

**EDUKACYJNA ANALIZA TRANSAKCYJNA**

**NR 10/2021**

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**EDUCATIONAL TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS**

**NO 10/2021**

Pismo Zespołu Badawczego Edukacyjnej Analizy Transakcyjnej  
Katedra Badań nad Edukacją  
Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczy im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie

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JAN DŁUGOSZ UNIVERSITY IN CZĘSTOCHOWA

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**NR 10**

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## Od redakcji

Miło nam oddać w Państwa ręce 10 numer rocznika „Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna”. Ostatni rok był niewątpliwie ciągle trudny dla środowiska naukowego. Sytuacja epidemiologiczna na świecie w znacznym stopniu ograniczyła możliwości przemieszczania się i kontaktu z innymi. Jednocześnie zmusiła do wprowadzenia nowych, mocno absorbujących form pracy zdalnej. Tym samym możliwości i czas, jaki naukowcy mogli przeznaczyć na prowadzenia badań naukowych i publikacje, stał się mocno ograniczony.

Z dumą i radością przekazujemy kolejny numer, który świadczy o ciągłym rozwoju Czasopisma – zarówno pod względem merytorycznym, jak i od strony estetycznej i formalnej. Z przyjemnością informujemy, że poczynając od numeru 9/2020 „Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna” stała się czasopismem prawie w pełni anglojęzycznym. Mamy nadzieję, że w znacznym stopniu pomoże to w jej umiędzynarodowieniu oraz stopniowym pozyskiwaniu autorów spoza granicy Polski. Oczywiście stale dokładamy wszelkich starań, aby podnosić wartość merytoryczną publikowanych artykułów. Jesteśmy na liście czasopism punktowanych Ministerstwa Edukacji i Nauki z wynikiem 70 punktów za publikację. W roku 2020 wprowadziliśmy „Edukacyjną Analizę Transakcyjną” do bazy DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), a w 2021 do ERIH PLUS European Reference Index for the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Wszystkie artykuły publikujemy na licencji Creative Commons, przyczyniając się tym samym do popularyzacji nauki oraz koncepcji edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej.

Od tego numeru wprowadzamy możliwość zgłaszania artykułów do nowego działu – „Inne koncepcje terapeutyczne w edukacji”. Mamy tym samym nadzieję, że dzięki temu uda nam się pozyskać nowych autorów, a koncepcję edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej upowszechnić również wśród naukowców zajmujących się innymi obszarami nauk społecznych. Już teraz serdecznie zapraszamy Autorów do zgłaszania swoich artykułów do nowego działu.

Zainteresowanych Czytelników zapraszamy do lektury numeru 10/2021. Z całą pewnością każdy znajdzie tu zagadnienia, które będą dla niego inspiracją oraz okazją do polemiki lub przemyśleń.

Redakcja



## Editorial

It is a pleasure to offer you the 10th edition of “Educational Transactional Analysis” annual. The last year was still difficult for the scientific environment. The epidemiological situation in the world limited our possibilities of traveling and human contact to a large extent. At the same time, it forced us to introduce new, time-absorbing forms of online work. Thus, opportunities and time that scientists could devote to their research and publications were considerably constrained.

We are, therefore, even more proud and happy to present the next magazine issue, which shows its constant development, both from the factual, esthetic and formal point of view. We are glad to announce that beginning with the issue no 9/2020, “Educational Transactional Analysis” becomes a publication issued almost entirely in English. We hope that it will help to promote it internationally and gradually attract foreign authors. We make every effort to improve the research content of published articles. We are on the list of journals recognised by the Ministry of Education and Science, with the score of 70 points for a publication. In 2020, we added “Educational Transactional Analysis” to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and in 2021 to the ERIH PLUS European Reference Index for the Humanities and the Social Sciences. We publish all our articles on the Creative Commons licence, contributing in this way to the popularization of science and the concept of educational transactional analysis.

From the actual issue, we shall have a call for papers for a new section – Other therapeutic concepts in education. Thus, we hope it will help us acquire new authors and popularise the concept of Educational Transactional Analysis also among researchers dealing with other areas of social sciences. We already kindly invite all the authors to submit their articles for the new section.

We invite all interested readers to enjoy the content of the issue no 10/2021. Undoubtedly, everyone shall find here a source of inspiration and an opportunity for further discussion or reflection.

The Editorial Team



**TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN EDUCATION**  
**ANALIZA TRANSAKCYJNA W EDUKACJI**





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## “School Tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue programme” as a recommended preventive programme. Assumptions and use in the light of educational transactional analysis

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### Abstract

In the middle of 2020, in the Polish system of recommending preventive programmes and promotion of mental health, a new publication “School tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue programme” was released. The programme was positively assessed by independent reviewers and obtained the second out of three recommendation levels – good practice. In this way, the offer of educational institutions support and preventive-educational activities executed by them was enlarged. The aim of this article is to present the assumptions of “School tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue programme”, taking into account the presence and significance of the system of recommending preventive measures itself. The article shall also contain a description of the procedure evaluating the quality of the aforesaid programme. The evaluation was based, among others, on the concept of educational transactional analysis.

**Keywords:** school tutoring, prevention, recommended programmes, educational transactional analysis.

## Schools and prevention

“Contemporary times are full of opportunities, just like a jungle rich in various species. They are what they are, but we cannot deny the fact that our children have access to so many consumption options, to such advanced technology their parents’ generation could not even dream of”\* (Wojcieszek, 2016, pp. 13–14). In such a metaphorical way, Krzysztof Andrzej Wojcieszek referred to the conditions which children and teenagers grow in, emphasizing that it is easy to get lost in such a jungle if one is lonely and surrounded by many creatures who would like to devour them. What is more, the jungle makes many things look different than they really are, at the same time being a place where everyone can fight with everyone... To a great extent, wrong use of new media becomes a catalyst for such issues as it leads the users to addiction and experiencing various threats, including Problematic Use of the Internet treated as behavioural disorder (Tomczyk, 2019, pp. 95–99), crime or cyber violence (Bochenek, Lange, 2019, p. 6). Experiencing modern times in such a way seems more and more risky. Police statistics of suicide attempts of people under 18 shown in table 1 are a good illustration of the issue.

Table 1

*Police statistics of suicide attempts in age groups 7–18, in the years 2017–2019*

Year	Suicide attempts		Fatal suicide attempts	
	Age group 7–12	Age group 13–18	Age group 7–12	Age group 13–18
<b>2017</b>	28	702	1	115
<b>2018</b>	26	746	5	92
<b>2019</b>	46	905	4	94
<b>2020</b>	29	814	1	106

Source: <https://statystyka.policja.pl/st/wybrane-statystyki/zamachy-samobojcze/63803,Zamachy-samobojcze-od-2017-roku.html> [Accessed on 27.03.2021].

Taking into account the aforesaid data, it is worth noticing that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have additionally made the situation of children and teenagers more difficult. Isolation, no peer contacts or class rituals connected with attending school and obligations deriving from it, the atmosphere of limitations and constant presence of other family members under one roof led, among others, to a noticeable rise in violence they directly experience. For example, it is reflected in the results of a study commissioned by the Empowering Children Foundation, which show that in a group of 500 respondents

\* All translations – E. Haberko.



aged 13–17, 27.2% of them experienced at least one form of violence (during the lockdown from March to June 2020).<sup>1</sup> Such experiences were connected with living with a person overusing psychoactive means (50.7% vs 23.1%,  $p < 0.01$ ) or suffering from mental issues (53.3% vs 24.6%,  $p < 0.01$ ) (Makaruk, Włodarczyk, Szredzińska, 2020, p. 12), whose symptoms and negative behaviour might have intensified due to increasing stress triggered by the pandemic situation.

Searching for the reasons responsible for the statistics in table 1, a problem that often resurfaces is no proper access to psychiatric support for children and teenagers (Ćwiek, Kowalska, 2021; <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-zlystan-psychiatrii-dzieciecej-jeszcze-sie-pogarsza>). This also concerns psychological and pedagogical help. According to the results of the analysis performed by the Polish Supreme Chamber of Control, in schools in the years 2014-2016, one full-time school counsellor was supposed to support 475 students, and one psychologist was supposed to care for 1904 students (Tomaszczyk-Pacufa, 2018, p. 44). Regardless of this shortage of specialists, pursuant to the assumptions of education law, it is primarily school that should organize and adequately assess the level of support its students might need. It derives from the fact that since 1999, each educational body has had an obligation to develop and implement an individual school educational programme (cf. the Regulation of the Ministry of Education (MEN) of 15.02.1999 concerning framework statute of public school §2.1, §2.2; the Regulation of the Ministry of Education of 15.02.1999 concerning the curriculum of general education), realized not only by school counsellors and psychologists, but all teachers (Szymańska, 2002, p. 59). Joanna Szymańska remarks that the aforesaid programme, in accordance to the then education reform, was not to be treated like a product developed by the principal and pedagogical staff, but it was to become a planned process open to amendments and updates. This initiative was to ensure activities that were of non-incident nature, integrating didactic and educational areas, additionally introducing “prevention as a fixed aim of each school [...]” (2002, p. 62).

The presence and noticing the value of prevention was strengthened by changes in education law which imposed on each school an obligation to develop its preventive programme (in the school year 2016/2017) and integrate it with its educational programme in one document. It is worth remarking that the latest assumptions pointed to developing a given school’s educational and preventive programme every year, based on “the results of an annual diagnosis of students’ developmental needs in the school environment, including protective and risk factors, with a special emphasis put on risk pertaining to using psycho-

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<sup>1</sup> Forms of violence against children include: violence executed by adults (family members), being a witness of violence at home, peer violence, sexual abuse with or without physical contact (cf. Makaruk, Włodarczyk, Szredzińska, 2020, pp. 7–8).

tropic substances, their substitutes and new psychoactive substances” (Education Law Act, art. 26). Taking such measures made pedagogical staff more sensitive to the realization of appropriate steps. Since 2010, they have been supported by the system of preventive programmes recommendation.

## **Assumptions of the system recommending preventive programmes and promotion of mental health**

In 1982, Poland adopted the Upbringing in Sobriety and Alcoholism Prevention Act whose initial aim was to limit alcohol consumption (Piekarz, 2019, p. 7), but also to coordinate support for people who experienced the consequences of alcohol abuse. The almost forty-year old act has been amended many times. That time also meant the occurrence of a significant number of new threats that have an impact on society and its functioning. In the 1990s, due to the need of new measures precisely addressed to particular groups (especially children and teenagers), there was a rapid increase in bottom-up initiatives, to a large extent consisting in developing and realizing preventive programmes. J. Szymańska draws our attention to that fact, writing that “The 1990s in the system of education can be safely called a prevention decade [...] as there were more and more various preventive projects of good quality addressed to schools, including teachers and parents. Unfortunately, the number of offers outweighed their quality” (Szymańska, 2002, p. 50). Embracing that tendency, in 2010 there was a decision to make these actions subject to qualitative verification – by creating the system recommending preventive programmes and promotion of mental health. This task meant the cooperation of four state institutions: the National Bureau for Drug Prevention, State Agency for Prevention of Alcohol Related Problems, the Centre for Education Development, and the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology in Warsaw. Mutually complementing competencies of employees of these institutions made it possible to create standards that preventive programmes had to meet if they were to be recommended to obtain financial help from commune or city committees for prevention of alcohol related problems. There were three quality levels: a promising programme, good practice, and a model programme (cf. Radoska, 2016, pp. 5–6). Reaching a given recommendation level means a programme’s evaluation by two independent reviewers, checking its quality (including its contractors’ experience) mainly based on conclusions deriving from a given programme evaluation. Its scope is key to obtaining a given recommendation level for a definite period of time. It is assumed that there are:

- process evaluation (basic activity) that takes into account the moment of programme implementation, including implementation quality and participants’ satisfaction;

- results evaluation, whose aim is to decide “[...] to what extent a given programme has reached its goals or intermediate stages of planned changes” (Radomska et al., 2010, p. 21);
- formative evaluation, verifying a programme’s efficiency at the stage of developing its final version.

It is worth noticing that whereas in case of a promising programme the process evaluation is taken into account, in case of good practice it is results evaluation and formative evaluation, a model programme means the confirmation in the results of methodologically appropriate research of a positive impact “[...] of a given programme on problematic behaviour at least one year after the end of all activities (the so-called deferred effects)” (Radomska et al., 2010, p. 29). Thus, the recommendation system linked activities undertaken by preventive programmes contractors to their solid scientific verification. Such an approach is based on the belief expressed by Henryk Mizerek that “the main task of evaluation is accumulating and communicating knowledge allowing for reasonable evaluation of a given activity’s value. Knowledge that is accumulated, respecting strict methodological rules binding in social sciences, has many functions. The most important of them is providing data for reflection” (Mizerek, 2012, p. 46).

While presenting the system recommending preventive programmes and the promotion of mental health, one also has to pay attention not only to the aspect of these programmes’ quality, but also to their recipients. On the one hand, these activities may protect groups that have not experienced this negative phenomenon, and on the other hand support those that to a lesser or greater extent e.g. experienced substance abuse or unhealthy behaviours. Therefore, we can distinguish:

- promotion of mental health, i.e. activities addressed to children, whose aim is to support their mental wellbeing and interpersonal skills;
- universal prevention – addressed to all people “regardless of differences in the risk level of problematic behaviour within a given group” (Radomska, 2016, p. 6), which is to prevent initiating hazardous behaviour or delay their initiation;
- selective prevention – referring to groups of recipients living in the proximity of risk factors or occasionally undertaking hazardous behaviour, undertaken activities are to limit and prevent their occurrence;
- dedicated prevention – addressed to these groups that have already undertaken hazardous behaviour to a considerable extent and need support in the area of intervention and therapy, helping to stop destructive behaviour and to recover.

Taking into account the aforesaid categorization, it is worth mentioning that nowadays out of 25 programmes that are in the system of recommended programmes (data as of March 2021), 16 of them cover the area of promoting

health and universal prevention, and among them we can find “School tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue programme” (since May 2020).

### **“School Tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue programme”**

Even though tutoring itself might be associated with academic didactics, which is obviously justified by Oxford and Cambridge experience (Hejwosz, 2010, p. 198; Szala, 2015, pp. 255–265; Pełczyński, 2007, pp. 31–34), since 2008 it has become a more frequent phenomenon noticeable at lower levels of education. First of all, a project financed by the City Council of Wrocław “Protective tutoring in Wrocław junior secondary schools” (Zambrzuska, 2011), experience of Original Artistic and Academic Secondary Schools ALA are worth mentioning. The process of adapting tutoring to the conditions of the Polish education system was based on qualitative and quantitative change in the teacher/ educator/ tutor – student/ charge relation. In mass education institutions, tutoring was to introduce individualised and personalised, long-term contact of an adult (professionally prepared for their role of an educator or a counselor) with a child or a young person. According to the assumptions and observations of tutoring promoters, it was to contribute to improving the school atmosphere, student performance using their potential to a greater extent, learning how to be independent, experiencing the feeling of strengthened self-esteem. Tutorial activities understood in such a way unveiled their psycho-preventive potential, which became part of general prevention aims presented by Maria Deptuła, Alicja Potorska and Szymon Borisch, addressed to school children, such as “supporting the psychosocial development of children in relation to their life environment and: [...] the feeling of causation in the area of their own development (e.g. achieving desirable school results, mastering particular knowledge and/or skills) [...]” (2018, p. 66).

“School tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue programme” registered for recommendation combines tutorial activities with the assumptions of pedagogy of dialogue. Thus, school tutoring is “a form of pedagogical work realized in direct and individual contact with a student, with a special emphasis put on the student’s and educator’s integrity deriving from their being human; inter- and intra-activity of the educational process and its anchoring in a given life reality” (Budzyński, 2009, p. 31). Additionally, one can list the following indicators of such work:

- long-term nature (tutorial work shall last at least one semester),
- systematicity (regular meetings build up relations),
- purpose (the whole process and every meeting shall have a well-defined purpose and shall discuss it – it can be a school or non-school purpose),

— using strong sides [...]” (Zwolska-Płusa, 2018, pp. 11–12).

Preventive measures realised within the aforesaid programme engage teachers in a direct way as they are invited to participate in a 64-hour tutor training (tutoring course of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree), giving an opportunity to initiate a process of building their identity/ role as a tutor, which is not tantamount to their function of a head teacher, counsellor or teacher. The course is divided into 8 training modules, whose content introduces the participants into the tutorial process.<sup>2</sup> According to the programme description, content covered in particular training modules refers, among others, to: the assumptions of tutoring and pedagogy of dialogue, relation-building training, discovering and working on one’s charge’s strengths, professional support of tutor charges in establishing and realizing their developmental goals, monitoring and evaluation of tutorial work, creativity training and aspects of tutoring ethics (cf. <https://programyrekomen-dowane.pl/strony/artykuly/tutoring-szkolny-program-pedagogiki-dialogu,46#wiecej-informacji-na-temat-programu->). All the activities undertaken during the realization of the “School tutoring...” programme also include a one-year tutor supervising care, where the supervisor in question supports a given school in the implementation of tutoring by individual work with its principal, and also by providing support to its tutors.

While describing the “School tutoring...” programme, it is worth noticing that in the suggested model of support (whose detailed formula is each school’s independent decision) a tutor should not work with more than 10 charges, who in this way become indirect recipients of the project. What is important, this strategy goes hand in hand with thinking about legitimacy of realizing preventive programmes by teachers who are trained to realise them, which J. Szymańska remarked on. The author emphasized the value of running preventive programmes realised by people connected to a given school, understanding its reality, which finally might mean concentrating on the school’s everyday educational work without filling this void by preventive programmes run by external bodies (cf. Szymańska, 2002, pp. 56, 63). In this way, tutors immersed in the area of their charges’ existence<sup>3</sup> could, by means of systematic, personalized and individualized contact, complete their tasks that M. Deptuła thinks should be realized in the area of early prevention of psychosocial development issues and hazardous behaviour of children and teenagers. On the one hand, it refers to supporting the child’s psychosocial development by “strengthening individual

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<sup>2</sup> During the training, the participants are engaged at the same time in their own tutoring practice by mutual tutorials (participants working in pairs) and initiating cooperation with charges in their institution.

<sup>3</sup> The term of existence, next to humanity, permanence, inter- and intra-activity, nondescriptiveness, transgression – constitutes a feature attributed to pedagogy of dialogue (cf. Śliwerski, 1998, pp. 68–69.)

protective factors and weakening risk factors and supporting parents/carers/teachers in developing competencies that enable to create better development conditions for children – strengthening protective environmental factors and weakening environmental risk factors” (Deptuła, Potorska, Borsich, 2018, p. 69). This last aspect she mentions in case of the “School tutoring...” programme is linked with recommendation of close, also individualised and personalised tutor’s cooperation with parents/carers of a given charge, which should be based, among all, on meetings organised at least three times per year (Zwolska-Płusa, 2018, p. 20).

## **Tutoring evaluation and references to educational transactional analysis**

The perspective of psycho-preventive resources that are used in tutors’ work was noticed and used in the realisation of the project entitled “To raise a smart man. Introduction of educational and resocialisation work model with the use of school tutoring as a positive prevention of problems at Polish school”. The project made it possible to implement school tutoring based on the assumptions of pedagogy of dialogue in 79 educational institutions in Poland in the years 2016-2018.<sup>4</sup> The possibility of performing a thorough evaluation not only of the process itself but of the results turned out to be an added value of this project. It shall be noticed that in this case evaluative activities were supposed to cover all the participants of the project, i.e.

- training participants (teachers and head teachers) and their trainers and supervisors of project implementation in particular institutions – process evaluation;
- tutoring relation partners (tutors/teachers/head teachers and their charges) and their parents – result evaluation.

Table 2 below shows the number of the recipients of the project subject to evaluation, in addition to whom 339 parents also participated in these activities.

The undertaken activities were based on the assumptions of social studies methodology and were performed by the Project Evaluation Research Group “To raise a smart man”, which functioned at Jan Długosz University, but its members were also employees of other tertiary education institutions.<sup>5</sup> The Research

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<sup>4</sup> The project “To raise a smart man. Introduction of educational and resocialisation work model with the use of school tutoring as a positive prevention of problems at Polish school” was financed by the Ministry of Education (<http://www.tutoringszkolny.pl/o-projekcie>).

<sup>5</sup> The Project Evaluation Research Group “To raise a smart man” consisted of employees of Jan Długosz university – prof. Jarosław Jagieła, doctor habilitatus, Zbigniew Łęski, PhD, Anna Pierzchała, PhD, Dorota Gębuś, PhD, Beata Zajęcka, PhD, Anna Irasiak, PhD, Karol Motyl, PhD

Group’s conceptual work on methodology used during the evaluation process led to the conclusion that results evaluation should be based on the pretest and posttest procedure.<sup>6</sup> The research was conducted online, at the beginning and the end of the school year 2017/2018 (the implementation year). It should be emphasized that results evaluation itself that was supposed to control to what extent implementation had an impact on the project participants was based on the observation of the following dependent variables: school atmosphere, school passivity and life positions of tutors and their charges (cf. Sarnat-Ciastko, Gębuś, Zalewski, 2018, pp. 108–109). In this way, two theoretical constructs deriving from transactional analysis found their way into the conducted research – personality theory and psychotherapy system directed at personal development and personal change (Stewart, Joines, 2016, p. 467), which may be also used in the area of education.

Table 2  
*Participation in project participant evaluation of the project “To raise a smart man”*

Group		1 <sup>st</sup> stage of the research	2 <sup>nd</sup> stage of the research
Primary school	Students	5540	4833
	Teachers	758	687
(Junior) secondary school	Students	1865	1403
	Teachers	338	274
Centre for Education Development or Youth Socioterapy Centre	Charge	591	485
	Headteachers/ teachers	201	167
<b>Total</b>		9293	7849

Source: Cf. Sarnat-Ciastko, Gębuś, Zalewski, 2018, p. 182.

Defining passivity strategies understood as “behaviour consisting in not solving problems” (Stewart, Joines, 2016, pp. 239–240) deriving from lack of “[...]”

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and Adrianna Sarnat-Ciastko, PhD (group leader), University of Lower Silesia – Agnieszka Zembruska, PhD, Maria Sitko, PhD, Kazimierz Pulaski University of Technology and Life Sciences in Radom – Katarzyna Nowak, PhD, University of Opole – Sławomir Kania, M.A. and University of Silesia – prof. UŚ Edyta Widawska, doctor habilitatus.

<sup>6</sup> According to Zbigniew Gaś, this procedure can evaluate effectiveness of preventive programmes and consists “[...] in conducting studies in the group covered by preventive intervention twice: before and after the intervention. This procedure makes it possible to assess changes that took place between two measurements (performed by the same tools in the same way). The condition of its use is the belief that preventive intervention lasted long enough for such changes to occur [...] (2006, p. 218). Additionally, it should be pointed out that the scope of the research did not include any research on a control group.

responsibility for one's thinking, actions and feelings" (Jagięła, 2012, p. 141) was verified on the basis of an original questionnaire "I and my teachers/ students" developed by Anna Pierzchała and Dorota Gębuś. This tool included categories evaluating the respondents' creative approach, which was the result of the questionnaire's authors' earlier studies that let them combine these two areas of human activity as complementary categories (cf. Gębuś, Pierzchała, 2016). The aforesaid tool was used in the group of all the teachers and educators, and also 4<sup>th</sup> graders of primary school (taking into account a simplified version of the tool for the charges of Youth Sociotherapy Centres and Centres for Education Development). It made it possible to determine an extent to which five types of passivity strategies were present in school experience, i.e.:

- passivity, meaning lack of reaction to a given situation;
- overadaptation, i.e. adapting too much to one's environment;
- uncontrollability shown in aimless behaviour, which wastes energy and does not put one any closer to task realization;
- aggression and incapacity, occurring as a result of increased tension deriving from experienced difficulties; while aggression certainly means letting one's anger out, incapacity is inner lack of strength to act, depreciating "[...] one's abilities to solve a problem [...], which can take a form of psychosomatic symptoms, nervous breakdown or addiction to alcohol or drugs" (Pierzchała, 2013, p. 107).

Another concept of transactional analysis used during evaluation were the respondents' life positions. Their activity was analysed with the help of a tool "School situations", which was developed by Jarosław Jagięła. Contrary to the aforesaid questionnaire including 30 items and based on a five-degree Likert scale, this tool included a description (adjusted to a given recipient) of 8 situations which could develop in a way pointing to activation of a given life position, i.e. fundamental beliefs "[...] of a person concerning oneself and others, which are used to justify decisions and behaviour" (Stewart, Joines, 2016, p. 475), that is positions in which a given person assumes that:

- I am OK, in a situation where another person/others is/are also OK;
- I am OK, in a situation when another person/others is not / are not OK in their opinion;
- I am not OK, when another person/others is/are OK;
- I am not OK and another person/others is/are also not OK.

It should be emphasised that this tool was used among all the researched teachers/ educators and 4<sup>th</sup> graders and older students of primary school. A slightly simplified version was given to be completed by the charges of Youth Sociotherapy Centres (MOS) and Centres for Education Development (MOW).

As a detailed presentation of statistic analysis results for the research in question was included in the publication *"To raise a smart man" Final report of*



the evaluative research for the Polish project of school tutoring implementation, this article shall only focus on the most crucial aspects linked with the conducted research and using TA concepts. The research conducted on such a big number of respondents made it possible to verify, among others, tendencies connected with the tutors' charges' and tutors' opinions on themselves, or ways of entering into interpersonal relations. Tables 3 and 4 can be a good example – they present a picture of activated passivity strategies and choosing certain life positions by the researched primary and (junior) secondary school students.

Table 3  
*Passivity strategies among primary and (junior) secondary school students in the second stage of the research (generalised data)*

School	Grade	No of students	Median (M) and standard deviation value (SD)	Passivity	Overadaptation	Uncontrollability	Aggression	Incapacity
Primary school	IV-V	1941	M	2.82	2.83	2.74	2.38	2.43
			SD	1.04	0.97	1.16	1.13	1.09
	VI	574	M	3.17	3.05	3.03	2.71	2.60
			SD	1.05	1.02	1.18	1.18	1.11
	VII	624	M	3.27	2.98	3.11	2.73	2.55
			SD	1.04	1.08	1.13	1.16	1.12
Junior secondary school	I	62	M	3.50	3.19	3.44	2.79	2.62
			SD	0.96	1.10	1.10	1.09	1.15
	II	63	M	3.47	3.02	3.35	3.02	2.59
			SD	0.94	1.12	1.10	1.15	1.17
Secondary school	I	830	M	3.45	3.03	3.12	2.65	2.52
			SD	0.96	1.02	1.10	1.08	1.01
	II	299	M	3.47	2.91	3.27	2.76	2.44
			SD	0.95	0.98	1.11	1.17	1.02
	III	210	M	3.62	3.12	3.20	2.82	2.59
			SD	0.94	1.00	1.10	1.16	1.09

Table 3  
*Passivity strategies... (cont.)*

School	Grade	No of students	Median (M) and standard deviation value (SD)	Passivity	Overadaptation	Uncontrollability	Aggression	Incapacity
Technical secondary school	I	167	M	3.35	3.17	3.11	2.86	2.62
			SD	0.90	0.98	1.06	1.15	1.09
	II	121	M	3.60	3.35	3.34	3.04	2.75
			SD	0.98	1.04	1.12	1.27	1.14
	III	39	M	3.36	3.27	3.02	3.00	2.51
			SD	0.78	0.78	0.86	1.13	0.92
	IV	35	M	3.82	3.38	3.26	2.92	2.51
			SD	1.01	1.05	1.22	1.02	1.01
Vocational school	I	69	M	3.37	3.35	3.25	2.85	2.77
			SD	0.85	1.08	0.98	1.17	1.13
	II	55	M	3.15	2.94	3.05	2.78	2.51
			SD	0.96	0.92	1.13	1.11	1.14
	III	40	M	3.20	2.81	2.67	2.62	2.11
			SD	0.89	1.04	1.22	1.26	1.11

Source: own materials on the basis of the data from the publication by Sarnat-Ciastko, Gębuś, Zalewski, 2018.

Referring to the data above, one should pay attention to high median values attributed to passivity and overadaptation among final exam takers (from secondary school and technical secondary school), uncontrollability among junior secondary school students, aggression and incapacity noticed in technical secondary schools, and incapacity among 6<sup>th</sup> graders of primary school (whose perspective was not to go to a junior secondary school but to continue their education in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school – as a result of education reform implementation). Thus, this data can clearly show what the activation of passivity strategies is like, depending on the stage of school education and challenges deriving from it, which seem to grow together with these strategies.

Table 4  
*Life positions of primary and (junior) secondary school students in the second stage of the research (percentage)*

School	Grade	No of students	Life positions			
			I +, You +	I +, You -	I -, You +	I -, You -
Primary school	VI	574	41%	27%	18%	14%
	VII	624	42%	24%	20%	13%
Junior secondary school	I	62	42%	24%	19%	15%
	II	63	42%	28%	16%	15%
Secondary school	I	830	50%	17%	21%	12%
	II	299	39%	25%	22%	13%
	III	210	37%	26%	22%	15%
Technical secondary school	I	167	29%	28%	22%	21%
	II	121	23%	27%	28%	22%
	III	39	28%	29%	19%	23%
	IV	35	31%	26%	22%	21%
Vocational school	I	69	31%	26%	20%	24%
	II	55	27%	27%	25%	21%
	III	40	27%	35%	14%	24%

Source: own materials.

Table no 4 shows the percentage of responses in a given group, where a given respondent would demonstrate a given life position. It can be noticed that while passive strategies seem to get activated with age to a greater extent, in this case, age, and primarily school type, show decreasing self-esteem. The life position I am OK, you are OK was most frequently shown by primary school students and 1<sup>st</sup> graders of secondary school, in the situation where in technical secondary schools and vocational schools each life position was evenly chosen, which also refers to the position I am not OK, you are not OK. This observation showed first of all how important it is to realise preventive or educational projects in schools as not only do they decrease the use of passive strategies but also strengthen students' self-esteem and teach them how to appreciate other people's value.

Conducting the research on such a large scale made it possible to notice several issues existing in Polish schools, which might have impacted the implemen-

tation process. It referred not only to the state of these institutions, but also the education reform realized at that time: closedown of junior secondary schools and restoration of 8-grade primary schools. The data analysis showed that the students who directly experienced this change had worse results in all researched parameters in the second stage of the research than in the first one – despite of a tutor’s presence. The presence of a tutor in direct comments (open questions) of the researched students was important and had a mainly<sup>7</sup> positive impact. Against this background, it is worth adding that the research confirmed a special value of tutoring implementation for primary school students (grades 1–5), students of big schools or those from big cities. It proved especially valuable for the charges of MOW-MOS. From this perspective – though in the tutors’ direct comments (open questions), tutoring also played a mostly positive role, parameters studied in the quantitative analysis of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the research did not show a particularly positive change here (cf. Sarnat-Ciastko, Gębuś, Zalewski, 2018, pp. 284–294).

## Conclusion

While describing the assumptions of the most efficient, in her opinion, preventive programmes realised in schools, Joanna Szymańska paid attention to a few criteria, including:

- teachers’ engagement in programme realisation;
- giving freedom to teachers and encouraging their creativity as far as task realisation is concerned;
- providing teachers with training and materials that make the realization of a given method possible;
- possibility to refer to authentic and appropriate data deriving from work in a given environment and being familiar with it;
- parents’ engagement in programme realisation (cf. 2002, p. 63).

The “School tutoring – pedagogy of dialogue” programme meets all the criteria mentioned above, which was confirmed in the conducted evaluative research. Using school tutoring in primary schools also offers the beneficiaries of this implementation an opportunity to develop skills that Zbigniew Gaś paid attention to as the ones constituting key aspects of realizing educational programmes. It means, e. g. “[...] taking decisions, handling stress, solving problems, interpersonal communication or provoking motivated activities” (Gaś, 2006, pp. 26–27). It may be stated that it is particularly important for students entering

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<sup>7</sup> It concerned 62.1% of opinions provided by primary school students (6-8 grades) (cf. Sarnat-Ciastko, Gębuś, Zalewski, 2018, p. 206).

the age of adolescence, described as the age of risk (Szymańska, 2002, p. 49), but also for younger students, for whom a relation with a wise, accompanying adult becomes a valuable, protective factor (cf. Ostaszewski, Rustecka-Krawczyk, Wójcik, 2009, p. 12), modelling safe growing up.

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## **„Tutoring szkolny – program pedagogiki dialogu” jako profilaktyczny program rekomendowany. Założenia i zastosowanie w świetle edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej**

### **Streszczenie**

W połowie 2020 roku w polskim systemie rekomendacji programów profilaktycznych i promocji zdrowia psychicznego pojawiła się nowa propozycja: „Tutoring szkolny – program pedagogiki dialogu”. Program ten został pozytywnie oceniony przez niezależnych recenzentów i uzyskał drugi z trzech poziomów rekomendacji – dobrą praktykę. Tym sposobem poszerzyła się oferta wsparcia placówek oświatowych w realizowanych przez nie działaniach profilaktyczno-wychowawczych. Celem niniejszego artykułu będzie przybliżenie założeń „Tutoringu szkolnego – programu pedagogiki dialogu”, z uwzględnieniem tła związanego z obecnością i znaczeniem samego systemu rekomendacji działań profilaktycznych. Artykuł zawierać będzie także opis, istotnej dla przeprowadzonej procedury weryfikującej jakość omawianego programu, ewaluacji, która w swoich założeniach opierała się m.in. na koncepcji edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** tutoring szkolny, profilaktyka, programy rekomendowane, edukacyjna analiza transakcyjna.





