traits in shaping attitudes towards them.[60]

[51] I. Radlińska, M. Kożybska, A. Prajzner, Ł. Krzywoszański, B. Karakiewicz, *Attitudes towards persons with disabilities vs. personality traits of Polish students*, "Frontiers in Psychiatry" 2025, vol. 15, 1477877.

[52] M. Kożybska, I. Radlinska A. Prajzner, L. Krzywoszański, B., Karakiewicz, *Problematic Internet use and attitudes towards persons with disabilities – cross-sectional research among Polish students*, "BMC Med Educ" 2023, No. 23(1), p. 915.

[53] S. Byra, E. Domagała-Zyśk, *University students' attitudes towards people with disabilities – does type, exposure and the need for social approval matter?* "Revista Brasileira de Educação Especial" 2023, No. 30(2), e0173.

[54] T. Sinha, A. Parish, D.H., Jr Lein, E. Wylie, C. Carver, W. S. Brooks, *Integration of Disability Awareness*…, pp. 561–569.

[55] N. Tal-Alon, Y.S. Roitman, A. Cohen, W. Masalha, N. Almog, *Cross-Cultural Differences*…

[56] G. Ayelet, K. Roni, *Attitudes Toward Persons with Disabilities Among Community Centers' Management Staff Members: A Brief Report*, "Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin" 2019, No. 63(3), pp. 187–191.

[57] C. Chapman-Hilliard, H. Davis, D. Powers, P. Mandas, *Examining Social Advocacy Attitudes as a Predictor for Mental Health Professionals' Perceptions toward People with Disabilities*, "Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation" 2024, No. 105(4), e140.

[58] E. Domagała-Zyśk, *Attitudes of Different Age Groups Toward People with Intellectual Disability During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, „Frontiers in Psychiatry" 2021, No. 12, 591707.

[59] A. Szpakow, K. Kowalczuk, Y. Antonova-Rafi, I. Khudetskyy, O. Detsyk, O. Fedortsiv, O. Hdyrya, A. Bazylevych, L. Vilchynskaya, *Transformation of Ukrainian students' attitudes toward wheelchair users amid the Russian-Ukrainian war*, "Sci Rep" 2025, No. 15, 22772.

[60] E. Chronopoulou, K. Papadopoulos, *Attitudes toward individuals with visual impairments and the impact of personality traits*, "British Journal of Visual Impairment" 2025, No. 0(0), pp. 4–6.

Summary and conclusions

In summary, the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons with Disabilities (MAS) represents a unique and highly precise research tool, the value of which stems primarily from its strong foundation in the classic tripartite model of attitudes. By distinguishing between affective, cognitive, and behavioural components, this scale allows for the capturing of not only declarative opinions but also deeply rooted emotions and behavioural tendencies that are often masked by social desirability bias. The analysis of numerous international adaptations, along with the comparison of Polish versions of the MAS scale, demonstrates its high reliability and psychometric validity, making it a universal instrument capable of generating credible data across various cultural contexts. The empirical studies cited in this article using the MAS scale demonstrate that personality traits, close personal contact with disability, and educational awareness programmes significantly shape individual perspectives. Whilst certain limitations must be considered, such as the reliance on self-report techniques potentially subject to subjective distortions, the need for periodic updates to reflect evolving social realities and technological changes, the MAS scale remains a crucial diagnostic instrument that opens a broad field for further research on the dynamics of inclusion and the design of effective anti-discrimination and educational programmes in Poland.

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Part V

MAN IN THE FACE OF CURRENT SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES

Część V

CZŁOWIEK WOBEC AKTUALNYCH PRZEMIAN SPOŁECZNO-KULTUROWYCH

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The powerful pressure toward anthropological regression and the urgent need to strengthen glocal education[1]

Silna presja na regres antropologiczny i pilna potrzeba wzmocnienia edukacji glokalnej

Abstract

Assessments and diagnoses of the contemporary world are extremely ambivalent. We see a vast scale of opportunities and development, yet at the same time, the darkness of the world seems to be intensifying. Professor Jan Szmyd of Jagiellonian University writes about anthropological regression, understood as a retreat in human development. Is this really the case? Certainly, people must ask themselves such questions and, at the same time, seek answers. Informal, spontaneous essays by academic youth confirm that the difficulties are significant, yet they see, above all, enormous hope in localism and glocal education, expressed in the formula "think globally, act locally," which appears to open a significant space for optimism.

Keywords: glocality, glocal education, locality, anthropological regression

Streszczenie

Oceny i diagnozy współczesnego świata są niezwykle ambiwalentne. Dostrzegamy ogromne możliwości i perspektywy rozwoju, a jednocześnie wydaje się, że mrok otaczający świat gęstnieje. Profesor Jan Szmyd z Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego pisze o regresie antropologicznym rozumianym jako cofanie się w rozwoju człowieka. Czy tak jest w istocie? Z pewnością ludzie muszą stawiać sobie takie pytania i jednocześnie szukać na nie odpowiedzi. Nieformalne, spontaniczne wypowiedzi studentów potwierdzają, że trudności są znaczne, jednak dostrzegają oni przede wszystkim ogromną nadzieję w lokalności i edukacji glokalnej – wyrażonej w haśle „myśl globalnie, działaj lokalnie", które zdaje się otwierać znaczną przestrzeń dla optymizmu.

Słowa kluczowe: glokalność, edukacja glokalna, lokalność, regres antropologiczny

[1] This article continues the line of thought from the previous year's article and builds upon larger-scale qualitative research; I would like to thank the editorial team for the opportunity to continue promoting glocal education.

Introduction

In the encyclical *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis makes the significant observation that one of the most serious challenges today is the ethical and cultural degradation accompanying systemic ecological degradation. Postmodern men and women are constantly at risk of extreme individualism; many current social problems stem from the selfish pursuit of instant gratification, the breakdown of family and social bonds, and a difficulty in acknowledging others. We frequently encounter excessive and shortsighted consumerism; furthermore, an inability to engage in serious, pro-existential thinking about others and future generations is linked to our failure to broaden the scope of our concerns and to reflect more deeply on ourselves, on others, and especially on those in need of help.[2]

The realities of daily life today give rise to profound concern among many people:[3] depression, even among the youngest; suicidal tendencies, affecting both young and old; a vast scale of diverse addictions and human struggles;[4] recurring relationship issues, both immediate and long-term;[5] difficulties with learning and memory;[6] and a multitude of other health-related problems[7] that could be listed endlessly.[8] All of this raises a major question about the future of humanity[9] and each of us, a question that resonates strongly in the aforementioned text by Pope Francis, who addresses critical issues regarding root causes. Professor Jan Szmyd of Jagiellonian University terms this collection of troubling phenomena "anthropological regression,"[10] while Professor Francis Fukuyama refers to a "great disruption."[11] Could it be, then, that humanity is regressing in its development?[12] Yet, from the perspective of theistic conceptions, in which the Absolute, or God, assists humanity in building a better world, there is room for hope. In my view, such hope lies in "glocal" education, understood as thinking globally while acting locally.[13]

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[2] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, Rome 2015, p. 153.

[3] See: M. Suleyman, *Nadchodząca fala*, Kraków 2024.

[4] N. Carr, *Płytki umysł*, Gliwice 2013.

[5] S. Pinker, *Efekt wioski*, Kielce 2015.

[6] M. Spitzer, *Cyberchoroby*, Słupsk 2016.

[7] D. Goleman, *Focus*, Poznań 2014.

[8] See: "Niedziela" no. 24 (14 June 2026): *Less Drinking – More Gambling: New Threats*, p. 9. The article cites CBOS research – "Youth 2025" – which clearly points to a growing number of risks associated with e-cigarettes, online gambling, problematic Internet use, peer violence, and mental health (e.g., two-fifths experience symptoms of depression).

[9] A. Toffler, *Szok przyszłości*, Poznań 1998.

[10] J. Szmyd, *Zagrożone człowieczeństwo, Regresja antropologiczna w świecie ponowoczesnym*, Katowice 2015.

[11] See: F. Fukuyama, *Wielki wstrząs*, Warszawa 2000.

[12] See: *Sapiens without Homo?*, "Niedziela", No. 25 (21 June 2026).

[13] See: J. Nikitorowicz, *Edukacja regionalna i międzykulturowa*, Warszawa 2009. The author and the book continue to inspire me in developing and promoting a model of glocal education.

The informal, spontaneous essays written on this subject by university students clearly demonstrate that such education represents a source of great hope.

In her extensive publication titled *Nowoczesny esej* (*The Modern Essay*), Roma Sendyka offers an inspiring argument for engaging with the essay form; in her view, the study of the essay encompasses a multitude of potential starting points, countless interpretive goals, and, ultimately, an extraordinary diversity of conclusions. The essay seems to be everything and nothing all at once, spanning poetry, drama, and prose, and ranging from literature to specialized academic scholarship.[14]

Julia's essay serves as an excellent introduction to the subject matter and offers powerful inspiration regarding glocality and glocal education:

In an increasingly globalized world, where people frequently move and change jobs or places of residence, a sense of local belonging might seem less significant. Yet it is precisely this connection to a place that gives us a sense of identity and stability. Even if I were to leave and start a new life elsewhere, that local connection would remain within me. It taught me respect for others, openness, and sensitivity toward my fellow human beings. Local belonging also entails responsibility for the place where we live, for the people around us, and for the common good. It means caring for the environment, local culture, and the future of generations to come. It is the awareness that every action we take has an impact on the community of which we are a part. That is why this sense of local belonging holds such immense value for me. It is the foundation upon which I build myself, my values, dreams, and relationships. Without it, I would feel untethered, stripped of my roots. Local belonging means home, not just in a physical sense, but, above all, in a spiritual one. And it is thanks to this that I know where to return, who I am, and where I belong in the world (Julia).

Systemic issues

In *Querida Amazonia*, Pope Francis aptly illustrates the complexity of global issues and the phenomenon of anthropological regression, insights that can readily be applied to various models of local challenges in our rapidly globalizing world. Francis makes the significant and emphatic point that the globalized economy shamelessly damages human, social, and cultural wealth. The breakdown of the family resulting from forced migration disrupts the transmission of values, given that the family is, and has always been, the social institution most instrumental in preserving our cultures. Furthermore, in the face of the colonizing encroachment of mass media, it is essential to promote alternative forms of communication among indigenous

[14] R. Sendyka, *Nowoczesny esej*, Kraków 2006, p. 5.

peoples that are rooted in their own languages and cultures, while ensuring that indigenous actors themselves have a presence in existing media outlets.

Francis stresses that any project for the Amazon, and indeed for many local communities worldwide, must incorporate the perspective of the rights of peoples and cultures; this is necessary in order to understand that the development of a social group requires the active, ongoing participation of local social actors, grounded in their own culture. Moreover, a concept of "quality of life" cannot simply be imposed; rather, it must be understood within the framework of the symbols and customs specific to each group of people. Since the ancient cultures of indigenous peoples emerged and evolved in close contact with their natural surroundings, they cannot remain unaffected when that environment is destroyed, a point Francis astutely identifies and highlights. This, in turn, necessitates systemic solutions viewed through a "glocal" lens.[15]

An excerpt from an informal essay by a student, Julia, powerfully illustrates the immense challenge of analyzing and diagnosing these issues, while simultaneously seeking systemic solutions rooted in the interconnectedness of the world and local life. She writes inspiringly:

For me, 'locality' is far more than just a place of residence. It is not merely a dot on a map or an address on official documents; it is a space rich in meaning, emotions, memories, and relationships. It is this sense of locality that provides a feeling of being rooted in a world that is often unpredictable and constantly changing. To me, locality holds unique value; it is the foundation of my identity, a place to which I can always return, whether physically or simply in my thoughts.

I come from a small town where life moves a bit more slowly and naturally, in tune with the rhythm of the seasons and the flow of human affairs. In such a setting, one learns to appreciate the beauty of everyday life, the scent of freshly mown grass, the sound of church bells, or conversations held by neighbours over the garden fence. These small, seemingly ordinary things create a sense of belonging, the awareness that I am part of this community, this landscape, and this history.

For me, the true value of local life lies above all in human closeness. People here have known each other for years; they remember family histories and share in one another's joys and sorrows. In a local community, you are never anonymous; everyone is 'someone's son,' 'someone's granddaughter,' or 'the girl from that family.' While this can sometimes be challenging, it is far more often a source of support. When something difficult happens, you are not left alone; neighbors will come to help and ask if you need anything. It is an invaluable sense of community, something hard to find in vast, anonymous cities.

Local life also embodies continuity and tradition. The places where we grew up bear the traces of the past, family stories, old customs, and sites of worship or

[15] Francis, *Querida Amazonia*, Rome 2020, pp. 30–31.

ritual. Participating in local events, harvest festivals, markets, religious feasts, or community gatherings, forges bonds not only between people but also with the place itself. It gives us the feeling that we are not here by chance, that we belong to something greater than ourselves. It also teaches us respect for history, for older generations, and for their life experiences.

A sense of place is also connected with the nature and surroundings I have known since childhood. Every field, every path, and every nook holds a story, recalling carefree moments, meaningful conversations, and early triumphs and setbacks. Even years later, when I return to these places, I feel truly at home. The nature around my house is more than just a landscape; it is part of my inner self, something that calms and inspires me, and reminds me of who I am.

The harmony of local life as an antidote to globalization

In a healing message addressed to the Amazon, though one that arguably offers healing to the entire globalizing world, Pope Francis invokes the invaluable richness of pre-Columbian cultures. These cultures embody values such as openness to God's action, gratitude for the fruits of the earth, the sacred nature of human life and respect for the family, a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility in collective work, the importance of the cultural dimension, belief in life beyond the earthly realm, and many others.

In this context, the indigenous peoples of the Amazon offer a profound lesson, a proposal for many cultures, communities, and individuals, by exemplifying the concept of "good living." This entails harmony on personal, familial, communal, and cosmic levels, and is expressed through a communal approach to existence, the ability to find joy and fulfilment in a simple, austere life, and responsible stewardship of nature that preserves resources for future generations. Indigenous peoples can help us understand the meaning of joyful moderation; in this sense, "they have much to teach us." They are capable of happiness with little, rejoicing in God's small gifts without hoarding possessions; they avoid needless destruction, care for ecosystems, and recognize that the earth, which gives of itself to sustain them, possesses a maternal quality, like a generous source that evokes a tenderness born of respect.[16]

Building upon Francis's deeply motivating reflections on the "good life" and multidimensional harmony, I would like to share excerpts from informal essays written by students on the value of locality; these passages powerfully articulate ideas that resonate strongly with Francis's model and offer significant inspiration for glocal education.

[16] *Ibidem*, pp. 54–55.

Katarzyna writes:

For me, a sense of locality is far more than just the place where I live. It is a space to which I am emotionally attached, one that has shaped me and where I feel truly like myself. My local world is a small village near Sandomierz: quiet, peaceful, and surrounded by fields and forests. Although I study in a different city during the week, I return there every weekend with great joy. It is a place that gives me a sense of security, stability, and belonging, I feel at ease there because I am surrounded by people I have known since childhood, family, neighbours, and friends. I grew up in this village; I spent my childhood and youth there, attending kindergarten, primary school, and high school. Every corner holds a specific memory. I could walk the path to school with my eyes closed, as it became part of my daily routine over the years. I hold a deep affection for this place. It was here that I first discovered the world, learned about relationships, and built my values and character. Even now, living in a different environment and meeting many new people, I feel that my roots are right there.

For me, locality is also about people. In my village, everyone knows everyone else, which makes relationships warmer, more sincere, and more genuine. There is no anonymity, only mutual help and kindness. That is why I feel I always have a place to come back to. Conversations with neighbours, a walk along a familiar road, the scent of the air after the rain, these small things forge a strong bond with the place I call home. Locality means being rooted, closeness, community, and memory. Though life may take me to many different places, I know that I will always return, in my thoughts and not only in my thoughts, to my home village near Sandomierz. It is part of my identity and will always hold a special meaning for me.

Weronika strongly emphasizes that:

For me, a sense of locality is about more than just the place where I live. It represents my roots, my memories, and the people I know and with whom I feel safe. For me, that place is my hometown, Hermanowa, located near Rzeszów. It is where I grew up and where I feel most like myself. Hermanowa is a quiet, charming village where I know every corner well. I love returning there after a long absence, after classes or a week full of responsibilities. As soon as I enter Hermanowa, I catch that familiar scent of the air and see the fields, forests, and rolling hills; I know instantly that I am home. It is here that a warm dinner cooked by my mother, conversations with loved ones, and a kind of rest I cannot find anywhere else await me. The best scent is that of freshly cut grass. This place has taught me patience, gratitude, and respect for nature. For me, Hermanowa also embodies the simple, everyday things that hold great value, such as walks along a country lane or the familiar faces of neighbors. It gives me a sense of peace, security, and the joy of belonging to something close-knit. Here, everything seems less complicated, and the world moves a little more slowly. Locality is also about nature, which is exceptionally beautiful in Hermanowa. Sometimes, just stepping outside for a moment or

heading into the woods makes you feel as if you are breathing differently. For me, then, locality is not just about geography; it is primarily about people, relationships, and memories. It is something that grounds me and a place to which I can always return, no matter where life takes me.

Zuzanna highlights the immense value of a sense of place and local roots in the following way:

For me, a sense of place, of belonging to a specific locality, is deeply personal. It is not merely a spot on a map or a home address; rather, it is a space that shapes who I am and defines my identity. It is a place to which I am emotionally attached, where I feel safe and can truly be myself. For me, that place is Żmiąca, my home village. It was here that I spent my childhood and learned the meaning of hard work and respect for nature and tradition. Every road, every tree, and every house holds significance for me. I know the landscape and the people, and they know me. Although the world changes and life sometimes leads us in different directions, Żmiąca remains my anchor, a place I always want to return to. I feel a genuine sense of belonging here. The village gives me a sense of rootedness, a feeling that cannot be bought or artificially created. There is something unique about this place, perhaps the morning silence, the scent of the fields in summer, the sound of church bells, or simply the people: kind, hardworking, and authentic. It is in Żmiąca that the sunrises and sunsets are most beautiful. This sense of place is also about tradition and community. Most of my family lives in Żmiąca, so I associate the holidays exclusively with the village; at Christmas, the snow-covered landscape delights everyone. It is also where I received the sacraments, which makes the place especially significant to me.

This connection to my local roots holds immense value for me. While I do not know whether I will live there my entire life, I know one thing for certain: I will always be happy to return and visit my family often.

Ewa, for her part, highlights the immense value of her local community in a remarkable way:

My home village is Nowa Wieś, a small village located about 60 kilometers from Rzeszów. Although it might seem unassuming, it holds great significance for me. It is here that my home is located, a place to which I find myself returning with increasing eagerness. This is where my family and my cat are; it is the space that shaped me and gives me a sense of belonging and peace. My village is a place filled with quiet and nature. There is no urban bustle, noise, or rush there. Thanks to this, whenever I am there, I can truly calm down and recharge my inner batteries. I walk along familiar dirt roads and forest paths, listening to the sounds of nature, which allows me to rest and escape the daily grind of city life. As I get older, I increasingly appreciate my family home and life in the countryside.

For me, this sense of 'locality' is also about memories. Many places in Nowa Wieś evoke images from childhood: playing with my siblings and friends, first walks

in the woods, bonfires shared together, or sledding on the hill by the house. These memories are a part of me, and always will be. When I pass by old trees, a field, or the pond, I remember the moments I experienced there. It gives me a sense of rootedness and a pleasant nostalgia. It also prompts reflections on the passage of time and the changes that have occurred over the years among neighbours and old childhood friends who have ventured out into the world, started careers, or even begun families of their own.

Although the village is truly small and everyone knows one another, I do not think I would trade it for any other place; you could say it is part of my identity. Walking down the street and observing everything… I realize that, to an outsider, it might seem that little changes on the surface, yet the people around me are growing up, aging, and trying to live their lives in their own ways. The same applies to me; although my studies in Rzeszów mean I am not home as often, with every return I feel a sense of gratitude and the knowledge that I am finally where I belong.

In short, I believe that 'local roots' mean more than just the place you come from; they are, above all, about the people, the atmosphere, and a sense of familiarity. The family home is the one sanctuary in the world where someone is always waiting for me.

Another excellent essay highlighting the immense value of a sense of place, and its importance for a good life and harmony, is the one written by Gabriela:

In today's world, defined by constant change and migration, having a place to call one's own takes on special significance. For me, a sense of place is more than just an address or a dot on a map; it is a space where I feel safe, accepted, and connected to others. It is this sense of belonging that shapes my identity and allows me to find peace.

My place in the world is my family home in the countryside, surrounded by an orchard, a pond, a flower garden, and a vegetable patch. It is there that I can find quiet, spend quality time with my loved ones, and pursue my passion for herbalism. This place connects me to nature and gives me a sense of harmony and tranquillity. Yet people matter most, my family, especially my four siblings, alongside whom I grew up. Thanks to them, our family home is filled with warmth, support, and shared memories that shape who I am and teach me the meaning of belonging. I also feel a strong connection to the local orchestra, of which my siblings and I are members. Music and our shared activities strengthen the bonds among us and with other residents of my town. This demonstrates the importance I attach to relationships and community, which give a deeper meaning to my local roots. Above all, this sense of place provides me with security and stability; I know I can always return to this place, my "safe harbour." It is here that I can calm down, gather my thoughts, and find support during difficult times. Although I do not plan to dedicate my future entirely to working for my local community, I feel that this sense of place will always remain the foundation of my life. It is thanks to this that I have the strength and peace of mind to pursue my dreams and passions.

For me, a sense of belonging is defined above all by the people who create a community and give meaning to a place. The local setting is not merely a backdrop but a space where relationships, history, and emotions unfold. It is the foundation that allows me to feel truly at home and to look toward the future with hope.

I see the value of local identity in the strength of bonds, traditions, and the sense of security that shape who I am and give meaning to my everyday life.

