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Educational strategies of teachers with differentiated self-realization styles

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a study based on the relationship between teachers' self-realization styles and the educational strategies they employ to stimulate the psychological development of female and male students. Five self-realization styles were measured: self-acceptance, others acceptance, solving social conflicts, solving internal conflicts, non-self-realization and a random variable in the form of the following educational strategies: reinforcement, development, adaptation, and ideology. The results from the random sample demonstrated a general difference between the group of teachers who did not realise their potential (non-self-realization) and the other teachers who presented different self-realization styles. The former group identifies with heterogeneous strategies, whereas the latter identifies with autonomous strategies. This regularity was not the case for reinforcement strategies, whereby all groups employed an individual (autonomous) rather than a collective (heteronomous) reinforcement strategy.

Keywords: development of teachers and students, self-realization styles, educational strategies.

Research problem

Studies on education are usually focused on various theoretical categories that are derived from definitions of upbringing, education, teaching or socialisation. The theoretical category that will be applied to problematise the research field in this paper is the category of human development. Therefore, this cate-

gory applies to the development of students, teachers, educators, parents, and all participants in educational processes. What seems intriguing yet difficult to comprehend in problematising and operationalising educational practices in research is the relationship between teacher development and student development. This relationship is interesting as the existing knowledge in this area is incomplete, fragmented and poorly validated in an empirical sense. Development is crucial to education; however, this relationship is difficult to capture empirically because we are unable to demonstrate, directly by way of experiential analysis, whether the developmental change of the student somehow results from or is conditioned by the capabilities and developmental dynamics of the teacher. Moreover, colloquial conjectures on this issue are not scientific, and their accuracy is unverifiable. Consequently, they cannot be utilised to explain and understand these empirical phenomena. Therefore, we require theories of development and the tools to measure them, as well as use them in such a way that they become sensitive to the developmental changes of teachers and students. Simultaneously, which theories are used for such an analysis is not a crucial aspect. The theories may include neopsychoanalytic, behavioural, social-cognitive, cognitive, humanistic, or phenomenological. Each of these groups has a conceptual system that can explain several phenomena at the interface between development practice and education practice. Instead, the significant issue is to find an empirical space wherein these theories would provide meaning to the development of students and teachers simultaneously. As previous research practice has demonstrated, this will not be achieved by examining samples from both populations separately. This is because they are two non-concurrent systems from an empirical perspective, and the mystery is rather hidden in what the two populations may have in common. However, we can try to predict the developmental effects that may occur on the part of students when teachers apply certain educational action strategies. This is the potential that human development theories explain. On the one hand, they define a developmental standard that educational processes can aim to achieve. On the other hand, they provide data for defining a system of educational interventions in such a way as to make their achievement plausible. Thirdly, and most importantly, they can show how teachers with a certain developmental status (self-developmental state) select measures to stimulate students' development. It does not appear that the current state of sophistication of the social sciences will allow further clarification of this issue.

In an attempt to problematise the empirical field, one can begin with the potential developmental effects that may occur on the side of the students. These effects will result from how teacher impacts are defined. This area will be problematised using the categories of parenting strategies described on the heteronomous-autonomous dimension (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, Rubacha, 2007,

p. 39). An educational strategy is a way of stimulating student activity to ensure that a given developmental standard can be achieved. For instance, teaching a child to defer gratification is a manifestation of a strategy to stimulate the child's moral development towards achieving a standard of moral autonomy. The strategy is developed in line with the concept of education and the action implementing this concept. The authors reduced the educational strategies to the form of teaching strategies and thus related to school everyday life. While observing the links between the education process, they identified four areas in which educational strategies reveal themselves: reinforcement, development, adaptation and ideology. Therefore, four educational strategies emerged for each of the educational strategies: reinforcement, development, adaptation and ideology. The strategies were defined according to the heteronomous-autonomous dimension based on the development standards typical of these extremes. Their layout is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Educational strategies

Teachers' educational strategies organised at school	
HETERONOMOUS	AUTONOMOUS
Reinforcement Strategy	
Collective	Individual
Development Strategy	
Conformism	Self-targeting
Adaptation Strategy	
External Controllability	Internal Controllability
Ideology Strategy	
Conservative	Liberal

Source: Chomczynska-Rubacha, Rubacha 2007, p. 39.