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## Effective school in a crisis COVID-19. Engaging the school community in coping with school challenges based on the Lewin and Fisher model, in transactional analysis terms

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### Abstract

This article is a case study of coping with the challenge of change at Primary School No. 6 in Września from October to December 2021.

Underlying the intervention work described in the case study was the model of implementing change in an organization proposed by Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1951; Bhayangkara, 2020) and John Fisher's approach to individual coping with change (Fisher, 2012). In this paper, we look at the process from the perspective of educational transactional analysis.

The purpose of the process was to increase the sense of psychological and content security of the 7th and 8th grade community during the period of December 2021.

630 individuals actively participated in the process. The analysis was based on qualitative research in 5 groups of school community members: teachers (N = 45), students (N = 300), parents (N = 280), a group of psychologists and educators (N = 3) and school management (N = 2). The process included: observation, in-depth interviews, group work, and discussion. Participants also had an opportunity to individually analyze conclusions and proposals developed during the process.

As a result of the actions taken, comprehensive solutions and recommendations were proposed, which were communicated and implemented in the community of classes VII and VIII,

among students, teachers and parents. In this paper we show that and why parallel work with all major stakeholder groups is necessary to effect change in the school.

**Keywords:** implementing change, Lewin model, passivity, systemic solutions, rapid response system, educational transactional analysis

## Introduction – an outline of the situation

During the pandemic period, i.e. from March 2020 to June 2021, Polish educational institutions switched to remote teaching, interchangeably with offline and hybrid teaching. Upon returning from the vacations, there were calls in the media, social media, and in official communications from public institutions and professionals for the post-holiday time in schools to be spent on reintegration, back to building relationships, rather than on learning itself. Throughout the period of the pandemic, international organizations, such as UNICEF (The State of the World's Children 2021), as well as individual countries, including Poland, have conducted research and published reports on aspects of mental health of children and adolescents, especially on the impact that limiting social contact may have on it (Buchner, Wierzbicka, 2020; Buchner, Majchrzak, Wierzbicka, 2020; Grzelak, Żyro, 2021; Łuczyńska, Pyżalski, 2021; Ptaszek et. al., 2020; Pyżalski, 2021; Plebańska, Szyller, Sieńczewska, 2020; Sobiesiak-Penszko, Pazderski, 2020).

A year and a half later, around October 2021, both in the media and in direct communication with schools, voices were heard about an exceptional intensification of difficulties in students – even those who had managed without any particular problems so far. Difficulties were pointed out both in terms of behaviour and content competence, i.e. the knowledge that teachers expected after a few months of online work.

The theoretical assumptions of the process, the perspective of Transactional Analysis, the case study with recommendations, the juxtaposition of theoretical assumptions with implementation, and the final conclusions are presented in this paper.

The decision to present the topic as a case study stems from three key motives:

1. The challenge faced by the described school is a common one, affecting many institutions which, if they have identified the difficulty at all, are looking for solutions on their own. It is useful to show a possible way, probably not the only way, to deal with the difficulties.
2. The process was planned and carried out on the basis of research and theory, grounded in science, about which those involved were kept informed. Awareness and transparency of actions taken, drawing on proven methods and tools in organic ongoing work in schools is not standard. Meanwhile, understanding the processes that occur between people, in the process of

- learning, or in the process of communication allows, on the one hand, for their more conscious application both at the level of the individual and the group, and on the other hand allows for their application in other contexts.
3. It is worth appreciating and popularizing the openness of the headmasters, teachers and the not inconsiderable school community that engaged in co-operation, looking for common solutions.

## **Theoretical framework**

At the core of this work is a holistic approach to both the student and other members of the school community as individuals for whom the roles they play in that community are only one role, often distinct from those outside the school (Sills, Fish, Lapworth, 1999). Equally important are the principles of working with groups already proposed by Berne (1966) and the aspect of systemicity – both at the level of process implementation and at the level of solutions.

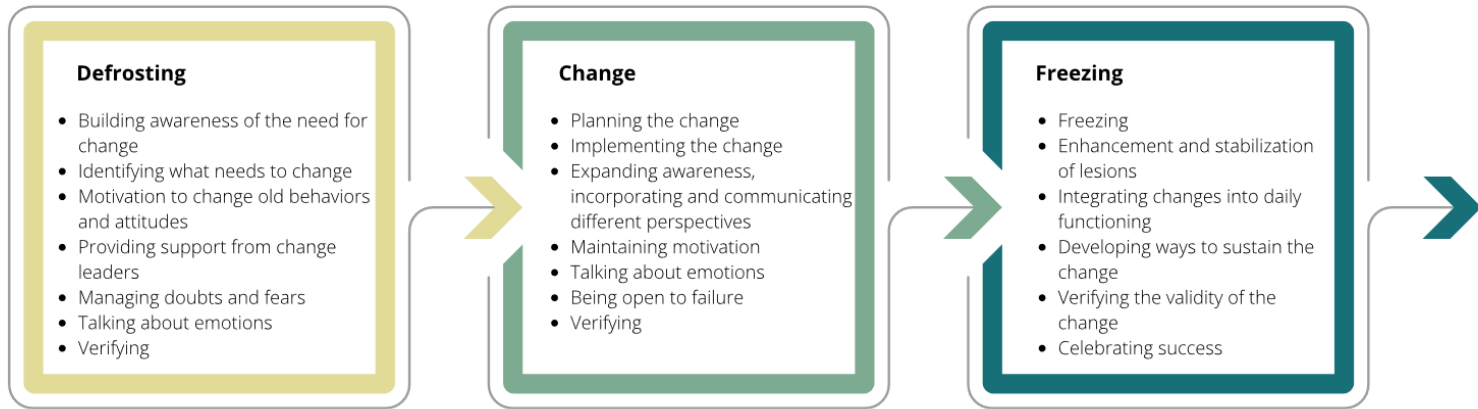
The basis of the work was to stop and look at the situation for the here and now. Each group was invited to look not only at themselves, but also at other actors in the situation. The participants used and developed competences in building self-awareness, empathy (role playing) and perspective.

The process described in the case study was based on Kurt Lewin's model of implementing change in organizations (Lewin, 1951; Bhayangkara, 2020) and John Fisher's approach to individual coping with change (Fisher, 2012), which will be briefly presented below.

The author's introversion activity presented here has not been previously implemented or described. It was designed at the executive level based on the facilitator's years of psychological, coaching, mediation and intervention experience and good knowledge of the school environment.

## **Lewin's model**

One of the key challenges from the beginning of the process was to achieve the goal while providing the process participants with a sense of security and empowerment. Hence, at the organizational level, Lewin's (1939, 1951) proposal was applied, for which these needs are an integral underlying value.



*Fig. 1*  
Kurt Lewin's model for implementing change  
Source: Lewin, 1951.

According to Lewin's conception, effective and safe implementation of change in an organization involves 3 phases:

**Unfreezing**, the change itself and freezing, initiating the change unfreezing includes: a. building awareness of the need for change, b. determining what needs to be changed, c. motivating to change old behaviors and attitudes, d. providing support from change leaders, e. managing doubts and fears, f. talking about emotions, g. verification.

**Change**, including: a. planning the change, b. implementing the change, c. expanding awareness of the change, d. incorporating and communicating different perspectives, e. maintaining motivation, f. talking about emotions, g. being open to failure, h. verification.

**Freezing**: a. reinforcing and stabilizing change, b. integrating change into daily functioning, c. developing ways to sustain change, d. verifying that change is valid, e. celebrating success.

## Process of personal transformation

From the beginning of the process, it was obvious to the implementers that the implementation of the recommendations, whatever they might be, would evoke different reactions from the school community not only at the system level, but also at the individual level. Therefore, from the very beginning of the process, both its plan and – as a part of micro-education – the mechanisms likely to be triggered in each of the participants were communicated. To this end, Fisher's model was used, with an attractive visualization designed to inform about the stages of coping with change without imposing an additional burden on the audience.

An important element that Levin did not include in his model and that Fisher writes about (Fisher, 2005; Fisher, 2012) is the aspect of time – the importance of the past and future to the change processes that occur in the here and now. Fisher cites Mahoney (Mahoney, 2003), according to whom we are all "conservative" in our way of thinking and thus more or less resistant to change. We need order in our lives and seek it in the familiar (whether it is most effective and efficient is not as important as the fact that it is familiar). Mahoney (2003) goes on to state that all change occurs in the context of interpersonal interactions, so for an organization to change, individuals must be taken into account - understanding at the very least that change can mean something different to each individual and his or her environment and its impact on a person's situation can vary.

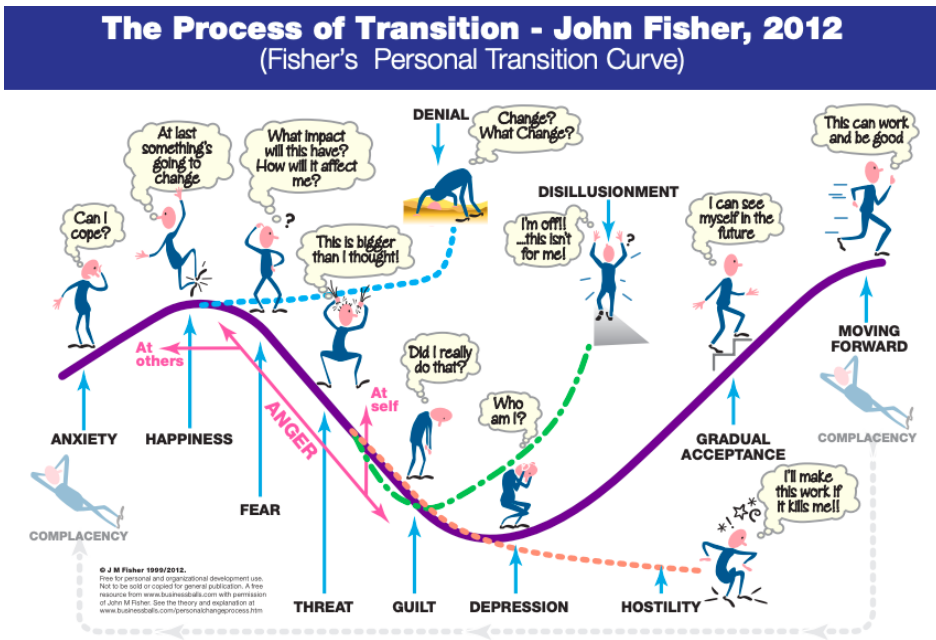


Fig. 2

Personal transition curve

Source: Fisher, 2012.

Fisher's proposed personal transition curve was helpful for the process (Fisher, 2005; Fisher, 2012; <https://www.r10.global/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/fisher-transition-curve-2012-1.pdf>).

He distinguishes 12 phases in which we can find ourselves (or get stuck) going through change:

**Anxiety phase** – the realization that events lie beyond the reach of anyone's understanding or control. Top, how a person handles this phase affects the rest of the curve, and finally, self-esteem.

**Happiness phase** – the realization that one's point of view is recognized and shared by others, there is relief that something will be corrected (regardless of how the person perceived the previous situation), and a kind of satisfaction that any of the personal reflections on the previous system were accurate (again, regardless of how the person likes the status quo, there are usually elements to change). One can have a sense of "Thank God, finally something is happening!" here, and an awareness of control over one's own life if one will only engage. The trap in this phase can be unrealistic expectations, which is why management is so important here: mindfulness and making things real.

Fisher writes: "if we can start an intervention at this stage, we can minimize impact of the rest of the curve and virtually flatten it. Through engagement, in-

forming, getting «acceptance» at this time, we can help people move through the process” (Fisher, 2012).

**Fear phase** – awareness of an impending change in a person’s core behavioral system – the person will behave in a different way and this will affect their perception of themselves, but also other people’s perceptions of them.

**Feeling threatened phase** – awareness of an impending complex change in what a person considers to be their core identity and what constitutes their sense of self-worth. The person does not know how they will behave when the old rules no longer apply and new rules have not yet been established.

**The guilt phase** – the awareness of the movement of our self away from our core self-perception, when a person examines how they have behaved in the past and looks at alternative interpretations, they begin to redefine their sense of self. Recognizing the inappropriateness of one’s past actions and their consequences can trigger feelings of guilt.

**Depression phase** – the realization that our past actions, behaviors and beliefs are inconsistent with our basic construction of our identity. General lack of motivation and confusion. The person does not know what the future will be or how they will cope in it.

**Phase of gradual acceptance** – the person makes sense of the situation and his or her place in the change is at the beginning of the process of managing his or her own control over the change, making sense of it, the background of the “light at the tunnel” stage.

**The phase of moving forward** – the person begins to exert more control, regains a sense of self. He or she knows who he or she is again and begins to feel comfortable acting in accordance with beliefs.

**Disillusionment phase** – the realization that your values, beliefs and goals are inconsistent with those of the organization. This is characterized by a lack of motivation, focus, dissatisfaction and gradual mental withdrawal (working at a minimum) or actively challenging the change through criticism/complaints.

**Hostile phase** – the person continues to operate old unreliable processes that are no longer part of the new situation. New processes are ignored or actively undermined.

**Denial phase** – lack of acceptance of any change and its impact on the individual. The person acts as if the change has not occurred, they follow old practices, ignore evidence or information that contradicts their belief system. “I can’t see it, so it doesn’t exist.”

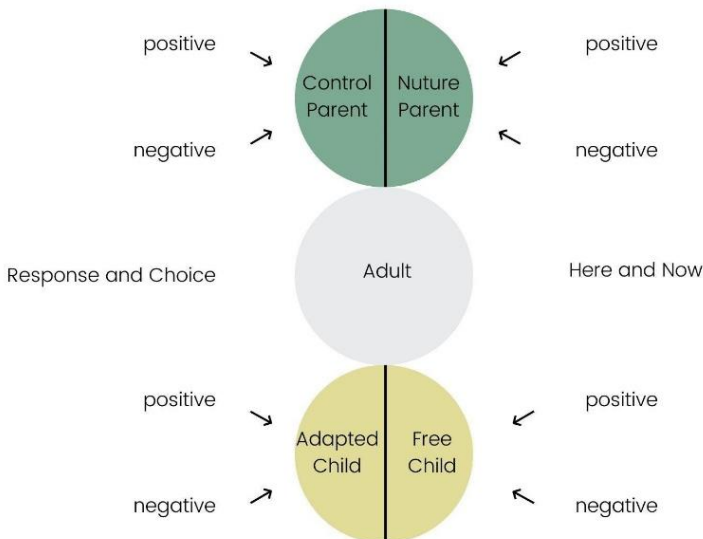
**Anger phase** – people who have had the change imposed on them direct their anger outward, at other people who are blamed for the situation. Later, the anger moves inward and there is a danger that this will lead the person into stages of guilt and depression or anger for lack of knowledge or determination.

**The complacency phase** (King, 2007) – the person has survived the change, rationalized the events, incorporated them into their new system and become accustomed to the new reality. This is the sense that the person is back in their own comfort zone and does not encounter any event that is outside of their system of constructs. She knows what decisions are appropriate and can predict future events with a high degree of certainty. This is the phase of attending to other matters, where the completed change process is seen by the person as natural and unnecessarily arousing so much emotion.

The phases, as presented by Fisher, allow the person to find their current position in the change process and verify the status quo - do I want to be here? what's ahead for me?

## Transactional analysis

Both Lewin's model and Fisher's proposal have been shown to resonate with the tenets of transactional analysis. Transactional analysis can provide a starting point and support for this work, and it can also be a reference point in terms of the attitudes and values it promotes.



*Fig. 3*

A functional model of transactional analysis

Source: Stewart, Joines, 2016.

During the process we look at in this case study, transactional analysis was not named as an integral part of the planned and implemented activities, but



looking at the process in its context allows for interesting observations and questions.

At the core of transactional analysis is a model of ego states. The first-order structural model assumes 3 ego states: **Child, Parent, and Adult** (Stewart, Joines, 2016; Emmerton, Newton, 2004; Vos, van Rijn, 2021). Child state – behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, reproduced from childhood. Parent state – behaviors, thoughts, or feelings, copied from parents or persons with an adequate function. Adult – behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that are direct responses to the here and now.

Of particular relevance to the case study presented here is the functional model of Self states, which refers to behaviors and only describes behaviors.

The model remains uniform only at the level of the **Adult Self**, while the **Child Self** and **Parent Self** have their own sub-representations. The **Adult Self** is considered here to be any behavior that responds to current challenges (here and now), using all the resources of the adult.

The **Child Self** state includes both the Free Child and the Adapted Child.

State of Self – **Free Child** is a state in which a person engages in those childhood behaviors in which he or she does not benefit from parental commands and prohibitions.

The **Free Child Positive** (OK) is triggered in situations that are appropriate for such behaviors, e.g., fully engaging in a board game, venting anger in a controlled safe environment.

The **Negative Free Child** (not OK), on the other hand, is triggered when the behaviors are not appropriate, e.g., intense play on public transportation.

The state of the Self – the **Adapted Child**, which is responsible for finding oneself in norms and rules, but also in expectations from the outside, can manifest as:

The **Positive Adapted Child** (OK), whose behaviors respond to the expectations of the environment, such as following the rules of *savoir vivre*.

The **Adapted Negative Child** (not OK), whose behaviour is unfavourable both for the actors of the situation and for him/herself, e.g. taking offence instead of giving clear information, not taking action due to destructive beliefs about oneself or the world, e.g. "I am hopeless. I won't even try."

Similarly, the **Self-Parent** state, may be the **Normative Parent** or the **Caring Parent**, roles heard/observed in childhood, whereby, as Stewart and Joines (2016) point out, a distinction can be made:

**Normative Positive Parent** (OK) in whom the Parent's directions/commands are driven by the protection or well-being of the other person, e.g. Please stop smoking, It's not good for you.

The **Normative Negative Parent** (not OK), whose behaviors belittle the other person, e.g., "You made a mistake again," "Is it really that hard to grasp?"

On the other hand, there remains the **Caring Parent**, a state in which the behaviors of the parents/caregivers from whom we experienced caring are reproduced. Here, too, a distinction can be made:

The **Caring Parent Positive** (OK), combining care and respect, for the person they care for, e.g. "If you need help, let me know."

The **Negative Caring Parent** (not OK) who cares while placing themselves above the person they care for while undermining the person's worth, e.g., "I see I have to help you again," which may be accompanied by taking over the task without getting the person's permission.

Jack Dusay (1972), who formulated the energy balance hypothesis, assumed that when one state increases its activity, the others are naturally withdrawn. Thus, if a person makes the decision and effort to use the state of Self – the Caring Parent more often, one of the consequences will be a reduction in the behavior of the Normative Parent.

The aforementioned theories and models provide a reference point for the presented case study. This paper does not presume to address each of their elements, but rather to illuminate certain relationships:

1. Decision-making model – **people decide their destiny and these decisions can be changed** (Stewart, Joines, 2016).
2. Influenced by experiences and observations, **we can change our own patterns of behavior**. Other people can put pressure on us, however, the decision – as to the choice of our behaviors or emotions – remains with us. At the same time, we actively decide to change (Stewart, Joines, 2016).
3. **Increasing the activity of one state, reduces the activity of the others** (Dusay, 1972).
4. **Taking care of a person in the happiness phase** allows the curve of the personal transformation process to flatten out (Fisher, 2012)

## Case study

In October 2021, i.e. approximately 1.5 months after students returned to full-time schooling after the pandemic and summer vacation, teachers, parents, and students in the community of the Elementary School No. 6 in Września, western Poland drew attention to the intensification of disturbing behaviors and phenomena. Informal signals reported to the headmasters, teachers, psychologists and pedagogues during informal meetings, corridor talks, conversations with parents, concerned, among others, decreased motivation of students, intensified difficult behaviours, lowered level of learning and its results. These reported phenomena had occurred at the school before, but not in such intensity and not as commonly.

The first intuitive concept focused on the need for intervention among students. The school principal, Dariusz Andrzejewski, in consultation with the school psychologists and educators, decided to invite an external facilitator to look at the situation. The facilitator – author of this article, a psychologist and coach specializing in dealing with difficult situations – had already worked with the school and had an understanding of its resources and challenges. Finally, after the initial assessment, the school management decided on systemic actions based on inclusive leadership, i.e. a process of cooperation of the community of stakeholders, starting from the analysis of the situation and learning about it from different perspectives, to the development of countermeasures, their implementation and monitoring.

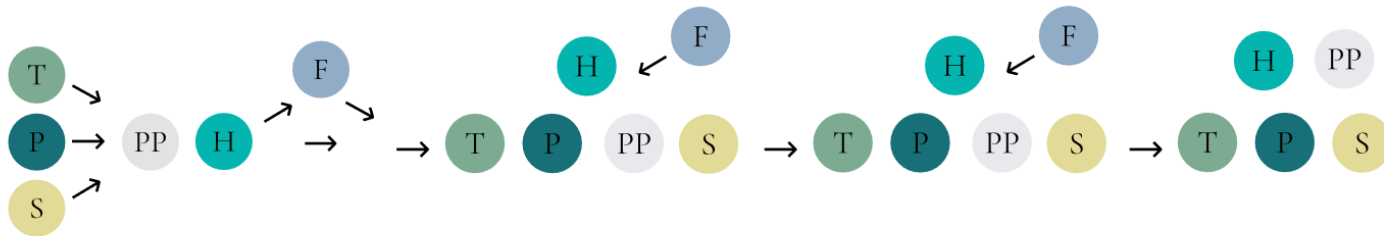
The school did not focus on interventions among students, but approached the problem systemically, despite the increased response time this way, because:

- a) students are only part of the situation. While it is their behavior that is normally subject to observation and evaluation, both teachers and parents, as well as other members of the school community, have important, sometimes crucial, influence over the working conditions and decisions of other groups, including students;
- b) the challenge itself stemmed from the general situation-it affected many schools that have struggled with pandemic, online, and hybrid learning in recent months. Knowledge of the prevalence of the problem came from conversations, experiences with other schools, and own research of the author. Systemicity, in this particular situation, involved preparing and implementing:
  - a) communication process, including all school stakeholders;
  - b) a way of working that engages and involves different points of view;
  - c) realistic and effective proposals that are acceptable to each group;
  - d) an effective system for monitoring the situation.

The process involved 5 stages:

- I. First signals;
- II. Initial situation analysis and strategy development;
- III. Consultation with stakeholders:
  - A) determination of spheres of influence of individual groups;
  - B) definition of problem sources from the perspective of each group;
  - C) formulation of needs of each group from the perspective of each group;
- IV. Conclusions and recommendations:
  - A) formulation of proposals for supporting actions;
  - B) consultation of proposals;
- V. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation:
  - A) implementation of the proposal in classes 7–8 with the prospect of extending it to other groups;
  - B) monitoring and evaluation.

I. first signals      II. preliminary analysis of the situation and development of the strategy      III. consultations with stakeholders      IV. conclusions and recommendations      V. implementation, monitoring and evaluation



S - students (7th, 8th grade), T - teachers, P - parents, PP - psychologists and pedagogues, H - school headmaster, F - facylitator

*Fig. 4*  
Planned and implemented process structure  
Source: own study.

Communication of current activities was an important element at each stage of the process.

## **Ad I. First signals**

Informally reported observations appeared from the end of September. They were heard and taken into account due to 2 types of premises:

- 1) intensity (severity and the fact that they also affected students who had been coping well with difficulties so far);
- 2) the school's previous experience in working with the community. The school has been active for several years, both locally and thematically, nationwide, with an emphasis on increasing the proficiency of students and teachers by developing their competence in new technologies. Of particular importance here is the school's participation in the Code for Green project of the Social Initiatives Forum Foundation<sup>1</sup>, where students, based on the Design Thinking method and C4G methodology, develop locally implemented environmental protection solutions. As part of the project, both the school headmaster and some staff members develop soft competencies, including excellence in building a supportive community.

## **Ad II. Initial situation analysis and strategy development**

### **Letter to parents of students (e-mail):**

Among students of grades 7 and 8 of our school we observe an increase in fatigue, problems with motivation to learn and difficult behavior. These are currently common phenomena and occur in many schools in the country. Some of them are the result of the intense and multidimensional impact of pandemonium and, above all, of being closed and living online. These include reduced motivation to learn, unstable social lives, a reduced sense of security, and thoughts of an increasingly unclear future. This is compounded by uncertainty about how the situation will develop further.

In such conditions the sense of security can be shaken in everyone, both adults and children.

That's why we have taken preventive measures – we have already started working with the teaching staff and now we invite you to take a look at the situation together and identify the areas that we – as a school and you as parents – can influence.

During the meeting we will present to you the effects of the teachers' work, but also invite you to think together about what further steps we can take.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ffis.edu.pl/>

### Letter to students (e-mail):

The situation we have been living in for a year and a half (pandemic situation, online) is different from what we have known. We are only now seeing what consequences it brings. And we are only now learning to deal with those consequences – to anticipate them and respond to them with care for ourselves and others.

That's why we've taken precautions – we've started working with teaching staff and parents, and now we're inviting you to look at the situation together and identify areas where we can make an impact.

During the meeting we will invite you to work together.

In order to gather signs of change, the school director invited an external expert with knowledge of the school to collaborate. A preliminary strategy was developed and implemented. The school manager invited an external expert to work with him and an initial strategy for further action was developed and implemented. The core and goal of the process has been defined and communicated, but the management has also conducted an ongoing evaluation and has continuously monitored the needs and signals regarding the subject matter and the support process.

### Ad III. Stakeholder Consultation

Interested groups and individuals were invited. (teachers, parents, psychologists, pedagogues and students of classes VII and VIII). The process of analysis began, organized by the school principal, with a series of short meetings during which each group of school stakeholders: had the opportunity to present their own perspective. Implemented were:

- online meetings with teachers;
- online meeting with parents;
- hybrid meeting with psychological-educational staff;
- hybrid meeting with students.



Fig. 5

Project participants

Source: own study.

The director communicated and supported the process at all stages. Prior to each meeting, the target group received an email with information about the topic, purpose, and context of the meeting.

Each person had the opportunity to individually:

- present their picture of the situation,
- present their needs,
- propose solutions,
- refer to the worked out proposals for solutions,
- monitor the situation,
- raise comments and doubts.

The first one and a half hour online meeting with teachers was attended by 45 people, i.e. more than half of the school staff. Teachers were informed about the purpose of the meeting and its agenda. Due to high activity of the participants, the agenda items that were not accomplished during the first meeting (spheres of influence and proposals) were discussed on the next date. Before the second meeting, the results of each group's work were organized into categories.

This material was the starting point for the second online meeting with teachers, which was focused on identifying spheres of influence and directions for seeking solutions to the areas that they felt they had influence on.

In this phase of the process, the purpose of the meetings with teachers was to view the current situation and prepare to build strategies to support male and female students, and indirectly, teachers and parents. A similar online meeting was then conducted with the parents of the students. They were attended by 280 parents of students in grades VII and VIII.

In both groups, the agenda included:

1. A brief introduction of the context of the meeting and the process – school principal.
2. Outline of context and reference to research, reports and situations in other schools – facilitator leading the workshop.
3. Working in subgroups (5–6 people). Each group recorded their conclusions and indications in an online sheet. The entries on the sheet were anonymous. A few participants decided to sign their conclusions. The participants' task was to work on identifying students' problems/challenges, needs, and sources of difficulties. It was also important to point out difficulties which the participants identified as new, ones they had not encountered before. The work in both groups was summed up by discussing the developed content on the forum, making additions and announcing further developments.
4. The group of teachers also focused on the areas of influence:
  - what I have influence on, what I don't have influence on,
  - that the school, but more importantly, I can and am willing to take steps to help myself, other teachers, parents, and students,

- preliminary recommendations – which of the proposed actions I can/we can realistically implement,
  - what do we need for this.
5. During each of the meetings, the facilitators spent a few minutes discussing the context of those difficulties that were reported particularly often. The participants were initially introduced to the report *Teenagers 3.0* (2021). Particular attention was paid to fragments of the survey indicating discrepancies between students' and parents' perceptions of the rules of technology use.

#### Wyzwania:

##### ORGANIZACJA

- przygotowanie do egzaminu E8 przy widocznych zaległościach wynikających z nauki zdalnej (trudności w samodzielnym tworzeniu wypowiedzi pisemnej i problemy z zapamiętywaniem słownictwa) **chęć udzielenia pomocy, PRACE PISEMNE WYKONYWANE PODCZAS LEKCJI**
- duże braki w wiedzy i umiejętnościach **chęć udzielenia pomocy w razie potrzeby** **CHĘĆ udzielenia pomocy**
- przemęczenie uczniów "dobrych" po lekcjach zajęcia dodatkowe, korepetycje- brak czasu na odpoczynek
- brak czasu na utrwalenie materiału
- **ANALIZA ZAKRESU MATERIAŁU DO EGZAMINU E8- WYRZUCENIE ZBĘDNEGO MATERIAŁU**
- **powtarzanie najważniejszych treści, zapoznanie z typem zadań, które pojawiają się na egzaminie,**
- **SKUPIENIE SIĘ NA PODSTAWACH**
- **INDYWIDUALIZACJA PRACY**
- **ZAPOZNANIE RODZICÓW Z AKTUALNYM STANEM POZIOMU WIEDZY I UMIEJĘTNOŚCI**
- **EGZAMIN A OCENY (DLA RODZICA NADAL WAŻNA JEST TYLKO OCENA)**  
**powtarzanie najważniejszych treści materiału, okrojenie treści tylko do niezbędnych na godzinach wychowawczych opracować i przedstawić techniki uczenia się**
  - ograniczenie treści na przedmiotach których nie ma na egzaminacyjnie do niezbędnych
  - jasne określenie, co uczeń musi umieć na poszczególne oceny - dokonuje wyboru - na ile i czego chce się uczyć

##### NORMY

- problem z przestrzeganiem norm lekcyjnych (dużo rozmów, mówi bez zgłaszania, picie i jedzenie na lekcji- przekąski pod ręką) - **USTALENIE JASNYCH GRANIC I ZASAD ZACHOWANIA NA LEKCJI, NIE LEKCEWAŻYĆ niepożądaných ZACHOWAŃ UCZNIÓW (OMAWIANIE SYTUACJI TRUDNYCH, WAŻNY PRZEPŁYW INFORMACJI MIĘDZY NAUCZYCIELAMI)**
- nieprzestrzeganie zasad zachowania na lekcji (picie, jedzenie podczas zajęć)
- aroganckie odpowiedzi do nauczycieli - **spokojna reakcja nauczyciela**  
**uświadomienie uczniowi niestosownego zachowania**
- **USTALENIE NORM, DO KTÓRYCH SIĘ ODWOŁUJEMY**
- **ustalenie wspólnie zasad zachowania nie tylko na lekcjach, wyrabianie dobrych nawyków**

Fig. 6

Review material – records of teachers' workshop work

Source: own study.



In most homes, there are no rules in place to limit the amount of time a teen can use the Internet or rules regarding the selection of content they can access. **The most common form of “parental control” is talking whenever a child reports a problem** (teens – 17.2% vs. parents – 56.7%). Preventive talks to prevent risks are declared by about 7% of teenagers, while at the same time about 60% of parents and guardians declare conducting such activities.

The next group was composed of school psychologists and educators who compared their experience, their own knowledge about the current situation of students and teachers with the information gathered during meetings with teachers and parents.

The preliminary recommendations developed by teachers and parents were communicated to the other groups (online tools, meetings) with an invitation for consultation, questions, comments and concerns.

Following step was a meeting with students, which took place in a hybrid format during one lesson. Each class of VII and VIII, under the supervision of teachers, stayed in classrooms, while the instructor connected with online groups. The workshop was preceded by a short introduction – an outline of the situation, a reference to the context and activities so far, as well as an invitation to participate in decisions concerning their own near and tangible future. Most of the students signalled their awareness of the process. In the next step, each class (using coloured stones) drew one of the three roles (pupils, teachers, parents) which they were to play and discuss and answer questions from that perspective:

1. What challenges does this group have, what is difficult for them right now?
2. What would this group need?
3. What can I do to respond to these needs?

Pupils worked in groups of 4–5, wrote down their proposals and then a group of delegates presented the results of their work on the forum. The meeting ended with an outline of further work and an invitation to actively participate in consultations.

The meetings resulted in a series of recommendations, which were then consulted. In addition to an opportunity for individual feedback and comments, the school management also organized a meeting with representatives of the school council to discuss the planned particularly intensive changes concerning the use of telephones on school premises. Parents and students were informed about the conclusions of the work during meetings with teachers. Due to radical decisions concerning homework and the rules of tests, the teachers met once again so that everyone had a chance to ask questions and share doubts.

- \* mniejsza ilość zadań domowych,
- \* mniejsza ilość lekcji,
- \* krótszy czas lekcji w ciągu dnia,
- \* brak zadań domowych na weekend i święta,
- \* brak prac pisemnych i ustnych po weekendzie i świętach.

pomóc im w nauce, okazać troskę, dążyć do sukcesu

- nie przejmować na siebie innych ludzi
- popierać rodziców ma iść
- wspierać ludzi z chorobami
- Mówić o tym do psychologa, nie być nim

UCZNIOWIE

a

problemy rodzinne	3) Jak można pomóc uczniom?
zaburzenia emocjonalne	- zapewnić wsparcie ze strony nauczyciela i rodziców
problemy z nawiązywaniem kontaktu	- pomoc psychologizacji
nieprzeżyte uwalnienia	- pomoc od przeżyć

2) Uczeń może mieć różne stany emocjonalne, między innymi: smutek, złość, strach, niechęć, poczucie winy, poczucie izolacji, poczucie samotności, poczucie przygnębienia, poczucie bezsilności, poczucie bezwartościowości, poczucie niepowodzenia, poczucie braku sensu, poczucie braku celu, poczucie braku nadziei, poczucie braku wiary, poczucie braku nadziei, poczucie braku sensu, poczucie braku celu, poczucie braku nadziei, poczucie braku wiary.