Aleksandra's excellent essay also strongly emphasizes the role of local connection in fostering a good and harmonious life:

For me, 'locality,' a sense of place, is more than just where I live. It is the space that shaped me, giving me a sense of identity and unforgettable childhood memories. In an era of globalization, as the world becomes increasingly homogenized, this local connection serves as a sanctuary of authenticity. It is here that I find peace, deeper human connections, and true beauty, qualities often undervalued or overlooked. One place that reminds me of the unique value of this local connection is Pustynia, in the Podkarpackie region. It is where I grew up and spent nearly twenty years of my life. I still return there with nostalgia and fond emotions. I recall summer bike rides with my mother through the woods and the surrounding countryside. I also formed many friendships there that have lasted to this day, and I hope will continue long into the future.

One of the greatest advantages of my village is its closeness to nature. Every day, I wake up to the sound of birdsong and views of fields, forests, and meadows. Each season holds its own unique charm: in spring, everything comes to life; in summer, the air is filled with the scent of fresh hay; in autumn, the leaves turn gold; and in winter, the world is blanketed in white snow. This is a completely different experience from the sight of concrete housing estates or the noise of city streets. The village is a place where one can truly relax and feel free.

Another advantage is peace and safety. There is no overcrowding, no traffic jams, and no constant rush in the village. Life moves at a slower, more mindful pace. People know one another, which builds a sense of community and trust. In my village, neighbours help one another, whether with gardening or during more difficult times. Such relationships are incredibly valuable and rarely found in big cities.

The countryside is also an excellent place to raise children. They can run around in yards, play in the woods, and ride their bikes along quiet roads. They are not cooped up in apartment blocks or glued to computer screens; instead, they connect with nature and animals, learning independence and responsibility. Nature itself becomes their teacher.

My village also has local traditions and customs that create a unique atmosphere. Harvest festivals, markets, communal bonfires, and village fairs are not just forms of entertainment but also ways to nurture our culture and identity. Thanks to this, village life is defined not only by work but also by shared moments. Although

some people think nothing happens in the countryside, I believe a great deal goes on, just in a different way. It is a life lived in harmony with nature, with other people, and with oneself. My village gives me what many spend their whole lives searching for: peace, security, and a sense of belonging.

I am happy to live right here. And although I sometimes travel to the city, I always joyfully return to my village, the place that matters most to me in the world.

In her essay, Oliwia highlights what "local" means to her:

To me, 'local' is not merely a place of birth or heritage; it is something deeply connected to who I am, part of my identity, a spirit of community, and the space where my values are shaped. My local home is Widełka, a village near Kolbuszowa. While to many it might seem like just a dot on the map, to me it represents something far more meaningful: shared warmth and a repository of memories.

Widełka is a community where a genuine sense of closeness exists among people. Our residents are approachable and supportive, ready to share in both joys and sorrows. Life here moves at a calm pace, yet it is deeply rooted in tradition and a shared sense of responsibility. Although the village is small, it teems with life, not the frenetic, noisy kind, but an authentic vitality born of closeness and engagement. I truly value the fact that we regularly undertake various social initiatives in our village, such as family picnics, festivals, and charity drives. Whenever someone needs support, especially when a child falls ill or a family faces hardship, everyone quickly mobilizes. People offer help, donate items for raffles, and pitch in to organize events. No one is left to face difficulties alone. These moments reveal just how strong and authentic our local community is.

I also place immense value on the intergenerational bonds that remain strong in Widełka. The older generation passes on not only stories of the past but also the principles that guide a meaningful life. Being part of this community makes me feel like I am part of a living history, one that endures while simultaneously evolving. Here, we know how to take action without losing sight of the future. We can take responsibility for our community, influence how things change, and support its long-term independence. I believe that 'local identity' is not just about what already exists, but also about what we, the residents, build together.

I dream of it remaining a place where young people want to stay, start families, grow, and work for the good of others. Nor can we overlook the beauty of the surrounding nature. The forest, the fields, the clean air, the open space, all of this brings a sense of peace and a chance to catch one's breath away from the daily rush. These places hold emotional value for me; this is where I spent my childhood and learned to view the world with gratitude and wonder.

My local community represents my roots. It encompasses relationships, memories, traditions, and a sense of togetherness. Widełka is not just a spot on the map; it is my home, a source of belonging and inner balance. Here, I learn that

there is strength in unity and that it is worth cherishing what is close and familiar. That is why my local community means so much to me; it shapes my worldview, builds my identity, and motivates me to act for the benefit of others. I believe that it is precisely in such small, close-knit communities that one can discover the true meaning of being part of something greater.

Natalia affirms the immense value of "locality," viewed as something far greater, encompassing everything that truly matters, in her poignant essay:

To me, locality is far more than a mere geographical concept. It is an emotional bond with the place where I grew up and which shaped me as a person. I come from Łęg Tarnowski, a small village in the Lesser Poland region, not far from Tarnów. Although the place might seem quiet and peaceful, it holds immense value for me because it is home to everything that matters most.

It is in Łęg that I feel most at ease; this is where my home, my family, my friends, and my beloved dog Boguś are. It is a place that gives me a sense of security and balance. When I am here, I know I am truly home. I know every nook and cranny, every shortcut between the houses. I am surrounded by people who know, understand, and support me. I feel part of a community, which gives me a strong sense of belonging, a belonging not just to a place, but also to the people, traditions, and shared values that unite the village residents. Thanks to this, I know I am never alone; I can always count on support and understanding.

Locality also represents a space where I am intimately familiar with every corner, every road, and the history of the area. It is a sense of rootedness, the awareness that this is where I belong, regardless of where life might take me next. I believe that the place we come from shapes our values, our way of thinking, and how we perceive the world. It was in Łęg that I learned the importance of closeness to nature, respect for tradition, kindness, and cooperation with others.

For me, a sense of local identity means home, not just in the physical sense, but emotionally, too. It is a space where I can be myself, where I have my roots, and from which I draw strength. Belonging to this place and community gives me a sense of stability and the assurance that, no matter where I go, I always have a point of reference. Belonging to Łęg Tarnowski is also a source of inspiration and motivation for me. I feel that this is the place where I can pursue my dreams and grow, supported by my loved ones and surrounded by a peace that fosters reflection. This connection to my local area teaches me the importance of human relationships, respect for tradition, and openness to others. Thanks to this, I feel part of something greater and can speak of my home with pride.

Oliwia articulates the priceless value of local connection beautifully in her essay:

To me, 'locality' means something far deeper than just a home address or a dot on a map. It is a sense of belonging, security, and being part of a community that shapes me every day. It encompasses the relationships, memories, and values that have become an integral part of my identity over the years.

I live in Nowa Wieś, in the municipality of Trzebownisko, not far from Rzeszów. It is a place to which I am deeply emotionally attached. I grew up here, and this is where my loved ones, family, friends, and neighbours, live. It is here that I experienced many significant moments that shaped who I am. Every path, every field, and every corner of this village holds a memory: of taking my first steps, of childhood carefreeness, of growing up, of laughter, and of moments of reflection.

For me, Nowa Wieś is not merely a place of residence but a sanctuary, my own special place on earth. I value it for its tranquillity, its open spaces, and its closeness to nature. In today's hectic world, these are the very elements that help me maintain my balance. I cherish the moments when I can step out into the fresh air, walk along a country lane, listen to the birdsong, or gaze at the horizon where the fields meet the sky. Simple, everyday gestures, like a neighbor's smile or a casual 'good morning' during a walk, also mean a great deal to me. These small interactions build the community I feel a part of; they remind me that I am not just an anonymous individual, but someone who matters within the local social fabric.

Locality is also about identity (…) *Being from here, I know who I am. The values instilled in me by life in this community, such as honesty, mutual aid, and respect for work, people, and nature, serve not only as a guiding light but also as the foundation upon which I build my life. They shape my choices, my relationships with others, and my perspective on the world.*

I know that life may take me to many different places and that the future often writes its own script. Yet, wherever I may be, my heart and thoughts will always return to Nowa Wieś. This is where my roots, my history, and my home are.

For a sense of local belonging is so much more than just a place; it is the feeling of being rooted, surrounded by people and values that truly matter to me. And that is precisely what makes it so incredibly precious.

Conclusion

I would like to be, and generally am, an optimist, yet many argue that an anthropological regression is intensifying, as if human problems were mounting. While a definitive answer is hard to come by, it is certainly worth seeking the sources of an optimistic outlook. A significant number of young people, especially university students, are awakening to the challenges at hand and generating a powerful wave of optimism. Yet they anchor this primarily in "glocality" and "glocal education," in caring for their local community, or even their immediate, intimate surroundings. As the informal essays powerfully demonstrate, it is in this context that one can find oneself, gain strength, and build a better future on both an individual and a societal level.

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Lifelong learning as a response to the instability of the modern labor market

Uczenie się przez całe życie jako odpowiedź na niestabilność współczesnego rynku pracy

Abstract

The modern labour market is undergoing dynamic changes driven by technological advancement, digitalization, globalization, and socio-economic transformations. These processes lead to increased employment uncertainty and the need to continuously adapt professional competencies to changing environmental demands. The aim of this article is to analyze the significance of the lifelong learning concept as a response to the instability of the contemporary labour market. This theoretical review is based on an analysis of academic literature and strategic documents from the European Union, OECD, and UNESCO published between 2020 and 2025. The analysis demonstrates that lifelong education plays a crucial role in developing future competencies, enhancing employability, supporting reskilling and upskilling processes, and building the professional resilience of individuals. At the same time, lifelong learning fulfils an important social function by contributing to the development of social capital, civic engagement, and social integration. The findings lead to the conclusion that lifelong learning is a fundamental mechanism enabling individuals to function effectively amid the permanent change and uncertainty characteristic of the modern labour market.

Keyword: lifelong learning, continuing education, labour market, future competencies, employability, upskilling, reskilling

Streszczenie

Współczesny rynek pracy podlega dynamicznym przemianom wynikającym z postępu technologicznego, cyfryzacji, globalizacji oraz transformacji społeczno-gospodarczych. Procesy te prowadzą do wzrostu niepewności zatrudnienia i konieczności ciągłego dostosowywania kompetencji zawodowych do zmieniających się wymagań otoczenia. Celem artykułu jest analiza znaczenia koncepcji uczenia się przez całe życie jako odpowiedzi na niestabilność współczesnego rynku pracy. Opracowanie ma charakter teoretyczno-przeglądowy i zostało oparte na analizie literatury naukowej oraz dokumentów strategicznych Unii Europejskiej, OECD i UNESCO opublikowanych w latach 2020–2025. Przeprowadzone analizy wskazują, że edukacja ustawiczna odgrywa istotną rolę w rozwijaniu kompetencji przyszłości, zwiększaniu zatrudnialności, wspieraniu procesów reskillingu i upskillingu oraz

budowaniu odporności zawodowej jednostek. Jednocześnie *lifelong learning* pełni ważną funkcję społeczną, przyczyniając się do rozwoju kapitału społecznego, aktywności obywatelskiej i integracji społecznej. Wnioski z przeprowadzonych analiz pozwalają uznać uczenie się przez całe życie za jeden z podstawowych mechanizmów umożliwiających jednostkom skuteczne funkcjonowanie w warunkach permanentnej zmiany i niepewności charakterystycznej dla współczesnego rynku pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: uczenie się przez całe życie, edukacja ustawiczna, rynek pracy, kompetencje przyszłości, zatrudnialność, *upskilling*, *reskilling*

Introduction

The first decades of the 21st century have brought profound social, economic, and technological transformations that have significantly altered the functioning of the labor market. The dynamic development of digital technologies, the automation of production and service processes, economic globalization, and demographic shifts make modern career paths increasingly unpredictable. Stable employment within a single profession or organization is giving way to models based on flexibility, mobility, and continuous adaptation to changing socio-economic conditions.[1]

Academic literature emphasizes that the contemporary labor market is characterized by a high level of uncertainty. This creates a necessity for the continuous updating of knowledge and competencies.[2] The advancement of artificial intelligence, robotics, and information and communication technologies leads to structural transformations in employment. Consequently, certain professions are disappearing, while new occupations requiring different qualifications are emerging.[3]

In response to these processes, the concept of lifelong learning plays a particularly important role. For several decades, it has been a primary direction in the educational policies of the European Union, the OECD, and UNESCO.[4] Today, *lifelong learning* is viewed not only as a strategy for upgrading professional qualifications but also as a foundation for personal development, active citizenship, and social participation.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the significance of lifelong learning as a response to the instability of the modern labour market. An attempt is made to illustrate the relationship between the transformations in the world of work and the need for continuous competence development. Furthermore, the article points out the role of continuing education in building the professional and social security of individuals.

This article takes the form of a theoretical review. The primary research method employed is a critical analysis of academic literature, alongside an examination

[1] Z. Bauman, *Płynna nowoczesność*, Kraków 2021, pp. 11–18.

[2] U. Beck, *Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 25–31.

[3] World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2023*, Geneva 2023, pp. 36–39.

[4] European Commission, *European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience*, Brussels 2020, p. 5.

of strategic documents related to continuing education, the labour market, and competence development.

The research material consists of three main groups of sources. The first group comprises academic publications in the fields of pedagogy, andragogy, the sociology of education, labour economics, and management sciences. Special attention was given to studies on the concepts of lifelong learning, human capital, employability, and the transformations of the modern labour market.

The second group of sources includes reports and documents from the European Commission, the OECD, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and the World Economic Forum, published between 2020 and 2025. The third group consists of Polish publications concerning continuing education, future competencies, and labour market policies.

The analysis was conducted using a problem-oriented approach. First, the most important theoretical concepts relating to lifelong learning were identified. Next, the main sources of instability in the modern labour market and their impact on the competency requirements for employees were examined. In the subsequent sections, an attempt was made to determine the significance of continuing education for the development of employability, professional resilience, and social capital.

Theoretical foundations of the lifelong learning concept

The concept of lifelong learning is currently one of the most important categories in contemporary pedagogy, andragogy, and educational policy. Its significance stems both from the changes occurring within social and economic systems and from the evolving perception of the educational process itself. Unlike the traditional educational model, which confined learning to specific stages of a person's life, the idea of lifelong learning assumes the continuity of the learning process across all phases of human development.[5]

The UNESCO report *Learning to Be*, edited by Edgar Faure,[6] is considered one of the most important documents shaping the contemporary understanding of permanent education. The authors of the report argued that education cannot be limited to preparing a person for a specific profession. Instead, it should support their comprehensive development and ability to function in a dynamically changing world.

Another breakthrough document was Jacques Delors's report, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, which formulated the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be,[7] These pillars indicate

[5] P. Jarvis, *Learning to be a Person in Society*, London–New York 2021, p. 42.

[6] E. Faure, *Learning to Be. The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, Paris 1972, p. 181.

[7] *Edukacja: jest w niej ukryty skarb. Raport dla UNESCO Międzynarodowej Komisji do spraw Edukacji dla XXI wieku*, ed. J. Delors, Warszawa 1998, p. 35.

that education encompasses not only professional development but also social, cultural, and civic growth.

An essential element of the contemporary *lifelong learning* concept is the recognition of the equal value of formal, non-formal, and informal education. Formal education takes place within institutional educational systems. Non-formal education includes courses, training sessions, and workshops. Informal education, meanwhile, occurs spontaneously in the daily life of an individual.[8]

Contemporary interpretations of *lifelong learning* also increasingly draw upon human capital theory. Gary Becker pointed out that knowledge, skills, and competencies constitute a specific form of capital that influences both individual productivity and the economic development of society.[9] In a knowledge-based economy, the importance of human capital steadily increases. Consequently, the ability to continuously develop competencies becomes a fundamental condition for professional success.

Andragogy has also made a significant contribution to the development of *lifelong learning* theory. Malcolm Knowles emphasized that adults learn differently than children because they possess rich life experiences and a higher level of autonomy. Therefore, adult education should be based on active participation, partnership, and the utilization of experience as a source of knowledge.

These theoretical foundations provide a basis for the subsequent analysis of the modern labour market. They also serve to evaluate the significance of continuing education as a response to growing employment instability and changing competency requirements.

The modern labour market and the sources of its instability

One of the most defining characteristics of the modern labour market is its high dynamism and unpredictability. In contrast to the industrial society's labour market-which relied on relatively stable forms of employment and predictable career paths-the contemporary professional environment undergoes continuous transformation. These changes are driven by technological development, globalization, and socio-demographic shifts.[10] As a result, employees increasingly operate under conditions of uncertainty, requiring them to constantly adapt their competencies to new economic realities. Technological advancement is among the primary sources of instability in the modern labour market. Automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence affect the structure of employment. They lead to the obsolescence of

[8] T. Aleksander, *Andragogika. Podręcznik akademicki*, Radom–Kraków 2009, pp. 218–248.

[9] G.S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, Chicago 1993, p. 17.

[10] U. Beck, *Społeczeństwo ryzyka*…, pp. 25–34.

certain jobs while simultaneously creating new professions that demand different qualifications. In many sectors of the economy, routine tasks are being replaced by technological solutions. This forces employees to develop competencies that are difficult to automate, such as creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to collaborate. Globalization also remains a significant driver of change. The international flow of capital, technology, and information increases competition in the labour market. It also elevates the importance of competencies that enable functioning in a multicultural environment. Today's employees often compete not only with individuals from their own region or country but also with candidates operating within the global economic space.

Demographic shifts present an additional source of uncertainty. The aging of European societies leads to extended periods of professional activity and increases the importance of education for adults and seniors. The traditional model, based on acquiring education in youth and applying it throughout one;s entire professional life, proves insufficient given the need for multiple competency updates.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a profound impact on the labour market. This crisis accelerated the digitalization process, popularized remote work, and highlighted the importance of adaptive and digital competencies. At the same time, it exposed existing social and educational inequalities regarding access to technology and opportunities to participate in learning processes.

The modern labour market is increasingly described as a market of permanent change. This means that professional security no longer stems primarily from employment stability. Instead, it comes from possessing competencies that allow for effective responses to ongoing changes. Under these conditions, continuing education takes on special significance, enabling individuals to maintain their adaptability to new professional demands.

Future competencies and employability in a knowledge-based economy

Transformations in the modern labour market are changing the way professional competencies are perceived. Universal competencies, which enable functioning in volatile and uncertain conditions, are gaining importance alongside specialized qualifications. In academic literature, these are referred to as "future competencies."[11] Future competencies comprise a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable effective functioning in a knowledge-based economy. The most frequently cited include digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, and the readiness for continuous learning.[12] The competency of learning

[11] S.M. Kwiatkowski, *Kompetencje przyszłości*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 14–20.

[12] J. Lamri, *Kompetencje XXI wieku. Kreatywność, komunikacja, krytyczne myślenie, kooperacja*, Warszawa 2021, pp. 25–120.

itself holds a particularly special place. Today, it is recognized as one of the most vital key competencies, as it facilitates the development of all other skills. Given the rapid accumulation of knowledge and technological progress, the ability to independently acquire new information is becoming more important than possessing a specific body of knowledge.

Modern organizations expect their employees to demonstrate flexibility, autonomy, and a willingness to take on new challenges. This translates to a growing importance of social and emotional competencies. Interpersonal communication, teamwork, empathy, and emotional intelligence are increasingly viewed as essential components of professional effectiveness.[13] The growing importance of future competencies is closely tied to the concept of employability.[14] Today, employability is understood as an individual's ability to gain, maintain, and change employment thanks to their possessed competencies, qualifications, and attitudes. It signifies not just the ability to find a job, but also the capacity to navigate the changes occurring in the labour market.

OECD research indicates that individuals actively participating in continuing education exhibit higher levels of employability and greater resilience to the impacts of economic shifts[15]. Consequently, developing future competencies has become a fundamental objective of modern education and labour market policy.

Reskilling and upskilling as adaptive strategies to labour market transformations

Processes known as *reskilling* and *upskilling* represent one of the most critical practical dimensions of implementing the lifelong learning concept. They serve as a response to the need for continuously updating professional qualifications amidst dynamic technological and social changes.[16] The concept of *upskilling* refers to developing and deepening already possessed professional competencies. Its goal is to adapt an employee's qualifications to the new requirements of their position and the changes occurring within the organization. This process does not lead to a change in profession; rather, it enables the individual to perform their current duties more effectively.[17] Conversely, *reskilling* means acquiring entirely new competencies

[13] *Pozytywna psychologia pracy i organizacji*, eds. P. Fortuna, A. Czerw, Warszawa 2026; J. Smoleń, *Relacje międzygrupow*e, "Socjologia i Psychologia Polityki" 2024, Vol. XVI, pp. 281–297; J. Smoleń, J. Iskra, *Inteligencja emocjonalna drogą do pokojowego budowania relacji przyjacielskich*, "Społeczeństwo. Edukacja. Język" 2023, No. 18(6), pp. 75–88.

[14] U. Jeruszka, *Zatrudnialność w perspektywie pedagogiki pracy*, Warszawa 2019; A. Solak, *Nowe kompetencje pedagogiczne pracowników służb społecznych wyzwaniem współczesnego świata*, "Szkoła – Zawód – Praca" 2013, No. 5/6, pp. 41–52.

[15] OECD, *Skills Outlook 2021. Learning for Life*, Paris 2021, pp. 9–12.

[16] European Commission, *European Skills Agenda*…, pp. 9–12.

[17] Cedefop, *European Skills and Jobs Survey 2023*, Luxembourg 2023, p. 18–21.

that enable an individual to pursue a different profession or take up work in a new economic sector. This process is particularly important when specific qualifications lose their value due to automation or structural changes in the labour market.[18]

The growing importance of *reskilling* and *upskilling* stems from the fact that professional competencies are becoming obsolete at an accelerated rate. In many industries, the lifecycle of knowledge has shortened to just a few years, necessitating regular qualification updates. A modern employee cannot base their professional standing solely on the education acquired at the beginning of their career. Employers play a significant role in competency development processes. An increasing number of organizations are investing in training, specialized courses, and mentoring programs. They view the development of human capital as a fundamental condition for maintaining competitiveness. Simultaneously, there is a growing reliance on education delivered via digital platforms, which facilitate the rapid acquisition of new skills.