Reinforcement strategies are teacher concepts and actions that stimulate and suppress different student behaviours described by two polarised standards: collective and individual. The former emphasises the importance of the group in the education process, whereas the latter depicts the significance of the individual. In the first case, the group is the reference point for the individual and the stimulated actions of the individual are intended to serve the development of the group. However, in the second case, the individual is the reference point for the group and the group provides a space for individuals to develop (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, Rubacha, 2007, p. 40). The development strategy involves a teacher's ideas and actions that stimulate the achievement of behavioural standards that are higher in quantity and quality than the previous stand-

ards concerning the standard of conformity. When students, regardless of their preferences, are confronted with a ready-made system of expectations, the fulfilment of conformity is necessary and requires them to reformulate their individuality towards conformity with the cultural pattern. The second case is a strategy focused on a self-targeted standard, based on an emancipatory developmental pattern of effectively maintaining the interaction between external norms and one's preferences. The adaptation strategy can be realised through the activation of two criteria: the external norms established by teachers, and the personal decision of the alumni based on participation in the construction of the norms guiding the life of the school. The last strategy of ideology includes concepts and actions that combine teachers' value systems and worldviews with general political and ethical orientations. In a manner, it can be similar to liberal ideology, being free, equal, and open to difference and multiplicity, or a conservative ideology, which can be broken down into secular, religious and educational fundamentalism (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, Rubacha, 2007, p. 47). Thus, the heteronomous standard is linked to the collective, conformist, externalist and conservative strategies, whereas the autonomous is linked to the individual, self-targeted, internal controllability and liberal. Several studies have that the autonomous standard is the highest developmental standard that can be achieved in the areas of cognitive (Piaget, 1981; Brunner, 1978; Vygotsky, 1971), moral (Piaget, 2006; Kohlberg, 1984; Bandura, 1999; Gilligan, 2006), social (Bandura, 1986; Schaffer, 2006) development. These strategies and the standards assigned to them are discussed in detail in the studies by the authors of the theory under discussion (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, Rubacha, 2007).

Following the mainstream approach applied in this paper, it is now possible to assess the states of teacher development on which the successful stimulation of the most complex and highest standards of students' psychological development may depend. The answers can be as many as the theories of development and based on these theories, different conceptual systems can be activated that can generate explanations from the corresponding social science paradigms. In the present research, the research field was problematised using the theory of self-realization, derived from the work of A. Maslow (1986, 1990) and A. Angyal (1972) and extended by K. Rubacha (1991, 2022). Thus, self-realization is most generally understood as activities aimed at bringing out one's developmental potential in the course of an individual's interaction with the environment (Rubacha, 2022, p. 5). The self-realization syndrome, as described by A. Maslow, consists of the following characteristics: spontaneity, simplicity, naturalness, self-esteem, acceptance of others and nature, creativity, focusing on a problem, need for privacy, autonomy (i.e., independence from culture and environment), philosophical but a non-malicious sense of humour, the constant freshness of judgement, sense of community with people, mystical experiences (peak expe-

riences), depth of interpersonal relationships, democratic character structure, more efficient perception of reality and more satisfactory relations with it compared to others, differentiation of means and ends, the distinction between good and evil, distance from reality, and resistance to enculturation (Maslow, 1990, pp. 212–251). According to Maslow (1990), this syndrome appears in respondents at different levels: low, average, or high, which makes it possible to operationalise it in the form of indicators hidden in questionnaire items (Witkowski, 1978; Rubacha, 1991). Self-realization understood in this way can occur based on the individual's diverse resources simultaneously emphasising specific areas of life and development standards. One version of this theory distinguishes four styles of self-realization, related to the following development standards: ipsocentric, allocentric, justice and care (Rubacha, 2022, p. 18). The first two are standards for emotional-social development (Skarżyńska, 1991), while the remaining two are standards for cognitive-moral development (Kohlberg, 1984; Gilligan, 2006). The styles of self-realization were constructed by crossing the two dimensions of ipsocentric–allocentric and justice–care. The first style is the result of an overlap between the ipsocentric standard and the standard of care. It is a style focused on *self-acceptance*. A personal perspective of self-realization is dominant, and potentialities and capacities are realised outside the social sphere of life. These capacities are governed by a standard of care and self-acceptance as well as involvement in the personal affairs of those closest to them. Central to this is a concern with the conditions for the realisation of one's potentialities (Rubacha, 2022, p. 17). The second style is formed when the allocentric standard is superimposed on the standard of care. It is a style focused on *others acceptance*. It is dominated by the public, non-personal space of self-realization, where people who require help and care are found. Central to this is a readiness for pro-social activities, a responsibility for other people, and an understanding of their situation (Rubacha, 2022, p. 17). Another style emerges when we superimpose the allocentric standard on the equity standard and is focused on *resolving social conflicts*. It is dominated by the macro-social, cultural, and political space of self-realization, and hence, it can be considered a more formal space. It is often a struggle against the social system wherein basic values must be defended (Rubacha, 2022, p. 17). Issues of individuals do not disappear from the field of view; rather, at the centre are actions for inter alia, the protection of civil rights, minority rights, and excluded groups. The last style originates when an ipsocentric standard is superimposed on the justice standard and is focused on *solving internal conflicts*. The personal space of self-realization dominates in this scenario, and activities consist of resolving value crises, focusing on the compatibility of one's behaviour with professed values, and resolving moral dilemmas in terms of personal life and the lives of loved ones (Rubacha,