- opowiedzieć nauczycielom o tym jak się czujemy i ile się stresujemy

- wspierać się nawzajem w nauce.

Problemy z emocjami i agresją

Trochę z samowiarą

UCZNIOWIE

- potrzebujemy dobrych przykładów

- dobrych wzorów do naśladowania

b



RODZICE

c



What can the teacher do about it? Manage the amount of material and the way it is distributed (timing, volume of material, review method) so as to leave space for other student activities.

How students use this time is up to them and their parents. For some it will be time to build relationships, for others it will be time to learn (however), and for others it will be time to sit at the computer.

This is not the teacher's sphere of influence.

**3. How to give minimum content in subjects i.e. math.**

**Recommendation:** This is an issue to be worked out. It will be addressed by the school mathematicians.

Developed solutions and recommendations for particular groups:

### **Recommendations for teachers (selected)**

1. Challenge – overloading students:
  - a) no homework for Christmas break;
  - b) to give 2 questions for a test/quiz for a pass mark or to give a full set of questions for a test/quiz;
  - c) no homework on weekends until the end of the semester;
  - d) cooperation of teachers within 1 class - following the rules and regulations regarding the number of tests/classes per week;
  - e) no tests in some classes.
2. Challenge – giving students a break from the media:
  - a) limit phone use on school grounds;
  - b) additional preparation of school space for activities other than phones during breaks (corridors with spaces for differentiated activities inviting interaction with others and building relationships, common room with board games, quiet corner, kinect, classroom type games drawn on the floor) within 24 hours.
3. Challenge – Support:
  - a) re-establish assessment as feedback;
  - b) support from the teacher (not shaming, not commenting, rather talking to the student individually, offering support if possible, or discussing why there is a difference in grade.

### **Recommendations for Parents**

1. Parents-teachers one goal

Cooperation with teachers in supporting children. Lack of cooperation between adults does not help children, it can encourage attempts to take advantage of the situation, which sometimes works against the interests and benefits.

## 2. Physiological needs

Supporting children to maintain a healthy daily rhythm, i.e. adequate sleep, meals at specific times such as breakfast. Lack of a maintained daily rhythm and hunger can result in difficulty concentrating. And definitely during the period of online learning some children have this rhythm of the day disrupted. Expecting children in this state to concentrate and pay attention is an impossible expectation.

## 3. Clear rules online

In a nationwide study “Teenagers 3.0. Report from a nationwide pupil survey”, published in October 2021, there is a significant difference in how children and parents perceive the time they spend on the computer. It’s a difference of several times. Let’s check to see if we know how much time your child is using technology.

## 4. Adequate expectations

Inadequate, i.e. too low or too high expectations towards the child (and oneself), but also misguided expectations, e.g. about getting excellent grades in subjects the child is not interested in, are not beneficial neither for us nor for our children. Your child may get a great grade for the here and now, but the information for the future: your abilities and interests are not important to me. Do we want to say that?

## 5. Supporting independence

It is clear that a child’s difficulty sometimes presents a temptation to do the task for the child. As a result, the child may get a better grade, but a. doesn’t learn, b. learns that he or she can’t do it alone. Not worth it.

## 6. Appreciation

Appreciating your child is an important part of building his/her self-esteem. Don’t wait “for something big – until he/she deserves it”. Appreciate efforts, plans and goals. Failure is a part of life and the information that mistakes are also valuable, because you can learn from them, can be a valuable lesson for our children.

### **Recommendations for Students**

#### 1. Plan and revise your daily schedule

We deal with planning differently. Some of us don’t plan at all and need help in this area, others plan too much and then are frustrated that they didn’t succeed. That’s why it’s worth thinking about WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR ME, then write down 3–4 tasks for the day (no more) and focus on them.

#### 2. Review your goals

The first step you can take to help your children with the current situation is to support them in setting their own goals – e.g. a goal for the coming day/week/month or term. Once you name the goal, it’s easier to keep moving

towards it. Here we can use a “progress bar”, i.e. a scale from 0 to 10 on which the child indicates where he/she is today in terms of his/her goal and what he/she can do to get one step further (e.g. moving from 4 to 5).

### 3. Take responsibility for your own learning

Taking responsibility for yourself is a skill, not a trait. Therefore, this skill can be developed. How to do it? The method of small steps – start with a small responsibility, then develop it.

### 4. Appreciate mistakes

Appreciate your efforts, plans and goals. Failure is a part of life and the information that mistakes are also valuable, because you can learn from them, can be a valuable lesson for you.

### 5. Diversify activities

In order to maintain mental health it is ESSENTIAL to diversify activities, e.g. if I sit in school or in front of a computer for 6 hours, after that time it is worth going for a walk/workout/ walking the dog. If we don't have such a possibility – let's find an activity which is beneficial for us and different from the one we used to do that day.

### 6. Appreciate yourself and others

Inadequate, i.e. too low or too high expectations of yourself, but also misguided expectations, e.g. for excellent grades in subjects you are not interested in, are not beneficial. If you are not sure why you are learning a particular material, ask how it might be useful or look it up yourself. Look for elements that interest you in the material your school provides. Appreciate yourself for it ;)

## Ad V. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The ongoing process of introducing changes is subject to ongoing evaluation. Actions taken are verified both at the level of assumptions and implementation.

The presented case study is a description of a real intervention in relation to a challenge identified by the community. Looking at the process in the context of transactional analysis can help to enrich the process, optimize it, but also prepare for further relevant situations.

Due to the intensity of the intervention, this study focuses on a few selected aspects that we have found to be crucial in this setting. These are:

1. Decision model – **people decide their own destiny and these decisions can be changed** (Stewart, Joines, 2016).
2. Influenced by experiences and observations, **we can change our own patterns of behavior**. Other people can put pressure on us, however, the decision – as to the choice of our behavior or emotions – remains with us. At the same time, we actively decide to change (Stewart, Joines, 2016).

3. **Increasing the activity of one state, reduces the activity of the others** (Dusay, 1972).
4. **Taking care of the person in the happiness phase allows for the flattening of the curve of the personal transformation process** (Fisher, 2012).

**Ad 1. Decision model – people decide about their destiny and these decisions can be changed**

The starting point of the process to which the school community was invited was the grassroots signals of the community indicating little difficulty at the time. Those reporting had a willingness to:

- observe and analyze community life;
- respond to situations they felt needed to be addressed;
- share knowledge, and they knew where to go to do so effectively.

Their willingness was based on previous positive experiences (source – in-depth interviews, self-reported research) and trust that their initiative would be met with an adequate response to help deal with the problem.

The culture of this particular school invites such behavior because community members know that it is effective, it is a confirmation of their impact on reality.

In the next step, when the community was invited to look at the situation and work together to deal with the difficulties in work that took time, required effort, and sometimes exposure, almost the entire staff, working with students in grades VII and VIII, 280 parents, and students in grades VII and VIII participated. Although the students' meetings were organized during lessons, attendance was guaranteed, but activity was no longer. Nevertheless, the students held a discussion and shared their conclusions. The facilitators ensured that before the students started, the situation they were participating in – participatory management – was named.

After each step, the community participants could (still can) make comments and suggestions to the developed conclusions in the forum or anonymously. These are made public, analyzed and taken into account where possible.

Each group – students, teachers, parents, the team of psychologists and educators works in its own sphere of influence. This is one of the most important and emphasized pieces of information from the beginning of the process. By being aware of the spheres of influence, the danger of ineffective inter-group “complaining” (teachers about parents and students, parents about teachers and students, students about teachers and parents, etc.), which is often a tradition in schools, is reduced. In this tradition, there is a place for a specifically understood decision-making and causality, characteristic of communities in which there are 3 main actors, and each group casts itself in the role of the Rescuer or the Victim, the other roles of the dramatic triangle being proposed to the subsequent groups.

An interesting element here is the observation of the participants' reactions to the next steps of the process, e.g., proposals for e.g., no homework for Christmas appeared in the students' and parents' statements. Including this demand in the proposed solutions and taking it into account evoked a reaction of surprise and greater involvement.

**Ad 2. Under the influence of experiences and observations, we can change our own behavior patterns. Other people may exert pressure on us, but the decision – as to our choice of behavior or emotions – remains with us. At the same time we actively decide about the change.**

At the beginning of the consultations the group of parents and teachers, although both groups worked diligently on the change, heard few voices of the traditional school script described above:

*Why didn't they (teachers) just do it when they can do it now.* On the other hand: *Parents want to have their cake and eat cake. They want the kids to have peace of mind now and pass their exams brilliantly later.* So here we have the Normative Parent: *This is not how it should be, you have to act differently.* or *But some parents will not want there to be no work over the weekend,* that is the "game of but" presented by the Adapted Child: *I am doing my best to please you.*

This is also evident in the children's statements, where one finds several repeated phrases, probably heard, indicating the condition of the Adapted Child: (when asked what is the problem:) *emotional disturbance, lack of high academic performance, lower level of learning,* (what is needed?) *to be nice and active.*

Here it is noteworthy that there were only a few such student statements in the face of a whole pool of factual concrete information indicating a high level of confidence and clear judgment. Most of the students' statements indicate thinking from the Adult Self state, which de facto encourages us to think about levels of adaptation. To what extent is the Adult Self state what it appears to be, and to what extent does it represent a high level of adaptation and response to social expectations. Since the facilitator asks explicitly for honesty, reinforcing the request with information about the joint participation of all groups in the activity and, moreover, about its real impact on students' functioning, does she encourage the adoption of the Adult Self or the Adapted Child? It is likely that the situations are different and the students have made decisions according to both schemes, but the difference makes us stop and think about the implications for further action.

Another interesting element worth mentioning is the workshop form of work, which allowed for discussion in groups of 5–6 people. Working in smaller teams made it possible to give vent to emotions in a casual, only slightly structured conversation, i.e. realize the need for expression of the Child and the Parent, leaving space for constructive, organized conclusions. All groups met after



their work in an open forum document in which the results of each team's work were visible anonymously. Each person could add to the document at any time (also anonymously) or verbally add to previous findings. During each of the meetings the participants used this opportunity to raise additional questions, doubts or proposals.

### **Ad 3. Increasing the activity of one state limits the activity of others**

Enabling members of the school community to participate in key decisions with a very quick return in the form of concrete implemented solutions, resulting from joint transparent communication work, allows for a redefinition of the sense of one's own influence and agency, regardless of age or position.

This activity can strengthen the position of the Adult or encourage the transition from negative to positive states in the position of the Child and Parent. And so, in the process presented here, all of the participant contributions that were made were listened to. The only element of exclusion was the lack of attendance at the meetings, although those who were absent had the opportunity to refer to the solutions worked out anyway, some of them took advantage of it by submitting their postulates after the meetings. Some of them took advantage of this opportunity by voicing their opinions after the meetings. All such comments were either taken into account or responded to in the summary materials.

Of course, this paper can only refer to the content that was submitted and reached the facilitators or school management. It is obvious that participants between and after the meetings have these discussions. However, we observe that the more transparent the process, the less content is circulated.

As a counterbalance, it is worth looking at the scenario that the school did not follow, which is often the first and only one in similar situations. A popular attitude in response to problems at schools is to "fix the kids" as the only participants of the school system, who are subject to notorious evaluation by a large group of metric adults, starting with the subject teacher (1), through teacher (2), parent(s) or guardians (3), potentially other teachers (4), principal (5), psychological and pedagogical team(6). If increasing the activity of one condition limits the activity of the others, then the Adapted Child, who does not necessarily have a say in what is happening to him and around him, and he has to make himself up to the expectations of others without having his own, would come to the fore.

### **Ad. 4. Taking care of a person in the happiness phase allows the curve of the personal transformation process to flatten out**

And the last point, although not from transactional analysis, correlates with the previous one. In the happiness phase, the person sees hope for change, and at the verbal level the contents appear: *Finally something is happening, Maybe*

*at last something will change.* This is a key moment in the change process. The more you manage to make people feel safe by anticipating successive phases of change, which by their very nature will be neither equally acceptable to everyone nor easy to implement, the easier it will be for a person to find his or her way in the subsequent stages of the process.

In our case study, we took care of the sense of security primarily at the level of knowledge, informing from the beginning:

- what kind of work we are inviting you to;
- what is the source of this work;
- in what form it will take place;
- at what stage is the work;
- what is the current state of arrangements;
- how to make comments.

It was not possible to inform from the beginning about such details of the process as e.g. the calendar of meetings, due to the fact that activities were flexibly adjusted to the situation and reported needs.

At this stage, depending on the state in which the person begins, participation in the process had the opportunity to confront them. Those who started the process from the state of the Caring Parent had the opportunity to take care of their concern, to take care of the welfare of the community members. From the state of Normative Parent - they had an opportunity to share their opinion working in groups and during conversations with educators. Those in the Adapted Child position were able to complete their tasks, while the Free Child had plenty of options to express concerns, raise ideas formally and informally.

## Summary

It is how the teacher behaves, not what the teacher knows, that is perhaps the most important issue during the teaching-learning exchange (Webb 2009). The teacher's behavior with/at the student, but also in situations that the student observes does not so much set patterns as it shows options, and at the same time verifies them. A slightly different role is played here by processes in which teacher and student experience together (e.g., a field trip, a game, a break), and yet another by processes like the one presented in the case study, in which groups meet on the ground where, although they still remain in their roles, the structure of the situation is changed. There is no teacher-student-parent relationship. Each group is a partner in the situation. An example is the pupil-teacher match. Pupils are still pupils, teachers are still teachers, but on the playground they are players, subject to the same rules, with the same rights and obligations.

One of the pillars of the activities of the presented process is the recognition that the teacher's task is to support the individual development of the student by, among other things, complementing deficits or improving strengths. (Pickett, 1986, p. 241) The phrase 'supporting individual development' was used deliberately rather than 'teaching', where teaching is defined as purposeful work with students in an organised form, e.g. a lesson, a lecture, a consultation, an interest circle. We treat teaching as an important, but not the only and often not the most important part of a teacher's job.

The presented process of leading a school through a difficult situation was possible thanks to openness and readiness of all parties. Each of the participants at each stage had the opportunity to make decisions. These decisions were influenced by internal factors (emotions, beliefs, worldview, experiences, relationship history) and external factors (circumstances in which communication took place, accompanying people, significant others who also participated in the process).

Regardless of their starting position, participants had the opportunity to confront their attitudes in overt communication and, as Stewart and Joines (2016) hinted, invited more or less consciously moved to intimacy at the moment of switching, descending from their hunched positions into constructive dialogue. It would be naïve to think that the individuals in each group entered the process without having already thought through, and probably discussed many times, the topics that constituted the goals of the collaboration. They therefore entered the process with a particular mindset and their own agenda. Inviting them to work together, which would not be based on the presentation of positions and positions, was the only chance to develop solutions that could respond to such different expectations. Because everything points to the fact that the nature of today's school results in a difference in the interests of students, teachers and parents. For dialogue and consensus to be possible, empathy is needed, that is, the ability to see the needs of the other side. Effort is not seen in the finished elegant laminated announcements. You can only see it in open communication, from behind which a monolith does not look at us, but a person in the full range of his or her doubts.

The process described above took place in a situation that was new to everyone involved. Usually, someone is an authority in a given field, has experiences and insights to share. Meanwhile, no one had yet gone through the pandemic and its associated online and hybrid learning. Schools have faced the unfamiliar challenge of facing the consequences of such structured work. And when there are no certainties, everything is an experiment and perhaps the most comfortable thing to do would be to hole up in the state of the Child, take no responsibility for anything and just react. Meanwhile, the community of the John Paul II Self-Governing Primary School No. 6 in Września not only dared to make the

attempt, but also went through it with care and openness. We do not know how the process will go on. Certainly the community has done much to take care of its members.

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## Skuteczna szkoła w kryzysie COVID-19. Angażowanie społeczności szkolnej w radzenie sobie z wyzwaniami szkolnymi w oparciu o model Lewina i Fishera, w kategoriach analizy transakcyjnej

### Streszczenie

Niniejsza praca stanowi *case study* radzenia sobie z wyzwaniem zmiany w Samorządowej Szkole Podstawowej nr 6 im. Jana Pawła II we Wrześni od października do grudnia 2021 r.

U podstaw opisywanej w *case study* pracy interwencyjnej leżał model wprowadzania zmiany w organizacji, zaproponowany przez Kurta Lewina (Bhayangkara, 2020) oraz podejście do indywidualnego radzenia sobie ze zmianą Johna Fishera (Fisher, 2012). W niniejszym artykule przyglądamy się procesowi z punktu widzenia edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej.

Celem procesu było podniesienie poczucia bezpieczeństwa psychicznego i merytorycznego społeczności klas VII i VIII w okresie od grudnia 2021 roku.

W procesie aktywnie wzięło udział 630 osób. Analiza oparta została o badania jakościowe w 5 grupach członków społeczności szkolnej: nauczyciele (N = 45), uczniowie (N = 300), rodzice (N = 280), grupa psychologów i pedagogów (N = 3) oraz dyrekcja szkoły (N = 2). W ramach procesu zastosowano: obserwację, wywiady pogłębione, pracę w grupach i dyskusję. Uczestnicy mieli również możliwość indywidualnej analizy wypracowanych w trakcie procesu wniosków i propozycji.

W wyniku podjętych działań zaproponowano kompleksowe rozwiązania i rekomendacje, które aktualnie są komunikowane i wdrażane w społeczności klas VII i VIII, wśród uczniów, nauczycieli i rodziców. W niniejszej pracy wskazujemy, że (i z jakiego powodu) dla przeprowadzenia zmiany w szkole konieczna jest równoległa praca ze wszystkimi głównymi grupami interesariuszy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wprowadzanie zmiany, model Lewina, systemowe rozwiązania, szybki system reagowania.



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## Didactic dimension of electroencephalographic research in terms of educational transactional analysis

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### Abstract

The paper presents selected results of the author's research conducted at the Laboratory of Experimental Research Biofeedback of Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa on the didactic activity of students in technical education. The presented research results are a partial answer to the questions posed in the theory of information technology education. The implementation of online education at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic with the use of deterministic computer simulations is a proposal to start a discussion on the importance of modern information transfer techniques as a key element of student-teacher communication.

**Keywords:** educational theory, didactics, constructivism, electroencephalographic research, ETA.

Discussions pertaining to the effectiveness of online education in the current pandemic situation limiting direct student-teacher interaction should focus on the importance of information technology in interpersonal communication. Information transfer with the help of available information technology constitutes

the main source of communication and school functioning (Łęski, 2017). In the light of formal limitations in teaching practice, the educational dimension of information technology in shaping human attitudes takes on a special meaning as far as personal and intellectual development of young people is concerned (Pankowska, 2012). The teacher as the Adult, presenting a fully-developed image, equipped with knowledge and experience, was given a slightly different role in the educational process. Their responsibility is not limited to emphasizing their superior role, i.e. the authority of a professional, being a paragon of wisdom and professional experience. Their current fundamental role is their organizational skills and the ability of selecting pragmatic syndication online. This issue is particularly noticeable in creative polytechnic teaching. It should be reminded that a cognitive process in technical education is based on conveying knowledge and skills in developing technical imagination. We are dealing here not only with popularization of theory from a given field of knowledge, but primarily with constructing new, creative images resulting from bonding elementary terms together. Thus, what we face here are elements of the constructivism and collectivism theories, shaping the perception and attitudes of a young person. The psychological concept of interpersonal relations created by Eric Berne is based on the idea of distinguishing three coexisting interpersonal relations taking the shape of the Adult, the Child and the Parent ego states. Each ego state creates a different, uniform and sometimes opposite attitude. As far as education is concerned, a human being is not its only significant element, but it is information technology taking over significant responsibility in the educational process. It is a non-personal element of the educational system, artificial yet playing an increasingly significant role in the effectiveness of teaching and educating. Although information technology tools are the effect of human labour, more and more frequently they become a sophisticated, often learned programme, practically displaying the features of "intelligent personality." Of course, regardless of its perfection, information technology will always be a secondary element working on the basis of some algorithm, yet, as a teaching element, it is perceived as innovative and in the field of didactics more and more importance is attributed to it. It is suggested that it is new media that should cause the biggest revolution, also in the area of teaching methods. On the basis of this technology's development, often exceeding our imagination, neurodidactics is mentioned more and more often. There is no scientific foundation currently to call this area of interest at least a scientific sub-discipline, yet experience of neuroscience is frequently used in pedagogy. This term is exceptionally complex and can constitute an area of analysis for people who are more competent to interpret it. A derivative term used in professional literature is educational neuroscience (Bowers, 2016). It assumes that neuroscience can significantly contribute to the understanding of complex cognitive processes, based



on other branches of science. It should be emphasized that neurodidactics is not able to provide teachers with ready methodological solutions right now. However, professional literature contains information on current research concerning human memory and cognitive processes (Addis, Barense, Duarte, 2015). On the other hand, educationalists are mainly interested in information pertaining to reliable assessment of didactic practice and instructions for didactic work in the light of neuroscience (Chojak, 2019).

The teacher as a coordinator of the process is more and more often attributed a secondary role. Interaction at the student-school level shall be based on an intermediary element, i.e. digitally conveyed content. Currently, the media shape a young person's attitude not only at the level of education but also their personality development, giving it direction and instilling new values in their world. It seems that the development of neurodidactics based on comprehending an individual will soon have a far bigger influence than a schematic approach in education even though it assumes this individual's interpersonal skills. That is why, worldwide media, and as far as polytechnic education is concerned, the emergence of didactic programmes not limiting a young person's ingenuity and supporting their creativity, are the motivation to follow one's dreams and excel at anything one wants. Civilisation development is based on an innovative approach in problem solving, hence it results in lack of barriers that have been considered impossible to overcome so far. Is the Adult ego state approach the only indicator of truth and the only, unquestionable way of development? Let us try to equip a young person with various work tools offering them a possibility of self-development and developing different attitudes, often contrary to well-established scientific principles. Such an approach might highlight new values not known so far, but often perceived as reprehensible and contrary to adopted standards. The human brain is still a body organ known a little. Although contemporary medicine and psychology are learning more and more about it, it still amazes and surprises us.

This generally described area of our concern is the ground of research pertaining to human cognitive processes resulting from artificially created workplace. Although the analysed issues are limited to the content of didactic classes, they are tackled with the help of offered deterministic simulation programmes and equipment that observes human behaviour. Available technology lets us use electroencephalographic tests in the research. Electroencephalographic tests (EEG) are becoming more and more popular in science, not only in medicine and medical therapy. One technique within this method is QEEG technique, i.e. quantitative analysis of data based on the so-called mapping of particular brain activity areas. Apart from the fact that QEEG tests are nothing new, modern technology and potential of computer equipment make it possible to analyse how the human brain works more and more thoroughly. Certainly this method is not the best one among those currently used, yet it has one main advantage, it is non-invasive. Its non-invasive-

ness means that one can read the brain's activity, of course with a certain measurement error, in different situations of human activity without affecting a given organ. Thus, the brain's activity can be watched during one's work on a computer. We can observe both moments of excitement, mental activity and all the symptoms and states detrimental to mental creativity.

As it has been already mentioned in numerous publications, the current method lets us follow and record particular brain waves with the measuring apparatus. This research makes use of Mitsar 202 apparatus, which constitutes an element of equipment in the aforementioned laboratory (Praužner et al., 2013–20) (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1*

Sample photograph taken during a QEEG test  
Own sources.

To simplify, the test consists in reading signals coming from the external surface of head skin. To do that, researchers use the so-called specialist caps with installed sensors that read brain waves generated in the skull area. These are very small electric impulses resulting from brain work in its different layers (i.e. brain lobes). They are generated as a result of neuron activity in the brain, and this activity stems from stimulation of the brain's elements whose function is responsible for various activity. Thanks to the very sensitive measuring apparatus, they are strengthened to such an extent that they can be recorded in the course of time. The analysis of professional literature and knowledge gathered so far makes it possible to determine with high probability the brain's activity, and more precisely its selected areas. Registered signals are analysed by specialist software and turned into an image, which is the so-called map of brain activity. Figures 2, 3 and 4 demonstrate examples of wave reading and their occurrence.

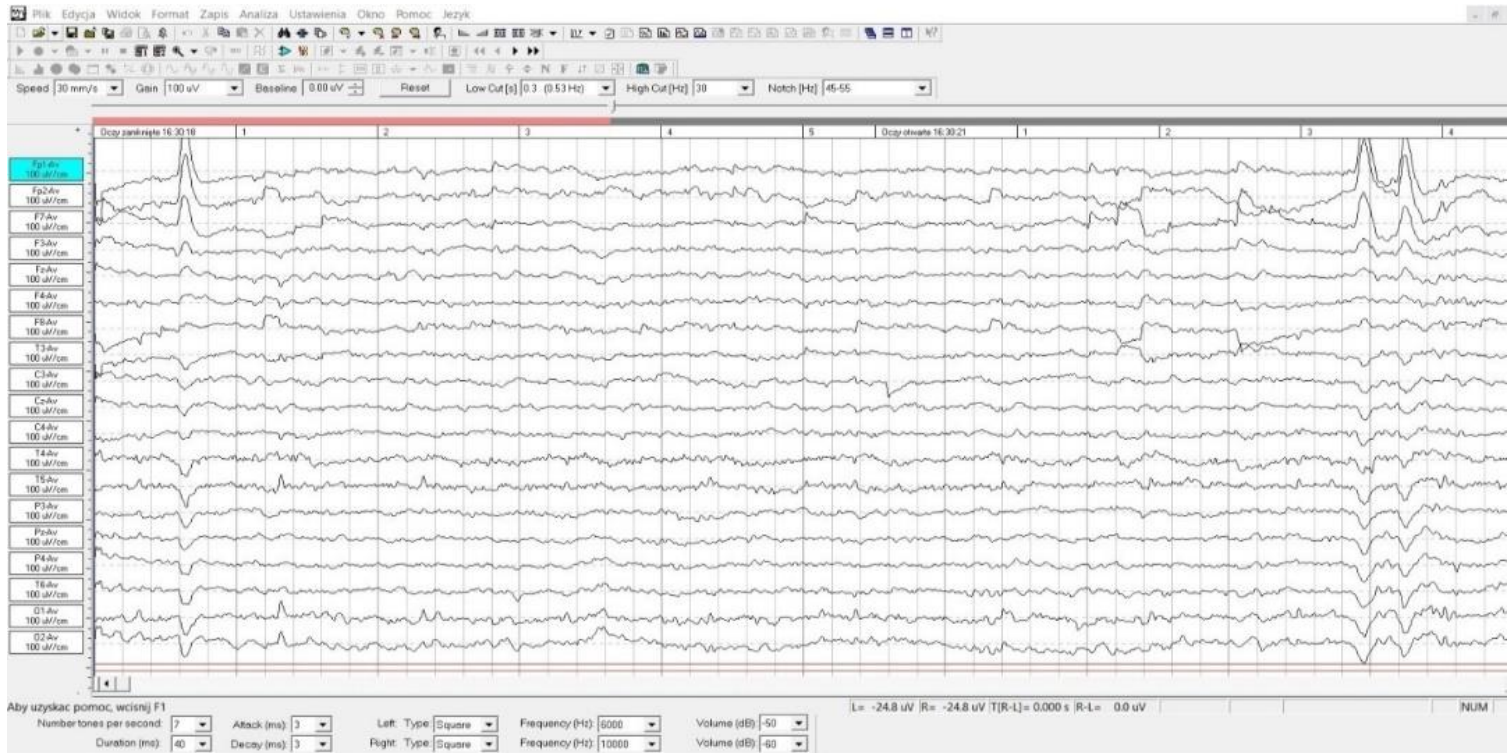


Fig. 2

An example of observed brain activity waves. Particular graphs refer to different wave frequency and the so-called artefacts (interference) Own sources.

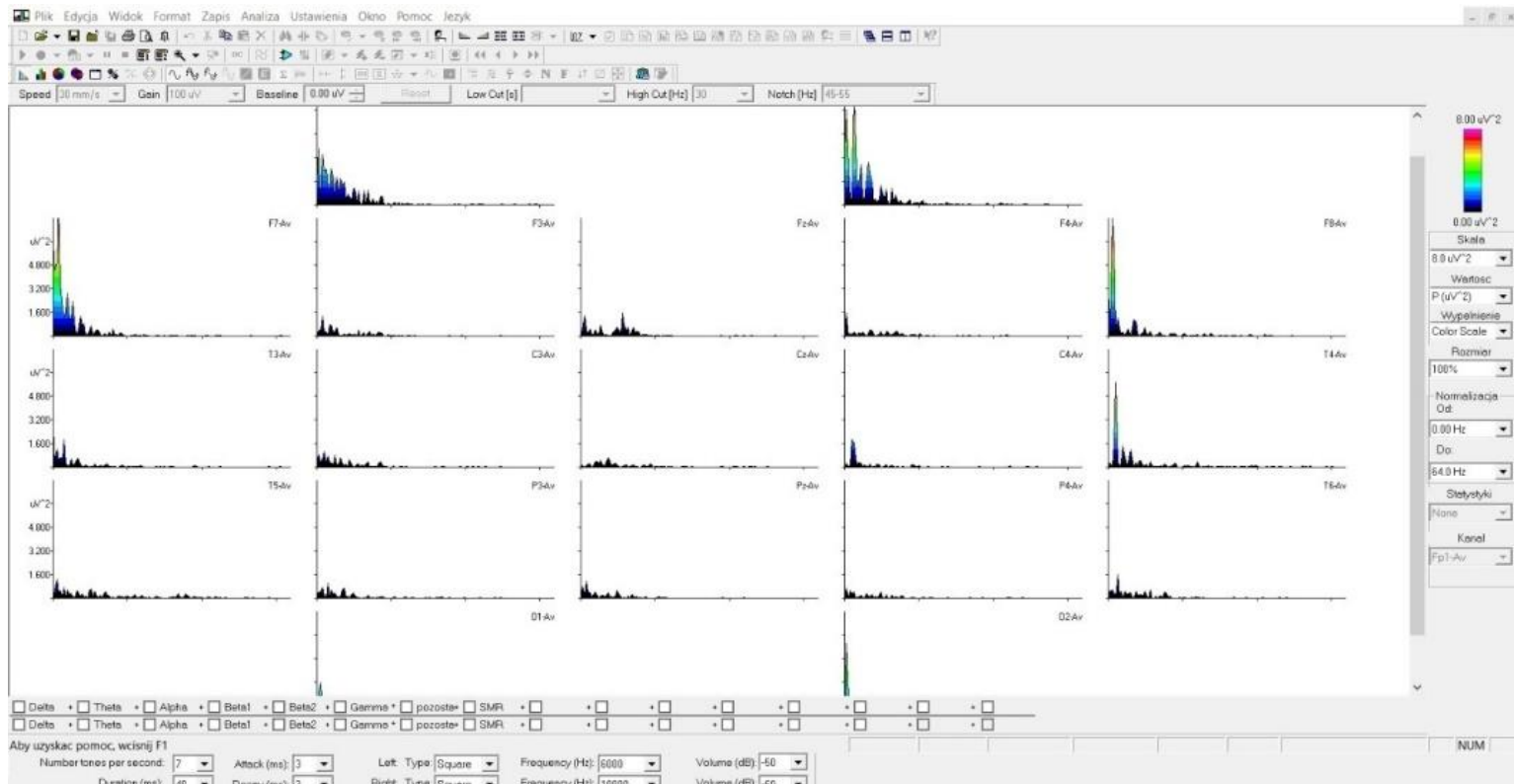


Fig. 3  
Wave amplitude  
Own sources.