The expansion of *reskilling* and *upskilling* processes is also a crucial element of social policy. The European Commission, the OECD, and the International Labour Organization emphasize that investing in skills development is one of the most effective methods of combating structural unemployment and professional exclusion.[19]

Therefore, *reskilling* and *upskilling* can currently be considered some of the most vital tools for realizing the idea of *lifelong learning*. They allow individuals not only to remain professionally active but also to build resilience against changes taking place in the economy and society.

Lifelong learning in the policies of the European Union, OECD, and UNESCO (2020–2025)

The rising prominence of lifelong learning is reflected not only in academic discourse but also in the strategic documents of major international organizations. In recent years, the European Union, the OECD, and UNESCO have all recognized the development of citizens' competencies as a key prerequisite for building social and economic resilience against the challenges of the 21st century. The issue of lifelong learning gained particular traction following the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscored the necessity for individuals and institutions to rapidly adapt to changing social and professional conditions.[20]

In the policies of the European Union, lifelong learning serves as a pillar for constructing the European Education Area and achieving goals related to the

[18] ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2024*, Geneva 2024, pp. 42–48.

[19] European Parliament, *Lifelong Learning for Employability and Social Inclusion*, Brussels 2022, pp. 11–16.

[20] OECD, *Skills Outlook 2021*…, pp. 15–22.

digital and green transitions. "The European Skills Agenda", adopted in 2020, plays a significant role. It aims to develop citizens' competencies by expanding access to continuing education, supporting upskilling, and creating frameworks that facilitate the reskilling of workers.[21] The European Commission stresses that the success of the European economy will depend on the ability of its citizens to continuously develop their skills and actively participate in lifelong learning processes. Special emphasis is placed on digital, entrepreneurial, and social competencies, as well as those associated with the green transformation of the economy.[22] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presents a similar stance, having long highlighted the strong correlation between skills development and economic growth. Reports published after 2020 pay particular attention to the labour market consequences of the digital and ecological transitions. The OECD emphasizes that modern educational systems should prepare citizens not merely to perform specific jobs, but primarily to function in an environment of constant change.[23] OECD documents increasingly feature the concept of a learning society, which posits that competence development should occur throughout life and encompass all social groups. Great importance is attributed to developing skills related to information analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to learn.

Meanwhile, UNESCO primarily accentuates the humanistic dimension of continuing education. The report *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* underscored that education should support not only economic growth but also the building of societies based on solidarity, democracy, and social responsibility.[24] According to UNESCO, lifelong learning is a fundamental condition for active human participation in social and cultural life. The organization draws attention to the need for cultivating a "culture of learning," wherein education becomes an integral part of the daily life of both individuals and local communities.

An analysis of the strategic documents from the European Union, the OECD, and UNESCO reveals a shared trajectory in the development of modern educational policy. All three organizations recognize lifelong learning as one of the most critical instruments for supporting human capital development, strengthening employability, and building social resilience against the challenges of the contemporary world.

[21] European Commission, *European Skills Agenda*…, pp. 5–11.

[22] European Commission, *European Education Area Progress Report*, Brussels 2023, pp. 18–24.

[23] European Commission, *Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-Credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability*, Brussels 2022, pp. 3–7.

[24] UNESCO, *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, Paris 2021, pp. 12–18.

Discussion

The analysis of academic literature and strategic documents from international organizations demonstrates that lifelong learning has become a core component of modern social and economic development strategies. In the context of advancing technological transformation, digitalization, and rising employment uncertainty, continuing education is no longer viewed as a supplementary developmental activity. Rather, it is increasingly treated as a prerequisite for active participation in professional and social life.

The findings of this analysis validate the assumption made in the article's introduction, according to which lifelong learning constitutes a vital response to the instability of the modern labour market. Contemporary economic shifts mean that traditional career models, rooted in relative employment stability, are becoming obsolete. Individuals increasingly find themselves in situations that demand multiple qualification updates, role changes, and sometimes even complete career shifts.

The presented reflections indicate that in a knowledge society, the primary source of professional security is not the permanence of a job, but rather the capacity to continuously develop competencies. This represents a fundamental shift in how individual economic security is understood. Today, professional security increasingly relies on human adaptive potential, the readiness to learn, and the ability to apply newly acquired knowledge in novel professional contexts.

Simultaneously, the analysis of documents from the European Commission, the OECD, and UNESCO reveals that continuing education is perceived as a tool for achieving numerous social and economic goals. On the one hand, it is meant to enhance economic competitiveness and prepare workers to navigate the digital and ecological transitions. On the other hand, its role in building social cohesion, promoting active citizenship, and combating social exclusion is strongly emphasized.

It is worth noting a certain interpretative tension between the economic and humanistic approaches to lifelong learning. The economic perspective primarily focuses on developing competencies that boost individual productivity and employability. Education is thus treated as an investment in human capital, aimed at increasing the efficiency of the economy. Conversely, the humanistic approach highlights the significance of education for comprehensive human development, community building, and the strengthening of democracy. However, the conducted analyses suggest that these two approaches need not be mutually exclusive. The modern labour market increasingly rewards competencies that hold both professional and social value. Creativity, teamwork, interpersonal communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills serve both as factors increasing employability and as competencies supporting active participation in social life.

The issue of inequality in access to continuing education is also of critical importance. Studies by the OECD and the European Commission indicate that individuals with higher education participate in various forms of lifelong learning far more frequently than those with lower qualifications. This creates a risk of exacerbating existing social and economic disparities. Paradoxically, the groups most vulnerable to the impacts of labour market transformations are often the least likely to utilize opportunities for competence development.

In this context, the role of the state and public institutions in creating environments conducive to citizen participation in continuing education becomes crucial. It is necessary to develop financial support systems, flexible forms of learning, and mechanisms for validating the outcomes of non-formal and informal education. Such measures can help increase the accessibility of education and mitigate the risk of educational exclusion.

Another important issue requiring further reflection is the development of artificial intelligence and its impact on educational processes. On the one hand, new technologies offer vast opportunities for personalizing learning and expanding access to knowledge. On the other hand, they raise questions regarding the quality of education, future competencies, and the relationship between humans and technology. It appears that in the coming years, continuing education will need to focus increasingly on cultivating competencies that remain resistant to automation, such as creativity, reflexivity, empathy, and ethical responsibility.

In summary, it can be concluded that modern labour market conditions amplify the significance of continuing education as a strategic asset for both individuals and societies. Lifelong learning acts as an adaptive mechanism, enabling responses to technological and economic shifts, while simultaneously remaining a vital tool for supporting social, civic, and cultural development. It is precisely the multidimensional nature of continuing education that makes it one of the most critical elements of contemporary human and social development strategies.

Conclusion

The theoretical analyses and review of contemporary strategic documents lead to the conclusion that lifelong learning is one of the most essential mechanisms enabling individuals to function amid the instability of the modern labour market. Dynamic technological advancements, economic digitalization, the rise of artificial intelligence, globalization processes, and the ecological transition are rendering traditional career models based on relative employment stability obsolete.

The objective of this article was to analyze the significance of the *lifelong learning* concept as a response to the instability of the contemporary labour market. The discussions presented herein allow for the positive verification of the adopted

research assumption, according to which continuing education is a significant factor in enhancing individuals' capacity to operate under conditions of professional uncertainty and dynamic socio-economic transformations.

The analysis demonstrated that lifelong learning currently serves multiple, mutually complementary functions. First, it supports the development of competencies that help maintain employment and increase occupational mobility. Second, it is a crucial component in building professional resilience, understood as the ability to effectively respond to changes occurring in the work environment. Third, it contributes to the strengthening of social capital, civic engagement, and social integration. Future competencies-including the ability to learn, digital skills, creativity, problem-solving, and socio-emotional competencies-are of particular importance. The modern labour market increasingly prioritizes these exact skills, as they enable functioning in unpredictable and permanently shifting environments. Consequently, continuing education becomes not just one possible developmental pathway, but a prerequisite for maintaining professional activity and participating in a knowledge society.

The conducted analyses also indicate that effectively implementing the idea of lifelong learning requires the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. The responsibility for skills development cannot be placed solely on the individual human being. Educational institutions, employers, social organizations, and the state play a vital role, and they should foster conditions that encourage citizens to engage in lifelong education.

It should be emphasized that this study takes the form of a theoretical review, which constitutes its primary research limitation. The analysis relied predominantly on academic literature and strategic documents from international organizations. It did not encompass empirical research conducted among continuing education participants or employers operating in the modern labour market.

It must be concluded that lifelong learning is becoming one of the modern individual's most critical assets. Amidst an unstable labour market and accelerating civilizational changes, the capacity for continuous competence development forms the bedrock of professional security, social engagement, and quality of life. *Lifelong learning* should therefore be viewed not as a temporary adaptive strategy, but as an enduring element in the functioning of individuals and societies in the 21st century.

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Educational activity of pedagogy students at the University of Rzeszów in the context of lifelong learning: Research findings

Aktywność edukacyjna studentów kończących pedagogikę na Uniwersytecie Rzeszowskim w kontekście uczenia się przez całe życie – doniesienie z badań

Abstract

Lifelong learning constitutes one of the greatest challenges of today's knowledge-based society. Ongoing civilizational, technological, and socio-economic changes make the continuous updating of knowledge, the improvement of skills, and the development of competencies essential conditions for effective functioning in personal, social, and professional life. Human activity, understood as an inherent characteristic of human functioning and a form of conscious interaction with the surrounding reality, is reflected in many areas of life, including educational activity. Educational activity has become an important subject of research in numerous academic disciplines, particularly pedagogy, psychology, and sociology. The purpose of this paper is to present manifestations of the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów.

Keywords: activity, educational activity, motives for activity, educational plans, lifelong learning

Streszczenie

Uczenie się przez całe życie stanowi jedno z najważniejszych wyzwań współczesnego społeczeństwa opartego na wiedzy. Postępujące przemiany cywilizacyjne, technologiczne i społeczno-gospodarcze powodują, że systematyczne aktualizowanie wiedzy, doskonalenie umiejętności oraz rozwijanie kompetencji stają się warunkiem skutecznego funkcjonowania człowieka w życiu osobistym, społecznym i zawodowym. Aktywność człowieka, rozumiana jako immanentna właściwość jego funkcjonowania oraz forma świadomego oddziaływania na otaczającą rzeczywistość, znajduje odzwierciedlenie w wielu obszarach życia, w tym w aktywności edukacyjnej. Problematyka aktywności edukacyjnej stanowi przedmiot zainteresowania licznych dyscyplin naukowych, w szczególności pedagogiki, psychologii oraz socjologii. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest ukazanie przejawów aktywności edukacyjnej studentów kończących studia na kierunku pedagogika na Uniwersytecie Rzeszowskim.

Słowa kluczowe: aktywność, aktywność edukacyjna, motywy aktywności, plany edukacyjne, uczenie się przez całe życie

Introduction

Activity is an inherent element of human life, enabling individuals to establish relationships with their environment, gain experience, influence reality, and participate in its transformation. The forms of activity change across successive stages of development and depend on age, needs, and the social roles individuals perform.

Among the fundamental forms of human activity, learning occupies a special place, as it enables individuals to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and shape attitudes toward themselves, other people, and the surrounding world. Learning is not limited to childhood or formal schooling; rather, it is a lifelong process extending from early childhood through adolescence and adulthood to old age.[1] At different stages of life, only the goals, motives, and forms of educational activity change, reflecting individuals' needs and the challenges arising from changing social and civilizational conditions.

The concept of **lifelong learning** assumes that human development does not end with the completion of formal education. Education is understood as a continuous process that enables individuals to improve their competencies, adapt to new circumstances, and participate actively in social, professional, and cultural life. In this context, the educational activity undertaken by university students is of particular importance. As future teachers, they should cultivate an openness to acquiring knowledge and continuously improving their competencies even after completing their formal education. The period of university study constitutes a crucial stage in developing readiness for lifelong learning and establishing habits that support continuous personal and professional development. Therefore, it is important to conduct research on students' educational activity and the factors influencing their engagement in the learning process. Such analyses make it possible to determine the extent to which the idea of lifelong learning is reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals completing higher education.

The aim of this article is to present selected findings from own research concerning the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów, viewed in the context of the implementation of the lifelong learning concept.

Theoretical considerations regarding activity

There are numerous definitions of the term 'activity' in the literature. According to Arthur S. Reber and Emily S. Reber, activity constitutes a general term that can be used as a synonym for action, movement, behaviour, mental processes,

[1] *Uczenie się jako przedsięwzięcie na całe życie*, ed. T. Bauman, Kraków 2005.

physiological functions, etc.[2] It is a tendency, an ability to act and take initiative, active participation in something.[3] According to Wincenty Okoń, activity can be discussed by referring it to the biological sphere of the human life and considered in the aspect of the body functions that aim at satisfying its needs. In the psychological sphere, activity constitutes an individual property of the individual consisting of a higher frequency and intensity of a particular kind of activity than in others.[4] This is a feature of the living organisms, including humans, understood as undertaking and conducting activities directed by various needs or forced by the environment.[5] Human activity constitutes an inborn ability of the person. It has a developmental character, determined by genetic, environmental and situational factors.[6]

Participation in changing the natural and socio-cultural environment according to human needs, goals and ideals is a special feature of the human activity.[7] Human activity is of a regulatory nature and is subject to constant changes to regulate the relations between an individual and the world surrounding him or her. The activities undertaken by a person are of functional nature and they always take place in an organised and targeted manner. Some of these activities can be directed and organised better by a person, while others are more difficult for the individual. The direction of the activities is determined by the needs or tasks whose implementation depends on the mental and cultural development of the individual, on the development of the environment in which the person lives and on the role that man plays in that environment.[8]

Activity constitutes an indicator of the mental development of the individual, it also undergoes formation and improvement during the life. Therefore, it has a progressive character, consisting in the fact that during the person's life, the areas of his or her activity are increased and the activities performed by him or her are improved.[9] Human activity is defined as actions serving to satisfy the human needs of a biological (living), psychological, social (participation in the life of various social groups) and cultural (participation in cultural life and cultural legacy) nature. Human activity is a moral and volitional property of the personality that manifests itself in undertaking the intentional actions leading to solving social and individual

[2] A.S. Reber, E.S. Reber, *Słownik psychologii*, Warszawa 2008, p. 35.

[3] H. Zgółkowa, *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny*, Poznań 1996, p. 178.

[4] W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 1996, p. 16.

[5] T.W. Nowacki, K. Korabiowska-Nowacka, B. Baraniak, *Nowy słownik pedagogiki pracy*, Warszawa 2000, p. 12.

[6] J. Kirenko, *Zasoby odpornościowe osób niepełnosprawnych jako predykator ich aktywności życiowej* [in:] *Wielowymiarowość aktywności i aktywizacji*, ed. S. Guz, Warszawa 2008, p. 263.

[7] W. Okoń*, Nowy słownik*…, p. 16.

[8] T. Tomaszewski, *Aktywność człowieka* [in:] *Psychologia jako nauka o człowieku*, eds. M. Maruszewski, J. Reykowski, T. Tomaszewski*,* Warszawa 1966, pp. 201–210.

[9] M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa, *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Zagadnienia ogólne*, Warszawa 2000, p. 151.

tasks, usually of a complex nature.[10] It concerns various spheres of the human life, consequently it can be considered, e.g., in the intellectual, reception, sensory, motor, verbal or emotional sphere.

In the process of human development, activity of the individual changes in numerous ways. It is primarily subject to the processes of differentiation, reorganization and integration. Changes in intensity constitute the result of these processes (intensity of a particular type of activity and, as a consequence, transition of the activity to an even higher level of organization). While considering activity from the point of view of the organization levels, the following are commonly distinguished: chaotic activity, imitative activity, the one guided by current instructions, the one guided by current tasks, independence, creativity.[11]

In conclusion, it should be noted that each human activity requires actions. The state of arousal, action, building generalizations and assimilating knowledge concerning the surrounding reality constitutes the essence of activity. Activity is a particularly broad concept that is applicable in many fields of science. Representatives of the numerous scientific disciplines are interested in it, especially pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists. It is also a key concept in sport.[12] According to Reber and Reber, the term of activity – due to a high degree of generality – is combined with the adjectives that define it, e.g. goal-oriented activity, accidental activity, problem-solving activity.[13] Okoń distinguishes social activity that manifests itself in production work, socio-cultural activity, sport and play, intellectual activity, which takes place at school, in scientific work and – in general – in independent solutions of the new problems, amateur activity, undertaken by non-professionals in various fields of science, art and technology.[14]

This elaboration focuses on the educational activity of the students graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów. It is understood as active participation in the process of the organized education and independent learning. Educational activity of the adults is a deliberately targeted and intentional behaviour related to the adaptation of the competences of the individual to the requirements of the changing socio-economic reality.[15] This activity may manifest itself in the following: participation in school and out-of-school forms of education of the adults, self-education, improvement of the vocational qualifications and formulation of further educational plans. The conditions of educational activity

[10] T.W. Nowacki, K. Korabiowska-Nowacka, B. Baraniak, *Nowy słownik*…, p. 12.

[11] W. Furmanek, *Z teorii edukacji zawodowej*, Lublin 1998, p. 285.

[12] H. Zgółkowa, *Praktyczny słownik*…, p. 178.

[13] A.S. Reber, E.S. Reber, *Słownik* ..., p. 35.

[14] W. Okoń*, Nowy słownik psychologii*, p. 16.

[15] E. Solarczyk-Ambrozik, *Kształcenie ustawiczne w perspektywie globalnej i lokalnej. Między wymogami rynku a indywidualnymi strategiami edukacyjnymi*, Poznań 2004, p. 198, after: J. Szłapińska, *Podnoszenie wartości kapitału edukacyjnego pracowników w systemie kształcenia ustawicznego*, Poznań 2009, p. 132.

result both from the situation of the individual and his or her subjective attitude towards learning as well as from external influences, i.e. from the socio-economic and cultural environment.[16]

Subject and purpose of the research

The subject of the study was the types of activities undertaken by students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów and their plans for further development. The aim of the research was to determine:

a) types of activities undertaken by students;
b) factors that encourage students to take up particular activities;
c) plans for further development.

In accordance with the assumed objectives of the research, the following research problem has been formulated: *What types of activities are undertaken by students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy?*

The following specific problems have formulated, among others, to the main problem:

1. What kinds of educational activities are undertaken by students of pedagogy?
2. What kinds of socio-cultural activities are undertaken by students of pedagogy?
3. What kinds of vocational activity are undertaken by students of pedagogy?
4. What is the relationship between the activities undertaken during studies and future professional work?
5. What are further educational and vocational plans of the students?

Due to the wide range of issues covered, the article analyses only issues related to the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in pedagogy.

Organization and course of the research

The study, conducted using a questionnaire survey, was carried out in May 2025 among 146 students (144 women and 2 men) completing Master's degree studies in Pedagogy (specializations: Care and Educational Pedagogy, Rehabilitation Pedagogy, and Preschool and Early Childhood Education). Selection of the last year students as a research group was deliberate. The examined students will be looking for a job in a few weeks' time. What will they write in their Curriculum Vitae? Which achievements will they take pride in? The research was supposed to encourage students to self-assess their own activities undertaken during the studies.

[16] J. Szłapińska, *Podnoszenie wartości kapitału edukacyjnego pracowników w systemie kształcenia ustawicznego*, Poznań 2009, p. 132.

The research used a questionnaire that consisted of 22 questions concerning various types of activity (educational, vocational, cultural, social) undertaken by students and their plans for further development. The analysis included only the questions related to evaluation of the educational activity of the students.

Analysis of the results of the author's own research

Students have numerous opportunities to undertake various types of activity during their studies. They can participate in open lectures, courses, trainings, scientific clubs, student organizations, etc. Universities establish cooperation with employers. Apart from the curricular internships, students can also take part in the training programs and continue their studies at another university in Poland or abroad for a certain period of time.

Students were able to indicate several activities while being asked the question: *Which activities did you undertake during the studies?* The majority of students indicated several activities.

Table 1. Activities undertaken by students

No.	Undertaken activities	Number of people	%
1.	Participation in free courses (trainings)	84	57.53
2.	Participation in paid courses (trainings)	14	9.59
3.	Participation in open lectures	42	28.77
4.	Participation in scientific conferences (passive)	143	97.94
5.	Participation in scientific conferences (active)	25	17.12
6.	Activity in scientific clubs	29	19.86
7.	Studies at a different major (specializations)	4	2.74

Note: data in the table do not sum up.
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The largest number of the respondents, 97.94% (143 people), indicated participation in scientific conferences. This answer is not surprising. Students are encouraged to participate actively in the conferences organised at the university. Sometimes, participation in these conferences is within the framework of particular classes, then the student is obliged to take part in the conference. On the other hand, significantly fewer people get involved in the organization of these projects. Only 17.12% (25 people) answered "yes" to the question *Have you ever assisted in the organization of the scientific conference?*

Students cannot always afford to participate in paid trainings. Only 9.59% (14 people) indicated that they had participated in these types of trainings. However, students do well in searching for free trainings. Participation in free courses and

trainings was marked by 57.53% of the respondents. Universities, e.g. through Academic Career Offices, organize these types of trainings as well to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills. Among other activities, the respondents indicated the following: participation in open lectures (28.77% – 42 people), activity in scientific clubs (19.86% – 29 people). Only 2.74% (4 people) of the respondents indicated studies at another major or specialization.

Students were asked the question *What are the motives for undertaking various types of educational activity of the students?*, being provided with the option to choose one of five answers (Table 2).