2022, p. 17). These four styles can be cultivated through the presence of the self-realization syndrome as described by Maslow (1990, pp. 212–251).

The problematisation presented makes it possible to place the differences and similarities that occur in terms of the educational strategies used by teachers with various styles of self-realization at the centre of the research. As the study will record data on teachers who score low on the self-realization measure in addition to the four self-realization styles, it will be possible to observe how these teachers use educational strategies in comparison to teachers who score high. Consequently, this will indirectly examine the potential developmental effects on the part of the students who work with these teachers on a daily basis.

Method

The research design is nomothetic, prepared to estimate general patterns. Thus, it is based on random sampling from the population of teachers in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Dolnośląskie voivodeships (06–10.2022). Hence, the conditions for randomisation of the first type were obtained, and allocation to comparison groups was based on the magnitude of the indices of the individual self-realization styles. A total of five groups of respondents ($N = 160$) were collated, equally ($n = 32$ each) representing a style focused on self-acceptance, others acceptance, solving social conflicts, solving internal conflicts, and the non-self-realization group. In the space of this five-value fixed variable, the results of the measurements of the four education strategies, and therefore the four random variables, were gathered. Finally, in a quasi-experimental design, four comparisons of mean educational strategy (reinforcement, development, adaptation, and ideology) were made between the five established groups of self-realization styles of the analysed teachers.

Data was collected using the test method, employing two paper-and-pencil assessment tools. To measure the random variable, the Educational Strategies Test (TSW) developed by M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha, K. Rubacha (2007, pp. 73–80) was used, whereas the Questionnaire of Self-realization Styles (KSS-22) developed by K. Rubacha (2022, pp. 19–26) was employed to measure the set variable. The Educational Strategies Test consists of tasks that require deciding on a strategy that can be applied to a specific educational problem. These items achieved discriminatory power indices (r_{bi}) ranging from 0.52 to 0.69. Their reliability as measured by Cronbach's Alpha index was in the range of 0.89–0.92. As a measure of the theoretical relevance of the tool, Loevinger's HIT homogeneity formula estimating the concordance of each item with the overall test score was also used, through which values in the range of 0.88–0.99 were obtained. The test was also normalised for each strategy using the interim measure

of mean and standard deviation. The second KSS-22 tool was ipsative in its nature, consisting of 22 items within which there were three items each to rank, containing indexes of self-realization within the dimensions of ipsocentric–allo-centric, justice–care and non-self-realization. The discriminatory power of the items (ϕ) ranged from 0.4 to 0.57, whereas Cronbach’s alpha ranged from 0.75 to 0.89. The theoretical relevance of the tool was also estimated. The hypothesis of three factors corresponding to the theoretical underpinnings of the KSS-22 was not confirmed in the factor analysis. Following several trials, analyses were temporarily abandoned, which would have been performed on the same group of subjects. However, theoretical, diagnostic, and prognostic relevance was tested using external criteria. The results confirmed the relevance of the KSS-22, and the tool has also been standardised on a sten score (Rubacha, 2022, pp. 19–26; pp. 35–40).

Null hypotheses were tested using univariate ANOVA analysis for two sets of variables and the Kruskal-Wallis Test for two further sets of variables since the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the two educational strategies was not met for the necessary conditions. In these cases, the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric analysis of variance was applied. An alpha of less than 0.05 was used as the significance level, which optimally captures the relationship between the probability of error of the first and second types.

Analysis of own research results

The development strategy falls between conformism and self-targeting. Theoretical data informs us that approaching a standard of self-targeting makes it possible to stimulate alumni to achieve states of autonomy, which will be much more difficult, if not impossible, in case their conformity is stimulated. The first observation depicted a high difference in the mean of this strategy between those with low levels of self-realization and the others.