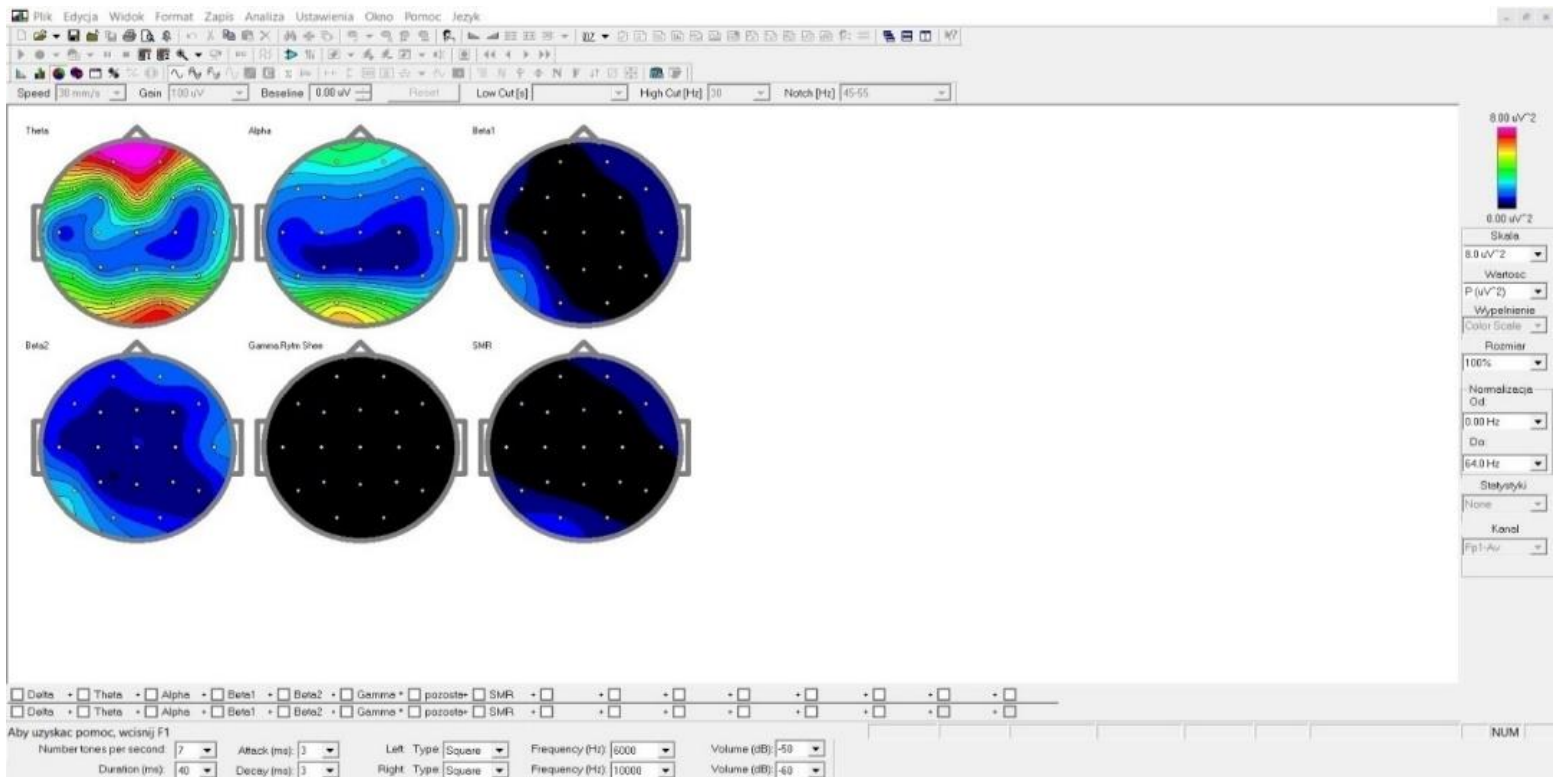


Fig. 4  
Mapping of brain activity  
Own sources.

It is important to remember which frequencies are observed and most relevant from the point of view of brain activity (Thompson, 2012). As for didactic activity, we are interested in brain activity that shows its significant engagement in intellectual activity. Thus, we shall focus on the so-called Beta waves with a frequency range from 12 to 36 Hz. Initial research during a student's work with simulation software from the area of widely-understood technology showed that a significant increase in the amplitude of these wave frequencies within the range from 16 to 20 Hz could be noticed. These are the waves that accompany people in moments of big concentration and focus, i.e. mental effort. Solving technical problems with the help of simulation software is not easy as we deal here with certain stages of work. The first stage is getting familiar with the software and its options. It is undeniably difficult, especially for students who have not had much contact with or working practice in this environment so far. In this case, such elements of the algorithm itself and software structure were examined as iconography used in the programme, interpretation of technical vocabulary in a foreign language, etc. There are many such elements and each of them can be an example how such programmes should be designed and which elements should be avoided. It is about communicativeness in transferring information between two parties, a student and a computer. The aforesaid waves are accompanied with waves of a frequency within the range from 18 to 36 Hz, the so-called Beta2 waves. Unfortunately, these waves occur during anxiety, heightened emotional states which result from adrenalin occurrence. Of course, we also notice other frequencies of various intensity, which is natural as they are often a result of other body organs' work. Comparing two working stages of people at work, during increased mental effort and during a state of inactivity, e.g. in the stand-by mode, we can notice that the characteristic of our brain's work changes. An identical state, though not researched yet, occurs in the area of contact between two persons. Here we also deal with different emotional states accompanying interpersonal, verbal, gesture communication, etc. According to ETA, emotional states of the Adult, Parent ego states are characteristic and proportional to the dynamism of expressed feelings. The educational process is not only a passive transfer of ideas, but, above all, their reception is conditioned by the form in which they are communicated. Sounds and images can be perceived positively by a given student, but sometimes they can be seen as an element disturbing their cognitive process. The intensity of their occurrence should not be random, as following constructivism and connectivism, concepts should complement each other and not occur randomly. Our brains seeks connections between concepts, which might come from both acquired knowledge and experienced knowledge (long-term memory), yet they should be recalled at a specified moment and presented with great sensitivity. The brain itself memorises only a few percent of signals that reach it, those that seem ir-

relevant, or seem to have no significance at a given moment are immediately deleted. The occurrence of particular concepts should not be incidental, and that is the direction of the latest research in neurodidactics. EEG tests can be a good example of such research. The development of neurodidactics, which is currently perceived as an area not thoroughly examined yet and is not defined by researchers even as a sub-branch of science, seems to be of a paramount importance and potential. Once we get to know our brain well, when we learn about our expectations and about our brain's potential, we shall not only improve but personalize teaching methodology. We shall implement a real process of an individual approach to a given student, taking into account many factors pertaining to their intellectual potential. Thus, it can be generally stated that the complexity of communication in interpersonal relations and in a relation with a digital machine is of a similar nature. Nowadays, in the area of didactics, pedagogy focuses mainly on behavioural studies, but it is more and more willing to make use of the achievements of biology and psychology. The presented research and observations are only a suggestion for further research in this area, we should look for answers where there are reasons for scientific reasoning. EEG tests are a good example. Although imperfect, the testing apparatus used there provides us with observations that cannot be ignored from a scientific point of view.

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## **Dydaktyczny wymiar badań elektroencefalograficznych w ujęciu edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule przedstawiono wybrane wyniki badań autorskich, jakie prowadzone są w Laboratorium Badań Eksperymentalnych Biofeedback Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczego im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie dotyczące aktywności dydaktycznej studentów w kształceniu technicznym. Przedstawione wyniki badań są częściową odpowiedzią na pytania stawiane w teorii edukacji technologii informacyjnej. Realizacja kształcenia online, w dobie pandemii COVID-19, z wykorzystaniem deterministycznych symulacji komputerowych jest propozycją rozpoczęcia dyskusji dotyczącej znaczenia nowoczesnych technik przekazu informacji jako kluczowego elementu komunikacji na drodze uczeń–nauczyciel.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja, dydaktyka, konstruktywizm, badania elektroencefalograficzne, EAT.



**TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN OTHER FIELDS**  
**ANALIZA TRANSAKCYJNA NA INNYCH POLACH**





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## Spirituality – pastoral care – transactional analysis. The presence of pastoral issues in one of the psychotherapeutic concepts

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### Abstract

The article addresses the relations between psychotherapy, treated as a form of psychological assistance, and faith, religion, and pastoral care. This issue has been present in transactional analysis almost from its beginnings, and it has been discussed by various authors from various perspectives. In Poland the application of transactional analysis in pastoral care has been extensively analysed by Rev. Antoni Tomkiewicz, PhD from the Catholic University of Lublin. One can hope that the issues mentioned in the article will arouse an interest of a number of both theoreticians and practitioners of transactional analysis as well as theologians and priests.

**Keywords:** transactional analysis, spirituality, pastoral care, psychotherapy.

It might seem that it is difficult to find a more vague relation or a more controversial parallel. On the one hand, the psychological concept grew out of the psychotherapeutic theory and practice of transactional analysis (TA), and on the other hand, pastoral care for the faithful springs from spirituality and methodology of pastoral theology. The controversial nature of this comparison shall seem less so if in transactional analysis we find a range of uses going beyond strictly psychotherapeutic objectives. Beginning with the area of facilitating organisational structures and interpersonal communication in human relations,

via coaching, and finishing with the area of school education and family upbringing. Transactional analysis, mainly focused on understanding interpersonal relations, offers assistance in all those areas where mutual relations dominate other aspects of human activity. All the implementations of TA include also the area of pastoral care. This issue, though discussed in western professional literature, is almost completely absent or not well-known in our local circumstances. Therefore, this article aims at making Polish readers more familiar with the aforesaid topic.

### **Pastoral care and psychotherapy – difficult coexistence**

Psychotherapy, and broadly speaking whole psychology, has been more than once perceived by some representatives of the Church and Catholic publishers or writers as a serious threat. The popularity of psychology and its growing, justified or not completely justified, influence on our lives worries some columnists. They write as follows:

It is obvious that psychology is becoming an area of science occupying a more and more important place in our lives. Its narrow specialisations make society generally believe that it is able to treat all issues, always finding the best solution for each of them\* (Kopańska, 2007, pp. XV).

And further on:

However, becoming a fashionable branch of science, it attempts to exercise a growing impact on our lives – and in that way to make us ignore our common sense and the fact that we can deal with our problems independently. Frequently expressing authoritarian views, it forgets that man is a being endowed with freedom by their Creator, and in this freedom and feeling of responsibility they have to make their own choices. It has to be accompanied with an ability of creative thinking and reflection (Kopańska, 2007, pp. XV).

Both Polish and foreign professional literature discusses the difference between spirituality and something that constitutes a *stricte* psychological area. The authors of these publications declare that psychology is slowly becoming religion, and psychotherapists and psychologists play the role of “secular priests” (Górny, 2005, pp. 20–23). They do not appreciate help offered by psychologists and therapists, treating it as a way of forming social awareness in accordance with their own ideas. They see the development of psychology and psychotherapy as a reason for a decreasing influence of Christian ethics on western societies. The aforesaid authors think that some psychological concepts and theories constitute a threat to faith and religion as they hide and propagate magic or the occult.

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\* All translations – E. Haberko.

Examples of critical views on psychology and psychotherapy can be found in numerous publications. One work devoted to the criticism of these areas that “seduce” religion reads as follows:

Genuine Christianity does not go hand in hand with psychology. When one tries to combine them, it most often leads to obscured message of Christianity, not to Christianization of psychology. However, this process is subtle and rarely noticeable. They do not realise they confuse two different things (Kilpatrick, pp. 20).

Is there anything to worry about? Are these doubts justified? This unease can be found in some views and opinions of the very psychologists, but also in views expressed by the so-called modern “enlightened elites” that perceive religion and Catholicism as a threat to their plans of social domination and manipulation, where psychotherapy is, in their opinion, to replace religion. It is well illustrated by a dialogue found in one of contemporary Polish novels:

“But why should we go back to these archaic beliefs,” Struś used a pause in Return’s monologue when he was downing his beer, “to this Christianity which has to die out? If psychotherapy lets us understand ourselves, i.e. free ourselves from our complex of guilt, then why should we need religion...”

“You’re wrong.” Return finished his beer and lit another cigarette. “Christianity is archaic in its present, Church state, yet even among its hierarchs we can find those who understand the modern spirit. But St Paul is our contemporary Alain Badiou. You just have to peel off this theological cover. We have to ... regain Christianity.”

“But what for? If we have psychotherapy...One has to help people, make their access to psychologists easier...” (Wildstein, 2008, pp. 234–235).

Although the quote above taken from one author’s literary imagination might seem unlikely, yet the remark on civilizational changes assures us that it is not as unlikely as it might initially seem. To replace Christianity with psychotherapy! – that is what many might think. A dilemma that can be taken down to a simplified alternative: “a priest or a psychotherapist?” is discussed by Tomasz Teluk in his article published in the journal “Frona” and he postulates a dialogue instead of a fight (T. Teluk). However, it can take place only in the atmosphere of mutual freedom and responsibility.

Bartłomiej Dobroczyński and Magdalena E. A. Zielińska view this issue a bit differently. Maybe because they are psychologists and their perception of the issue in question is not free from subjectivism. Their answer to the question “Is there too much or too little psychotherapy in our lives?” is straightforward. “Although psychotherapy is a very popular and more and more often omnipresent element of our lives, it is not true that there is too much of it” (Dobroczyński, Zielińska, 2003, pp. 12). Seeing a possible coexistence of pastoral care and psychotherapy, they refer to the views of a Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, who made a distinction between existential and pathological fear. Whereas the first one can be overcome with the help of a priest by “courage to be,” the latter one

requires specialist psychotherapeutic intervention. A priest can influence one's treatment, and a psychotherapist can be a priest. Yet:

...these roles should not be confused and professionals should not try to replace one with the other. The aim of each of them is helping people to achieve self-affirmation, to gain courage to be (Tillich, pp. 80).

However, nowadays, in everyday pastoral care we do not always find such strongly polarized views. Research conducted on the attitudes of priests towards different forms of psychological help shows their positive attitude towards support they received in their pastoral care from professional therapists.<sup>1</sup> At the same time there is a noticeable need to broaden one's knowledge in the area of pastoral psychology. This last conviction might have constituted a foundation for a project to prepare specialist textbooks on this topic, together with a clear decision of Church governing bodies to include content related to psychology in the programme of seminaries or theological studies (Makselson, 1995).

Yet, one should not forget about more or less hidden dislike of religion and pastoral care on the side of psychologists and psychotherapists. The origins of this attitude can be already found at the very beginning when psychotherapy was developed as a form of psychological help. They can be discerned in the views of Sigmund Freud who thought that religious doctrines might contribute to one's neurosis and delusions as a reaction to human helplessness in many life situations. It was to be an indication of infantilism manifesting itself in longing for a powerful father figure, namely God, offering us protection and the sense of security. He convinced his readers that churches and various religious communities institutionally meet this type of unsatisfied needs. These views were shared by a considerable number of psychoanalysts, and even today they are not rare among modern psychotherapists. However, some therapists (e.g. Erich Fromm, Erik Erikson or Hans Loewald and others) started to dissociate themselves from these views. More or less mid eighties of the last century, like David M. Black writes, mark a new psychoanalytical outlook on religion, which since then has been understood as a normal, developmental and mentally positive phenomenon (Black, 2009, pp. 62–68). What is more, some representatives of other psychotherapeutic schools and trends share the same point of view. A good example can be a trend described as existential psychotherapy, which was defined by one of its leading representatives, Irvin D. Yalom, in his lecture "Religion and psychiatry" as "...a dynamic therapeutic approach focused on worries about existence" (Yalom, 2009, pp. 19). A relation between existential psy-

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<sup>1</sup> P. Suszek (2009). *Postawy księży katolickich wobec pomocy psychologicznej (na przykładzie diecezji sosnowieckiej)*. Częstochowa: Wydział Pedagogiczny Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie. (unpublished M.A. thesis prepared under the supervision of *doctorus habilitatus* J. Jagieła, AJD prof.).



chology focused on four ultimate worries (death, isolation, freedom and sense of life) and religious comfort is complicated and filled with tension. However, the author admits that both of them legitimately aim at soothing existential fear, even though they follow different paths. They also both concentrate on the issue of relations.

Religion provides various forms of very strong relations. A religious person is offered comfort coming from humane, always watching Godly-being, who is not only aware of man's existence, but also promises them the final union with their perished dearest, with God almighty, with universal life force (Yalom, 2009, pp. 38).

I.D. Yalom shows such an approach to religion although he admits that "I have never been burdened with instilled faith" (Yalom, 2009, pp. 11). Among worries listed by him, there is one pertaining to feeling the sense of life, and it is a key issue for a leading existential psychotherapist, Viktor E. Frankl. His experience of being a Nazi concentration camp prisoner convinced him that seeking and feeling the sense of life constitutes the fundamental motivation in human life. The awareness of losing this key motivation leads to mental disorders, and in extreme cases, like it happened in concentration camps, to death, as only those who were convinced that they had a task to complete in the future and could see sense in their suffering had a chance to survive (Frankl, 2009). This last conviction was thoroughly described in *Homo patiens (Suffering man)*, where an issue of faith in God occurs as a crucial factor giving sense to the drama of human existence and destiny (Frankl, 1984).

When our patient can look for consolation in their faith – writes V.E. Frankl – there are no contraindications to use their religion for therapeutic purposes, drawing at the same time from their spiritual resources (Frankl, 2009, pp. 177).

The research proves that the psychological concept of logotherapy, as that is how Frankl called his therapeutic system, is effective and can be useful in pastoral care and in educational activities. With its spiritual dimension, it significantly enriches former methods of psychological help in pastoral practice. It is reflected in one interesting PhD thesis regarding pastoral counselling (Tylutki, 2015). Pastoral counselling should not be directly associated with psychological counselling or psychotherapy, though it uses their methods and techniques, which can be described as being close to therapy. In pastoral counselling a priest tries to help a person in need by deepening their faith, he suggests solving life problems following evangelical rules (Vaughan, 1987, pp. 40–41). The fundamental task of counselling is helping a person to keep the faith despite suffering, to strengthen their trust in solving their problems with the help of faith (Vaughan, 1999, pp. 20–21). What is more, pastoral counselling does not use any pharmaceuticals, but techniques based on communication, which can have an interesting context in the aspect of transactional analysis.

Modern therapeutic practice includes a conviction about ideological neutrality of each psychotherapist who should not by their judgement and pressure influence their patient's attitude towards religion. This aspect is regulated by many ethical codes of particular psychotherapeutic associations.<sup>2</sup> Yet, psychotherapists' neutrality in this aspect raises doubts of some authors, who are convinced that psychotherapy as a method of helping another human being in their existential dilemmas cannot be performed in isolation from their world view, which, on the other hand, might be destructive and dangerous (Włodawiec, 2013). Further on, one has to acknowledge the therapist's right to probe into their client's sphere of beliefs, pulling out and defining this area where certain mental disorders might develop and thrive. On the other hand, interference into the area of one's world view which has no relation to one's mental health would be reprehensible and unauthorized. It is also suggested that a given psychotherapist should reveal (e.g. within the framework of a therapeutic contract) their system of values so that their client is aware which specialist they have chosen (Witkowski, 2013). It seems that Eric Berne (1910–1970) followed the same conviction while developing his therapeutic system. And although he was not literally occupied with aspects of faith and religion, this topic became the subject of interest of later transactional analysts.

## Theological Adult – dispute about principles

One of such questions was touched upon by Thomas Harris in a chapter devoted to values, in his book *I'm OK – You're OK* (Harris, 1987, pp. 241–274). In the majority of this very interesting chapter one can find issues related to experiencing faith and morality accompanied with conclusions for therapeutic practice. The author claims that one of the tasks of the "liberated" Adult<sup>3</sup> is taking over the Parent's data that they want to accept and simultaneously rejecting everything which is not worth any approval. This kind of choice is the way to complete adulthood. From my own therapeutic experience, I can say with a deep conviction that it is an important element of the therapy process.

Another opinion that later on became the subject of polemics is worth quoting in full.

Thus, moral values initially occur in the Parent ego state. The words "must" and "should" are considered typical of the Parent. The main question that I pose in this chapter is: Can the words "must" and

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. a set of ethical and professional codes for psychologists and psychotherapists – bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> It can be assumed that by the "liberated" Adult T.A. Harris understood the state of integrated and decontaminated Adult.

“should” be the words of the Adult? (Harris, 1987, pp. 245–246).

As a consequence, the aforesaid paragraph comes down to the conviction that our moral choices and act of faith should not only be the result of unconscious introjectors contained in the Parent (tradition, ritual, culture, socialisation, upbringing, etc.), but our conscious decision of mature religiousness. They should derive from our knowledge, own experience and search for truth. Dogmas might limit our conscious choice as we accept something without studying and verifying it, something which is one of the main functions of the Adult in personality structure.

Religion of the Adult is different from religion of the Child – Harris continues. – While the Child says “I regret ... I AM NOT OK... please, forgive me...isn't it awful...,” the Adult can critically assess where change is possible and execute it. Religion without changing oneself is a game (Harris, 1987, pp. 258).

In this decision, which is a condition of spiritual change, we acknowledge our importance and importance of other people. In transactional analysis, we mark it with an existential approach described as “I am OK. – You are OK.” (in short we use the term Okness or a set of signs +,+). Only this perspective offers a possibility of interreligious understanding, as different cultures have different references to religion and human values, which is mainly passed on by and contained in the Parent who cannot be solely relied on in this case. Due to the presence of evil, which is a real thing, the aforesaid transactional position might become only an “unrealizable dream,” but it can also be a message worth striving for. It is the only one that justifies following the commandment “Thou shalt not kill.” Without it, in Harris’s opinion, it would be impossible to declare that Albert Schweitzer was a better man than Adolf Hitler. Referring to Paul Tillich, the author argues: “Before a sin becomes a deed, at the beginning it is a certain attitude.” Accepting the Okness life position is therefore the Adult’s act and an expression of mature faith. Religious experience should be above all the domain of the Adult who seeks truth as a set of data that was studied, verified and turned out to be subjectively true, and of our state of the Natural Child experiencing intimacy and trust. An act of God’s grace is a feeling that we are accepted by God.

Thomas Harris’s views met with a sharp polemic by Frank R. Morris, where he named them the “Theological Adult.” At the same time, he revealed differences in his views: “My observation is that a moral imperative that reads “must” and “should” are the Parent’s words (Morris, 1972, pp. 92). So, they belong to the Parent, not the Adult. He gives an example of a preacher who lectures the faithful adopting the Parent and not the Adult ego state. This polemic was joined by Kenneth N. Edelman, whose view in that matter was intermediary and in a sense conciliatory, assuming that religiousness should find its manifestation

in all ego states: these of the Parent, Adult and Child. Let us quote what he had to say about it.

Morris quotes a preacher on the pulpit as an argument showing that theology is parent-like. The preacher that does not utter anything else on his pulpit but words of criticism from the position of the Parent shall have his church empty. On the other hand, the preacher that undertakes the role of the protective Parent only shall be immediately surrounded by a crowd of childish faithful who will wait for their big daddy to do all the work for them within the framework of the Church. Talented preachers give up parent-like preaching in favour of fulfilling their function in all three ego states. Most of their sermons are delivered from the position of the Adult, that is why they are less “delivered” and are more like a conversation with the faithful who can laugh, cry and appreciate them (Edelman, 1973, pp. 50–51).

The author also mentions another issue. He thinks that a real question in the title of F.R. Morris’s article on the Theological Adult does not refer exclusively to the faithful but primarily to theologians. They also should approach their duties analysing them from the position of three transactional ego states.

In my view, this dispute from many years ago was worth mentioning. The polemics which has died away seems to concern fundamental issues. Answering the question whether one can be a believer in an “adult” way. Or maybe religiousness is merely the manifestation of “childhood” or “parenthood”?

The dispute was controversial and at the same time of a substantial nature, which can be illustrated by the fact that shortly afterwards Thomas A. Harris quit the International Transactional Analysis Association and withdrew all his articles from the archives of *Transactional Analysis Journal*.

Religious and pastoral issues which surfaced at the beginning of transactional analysis development and have accompanied it all the time were not the only aspects that can be found in publications devoted to this concept.

## **Spirituality and pastoral care – transactional analysis perspective**

More or less a decade after the aforesaid disputes about the Theological Adult, a series of articles dealing with spirituality was published. Following New Age trends, a change in the transactional analysis paradigm was announced as apparently it did not meet contemporary expectations. Muriel James suggests isolating the “inner core” serving as a vehicle for omnipresent and spiritual I, and she postulates to include it in the concept of TA (James, 1981, pp. 54–65). She claims that such a construct illustrating human spirit is of a universal nature and it can be used to synthesise eastern and western religious beliefs. Another article on the same topic shows the possibility of using genograms in order to present how spirituality in families is conveyed from generation to generation and

to observe how these graphs show choices of spiritual beliefs of given family members (Massey, Dunn, 1999, 115–129).

Two sacerdotal and probably also related Catholic authors engaged in pastoral care in India, a Jesuit George Kandathil SJ and a nun Candida Kandathil noticed that spirituality is related to the concept of autonomy, very important in TA. Since the times of Eric Berne, the understanding of the concept of autonomy has been focused on three related components, namely consciousness, spontaneity and intimacy. The authors attribute a special meaning to the latter ingredient, at the same time concluding that if a human being experiences both autonomy and intimacy present in them, then they sort of open the “door” to spirituality. Such a person overcomes themselves and rises to a new level of spiritual experience, which springs from love (Kandathil, Kandathil, 1997, pp. 24–29). Let us add in this place that autonomy is also a factor substantially contributing to human quality of life, which undoubtedly is related to a spiritual dimension of human existence (Jagięła, 2015, pp. 15–25).

Rebecca L. Trauimann refers directly to this article, looking for relations between spirituality and transactional psychotherapy (Trauimann, 2003, 32–36). Spirituality – like in the works by George and Candida Kandathil – is a process in which people overcome themselves. For the faithful it is a direct relation with God, for religiously indifferent cultivated men it constitutes a transcendental experience of relation with another human being. For other people it will be an experience of harmony or unity with the universe or nature, in any way they understand such a connection. It leads us to the realm, where we can experience unity with something above us and we can find the biggest peace in this unity. The author’s experience shows that patients themselves somehow introduce a spiritual dimension to their therapy, which enriched their experience of participating in that process. The aim of each psychotherapy is to expand awareness, develop one’s mindfulness and to integrate the feeling of “spiritual ego” with the whole human being. The author gives an example of her client who, at the end of a several-year therapy, thought about how he experienced peace and joy in his life. And he concluded that it was reflected in being close to nature and family life, and after a moment of silence reigning in the surgery he said he “felt almost spiritual”. It is the best recommendation of relations that unite psychotherapy and spirituality and that are so difficult to describe with words only.

Reviewing publications devoted to spiritual aspects present in transactional analysis, one has to mention an article by Peter Milnes, which to my mind presents the most mature and well thought-over approach to the issue (Milnes, 2017, pp. 203–217). It is not possible to discuss here the whole concept presented in the text entitled “The Pilgrim Model: Using Transactional Analysis to Explore the Spiritual Pathway Toward Meaning and Knowing”. Let us only say that the author, citing among all the aforementioned articles, remarks that alt-

though there are attempts to reconcile TA with religion, we still lack a user-friendly model that might be used by all psychotherapists, regardless of their own religiousness. The solution that Milnes calls “The Pilgrim Model” draws from the ancient concept of *logoi* (knowledge coming from logic and science) and *mythoi* (knowledge coming from religion and tradition) as a way of understanding the religious and secular way of thinking. This pattern based on the classic structural and functional model of transactional analysis can be used in therapeutic work with people of all denominations and constitutes a foundation for further development of religious or spiritual transactional analysis. It can build a dialogue between a therapist and their client in the spiritual journey and comprehending two different, though not excluding themselves, pathways towards knowing. Concluding his thorough article, he claims that:

In other words, the Pilgrim Model is a tool helping practising therapists to discuss religious and spiritual matters in their work with clients, although it can also constitute a superior framework which makes us develop further dialogue, think and study this combination of religion and transactional analysis (Milnes, 2017, pp. 215).

Let us notice that in one of concise German dictionaries of transactional analysis, there is a long entry “Pastoral care and transactional analysis” written by Helmut L. Harsch (Harsch, 2002, pp. 264–268). In the introduction, the author reminds us that pastoral care constitutes one of fundamental missions of the Church to help particular persons and groups get closer to God, who revealed himself to the faithful in Jesus Christ. It happens though in constant tension between the traditional message of Christian faith and human perception nowadays. Therefore, each generation has to formulate its own understanding of faith with the help of pastoral care. It is shown in a slightly different approach to this issue in Catholic theology and Protestantism which he finds a bit more familiar and which offers a place for justifying the sinner by God and for “mutual consolation of brothers” in the common priesthood of the faithful. This paved the way for including psychological and sociological findings into pastoral doctrine and practice.

Since the post-war period, there has been a need among the faithful of the Protestant Church for counselling performed by pastors in the area of marriage, family and upbringing difficulties. Frequently these problems were solved with the help of clinics located next to church buildings or telephone helpline services. However, since the seventies of the twentieth century pastors have been fully aware of the fact that they lack qualifications to provide professional help. Hence in numerous western pastoral institutions transactional analysis was included in the framework of psychological education of this group of clergymen.

Helmut L. Harsh emphasises that it was crucial to share an example of one pastor who claimed that his TA training gave him bigger self-awareness and ability to identify his ego states, especially in difficult situations limiting his auton-

omy. Adopting the Okness transactional position is also important. Each pastor should be able to protect himself and others against undertaking transactional games and other forms of manipulation, be aware of psychological conditions of choosing his priestly vocation or boundaries of his engagement in his charges' matters. He also remarks that a pastor so to speak serves the faithful all day long. Playing different roles, he should know which transactional forms of time structuring he uses. However, during intense moments of his meetings with the faithful he should avoid TA jargon which does not always suit such situations. As a "theological expert", he should be able to present current events (e.g. 11 September 2001 in New York) to the faithful in the eschatological dimension. Transactional analysis can also help a given priest prepare sermons and go through special events important for his parishioners, such as christening, wedding, funeral ceremonies and psychological moments of life crises. Acting as chaplains (e.g. in hospitals, psychiatric clinics, nursing homes, prisons, etc.), thanks to their knowledge of transactional analysis, they can become full members of therapeutic teams. The author finishes his discussion by emphasising an obvious need to train theologians in the area of transactional analysis, which "should become a strengthening experience" both to them and to other people they meet in their pastoral activity.

It was mentioned at the beginning of this article that spiritual and religious topics had been present since the very beginnings of the transactional analysis development. Although it is not the main area of transactional analysis interests, it is still present in many contexts even today. An article (of 2019) by two well-known authors can be a good example. In one of their recent texts, they share their own experience of developing closeness in faith, which was possible thanks to online contact (Newton, Pratt, 2019, pp. 88–101). Living far away from each other, on two different continents (Trudi Newton – England, Karen Pratt – South Africa), engaged in the activity of their local churches, by using TA as a point of reference, linguistic paradigm and a set of metaphors, they found common ground for deep, spiritual connection and mutual understanding.

Giles Barrow is probably known to everyone who is competent and familiar with transactional analysis. Especially when it comes to educational transactional analysis, i.e. his area of using TA, which refers to the area of teaching, education and upbringing. In one of his articles devoted to pastoral care and education, Barrow demonstrates possibilities offered by transactional analysis to develop optimal relations between a teacher and a priest in the classroom and beyond it (Barrow, 2007, pp. 21–25). He illustrates it with cases that could be noticed in one junior secondary school in the western part of London, where healthy interpersonal relations were to be promoted both in classrooms and the teachers room. Although these examples refer to western experience, they make one reflect on the use of similar solutions in Poland.

## Pastoral care and transactional analysis in Poland

Thus, it is worth mentioning how transactional analysis is propagated as an important tool that can be used in pastoral care and pastoral activity in Poland. In this context, one has to mention rev. Antoni Tomkiewicz, PhD from the Catholic University of Lublin. This priest substantially contributed to the popularization of TA in our country. He was an organizer and co-founder of the Institute of Family Studies within the framework of the Department of Theology at the CUL, where for many years he occupied the post of the head of this entity. He also used to be the head deputy of the Polish Association of Transactional Analysis in Lublin. Among numerous publications by rev. A. Tomkiewicz, there are many that present results of the research devoted to various aspects of family and religious life from the perspective of transactional analysis. Let us mention only some of them.

His studies concentrated on showing the relation between acceptance perceived by teenagers, understood as transactional support from the side of their parents, and their emerging religious attitudes (Tomkiewicz, 1999a, pp. 149–172). The results of the analysis proved that in families where teenagers often received positive and rarely negative signs of support from both parents, their attitude towards God was reflected in their willingness to follow Christ. The teenagers in that group were characterized by acceptance of religious beliefs, acknowledgement of God's existence and seeing in God someone offering the sense of security, providing help and giving sense and value to one's life. Openness to God was accompanied with openness to another person. There was an opposite relationship in case of negative support from teenagers' parents. One can notice rebellion against God, doubt in his justice and lack of need of his presence in their life, where religious values were put on the margin. The author concluded his article claiming that the research results confirm the common feeling that this crisis of faith can be analysed in the light of a crisis experienced by a modern family.

Other studies conducted by Tomkiewicz regarding family issues concerned the importance of transactional structuring of time in developing marital bonds (Tomkiewicz, 2007, pp. 139–151). The conclusions deriving from this research make us remark that there is a noticeable relationship between the extent to which one feels the bond and particular and selected forms of time structuring in TA. The author claims that people with a strong feeling of their marital bond more often structuralise their time via intimacy, leisure activities and rituals than people whose marital bond is weaker. On the other hand, the latter ones more frequently use withdrawal than people benefiting from a strong marital bond. Antoni Tomkiewicz writes further on:



Activity in both groups is of a great importance due to the engagement of the Adult ego state, whose rational and matter-of-fact behaviour strengthens the feelings of the Child ego state. The attitude of the Parent ego state contributes to maintaining and strengthening one's marital bond (Tomkiewicz, 2007, pp. 150).

Similar research topics can be seen in an article by Antoni Tomkiewicz published in a foreign journal devoted entirely to transactional analysis. The author analyses the issues of self-acceptance and care that occur in marriages, regarding them as an important factor of bond development (Tomkiewicz, Pawłowska, 1999b, pp. 72–81). On the other hand, such self-acceptance is missing in the research on the unemployed. Significant relations were found between the level of self-acceptance of the unemployed and their personality structure. They showed that self-acceptance of the unemployed, both men and women, depends on their ability to solve problems rationally, to deal with stress, to be responsible, autonomous and caring (Tomkiewicz, 2006, pp. 177–178).

It should also be added that rev. A. Tomkiewicz was also the author of training materials for priests implementing transactional analysis in their pastoral activity. The materials were entitled “How to lead a pastoral conversation?” (Tomkiewicz, 2003). The same author translated an important book on this concept (Rogoll, 2013). The author's contribution both by his publications and popularizing and training activity in the pastoral environment cannot be overestimated, especially that he dealt with topics that had been unknown in Poland before.