Table 2. Motives for undertaking educational activity

No.	Undertaken activities	Number of people	%
1.	Acquisition of knowledge, skills	14	9.59
2.	Obtaining a certificate (diploma, certification)	122	83.56
3.	Spending free time	3	2.05
4.	Possibility to be with others (getting to know other people)	7	4.79
5.	Other reasons	0	0

Source: Author's own elaboration.

A vast majority of the respondents (83.56% – people122) indicated that the motive for undertaking educational activity is to obtain a diploma (certificate) confirming acquisition of knowledge and skills. 9.59% of the respondents marked acquisition of knowledge and skills, 4.79% of the respondents indicated the opportunity to meet other people, 2.05% of the respondents marked spending their free time.

Table 3. Plans for further education

No.	Continuing education	Number of people	%
1.	Yes, doctoral studies	3	2.05
2.	Yes, postgraduate studies	48	32.88
3.	Yes, short courses, training	58	39.73
4.	I don't know	37	25.34

Source: Author's own elaboration.

When asked the question: *Do you plan to continue your education through doctoral or postgraduate studies?*, 37 respondents indicated that they had not yet decided. Among those who expressed a desire for further professional development, the most frequently chosen option was participation in short courses and training (39.73% – 58 people). Postgraduate studies were selected by 32.88% (48 people) of respondents, while only 2.05% (3 people) expressed a desire to undertake doctoral

studies. The results indicate that students interested in continuing their education prefer shorter, practice-oriented forms of professional development aimed at improving competencies.

97.26% (142 people) of respondents answered "no" to the question *Do you think that knowledge and skills acquired during the studies will be sufficient to have and maintain a job?* This answer confirms that students are aware of the necessity of continuous learning. They know that knowledge and skills acquired during their studies will have to be updated and supplemented.

Overall, the results demonstrate that students are aware of the importance of continuous development and the need to update their knowledge and skills throughout their professional careers. Although most respondents do not plan to pursue formal academic education after graduation, they recognize the value of additional forms of learning, particularly short-term courses and training aimed at improving professional competencies. This indicates that students perceive lifelong learning as an essential element of maintaining competitiveness in the changing labour market.

Conclusion

The conducted research made it possible to determine the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy and their attitudes towards further professional development in the context of the lifelong learning concept. The findings indicate that the respondents undertake various forms of educational activity, recognizing the need to systematically expand their knowledge and improve their skills already during their studies. Participation in scientific conferences as well as free courses and training programmes attracted particular interest, which demonstrates students' active search for opportunities to develop competencies useful in their future professional work.

The analysis of the research results indicates that students are aware of the dynamic changes taking place in the labour market and the necessity of systematically updating their knowledge and skills. The vast majority of respondents stated that the competencies acquired during their studies would not be sufficient to maintain employment throughout their entire professional career. This confirms that the participants understand the idea of lifelong learning as a continuous process of development that extends beyond formal academic education.

At the same time, the results show that students primarily prefer shorter, practically oriented forms of professional development, such as courses and training programmes, which enable them to acquire new competencies corresponding to current professional requirements. The lower level of interest in doctoral studies may result from the fact that most Pedagogy students perceive professional

development mainly in terms of practical preparation for their future profession rather than pursuing an academic career.

The research findings also highlight the important role of higher education institutions in creating conditions that support students' educational activity. Organizing conferences, open lectures, training programmes, and supporting student research clubs constitute important elements in preparing young people to function in a knowledge-based society. Universities not only provide specialist knowledge but also shape attitudes of openness towards further learning, self-education, and professional development.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Pedagogy students recognize the need for continuous development and perceive education as a lifelong process. Although not all graduates plan to continue formal education after completing their studies, the vast majority of respondents demonstrate readiness to undertake various activities aimed at improving their qualifications. Awareness of the necessity for continuous improvement of competencies constitutes an important element of the professional preparation of future educators and remains consistent with the assumptions of the lifelong learning concept.

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The philosophical foundations of teacher education

Filozoficzne podstawy edukacji pedagogów

Abstract

Reading the works of the most distinguished figures in culture – texts that reflect the struggle with questions every thinking person asks themselves – combined with reflection and discussion on the topics at hand, fosters intellectual and moral maturity. Therefore, it should be a permanent element of the education of students, including future educators. This article presents an example of such a practice, carried out during meetings of the Philosophy and Pedagogy Section of the Student Pedagogical Research Club at the Zamość Academy and during the seminars concluding this work. It emphasizes the need to combine practical professional training with classical education and indicates how the latter can be restored to its rightful place.

Keywords: classical education, philosophy of education, pedagogy

Streszczenie

Lektura tekstów najwybitniejszych przedstawicieli kultury – tekstów będących wyrazem zmagań z pytaniami, które zadaje sobie każdy myślący człowiek – połączona z refleksją i dysputą na rozważane tematy, sprzyja ludzkiemu dojrzewaniu intelektualnemu i moralnemu. Dlatego powinna być stałym elementem kształcenia studentów, m.in. pedagogów. Artykuł prezentuje przykład takiej praktyki realizowanej w ramach spotkań Sekcji Filozoficzno-Pedagogicznej Studenckiego Koła Naukowego Pedagogów w Akademii Zamojskiej oraz w trakcie wieńczących tę pracę seminariów. Podkreśla konieczność łączenia praktycznego przygotowania do zawodu z edukacją klasyczną i wskazuje, jak można próbować przywrócić tej ostatniej należne jej miejsce.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja klasyczna, filozofia edukacji, pedagogika

Introduction

Knowledge and skills relating to the philosophical foundations of upbringing and education are an essential and indispensable part of teachers' training. After all, anyone who intends to support the development of others must possess a mature,

insightful understanding of human nature and the structure of existence, of human dignity, of human capacities and how to develop them, as well as knowledge of true freedom and how to attain it, and of the meaning of life. No sensible person would entrust equipment to someone who has no idea about its composition, purpose and functions, and yet we are not talking about equipment, but about human beings: pupils and students. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the curriculum for teacher training includes subjects such as philosophical anthropology, ethics and the philosophy of education. Equally important is the development of critical thinking skills – correct reasoning, deduction and definition; the study of logic fosters the development of these abilities.

The acquisition of knowledge regarding the philosophical foundations of education and upbringing, as well as critical thinking skills and relevant competencies, is achieved, amongst other things, through the study of classical philosophical texts, combined with discussion of the issues raised therein.[1] This work, centred on a selected text and the problems it raises, can be carried out during classes, as well as (more broadly) during meetings of the student research society's section. The section's work may culminate in a seminar devoted to the problem under consideration. This article presents an example of such a practice, carried out during meetings of the Philosophy and Pedagogy Section of the Student Research Society of Educators at the Zamość Academy and during the seminars concluding this work.

Reading

Reading texts by the classics of philosophy is a regular feature of the meetings;[2] these readings serve as a starting point for discussions on the issues raised in the texts, allowing participants, as it were, to join the debate that has been ongoing since ancient times amongst the most eminent figures of Western European culture. Participants have the opportunity to explore how great minds have grappled with questions that concern every human being, to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed solutions, to identify their consequences and underlying assumptions, and to examine the arguments employed. The issues raised in the texts are discussed using the Socratic method. The facilitator therefore acts as a "midwife;" the participants' contributions provide an opportunity to discern the "state of their minds" – the ideas contained therein (proposals for resolving the

[1] W. Dłubacz, *Edukacja klasyczna dziś? Istota i geneza, struktura i metoda, cel*, "Edukacja" 2022, No. 4(163), pp. 12–13.

[2] The work of the Philosophy and Education Section of SKNP AZ has been ongoing since 2023; it is led by Dr Teresa Bojarska-Szot and Dr Jan Szot. Initially, the series of meetings focused on specific themes (theoretical wisdom, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance); over time, the programme has been based on a selected reading for the year.

issue under consideration); these ideas (proposed solutions) are then subjected to joint examination.[3]

This approach – characteristic of classical education – fosters the development of intellectual and moral maturity. Dawid W. Lutz drew attention to this: "The aim of classical education is not to prepare students for a specific profession or career, but to equip them to embark on a lifelong process of achieving human excellence, both intellectual and moral. The tradition of classical education is rooted in the belief that the great minds of the past discovered important truths about the world and humanity's place within it, truths that remain relevant to this day. Classical education helps students realise their potential by learning and putting into practice the wisdom of the ages, which has stood the test of time. As a living tradition, classical education (…) continually expands our knowledge by applying unchanging truths to new problems.[4]

In the previous academic year, the series of meetings focused on Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics,' particularly on passages from Book VIII; this work culminated in a seminar on *On Friendship*. This year, however, the work centred on A.M.S. Boethius's 'On the Consolation of Philosophy,' particularly Book IV, and as a conclusion, a seminar was organised on *Evil from the Perspective of Philosophers and Educators*. The seminars are part of the series 'The Philosophical Foundations of Education'. Participants include students and lecturers from the Institute of Pedagogy at the Zamoyski Academy.

On Friendship

The seminar *On Friendship* took place on 8 and 22 May 2024. The first session comprised three presentations, interspersed with discussion: 1) *Is social friendship possible?* (Dr Paweł Skrzydlewski, Professor at the Zamoyski Academy); 2) *Friendship in Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"* (students: Khrystyna Humeniuk, Maja Krzesińska, Wiktoria Sokołowska, Izabela Szarek, Miłołaj Kolbus); 3) *Friendship in C.S. Lewis's "The Four Loves"* (Dr Jan Szot).

Skrzydlewski explored the theme of social friendship – that is, friendship practised in the public sphere, encompassing the entire community, and expressed through an attitude of solidarity and respect; the questions focused on the theme set out in the title of his talk and on the conditions necessary for such friendship to exist. Szot referred to Lewis's concept of friendship as the most spiritual form of love, outlined its foundations and the differences between this form of love and others;[5]

[3] G. Reale, *Historia filozofii starożytnej*, Vol. 1: *Od początków do Sokratesa*, transl. E.I. Zieliński, Lublin 1993, pp. 370–382.

[4] D.W. Lutz, *O edukacji klasycznej i progresywnej*, "Edukacja" 2022, No. 4(163), p. 49.

[5] See: C.S. Lewis, *Cztery miłości*, transl. M. Wańkowiczowa, Warszawa 1962, pp. 53–82. The fourth chapter of the book is devoted to the subject of friendship.



Figure 1. The poster announcing the seminar "On Friendship"

Source: https://www.akademiazamojska.edu.pl/pl/news/1755-zapraszamy-na-seminarium-naukowe-bdquo-o-przyjaznirdquo (28.03.2026)

in this context, the discussion turned to the possibility and conditions of friendship between men and women. In turn, the students presented the results of their work on the text of the *Nicomachean Ethics* – they addressed the nature of friendship, its significance and role in human life, the conditions for genuine friendship, and the characteristics distinguishing it from what is merely a semblance of friendship. The latter point in particular seemed significant to the participants. Following Aristotle, a distinction was drawn between friendship for the sake of benefit, friendship for the sake of pleasure, and friendship for the sake of the friend's person; each was characterised, and the basis for this distinction was also explained. The facilitator summed up the reflections on this part of the seminar with the words: "As the philosopher from Stagira used to say, every person desires good for themselves and clings to what seems to them to be good for them. Among various goods, everyone chooses what they value most. And since there are three kinds of goods: pleasant, useful and just, there are three directions of human endeavour. This also applies to the realm of interpersonal relationships, including those of a special nature: friendships. People form such relationships for various reasons – some for pleasure, others for benefit, and still others because of the friend's character: their integrity (*ethical courage*). These three motives correspond to three types of friendship. Friendship for pleasure is fleeting, as is friendship for benefit: «So when the reason why people were friends disappears, friendship disappears too (…)». Neither of these is really friendship, but merely resembles it. Friends in the proper

sense are only «those who wish their friends well for their own sake (…), and not for secondary reasons […]».”[6]

The second part of the seminar “On Friendship” took place on 22 May 2025. It comprised two presentations: 1) *Intellectual love as friendship* (*amor amicitiae*) *in Thomas Aquinas's 'Summa Theologica'* (Dr Teresa Bojarska-Szot); 2) *Can a choir be built without friendship?* (Paweł Łobacz, MA), as well as informal discussions among students regarding friendship and its significance. Once again, the speakers' presentations were interspersed with segments of discussion prompted by questions from the students. The speaker summarised her reflections on friendship understood as intellectual love with the following words: “It is customary to contrast love with friendship, reducing the former to the level of emotion (sensory stirrings), whilst linking the latter to reason. Thomas Aquinas, representing the Christian sphere of European culture, would say that man (a person of a spiritual and bodily nature) shares with animals the capacity for sensual love, yet unlike them is capable of intellectual love. Sensual love is a reaction of the emotions (sensory stirrings) to an object perceived by the senses as a potential source of benefit or pleasure. Intellectual love, on the other hand (*amor amicitiae, caritas*), is an act of the will (a free act), manifested in loving (*dilectio*), i.e. spiritual unity with the beloved, and benevolence (*benevolentia*) – wishing them well and supporting them in the realisation of what is actually good for them.”[7]

On Evil from the Perspective of Philosophers and Educators

The seminar *On Evil from the Perspective of Philosophers and Educators* took place on 22 April 2026. The event consisted of two parts, both of which took the form of a debate – the issues presented by the speakers and the conclusions drawn regarding them were interwoven with elements of discussion. During the seminar, the nature of evil, its causes and methods of counteracting it in the context of upbringing and education were discussed.

Szot presented some introductory remarks on the problem of evil and humanity's struggle with it. He pointed out that “The problem of evil – the question of its origin, basis, nature and consequences, of how it manifests itself, and of the possibility of controlling and overcoming it – is as old as the history of humanity. (…) It could be said that what distinguishes societies and cultures is precisely the ways in which they experience evil, and their attempts to define and overcome it.”[8]

[6] https://www.akademiazamojska.edu.pl/pl/news/1761-dyskutowali-o-przyjazni (28.03.2026). Cf. Arystoteles, *Etyka nikomachejska*, ch. 8 [in:]: *Dzieła wszystkie*, Vol. 5, Warszawa 1996, pp. 236–258.

[7] https://www.akademiazamojska.edu.pl/pl/news/1780-o-roznych-obliczach-przyjazni (28.03.2026). See: Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, Vol. 16, transl. A. Głażewski, Londyn 1967, II–II, q. 23–46.

[8] See: V. Lenzen, *Zło* [in:] H. Waldenfels, *Leksykon religii*, Warszawa 1997, p. 552.



Figure 2. The poster announcing the seminar 'On Evil'

https://www.akademiazamojska.edu.pl/pl/news/2071-o-zlu-ndash-z-perspektywy-filozofow-i-pedagogow (28.03.2026).

The first part of the meeting examined evil from a philosophical perspective. In her presentation, *Philosophical views on the nature and origin of evil*, Bojarska-Szot outlined the main ways of interpreting and attempting to explain the existence of evil; she stated, amongst other things, that: 'Views on the nature of evil divided philosophers into three camps: some accepted that evil exists as a being opposed to good and believed that evil is connected with the material side of the world. Others defined evil as a form of non-being – understood as nothingness or as *privatio* (privation). The denial of the reality of evil was based on flawed metaphysical and epistemological assumptions; it therefore has no cognitive value. Dualistic explanations are also untenable (there is no evil in itself; matter is not evil). Evil is the absence of the good that is naturally due to being.'[9] Subsequently, the students – Aleksandra Wiater, Aleksandra Rogala, Khrystyna Humeniuk and Michał Dudziński – presented reflections on evil and good contained in A.M.S. Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*. They cited the philosopher's theses ('for

[9] https://www.akademiazamojska.edu.pl/pl/news/2083-pedagodzy-i-filozofowie-dyskutowali-o-zlu (28.03.2026). The concept of evil as the privation of good was most fully discussed by Thomas Aquinas. See his *Suma teologiczna*, Vol. 4, transl. S. Bełch, Londyn 1978, I, q. 48–49.

the evildoer, just punishment is a remedy, and impunity is a misfortune,' 'power accompanies the good, and weakness the evil,' 'reward is always associated with good, and punishment with evil') and presented their arguments.[10]

The second part of the seminar examined evil from the perspective of educators. The role of the educator in relation to people affected by physical and moral evil was discussed. The students explored two topics: *Education and self-education as a remedy for moral evil* (Joanna Książek, Wiktoria Sokołowska, Wiktoria Tracz) and *Social support as a response to the physical evil afflicting people* (Maja Krzesińska, Aleksandra Rügge, Justyna Winiarczyk). While discussing these issues, the students asked the audience questions, guided them towards answers, and initiated a discussion. They raised, among other things, the issue of the role of upbringing in overcoming moral evil, factors helpful in overcoming phonoholism and social maladjustment, as well as the nature and types of social support provided in the context of a child's terminal illness and in relation to families with a disabled member. The meeting concluded with a summary.

Conclusion

The practice of reading classic works of educational philosophy together, as presented here, is part of the tradition of classical education.[11] Its modern proponents, such as Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, launched the "Great Books of the Western World' programme at the University of Chicago as early as 1946, which involved reading the most outstanding works of our culture and engaging in discussions about their content."[12] This programme, which constitutes a form of active participation in the 'Great Conversation' initiated by the ancient sages, is now being developed at many American universities. As it serves to foster the moral and intellectual maturity of students, it has been recognised as an essential complement

[10] A.M.S. Boecjusz, *O pocieszeniu, jakie daje filozofia*, transl. M. Antczak, G. Kurylewska, ch. 4.

[11] "Education, in the classical sense, is a method of teaching and upbringing that draws on the achievements of classical thought developed in ancient Greece, Rome and the Christian Middle Ages. It refers in particular to the purpose of such education, its teaching methods and its methods of upbringing. (…) The basis of such education is, in a sense, philosophy understood in the sapiential sense. (…) In classical education, a general education is of great importance. Its ultimate aim is to bring up a good, wise, righteous and honest person who desires wisdom, truth and beauty. In this concept of education, it is believed that one should learn from the past and not disregard tradition." W. Dłubacz, *Edukacja klasyczna*…, pp. 14–15. The methods of education and upbringing practised in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as in medieval Europe, were described, amongst others, by W. Jaeger in his works: *Wczesne chrześcijaństwo i grecka paideia*, transl. K. Bielawski, Bydgoszcz 1997 and *Paideia*, vol. 1–2, transl. M. Plezia, Warszawa 1964.

[12] D.W. Lutz, *O edukacji klasycznej*…, p. 51. G.L. Gutek, *Filozoficzne i ideologiczne podstawy edukacji*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 282.

to professional training. Such a programme is also worth implementing as part of the academic education of teachers. To justify the validity of this proposal, let us simply cite the following observation.

This series of philosophical meetings aims to address the systematic absence of philosophy teaching in Polish secondary schools. Maintaining this state of affairs is, in essence, an anti-cultural and anti-state act. And it does not seem that, without a fundamental change to the education system, one could "plead for philosophy in schools; one cannot plead for it, because there is no one to ask – these people are deaf, intellectually and spiritually deaf."[13] At this point, we cannot address the causes of this "deafness." Instead, we shall point to the effects of an education devoid of philosophy, quoting Stanisław Judycki: "When there is no philosophy, the human spirit is, in this day and age, exposed to every whim of the imagination of those who are clever at manipulating concepts, of the conjurers who peddle conceptual «nonsense» and emotional «distraction», which we commonly call the mass-media. People left at the mercy of this educational scandal are only able to defend themselves against it intuitively, but even so, much of this degrading manipulation seeps into them and they lose part of their potential identity, or even begin to believe that identity is not important at all."[14]

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[13] S. Judycki, *Czy edukacja bez filozofii prowadzi do istotnej ułomności intelektualnej i duchowej*, "Znak" 2005, No. 5, p. 84.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 88.

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Femininity and masculinity from an interdisciplinary perspective

Kobiecość i męskość w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej

Abstract

The issue of femininity and masculinity is at the centre of interest in many academic disciplines, which confirms its complex and multidimensional nature and, at the same time, justifies the need to analyze it on various levels. It is part of a broader discussion surrounding the concept of cultural gender, especially in the context of the factors that determine it. For femininity and masculinity lie at the intersection of nature and culture, and thus encompass the biological, social, and individual dimensions of the human being, which leaves additional room for individual interpretations. The multitude of views and positions on this issue makes it difficult to define them unambiguously; therefore, this article is devoted to femininity and masculinity from an interdisciplinary perspective. It focuses on highlighting the complexity of this issue; therefore, it will be presented through the lens of those academic disciplines that describe it in the greatest detail. Based on an analysis of the relevant literature – to the extent permitted by the framework of this publication – the anthropological, biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives will be presented in turn.

Keywords: femininity and masculinity, sexuality, corporeality, biological sex, cultural gender, gender identity

Streszczenie

Zagadnienie kobiecości i męskości znajduje się w centrum zainteresowania wielu dyscyplin naukowych, co potwierdza jego złożony i wielowymiarowy charakter, a zarazem uzasadnia potrzebę jego analizy na różnych płaszczyznach. Wpisuje się ono w szerszą dyskusję prowadzoną wokół pojęcia płci kulturowej, zwłaszcza w kontekście czynników, które ją determinują. Kobiecość i męskość sytuuje się bowiem na pograniczu natury i kultury, a więc obejmuje zarówno biologiczny, społeczny, jak i indywidualny wymiar człowieka, co pozostawia dodatkową przestrzeń do własnych interpretacji. Wielość poglądów i stanowisk w tej kwestii utrudnia ich jednoznaczne zdefiniowanie, dlatego niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest kobiecości i męskości w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej. Koncentruje się na ukazaniu złożoności tego zagadnienia, dlatego zostanie ono przedstawione w optyce tych dyscyplin

naukowych, które opisują je w sposób najbardziej szczegółowy. W oparciu o analizę literatury przedmiotowej – na tyle, na ile pozwolą przyjęte ramy te publikacji – kolejno zaprezentowane zostaną perspektywa antropologiczna, biologiczna, psychologiczna oraz socjologiczna.