It is evident that creating conditions for the development of conformism, opportunism and dependency is a strategy of teachers who fail to realise their potential in life. Table 2 also demonstrates that teachers with self-acceptance and solving internal conflicts styles are the most advanced in stimulating self-targeting. A common dimension of these respondents is ipsocentrism.

Perhaps having positive experiences in focusing on personal development tasks, instinctively as it were or intentionally (we don’t know), teach the students to recognise their own needs and to set themselves tasks beyond their current developmental ceiling. In the same direction, although somewhat less strongly, are teachers with the others acceptance and solving social conflicts styles. Maslow (1990) stressed the importance of positive self-centeredness as

a condition for acting for the benefit of others. In doing so, he cited the examples of his subjects, who were outstanding people that made important breakthroughs in the world, acting for the benefit of humanity, albeit in a state of self-centeredness.

Table 2

Estimators for the system of variables development strategy – self-realization styles

development strategy	N	Mean	Std. Devia-	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
non self realization	32	1,5000	,87988	,15554	1,00	4,00
self-acceptance style	32	3,0938	,92838	,16412	1,00	4,00
others acceptance style	32	2,4375	1,01401	,17925	1,00	4,00
solving social conflicts style	32	2,1563	,88388	,15625	1,00	4,00
solving internal conflicts style	32	3,2188	,87009	,15381	1,00	4,00
Total	160	2,4813	1,10443	,08731	1,00	4,00

Source: own research.

Table 3

Homogeneity of variance test for development strategies

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
development strategy Based on Mean	,678	4	155	,608

Source: own research.

Table 4

Self-realization styles vs. development strategy; ANOVA results

development strategy	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	63,662	4	15,916	18,935	<,001
Within Groups	130,281	155	,841		
Total	193,944	159			

Source: own research.

Table 4 confirms that this relationship is not a coincidence, but rather a result of the test procedure used, as it is statistically insignificant. The data collected had a distribution close to normal, and the variances were homogeneous (Table 3), legitimising the accuracy of the ANOVA test applied.

School life takes place in a group, leading to various consequences with respect to the development of the individual. Teachers can subordinate individual students' needs and activities to the group, emphasising the value of community. They may also treat the group as a place to realise the individual potential of male and female students, underestimating its importance in human development. Moreover, they can also focus on valuing the individual preferences of alumni and help them find social space for their realisation. The Educational Strategies Questionnaire includes indicators that emphasise individuality as a developmental standard of reinforcement.

Table 5
Estimators for the system of variables reinforcement strategy – self-realization styles

reinforcement strategy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
non selfseralization	32	2,5625	,80071	,14155	1,00	4,00
self-acceptance style	32	1,6250	,65991	,11666	1,00	3,00
othevers acceptance style	32	2,3125	1,02980	,18204	1,00	4,00
solving social conflicts style	32	2,8750	1,07012	,18917	1,00	4,00
solving internal conflicts style	32	2,9688	,78224	,13828	1,00	4,00
Total	160	2,4688	,99636	,07877	1,00	4,00

Source: own research.

Table 5 illustrates averages indicative of respondents' focus on individual reinforcement strategies, regardless of the revealed fact and self-realization style. The average of the group with a low level of self-realization did not differ from the other research groups in this regard. Only those with a style focused on self-acceptance were inclined to prefer a collective reinforcement strategy. This condition was confirmed by the statistically insignificant result of the variance analysis, and the result can be considered accurate since the data met all the conditions for using this statistical test, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Homogeneity test for reinforcement strategies

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
reinforcement strategy Based on Median	1,131	4	155	,344

Source: own research.

This is quite an interesting result since while stimulating individuality falls within the development standards described in theories of self-realization, the

lack of self-realization experiences should be linked more to a lack of self-perception than vice versa. Yet those who do not reveal a tendency towards self-realization prioritise the individual system of educational reinforcement over the collective system, similar to the other respondents. Perhaps the socialisation factor, i.e., the prevailing culture of individuality, is involved in this scenario. It may be assumed that a broader process than education is socialisation, which in this case is not modified by conscious educational reinforcement. To summarise, they do not alter the socialisation trend. This, in turn, is strongly marked in Poland by the experience of post-communist society.

Table 7

Self-realization styles vs. reinforcement strategy. ANOVA results

reinforcement strategy	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	37,125	4	9,281	11,917	<,001
Within Groups	120,719	155	,779		
Total	157,844	159			

Source: own research.