## Conclusions

Focusing on the relation that might occur between pastoral activity and one of psychotherapeutic concepts, one should hope that however difficult and in-subordinate this coexistence of both areas has been so far, they shall find a comfortable area of coexistence and cooperation in the future. It shall be beneficial both to transactional analysis itself as it shall be able to understand phenomena that it has not paid enough attention to so far, and to priests for whom TA might become a useful tool in building optimal relations with their faithful.

Many issues that have not been discussed in this article wait to be studied and reflected on in the light of Catholic pastoral theology. Let us list one of them, which is somehow linked with the concept of the “Theological Adult” but has a different dimension and sense. The concept of spiritual leadership developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola involves an important category of insight.<sup>4</sup> This spiritual insight comprises many elements that can be easily attributed to the Adult ego

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<sup>4</sup> Co to jest rozeznanie duchowe ? [http://www.ozarow.cpps.pl/dokumenty/prezentacje/rozeznawanie-duchowe\\_\\_druk.pdf](http://www.ozarow.cpps.pl/dokumenty/prezentacje/rozeznawanie-duchowe__druk.pdf) (access: 10.04. 2020 r.)

state in transactional analysis. Beginning with the very approach facilitating such an insight, e.g. the necessity of intellectual, emotional and spiritual maturity, awareness of one's own feelings, motivation referring to life choices, self-acceptance and cooperation of mind and heart, etc. Particular stages of insight involve: collecting information, analysing inner commotion accompanying prayer, taking clear, straight decisions and checking and confirming the choices made. All that comes down to knowing, judging and acting. Therefore, spiritual insight is not only a purely cognitive speculation, but in consequence it is to lead to taking particular decisions, both regarding oneself, other people and the surrounding world. Let us hope that the presented issue, and especially a special role of the so-called Integrated Adult in the structure of transactionally comprehended personality shall be of interest both to theologians and priests, and to theorists and practitioners of transactional analysis.

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## **Duchowość – duszpasterstwo – analiza transakcyjna. Obecność problematyki duszpasterskiej w jednej z koncepcji psychoterapeutycznych**

### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł podejmuje kwestie relacji, jakie zachodzą między psychoterapią, jako formą pomocy psychologicznej, a wiarą, religią i duszpasterstwem. W analizie transakcyjnej, niemal od początku istnienia tej koncepcji, kwestia ta jest obecna w różnych kontekstach i podejmowana przez różnych autorów. W Polsce zagadnienie zastosowania analizy transakcyjnej w duszpasterstwie od lat podejmuje ks. dr Antoni Tomkiewicz z Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. Można mieć nadzieję, że zasygnalizowana w artykule problematyka zainteresuje w większym niż dotąd stopniu zarówno teoretyków, jak i praktyków analizy transakcyjnej, a także teologów i duszpasterzy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** analiza transakcyjna, duchowość, duszpasterstwo, psychoterapia.



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## Kolb's cycle in teachers' group work in the context of transactional analysis

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### Abstract

In this paper we look at processes occurring among teachers during annual development programmes, juxtaposing observations of behaviour in the context of Kolb's cycle with selected elements of transactional analysis.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a preliminary analysis of phenomena, as described by Transactional Analysis (AT) (Jagięła, 2015, Motyl, 2019), that may occur in the first two phases of Kolb's cycle. The premise of the work is that the teacher's development priority is the ability to self-observe and build awareness of one's own decisions, behaviors, and motivations (Juszczak, 2013, Szymańska, 2016). The development programs from which the observations described in the article were taken, were attended by 120 people, belonging to 6 workshop groups. Each group consisted of 12 to 20 teachers of various subjects in grades 4–8 and elementary school principals from all over Poland. The groups implemented, preceded by an extensive needs analysis, the development programs *Sense and Method* and *Join the Dots* over the years 2017–2021. Each program had a developmental goal, was not planned and implemented as a research program. Observation records and internal recordings were analyzed for the purpose of this study. However, the organic nature of the classes (natural conditions, natural need and motivation of the teams, awareness of the lack of evaluation) allowed us to look at the observed phenomena and design future research based on them.

**Keywords:** transactional analysis in school, games in adult learning, Kolb's cycle, adult learning.

– Are we never going to change? We keep doing these games and we keep making the same mistakes. Is it changing?

– I have it different. I have some lessons learned from last time and now I have acted differently.

(from a conversation with participants of one of the Connect the Dots workshops)

## Introduction

A school is a specific environment that has several characteristics that distinguish it from other environments:

- it is an environment that has a specific goal – the development of students, implemented by or with the participation of adults, teachers,
- the core of the school community consists of students, teachers, and parents,
- students, as the defining entities of the school phenomenon, participate in formal and informal developmental processes.

This paper is based on the experience of working with teachers and does not deal directly with work with students and parents, although the effects of the processes described include all three groups. The authors have not found similar suggestions in the literature for reference. Although the literature proposes an extensive number of items, concerning the implementation of the project method (Btemirova et al., 2020; Kilpatrick, 1918; Knoll and Dewey, 2012; Kolodziejski and Przybysz-Zaremba, 2017; Kobernyk, 2022; Mitchell et al., 2020, Murdiati et al., 2021; Parisoto et al., 2021), no less the authors of the article propose an original authorial approach (Józefowicz and Buchner, 2022) and in this text do not directly refer to the project method itself.

Within the framework of the *Sense and Method* and *Joines the Dots* ([www.polacz kropki.com.pl](http://www.polacz kropki.com.pl)) Programs, implemented since 2017 in selected Montessori schools throughout Poland, the participants – elementary school teachers – took part in comprehensive workshops, implementing and developing competencies of working with the project method. One of the important methodological assumptions of both Programs was the work in Kolb's cycle, which – in the first stage of the process – was implemented on the basis of workshop games. For the purpose of this article, and in order to distinguish them from games in the AT approach, it will be referred to as an activity. In further stages, the programs were no longer based on workshop experiences, but on real work of participants in their own groups and in cooperation with children and parents. In this paper we describe 2 stages of Kolb's cycle – the experience stage and the reflection stage, which took place in the workshop room, with the direct participation of the authors, which makes it possible to describe the observations.

## Theoretical assumptions

### Games in transactional analysis

Transactional analysis is increasingly making its presence felt in education. Hough (1971) stated that “the role of the school in the process of shaping one’s script and position in life cannot be overestimated” (p. 38). The role of the teacher is also gaining importance and has begun to receive more attention, as confirmed by Frazier (1971): “Before the learning process can take place, teachers can become aware of the major elements of a student’s life. Teachers can develop skills to help the student untangle intersecting transactions, understand secret messages, and make new constructive decisions” (p. 17–18). He also noted that “TA, in teaching, recreation, and discipline, becomes effective when it is connected to these other variables in the present moment, in the here and now” (p. 20). For Stewart and Joines, a teacher’s work is primarily concerned with the social level, not the psychological level, so it relates to an overt rather than a covert agenda (Stewart and Joines, 2016, p. 279).

There is a kind of interference in communication between people due to differences, between the uncovered and hidden agenda, unconscious rather than conscious. Stewart and Joines (2016, p. 318) outline the general characteristics of these actions, referred to here as games.

Play is a process in which we do something because of ulterior motives that:

- are beyond the Adult’s awareness;
- do not become clear until the participants in the game change their behavior;
- cause everyone to feel confused, misunderstood, and tend to blame the other person. (Stewart, Joines, 2016, p. 331)

Games in the training room usually (though not always) occur at the first level specified by the authors, and only this level is addressed in this paper.

According to Berne (1966), each game follows the G Formula, i.e., a sequence of 6 points:

**trick > weak point > reaction > switch > consternation > payoff**

**trick** – initiation of the game – revealed agenda unconsciously different from non-verbal concealed one

**weak point** – the weak point of the person to whom the foray is applied, and which makes it possible to “*fall for*” the bait, here e.g. from the level of the I-Parent: “*You have to help if someone asks for help*”.

**reaction** – response, which is usually the sum of transactions

**switch** – a switch, usually associated with a feeling of surprise

**consternation** – the consternation that results from this surprise

**payoff** – the payoff, i.e. the alternate feelings with which the parties end up

Each game can also be analyzed using the dramatic triangle proposed by Steven Karpman (Stewart and Joines, 2016, p. 323), suggesting that in games individuals take on one of 3 scripted roles: the **Persecutor**, the **Victim**, and the **Rescuer**. Both the **Persecutor** and the **Rescuer** place themselves above others; they are OK, others are NOT OK, with the Persecutor demeaning and viewing others as inferior to themselves, and the **Rescuer** as insufficient and in need of his (being OK) rescue. The victim, on the other hand, puts herself in the NOT OK position, looking for either the **Persecutor** to humiliate her, confirming her perception of herself as worthless and deserving of persecution, or the **Rescuer** to show her again how badly she can't handle herself.

Each role is compensatory in nature and is a reaction to what the person has experienced in the past rather than what is happening here and now. Typically, a person starting a game from one position of the triangle switches to another at the switch stage – the Formula G switch.

Games can be disarmed at different stages. Stewart and Joines distinguish several ways of dealing with games (p. 345): catching the game at the fortuitous stage, confronting nonrecognitions in games, not accepting negative payoffs, moving to intimacy at the moment of switching, and replacing recognition signs coming from games. However, as the authors point out if a person is playing his or her favorite game, he or she can interpret any response, even one that is an element outside the game, in a way that allows the game to continue so that the expected payoff is received at the end.

### **Kolb's cycle**

David A. Kolb's (1984) most popular model of adult learning is a multidimensional developmental model based on experiential learning. Its foundation is based on the work of many researchers, viz: John Dewey (1925, 1938), Kurt Lewin (1939, 1951), Jean Piaget (1970), Lev Vygotsky (1978), Carl Jung (1933), Carl Rogers (1959, 1964, 1968), and Mary Parker Follett (1924). The theory of experience as a source of learning and development (Kolb, 1975, 1976, 1984), is built on six foundations that are shared by these scholars.

1. Learning is understood as a **process**, not as an outcome. It does not end with an outcome, nor is it always confirmed by results. Rather, it takes place in the course of interrelated experiences during which knowledge is modified and reshaped. To improve learning, the primary focus should be on engaging learners in the process that best supports their learning. This process includes feedback on the effectiveness of their efforts in acquiring knowledge and skills.
2. **All learning is re-learning.** Learning facilitates a process that brings out learners' beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be explored, tested,



and integrated with new, more sophisticated ideas. This is known as constructivism (Piaget). Individuals construct their knowledge of the world from experience and learn from experiences that lead them to realize how new information conflicts with their prior experiences and beliefs.

3. **Learning requires resolving conflicts** between opposing ways of adapting to the world. Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. These tensions are resolved between opposing ways of reflecting and acting and feeling and thinking.
4. Learning is a **holistic process of adapting to the world**. Learning is not just the result of cognition, but involves the integrated functioning of the whole person - thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. It includes other specialized models of adaptation from the scientific method to problem solving, decision making, and creativity.
5. Learning results from **synergistic transactions between the person and the environment**. It occurs by balancing the processes of assimilating new experiences to existing concepts and adapting existing concepts to new experiences. Learning is influenced by the characteristics of the learner and the learning space (Lewin, 1951).
6. Learning is a **process of knowledge creation**. Knowledge is seen as a transaction between two forms of knowledge: social knowledge, which is co-constructed in a socio-historical context, and personal knowledge, the subjective experience of the learner. This conceptualization of knowledge stands in opposition to the traditional model of education in which pre-existing, fixed ideas are transmitted to the learner. Meanwhile, social knowledge is created and reproduced in the learner's personal knowledge.

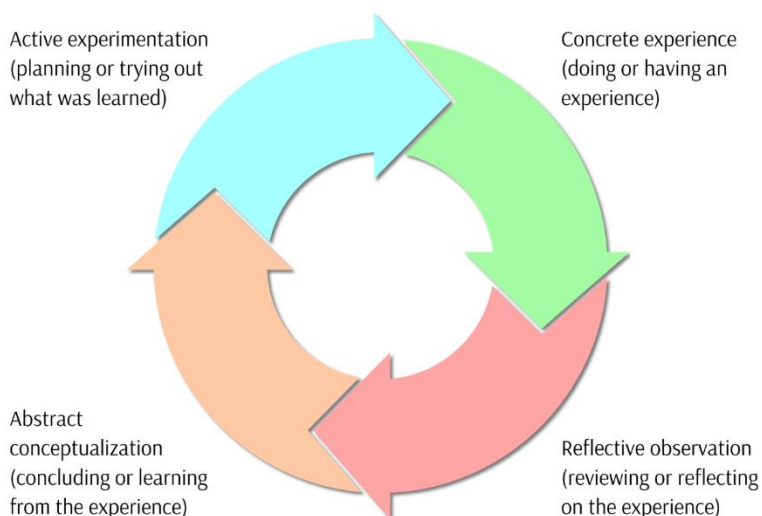
Learning is defined as "the process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge is created through a combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb 1984). Understanding experience refers to the process of acquiring information, and transforming experience is how individuals interpret and act upon that information.

According to Kolb's model, effective learning occurs in four stages associated with four abilities and activities:

- concrete experience (feeling);
- reflective observation (observing) theorising;
- forming abstract hypotheses (thinking);
- active experimentation (action).

Learning occurs as a result of resolving the creative tension between these four modes of learning. This process is often referred to as **Kolb's cycle**. Ideally, Kolb's cycle is a process or learning spiral in which the learner touches all the bases by experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting, in an iterative process. This process is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned. The

process is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observation and reflection. Reflections are assimilated and transformed into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be actively tested and serve as clues in the creation of new experiences. Outside of the model, in real life the cycle can stall – individuals stop acquiring new skills. For the assimilation of new knowledge, skills or attitudes to occur, the learner must have the capacity to engage fully, openly and without prejudice in each phase of the new experience.



*Fig. 1*

Kolb's cycle

Source: own sources based on Kolb (1984).

## Description of observation

### Participants

This paper is based on the observation of 6 independent workshop groups of 120 people (approximately 14–24 people per group). The participants were real teams – elementary school staff, consisting of teachers of different subjects in grades 4–8 and elementary school principals from all over Poland. The only criterion for selection to the groups was the fact of being a teacher of grades 4–8 or a headmaster. Individuals were required to participate in the Programs. Classes were held on the premises of schools. The described observations were

collected during the first stage of the Programmes, during which the participants went through the Kolb cycle in a workshop room, on the basis of the activities proposed by the leader.

### Selected activities

The activities referred to in the text were one element of the workshop work, a starting point for experimentation – both of the groups and their members – in a safe environment, where each experience (positive and negative) was discussed with the facilitators.

The Kolb cycle used in the Programs was applied in both Programs at 2 levels:

- the entire Program (on an annual basis);
- specific experiences, based on diverse activities, the selection and arrangement of which depended on the group's advancement in the programme, its level of development, previous experiences and group needs. Each activity introduced provided a starting point for the next Kolb cycle. Often the last phase of the cycle of one activity, **Active experimentation**, provided the first phase of the cycle, **Concrete experience** of the next activity.

The activities listed in the text:

*Islands* – an exercise in which participants have unequal access to resources (sight, speech, freedom of movement) and their task is to get from point A to point B based on restrictive instructions and within a specified time.

*Symbols* – an exercise in which participants have fractions of information on cards, and their task is to find the correct order of these cards using verbal communication and in a short time arrange them on the board.

*Stones* – an exercise in which each participant has some resources, and the task is to make the resources in a limited time in accordance with the instructions.

*Rope* – an exercise where participants have a long rope and instructions that significantly limit the use of this rope in achieving the goal of moving the rope.

### Aims of workshop work with participants

The purpose of this phase is to prepare participants for the next phase, where they will be able to apply the skills developed during the workshop, working with students. The experiments, which are closed in the workshop room, give the participants the chance to experiment in a safe environment and within a certain time period. A key element of the workshop activities is the presence of the instructor, whose task is:

- in the experience phase: planning the process and laying out the tasks in a way that supports the process, preparing materials and aids, proposing tasks, overseeing their progress in a way that depends on the purpose and rules of the task;

- in the reflection and conceptualization phase (if possible and advisable in a specific task and in a specific group): support in analyzing the course of the task, e.g. moderating the discussion, highlighting the less audible voices, highlighting the elements/significances which are not seen by the group, explaining the situation on a theoretical level, referring to contexts, supporting the conceptualization process.
- In all phases: crisis support (if possible).

### Types of participant presence

In the context of participants, the nature of their presence during the meeting is important, that is, whether they participate in:

- a **guest position** – the person declares/shows nonverbally or does not reveal that he/she is present only because he/she was instructed to do so,
- a **complaining position** – the person is aware of why he/she attends the meeting, but believes that the solutions depend on someone else, some others (management, parents, colleagues, students, or husband/wife) and at the meeting he/she will certainly not find them,
- a **cooperative position** – the person is aware of why he/she is at the meeting, believes that to some extent it depends on him/herself whether and what he/she gets out of it.

The type of attendance is influenced by the culture of the school, how it manages and gives responsibility to staff. In institutions where teachers feel their responsibility, the **positions of guest and complaining** happens, but rather in the initial phase of the activity or sporadically later. Then a **position of cooperation** prevails. And not necessarily understood as turquoise management, but rather about clear rules and giving responsibility for tasks in their entirety, including consequences, and for a moment and seemingly. In situations where the **guest position** was leading in 100% of the observed cases there was an implicit or explicit conflict at the level of management – teacher/s, and the workshop was one of the many battlefields. In contrast, where a **complaining position** could be observed the explanation was often a sense of lack of appreciation and a lack of situations in which the person could see their impact.

Looking at the types of presence in terms of games, it can be seen that in the **guest position** there is often a transfer from the role of the Victim (*I have to be here even though I don't want to, Nobody asked my opinion, I have no idea why they make me sit here*) to the role of the **Persecutor** (*I don't understand why I need this, We are wasting time, We are having fun and nothing comes of it*).

As long as the person in the **complaining position** makes no attempt to look at himself or herself as someone who could influence the situation, take responsibility or even have a voice, he or she enters the role of **Victim**, ceding influence to others more or less by default.

The person operating in a **collaborative position** does not enter into the roles of the **drama triangle**. He cooperates by openly communicating his needs. This does not necessarily involve active participation, but even if it does not occur the person names the situation. A training contract is helpful here, which - in the case of the mentioned Programs - is always present and assumes voluntary participation in all activities.

### **Kolb cycle – participant behaviour in the experience phase**

During the experience phase, the person engages to varying degrees or does not engage in the proposed activities. Often (during the whole activity or parts of it) he/she enters the **flow state**, where:

- the artificiality of the situation is not important to him/her (activities are arranged situations, they do not solve problems in participants' real lives),
- full commitment appears, even though the stakes are low (e.g. will I collect the stones, will I arrange the cards correctly, will I complete the task),
- the person cuts himself off from external factors, i.e. time (it does not matter how long the activity lasts), space (it does not matter that people are e.g. in a classroom), social context (it does not matter that people are observed by other people participating in the activity or not).

The level of **engagement** depends on beliefs, current relationships and relationship history (with other participants/participants or the facilitator), experiences with these kinds of propositions, but also depending on current attitudes or moods.

In the context of relationships (both here and now and historically) a person can make decisions, regarding the quality of the activity, depending on the quality of the relationship in 5 main configurations. :

- teacher vs. teacher,
- teacher vs. manager,
- teacher vs. trainer,

but also individual vs. group configurations (and vice versa):

- teacher vs. group of teachers,
- group of teachers vs. trainer,
- group of teachers vs. manager.

In addition to those listed, there may also be specific configurations, e.g., teachers of one grade or grades 1–3 or all mathematicians or teachers from Building A or newly hired teachers.

In each of the above, there are relationship-specific **dependencies** that may directly or indirectly influence the quality of engagement, flow, and choice of presence tools (e.g., games). In the context of individual relationships, the sense of safety and history of the relationship with the individual play a particularly important role.

### Teacher vs. teacher

If it is another teacher – the experiences we have gone through that invite full engagement or not – matter. For example, the *Island* activity requires trust and complete reliance on another person. Experiences show that the discomfort a person feels in a relationship with someone with whom they have not had a good experience will encourage them to seek escape routes:

- openly, in a message clearly stating the need, e.g., *I can see that we are supposed to do this task together, but because of past shared experiences it may be more beneficial for both of us to separate* (the **Adult Self** state) or *I don't want to work with him* (the **Free Negative Child Self** state);

or

- in a camouflaged way, using excuses or games, such as: *Come on. I always help you, now I will also tell you what and how* (**Rescuer**), *How good that you are with me. You are going to save me* (**Victim**), *And how am I going to prove this task with such a team* (**Persecutor**).

### Teacher vs. manager

If it is a person in charge, e.g. the headmaster, it is also important to have a sense of security resulting from the guarantee of job retention, the culture of the school and the knowledge (not acquired during the workshop, but which the person comes to the workshop with) of how failure is treated in the school, whether there is space for it or whether it is necessary to keep up with expectations and strive for perfection. If there is no openness to failure the person will more than likely drift into a **guest position**, settling into the role of **Victim** and sometimes moving into the role of **Persecutor**. Anxiety is not conducive to learning and growth. As an example, there are many times when the manager participates in activities but not in all of them (occasionally leave the workshop room). There are individuals whose level of engagement then does not change – the presence and absence of the boss does not affect them (**Adult**). There are participants who only then “breathe”, become active, and also those who then let go, stop working. In both of the latter cases, we are dealing with the state of the Self – the **Adapted Negative Child**, where there is a permanent dependence of the person, manifested in an unfavorable way for the person.

### Teacher vs. trainer

If it is a relationship with a trainer – apart from the feeling of security and the history of the relationship with the person, also the quality and punctuality of the communication regarding the meeting is important. To what extent was the person invited early enough (in his/her perception), how was the invitation – was he/she able to make a decision about participation, did he/she find out

for what purpose he/she would spend his/her time. And the second issue – verification of the quality of the shared experience - whether the trainer, in the opinion of the person, brings valuable content. If this is not the case, if the trainer has not fulfilled expectations and, for example, does not constitute an authority for the participants – and this experience is especially important for people in the teaching profession, i.e. being a trainer in various configurations – the participant may become a **Persecutor**. In this case, it depends on the participant's invention how it is to be realized, from asking questions in detail, to questioning the content or sense of the work, to behaviors that make the meeting difficult (loud conversations, jokes), etc.

### Team roles

Team roles, i.e. person versus group and group versus trainer, are also an important issue. During the experience phase, the patterns of the group become apparent fairly quickly, viz:

1. Who steps into leadership roles and how, whether there is a person(s) who immediately assumes the role of leader (often from a position of **Rescuer**, especially in caring professions or in education), or whether the emergence of a leader is a process, whether there are individuals who take this role according to need and competence, and whether the group is open to such action and situational leadership. This is an important indicator of how people are functioning in the group, and it gives a clear indication of whether there is room for decisiveness and agency, or whether this is a resource reserved for the chosen few.

EXAMPLE: After instructions were given, a young person who had recently become the leader of the group immediately took command and led the group until – at the end – she had no idea how to proceed and considered closing the task and declaring it unfinished. At that point, one person spoke up, hitherto silent – a newly hired employee – who calmly, systemically, led the group to complete the activity. While in the case of the employee we could observe the state of the **Adult Self** – analyzing resources, making an attempt, in the case of the boss we could talk more about the **Adapted Child** – awareness that others expect her to take on the leadership role, but in the absence of a sense of security in the leadership role she did not decide to consult, lest it be perceived as a sign of weakness.

2. Who by definition withdraws, **enters the position of Victim**, waiting for others to take care of the task (*I have no idea how to do it, I don't know what it's about, I don't know how to do such things*).
3. Someone who, **without thinking, starts an activity**, not necessarily knowing the goal, guidelines, sense (*Let's have fun! Come on, it will be fun*), realizing

from the position of a **Free Child** their own goal, e.g. having fun, often one that only they know about.

EXAMPLE: The group took part in the *Rope* activity, which is based on the fact that there is no time limit and physical activity is possible, even imposing itself as a solution. The team was trying to complete the task for about 40 minutes, some of the participants were already tired, when suddenly a new spirit entered the group.

The initial target was unknowingly converted to an alternate target. Messages could be heard: *It's fun, I won't have to go to the gym anymore*. The participants could not handle the goal, but since, as from the position of the **Adapted Child**, they needed to perform, they replaced the goal with one at which, while performing the identical activity, they felt no discomfort or their discomfort was less.

4. **Who yells, reprimands, or sets up** a group or individuals in a group.

EXAMPLE: During the Symbols activity, when the group was nearing the end of the activity, one of the participants, unable to cut through the noise resulting from the involvement of several people, shouted loudly: *Silence!* The group fell silent for a moment, after which individuals began to return to their activities. After a while, however, the action was stopped again, this time by another person who said with tears in her eyes: *I don't want that. You shouted at us. We work differently here. I ask you to be fair to each other*. It can be debated what states the two people represented. As observers of the situation, we accept the interpretation that the person yelling reacted from the position of the **Normative Parent**, while the other person at first – the crying reaction – reacted from the position of the **Child**, later – given what they said – from the position of the **Adult**.

### Maintaining the status quo

Another interesting element is how the status quo of the group is maintained in front of the facilitator (an outsider with some authority). This is important because it can significantly affect the work of the group. We can observe: self-mobilization of the group members, motivating each other, “seducing” the instructor, diverting his attention, etc. Generally, a wide range of behaviors from the **Child** Self state appear here. It is interesting to note that the **Child** Self is particularly evident in this phase – the experiential phase, when the participants have space for exploration.

### Alternative agendas

In addition to the relational aspects, individual agendas can also be observed, which are already visible at the level of achieving the task goal.



EXAMPLE: The group found the *Symbols* activity very challenging, so they changed the task during the game, completed it according to the new rules, and then celebrated their success.

The initiator's state of **Free Child Self** (*This is not cool, let's do something else*) did not spread to all group members. Some people rationalized their decision (*We have influence on what we do, we can change the task*), referring to the contract (**Normative Parent**), some remained in the position of an **Adult**, verifying what are the boundary conditions of this situation and what they can finally afford.

EXAMPLE: During the workshop, the group was planning to solve a conflict of the team with one of its members.

Such situations do happen, but it is useful to understand their consequences for the process, when participants are very involved, but not in what they do in the open agenda. Each activity then brings them closer to or further away from their own goal, so the planned goal is not realized. It is important that the facilitator is informed of the situation and has the opportunity to address it and contract on something with the group. If this is the case it helps to stick to the **Adult Self** state - to clearly establish the boundary conditions of the situation, e.g. time, tools, roles and responsibilities. Working with people who are heavily involved in a common topic and can't close it despite being together is not effective. On the other hand, if the facilitator has no information and can't agree on anything, the participants will be doing a role hopping, jumping from role to role after the drama triangle, and the facilitator has little chance to find out what is actually happening. The quickest way to recognize such a situation is by the number of personal comments and/or aggression in the statements, e.g. *You always have something to say, As always you have to comment (Persecutor), Well, it came down to me again (Rescuer), I don't know, let someone else go, Do it yourself (Victim)*.

In the experience phase – if the participants are involved – there are also messages, addressed directly to other participants, indirectly to the instructor, and related to the **hidden agenda** of the activity, e.g.: *a hidden bottom, a simple solution that has to be found, a trick, a ploy, being led astray, being tricked*. Participants look for answers in the structure of the task, read instructions or ask for repetition of instructions. Such cheating usually starts when the group already knows that the task may be difficult.

EXAMPLE: A participant stopped the process, asked for a copy of the instructions and reviewed the task point by point with the group, verifying that everyone understood what the activity was about. The **Adult Self** condition revealed here was not the most common choice. In another situation, a participant, unheard by the group, purposely dropped the already-arranged pieces from the

elevation to get the group's attention and to communicate that the chosen method was ineffective and the group needed to change the activity.

The state of the **Negative Free Self** presented here happens quite often, especially at the final stages of the activity, when the participants know that they have little time left. However, there are also situations that show how important it is to look at activities holistically, because the fact that they are separate entities does not cancel out the fact that if they are carried out by the same people, they are going through a broader process than the one that comes from the individual activity.

EXAMPLE: During an activity, participant Y kicked and trampled a structure, made by participant X, after being hurt by X during an activity that had taken place about 2 hours earlier.

What was evident here was not only the entry into the **Free Negative Child Self** state, but also the transition from the **Victim** role to the **Persecutor** role. Interestingly, the group seemed to overlook the situation (again the denial of the **Adapted Child**) in order to protect the good atmosphere in the team.

### Testing boundaries

At the experience stage, there are also situations of verification whether the rules written in the contract will actually be respected. Often the first signal is a message about the person's possible inability or unwillingness to perform the task. The tutor reacts according to his own preferences, most often depending on the previous contract or the goal of the activity.

EXAMPLE: A group that, from the very first minutes of a meeting, showed a lot of defensive behavior, i.e. expecting or even demanding strict observance of time, presenting the purpose of the meeting several times, the consequences of possible absence. After establishing an extremely detailed contract, during the first activity, two persons appeared and announced on the forum that they did not want to take part in the exercise, referring to the contract in which the voluntariness of participation in activities was written. The presenter thanked them for the information and the activity – to the verbalised surprise of the group (*They really don't have to?*) – was carried out without the participation of two people. In the next one everyone participated. In the Free Child condition, individuals tested the boundaries and then joined in the activity.

To sum up, the experience phase includes exploration, the possibility of making mistakes, flow, experimenting with previous roles and choices (also in terms of Self-states). If the action takes place with a sense of security, it can constitute a space for conscious development work, not only on the declarative level, but in real situations, in interactions that do not leave room for theoretical considerations, but require choices. This is the time of verification to what ex-

tent our reflections from previous activities are already internalized, to what extent we understand our scripts and are able to consciously choose decisions that are most beneficial for us here and now.

### The phase of reflection

The next phase occurs when, just after participating in the activity, a person has time to reflect on what really happened and how decisions were made. Again, **the level of development of the group, the identification of people with the purpose of the meeting, their own goals, relationships, but also team roles** are important here. The more experienced the group is in working together, the more they have gone through the ordinary ordinary days of work, but also mistakes and celebrations, the more individuals are able to detach themselves from group functioning and focus on individual development.

It is still important to take care of the **status quo**, especially in communities where it is stable and cooperation - at least at the level of declarations - is based on values.

EXAMPLE: During the *Stones* activity, participant X takes away all resources from participant Y without any consultation. When, during the discussion stage after the activity, participant Y called the situation from the **Adult** Self position: "*I felt robbed*", X accepted the information and explained that he understood and that for him it was a task that he completed using the most effective method in his opinion. It can be debated here whether the behavior presented was realized from the state of the **Free Child**, the **Persecutor**, who then stepped into the role of **Victim**, or whether it was a rational choice, later a rational communication by the **Adult**. However, the key reaction occurred in the group in which:

- Several members defended X: *You know that he would give his last shirt, Everyone knows X and knows that he will always help everyone* (the **Adapted Child** Self, here with the message of denial: *It didn't happen*);
- There were some statements calling person Y to order: *How can you do that, those are too big words, they are just stones* (the **Normative Parent** Self);
- There were some statements calling the tutor to order: *This was supposed to be a short activity before dinner, but here we see such things* (the **Parent Normative** Self);
- One statement appeared, describing, but also evaluating the situation: *I think we should be ethical in every situation* (the **Normative Parent** Self).

Knowing the team allows us to redefine the situation – the person who took away the resources had a strong position in the group, was one of its leaders and its **gray eminence**. The person who had resources taken away was an **outsider** who often had his own opinion and communicated it in a non-imposing but consistent way. Group members made sure that the situation did not affect

the status quo, at least on an overt level. The situation continued with the roles of **Victim** and **Persecutor** occurring interchangeably (participants X and Y are the same people from the example above, where Y kicked the work done by team X).

It is in this phase that the participants' goals and limitations become most apparent. While phase one (experiencing) consists of facts, phase two (reflecting) is fishery:

- **fishing, or identifying facts,**
- **naming them,**
- **looking for causes and consequences.**

Challenges arise already in the first step, when the person may or may not care about the facts in question for various reasons.

EXAMPLE: In the *Lina* activity, one of the participants communicated from the beginning, from the moment she heard the instructions, that she was unable to complete the task. The group did not pay attention to the clear message, which was repeated several times. During the discussion, neither the person reporting the problem nor other group members raised the issue. Similarly, in the *Island* activity, when the person with covered eyes tried to suggest something, but no one responded to the messages. During the discussion, no one raised the issue until the person in question misspoke and said *I was invisible* instead of *I couldn't see*.

In both of these situations (in different groups) at the behavioral level, no one made a decision about the importance of the group identifying the fact that the person was deaf. Based on further events, however, when both situations were discussed, it was clear that the deaf person here entered the role of **Victim** (*Again, nobody listens to me, my voice does not matter*), while the rest of the group was okay with not naming this situation. Putting the person in the role of the **Victim** automatically triggered the position of the **Persecutor** in some of them, and consequently the feeling of guilt. They have adopted the state of the **Adapted Child**, who knows what the rules of cooperation are and that if the cooperation is not a complete success, it may be better to keep quiet about uncomfortable details.

### The Conceptualization Phase

The phase of drawing conclusions and learning also often turns out to be a challenge. It requires looking at oneself from a perspective, verifying to what extent the experience during which one made such and not other choices was an individual situation, to what extent it is repeatable and constitutes a script which we use more often, and most of all – whether this script is actual and beneficial for a person, or it is just an echo of the past.