Słowa kluczowe: kobiecość i męskość, płciowość, cielesność, płeć biologiczna, płeć kulturowa, tożsamość płciowa

Introduction

The issue of femininity and masculinity is part of the ongoing debate on gender, which is currently taking place not only in academia but also in the broader social sphere. A particularly hotly debated aspect is its social dimension, which is defined using the term *gender* borrowed from English, although in Polish academic discourse it is increasingly referred to as "cultural gender."[1] The social nature of this issue places femininity and masculinity within the scope of many academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and other human sciences.[2] This highlights the need to approach the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective, which in turn makes it difficult to provide an unambiguous definition of femininity and masculinity. A distinction commonly used in the social sciences proves helpful in this regard; it distinguishes between: biological sex, which refers to the anatomical and physiological differences between the sexes, and cultural gender (*gender*), which emphasizes the psychological, social, and cultural differences between women and men resulting from the "social process of gender construction." Drawing on this distinction, femininity and masculinity can be defined as models comprising a set of certain traits, behaviours, and roles attributed to women and men in a given society, which they internalize during the process of socialization.[3]

The literature on the subject identifies two cultural models of femininity and masculinity: the traditional and the modern. Until the second half of the 20th century, the traditional model dominated in many societies, in which femininity and masculinity were viewed as two distinct and opposing dimensions of personality.[4] Within this framework, femininity was equated with emotionality, tenderness, gentleness, and nurturing, as well as a focus on motherhood and family. Masculinity, on the other hand, was associated with strength and self-confidence, but also with aggression, selfishness, and a competitive mindset.[5] Today, however, due to numerous social,

[1] Ł. Wawrowski, *Czy jest sens dyskutować z przeciwnikami tzw. ideologii gender?*, "Chorzowskie Studia Polityczne" 2017, No. 14, pp. 13–14.

[2] M. Olczyk, *Prawda (o) płci – odkrywana czy tworzona? Antropologia integralna w konfrontacji z ideologią gender*, "Teologia i Moralność" 2018, No. 2, p. 191.

[3] K. Dzwonkowska-Godula, *Tradycyjnie czy nowocześnie? Wzory macierzyństwa i ojcostwa w Polsce*, Łódź 2015, p. 35.

[4] D. Dobosz, *Kobiecość i męskość w popkulturze z perspektywy młodych dorosłych. Studium jakościowe*, Katowice 2021, s. 24.

[5] A. Gromkowska-Melosik, *Paradoksy emancypacji*, "ACADEMIA" 2013, No. 1, p. 32.

cultural, and economic changes, gender role models have undergone significant transformation.[6] As Krystyna Dzwonkowska-Godula notes, in contemporary society, the traditional gender model clashes with the modern one, leading to changes in how women and men are perceived, as well as in the traits, roles, and spheres of activity attributed to them.[7] Femininity and masculinity are therefore no longer perceived as two contrasting poles, and in society, the intertwining of these two dimensions is increasingly evident, making it difficult to clearly distinguish between what is masculine and what is feminine.[8]

In light of the above, it must be concluded that, in the face of contemporary social changes, the issue of femininity and masculinity takes on particular significance and relevance. The dynamics of these changes and the multitude of contemporary perspectives on this issue point to the need for in-depth reflection; therefore, this article focuses on examining femininity and masculinity from an interdisciplinary perspective. Its aim is to attempt to capture the complexity and multidimensionality of the issue at hand, which simultaneously justifies the need to further explore it in future publications. The article contributes to the current discussion on the significance of gender in human life, and thus to a deeper line of reflection on the concept of the person, their nature, identity, and place in society. It should be emphasized, however, that these reflections are introductory in nature and serve only as a starting point for more in-depth analyses, the full development of which definitely goes beyond the scope of a single study.

The anthropological perspective

Reflection on femininity and masculinity essentially touches upon a much more fundamental issue. Any attempt to define these concepts presupposes – often in a way that is not explicitly stated – a specific vision of humanity. Thus, when we ask questions about the sexuality of women and men, we are in fact asking about the essence of human nature, about who a person is as such, and also about their relationship to nature.[9] Therefore, when reflecting on human sexuality, one should begin by approaching the issue primarily from an anthropological perspective, seeking to discover what vision of humanity lies behind a given concept of sexuality.[10]

[6] B. Harwas-Napierała, *Niektóre uwarunkowania i zagrożenia rozwoju tożsamości płciowej dzieci*, "Forum Psychologiczne" 1998, No. 1, p. 62.

[7] D. Dobosz, *Kobiecość i męskość*…, p. 67.

[8] A. Gromkowska-Melosik, *Rekonstrukcje tożsamości współczesnych kobiet. Paradoksy emancypacji*, "Pedagogika Społeczna" 2017, No. 2, p. 97.

[9] W. Starnawski, *Dwa modele relacji: męskość – ojcostwo. Perspektywa pedagogii personalistycznej*, "Forum Pedagogiczne" 2016, No. 2/2, p. 218.

[10] B. Biela, *"Antropologia genderyzmu" w świetle Listu do biskupów Kościoła katolickiego o współdziałaniu mężczyzny i kobiety w Kościele i świecie*, "Studia Pastoralne" 2015, No. 11, p. 41.

In this sense, the ongoing academic debate on the "truth about gender"[11] appears, in essence, to be an anthropological dispute.

The debate addressing the issue of human sexuality, including interpretations of femininity and masculinity, centres on the concept of *gender*.[12] This word comes from English, where it is used to denote the grammatical gender of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns: masculine, feminine, and neuter (e.g., this wardrobe or this table). As Bogdan Biela points out, in this context, one can observe a significant feature of language, which involves speaking about asexual objects in terms of gender. Thus, a process takes place here of transferring human characteristics to objects, which consequently leads to their "genderization." In other words, language is used to assign a specific gender to objects, even though in reality they are not sexually defined (they do not exhibit any biological differences in their structure, as is the case with humans). The assignment of gender does not, therefore, stem from the nature of things, but takes place within the realm of human language, which is a product of culture. Ultimately, it can be said that it is culture that assigns generic characteristics to things.[13]

As Biela notes, a similar process occurs within *gender* theory, although here it takes the opposite direction, i.e., from language to anthropology. This means that in research on the cultural determinants of gender, a dominant role in the formation of femininity and masculinity is attributed to language and the social narratives derived from it. Ultimately, differences between the sexes are viewed primarily as a matter of gender – that is, a culturally constructed description, shaped by language, of what is masculine and feminine.[14] From this perspective, biological determinants of sex are of no significant importance, since the criteria for femininity and masculinity are defined by culturally embedded narratives about gender and sexual behaviour. Gender thus appears here as a sociocultural construct that is neither a permanent nor a stable category, as it is subject to free creation (the theory of gender performativity).[15] Hence, the concept *of gender* is defined as gender in the sense of the characteristics and roles attributed to women and men in a given culture.[16]

Gender understood in this way entails far-reaching anthropological consequences that affect the way a person functions and fulfils their potential, as well as their interpersonal relationships. The rejection of the concept of biological sex as an innate characteristic of a person undermines the view that the division between women and men is legitimate. According to proponents of *gender* theory,

[11] M. Olczyk, *Prawda (o) płci*…, p. 184.

[12] W. Rogowski, *Ideologia gender w krytyce medialnej środowisk prawicy w Polsce*, "Świat Idei i Polityki" 2013, No. 12, p. 26.

[13] B. Biela, *"Antropologia genderyzmu"*…, pp. 40–41.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 41.

[15] M. Olczyk, *Prawda (o) płci*…, pp. 185–186.

[16] B. Biela, *"Antropologia genderyzmu"*…, p. 41.

biological sex characteristics are individual physical traits that do not allow for the identification and characterization of a person as belonging to a particular sex. All the more so, they cannot serve as a basis for drawing conclusions about a person's social roles, as is the case in classical sexuality theory. Any form of highlighting differences between women and men is considered a gender stereotype that must be discarded. Gender is, in fact, a matter of convention – a sociocultural construct that is not a permanent reality contributing to a person's identity, but rather a role that someone assumes. In other words, there are no objective criteria for assigning someone to a particular gender category, because no one is born a woman or a man, but simply a human being who assumes a certain social role. However, this role is not a consequence of their genetic code, but of their natural needs and feelings.[17]

The denial of human sexuality, as it occurs within *gender* theory, leads to the belief that it cannot be confined to two dimensions, namely femininity and masculinity. The thesis of gender complementarity – which would imply that each gender is incomplete – is also rejected. According to proponents of the *gender* concept, a person can achieve full self-realization without reference to their supposed femininity or masculinity. Moreover, "entanglement in sexuality" actually limits a person, who is not inherently sexual – it is within the framework of culture that a person is "gendered," that is, assigned a gender. This means that a person's adoption of a particular social role will most likely stem from their relationship with another person. However, this relationship will not be based on complementarity, but on a partnership that emphasizes the equality of the individuals involved. Biela points out that this approach to sexuality has specific consequences for the perception of gender roles associated with women and men, which in turn affects the understanding of the institutions of marriage, family, fatherhood, motherhood, as well as the upbringing, education, and identity formation of children and adolescents.[18]

According to Maciej Olczyk, it is an undeniable fact that culture has a real influence on how the functions and tasks assigned to women and men are perceived, both in the family and in the workplace. The interpretive models present in societies shape people's conceptions of femininity and masculinity, determine different modes of socialization, and sometimes even contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities. At the same time, however, Olczyk notes that an excessive focus on cultural determinants can lead to downplaying the objective knowledge about sex provided by numerous human sciences, including, among others, sociobiology, neurophysiology, genetics, and psychology. As he emphasizes, all of these disciplines clearly point to the existence of biological determinants of human sex development that precede any human decisions.[19]

[17] *Ibidem*, pp. 45–47.
[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 47–48.
[19] M. Olczyk, *Prawda (o) płci*…, pp. 190–191.

Monika Kacprzak raises similar concerns, stating that accepting the tenets of *gender* theory goes beyond merely acknowledging sociocultural differences. According to the author, it also implies consent to the devaluation of the human body as an insignificant element, which consequently leads to the adoption of an anthropological perspective in which human nature is stripped of the characteristics that are absolutely inherent to it.[20] The denial of a fixed human structure – and thus of a certain essence of human existence – means that humans begin to be perceived almost as an incarnate spirit endowed with unlimited freedom, while their body becomes merely a "thing" attached to them. As a result, the freedom in question manifests itself not so much in the ability to accept or reject objective principles as in the freedom to establish them at will.[21]

John Paul II drew attention to this problem in his encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, where he wrote: "Freedom, when considered absolute, leads to treating the human body as raw material, devoid of meaning and moral value, until it shapes the body according to its own design. Consequently, human nature and the body appear as preliminary data or premises for the choices made by freedom – materially necessary, but external to the person, to the human agent."[22]

A vision of man in which absolute freedom is attributed to him carries serious theological consequences. For such a conception of the human person leaves no room for God. As Pope Benedict XVI observed: "Where the freedom to act becomes the freedom to make oneself, the negation of the Creator himself inevitably follows."[23] Ultimately, then, the human being assumes the role of God Himself, thereby becoming a "god incarnate" (*homo creator*).[24]

According to Danuta Radziszewska-Szczepanik, this contemporary understanding of man has been largely influenced by the Cartesian paradigm, which is expressed in a clear separation of two spheres of existence: the soul and the body (*res cogitans* and *res extensa*). Descartes characterized them as fully autonomous realities – and thus independent of one another – that are governed by their own laws. He identified the soul with consciousness, the self, which by its very nature is responsible for thinking. In his view, it is precisely the soul that constitutes the essence of the human being, whom the philosopher perceived primarily as *res cogitans*, i.e., a thinking thing. He treated the body, on the other hand, as part of the natural world, which made it external not only to the soul but also to the subject

[20] M. Kacprzyk, *Społeczne koszty wdrożenia ideologii gender*, "Collequia Theologica Ottoniana" 2014, No. 2, pp. 68–70.

[21] D. Radziszewska-Szczepaniak, *Redukcjonizm antropologiczny i jego konsekwencje*, "Nurt SVD" 2016, Issue 2, pp. 384–385.

[22] John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, No. 48.

[23] *Przemówienie jego świętobliwości Benedykta XVI z okazji życzeń bożonarodzeniowych dla Kurii Rzymskiej*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia.html (27.03.2026).

[24] D. Radziszewska-Szczepanik, *Redukcjonizm antropologiczny*…, p. 385.

itself. It was therefore not viewed by Descartes as an element constituting humanity, but rather as something that is in our possession, though in essence it does not belong to the human being. For this reason, the relationship between the soul and the body was, in his view, accidental rather than constitutive.[25]

Drawing on this tradition of thought, Radziszewska-Szczepanik asserts that within *gender* theory, the human person is reduced to *a res cogitans*. As she explains, the error of this approach lies primarily in treating corporeality as an impersonal reality. Meanwhile, in her view, the body is a co-constitutive factor of human personal being; therefore, it cannot be perceived solely as matter subject to the individual's free disposal, since a human being is not merely a spirit but a unity of spirit, psyche, and body.[26]

Witold Starnawski also points to an alternative approach to human nature, proposing that the issue of the human body be considered from a personalist perspective. In seeking an answer to the question of the body's place within the structure of the human person, he draws on Boethius's definition. It follows from this definition that the person is a broader category, extending beyond the aspect of corporeality. Indeed, the concept of the person can be applied not only to human beings but also to incorporeal beings. At the same time, however, he notes that, according to classical tradition, the body constitutes an integral element of human nature and is therefore not something foreign (external) in which the soul (consciousness) merely resides or which it uses. For a person does not so much „possess" a body as simply be corporeal. According to Starnawski, the unity of soul and body is confirmed by the classical principle *operari sequitur esse*, according to which the manner in which a given thing acts follows directly from its nature. If, therefore, a human being acts through their body – that is, through actions – and also as a person, that is, consciously and in a free manner, this means that their action is simultaneously spiritual and corporeal. A corresponding unity must therefore exist at the level of their nature.[27]

In the context of our reflections, a crucial question remains: to what extent is being a woman or a man a constitutive element of human nature?[28] Christian personalism, as represented by John Paul II, provides an answer to this question. This approach indicates that human nature is sexual,[29] whereby the "naturalness" of sex emphasized by the Church is linked not only to the bodily dimension but also to the spiritual one, which means that it concerns the inner essence of the human person as such.[30] Sexuality will therefore not be viewed here solely as a biological fact, but as a way of being as a man or a woman. The Pope defines it as a constitutive property

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 381.

[26] *Ibidem*, p. 386.

[27] W. Starnawski, *Dwa modele*…, p. 220.

[28] *Ibidem*, p. 220.

[29] M. Siemion, *Seksualność w teorii querr oraz filozofii osoby i teologii ciała Karola Wojtyły*, "Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne" 2019, No. 3, p. 114.

[30] A. Szwed, *Kto się boi gender? Kościół rzymskokatolicki w Polsce i kategoria płci*, "Kultura i Edukacja" 2015, No. 3, pp. 281–282.

of humanity, while emphasizing that it should not be equated with physicality. As he points out, the human body always bears the marks of sex; however, the fact that a person "is a body" has a much more fundamental significance for their personal structure than the fact that they are a man or a woman. In other words, the body is a far more fundamental element of being a person than sex, which should be understood as a certain mode of existence of the body – and thus of the person.[31]

The Christian view of sexuality has its roots in the biblical account of the creation of the world, where it is written that God created *adamah*. This is a term of Hebrew origin that means "human being" (not "man").[32] The distinction between man and woman appears in Scripture only later, in the context of „Adam's dream,"[33] which points to sexuality as a secondary, though constitutive, characteristic of human beings. John Paul II interpreted this fact as an expression of the ontological equality of women and men, manifested in their identical nature, which, though essentially one, can be expressed in two different ways, namely, in femininity or masculinity.[34] An analysis of the biblical text on the creation of Adam and Eve also reveals the complementarity of the sexes, indicating that no human being – existing solely as a man or solely as a woman – embodies the fullness of humanity in their body. In other words, man and woman are created "together" and are willed by God as one for the other. Therefore, they can only fully realize themselves through mutual relationship.[35] In this context, gender plays an essential role, allowing a person to transcend their original solitude – it opens them up to a relationship with another person. It is a relationship of love that allows one to discover oneself, as the Pope pointed out when he wrote: "Femininity, as it were, finds itself in the presence of masculinity, while masculinity is affirmed through femininity."[36] This complementarity on the spiritual level also finds expression in the human body, which, thanks to its diversity, reveals the orientation toward unity between woman and man, leading them toward love and personal communion.[37]

The biological perspective

In the field of medical science, the term "sex" is used to refer to a set of biological characteristics that distinguish female individuals from male ones. These characteristics are associated with various reproductive functions, hormones, and anatomy. They are universal in nature, meaning they are biologically determined

[31] *Ibidem*, p. 116.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 116.
[33] S. Kunka, *Szkic do teologii ludzkiej płciowości*, "Polonia Sacra" 2012, No. 31, p. 184.
[34] M. Siemion, *Seksualność w teorii*…, p. 116.
[35] S. Kunka, *Szkic do teologii*…, pp. 182–183.
[36] John Paul II, *Mężczyzną i niewiastą stworzył ich*, after: M. Siemion, *Seksualność w teorii*…, p. 117.
[37] M. Siemion, *Seksualność w teorii*…, pp. 117–118.

and thus remain independent of the influence of social factors.[38] Based on biological determinants, the following are distinguished:

a) chromosomal (gonadal) sex, which depends on the type of sex chromosomes, where male sex is determined by the 46 XY karyotype and female sex by the 46 XX karyotype;
b) gonadal sex, associated with specific sex glands (testes or ovaries);
c) gonadophoric sex, determined by the differentiation of the reproductive tracts that develop from the gonadal ducts;
d) phenotypic sex, determined by a person's external appearance (secondary and tertiary sexual characteristics);
e) hormonal sex, associated with the amount of sex hormones secreted;
f) brain sex, which refers to differences in brain structure that determine psychological sex.[39]

The origins of sex differences can be traced back to the prenatal period, when, alongside genetic sex (XX vs. XY), gonadal sex (testes vs. ovaries), and somatic sex (internal and external genitalia), neuronal sex begins to develop, which refers to the manner in which specific brain structures function – characteristic of either women or men: "During this period, through neurotransmitters, a specific type of feedback loop is established between the secretion of sex hormones and gonadotropins, a type of sexual behaviour (homosexuality or heterosexuality), and a type of behaviour associated with the biological sex role (aggressive or maternal behaviors)."[40]

Interestingly, from a biomedical perspective, psychological sex (including gender identity) is ultimately determined at the moment when a male fetus begins to secrete sufficient amounts of testosterone for its further biological, psychological, and sexual development. In the case of a female fetus, the basic brain structure does not undergo fundamental changes; thus, generally speaking, the natural brain model appears to be female.[41]

However, there are situations in which a male embryo does not have sufficient hormones necessary to develop a brain sex that is appropriate for its genetic sex, as a result of which it "remains" female. Similarly, a female fetus exposed to a male hormone (or one with a similar effect on the sex development of the fetus) may be born with a male brain. These disorders are permanent and irreversible, and may lead in the future to difficulties identifying with one's own genetic or anatomical sex, or even to sexual orientation disorders.[42]

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[38] D. Dobosz, *Kobiecość i męskość*…, p. 17.

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 18.

[40] A. Herman-Jeglińska, *Różnice między kobietami a mężczyznami w zdolnościach poznawczych i organizacji funkcjonalnej mózgu: wpływ płci psychicznej*, "Przegląd Pedagogiczny" 1999, No. 1–2, p. 74.

[41] E. Lichtenberg-Kokoszka, *Rodzina wobec kształtowania tożsamości płciowej dziecka w okresie prenatalnym*, "Family Forum" 2014, No. 4, p. 281.

[42] *Ibidem*, p. 282.

Furthermore, studies of the human brain have shown that there is a direct link between hormones, brain structure, and behaviour, which influences differences in cognitive development between women and men.[43] It has been observed that the male brain pattern is characterized by superior mathematical and visuospatial abilities, distinct lateralization of verbal and nonverbal functions, and a greater tendency toward left-handedness. The female brain pattern, on the other hand, is characterized by better-developed linguistic abilities, less functional asymmetry of the cerebral hemispheres in the processing of both verbal and visuospatial stimuli, as well as stronger right-handed dominance and possibly higher manual abilities.[44]

These gender differences manifest themselves in the distinct behavioural patterns of women and men, which can be observed at nearly every stage of human development. As early as the neonatal period, it is observed that boys exhibit greater motor activity than girls. Girls, in turn, are able to maintain eye contact for longer and learn to speak and read much faster. It is also observed that, over time, boys demonstrate greater mathematical abilities – particularly in reasoning – and possess better spatial orientation. They also show a greater tendency to use physical force and threats, whereas girls tend to rely on verbal persuasion. Additionally, they are characterized by an altruistic attitude, a willingness to help and cooperate, and greater resilience to stress. More often than boys, they form close bonds and enjoy spending time in the company of adults. Significant differences have also been noted in the types of play they choose. Specifically, it has been found that boys prefer activities that involve a larger number of people and require significant physical effort, with distinct elements of competition. Girls, on the other hand, prefer smaller groups characterized by an atmosphere of intimacy and friendship.[45]

According to Katarzyna A. Knopp, a growing body of scientific research shows that men and women also differ in certain emotional characteristics. The greatest gender differences are observed in the perception and recognition of emotions. Women are more sensitive to nonverbal cues (especially facial expressions), which allows them to recognize other people's emotions more easily and accurately. These differences become apparent around the age of 3 and, importantly, are common across different cultures. However, some studies indicate that women's advantage applies only to the recognition of positive emotions, while negative emotions (e.g., anger) tend to be better recognized by men.[46]

Empirical data also quite consistently confirm women's greater capacity for empathy. Its importance was emphasized, among others, by Simon Baron-Cohen, who stated that the ability to empathize – as well as the brain structures underlying it – is the most significant difference between the sexes. He believed that women's

[43] *Ibidem*.