Several decades of deprecation of individuality can now still maintain a fascination with individuality as a criterion for thinking about society (Bauman, 2012). Nevertheless, this socialisation effect is in line with the standard of development towards individual autonomy. This interpretation also makes it possible to note that the power of developmental stagnation did not prove to be greater than the power of socialisation processes.

The adaptation strategy emphasises two dimensions of school life with respect to creating conditions for external and internal controllability. Simultaneously, the institutional structure of school organisation strongly privileges the passive, dependent adaptation of male and female students. They indeed enter as beings “in statu nascendi” into ready-made structures. This socialising dimension of school can be categorised by teachers and students who, consciously and deliberately, break down the latter’s model of adjustment to everyday school life, and the school is full of ready-made adaptation recipes.

Figure 1 depicts that the internal controllability strategy is most strongly used by teachers with styles focused on solving social and internal conflicts. These two groups of people identify with an ethic of justice, and therefore, principled action. They do not use the practice of rewarding students for giving in to pressure, but rather stimulate them to follow their own rules. Using this strategy can be difficult in practice, as controlling people’s adaptation to the organisation is a tool for exercising power if not directly by the school management, then often by the Superintendents of schools and the minister, as seen in Poland today.

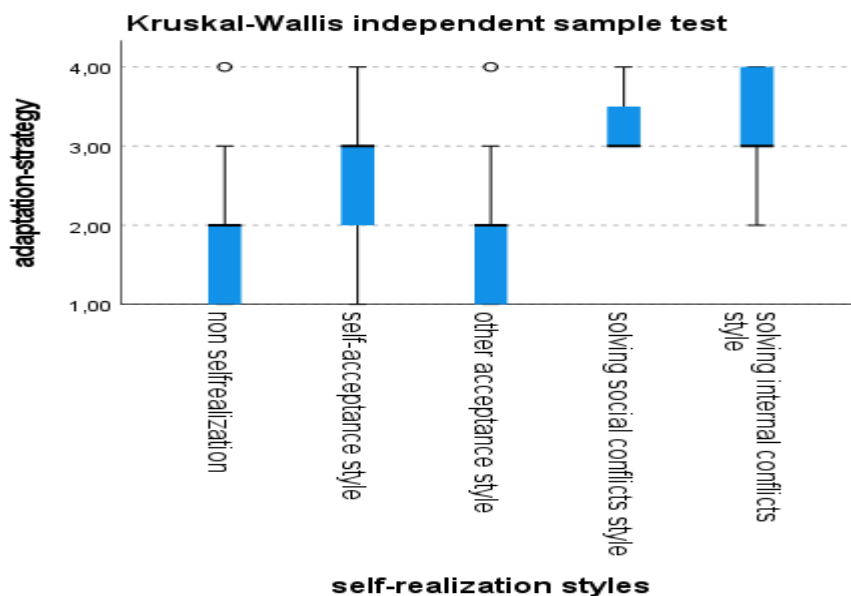


Figure 1
Adaptation and self-realization styles

Source: own research.

Table 8
The null hypothesis of the Kruskal-Wallis test for the relationship adaptation strategy – self-realization styles

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of adaptation strategy is the same across categories of selfrealization.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	>.05	Reject the null hypothesis.

Source: own research.

Internal controllability in this situation can be combined with the risk of being penalised, which applies to both teachers and students. External controllability, on the other hand, is sometimes rewarded when the system fears civil society. The ethics of justice, however, provides a barrier against such tendencies. Care, on the other hand, apart from its positive dimension from a developmental point of view, can be confused with tribalism, which is fostered by external controllability. The trends captured are confirmed in Table 8, reporting the statistical significance of this relationship. Self-realising individuals perform better with an internal controllability strategy as a mechanism for active adaptation to school structures than individuals without such developmental dynamics.

However, as the name might suggest, the ideology strategy does not only remain in the realm of concept, but it also moves into the realm of action. Therefore, the teachers can actively stimulate either conservative student behaviour or liberal behaviour. Figure 2 shows that teachers with low levels of self-realization have a greater tendency than teachers with a self-realization style focused on solving social and internal conflicts as well as self-acceptance to use a conservative strategy. In contrast, it is difficult to interpret the outcome of those with a style focused on others acceptance. One might have expected a strong, constant focus on liberal ideology, which is open to different versions of the world and life. Nevertheless, teachers' self-realization is generally conducive to openness, tolerance of cognitive incompatibility, freedom and equality of treatment of students. In any case, these qualities are being stimulated as part of the liberal strategy. This strategy, similar to the previous one, is strongly entangled with the political context of education, especially when the educational authorities are conservative. The situation is difficult in terms of stimulating the development of autonomy when conservative ideology is introduced into the school in a version of religious fundamentalism.