## Experimentation phase

In Kolb's cycle, this phase is simultaneously the phase of experiencing and the next activity, which, by bringing in new content, gives space to verify previous observations and implement conclusions.

For effective work, a person should use all ego states, the teacher should notice them, name them and appreciate their resources. A teacher who can be aware of a student's nonverbal cues has the ability to deal with them in the classroom. So the teacher should be an attentive observer and an attentive listener, have a sensitive understanding of others before he can best help the student by directing all his energy, all his awareness to the task of learning (p. 216). It is difficult to imagine how this can be achieved if the psychological level is not taken into account by the educator. Many contemporary educators argue that for learning to be effective, the psychological level must be included in the educational contract. (Emmerton, Newton, 2004, p. 283).

Clarke (1996) presented five leadership concepts based on transactional analysis that she found useful for teachers: **frame of reference, imago of the group, three functions of leadership, egograms, and the five P's - acquiescence, patronage, potency, practice and perception** (pp. 214–219).

Temple (1999) proposed the term "*functional fluency*" to describe an educator's ability to respond flexibly to a range of positive behaviors so that he or she can engage effectively with students, understand their difficulties, and impart material with enthusiasm and energy. She writes: "The teacher's basic need is to develop a sensitive and formed maturity that enables him or her to disengage symbiotic invitations and instead give strokes that help students or pupils go beyond the script" (p. 171).

## Conclusions

At each stage of the learning process and in each phase of Kolb's cycle, we encounter drama triangle positions, games, and states of Self that may or may not serve the person. For an instructor – whether a teacher educator or a teacher himself working with a group – disarming games can become one of the essential tools of the work. On an ethical level, in order to be able to use it, it is important to signal at the stage of the initial arrangements, but also of the contract, on what level and with what he will work. States of the self, even negative ones, but also the games themselves, as Stewart and Joines (2016) point out, are a resource for the person who uses them. He or she reaches for them for specific reasons and for specific, though mostly unconscious, purposes. Dealing with them without general consent that we will do so or with the resistance

of the person or group (which, if it happens, is caused precisely by a lack of information) constitutes violent behavior and is itself a game, except that the initiating player in this case is the instructor.

If the tutor or teacher is given permission to catch and show the mechanisms that emerge in the participants, he/she can become their ally on the way to a better understanding of themselves and higher communication effectiveness. Moreover, in a group that feels safe, trusts the facilitator or teacher, and understands the meaning of such work, identifying mechanisms through a strictly cognitive presentation and highlighting the moments in which they appear can be a breakthrough in group development.

EXAMPLE: A group that, despite 2 years in the same composition, was still at the first stage of development. The culture of the organization and the number of people avoiding confrontation (both with each other and with others) effectively prevented the group from moving from the recognition stage to the storm stage. The triggering activity proved to be the transition to intimacy at the time of the switch in several key individuals. Others had the opportunity to experience for the first time in this group collaboration based on openness, saw the value in it and in subsequent meetings tried – more or less subtly – to continue this way of working, which turned out to be a cleansing situation for the group.

This work is particularly important in the first stage of Kolb's cycle, during the experience, which is often carried out through concrete activities. This stage is distinguished from the others by its intensity and can often appear not to be work but play. This is valuable because it is the easiest place for a person to lose attention. Her behavior and choices here are closest to real life. But also – and this is very important – this is not the moment to stop the frame from the instructor and name the phenomena, only the observatory. The only people who can stop the process and draw attention to something are the participants. At subsequent stages, where there is more space for reflection, time and an invitation to think, this work proceeds differently. Above all, it is possible to react immediately, to name and discuss interesting elements of both the past experience and the current discussion. There is room for possible intervention by the facilitator. In a way, these are safer stages.

In sum, every person who works with others in developmental processes, and therefore – may I say – every teacher has the opportunity to actually support individuals and build their maturity. He or she will not be able to take advantage of this opportunity if he or she does not work on his or her own maturity, defined as self-awareness. Transactional Analysis can be a useful tool in this process, but as with any tool, it should be handled carefully and with respect for the other person.

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## Czy my się nigdy nie zmienimy, czyli cykl Kolba w pracy grupowej w kontekście analizy transakcyjnej

### Streszczenie

W niniejszej pracy przyglądamy się procesom zachodzącym wśród nauczycieli podczas rocznych programów rozwojowych, zestawiając obserwacje zachowań w cyklu Kolba z wybranymi elementami analizy transakcyjnej.

Celem pracy jest wstępna analiza zjawisk, opisanych w AT, jakie mogą pojawić się na kolejnych etapach cyklu. W artykule uwzględniono pracę 120 osób, należących do 6 grup warsztatowych. Każda z grup liczyła od 12 do 20 nauczycieli klas 4–8 szkół podstawowych z terenu całej Polski. Grupy realizowały programy *Sens i metoda* i *Połącz Kropki* na przestrzeni lat 2017–2021.

Dla potrzeb pracy przeanalizowano zapiski z obserwacji oraz nagrania wewnętrzne. Wnioski stanowią punkt wyjścia do dalszej obserwacji oraz przygotowania systematycznego badania kolejnych uczestników programów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** analiza transakcyjna w szkole, gry w uczeniu dorosłych, cykl Kolba, uczenie dorosłych.





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## The Three-Cornered Contract in Psychotherapy of the Adolescent and their parents

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### Abstract

Transactional analysis has made an indisputable contribution to thinking about the contract, its formulation, and its importance in the process of psychotherapy. The article presents the concept of contract and the process of contracting in the perspective of transactional analysis and its implications in the field of psychotherapeutic practice, with particular emphasis on individual psychotherapy of adolescent patients. Erik Berne's (1966) classic concept of the contract and Fanita English's (1975) three-cornered contract are discussed, together with a special focus on the analysis of overt and covert processes leading to success and failure in adolescent therapy from the perspective of relational transactional analysis (Hargaden, Sills, 2002). The article also describes the specific problems a psychotherapist may encounter in therapeutic work with an adolescent and their parents from the perspective of the developing tripartite relationship.

**Keywords:** contract, contracting process, contract levels, three-cornered contract, adolescent psychotherapy.

### Introduction

The inspiration to write this article came from a problem that often appears in conversations with child and adolescent psychotherapists or during group supervision. Therapists working with under-age patients repeat that the most dif-

difficult aspect of their work is in cooperation with the parents of the patient. This answer hides many difficult experiences and dilemmas experienced by therapists. These often include serious difficulties in building an alliance with parents even when the adolescent is motivated to seek help. The sources of these difficulties are very different and can be divided into three groups: 1) denial of the child's problems, 2) unrealistic expectations as to the course and effects of therapy, and 3) problems with taking into account one's participation in making changes in one's functioning, especially when they are important for the realisation of the adolescent's goals. Examples of these sources in clinical work can be as follows: inadequacy of expectations towards the psychotherapist (e.g. "my daughter needs a father"; "my son needs to have certain issues explained to him in a manly way") or questioning the competence of the psychotherapist in situations of experiencing anxiety, observing the child's developing positive alliance with the psychologist. "Taking" the patient away from therapy at important moments crucial for its success or passively destroying the beneficial changes worked out together with the adolescent are other possible sources of conflict in the psychotherapist-parent relationship (Glita, 2016, pp. 71–73). A threat in such a situation is also the loss of therapeutic neutrality, understood as remaining at an equal distance (emotional and cognitive) from all the parties participating in therapy, both at the psychological and behavioural level. The danger is "taking sides" and unconsciously playing out the internal conflict in the therapeutic relationship, e.g. focusing too much on diagnosing the parents while ignoring the patient, or unconsciously constructing a situation in which the adolescent is in a conflict of loyalties between the parents and the psychotherapist. This kind of experience on the part of both the patient and the psychotherapist and the accompanying emotional reactions may lead to a breakdown of the therapeutic alliance and, as a consequence, premature discontinuation of the adolescent's psychotherapy process (Cierpiałkowska, Frączek, 2017).

This article aims to analyse the phenomena occurring in the psychotherapist-patient-parent relationship during the conclusion of a contract according to the assumptions of transactional analysis and to propose ways of understanding the mechanisms occurring in the process of psychotherapy of an adolescent, which will allow reducing the risk of becoming entangled in an unfavourable ("three-cornered") interaction with his parents and may help maintain a professional and stable position towards the patient and his parents/legal guardians.

## **The concept of a contract in transactional analysis**

A unique concept in understanding and dealing with the dilemmas and conflicts described above, and then applying the understanding to clinical practice,

is the concept of a contract. Transactional analysis – often defined as the contract method – shows a unique understanding of the contracting process. It provides an understandable yet highly complex tool that takes into account the multilevel nature of the relationship with the adolescent patient and their parents (Rotondo, 2020, pp. 236–237). The contract for transactional analysts is considered fundamental for the proper course of treatment, especially the therapeutic relationship and alliance regardless of the form of psychotherapy proposed (Cierpiąłkowska, Frączek, 2017, p. 132).

The most quoted and best-known definition of a contract as proposed by Eric Berne in his book *Principles of Group Treatment* is: “[...] an explicit bilateral commitment to a well-defined course of action”\* (Berne, 1966 for: Stewart, Joines, 2016, p. 353). The founder of transactional analysis emphasised that one of the most important foundations of this approach is the relationship that arises between the psychotherapist and the patient, a relationship based on the capacity for autonomy, embedded in a specific context (social or cultural) that cannot be ignored, and the awareness that the patient is functioning in a system of family relationships that must be taken into account when entering into a contract with an adolescent (Rotondo, 2020, pp. 241–242).

The classical assumptions formulated by Berne find far-reaching additions, taking into account yet other aspects and elements. Some authors focus more on the conditions a person has to fulfil to enter into a contract (i.e. which Ego states should participate in the formation of the contract), others on its usefulness and significance for the involvement of the patient and therapist in the therapy process or the assessment of its progress, others on various problems and difficulties in the process of entering into a contract. However, with time the classical definition has been extended by adding other elements, thus complementing the understanding of the contract with additional dimensions. Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward (1994, p. 313) define a contract as: “an Adult commitment to one’s self and/or someone else to make a change” or “a clearly expressed commitment made by an individual to a therapist, a therapy group, or himself, and concerning the achievement of a specific goal representing a certain stage of therapy” (1994, s. 354). Ian Stewart and Vann Joines (2016, pp. 353–355) define a contract as a situation in which “the client sets out the changes they want to make and specifies what they can do to make those changes happen. The practitioner states whether he or she will undertake to work with the client towards achieving his or her dream change, and specifies what his or her contribution to this process will be.” In conclusion, the therapist using different theoretical assumptions and clinical experiences concerning the contract encourages the patient to make a transparent, bilateral commitment,

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\* All translations – A. Machnia.

clearly and precisely defining the aim, tasks, and tools to be used for its implementation. Making a contract encourages the patient to take joint responsibility for the outcomes of the psychotherapy process (Berne, 1966, p. 362).

Steiner (1994) specified and described four conditions of a contract adequate to the patient's expectations and needs, the inclusion of which during the contractual process protects the patient and therapist from the realisation of hidden (scripted) expectations and resistance to change:

- 1) mutual consent (voluntary; both parties agree to the contract),
- 2) fair exchange (the type of remuneration must be clearly defined and agreed upon by both parties: the therapist receives a fee, the patient receives professional help),
- 3) competence (of the therapist to provide diagnosis and psychotherapy, of the patient to understand the meaning and sense of the contract),
- 4) legality (conformity of the contract with the cultural, ethical, and legal norms in force in the given country and described in the association the psychotherapist belongs to).

Other transactional analysts add a condition to the proposed list, namely the reality of the contract – i.e. a goal formulated in such a way that it is achievable from the perspective of the patient and therapist (Frączek, Smelkowska, 2016).

In summary, the contract is an agreement between the Adult ( $A_2$ ) and the Parent ( $P_2$ ) of the psychotherapist and the Adult ( $A_2$ ) and Parent ( $P_2$ ) of the patient, supported by the Child ( $C_2$ ), formulated in a language adapted to the patient's capacity, in which the decision is clear and realistic. The contract allows for the disclosure of contradictions between the patient's expectations and the limitations of the psychotherapy process, for the analysis of the complaints made and the formulation of the problem, for the clarification of the nature of the relationship (the goals become visible to all parties to the contract), for the mobilization and motivation by clarifying specific goals, for protection against sabotage and resistance (Cardon, Mermet, Thiriet-Tailhardat, 1995).

Berne distinguished three levels of the contract: administrative, professional, and psychological. Analysing the contract from the perspective of all these levels helps to create a safe and transparent space between therapist and patient, which allows the psychotherapy process to be conducted effectively and ethically in the direction desired and agreed upon with the patient (Sills, 2006, p. 9; cf. Table 1). If the patient is an adolescent, it is important to discuss the various levels also with the parents of the adolescent. In the event of the professional level, it is important to agree with the adolescent in what form and when the parents will be introduced to the objectives set during the consultation meetings. Conducting psychotherapy of a teenager in the TA trend leaves the therapist free to decide whether to discuss the goals of therapy with parents. I implement this stage of work in such a way that I first establish and dis-

cuss it with the teenager and then invite parents to a joint consultation, during which the teenager presents the established goals to the parents. See Table 1 for a description of the contract levels.

Table 1  
*Contralateral levels according to E. Berne*

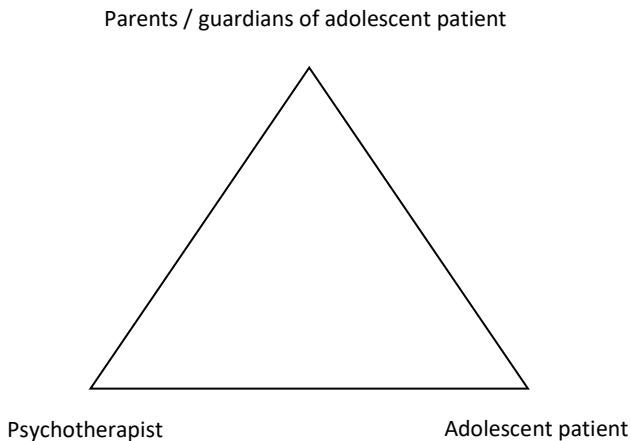
Contract level	Summary
ADMINISTRATIVE	<p>It defines the scope of work, creates a safe space for further psychotherapeutic work, i.e., time and place of psychotherapy; amount and payment for sessions; audio and video recordings, participation or access to information of third parties, i.e., observers, parents, guardian, teacher; ways to renegotiate the contract; describes the principle of discretion and exceptions to it, and the process of supervision of the psychotherapist.</p> <p>In the event of short-term work, the number of sessions, the conditions of termination, and the ways of renegotiation/renewal of the contract.</p> <p>The rules of the institution where the therapist works (office, counselling centre, hospital, school, etc.), i.e. the regulations of the institution, internal arrangements.</p>
PROFESSIONAL	<p>Commonly agreed psychotherapy goals with the patient and his parents, often preceded by a phase of listening to the patient's complaints and problem definition.</p> <p>Description of the approach, tools, and working methods. Guidelines on how to conduct psychotherapy (e.g. disclosure of free associations, homework).</p> <p>Explanation of what psychotherapy is and what it consists of, some therapists describe the methods they use. If bodywork techniques are used, a thorough discussion and explanation of the method.</p>
PSYCHOLOGICAL	<p>The relationship between the contracting parties and the psychological processes involved. Unspoken and often unconscious expectations of the patient and his parents towards the therapist and the therapist towards the patient and parents.</p> <p>Analysis of possible sources of psychological coercion and their influence on the relationship and the psychotherapy process.</p> <p>Checking whether the patient does not come to therapy to confirm scriptural beliefs – analysis of psychological games, elements of the script (especially elements inaccessible to the patient's awareness), the consciousness of the occurrence of hidden double transactions, and the third principle of communication, roles in Karpman's drama triangle, analysis of transference and counter-transference.</p> <p>Analysis of observed defence mechanisms based on splitting, e.g. projective identification, various forms of idealization, devaluation, and fantasies about the psychotherapist.</p>

Source: own elaboration based on Terlato, 2017; Hargaden, Sills, 2002; Sills, 2006; Frączek, Smelkowska, 2016; Hay, 2009; Grzegółowska-Klarkowska, 1986.

Over the last few decades, the concept of contracts has been developed by many transactional analysts. An interesting perspective is offered by Holloway and Holloway (1973; Rotondo, 2020, pp. 241–242). They describe and explain two types of contracts: the autonomy contract, which is concerned with working at the level of the script, the structural model and the process of re-decision, and the social change contract, which is concerned with working at the level of ego states, the functional model and the economy of recognition signs. Another example of contracts i.e. “hard” and “soft” contracts and the contract matrix is exhaustively described by Charlotte Sills (2006, pp. 19–26).

### The three-cornered contract and therapeutic alliance

Two people can enter into a contract whose subject matter relates solely to the relationship between them (a bilateral contract). However, if their arrangements involve the participation of third parties e.g. parents, guardian ad litem, school psychologist, they must ensure that the three-cornered contract (between three parties) or multipartite (more than three parties) contract is formulated and is known to all parties involved.



*Figure 1*  
Three-cornered contract

Source: own elaboration based on English (1975).

Three-cornered contracts are an integral part of psychotherapeutic work with adolescents (English, 1975). The psychological distance between the parties involved in the contract is represented by an equilateral triangle (cf. Figure 1) – this is an illustration of a three-cornered contract in which the goals of the work

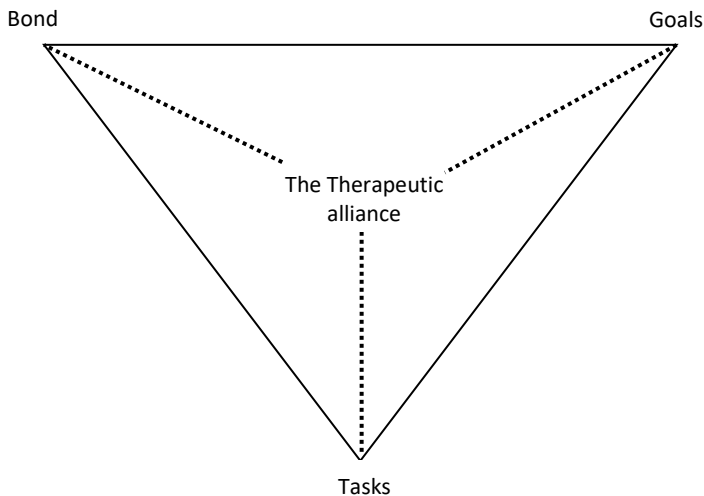


are transparent and realistic and the decision of each party is conscious and voluntary. In other situations, there may be an imbalance between the parties involved, which can be represented by the isosceles triangle, which illustrates a shortening of the distance with one party to the contract and an increase with the other (Rotondo, 2020, p. 247). This usually occurs when, in the contracting process, the clinician omits to analyse any of the levels of the contract (cf. Table 1) or any of the conditions for a good contract described by Steiner (1994). The transactional analysis does not propose the only valid procedure for building a relationship with an adolescent patient, rather it focuses on analysing the consequences for the therapeutic alliance depending on whether the initial consultation took place first with the adolescent's caregivers or with the adolescent himself (Frączek, 2020, pp. 881–882).

The three-cornered contract between the psychotherapist, the adolescent, and their parents should take into account not only the principles and rules of a bilateral contract but also the relevant issues and specifics of a multilateral one. Usually, after an initial consultation conducted separately with the parents and the adolescent, the psychotherapist proposes a joint meeting for all parties involved in the treatment process. This is the time set aside to present the established goals and to discuss the degree of commitment of each party in achieving them. Three issues specific to the three-cornered contract deserve special attention. Firstly, the psychotherapist in the joint consultation must reveal the emerging mutual expectations of all parties to the contract: parents towards the adolescent, adolescent towards the parents, parents towards the psychotherapist, psychotherapist towards the parents, adolescent towards the psychotherapist, and psychotherapist towards the adolescent. Secondly, it is important to establish clear and distinct boundaries for communication between psychotherapists, adolescents, and parents, with particular attention to the transfer of content from the relationship with the adolescent to the relationship with the patient's parents. The principle of discretion has a significant impact on building and maintaining the strength of the therapeutic alliance with the adolescent, so it is extremely important to establish what information, under what circumstances, and in what way will be communicated directly to the parents (e.g. situations threatening the life or health of the patient or others) and what will be discussed during the session with the adolescent and only then communicated to the carers as agreed. This dilemma also relates to placing boundaries on parents who inquire about their child's progress towards goals while omitting their participation in obtaining feedback (Frączek, 2020, pp. 883–884). The third point concerns the situation of modifying or changing a pre-established contract. Discussing and naming possible ways of modifying the contract gives the parents an understanding of the procedure according to which the work of the adolescent and the psychotherapist proceeds without involving them in the content of

the individual sessions. For example, a specific number of sessions can be agreed upon with the parents to exchange feedback on the implementation of the therapy plan at the beginning, middle, and end. This allows the caregivers to adjust their expectations and, above all, to be an ally in the adolescent's process of change, which is also a change of the whole family system (Rotondo, 2020, p. 245).

Bordin (1994), after conducting numerous studies on the effectiveness of psychotherapy, described a model in which he assumes that the effectiveness of psychotherapy depends largely on the quality of the therapeutic alliance, which includes: 1) the patient's level of participation in negotiating the key goals of therapy (the cognitive component), 2) the tasks relevant to achieving the goals set, specific to a particular school of psychotherapy, and 3) the strength of the bond, i.e. the feeling of being accepted, respected and liked (affective component; cf. Fig. 2). In other words, the psychotherapist and the adolescent patient (and his/her parents) have a clear common agreement about the purpose of their work – the direction and the desired outcome. They have clarity and understanding of how the therapy will work and what each party's role will be in this endeavour (tasks) and that the psychotherapy process will be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and empathy. For transactional analysts, the first two points are the significant and main focus of the contract. The third concerns the empathic relationship which, according to Helena Hargaden and Charlotte Sills, is the “heart and cornerstone” of the psychotherapy process in relational transactional analysis terms (2002, p. 55).



*Figure 2*

The therapeutic alliance

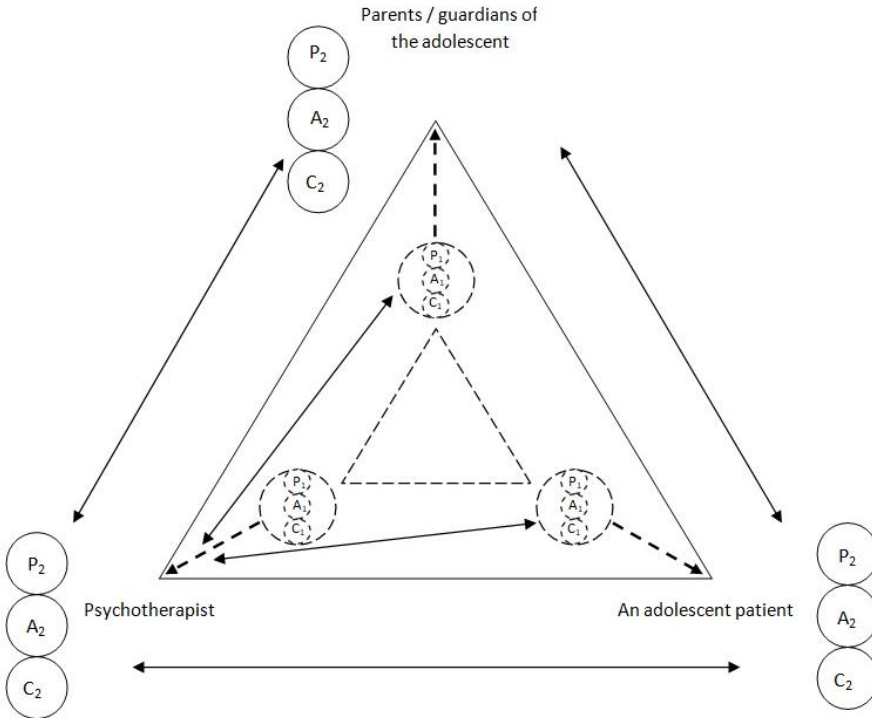
Source: compiled from Cierpiałkowska Frączek, 2017.

Transparent and understandable contracting on each of the levels described above (cf. Table 1) with every person involved in bringing up the adolescent (cf. Figure 1) protects against conflicts and misunderstandings and limits attempts to sabotage the changes made in the therapy room in the psychotherapist-patient-parent relationship. Therapy with the adolescent is always a three-cornered (and sometimes multilateral) contract, thanks to which it is sometimes easier to come to an agreement with the parents/legal guardians/school about the intended purpose of the work, but not always with the adolescent – work in a psychologically forced situation often fails (Pierini, 2014, pp. 109–111).

In summary, traditionally in transactional analysis, the focus on the contract emphasises the responsibility of the patient and therapist to define and achieve the desired change. The three-cornered contract clarifies and describes the mutual commitment regarding what the contralateral parties are doing and that each has different roles and responsibilities. It takes into account the active participation of the patient in achieving the agreed goal. At the same time, it is a dynamic tool, evolving with the development of the psychotherapist-patient-parent relationship and each stage of the adolescent psychotherapy process implemented (Rotondo, 2020, pp. 241–242). However, regardless of the form of psychotherapy, the therapist and the patient (and his/her parents) must have a common understanding of why they are together in the office, what rules and principles they commit themselves to, that they can name the problem they are presenting and the goal they are going to pursue together, and that they have an agreement on the course of therapy (Hargaden, Sills, 2002, p. 56–57).

### **Non-recognitions and recognitions and their significance for the contract**

No matter how precisely the contract (goals) is defined and the contractual framework (principles and rules) is discussed, and no matter how much the therapist is aware of the benefits and losses of the contract, in every process of psychotherapy, there are issues related to its ambiguity (i.e. the psychological level of the contract, hidden double transactions, situations of renegotiation of a previously agreed contract, nonrecognitions, scripting, transference, and countertransference, etc.). Attempts to control these unconscious processes and phenomena in the patient and the relationship between the patient and the therapist may cause the very essence of psychotherapy to be lost. The relational approach analyses with greater attentiveness the unconscious processes that emerge in the therapeutic relationship as the healing process unfolds (Hargaden, Sills, 2002, pp. 27–30).



*Figure 3*

Three-cornered contract and contract levels – integration of concepts

Source: own elaboration.

In Fig. 3 and attempt was made to graphically present the dependencies which we observe in the process of psychotherapy of a teenager, taking into consideration: 1) the persons involved in the treatment process, i.e. the adolescent, the parents, and the therapist (cf. Fig. 1), 2) the levels of the contract described by Berne (cf. Table 1) and 3) the Ego states in the structural model, which are activated both at the conscious level (I present this employing a continuous line) and at the unconscious level (dashed line) during contracting. The figure shows a slice (as if frozen in a frame) of the contracting process, which in its nature is a dynamic and changing process during psychotherapy. The contracting process presented above is a very complex and complicated activity, which is certainly subject to further analysis in subsequent stages of therapy. Monitoring the processes that the transactional analyst should take into account to maintain the balance between the work with the conscious and the unconscious part is important both in the process of contracting, which is the result of the consultation and in the changes of the contract (concerning the goal and tasks) during the process of psychotherapy.

When the therapist concentrates too much of the contract setting mainly on the conscious level i.e. between Ego states ( $P_2$ ,  $A_2$ , and  $C_2$ ) more accessible to the patient, parent, and psychotherapist by focusing on the analysis of the administrative and professional level of the contract, there is a risk of overlooking the processes present on the unconscious level i.e. the Ego states  $P_1$ ,  $A_1$ , and  $C_1$  and not taking sufficient account of the psychological level. In a three-cornered contract, there may be an additional danger that at one time the psychotherapist has to take into account what is happening at the unconscious level (i.e.  $P_1$ ,  $A_1$ , and  $C_1$ ) in the adolescent, at another time in the parents/legal guardians. Each party may unconsciously play out their hidden desires and conflicted expectations in the relationship, thereby boycotting or hindering (persisting in resistance) by activating defence mechanisms the achievement of change in psychotherapy.

The sense of security and predictability that the contract provides does not exempt the psychotherapist and the patient (and parents) from the fears and uncertainties that are part of the change process in psychotherapy. The transactional analysis emphasises that the most important function of the contract is to give structure in the often unclear (to the patient) psychotherapeutic process (Terlato, 2017, pp. 12–13; Sills, 2006, p. 9). This carries both a risk of loss and a potential gain. On the one hand, it may lead the therapist to focus so strongly on the conscious aspect of the contract that he/she activates unconscious defences against the complexity of what may arise in the relationship and the psychotherapy process. The therapist's defences may consequently lead to a limitation of creativity and competence (access to the Adult) on both the patient's and the therapist's side and to sustain the illusion of control and predictability (Terlato, 2017, pp. 12–13). On the other hand, it is an opportunity to build a stable therapeutic alliance with the patient, which will be the basis for achieving the established goals of psychotherapy (Cierpiatkowska, Frączek, 2017).

In contemporary relational approaches, alongside the classical understanding of the controlling function of the contract, greater therapeutic significance is attributed to the analysis and understanding of the complexity and multidimensionality of the therapeutic relationship at both conscious and unconscious levels (Hargaden, Sills, 2002, p. 55; Terlato, 2017, pp. 8–9). Focusing on one aspect of these complex processes causes various problems. A therapist who focuses excessively on the conscious aspects of the contract, i.e. the patient's conscious decision to participate in psychotherapy, may fail to take into account the unconscious aspects that emerge as the relationship develops. In the opposite situation, when the therapist focuses exclusively on the unconscious aspects of the contract it can lead to a disregard for what has been established at the conscious level (administrative and professional level). In other words, omitting to explain to the patient that what happens at the unconscious level (psychological

level) is related to what is established at the conscious level can lead to additional confusion and ambiguity for the patient. Whatever the source, the therapist may lose attention to the vital information flowing from the relationship that develops between them and the patient. A relationship of which the therapeutic alliance is an important element, being complex, ambiguous, and subject to constant natural and continuity-threatening fluctuations in therapy (Cierpiąłkowska, Frączek, 2017, pp. 131–133). In other words, the desire to control and include the patient into the contracting process plan may impede the development of the transference and countertransference process, thus blocking the possibility of the patient's unconscious relational needs to emerge (Hargaden, Sills, 2002).

The dynamics of the activation of transference reactions related to the obstruction of contractual goals can be observed both on the part of the adolescent and the parents. This requires the therapist to be particularly attentive to the most significant processes that are already set in motion during the initial consultation with both the adolescent and the parents, with particular attention to when the parent may step in and try to change the goals of the therapy, which are related to the activation of their unconscious processes, e.g. denying the experience of anxiety, observing the developing positive alliance between the child and the therapist may become a source of aggression (e.g. the parent forgets to provide the child with money or to inform about a planned departure at the time of the meeting) and, as a result, interrupt the process of the adolescent's therapy. The balance between working on the conscious aspects of the contract and taking into account the emerging competing goals that emerge on an unconscious level in the adolescent and parents is a very important competence not only relevant during the contract with the patient, but also during the whole process of psychotherapy.

## Conclusion

The presented issues show that the most important thing is to maintain the balance between the analysis of conscious and unconscious processes that appear in the relationship during the contract with the patient and his parents. The psychotherapist's ability to observe clinically significant indicators of unconscious mechanisms on the part of the parent is a helpful process in sustaining effective psychotherapy of the adolescent. It seems, however, that this is a state to which, like autonomy, we are constantly striving and that it seems impossible to achieve a constant and unchanging level, especially when we treat each patient as a conscious, spontaneous, and capable of intimacy individual who realizes being autonomous in many different ways.

In conclusion, a very important skill for every therapist working with adolescent patients is to establish a transparent, understandable, and feasible contract in the initial phase of work with the patient, taking also into account the context and expectations of his parents. It is helpful in this respect to improve one's qualifications, to have one's work regularly supervised, and to have one's psychotherapy. In other words, a constant search for one's professional path and increased awareness of oneself and one's relations.

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## Specyfika kontraktu trójstronnego w pracy psychoterapeutycznej z adolescentem i jego rodzicami

### Streszczenie

Analiza transakcyjna wniosła niepodważalny wkład w myślenie o kontrakcie, jego formule i znaczeniu w procesie psychoterapii. W artykule przedstawiono koncepcję kontraktu i procesu kontraktowania w ujęciu analizy transakcyjnej oraz jej implikacje w obszarze praktyki psychoterapeutycznej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem psychoterapii indywidualnej pacjentów nastoletnich. Omówiona została klasyczna koncepcja kontraktu Erica Berne'a (1966) oraz kontraktu trójstronnego Fanity English (1975) wraz ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem analizy jawnych i ukrytych procesów prowadzących do sukcesu i porażki w terapii adolescenta z perspektywy relacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej (Hargaden, Sills, 2002). W artykule zostały opisane także specyficzne problemy, na jakie może natrafić psychoterapeuta w pracy terapeutycznej z nastolatkiem i jego rodzicami z perspektywy rozwijającej się relacji trójstronnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kontrakt, proces kontraktowania, poziomy kontrakt, kontrakt trójstronny, psychoterapia nastolatka.





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## Psychopedagogy of meaning and value, that is about the relationship between existential therapy and transactional analysis (part 6)\*

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### Abstract

The article discusses existential therapy and its possible connections with transactional analysis in its educational dimension.