[44] A. Herman-Jeglińska, *Różnice między kobietami*…, p. 78.

[45] T. Bajkowski, *Kobiecość i męskość w percepcji młodzieży akademickiej*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 19–20.

[46] K. Knopp, *Czy kobiety są bardziej inteligentne emocjonalnie niż mężczyźni? O różnicach międzypłciowych w zakresie zdolności emocjonalnych*, "Fides et Ratio" 2012, No. 12, p. 100.

better-developed linguistic abilities may result from their greater propensity for empathy, while men's superior spatial abilities stem from a greater capacity for systematization. Therefore, according to Baron-Cohen, the female brain is structured for empathy, whereas the male brain is structured for reasoning and building systems.[47] The neurobiological basis of empathy in women has been indicated by research findings obtained using EEG and MEG, and more recently, VBM. These studies revealed that women exhibit higher activity in mirror neurons, which likely underlie affective empathy. Greater changes in the frequency of these neurons were recorded in women observing situations involving pain than in men, which may indicate that, in terms of neuroanatomical features and neurophysiological mechanisms, women are better adapted to empathizing with others.[48]

It should be noted, however, that although women's overall level of emotional intelligence is generally slightly higher than that of men, this does not always imply an advantage in the context of specific emotional abilities. Research findings indicate that their emotional expression is more intense and more easily discernible to those around them, and that they demonstrate a greater ability to recognize, understand, and regulate the emotions of others.[49] It is also easier for them to talk about their inner experiences, which may result from less functional asymmetry in their brain hemispheres ("If the left hemisphere handles speech and the right hemisphere handles emotions, it is easier for women to verbalize their emotions, to 'combine one with the other,' whereas in men these functions are separate").[50] Men, in turn, demonstrate greater skills in managing their own emotions, better understanding of their emotional states, and exercising cognitive control over them. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that empirical data do not distinguish between women and men in terms of the frequency of emotions experienced. Differences in this regard relate rather to the intensity, experience, understanding, and manner of expressing and regulating emotions. This contradicts common stereotypes about men having an underdeveloped emotional side. Emotions are, in fact, inherent in every human being, regardless of gender.[51]

The psychological perspective

The main focus of analysis from a psychological perspective is gender identity (also known as gender identification), which refers to the individual dimension of gender – that is, how an individual experiences their own gender.[52] It is defined

[47] R. Ziemińska, *Mózgi kobiet i mężczyzn. Nowsze dane i ich znaczenie dla gender studies* [in:] *Feministyczne konteksty. Multidyscyplinarnie*, ed. E. Hyży, Toruń 2017, pp. 17–18.

[48] K. Jankowiak-Siuda, K. Siemieniuk, A. Grabowska, *Neurobiologiczne podstawy empatii*, "Neuropsychiatria i Neuropsychologia" 2009, No. 2, p. 56.

[49] K. Knopp, *Czy kobiety są*…, pp. 105–106.

[50] A. Puć, *Różnice pomiędzy kobietami i mężczyznami*, "Fides et Ratio" 2013, No. 13, p. 18.

[51] K. Knopp, *Czy kobiety są*…, pp. 105–106.

[52] K. Dzwonkowska-Godula, *Tradycyjnie czy nowocześnie*…, p. 48.

as the psychological sense of belonging to a particular gender group, which is expressed outwardly through behaviour that falls within the scope of gender roles. The term "role" refers to everything a person says and does to demonstrate, both to themselves and to others, the extent to which they are a woman or a man. In other words, it is the aspect of identity that a person adopts to present their "gender image." Another indicator of a properly formed gender identity is a specific sexual orientation. Typically, all three of these elements are closely related, together forming a harmonious personality.[53]

In light of the relevant literature, the norm is therefore defined as: „the mutual internal correspondence between an individual's gender identity, gender role, sexual orientation, and psychological capacities, as well as their conformity to a specific female or male gender model." If any of these elements is missing, this is referred to as gender transposition, i.e., a shift of at least one component of the definition toward the opposite gender.[54]

Psychological gender identity is determined by biological sex as well as the process of upbringing and an individual's interaction with their social environment. It develops based on a growing awareness of what it means to be female or male, followed by the recognition of oneself as a sexual being belonging to one of these categories. It becomes clearly defined by the end of the second year of life, and from around the age of 4, it no longer undergoes significant changes. It is ultimately shaped during adolescence.[55] From a psychological perspective, gender identity is part of the process of separation–individuation, which involves a growing sense of one's own distinctiveness from the environment. From a Freudian perspective, the precursor to gender identity is the child's discovery of their own corporeality (*the* so-called "bodily *ego*"), which occurs as a result of the ongoing process of individuation. Gender identity emerges through the development, elaboration, and integration of all its precursors into a masculine or feminine representation *of the self* (i.e., the "I," the "self"). It encompasses the ability to distinguish between male and female, identification with one's own gender, and awareness of the reproductive functions of women and men. The physical changes that occur during a child's development take place in parallel with psychological changes and the assumption of social roles.[56]

However, when using the concept of gender identity in the Polish context, we often refer more to its sociocultural dimension (gender) than to its biological one.

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[53] S. Dulko, *ABC… płci*, "Kosmos" 2003, No. 1, pp. 6–8.

[54] E. Łyczba, *"Ubrani w płeć" – nowe podejście do płci w psychologii?* [in:] *Młoda Psychologia*, Vol. 1, eds. E. Drop, M. Mackiewicz, 2012, p. 549.

[55] M. Nowak, A. Gawęda, M. Janas-Kozik, *Fizjologiczny rozwój psychoseksualny dzieci i młodzieży*, "Seksuologia Polska" 2010, No. 2, p. 67.

[56] M. Kunicka, *Równość i tożsamość. W trosce o (nie)harmonijny rozwój dziecka*, "Kultura – Media – Teologia" 2014, No. 18, pp. 121–122.

In such cases, we speak of gender identity, which can be understood as the development of a gender role.[57] "An individual, in becoming aware of being a woman or a man, must simultaneously relate to the sociocultural connotations associated with the concept of sex. In this way, they construct their gender identity. This means «filling» with content the framework that is the sense of belonging to a biological sex. By defining their gender identity, a person simultaneously shapes their own conception of gender roles."[58] In this sense, it can be said that gender identity is a result of sex identity and that it refers to the sociocultural superstructure of sex. The fact of being a woman or a man is thus viewed here as an individual and subjective experience of the person, which is based on interpretation.[59]

The most frequently cited concept of gender identity is Sandra Bem's *gender schema theory*, which explains the development of gender-related psychological traits in accordance with social definitions of masculinity and femininity.[60] It posits that a child, growing up in a specific environment, learns the definitions of gender that are approved and accepted within that environment, and subsequently processes and encodes information about themselves using *the* resulting gender *schema*. This schema is understood as a cognitive structure that organizes and filters an individual's perceptions, allowing them to select, from among all possible dimensions of human personality, only those that correspond to their gender. The internalized schema not only influences a child's behaviour and the type of information they process but also serves as a specific indicator of masculinity and femininity.[61]

In the course of her research, Bem identified four types of individuals with a specific pattern of gender-related psychological traits:

a) sexually defined individuals, whose psychological traits correspond to their biological sex (so-called "feminine women" and "masculine men");
b) androgynous individuals, who possess male and female traits in equal measure;
c) sexually undetermined individuals, who have only slightly developed masculine and feminine traits;
d) cross-gender individuals, whose psychological traits correspond to the gender opposite to their biological sex (feminine men and masculine women).[62]

According to this theory, gender-typical and cross-gender individuals demonstrate a greater ability to use gender schemas than androgynous and gender-ambiguous individuals. Individuals characterized by this schema (so-called "gender

[57] D. Dobosz, *Kobiecość i męskość*…, p. 56.

[58] J. Miluska, *Tożsamość kobiety i mężczyzny w cyklu życia*, Poznań 1996, p. 17.

[59] M. Dzwonek*, Socjalizacja ról płciowych w rodzinach monoparentalnych* [in:] *Z szerszej perspektywy. Gender*, eds. A.A. Wycisk, Ż. Krawczyk-Antońska, Warszawa 2013, p. 50.

[60] D. Strzelczyk-Muszyńska, *Role grupowe a płeć psychologiczna i kompetencje społeczne*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Psychologica" 2007, No. 11, p. 23.

[61] M. Chuchra, P. Wójtowicz, *Samoakceptacja u studentów o określonej płci psychologicznej*, "Roczniki Teologiczne" 2006, Issue 10, pp. 113–114.

[62] *Ibidem*, p. 114.

schemists") behave in accordance with gender stereotypes, which, according to the author, limits their possibilities by confining them within the framework of socially defined masculinity and femininity. She further believes that freedom of action is ensured only by psychological androgyny, which, by combining elements of femininity and masculinity, broadens the repertoire of behaviours and ensures their flexibility – freeing the individual from the prison of gender represented by social stereotypes. According to the author, the concept of androgyny should form the basis of mental health, as it helps people become independent of social pressure.[63]

The sociological perspective

Reflection on femininity and masculinity was initially on the margins of sociological research. It was addressed mainly in the context of analyses of the social system – especially the family – or, alternatively, in the context of discussions on the causes of social inequalities. The limited interest in this topic was undoubtedly linked to the essentialist and naturalistic view of human sexuality that dominated psychology and medicine at the time and had also permeated the field of sociology.[64]

Classical sociologists (including Herbert Spencer, Émile Durkheim, and Talcott Parsons) viewed gender exclusively as the result of biological determinants – and thus as immutable and universal. Consequently, in their view, the individual had no influence whatsoever on the patterns of femininity and masculinity – they could only conform to them. Consequently, femininity and masculinity were viewed solely through the lens of naturally determined differences between the sexes, which encompassed not only the emotional realm but also the intellectual and cognitive spheres. These differences thus became the basis for drawing conclusions about their distinct needs, predispositions, social roles, and value hierarchies. The differences between femininity and masculinity were therefore considered in terms of oppositions: physicality vs. mental faculties, irrationality and emotionality vs. rationality, and a focus on collective values vs. individualism.[65]

Beliefs about the biological potential of women and men justified the need for male dominance, which was supposed to guarantee the proper development of civilization and the balance of the social system.[66] At the same time, the view of women's inferiority was propagated, citing their physiology and brain structure,

[63] S. Bem, *Androgynia psychiczna a tożsamość płciowa* [in:] *Psychologia i życie*, eds. Ph. Zimbardo, R. Gerrig, Warszawa 1988, pp. 114–115.

[64] K. Leszczyńska, A. Dziuban, *Pomiędzy esencjalizmem a konstruktywizmem. Płeć (kulturowa) w refleksji teoretycznej socjologii – przegląd koncepcji*, "Studia Humanistyczne AGH" 2012, Issue 2, pp. 15–16.

[65] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[66] *Ibidem*.

which differed from those of men.[67] Furthermore, due to their reproductive capabilities, women were perceived as closer to nature, which led to their being assigned the status of domestic beings. This meant that their activities were restricted primarily to the domestic sphere, where they fulfilled the roles of mothers, wives, and homemakers.[68] This limitation of their potential soon led to a "mass uprising against oppression", which contributed to significant changes in the understanding of gender, gender roles, and the very concepts of femininity and masculinity.[69]

A new approach to the issue of gender has been discussed since the 1960s and 1970s, a development linked primarily to the activities of the so-called second-wave feminist movements. The novelty in this field lay in the introduction of a distinction between *sex* as a biological category and *gender* as a social category. The works of psychologist Robert Stoller – *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (1968) – and Ann Oakley – *Sex, Gender, and Society* (1972) – are considered significant in this context. Thanks to their work, femininity and masculinity ceased to be viewed exclusively through the lens of biological differences and came to be seen as social constructs – cultural phenomena. The validity of this approach was also supported by research conducted by Margaret Mead, which examined differences among societies in the perception of femininity and masculinity, as well as changes in the definition of these concepts within a single culture over time. Her observations provided new insights into the significance of sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., ethnic, social, and geographic background, class, education, sexual orientation, and age) for the social expectations directed toward an individual of a specific gender – and, consequently, for the way that individual experiences their "gender." Consequently, it was proposed that we should not speak of a single "femininity" or "masculinity," but rather of multiple "femininities" and "masculinities" within a given culture. Attention was also drawn to the relational nature of gender, which manifests itself in the definition of femininity and masculinity through mutual reference and comparison. Finally, their situational nature was highlighted – that is, their variability depending on context – which prevents cultural gender from being treated as an „attribute" of the individual, but rather as a feature of the situation.[70]

The activities of feminist movements have contributed to a new perspective on the issue of gender, emphasizing not only its biological dimension but also its sociocultural one. Thus, the category *of gender* has become an important area of interest for sociologists, who have taken it as a starting point for developing various

[67] E. Szymczak, *Kobiety na politechnikach – trajektorie codzienności w kontekście współczesnych przemian społeczno-ekonomicznych* [in:] *Codzienność jako wyzwanie edukacyjne*, eds. M. Humeniuk, I. Paszenda, Wrocław 2017, p. 246.

[68] K. Pasternak, *Współczesne wzorce kobiecości w kulturze rosyjskiej (na przykładzie serialu Мамочки)*, "Studia Interkulturowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2018, No. 11, p. 310.

[69] J. Spychalska-Stasiak, *Konstruowanie wiedzy naukowej o fenomenie ludzkiej płci*, "Przegląd Pedagogiczny" 2009, No. 2, p. 45.

[70] K. Dzwonkowska-Godula, *Tradycyjnie czy nowocześnie*…, pp. 39–40.

theoretical concepts. The literature on the subject highlights in particular: theories of gender roles and socialization into gender roles and identities, theories relating to the category of power, and theories *of doing gender*.[71]

In social role theories, cultural gender is defined as "a culturally and historically conditioned social role associated with women or men and used to describe a person's identity in terms of femininity and masculinity." It is therefore assumed here that cultural gender is acquired through a process of socialization based on interpretation. This is a very complex process, but its elements can be identified, such as: gender labelling (through language, clothing, or toys), gender universalization (i.e., the internalization of gender as a fundamental category for dividing the social world), and the belief in the immutability of gender. Social role theories are based on gender polarization and the perception of femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive categories.[72]

Theories relating to the category of power stem from the demands put forward by feminist movements. Various strands can be distinguished among them (essentialist, materialist, or deconstructionist), but it seems that what unites them all above all is a critical stance toward role and socialization theories. While the former focus on microsocial processes and the individual formation of an individual's gender identity, theories of power interpret the process of becoming a gendered being as a consequence of the patriarchal power structure, which exerts coercion at various levels of life (economic, political, or religious). In this framework, therefore, gender is not viewed as an individual experience but as a structural one, which is framed in terms of oppression.[73]

The final group of theories is the concept *of doing gender*, which is based on the assumption that gender is not something fixed that a person possesses, but rather something that is produced in everyday interactions. Consequently, the importance of social context is emphasized here, since every situation is, in a sense, *gendered*. This means that nearly all interactions involve expectations regarding how a given person, as a man or a woman, should behave. This theory is developed by Judith Butler, who proposes that gender be treated as a form of performance – that is, the "act of playing the part" of being a woman or a man. As the author argues, through the constant repetition of specific behaviours, we reinforce patterns of femininity and masculinity, and thus come to perceive them as natural and self-evident. Consequently, what we take to be the inner essence of gender is in fact the result of an uninterrupted series of acts – something that is created and perpetuated through everyday social practices. Therefore, in her view, any attempt to separate the biological and cultural aspects of gender is pointless, since both are closely intertwined and created in the "gender show" that is performed every day.[74]

[71] K. Leszczyńska, A. Dziuban, *Pomiędzy esencjalizmem*…, pp. 18–19.
[72] *Ibidem*, p. 19.
[73] *Ibidem*, p. 20.
[74] K. Dzwonkowska-Godula, *Tradycyjnie czy nowocześnie*…, p. 37.

Conclusion

The issue of femininity and masculinity emerged in the social sciences alongside the beginning of a broader reflection on the question of gender. Social and cultural changes over the last century have led to significant shifts in the way human sexuality is perceived, including gender roles, as well as femininity and masculinity themselves. The traditional gender model, which has dominated until now, is currently being gradually supplanted and replaced by a newer approach that blurs the boundaries between what is feminine and what is masculine. The dynamics of contemporary changes and the associated new ways of interpreting femininity and masculinity make it difficult to define these concepts unambiguously. They thus highlight the relevance of the issue at hand and the need for further analysis. The discussions presented here are therefore merely introductory in nature, aimed at capturing the complexity of the subject matter, which clearly extends beyond the scope of a single study. Consequently, this article should be viewed as a starting point for future research and analysis.

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Opinions of mathematics students about the vocational education system for teachers

Opinie studentów matematyki na temat systemu kształcenia zawodowego nauczycieli

Abstract

This article presents a definition of the teaching situation. It characterizes two fundamental pedagogical concepts throughout history: Herbartian teaching (in the context of the Steiner school) and Deweyan teaching. Contemporary teaching is also included. Contemporary teaching systems are discussed, divided into three main systems identified in the literature: authoritarian, humanistic, and technological. This systematic approach also includes Okoń's theory of multifaceted education. The presentation includes statements from students of the second-cycle full-time mathematics teacher training program and postgraduate mathematics studies at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, School of Sciences, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. During the lecture, *Fundamentals of Mathematics Didactics*, students participated in the forum "My teacher education system." The most important, most frequently occurring opinions, those that best capture the essence of the topic, were identified.

Keywords: contemporary didactics, Deweyan didactics, didactic situation, didactics system, Herbartian didactics, mathematics didactics, mathematics, Steiner's school, theory of multilateral education

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono definicję sytuacji dydaktycznej. Scharakteryzowano w nim dwie fundamentalne koncepcje pedagogiczne obecne w historii: dydaktykę herbartowską (w kontekście szkoły steinerowskiej) oraz dydaktykę deweyowską. Zaprezentowano również dydaktykę współczesną, wyróżniając trzy główne systemy wskazywane w literaturze przedmiotu: autorytarny, humanistyczny i technologiczny. Takie systemowe ujęcie uwzględnia także teorię kształcenia wielostronnego autorstwa Wincentego Okonia. W pracy przytoczono wypowiedzi studentów studiów magisterskich (II stopnia) na kierunku nauczycielskim (specjalność: matematyka) oraz słuchaczy studiów podyplomowych z zakresu matematyki, prowadzonych na Wydziale Matematyczno-Przyrodniczym (Instytut Matematyki) Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie. W ramach wykładu „Podstawy dydaktyki matematyki" studenci wzięli udział w forum dyskusyjnym zatytułowanym

„Mój system kształcenia nauczycieli". Zidentyfikowano najważniejsze i najczęściej pojawiające się opinie – te, które najlepiej oddają istotę omawianego zagadnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: dydaktyka współczesna, dydaktyka deweyowska, sytuacja dydaktyczna, system dydaktyczny, dydaktyka herbartowska, dydaktyka matematyki, szkoła steinerowska, teoria kształcenia wielostronnego

Introduction

When reviewing educational systems, it's important to consider the simplest situation, which is, in a sense, a component, a unit, of the educational system – that is, the educational situation itself. From the perspective of an external observer, this is the interplay of various components: the educational content, the teacher's methodology, and the teacher on the educational content and the organization of education. The content delivered is, to some extent, tailored to students, meaning students influence the content and the organization of education. Furthermore, students and teachers change, both under the influence of factors occurring in the educational situation and those external to it. Educational content and teaching aids are subject to historical modernization, but the means themselves (and sometimes the content itself) age. External factors regulate the organization of education.

The entire system of purposefully designed, interconnected, and mutually interacting teaching situations leads to the creation of a teaching system.

A brief description of teaching methods over the centuries

Concepts related to didactics, or the methods of teaching and upbringing, have been developed over the centuries. Modern educational systems are divided into the traditional system, Herbartian didactics (Herbartism, 8th/19th centuries); the system associated with the new educational movement-Deweyan didactics (progressivism, 19th/20th centuries); and the contemporary system-contemporary didactics.[1] Zygmunt Mysłakowski called the first two of them "two great pedagogical concepts of humanity."[2]

In Herbartian didactics (according to Czesław Kupisiewicz), the most important goal was to shape strong moral characters through guiding children, keeping them constantly occupied, that is, discipline (morality based on strong character) and the related teaching. Education cannot be separated from teaching; knowledge must be linked to feelings and will; there are no acquired or inherited psychological dispositions; life is made up of ideas. To evoke emotional experiences, one must influence

[1] C. Kupisiewicz, *Dydaktyka ogólna*, Warszawa 2000, p. 43.

[2] Z. Mysłakowski, *Wychowanie człowieka w zmiennej społeczności*, Warszawa 1964, p. 82.

ideas. This is how a scheme of teaching levels was created: clarity (resting exploration), association (progressive exploration); system (resting understanding), method (progressive understanding); these define the course of teaching. According to them, the teaching process was to progress from ideas to concepts and to skills. A characteristic feature of this system was formalism and rigor, with a tight lesson plan.[3]

An alternative (and worth mentioning) to the above teaching approach was the emergence of the so-called Steiner school (early 19th century). Its main tenets were to develop children's skills, emphasizing their individual development in harmony with nature. Its founder believed that each separate discipline only explores and analyzes the human being and his functioning. It was a shocking change. This school offered/continues to offer three groups of subjects:

1. Core subjects – native language, mathematics, history, geography, physics, chemistry.
2. Artistic subjects – visual arts, music, elements of history, art, theatre, and eurhythmy.
3. Practical subjects – sewing, cooking, basketry, baking, stonemasonry, carpentry.