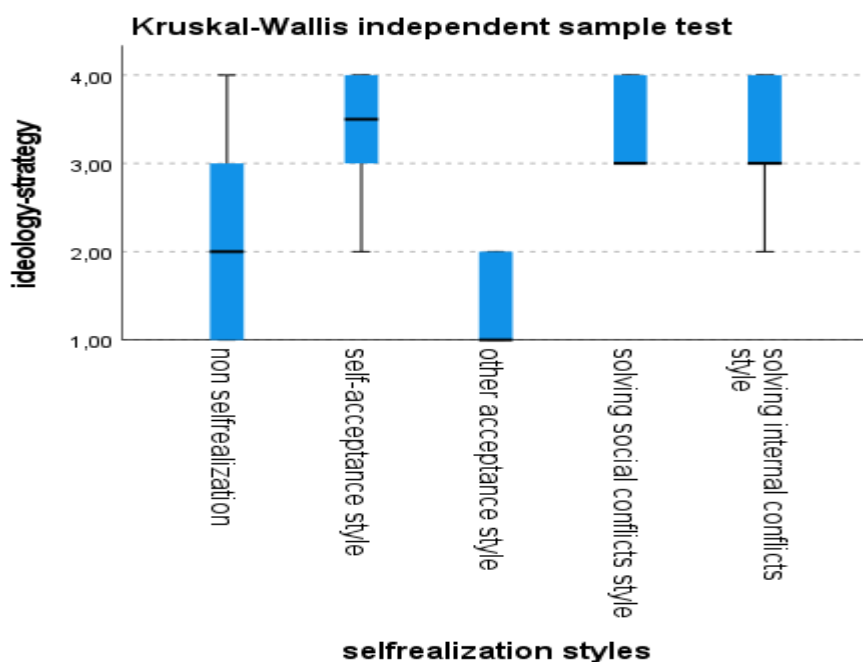


Figure 1
Adaptation and self-realization styles

Source: own research.

In this case, self-realizing teachers who are conflict-solution-oriented and accepting of diversity are invaluable assets. The result of the Kruskal-Wallis test in Table 9 confirms the relationships described.

Table 9

Null hypothesis of the Kruskal-Wallis test for the relationship adaptation strategy – self-realization styles

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of ideology strategy is the same across categories of selfrealization.	Independent- Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	>,05	Reject the null hypothesis.

Source: own research.

Summary

Concluding the entire analysis and moving from detailed insights into the data towards a more general theoretical reflection, it is worth emphasising that the developmental condition of teachers can be considered as a system of factors that alter the development of students. This relationship was not shown directly from the data obtained from the survey of teachers and students; however, it was reflected in the impact of teachers' self-realization styles on the educational strategies they use with students. In case such strategies are efficient and our knowledge of education does not deny the causal role of education with respect to the development of children and young people, research of such accord is worth continuing.

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Strategie wychowawcze nauczycieli o zróżnicowanych stylach samorealizacji

Streszczenie

W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań nad relacjami pomiędzy stylami samorealizacji nauczycieli a stosowanymi przez nich strategiami wychowawczymi. Zmierzono pięć stylów samorealizacji: akceptacji siebie, akceptacji innych, rozwiązywania konfliktów społecznych, rozwiązywania konfliktów wewnętrznych, braku samorealizacji oraz zmienną losową strategię wychowawczą: wzmocnień, rozwoju, przystosowania, ideologii. Wyniki badań z próbki losowej pokazały, że istnieje generalna różnica pomiędzy grupą nauczycieli nierealizujących swoich potencjalności (brak samorealizacji) a pozostałymi nauczycielami prezentującymi różne style samorealizacji. Ci pierwsi identyfikują się ze strategiami heterogenicznymi, podczas gdy ci drudzy – z autonomicznymi. Prawidłowość ta nie miała miejsca w przypadku strategii wzmocnień, kiedy wszystkie grupy stosowały strategię wzmocnień indywidualnych (autonomiczną), nie zaś kolektywnych (heteronomiczną).

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój nauczycieli i uczniów, style samorealizacji, strategie wychowawcze.