**Keywords:** existential therapy, transactional analysis, educational transactional analysis.

Man does not want to live at all costs, but all he wants is to live meaningfully\*\*.  
Victor Frankl, *Homo Patiens*, 1971

Existential psychology shows affinity to psychological humanistic approach in its many areas. These parallels are so clear that frequently these two trends are called by the same name of the humanistic-existential approach. Yet, existing differences consist mainly in the fact that whereas trends described as humanistic concentrate on various aspects of the Ego state structure and consequences deriving from it, existential trends focus more on the issues of values

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\* The article is an excerpt of a bigger study by J. Jagieła (2018). *Edukacyjna analiza transakcyjna na tle innych orientacji psychopedagogicznych*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie.

\*\* All translations – E. Haberko.

and sense of human life. Viewing critically both psychoanalysis and behaviourism, existential psychologists demonstrate their doubts also with regard to humanistic psychology. Especially the classical one by C. Rogers or A.H. Maslow. While they accuse psychoanalysis and behaviourism of treating people like objects, they think that in case of the humanistic approach although one intentionally wishes to attribute sense and dignity to a human being, at the same time they get closed in the narrowly understood and egotistic Ego state. They are isolated from the influence of the outside world and values existing there. The vision of the human being comprises solely someone who is egocentrically occupied with themselves and their acting motives. It is someone who seeks exclusively in themselves the justification for their development and their sense of existence. Such a way of thinking deprives a human being of responsibility for who they are and who they become as a result (Opoczyńska, 1999, pp. 201).

## Philosophical foundations of existentialism

Existential psychology originates from and takes its inspiration from existential philosophy to a much larger extent than other theoretical approaches and orientations. Therefore, many times one can have an impression there are no clear boundaries between these two separate areas. Hence, for many people the status of this trend among other psychological ones is uncertain, unclear and vague. It can be proved by the fact that in some extensive, well-known modern lexical studies the term of existential psychology does not appear at all (cf. Colman, 2009).

As it is known, existential philosophy (Latin *existential* – existence) presents a vision of a human being as individual and unique, often tragic in their earthly existence. It emphasizes the feeling of permanent imperfection of human nature. Man is a being tragically lonely in the face of God (theistic version of existentialism) or in the face of enormous time and space (atheistic version). They strive for salvation (theistic variant) or they want to achieve inner peace that shall give them freedom (non-religious variant). They acknowledge the primacy of existence over essence, which comes down to the belief that man can be understood mainly by analysing their individual being in the world. It means that man is first alive and exists, and later on they are aware of their existence and attribute some sense to it. Thus, a human being has got freedom expressed in the possibility of choice and is not determined by their fate. Among the precursors and representatives of philosophical existentialism the following authors are usually mentioned: Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) in the agnostic trend, regarded also as a representative of phenomenology, atheist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). On the Christian side,

we find Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Paul Tillich (1886–1965), or Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), close to Christianity. Other representatives of the trend are mentioned too: Martin Buber (1887–1965), Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), Nicol Abbagnano (1901–1990) or Miguel de Unamuno (1918–1972). Existentialism, as a philosophical trend shares its origins with widely-understood humanism, philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, hermeneutics and personalism. Existential themes can be found in films and books, where protagonists have a free choice and full responsibility for their actions, which, at the same time, generates fear, sense of hopelessness and leads to extreme pessimism. Existentialism can also be found in psychology and pedagogy.

## Psychology and existential therapy

Existential psychology tries to primarily answer the question: “Who is man?”, which other psychological trends tackle rarely or unwillingly, as Małgorzata Opoczyńska writes (Opoczyńska, 1999, pp. 10–11). In the opinion of representatives of this orientation, the aforesaid fundamental question shall be posed first, before a psychologist begins to get to know another human being, to understand them or initiate their therapy. It is a trend that was not formed thanks to one leader or a few precursors (like in case of psychoanalysis or behaviourism), but was born simultaneously in the twenties of the twentieth century thanks to many psychologists and psychiatrists in many European countries and in the United States. The most frequently mentioned names are: Eugène Minkowski (1885–1972), Viktor Emil Gebattel (1883–1976), and later on Ludwig Binswanger (1903–1990), Medard Boss (1903–1990), Frederik Johannes Buytendijk (1887–1974), or other distinguished authors such as Irving David Yalom (born in 1931), Viktor Emil Frankl (1905–1997) and Rollo May (1909–1994).

Antoni Kępiński (1918–1972) is considered to be a Polish representative of this trend in psychiatry, and to a large extent in psychology (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, pp. 79). The achievements of this author cannot be overestimated. Almost all his books were published posthumously, yet he is still known and present in memory of psychotherapists representing academic environment in Cracow.<sup>1</sup> A collection of articles and scientific studies published in various journals in 1972 under the title “The Rhythm of Life” (“Rytm Życia”) (Kępiński, 1972) is an exception here as they were released in the last moments of the author’s life. Books by Kępiński are still reissued and although they were written so many years ago,

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<sup>1</sup> A good example can be a collection of interviews conducted with a group of psychotherapists who began their professional career in the Psychiatry Clinic managed by A. Kępiński in the then Medical Academy in Cracow. M. Werszka (2013). *Psychoterapia to jest moja partia polityczna*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Różnica.

they still enjoy considerable popularity. They are accompanied with studies devoted to the author's achievements (e.g. Murawski, 1983; Jakubik, Maślowski, 1981; Maj, 2012), or selections of his aphorisms or constitutive terminology (Ryn, 1992, 2004). What is more, the author of this article is proud of devoting his first scientific article to the understanding of (artistic) work by Antoni Kępiński (Jagięła, 1985, pp. 5–12). An indefatigable propagator of this author's achievements, Zdzisław J. Ryn, wrote these words in a letter to the author of this article:

Wydawnictwo Literackie keeps re-issuing the books by master Kępiński, there are new studies in the pipeline, e.g. *Essays on Auschwitz [Eseje oświęcimskie]* [...]. In short, we do not celebrate consecutive anniversaries of Professor Kępiński's death, but anniversaries of His Resurrection!<sup>2</sup>

Not much can be added here, except for the fact that some books, e.g. *The Self-portrait of a Man (Autoportret człowieka)* have been already re-issued seven times.

Antoni Kępiński devoted one of the chapters in the book *Fundamental Issues of Contemporary Psychiatry (Podstawowe zagadnienia współczesnej psychiatrii)* to existentialism as a psychological concept (Kępiński, 1978, pp. 111–118). He reviews opinions of several leading representatives of this trend and presents a phenomenological foundation of getting to know the patient in psychiatric practice, which, as he claims, comes down to observation, somehow "a vista," without preliminary assumptions, attitudes, prejudice and accepted theory. Thanks to such an approach, one can discover new, formerly unnoticeable details and phenomena. Man is to be examined as the whole of one's being. He refers to typical existential differentiation between essence (nature, substance) and existence (being, becoming), giving priority to the latter one. In the statement "I am," the subject "I" means the essence, whereas the predicate "am" characterizes the existence, which determines becoming, awareness, activity and right to decide. It is also linked with the awareness of death as the word "to be" is inadvertently accompanied with "not to be." Similarly, human will, fear and guilt are linked with the concept of existence, shaped into the word "am." However, man does not exist in vacuum, but is a being located in space and time. Their relations with the world are expressed in the logical, biological and determined way (*Umwelt*), socially with their norms, meanings and meetings with other people (*Mitwelt*). They cannot objectify, which specially regards a therapeutic relation. The last aspect of human existence in the world is the way of perceiving oneself and assessing how one is able to realize oneself in this world (*Eigenwelt*). Kępiński finishes his deliberations on existential psychiatry with the following statement:

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<sup>2</sup> A letter of prof. Z.J. Ryn of 12 July 2004 r. in author's resources.

One can have many objections to the philosophical assumptions of existentialism, but it cannot be denied that it has contributed a lot to studying some psychopathological phenomena and has been helpful in debunking a false approach of a psychiatrist towards their patient – that of a subject towards an object (Kępiński, 1978, pp. 118).

Referring to the aforesaid words, one can say that many reasons contributed to the emergence the existential movement. One of them was dissatisfaction of some psychologists with previously practised academic psychology, which did not perceive “man as such” any more. It was more focused on explaining phenomena than on their thorough understanding. On the other hand, getting to know an individual without the primacy of underlying assumptions and theory offered a common ground for possible relations with phenomenology and hermeneutics concentrated on methods aiming at approaching inner human experience. What we can get to know about another individual depends on a direct and open relation, its quality and engagement of both parties in this relation. This relation differs from reductionist and somehow uneven learning in life sciences, where the learning subject gathers knowledge about their studied object. In the case of the existential approach, this relation resembles the “parallel” arrangement, especially present in therapeutic relations. The learning subject (therapist) is geared towards gaining knowledge about their object (client), but simultaneously the very same object becomes the subject of their therapist’s acquaintance. It was connected with the fact that “scientifically” and academically performed psychology provided few premises and clear suggestions for therapeutic practice. However, does existential psychology provide such premises? Rollo May states that “...the existential method can and should have a significant and far-reaching impact on practical therapy of patients, even though so far this method has not found its proper use” (May, 1989, pp. 152). Yet, this judgement is not really true. And although, as it has already been mentioned, existential therapy does not have one founder and it has not tried to become a homogenous school of therapy, it is not devoid of its character, distinguishing it from other trends of psychological counselling. “On the contrary,” like Małgorzata Opoczyńska writes, “it is exactly due to that fact that this approach is clearly and fundamentally different from other therapeutic schools and as such constitutes an alternative for their views concerning objectives and methods of “healing” people” (Opoczyńska, 1999, pp. 193).

One of leading representatives of existential therapy, who undoubtedly is Irvin D. Yalom (born in 1931), similarly to other representatives of this option, regarded the aforesaid trend as ambiguous and not rooted. In his fundamental work, *Existential Psychotherapy*, he writes about it in this way:

Existential psychotherapy is a homeless child. It does not really “belong” anywhere. It does not have its territory, its formal school, its institution; it is not well-perceived in better academic institutions. There is no association devoted to it, no scientific journal

(its few feeble offspring were annihilated in their childhood), stable family or founding fathers. It does though have genealogy – a few cousins and friends of the family dispersed all over the world, partly in the Old World, and partly in America (Yalom, 2008, pp. 21–22).

He also remarks that despite its ambiguity and lack of uniform subject rooting, many experienced therapists, regardless of which school they represent, use many aspects of existential approach in their practice (Yalom, 2008, pp. 12). He defines this trend in the simplest way possible: “Existential psychotherapy is a dynamic therapeutic approach focused on worries regarding existence” (Yalom, 2009, pp. 19). Dynamism means here rooting in Freudian understanding of contradictory mental forces, and he adds what he finds the most important aspect: “...these contradictory forces act at various levels of consciousness; in fact some of them are completely unconscious” (Yalom, 2009, pp. 20). Let us notice that Yalom’s reference to unconsciousness is slightly different than this of numerous representatives of this trend, who remain more distanced in their attitude to unconsciousness. Writing about relations between psychotherapy and religion, Yalom notices several links, though at the same time he is convinced that they are complex and full of tension. They have the same worries, deal with human despair, confession is after all a tête-à-tête relation, like in a psychotherapeutic surgery, where one explores their inner self, forgives themselves and others, and being a psychotherapist is not only a profession but a kind of vocation. “And yet,” the author writes, “it is still true that the most important convictions and the most fundamental practical approaches of psychotherapy and religious consolation are often quite contradictory” (Yalom, 2009, pp. 9). Yalom also claims that, similarly to other representatives of the humanistic and existential trend, therapy should not concentrate on theory but on relation. Existential issues have a significant impact on the nature of this relation. Finally, thinking about the sense of human life, reflection that Victor E. Frankl finds so familiar, he states that it is plague of all beings capable of thinking.

One of the most recognisable trends of existential psychotherapy is logotherapy developed by Victor E. Frankl (1905–1997). Its founder saw an opportunity of psychological help in searching the sense of life, role of freedom, responsibility and love in becoming oneself. Realising oneself via values such as: creativity, experiencing different things and acceptance of suffering, which are inseparably linked with human existence. According to Frankl, man is unity, not only mental and physical one, but the spiritual dimension of human existence should be also taken into account. All that constitutes unity in diversity, which does not equal dividing anything. The author believes that spirituality is not identical to consciousness, and spiritual unconsciousness is also religious unconsciousness. And although some of Frankl’s deliberations are of a religious nature, interpreters of his approach believe that he thought that religion should

not be combined with psychotherapy (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, pp. 153). This distinction comes down to one statement: “psychotherapy aims at healing the soul, religion aims at soul’s salvation” (Frankl, 1978, pp. 77). Let us give the floor to the very founder of logotherapy, who makes it more precise, writing as follows: “When our patient has got a solid foothold in religion, there are no contraindications to use their religious beliefs for therapeutic purposes, drawing from their spiritual resources” (Frankl, 2009, pp.117). Thus, it is not accidental that in some Catholic environments that approach other schools or trends of psychotherapy with a certain distance and criticism, Frankl’s achievements are received with acceptance and acknowledgement. In Poland, Frankl’s concept was propagated by, among all, rev. K. Popielski, professor of the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), privately a friend of the founder of logotherapy and its Polish version, nootherapy, and a form of psychological-pastoral counselling (Popielski, 1989, 1992, 1997).

Situations leading to lack of possibility to realise oneself spiritually in the area of values and a decreasing sense of purpose in life cause neurosis which Frankl called noogenic. “Noogenic neurosis,” as this author writes, “is not the result of contradictory drives and impulses, but rather derives from existential issues. Among the latter ones an important role is played by frustration of will to meaning” (Frankl, 2009, pp. 154). Logotherapy as a suggested form of psychological assistance is not to replace psychotherapy but to complete it. In this way, Frankl clearly broadens the meaning of psychotherapy, which becomes for him “practical” philosophy whose aim is not only healing a sick individual but “leading them to the truth” (Frankl, 1998, pp. 16). It might seem that Frankl cares more about helping people experiencing existential void than about treating the sick (Frankl, 2010, pp.111). Thus, sometimes, like Aleksander Nelicki does, this concept is defined as “metaclinical” (Nelicki, 1999, pp. 177–194), i. e. going beyond narrow and intentional removing reasons and symptoms of human problems, but reaching the depths of one’s sense of life.

Viktor E. Frankl developed several therapeutic techniques, among all, the technique of paradoxical intervention and de-reflection. In case of paradoxical intervention, it is about persuading the patient to experience situations causing fear, which leads to decreasing mental strain.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, de-reflection is to change the direction of destructive thoughts. The therapy process also includes Socratic dialogue, which especially concentrates on the patient’s system of values. Yet, Frankl thought that psychotherapy cannot be equated with a task, where a psychotherapist, like a skilled technician, fixes another wrongly operating human being. Techniques, though helpful at times, play a supporting role

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<sup>3</sup> It can be said that Frankl follows Democritus, who recommended to “Do what you are afraid of”.

here, atmosphere that the therapist brings into the meeting is of an utmost importance because the therapist cannot objectify the patient as in this way they objectify themselves. Therefore, a good therapist is a person whose help comes from the inside of their person. Frankl claims that logotherapy as a method of existential analysis can be a therapy for everyone.

Frankl's aloofness from himself and his concept, and his sense of humour can be well illustrated by an excerpt from one of his books.<sup>4</sup> He describes a situation when someone addressed him with a question if he was a psychoanalyst and how his concept differed from psychoanalysis. At the beginning, Frankl asked this person to explain first of all how they understood the concept of psychoanalysis. The guest, interested in logotherapy, answered as follows: "During psychoanalysis a patient has to lie on the couch and tell their therapist about things they often don't feel like talking about." Frankl responded to it in this way: "In this case, during logotherapy, a patient has to sit straight and listen to things they do not feel like listening to" (Frankl, 2009, pp. 149-150). There is a grain of truth in this anecdote, but it is a bit far from a real value and usefulness of this concept and fundamental differences that separate it from psychoanalysis. One of the main assumptions of logotherapy says that a man's main goal, like Frankl writes, is neither aspiration for pleasure nor avoidance of pain, but looking for sense in one's life. That is why we are even ready to suffer, of course on the condition that we give some sense to our suffering. Man is to look for the sense of life beyond themselves, "we are to answer and not to ask and the very life is a question" (Frankl, 1998, pp. 133). Thus, logotherapy is above all to become a therapy that allows us to uncover the sense of life of a person seeking help.

Comparing the three consecutive concepts represented by Freud, Adler and Frankl, one can frequently notice how they are reflected in the process of human ontological development. The period of childhood would refer to Freud, growing up with the desire of power to Adler, and mature striving for giving one's life some sense would be linked in Frankl's case with complete adulthood (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, pp. 148). Frankl himself confirms this remark quoting Peter R. Hofstätter: "Each of three mental instances has found its psychotherapeutic advocate, id – in Freud, ego – in Adler, and superego in C.G Jung, R. Allers and V. Frankl" (Frankl, 1971, pp. 23). Further on he adds: "Putting psychoanalytical jargon aside, treating it as usual *façon de parler*, one has to completely agree with it" (Frankl, 1971, pp. 23). Therefore, following the same reasoning and referring to transactional analysis it can be said that Freud embodies the interests of the Child ego state, Adler – the Adult ego state, and Frankl – the Parent ego state.

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<sup>4</sup> Let us add here that the book was sold in over 12 million copies; it can clearly show in how many world countries people seek an answer to the niggling question about the sense of life.



One should mention one more representative of the existential approach, i.e. Rollo May (1909–1994). Existential psychologists do not want to, as May says, link psychology with a certain philosophy, but they want to be aware of ontological reasons for their actions (e.g. therapeutic ones), which are otherwise somehow suspended in the air and cannot have any lasting significance (May, 1989, pp. 152). In his studies, May focuses mainly on the issue of fear, which he treats in many cases as a developmental factor, and he devotes a lot of place to the feeling of love. Constructive fear helps one face dangerous situations. In case of destructive fear of a neurotic nature, which is responsible for inner anxiety, the situation is opposite. May writes that “It is characterized by limited consciousness, loss of orientation; and when such a state lasts longer, there emerges a feeling of depersonalisation and apathy” (May, 1989, pp. 50). In case of love, he distinguished its five types: *libido* (as a biological demonstration of gender), *eros* (mental desire of unity with the loved one), *philia*<sup>5</sup> (intimate closeness between people devoid of sexuality), *agape* (unconditional love expressed with care about a given person) and *manic* (impulses and emotions driven by love). And although in May’s opinion sexuality should not be separated from love, love is the aim of worthy human life, contrary to sexual desire which is egoistic in nature.

Showing positive aspects of the aforesaid existential trend in psychology, one cannot ignore the fact that also this orientation, like other ones, attracts criticism. Putting aside this obvious statement that academic psychology accuses it of not being scientific enough, talking about some authors identifying themselves with existentialism, it is said that their categories seem to have some shortcomings. For example, it is said that they do not define fundamental existential terms which the whole concept relies on. Several terms (e.g. being, freedom, subjectivity, etc.) are most often explained one with the help of another, thus not referring to any internal reference systems.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, like in case of Rollo May’s views, despite declared relations with existential philosophy, existential psychology is not completely rooted in it, and frequent references to terms close to existentialism only illusorily “make an impression of dealing with human reality” (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, pp. 139).

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<sup>5</sup> This term shall be used by the author later on in another publication in the context of integrated personality. Jagieła, J. (2013). *Integracja osobowości jako wartość edukacyjna. Perspektywa edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej*. In: A. Gofron, K. Motyl (eds.), *Podstawy edukacji. Sfera wartości i zasad – konstruowanie przedmiotu*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, pp. 119–139.

<sup>6</sup> This mistake is described in methodology as *ignotum per ignotum* (the unknown by the more unknown).

## Existential psychopedagogy

It is difficult to find examples showing a clear use of the existential approach (e.g. logotherapy) during school lessons. However, it seems that, like it was said before, existential therapy should not replace other directions, solutions or corrective methods, but constitute their foundation and completion, and the existential orientation does not have to dominate and eliminate other ways of acting but can provide them with an axiological direction and foundation. At the same time, if Frankl's achievements shall be associated with the issues of values and discovering the sense of one's own life, it is difficult to imagine a teacher, head teacher or a therapist to completely ignore the aforesaid issues. It can seem even more important because, as we can reasonably suppose, some students or participants of therapeutic meetings have smaller or bigger deficits in the normative area of the Parent ego state. Therefore, a teacher can create, without any pressure and imposing anything, a fantastic opportunity for children and teenagers to discover values and look for sense of their own existence. And although Frankl did not devote much attention to teaching and educating, his achievements constitute an important inspiration for other authors to undertake steps in this area. As far as the logotherapy author's interest in educational issues is concerned, the concept was already formed in secondary school, when he got interested in social work, questions of help for social outcasts, started working with failed suicide attempt minor victims, people who had lost any sense in life. Being only 21 years old, like Jan T. Michalski says, in his publications he postulated establishment of school therapy centres for teenagers. After ten years of therapeutic practice he stated that teenager's mental issues derived from lack of sexual education, family conflicts, school and economical difficulties and personality disorders (Michalski, 2011, pp. 26). Other researchers of Frankl's works appreciate the value of this concept in the educational aspect, mainly in its multidimensional character, which offers a possibility to overcome contemporary existential crises of a young man, caused by losing their sense and purpose of life, at the same time giving hope for solving many educational problems deriving from negligence of spiritual needs (Wolicki, 2007, pp. 9–10). J. Wiśniewska claims that the logotherapeutic concept of education is unique and efficient because logotherapy makes attempts to meet the basic human need, which is striving to determine the sense of one's life. Realising the aforesaid aim is a way to overcome existential void and frustration, which often destroys a contemporary man and does not let them enjoy mental health, development and maturity (Wiśniewska, 2013). Also foreign authors perceive the value of logotherapy in its pedagogical aspect, seeing its special usefulness in discovering the sense of life by children and teenagers (Heinelt, 1986, pp. 78). Many articles dealing with pedagogical aspects of logotherapy were published in an international review

*The International Forum for Logotherapy*. Logotherapy provides foundations for pedagogical anthropology, claims Karl Dienelt (Dienelt, 1955, 1970, 1979). Further on, Joan Carles Melich remarks that logotherapy builds philosophical and anthropological foundations for the theory of pedagogy (Melich, 1993, pp. 72). In Bernard R. Dansard's view, logotherapy offers means that support education. He notices how important logotherapy is in pedagogy (Dansard, 1993, pp. 89–96). Ludwig Kerstiens wants pedagogy to be open to sense (Kerstiens, 1978, pp. 85). In the opinion of E. Lukas, logotherapeutic education is based on three pillars: free will, will to live and sense of life. Logotherapy can support the development of young people, can favour finding and developing their full life potential (Lukas, 1989). According to W. Kurz, Frankl's theories showing will to live and sense of life are particularly useful in creating the concept of religious education (Kurz, 1989, pp. 237). Similarly, A.G. Wirth even shows that logotherapy and its image of a man can be a source of spiritual strength for teachers and students (Wirth, 1979, pp. 237). Hans Nobert Hoppe claims that the system of logotherapeutic education must treat a man as a creature equipped with their spiritual dimension, freedom, responsibility, capability of self-transcendence. He suggests transferring fundamental ideas of logotherapy into the educational practice based on the integral vision of logotherapeutic education that also takes adults into account (Hoppe, 1989). Also L. Tarner (Tarner, 1994) offers a proposition of integral pedagogy understood in this way. On the other hand, H. Frank suggests that pedagogical work should be geared towards the future, make one sensitive to possibilities of finding sense, and should not limit itself to conveying knowledge. Children and teenagers have to learn in their families and at school to discover will to meaning and sense of life (Frank, 1994). Concluding, one can quote an opinion of B.Z. Hirsch, who states that logotherapy is orientated towards the future, prepares for dealing with problems that young people might encounter in the future, and the practice of logotherapy might prove useful in counselling available at school (Hirsch, 1995). This short review of foreign authors shows us that Viktor E. Frankl's concept constitutes a constant inspiration for teachers and educators, who find an important pedagogical message in it.

In Polish pedagogy, the existential trend was represented most comprehensively by Janusz Tarnowski (1919–2012). He expressed his view writing that

Among various trends nowadays gaining more and more significance, there is existential philosophy, which focuses its interests on an individual and sense (or no sense) of their life. As this direction of research cannot be unfamiliar to Christian pedagogy, its confrontation with existentialism is inevitable (Tarnowski, 1974, pp. 1; 1982, pp. 5).

He made a dialogue and a meeting central concepts of his vision of education for peace, and he devoted popular science publications to them. An example can be a book *How to Educate? (Jak wychowywać?)* (Tarnowski, 1993). Janusz Tarnowski also noticed aspects of existential pedagogy in the achievements

of Janusz Korczak (1878 or 1879–1942). He associated it with Korczak's understanding of a dialogue, which was close to his, and which was expressed in partner-like relations between adults and a child who is already treated like a man and is not to become a man sometime in the future. One type of dialogue he wrote about in the context of Korczak's pedagogy was an existential dialogue, which was linked with three situations: guilt, joy and suffering, and speaking more precisely with co-guilt, co-joy and co-suffering of an adult with a child. The realization of the dialogue understood in such a way, i.e. the one between a responsible adult and children is best expressed in well-known circumstances of Korczak's death, which Tarnawski writes about in the following way: "The decision of fraternizing with children at the moment of death was so to speak in advance organically integrated with intense, existential connection with them" (Tarnawski, 1990, pp. 81–86). Therefore, concluding, one might try to find relations between the existential approach and transactional analysis in its educational context.

## Existential aspects of transactional analysis

In his book *Existential Psychotherapy* (2008), Irvin D. Yalom, referring to four (like he calls them) human "final worries" (death, freedom, isolation and sense), looks critically at transactional analysis in the context of human freedom and decisions. As he writes, it is difficult to imagine freedom of deciding about oneself without free will and without the right to choose accompanying the possibility to make a decision. At this point, he lists and discusses five types of human decisions (rational, volitional, drifting, impulsive and based on changing one's point of view), distinguished by a transactionalist, William James (Yalom, 2008, pp. 324). In this way, he critically refers to known transactional early-childhood script decisions. He questions the awareness of decisions made by a child and placing them in real time, decisions that later impact their unconscious script, personality variables and repetitive interpersonal relations. Irving D. Yalom's doubts also concern the process of re-decision, in which a therapist comes back to this moment with a suggestion of taking a rational decision from their point of view this time. The problem, the author writes, lies in the fact that it might happen that it concerns completely different decisions (as we might guess from the text); other reservations concern the fact that the client is allegedly forced to work on unconsciousness forces with the help of consciousness. "In this radical opinion on taking decisions there is no place for the subtlety of the developmental process," Yalom writes (Yalom, 2008, pp. 325). He also claims that the structure of one's character is not a consequence of a single, even crucial decision, but constitutes the outcome of many choices, which develop throughout

one's lifetime. What is more, a man, thanks to their will, can accept or reject offered solutions.

Not entering into a polemic about this view, it is still worth asking only one, it seems, crucial question: does that power of free will also regard a child at an early stage of its development, i.e. when the most important traits of its mental state and character are being formed? It is also difficult to deny the fact that the dynamics of developmental changes differs depending on a stage of this development. What else is psychoanalysis and this inside but revealing with the help of consciousness what can be found in the area of unconsciousness (psychoanalysis is sometimes defined in the shortest way possible as "studying irrational phenomena with the help of the rational method"). Thus, should not consciousness be the last instance man relies on?

Let us put a full stop here. We began to look for relations connecting psychology and existential psychotherapy with TA by criticizing the latter one, whereas it is interesting to notice with how much reverence and awareness of meaning Eric Berne approached existential issues in his concept. They occupy a few pages in this book *Principles of Group Treatment*. In the chapter devoted to existential analysis Berne writes as follows: "TA shares with existential analysis a big respect and interest in such personality features as honesty, sincerity, integrity and autonomy and very touching manifestations of social meetings and closeness" (Berne, 1966, pp. 305). Further on, he thinks about the role and meaning of *self*. He writes that "*Self* in its existential sense is recognized and appreciated by transactional analysis. It is experienced as an ego state with a lot of free energy. This energy allowing to feel "the real self" can occur at a given time, one by one in the Parent, Adult and Child ego state" (Berne, 1966, pp. 305). He claims that control over *Self* is attributed more to poets, philosophers or theologians than psychotherapists.

A TA patient learns to control free energy, increase it and transfer their "real *Self*" between different ego states as acts of their will. They learn autonomy and develop their sincerity. It is paradoxical that a person capable of controlling their *Self* should be described in the philosophical and existential context but not with the help of TA notions. It creates opportunities for philosophers, theologians, poets for cooperation with psychotherapists and reflecting upon the meaning of these basic values (Berne, 1966, pp. 305).

There is also a reflection on the question of psychological games, or a racket.<sup>7</sup>

Games by definition – Berne writes – are perceived from an existential point of view as evil. A TA ideal are interpersonal relationships devoid of games. But, on the other hand,

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<sup>7</sup> Racket is a pattern of unconscious script behaviours being a source of cheating and manipulating the environment, thus making a given person experience negative substitute feelings, [in:] Jagieła, J. (2012). *Słownik analizy transakcyjnej*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo AJD, pp. 168–169.

games provide socially interesting ways of time structuring. Thus, everyone takes their independent decision which games they choose and how often they play them and in whose company – so as to maintain one's identity and sincerity. One may also abandon games (Berne, 1966, pp. 307).

Thus, Berne notices the insignificance and insidiousness of psychological games in interpersonal relations, but, with contrariness and inquisitiveness typical of a researcher, he notices their interesting aspect as a psychological form of spending leisure time. Games are accompanied with racket that still requires further analysis:

The question of a relation between such feelings as the sense of guilt, being hurt, fear or inadequacy is not completely answered in TA. The critical point is transferring these feelings from the Child to the Adult ego state (Berne, 1966, pp. 307).

The script aspect, remaining in the area of important research of TA, has got its existential dimension as well. Reflecting on it does not always bring positive conclusions. Berne writes about it as follows:

Nearly whole human activity is programmed to pursue and fulfil the early-child script, hence the feeling of autonomy is almost always an illusion. This illusion causes suffering of the human race as it happens that consciousness, sincerity, creativity and intimacy are possible only to few lucky ones. For the rest of the human race other people seem to be mainly objects of manipulation. They have to be invited, persuaded, seduced or forced to play appropriate roles, strengthen the protagonist's position and fulfil the script (Berne, 1966, pp. 310).

Existential optimism occurs when someone is consciously capable of getting rid of one's script and undertaken games, and meets a person similar to themselves.

A person freed from their script can see the world from a different perspective (or rather the old and long-forgotten one). A sincere relation takes place when such a person freed from games meets another, similar person. Such a meeting is probably the highest form of relation, which existentialists call an *encounter*. In TA terminology, an *encounter* is preparation for the relation of closeness and intimacy (Berne, 1966, pp. 310).

Finally, referring to Berne, let us quote what he said about therapeutic issues both in the context of existential analysis and transactional analysis. It is worth doing as the aforesaid book has not been translated into Polish. This observation shows one of key psychopathological issues, where depression meets despair and anger, though constituting separate components. What does Berne think about it?

TA, similarly to existential analysis, differentiates the terms of depression and despair. Depression is the outcome of a dialogue between the Parent and the Child ego states, and despair is the result of therapeutic failure or interrupting a game or a script. Then, the patient tries to reconstruct the game and this leads to anger and frustration as the therapist tries to prevent it (Berne, 1966, pp. 311).

However, an extract in which the author refers to human disappointment, which happens when one gets rid of early-child illusions, is especially worth our attention.

Disappointment is different from depression and despair. The original script protocol formed in early childhood contains elements of magic, is developed at an archaic level. It might be the reason of failure in therapy. The patient has to live in the world without Santa Claus, one has to confront various existential problems, necessity of choice, absurdity. One has to confront the illusion of the script. Then, the main feeling is disappointment and a lot depends on the therapists competencies. It might be the therapist's last existential task – separate disappointment from anger (Berne, 1966, pp. 311).

For a therapist it is a great existential challenge as illusions are obstacles and adversities on the path of one's development. In his brilliant book (one has to appreciate it despite its controversial criticism of TA), *The Gift of Therapy* (Yalom, 2003, pp. 1), Irvin D. Yalom, formulates, first and foremost, a clear and explicit recommendation for young therapists: "Remove obstacles from the path of development." This development is often limited or hindered because of various mental disorders. Being at the beginning of his own professional career, he adopted this directive, which changed his approach to psychotherapy forever. It freed him from the compulsion of taking many steps which, in this perspective, turned out unnecessary. It made him realise that "...I just have to recognize and remove obstacles. The rest shall come on its own thanks to self-realisation forces operating in a given patient" (Yalom, 2003, pp. 1). These disorders can be understood as a certain illusion (Latin *illuso* – scorn, joke, illusion), a given person finds themselves in. As an illusion is nothing else but "[...] an erroneous presentation of a reality fragment" (Podsiad, Więckowski, 1983, pp. 148). Using the language of contemporary pop-culture, one may have an impression that patients in need of therapy live in a kind of *Matrix*.<sup>8</sup> Let us point out that in the Wachowskis' film, people lived in the world created by a computer programme giving an impression of authentic reality. It is similar in case of mental disorders. It should be emphasized here that this world is not completely distorted, falsified and entirely false, it does not create new facts or it does not deny them, but deforms them in a peculiar way, changes the perspective and redrafts. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in case of neurosis. In such a case, the patient can describe their symptoms and is partially able to differentiate themselves from the object (contrary to the case of psychosis or borderline disorders) and as a result, to a certain extent, stays in touch with reality. Only their Feeling-Self is affected, Watching-Self does not suffer, hence a neurotic patient is not completely disoriented. The so-called *stupiditas neurotica*<sup>9</sup> can be a good example

<sup>8</sup> *Matrix* – an American movie of 1999, directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski.