These schools still exist today, largely unchanged. Waldorf schools have their own curriculum, independent of state curricula. They do not emphasize any worldview.[4]

Deweyan Didactics: At the turn of the 20th century, Herbartian didactics became the subject of harsh criticism. Opinions condemning the rigor and authoritarianism of teaching and upbringing began to prevail, and proposals were made to create a school tailored to children, one that would take their interests and needs into account. The most radical, creative, and representative of this concept was John Dewey. At the end of the 19th century, he founded a school in Chicago where he developed and tested his educational concept.

A school tailored to the child (Édouard Claparede), an active school (Henryk Rowid), a socializing school (Peter Petersen), and a school worthy of the child's centenary (Ellen Key). It was intended to accommodate students' interests, develop their minds, wills, and feelings, teach them to think and act, serve as a place for free, creative work, encourage collaboration, individualize content and the pace of learning, and encourage activity. The goal was to develop students' innate interests and gain rich experience. Lessons should be designed to include stages in problem-solving, such as experiencing the difficulty of the problem, describing it, searching for a solution, verifying the hypothesis, and solving the problem.[5]

Contemporary didactics, although different from the didactics, do not reject all their assumptions and postulates, but do eliminate one-sidedness and promote abstract thinking. Psychology, understood as the science of the higher functioning

[3] C. Kupisiewicz, *Dydaktyka ogólna*, pp. 43–46.

[4] F. Edmunds, *Pedagogika Rudolfa Steinera. Szkoły waldorfskie na świecie i w Polsce*, Kraków 1996; J. Kiersch, *Pedagogika waldorfska. Wprowadzenie do pedagogiki Rudolfa Steinera*, Kraków 2008.

[5] C. Kupisiewicz, *Dydaktyka ogólna*, pp. 45–61.

of living beings, occupies a prominent place. It assumes that students should acquire systematized knowledge through cognitive, empirical, teacher-guided, and independent activities. It incorporates the so-called "link concept," i.e., the diversity and multiplicity of teaching tasks. When selecting content, it emphasizes the need to respect both social and individual needs. It emphasizes the purpose of holistic teaching at younger ages and subject-specific teaching at older ages. It discusses various organizational forms of teaching. It assumes that outcomes are not determined by hereditary or environmental factors (although they certainly influence the teaching process), but that the teacher's work is at least as important.[6]

Teaching systems

Simply put, a teaching system is a teacher's work plan that includes substantive content, instructional methods, and educational activities. The previously mentioned teaching situations are the lessons in which this work plan is implemented. It is created and optimized based on the adopted educational goals, that is, the precisely defined student characteristics we want to achieve upon exiting the teaching system, that is, after completing a given learning cycle.

When creating a teaching system, we must remember that it does not exist in a vacuum. Students have developed before and will continue to develop after leaving it. The broad material and social context of education constantly influences our actions. Therefore, there was a "before," there will be an "after," and our actions do not take place in isolation from other factors and variables.

When discussing contemporary teaching systems, in the literature, we often encounter a division into three main teaching systems:

a) authoritarian,
b) humanistic,
c) technological.

The authoritarian system is based on Herbart's system, in which goals are formulated from above, expressing the needs of the state and the authorities, and the teacher must adapt all his or her actions to these goals. Students must unconditionally submit to these actions, and the teacher, in a sense, represents the state. The instructional content is uniform and primarily rote. We encountered such a school in the so-called socialist system. Of course, we encounter it in all totalitarian states and wherever excessive discipline is required, such as military schools and some monastic schools.

In a humanistic system (similar, at least in part, to Dewey's model), the focus is on the student and their needs and interests. The teacher's role is to recognize

[6] *Ibidem*, pp. 51–56.

these needs, learn about students' interests and talents, and serve as a "guide" along the path to spontaneous, unfettered development. Educational content is freely selected, and teaching aids are designed to stimulate creativity.

In **the technological system**, the emphasis is on the effectiveness of mastering selected educational content, both knowledge and (perhaps especially!) skills. This system is the primary focus today. The teacher selects appropriate educational content, including its scope and level of mastery. Teaching aids, appropriately matched to the established learning objectives, play a crucial role, and the organization of education is carefully planned. Monitoring student achievement is crucial, and it occurs at various stages of education – this is where we see the most applications of educational measurement. It can be called the most "practical," though it also carries certain risks that limit educational outcomes.

It is worth noting here **the theory of multilateral education** according to one of the leading Polish educators, Wincenty Okoń. Already in the 1950s, he stated that the goal of education is personality development, and we should develop each of the personality spheres: mental – a person experiences the world and the values accumulated in it, intellectual – a person learns about the world and themselves, and physical/practical – a person changes the world.[7] His concept opposes both didactic sensualism (the cult of the principle of visualization), one-sided abstractionism (the cult of book knowledge), and didactic instrumentalism (the cult of practice).[8]

Mathematics students specializing in teaching and their teacher education system

The research was conducted among 51 future mathematics teachers – students of the second-cycle teaching specialization in mathematics and postgraduate studies in mathematics at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the School of Sciences of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Over the years (since 2008), while lecturing on *Fundamentals of Mathematics Didactics*, the author has hosted a forum where she asks students the question: "My teacher education system."[9] The research was limited to the years 2023–2026.

Qualitative analyses are quite difficult. They cannot be presented numerically and carry a certain element of subjective choice – why these responses and not others? The selection of respondents depended on the number of mathematics teaching students in each year. Their number was as follows: 2023 – 5 people,

[7] W. Okoń, *Podstawy wykształcenia ogólnego*, Warszawa 1987, p. 196.

[8] W. Okoń, *Słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 1992, p. 135.

[9] J. Kandzia, *Podstawy dydaktyki matematyki*, Forum: *Mój nauczycielski system kształcenia*, https://e.uksw.edu.pl/course/view.php?id=53893, https://e.uksw.edu.pl/course/view.php?id=46805, 2024/2025/2026 and earlier.

2024 – 4 people, 2025 – 11 people in full-time studies and 21 in postgraduate studies, 2026 – 10 students. Due to the article's limited size and readability, it was necessary to make some selections from the collected material. In the following years, 2, 1, 6, 4, and 4 statements were selected, respectively, that were not merely repetitions of the information contained in the lecture and were unconventional.

Student statements

"When I think about how I would like to teach, I'm most drawn to a concept that combines different approaches/different systems. Contemporary teaching doesn't reject earlier systems but strives to overcome their one-sidedness. Of particular importance to me are the principles of Okoń's multifaceted learning theory, which emphasizes the development of various areas of a student's personality and the use of associative, problem-based, emotional, and operational strategies in the teaching process. This approach has proven effective during my tutoring sessions, where I've observed how various forms of activity help students better understand mathematics."

"I draw heavily from the humanities system, which focuses on the student, their needs, interests, and talents, and assigns the teacher the role of a guide supporting the student's development. This role of the teacher is particularly close to my heart because I want students to feel safe and be able to openly discuss difficulties, especially when they stem from previous deficiencies, which perfectly aligns with the need to recognize the initial state in the teacher education system."

"The technological system also cannot be dismissed; it involves planning the teaching process, clearly defining content and goals, and regularly assessing students' achievements at various stages of education. It is consistent with my own style of work – orderly, consistent, and based on a clear line of reasoning. In mathematics, I need to show students that many tasks are based on similar patterns/algorithms, and that an insignificant change in data leads to a different, but logically related, situation."

"I would use Herbart's system to structure the teaching process, which stems from a pattern of progression from ideas to concepts and skills, though without the formalism and rigor typical of that system. The element of clarity and logical structure is particularly dear to me because I never demand anything from a student that I haven't already shown and organized."

"I'm inspired by Dewey's concept of problem-based learning, which involves moving through successive stages: recognizing the problem, describing it, finding an idea, verifying the hypothesis, and solving the problem. This method of working allows students to independently discover relationships, which is especially valuable when working with more mathematically advanced students."

"My system would have to be flexible, in line with the procedures for creating a teacher education system, which include recognizing the initial state, identifying contributing and disruptive factors, and adapting methods to the current classroom situation. When working with students with varying levels of knowledge and skills, this flexibility can be crucial, so it would naturally become part of my system. Monitoring the learning process both during and at its conclusion would also be an essential element, allowing for modifications and refinement of working methods."

"My goal would be to create lessons in which students actively seek solutions, so I would utilize elements of methods focused on action and discovery, not just on receiving ready-made content. In many situations, I would draw on Dewey's ideas because experiential learning helps students better understand the meaning of learning. At the same time, I would want to introduce some order, so I would also reach for solutions inspired by Herbartian didactics, such as short introductory stages that help students get a foothold. An individual approach would also be important in my work - this is the element I value most in the humanities system. I want students to be able to express their emotions and opinions, so I would often use methods that require discussion and collaboration."

"I see great value in clear organization and setting specific goals, which is typical of a technological system. I believe that thanks to such solutions, students know where they are going and what skills they are developing. I wouldn't give up on practical activities either-I would be inspired by both Okoń's operational strategy and more contemporary activation methods. When introducing my own system, I would ensure it wasn't closed or rigid; I would want to be able to respond to what's happening in the classroom. Therefore, my system would be a mix of different concepts, but one consciously chosen to suit me as a teacher and the needs of my students."

"When developing my vision for the learning system, I would like to combine a clear lesson structure with opportunities for more independent student work. In my opinion, individualization is key – students have diverse needs and learning paces, so the system should account for this. I envision this as a set of materials with varying levels of difficulty, allowing people to work at their own pace. I'm also thinking about shorter modules with clearly defined goals, so that students know exactly what they need to learn and how to assess it."

"I attach great importance to clear feedback, because well-formulated feedback can facilitate further learning. Shorter assessments and point-based guidance seem particularly helpful. Logical arrangement of material and fostering systematicity are important to me – in mathematics, everything is based on previous steps, so order and repetition are crucial. I want lessons to provide space for collaborative problem-solving, because such tasks allow for the comparison of different strategies and teach step-by-step thinking."

"I'd like to create an atmosphere where mistakes are a natural part of the process, not a cause for stress. In the long run, I'd like students to gradually take more responsibility for their learning and be able to assess what they're still missing."

"In the current reality, I have been working for many years with classes that occasionally lack special education decisions or opinions regarding learning difficulties. Therefore, the teacher's educational system will depend on the group (class) I work with. Currently, I prioritize the associative strategy alongside the operational strategy. Students remember much more easily when the material is consolidated through action. The more independent, the better. The teacher should be a «compass» at every moment of the student's independence and point the right direction of action or correct inappropriate deviations."

"Constructive discussion and a cultured exchange of observations between students and teachers are particularly important in my work – this allows for an interdisciplinary approach to science, while also strengthening students' social skills. In today's world, teachers should also be sensitive to all social relationships within a given group and support positive ones, regardless of the subject being taught. I also reward student activity and enthusiasm – nothing can clip a young person's wings like not being able to appreciate their efforts."

"When creating my own teacher education system, I take into account the subject I will be teaching. I believe that, in the case of mathematics, it is necessary to combine an associative strategy, which means learning through the acquisition of ready-made knowledge – the foundations of the subject that teachers should cover. Another significant element will be a problem-based strategy, meaning learning through independent exploration of knowledge. We use this element when students already possess basic knowledge. The final strategy will be operational – learning by doing, which I would use to consolidate existing knowledge and expand it according to my own needs. I would adapt it to the educational goals I have set for myself and to the group of students for whom it was created. Mathematics is a subject that requires, above all, intellectual and practical activity, which allows students to acquire knowledge and improve their performance."

"When creating my own teacher education system, my priority would be to create an educational environment that takes into account the needs, interests, and pace of development of each student. Modern education should put students first – their activity, curiosity, and development should be the primary goals. A key element of my system would be the idea of comprehensive education, which integrates intellectual, emotional, and practical activity. In accordance with the theory of multifaceted education outlined by W. Okoń, I believe students should learn through discovery, experience, and action. Striving to intellectually activate students by solving real-world problems and considering problem-based strategies not only allows them to develop cognitive skills but also shapes their ability to think independently and overcome difficulties."

"A crucial element in my teaching system would be students' emotional engagement. I believe that education cannot be limited to merely conveying facts but must also engage emotions so that students deeply experience the learning process.

Only then will they be able to fully grasp the concepts discussed and build values that will guide their future actions. In an era of dynamic technological change, I would like to introduce technological elements into the system that will enable students to learn by doing. Learning through experimentation, the use of digital tools, and project work will allow them to understand better not only theory but also the practical application of knowledge in everyday life and in the professions of the future."

"In my education system, I would place particular emphasis on project work, which develops creativity, collaboration, and practical problem-solving skills. All these elements, combined with flexibility, allow the creation of a system that is not rigid but adapts to students' individual needs. By continuously monitoring progress, as indicated by the educational system development procedure, I adapt my work methods to students' changing needs and learning pace and respond to any difficulties. I believe that a 21st-century teacher is one who not only imparts knowledge but also supports students in their individual development, creates space for creative thinking, engages them emotionally, and develops practical skills. It is crucial that we, as teachers, be flexible, open to change and innovation, but always place students at the centre of the learning process."

Conclusions

Analysis of the responses allowed us to understand students' and future mathematics teachers' opinions regarding the teacher education system. The young people's opinions are balanced. They do not glorify any teaching system or method. In each, they found values they would like to apply in their future work. They draw on their own experiences – as students, tutors, and teachers. The content of the lectures took on a real dimension. It's not just dry theory and a passing exam. The question posed provoked them to connect theory with reality and to delve deeper into the issue.

When teaching mathematics, we combine/select from each system what seems most beneficial. Methods that allow for the most transparent and understandable presentation of concepts and problems, developing mathematical skills that enable us to solve many of the problems of the modern world. Working in a school, and especially teaching mathematics, is a huge challenge. Reluctance to approach this subject is widespread in our society. In many cases, this stems from a fear of it, the belief that children and young people must somehow overcome it (like a disease), and inadequate teaching in the early years. Each didactics, each educational system, highlights crucial elements that are helpful in the work of a mathematician. Therefore, it is encouraging that future mathematics teachers (familiar with scientific assumptions) will strive to incorporate diversity in their work, rejecting the stereotype of one-sided approaches.

It's worth mentioning that to achieve full student development, we should utilize various strategies (**APEO**): **A** – associative strategy (association – Herbart), **P** – problem-based strategy (Dewey), **E** – emotional strategy, **O** – operational strategy.

Certain forms of learning characterize each of these strategies. For example, strategy A – learning through the acquisition of ready-made knowledge, strategy P – learning through independent acquisition of knowledge, strategy E – learning through experience, and strategy O – learning through action.[10]

Summary

In Poland, we are witnessing and participating in a strong trend toward the humanization of pedagogy. The time of authoritarian, instrumental pedagogy, which produced "builders of socialism," is over. Today, two great schools are vying for superiority: the humanistic school, focused on students' needs and self-development, primarily on the experience of values, and the technological school, which demonstrates how to use theory, tools, and interpersonal communication to improve the effectiveness of education.

Both groups seek to empower students in some way: by equipping them with spiritual values or by arming them with strategies for achieving goals. The battle is between authoritarian relics in pedagogy: the forced acceptance of outdated values of previous generations, the overly strong influence of charismatic teachers, and the moral nihilism of mass culture and its media.

Relations between representatives of these two schools are not the best, and humanists do not feel comfortable in the company of technologists. Nevertheless, it is important to note the "complementarity" between these schools. Both groups strive to empower students in some way: by instilling spiritual values or by equipping them with strategies to achieve their goals.

Focusing on the student evokes a deep interest in their development. It elevates educational diagnosis from a kind of didactic "materials science" to the recognition of the profound values that guide the partner in the educational process.

The importance of humanizing pedagogy for the development of educational diagnosis cannot be overstated. Choosing the right direction, however, is not enough. Appropriate technology is needed to develop a program for obtaining useful information.

In a knowledge society, we are unable to isolate ourselves from the media, information technology, computer science, and artificial intelligence that have infiltrated our lives. Teaching methods are also changing, including personalization, project-based learning, and gamification,[11] and SEL (Social and Emotional

[10] W. Okoń, *Wprowadzenie do dydaktyki ogólnej*, Warszawa 1995, p, 196.

[11] Gamification is a teaching method that uses mechanisms known from games: points, levels, rewards, and rankings.

Learning) – these are solutions that combine technology, emotions, and practice. The best are those that prepare students for life – interdisciplinary, relationship-based, and new-technology-oriented.

Schools must provide students with extensive development opportunities so that they can pursue their interests and use the most beneficial learning methods, enabling them to develop and shape their personalities. It highlights the importance of the teacher – they must be versatile, able to observe students and guide them appropriately. Teachers are a key group that shapes a school's character. The level of mathematics education for children and young people depends on their collaboration, teaching, and nurturing.

Of course, the school structure must enable both teachers and students to function effectively.

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Finding instead of knowing: How search engines have reprogrammed thinking habits and approaches to participating in cultural life. How we have become experts at searching rather than remembering

Znaleźć zamiast wiedzieć: Jak wyszukiwarki przeprogramowały nawyki myślowe i podejście do uczestnictwa w życiu kulturalnym. O tym, jak staliśmy się ekspertami od szukania, a nie zapamiętywania

Abstract

Social media play an important role in students' lives, serving communicative and entertainment functions, as well as supporting the learning process. Students eagerly use available platforms, search for necessary information, share notes, and watch educational materials. However, the question increasingly arises whether students prefer to memorise content or to know where to find it quickly, foregoing information retention because it is readily accessible. Participation in cultural events also proves to be extremely important. Yet, more often the online format is chosen, even though in-person meetings offer experiences full of emotions and social interactions. To meet students' expectations, higher education institutions should support education by combining the virtual world with the educational process, so that technology and media support both knowledge development and the social and cultural dimensions of education.

Keywords: social media, culture, society, memory, education

Streszczenie

Media społecznościowe odgrywają istotną rolę w życiu studentów, pełniąc funkcję komunikacyjną, rozrywkową, oraz wspierają proces nauczania. Studenci chętnie korzystają z dostępnych

platform, wyszukują potrzebne informacje, dzielą się notatkami i oglądają materiały edukacyjne. Coraz częściej pojawia się jednak pytanie, czy uczniowie wolą zapamiętywać treści, czy raczej wiedzieć, gdzie je szybko odnaleźć, rezygnując z trwałego utrwalania informacji, ponieważ mają je na wyciągnięcie ręki. Niezwykle ważne okazuje się uczestnictwo w wydarzeniach kulturalnych, jednak coraz częściej wybierana jest forma online, pomimo iż spotkania na żywo oferują doświadczenia pełne emocji i interakcji społecznych. Wychodząc naprzeciw oczekiwaniom studentów, uczelnie wyższe powinny wspierać edukację, łącząc świat online z procesem edukacyjnym, tak aby technologie i media wspierały zarówno rozwój wiedzy, jak i wymiar społeczny i kulturowy studiowania.

Słowa kluczowe: media społecznościowe, kultura, społeczeństwo, zapamiętywanie, edukacja

Introduction

Contemporary society is characterised by constant dynamic change encompassing every dimension of social, professional, and educational life. In a world saturated with technology, where information is constantly being generated and becoming obsolete, understanding knowledge based solely on theory and the memorisation of specific facts is no longer the only measure of competence. The ability to analyse acquired data, select it, and apply it in a professional environment are gaining ever greater importance. It is therefore worth asking whether in the twenty-first century the most important skill is still to "know," or rather to "find."

The aim of this analysis is to attempt to answer the question of how the presence of internet search engines and social media influences the learning process, memorisation, and the classification of acquired information. The objective is not to pass a definitive judgement on their value, but to reveal their complex, ambiguous character. On the one hand, social media are enormously helpful in providing rapid access to knowledge, supporting collaboration and developing the capacity to select specific information. On the other hand, they can lead to problems with concentration, superficial assimilation of content without critical reflection, and consequently resulting in the lack of the need to permanently retain information.

It is important to draw attention to the phenomenon of a shift in emphasis from memorising to searching for information, and in order to attempt to answer whether, in the digital era, we have become experts in finding content at the cost of permanently assimilating it. It is also worth considering whether the cultural life of young people has not, to a large extent, been replaced by activity on social media. The thesis presented here is that social media and internet search engines constitute a double-edged tool: they hold significant developmental potential, yet simultaneously they can lead to a simplification of cognitive processes and encourage the taking of "shortcuts."

This paper examines the ways in which internet browsers and multimedia technologies have reprogrammed the cognitive habits of young people – specifically students at the University of Rzeszów. Young adults function in a world where the boundary between learning and online activity is extremely thin. It is also worth

directing attention to students as consumers of culture. The question arises whether contemporary youth more readily choose to participate online in cultural events that have hitherto been associated exclusively with "live" performances. For this reason, this group was selected as the subject of the present analysis. Examining their experiences and habits allows for a better understanding of whether the model of "finding instead of knowing" is an expression of convenience, a necessary adaptation to information overload, or a transformation in ways of thinking. A certain tension exists between opportunity and a real threat, since in the era of modern technologies, consumers often become specialists in searching at the expense of deep understanding, critical thinking, information retention, and cultural participation.

Theoretical framework

In the contemporary world, where the answers to almost any question can be found within seconds, educational priorities are shifting. Decreasing attention is paid to memorising facts, while the ability to navigate diverse knowledge sources and use them effectively has become increasingly important. Young people should not only be able to assimilate content but also to navigate independently within the digital data environment. Network technology provides access to similar knowledge resources regardless of place of residence, material resources, or individual limitations, thus ensuring equal opportunities to participate in the transfer of knowledge.[1]

Students spend majority of their time in the digital space, which serves them as a source of entertainment, planning, information retrieval, following cultural events, and even meeting new people. When a young person is asked a question, their natural reaction is no longer to try to recall the answer from memory, but to use a ready found answer from the internet. Increasingly, we remember not the content itself, but the way of finding it. This phenomenon also applies to the use of free time through participation in cultural life, which is undergoing a process of mediatisation. These facts reveal a change in access to knowledge and the cognitive habits that accompany it.[2]

Aleksandra Powierska points out that social media are not merely a communication space – they constitute an environment in which young users construct their identity, build relationships, and shape cultural preferences. The algorithms of online platforms determine which content is exposed, thereby influencing what becomes "knowledge" for a given user.[3]

[1] M. Shanmugasundaram, A. Tamilarasu, *The impact of digital technology, social media, and artificial intelligence on cognitive functions*, Tamil Nadu 2023, pp. 2–3.

[2] D. Mroczkowska, *Czas wolny jako kategoria społecznie i kulturowo zmienna. Przeobrażenia w czasowej organizacji oraz doświadczania czasu wolnego*, Toruń 2014, p. 90.

[3] A. Powierska, *W sieci mediów społecznościowych*, Kraków 2024, pp. 17–20.

According to Mustafa Suleyman, limiting the harmful social changes caused by technology requires an appropriate pace of development, one that gives society the space and time to understand it.[4] One of the most important elements of an individual's competence set is a creative disposition, understood as a readiness to generate new ideas, perceive alternatives, and respond rapidly to encountered problems.[5] Creativity does not function independently, since its inseparable element is information, which constitutes the fundamental building block of every learning process. Through access to information and correctly chosen tools, we are able to process and modify our cognitive processes.[6]

Magdalena Wasylewicz indicates that social media in the lives of contemporary adolescents and young adults fulfil not only a communicative function but also an identity-forming one – they influence self-esteem, the shaping of peer relationships, and ways of perceiving reality.[7]

The development of digital technologies, and in particular internet search engines and multimedia tools, exerts an enormous influence on the functioning of the educational environment. Students operate in a space where access to knowledge is immediate, and effective searching and critical evaluation of acquired information have become key skills. The question therefore arises whether frequent use of internet browsers promotes the development of creativity and positively influences understanding of content, or whether it creates easier data-acquisition channels focused on superficial processing without reflection.

There is no doubt that internet browsers have become the primary source of knowledge. The educational system should not only accept their use but also consciously integrate media into the teaching process. A university that underestimates the influence of digital technologies on students' thinking and their organisation of free time may encounter difficulties in communication and knowledge transmission. On the other hand, the labour market increasingly indicates that access to information is not sufficient. Employers do not expect educated people to possess encyclopaedic knowledge, but rather the ability to deal with problems, combine data, and create new solutions. The cause of a persistent skills mismatch may be that we are able to search for information quickly, but are not always able to understand it thoroughly, assimilate it, and use it in a creative way.[8]

Reflections on how internet browsers have changed our cognitive habits thus become not merely an analysis of technological progress, but a question about the

[4] M. Suleyman, M. Bhaskar, *Nadchodząca fala. Sztuczna inteligencja, władza i najważniejszy dylemat ludzkości XXI wieku*, Kraków 2024, s. 169.

[5] Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework*, Luxembourg 2007, pp. 3–8.

[6] M. Laskowska, *Nowe media w służbie człowieka. Zarys problematyki w kontekście etyki i aksjologii mediów*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 2012, Vol. 13, p. 126.

[7] M. Wasylewicz, *Media społecznościowe w życiu współczesnego nastolatka*, "HUMANITAS Pedagogika i Psychologia" 2024, No. 1(29), p. 125.

[8] M. Laskowska, *Nowe media*…, pp. 128–130.

future of contemporary education. Are we teaching people to think, or merely to search efficiently for information? The answers are crucial for the future role of learning and for whether "searching" will entirely replace "knowing."

Research methodology

The research was conducted using a diagnostic survey method with a questionnaire instrument, with the aim of analysing the influence of social media and internet search engines on the cognitive habits, learning strategies, memorisation practices, and participation in cultural life of students at the University of Rzeszów. Respondents' answers allow for the collection of opinions, attitudes, and declared behaviours. The primary objective of the study was to determine how social media and internet search engines influence cognitive habits, learning strategies, and cultural participation among students at the University of Rzeszów.

To explore this topic in depth, it was necessary to answer the following research questions:

1. How frequently, and for what purposes, do students use social media?
2. Do social media influence the way students learn and memorise information?
3. Do students perceive social media as a support or a distraction in the learning process?
4. In what ways do social media affect students' participation in culture (online and offline)?
5. How do students assess the role of higher education institutions in the context of the growing importance of social media in education?

A researcher who wishes to conduct specific research must choose a location that is appropriate for analysing and resolving the research problems contained in their topic.[9] In accordance with this principle, the study was conducted among 54 students at the University of Rzeszów, representing various fields of study (including administration, law, psychology, economics, computer science, pedagogy, nursing, and physical education). Women and men constituted approximately equal proportions of respondents. Age was recorded in the following brackets: 18–20 years, 21–23 years, 24–26 years, and above 26 years of age. The largest category of respondents was fourth-year students. Equal-sized groups were recorded among full-time and part-time students. In terms of place of residence, students from cities with populations exceeding 150,000 were predominant.

An original questionnaire was employed, consisting of both closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions included single-choice and multiple-choice questions, as well as five-point Likert scale items. The open-ended questions allowed

[9] M. Łobocki, *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych*, Kraków 2009, pp. 86.

respondents to freely express their opinions on changes in approaches to acquiring knowledge, the influence of media on cultural participation, and their expectations of the university in the context of the growing role of social media. The study was conducted as an anonymous electronic survey.

Analysis of research findings

The group of respondents answered both closed and open-ended questions. It was noted, with some surprise, that the open-ended questions attracted considerable interest, as they were very rarely left unanswered. The conclusions that emerged may serve as a valuable source of information for further analysis of issues related to media in education, taking into account the specific needs and attitudes of respondents towards mass culture.

Social media exert a significant influence on shaping the attitudes and views of the younger generation. The question of the amount of time devoted to social media use therefore proved particularly important. The largest group of respondents consisted of students who spend between two and four hours per day on social media – 57.4%. Close behind were students spending between four and six hours per day – 25.9%, followed by those spending one to two hours per day – 13%. The smallest group were students who spend less than one hour on social media – 3.7%. The most frequently used platforms in students' free time were: Instagram – 64.8%, YouTube – 63%, TikTok – 61.1%, Facebook – 27.8%, and X (Twitter) – 1.9%. A significant majority of students – 51.9% – stated that they sometimes use media in the educational process.

Social media and online communicators greatly facilitate the exchange of notes and collaboration between students, which can increase the effectiveness of learning. The most frequently chosen platform for educational purposes was YouTube – 55.6%, followed by TikTok – 44.4%, Instagram – 29.6%, Facebook (student groups) – 29.6%; podcasts were also indicated – 14.8%, as well as IT systems – 1.9%, and Google Scholar – 1.9%.

The next question concerned access to information and ways of learning and memorising it, using a scale where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 5 indicated full agreement. A decisive majority – 75.9% – chose the answer that social media indicate where to find needed information; a further 14.8% of students stated that social media help them memorise information. The remaining students most frequently pointed to various types of graphics that facilitate memorising facts presented through images, mind maps, etc. When asked whether social media serve as a distraction during study, 50% of students indicated that they do divert attention from learning. In students' assessment, their ability to concentrate had deteriorated compared to the period before intensive social media use – this opinion was expressed by 70.4% of respondents.

Respondents believe that, depending on the content creator, educational materials presented on social media can be either thorough and in-depth or superficial. Short learning formats, such as "reels," shorts, and TikTok videos, prove to be highly useful for assimilating information. Content presented in this way is typically short, dynamic, and visually attractive. This form of presenting a given topic promotes focused attention, while the combination of image, sound, and text engages multiple senses, which positively influences the memorisation of information. Platform algorithms frequently repeat similar content, thereby reinforcing retention on a given subject.

In the subsequent open-ended question, students were given the opportunity to express their opinions on how social media have changed their approach to acquiring knowledge. The answers were varied. Most frequently, however, attention was drawn to the fact that social media help to acquire specific knowledge in a short time. Students do not invest great effort in searching for information, as a consequence of which they become more passive. Many mentioned the easy and free access to information, as well as the risk of information overload and inaccuracies.

Respondents indicate that it is *much quicker and more pleasurable to watch a fifteen-to-twenty-second video than to attend a lecture in which the lecturer speaks monotonously for two hours on a given topic*. They also mention the importance of verifying found information. Students admit that they prefer to reach for a definition available in a browser rather than search for it in books, and they appreciate the fact that so much information of interest to them is readily at hand.

There is a group of students who maintain that social media have changed nothing in their approach to acquiring knowledge. When asked whether social media serve as a source of information about cultural events taking place in Rzeszów and its surroundings, the majority – 59.3% – responded that media do provide such information. They were then asked about algorithms and whether they genuinely suggest events of interest to respondents; 53.7% agreed with this statement.

As the study reveals, content on social media significantly influences participation in cultural events that take place "live." It is nevertheless a source of concern that the majority of surveyed students – 40.7% – more frequently consume cultural content online rather than offline. Respondents largely consider that social media broaden their cultural horizons. Students' opinions on whether media inspire participation in culture or rather replace real experiences varied considerably. Some believe that internet portals present the course of given events but are unable to convey the emotions that accompany attending them in person. The topic of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) was also raised. Some students fear that a given event will pass them by, while others are pleased that they can participate online without any effort.[10]

[10] *Młodzież w infosferze*, ed. M. Wojtkowiak, Warszawa 2024, p. 76.

The majority of respondents – 40% – consider that, in today's world, the ability to quickly find information on a given subject is more important than memorising it. They agree that social media represent both an opportunity and a threat in equal measure. Everything, however, depends on the way in which they are used. As research gathered in the monograph edited by Monika Wojtkowiak shows, youth functioning in the infosphere increasingly experience difficulties with concentration and critical evaluation of content, which constitutes a significant challenge for contemporary education.

In the final open-ended question, students were asked to present their opinions on how the university should respond to the growing importance of social media in the educational process. A significant majority highlighted the need for training to make the best possible use of the potential of media in learning. Many answers indicate that students value attempts to teach critical thinking and responsible use of available information. Respondents would like the university to use social media as an educational tool for: publishing short materials, summarising lectures, and presenting interesting facts that would encourage students to deepen their knowledge on a given subject.

Conclusions

Social media play an extremely important role in the lives of all students, since they have become not only a communication tool but also a form of entertainment and a support in the learning process. As the research shows, students eagerly use a variety of platforms that help enrich the educational process. They willingly search for information on given topics, use educational sections, exchange notes, and watch videos in their areas of interest.

Through social media, learning takes on a more dynamic character, adapted to the everyday needs of students. Respondents themselves note that the use of social media requires the development of critical thinking, and consequently the ability to select found content, assess it in terms of credibility, and consciously receive information. In the context of data overload, such competences are of utmost importance for the educational process to proceed in an effective and responsible manner. Students are very willing to participate in cultural events available in Rzeszów – these include author meetings, various concerts, and lectures. They more frequently choose the online format, however, which is more convenient but comes with limitations. Remote participation in certain events does not allow for the full experience of the emotions that accompany live performances. Offline events will never be able to fully replace direct contact with others and the impressions provided by real participation in cultural life.

Thanks to the dynamic development of new technologies, higher education institutions should meet the expectations of younger generations regarding the use

of social media as tools for learning and the promotion of knowledge. Universities should maintain a balance between the online world and direct contact with students, so that technological development and media support education rather than limit its social and cultural dimensions.

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Part VI

REVIEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Część VI

RECENZJE I KOMUNIKATY

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Sprawozdanie z seminarium naukowego „Edukacyjny wymiar biografii w cyklu życia człowieka", Zamość, 9 czerwca 2026 roku

9 czerwca 2026 roku w Akademii Zamojskiej odbyło się seminarium naukowe zorganizowane przez Ośrodek Badań Biograficznych działający w ramach Instytutu Pedagogiki, a kierowany przez dr. hab. Ryszarda Skrzyniarza, prof. AZ. Seminarium zorganizowane było w ramach podsumowania projektu dofinansowanego ze środków budżetu państwa przez Ministra Edukacji i Nauki w ramach Programu „Nauka dla Społeczeństwa II" na realizację projektu „Edukacyjny wymiar biografii w cyklu życia człowieka".

W ramach projektu staraliśmy się zbadać, jak biografia, która jest źródłem wiedzy o roli jednostkowych wydarzeń życiowych i ich funkcji w procesie wychowania i socjalizacji, może tworzyć szanse na uczenie się, ułatwiać zdobywanie wiedzy i zrozumienie świata, a także sprzyjać wychowaniu i rozwojowi człowieka na wszystkich etapach i płaszczyznach jego życia: od wychowania małego dziecka najpierw w domu, przedszkolu, przez kolejne typy szkół, studia wyższe, okres dorosłości, po działania edukacyjne seniorów i dla seniorów. Rozumiejąc ważną rolę biografii w procesach edukacji i wychowania, w ramach programu pracowaliśmy nad modelami edukacyjnymi, które pomogą nauczycielom i wychowawcom uczyć przez biografie, a uczniom i osobom dorosłym poszerzać swoją wiedzę z różnych dziedzin wiedzy dzięki poznawaniu biografii. Na seminarium zaproszeni zostali badacze, którzy w większości są też praktykami – badają biografie, a w swojej pracy wskazują jej wymiary edukacyjne. Prelegenci reprezentowali różne dziedziny wiedzy. Znaleźli się wśród nich m.in. pedagodzy, historycy, historycy oświaty i wychowania, teolodzy, a nawet językoznawcy.

Uczestników seminarium powitał dr hab. Ryszard Skrzyniarz, prof. AZ. Słowo wstępne do zebranych wygłosił także dr hab. Paweł Skrzydlewski, prof. AZ – rektor Akademii Zamojskiej.

Program seminarium obejmował trzy części. Obrady w sekcji pierwszej, zatytułowanej „Edukacja biograficzna w przedszkolu i szkole", moderowała

pracująca w OBB dr Urszula Krzyżanowska-Sobiesiek. Jako pierwsza głos zabrała s. dr hab. Loyola Maria Opiela, prof. KUL, która podzieliła się z zebranymi doświadczeniami – swoimi, ale także sióstr ze Zgromadzenia Sióstr Służebniczek Bogarodzicy Dziewicy Niepokalanie Poczętej prowadzących przedszkola – jak wykorzystywać biografie w edukacji przedszkolnej. Przedstawiła metody pracy z dziećmi w wieku przedszkolnym wykorzystujące walory edukacyjne i wychowawcze biografii nie tylko św. Edmunda Bojanowskiego – założyciela zgromadzenia, ale również rodziców, dziadków, a nawet samych przedszkolaków. Zaprezentowała metody pracy z biografią dla dzieci wypracowane przez zakon. Ks. dr hab. Adam Solak, prof. APS ukazywał biografię jako wzór i przykład dla dziecka, bo „wychowanie to praca człowieka z drugim człowiekiem nad wydobywaniem piękna z człowieka". Ks. dr hab. Adam Maj – założyciel oraz wieloletni dyrektor Katolickiego Liceum Ogólnokształcącego im. św. Filipa Neri w Radomiu – mówił o uczeniu się na podstawie biografii w edukacji szkolnej, o biografiach obecnych w programach szkolnych, o pracy pedagogicznej z patronem szkoły i o wskazówkach dotyczących kształtowania biografii uczniów. Dr hab. Piotr Gołdyn, profesor Uniwersytetu Kaliskiego im. Prezydenta Stanisława Wojciechowskiego wskazywał na biografie jako istotny wyznacznik wyboru kandydata na patrona placówki oświatowej. Jako ostatnia w tej sesji głos zabrała dr hab. Anina Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, prof. UJK, która przedstawiła referat *Potencjał biografistyki w edukacji historycznej. Analiza podstaw programowych (1999–2024).* Obrady sekcji zakończyła dyskusja.

Drugą sekcję, zatytułowaną „Edukacja biograficzna dorosłych", prowadziła dr Małgorzata Łobacz z Akademii Zamojskiej. Obrady zainaugurowało wystąpienie prof. dr hab. Elżbiety Dubas z Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, kierownika Katedry Andragogiki i Gerontologii Społecznej, która wskazywała na potrzebę uczenia się nie tylko z biografii „cudzej", ale mówiła wręcz o konieczności uczenia się z biografii własnej, przekonując, że na edukacyjny walor tej biografii powinniśmy wskazywać nie tylko dorosłym, którym poświęciła gros wystąpienia, ale także dzieciom i młodzieży. Dr hab. Danuta Opozda, profesor KUL mówiła o znaczeniu narracji biograficznych w perspektywie biografii rodziny. Dr hab. Iwona Jazukiewicz, prof. USz mówiła o biografii, która jest źródłem autorytetu. Przypomniała, że „biografia łączy poznanie, wartościowanie i działanie. Obserwując cudze życie, uczymy się, co jest ważne, wartościowe, potrzebne. Biografia wspiera rozumienie świata. Uczy nie tego, jak należy żyć, ale jak można żyć lepiej… Nawet autorytet, którego korzenie sięgają do biografii, nie istnieje tylko w osobie, istnieje w relacji z osobą". Wystąpienie dr Izabeli Przybylskiej z Uniwersytetu Ignatianum w Krakowie o wykorzystaniu biografii w edukacji językowej wzbudziło ogromne zainteresowanie studentów. Podczas dyskusji, która miała miejsce na zakończenie sesji, nie tylko pytali oni o metody pracy biograficznej podczas uczenia się języków obcych, ale także opowiadali swoje biografie związane z poznawaniem języków i kultury

innych państw, z nabieraniem odwagi mówienia czy myślenia w różnych językach. Jako ostatnia wystąpiła dr hab. Violetta Rodek, prof. UŚ, która przedstawiła swoje doświadczenia dotyczące wykorzystania biografii w edukacji studentów.

Obrady w ramach sekcji trzeciej, zatytułowanej „Całożyciowe uczenie się z biografii”, moderowała pracująca w grancie dr Justyna Mazurek z Akademii Zamojskiej. Rozpoczęło je wystąpienie dr Ewy Smołki z Lubelskiej Akademii WSEI. Badaczka przedstawiła biografię Innego jako źródło inspiracji w kształtowaniu charakteru. Dr Małgorzata Łobacz, która w grancie odpowiedzialna była za przygotowanie konkursu dla młodzieży na temat wzorów osobowych, przekonywała, posiłkując się fragmentami konkursowych prac, że poznawanie biografii jest – zwłaszcza dla młodego człowieka – swoistym spotkaniem edukacyjnym z Innym. oznacza bowiem kontakt ze światem wartości i sensów Innego, które kształtują jego cele oraz sposób postępowania. Dzięki temu Inny wprowadza młodego człowieka w świat wartości i odpowiada na jego naturalną potrzebę poszukiwania autorytetu godnego naśladowania. Ks. dr hab. Kazimierz Pek, prof. KUL wskazywał, jak biografie wierzących mogą wpływać na rozwój wiary, pogłębianie wiedzy religijnej i przemianę wewnętrzną człowieka w różnych okresach jego życia. W podobnym duchu utrzymane było wystąpienia ks. Mgr. Mateusza Chmielewskiego z Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, który przedstawił problem biograficznego uczenia się wierzących rodziców wobec dekonwersji ich dziecka. Dr hab. Małgorzata Czerwińska, prof. UZ omówiła znaczenie biografii osób z niepełnosprawnością, przewlekle lub terminalnie chorych dla rozwoju osobowości chorych, mobilizacji do walki z przeciwnościami i ograniczeniami. Odmienne w wymowie było wystąpienie dr. hab. Ryszarda Skrzyniarza, profesora AZ, który wskazał na trudny badawczo, społecznie i etycznie problem biografii Dzieci Zamojszczyzny – ofiar wysiedleń niemieckich z lat 1942–1943. Przypomniał on, że mówienie o traumie tych, którzy przeżyli, bólu tych, którzy stracili rodziny i niejednokrotnie cały dobytek, nie wpływa na budowanie tożsamości regionu. Narracje o wysiedleniach i próby rekonstrukcji biografii ofiar zarówno tych, którzy zginęli lub zostali poddani germanizacji, jak i tych, którzy powrócili do swoich wiosek, wyzwalają tak wiele sprzecznych, a do tego negatywnych emocji, że zbrodnia do dzisiaj nie została należycie upamiętniona i przebadana. Obraz, który rysuje się na podstawie wywiadów przeprowadzonych w czasie trwania projektu, daleki jest od portretu pokolenia czy regionu. To raczej odbicie w roztrzaskanym lustrze. Niby obraz jest jeden, ale poszczególne kawałki nie pasują do siebie. Pamięć o tych biografiach, zamiast łączyć i wpływać na budowanie tożsamości regionu – dzieli, a pęknięcia nie chcą się zabliźnić. Ostatnim prelegentem w tej sekcji był ks. dr Leszek Waga z Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, który przywołując podstawowe filozoficzne koncepcje doświadczenia oraz prezentując ich epistemologiczne właściwości, wskazał na związki koncepcji fenomenologicznej i hermeneutycznej z dwoma podstawowymi celami biografistyki pedagogicznej (odpowiednio: poznawczym i praktycznym)

oraz z dwoma jej przedmiotami badań (procesem budowania tekstów biograficznych i wychowawczym znaczeniem biografii).

Podczas spotkania nagrano również kilka wywiadów z uczestnikami spotkania na temat znaczenia biografistyki pedagogicznej, uczenia z biografii i wykorzystywaniu biografii w rozwoju osobowości człowieka na każdym etapie jego życia.

Jak ważne są zagadnienia poruszane podczas spotkania, świadczy fakt, że wielu uczestników jeszcze po zakończeniu seminarium zostało w Ośrodku Badań Biograficznych na długie dyskusje. Wskazywano na potrzebę przybliżania edukacji biograficzne już w dzieciństwie, aby zarówno uwrażliwiać na drugiego człowieka, jak i wskazywać na sposoby uczenia się dzięki biografii różnych dziedzin życia i wspierać własny rozwój osobowy.

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