<sup>9</sup> *Stupiditas neurotica* – also called "neurotic stupor" consists in demonstrating a lower than usual intellectual level in challenging situations.

here. In *The Little Prince*, the character of a lamplighter represents a person suffering from neurosis. He keeps extinguishing and relighting the lamp-post, blindly following orders, although there is no need to do that as the planet does not move in the same way it used to (De Saint-Exupéry, 1992, pp. 44). A person under the influence of their script functions in a similar way. In case of psychoses, illusoriness takes the most dramatic form of delusions and hallucinations. On the other hand, particular personality adaptations, which constitute a significant area of TA studies (Joines, Steward, 2002; Ware, 1983, pp. 11–19), create a different image of illusions depending on their character typology. For a schizoid person it will be an illusion of their own existential safety in danger. A paranoid person creates their own, closed world in a similar way, based on lack of trust in their surroundings. A person demonstrating moral issues does not distinguish their and other's needs, and a symbiotic person lives in their constant dependence on others. A narcissistic individual, on the other hand, constantly defends their feeling of importance and tries to prove their worth to an indifferent world. Masochistic people are trapped by their sacrifice and freedom, whereas histrionic people immaturely long for love and take great care of their own attractiveness. A person suffering from OCPD render to the illusion of excellence, exaggerated perfection and strict discipline. One may sometimes have an impression that all those illusions let people live, or function, more precisely, as change is regarded as something impossible or dangerous. In his book *Droga donikąd*, Józef Mackiewicz writes similarly to Berne:

Human nature due to its imperfection is not capable of learning absolute truth. In these circumstances a lie in a mental dimension is as natural as, let us say, the presence of air, water, etc., which we cannot survive without in a physical dimension (Mackiewicz, 2011, pp. 298).

It is a sad existential conclusion in the context of human life. However, is it completely true in its pessimism and a tragic nature of human fate? Does it not create an opportunity for education and correcting students' and charges' existential approaches towards themselves, others and the surrounding world?

Existential themes occur in transactional analysis also in the context of frequently mentioned existential positions, alternatively called life positions. They clearly refer to the well-know relation I-You, which we find in Martin Buber's works (Buber, 1992). However, this relation is shown from a slightly different perspective and it acquires a bigger significance. We also find parallels to the characteristic of the human approach "from" and "to" described by A. Kępiński:

Basic emotional approaches ("to" and "from" – I love and hate) can be realized only in relation to another human being [...]. That is why this attitude towards another person contains hidden ambivalence (I love and I hate). That is why another person decreases anxiety and evokes it at the same time (Ryn, ed. 1992, pp. 69).



It is an issue which has been attracting researchers' attention for a long time. They have shown how important it is in developing individual and social identity, or in shaping an individual's self-knowledge, their readiness to engage in others' matters, and developing a defensive approach in the conditions when one's identity is threatened (Jarymowicz, ed., 1988).

The classification of existential positions was initiated by E. Berne when transactional analysis was being formed (Berne, 1962, pp. 10–23). He came back to it in one of his last books, making its meaning broader and more profound (Berne, 1998, pp. 115–127, 529). Other foreign authors, well-known in Poland, who dealt with TA also frequently referred to the aforementioned subject matter (e.g. Harris, 1987, pp. 56–70; Hay, 2010, pp. 65–90; James, Jongeward, 1994, pp. 62–64; Rogoll, 1989, pp. 47–49, and many others). Many Polish researchers did not ignore it either (e.g. Cichocka, Suchańska, 1989, pp. 35; Cierpiatowka, Nowicka-Gawęcka, 1992, pp. 109–110; Jagieła, 1998, pp. V–VI and others).

Existential positions, putting it simply, are fundamental convictions of a given person about themselves and other people. The aforesaid four fundamental life positions<sup>10</sup> are formed and develop early in one's life, serving later on to justify one's behaviour and decisions, initiate certain games, or confirm a given script. They determine how one views fundamental values and builds their sense of life with regard to themselves and others. Three first life positions are of an unconscious and to a great extent emotional nature, developed by us and by others, whereas the last one (+,+) is a conscious choice of an adult person. Ted Novey describe that position as specifically understood "medicine", which solves 95% of problems psychotherapy clients suffer from (Novey, 1980, pp. 135–139). Nancy Porter is of a similar opinion when she explains in her article how we should understand the statement 'I am OK. and you are OK.' She writes:

Let us say it clearly and simply. Each human being is precious and it has to be taken into account. That is what we say when we claim that I am OK. and you are OK. [...] I am glad and moved that we managed to use such a simple language in transactional analysis to express our fundamental and very humanitarian existential approach, which ITAA members confirm every day in their actions (Porter, 1981, pp. 117).

Apart from that we can add that this four-position fundamental interpretation has its more complex formula developed by many authors, e.g. besides four bilateral life positions, there are eight further positions, multilateral, unstable or redundant (marked with a symbol '?'). Many transactional analysts noticed in existential positions several contexts and themes worth more profound reflections and references to occurring problems, circumstances or groups of people.

<sup>10</sup> Let us revise: I am not OK. – You are OK. (-, +); I am not OK. – You are not OK. (-, -); I am OK. – You are not OK. (+, -); I am OK. – You are OK. (+,+).

It is impossible to present a complete image of these inquiries, yet let us mention some authors and their studies.

Tony White, an Australian psychologist and supervisor, running his private therapeutic practice, summarises achievements of various authors, concerning existential positions, and proposes his own model, which he regards as more useful in psychological help (White, 1994, pp. 269–276; 1997, pp. 57–64). Thus, he proposes to use not four but seven life positions.<sup>11</sup> He concerns them crucial in clinical practice, though he admits in the conclusions of his articles that he might be accused of making the already existing theory too complicated.

On the other hand, Southey Swede compared all Eric Berne's opinions on life positions with those of other authors such as Franklin Ernst, Edgar Stuntz, William Greene, or Karen Horney (Swede, 1978, pp. 59–62). In the catalogue, recapitulating her findings, she lists every accepted position and its various aspects such as: ways of problem solving and using time, transactional games played and benefits and signs of recognition received thanks to them, typical script slogans, characteristic forms of activity, and finally, typical inner Child ego states.

Since Berne distinguished those particular existential positions, many authors have been trying to measure them with the help of standard tests and questionnaires. An article by Frederick D. Kramer, a member of the International Transactional Analysis Association, professor of psychology at Concordia College in Portland, Oregon, can be a good example (Kramer, 1978, pp. 166–168). In his publication he describes a test for measuring basic life positions. A tool consists of 40 simple statements based on a Likert scale, offering a possibility to respond to all of them within 10–15 minutes. It should be emphasized that the test, though very simplified in comparison to later solutions, meets strict psychometric standards with its high reliability and accuracy. The article presents and discusses interesting differences in levels of life positions noted in the research of cross-sectional age groups. The author also made an attempt to explain them and pointed to possible reasons of differences occurring between particular age groups.

Almost twenty five years later, another author, Frederick A. Boholst, comes back to the idea of developing a scale that would allow to study existential positions (Boholst, 2002, pp. 28–32). He makes his method subject to a thorough factor analysis, which allows him to acknowledge its considerable efficiency in clinical practice. However, he makes it clear that its use and standardization should have its local and cultural adaptations, and remarks that further research of his scale might shed light on developmental aspects of transactional analysis. Three years later, he addresses this issue again with two other authors, analysing, with the help of purely theoretical speculations, the questions of the so-

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<sup>11</sup> 1. (+,?), 2. (-,?), 3. (-,-), 4. (-, --), 5. (++,+), 6. (+,+), 7. (+, -).

called attachment and the separation-individualisation stage in an individual's development (Boholst, Boholst, Mende, 2005, pp. 62–67).

To a large extent, K. Harley also refers to existential positions and attachment when he shows relations between the achievements of Eric Berne and Melanie Klein. He suggests that the proposition of four existential positions with further amendments of this model would benefit from taking into account the perspective of early attachments. He tries to prove his statement by referring to a number of examples from his own clinical practice. He writes in the conclusion that

Existential positions of transactional analysis provide a shortened description of developmental phases. Yet, Klein offers an inside in the quality and stages of this development. An inseparable element of Klein's developmental structure is his description of how psychopathology was formed, which has its implications in clinical treatment. Studying the correspondences between Berne and Klein, I offer getting our roots back, to add a deeper dimension to the theory and practice of transactional analysis (Harley, 2006, pp. 252–269).

When it comes to Fenita English, she analyses particular existential positions in their developmental context, referring frequently to Rene Spitz and to Melanie Klein and other representatives of the psychoanalytic object relations theory (English, 1975, pp. 416–419). This very author and her findings are quoted by a Swiss psychotherapist Jenni Hine, when she relates the significance of four life positions to couples therapy (Hinne, 1982, pp. 190–194). In her opinion, it is an underestimated tool which lets partners see features and shortcomings of their relation and prevent their difficult mutual references. She shows such situations using examples from her therapeutic sessions. This educative illustration of symptoms and presentation of their causes offers relief in experienced tension, opens up one's perception and focus on the situation "here and now", favours closeness and clearly accelerates the process of treatment.

Two American educational psychology theorists, Marvin J. Fine and John P. Poggio, this time adopting not the psychoanalytic object relations theory but behavioural orientation, tried to attribute particular behaviours to given life positions (Fine, Poggio, 1977, pp. 250–356). They claim that the results prove the rightness of fundamental assumptions of transactional analysis formulated beforehand in an intuitive way.

John G. Allen and Dorothy Weeb from the Faculty of Psychology of the Northern Illinois University in DeKalb tried to link life positions of their researched subjects to administering signs of recognition and experiencing a positive mood (Allen, Webb, 1975, pp. 227–223). In the light of their research in a group of students, one could see a clear connection between a tendency to give positive strokes to oneself and others and experiencing positive emotions as far as people adopting the fourth, aforesaid, life position (+,+) were concerned. This life position is unanimously regarded by all transactional analysts

as the most optimal existential position. The editors of *Transactional Analysis Journal*, where this article was published, published the text despite several factual and methodological reservations (e.g. lack of taking into account negative signs of recognition in the research), admitting that the publication was inspiring and encouraging to conduct further studies in this area.

Charles H. Peterson shares the view of Eric Berne quoted in the book *Games People Play*, which says that due to a few ways of game classification, only a game based on existential positions can be called systematic and scientific (Peterson, 1976, pp. 381–383). Considering some game types, the author also points to the relation of a game type to an adopted existential orientation. He also remarks that the therapist's awareness of their patient's life position and their life position identified on the basis of psychological games played by them is crucial in defining at the beginning the patient's engagement level and energy they would be able to contribute to this therapy, and as a result, the change of their situation.

Three authors, Sandra S. Andrews, Diana C. Conrad and Marvin J. Fine, conducted a research with a sample of fifteen boys and the same number of girls in the last grade of college (Andrews, Fine, Conrad, 1977, pp. 357–360). It concerned the stability of a given adapted life position in comparison with other peers, school situations and family relations. This research proved that despite the view of Thomas A. Harris (Harris, 1987, pp. 56–70), these positions can change depending on places and circumstances. Thus, they are not deeply rooted and they are subject to change. However, it seems that the authors did not sufficiently take into account the subjects' developmental stage, which is, as we know, not very stable either as far as other personality traits are concerned. James H. Morrison reaches similar conclusions about the lack of stability of life positions and he states that conflict situations are an intermediate variable that can significantly influence one's behaviour regardless of originally adopted and declared life position (Morrison, 1978, pp. 250–254).

Maggie Hunt-Cohn, an American writer and poet permanently living in Georgia, notices an important relation between one's life position and loneliness (Hunt-Cohn, 1994, pp. 293–294). The feeling of loneliness is the result of lack of sufficient social contacts, a state that might impact both a child's development and the way older people function. It decreases one's self-esteem,<sup>12</sup> but also influences negative assessment of other people's value. The effects of loneliness can be noticed in elderly people residing in long-term care centres, for whom intensified social contacts might improve their functioning in the area of thinking processes and dealing with everyday activities. Understanding oneself and others is a factor that allows people to feel that they are OK. In other tests, links

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<sup>12</sup> Self-esteem is called OKness in TA, whereas lack of it is called non-OKness.

between four life positions and the feeling of shame were studied. The subject matter was studied before by other researchers in the context of social control (English, 1994, pp. 24–28). Molly Cole comes back to the feeling of shame as a psychological phenomenon inseparably linked with the feeling of being or not being OK (Cole, 1998, pp. 152–156).

On the other hand, Charles McFarren shows correspondences between self-esteem and narcissism (McFarren, 1998, pp. 244–250). He is a certified transactional analyst, specialising in clinical practice, teacher, therapist and consultant in the area of organizational development. He lives and works in Bolivia, being a representative of several non-governmental organisations as well as an active member of the Methodist Church. He relates the question of narcissism to two personally studied examples. One of them was a leader of a destructive religious group, displaying all the characteristics of a sect, which one member of his family got engaged in. The author has no doubts writing, “When I consult professional literature, I have no doubts that many sect leaders are narcissists.” The second analysed example are Bolivian political leaders using demagoguery and manipulating big group of people by controlling radio, press and television. What links them can be described as “psycho-terror” used by them. Their approach is inseparably linked with their adopted life position (+, -) ambivalently moving around a seemingly contradictory position (-, +). It seems though that the author does not sufficiently notice this ambivalence that can be treated like a key to understanding narcissism and psychopathic attitudes. Concluding his text, he shares a moving reflection on how much it cost him in life to deal with narcissists and maintain his own existential position (+,+).

On the other hand, the reflections of Alan Jacobs might sound controversial. He criticises several former publications and postulates to separate separately studied and empirically described existential positions and their moral judgement. He considers such an approach unacceptable (Jacobs, 1997, pp. 197–206). It is difficult to share such an opinion when one can discern a broader, not strictly scientific, point of view, like the author does. And one keeps analysing various aspects of human existence also in the context of loneliness, shame or others’ damaging behaviour that clearly has ethical connotations.

The aforesaid results of research, inquiries and analyses presented in recent years in the journal devoted to TA confirm that existential issues are still present in authors’ reflections and in research dealing with transactional analysis. It attracts their attention and still constitutes a source of creative inspiration. It can be also clearly noticed that each publication advances our understanding of existential aspects referring to us and other people, which were developed and are still being developed within the framework of transactional analysis. Nevertheless, educational issues do not attract the aforesaid authors’ attention. It is Polish authors who significantly feel that gap and focus on the issue of existential

positions in the context of educational transactional analysis, especially relations between a teacher and their students. These are researchers mainly belonging to the Educational Transactional Analysis Research Team at Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa (Gębuś, 1997, pp. 111–121; Gózdź, Wysocka, 2013, pp. 69–86; Gózdź, Wysocka, 2014, pp. 95–116; Motyl, 2016, pp. 241–252). Thus, one can hope that further publications and research of the authors belonging to this group shall contribute to propagating this subject matter as a significant, though not always noticed, issue of contemporary psychopedagogy.

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## **Psychopedagogika sensu i wartości, czyli o związkach terapii egzystencjalnej z analizą transakcyjną (cz. 6)**

### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł omawia terapię egzystencjalną oraz jej ewentualne związki z analizą transakcyjną w jej edukacyjnym wydaniu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** terapia egzystencjalna, analiza transakcyjna, edukacyjna analiza transakcyjna.

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## How to Maintain Self-Esteem and Inner Balance in Discounting Transactions

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### Abstract

Discounting is a process that accompanies the life of every person. And, although this is one of the ways to distort reality, it is necessary for maintaining the stability of the world perception. Discounting can refer to events, phenomena, tasks, objects, as well as people. It manifests itself in an internal dialogue. However, sometimes transactions are used in communication, in which internal discounting is transferred to the outside world and to other people (I call them “discounting transactions”). This often looks like non-constructive criticism. In many cases, people experience unpleasant feelings when they are discounted. The degree of unpleasant feelings and the possibility of restoring inner comfort depend on the Script. The author examines this process using the concepts of Transactional Analysis and offers a specific express methodology for working with internal dialogue. As a result of the application of the technique, the internal state of a person changes, self-esteem is restored and the possibility of Adult reaction to the Critic’s stimulus appears.

**Keywords:** transaction, discounting, script.

### Theoretical provisions

The theory is based on E. Berne’s concepts of Functional ego states and Life Positions, K. Steiner’s elaboration of the Critical Parent (CP), P. Clarkson’s supportive Nurturing Parent (NP), propositions of R. and M. Gouldings about the use of external elements of behavior to describe internal dialogue, Schiff’s ideas

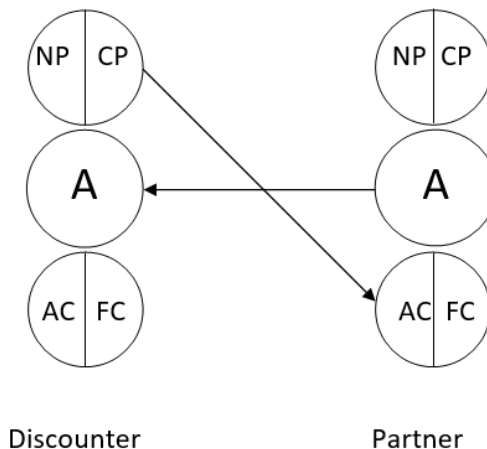
about Discounting, and E. Stuntz's many-chair method (Berne 1972, Steiner 2004, Clarkson 1992, Gouldings 1997, Schiffs 1971). E. Berne defined ego states as "consistent systems of ideas and feelings associated with the corresponding models of behavior" (Berne, 1966). To describe behavior, E. Berne used a separate model, which he called the Functional Model of ego states (Berne, 1972). Here he outlined that a person can manifest as a Controlling Parent (structuring, regulating, punishing), Nurturing Parent (supportive, soothing, caring), Adapted Child (obeying or rebelling in response to the actions of the Parent), and Free Child (manifesting natural behavior, creative, impulsive). E. Berne and K. Steiner emphasized that a dialogue between ego states takes place inside a person. In particular, if in childhood the parent was often a dominant, punishing, discounting negative CP (Critical Parent), this behavior is introjected along with other parental characteristics. And, subsequently, the criticizing parental part continues its pressure on the child in the Inner space (Steiner, 2004). At the same time, the inner Child reacts to such an impact adaptively, that is, the way it reacted once in childhood to a real Critic.

The result of such a dialogue may be feelings of depression, helplessness, apathy and others. One of the goals of TA therapy is to bring into awareness the content of ego states and the interactions between them, so that a person can, if desired, change their cognitive and behavioral stereotypes, that is, elements of the Script. A Script is an unconscious plan created in early childhood, mainly under the influence of parents (Berne, 1972). P. Clarkson suggests as one of the methods of psychotherapy the formation of a Nurturing Parent to increase stability, self-esteem and security (Clarkson, 1992). If a person already has such a structure inside, it can be used for self-support and strengthening self-confidence. It is also worth mentioning that Berne spoke of Life Positions, which he defined as "childhood decisions based on a person's attitude to the world as a whole" (Berne, 1972). He believed that a person is born with the position I am OK – You are OK (healthy position). Then, under the influence of others, Parental Figures in particular, this position can be transformed into one of three others: I'm OK – You're not OK, I'm not OK – You're OK, I'm not OK – You're not OK. If a person is in a Healthy position (I am OK, You are OK), they feel comfortable, stable, can control their emotions and behavior, and communicate normally with others. With any other Life Position, self-awareness and communication with the environment are disturbed. A person reacts to external stimuli not quite adequately. One powerful negative external stimulus is a discounting transaction, that is, a transaction in which one person belittles, ignores, or criticizes another. It is known that "Discounting is a distortion of reality within the psyche, with the help of which a person defends their frame of reference" (Schiffs, 1971). However, while protecting the frame of reference, a person can take the internal process outward, that is, belittle and insult another person,

their qualities or behavior, playing their Script. They project images or individual qualities of their parental figures onto people. And the one to whom the discounting transaction is directed may perceive this situation in different ways.

If they are in the I am OK – You are OK position, they may not notice the discounting, or notice, but not attach any importance to it, and remain calm. If they are in a different position, they can perceive the situation very painfully. Let's take a closer look at the internal process. The Discounting Transaction most often proceeds from the Critical part of the Parent ego-state, the Discounter, and is directed to the Adapted part of the partner's Child ego state. Three scenarios are possible. (I will follow the practice of some authors (Steiner, 2004, Gouldings, 1997, Shtunts, 1973) and use elements of external behavior to describe internal processes).

1. If a person is in the I am OK – You are OK position, they can give a crossed transaction, for example, Adult – Adult, and complete the communication. (Fig. 1)



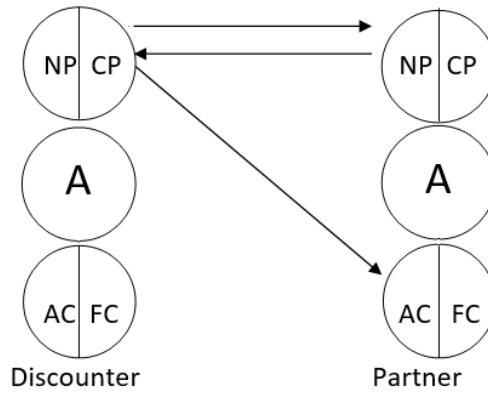
*Fig. 1*

The discounting transaction: crossed transaction  
Own resources.

For example, a husband says to his wife who has bought a new dress: "What a bad taste you have!" If the wife is in the Healthy position, she may respond: "Tastes differ! Let's go for lunch".

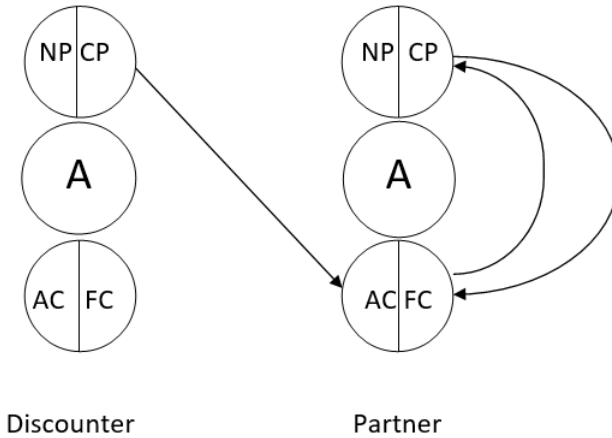
2. Another option, when the position is I am OK – You are not OK.

In this case, there may be a conflict, a crossed transaction from the CP, and then the exchange of parallel negative transactions, for example, from Parent to Parent. Answer like: "You don't understand anything in this" (Fig. 2). And then mutual accusations are possible.



*Fig. 2*  
 The discounting transaction: I am OK – You are not OK  
 Source: own resources.

3. If the position is I am not OK – You are OK or I am not OK – You are not OK, the stimulus will most likely launch an internal script process, where own Critic (CP) will continue to persecute the Child (AC) (fig. 3).



*Fig. 3*  
 The discounting transaction: I am not OK – You are OK or I am not OK – You are not OK  
 Source: own resources.

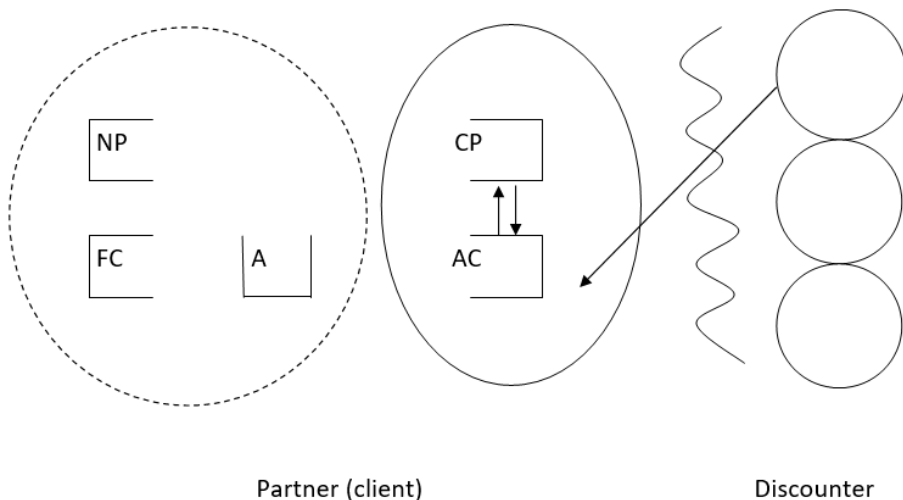
In our example, it can be the following: “Of course, you are nothing, you are miserable,” says CP minus inside (the Critical, negative part of the Parent). The Adapted Child part answers him: “Yes, I am terrible, ugly, and it is better for me not to show myself to anyone.” At the same time, the external Discounter strengthens the influence of the internal Critic. It is difficult for the Adult to

wedge into this process; the Free Child (FC) is also blocked. Therefore, this person can remain upset, offended, humiliated or sad for a long time.

### Express technique for getting out of an uncomfortable state

This is a method by which a person will be able to control their inner process. The method is suitable for counseling and therapy (when the client's Adult ego state is functioning well). It is advisable to first apply it with the help of a transactional analyst, and then one can do it themselves. Further, with frequent repetition, new neural connections are formed, and the person acquires the ability to easily cope with discounting transactions. Restrictions: Not recommended for clients with a highly contaminated or excluded Adult, with severe personality disorders, psychotic processes or organic brain diseases.

The idea is as follows. We can arrange 5 chairs and with their help carry out some resourceful internal work according to the method of E. Stuntz (Stuntz, 1973). Stuntz invites the client to actualize the elements of their internal processes, expressed in behavior, in the appropriate chair. Next, the client conducts a multi-log of CP, AC, NP, FC, and finishes in the chair of Adult. Stuntz used the technique in therapy for Decontamination, Redecision, and Parenting. My modification is an express technique that helps to get an improvement of condition in the current situation here and now. Figure 4 shows the chairs and the first stage of work.

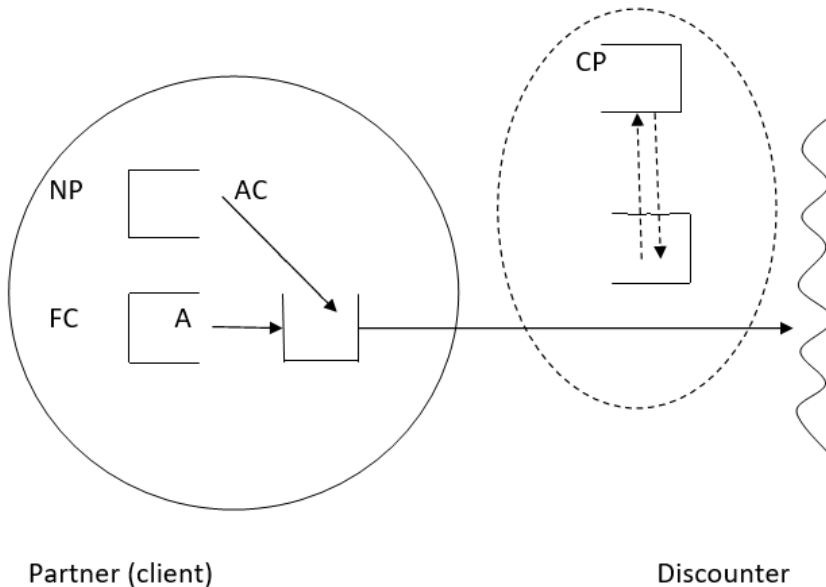


*Fig. 4*

The first stage of work

Source: own resources.

The client first tells their situation. Then the therapist can play the role of a Discounter (in the group it can be one of the participants) and says a toxic phrase. The client plays an internal dialogue on the chairs, changing seats. First, it is a dialogue between CP and AC, and the energy is there. Adult, NP and FC are not involved. To change the situation, it is important to activate these ego states. It is easiest to strengthen a Nurturing Parent who can support the Child. It can be a message like: "You are cool, you have great taste, I love you." This is a transaction to the Free Child part (FC). The client goes to sit in the appropriate chair and monitors their feelings in the FC chair. In practice, the client's state changes, and it immediately becomes evident from bodily manifestations. Energy moves, and the Adult, with the support of NP and FC, can already calmly give an answer to the Discounter (and at the same time to own Critic) (Fig. 5)



*Fig. 5*

Answer to the Discounter

Source: own resources.

After this work, a person feels a rise of energy, joy and strength.

## Client cases

To illustrate the effectiveness, I would like to cite a few specific cases of working with clients.



### **1. Case example of client M**

(transcript of transactions)

Discounter: "You can't drive a car".

Further is the client's work on chairs with moving to the appropriate chair and pronouncing an internal dialogue, feelings and bodily sensations.

Client:

AC: stupor, surprise, fear

CP (inside): "You can't do it, you are too old, you can't cope".

NP: "Yes, you can do a lot, look how many achievements you have, you took on difficult tasks and you did it".

FC: joy, energy, relaxation.

A (answer to the Discounter): "Next time I'll come by car".

### **2. Case study of client A**

Discounter: "You are fat".

Chair work - client:

AC: a feeling of an arrow in the back, breath caught

CP: "You are really fat, you are unlovable".

NP: "I love you the way you are, I believe in you, you can be whatever you want".

FC: lightness, faith that this is not the end. Hope. Joy. Calmness and confidence.

A (answer to the Discounter): "I love myself the way I am. And I can change my body whenever I want".

### **3. Case study of client D (she is an artist)**

Discounter: "Your paintings are not interesting to anyone!"

Chair work, client:

AC: fear of criticism, shame, embarrassment.

NP: "You put feelings into paintings, and there will definitely be people who will like them".

FC: "Yes, I love painting; each painting is a story of my life." Joy, inspiration.

A (answer to the Discounter): "I will demonstrate my paintings. Some people will like them, and some will not. But the main thing is that I like them. I will get strokes from those who will be touched by my feelings".

## **Conclusion**

The proposed technique is based on the classic concepts of Transactional Analysis and is highly effective for therapy and counseling, provided that the

client can freely switch to the Adult and be aware of what is happening to them. Regular use of the method allows a person to learn how to manage their states and feelings, change the script, and increase resistance to toxic communications. The use of the proposed method is of particular importance in situations where a person is forced to be in constant contact with the Discounter. For example, if such is the boss, parent or spouse.

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## Jak zachować poczucie własnej wartości i saldo wewnętrzne w transakcjach dyskontowych

### Streszczenie

Dyskontowanie to proces, który towarzyszy życiu każdego człowieka. I choć jest to jeden ze sposobów zniekształcania rzeczywistości, jest niezbędny do utrzymania stabilności postrzegania świata. Dyskontowanie może dotyczyć zdarzeń, zjawisk, zadań, przedmiotów, a także ludzi. Przejawia się w dialogu wewnętrznym. Czasami jednak w komunikacji wykorzystywane są transakcje, w których dyskontowanie wewnętrzne jest przenoszone na świat zewnętrzny i inne osoby (nazywam je „transakcjami dyskontowymi”). Często wygląda to na niekonstruktywną krytykę. W wielu przypadkach ludzie doświadczają nieprzyjemnych uczuć, gdy są dyskontowani. Stopień nieprzyjemnych odczuć i możliwość przywrócenia wewnętrznego komfortu zależą od Skryptu. Autor analizuje ten proces z wykorzystaniem koncepcji analizy transakcyjnej i proponuje specyficzną ekspresową metodologię pracy z dialogiem wewnętrznym. W wyniku zastosowania techniki zmienia się stan wewnętrzny osoby, przywracana jest samoocena i pojawia się możliwość reakcji Dorosłego na bodziec Krytyka.

**Słowa kluczowe:** transakcja, dyskontowanie, skrypt życiowy.

**RESEARCH REPORTS**  
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## Online Learning from the Perspective of Life Positions of Pupils and Students – Report of a Pilot Study

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### Abstract

Life positions in transactional analysis allow for defining the attitude of a person to themselves and their surrounding. In the article, the author attempts to analyse whether the life position adopted by the respondents may somehow affect their attitude to online learning forced by the pandemic.

**Keywords:** life positions, online learning, COVID pandemic.

The pandemic situation in the country and the world has forced a change in the teaching-learning process from stationary – with direct contact, to online – with contact via a computer and the Internet. From the point of view of pupils and students, this led to a significant change in their daily functioning. Presence during classes did not require leaving home. However, it also did not entail the possibility of a direct meeting with a group of peers. On the one hand, such circumstances may seem comfortable. The necessity to commute was eliminated, and it was possible to participate the classes from one's room. The computer and the Internet provided entertainment during the breaks and, unfortunately, during the classes as well. The comfort of one's room in comparison with the school or university room seems indisputable. On the other hand, peer contacts

suffered greatly, and the teacher-student relationship was limited to contact through new technologies.

This situation was completely new and unknown for most teachers. Distance learning requires not only literacy in tools operation used for contact and transfer of knowledge via the Internet. The methodology of work in such conditions differs and requires a different approach to the transfer of knowledge from the teachers as well as other methods of activating and motivating students, other forms and ways of establishing and maintaining relationships. In addition, it should be mentioned that in contact through new media, the media becomes not only a tool. Man shows a tendency to treat them personally, which was proven by B. Reeves and C. Nass at the end of the 20th century by formulating the so-called media equation –  $\text{media} = \text{real life}$  (Reeves, Nass, 1996). The author of this article analysed this topic from the perspective of transactional analysis, confirming the tendency to assign to new technology tools the profile of the Ego states similar to the one of the user (see: Łęski, 2016).

Restricted relationships in the classroom can be a source of problems in terms of students motivation and attitudes. This issue was analysed in the literature numerous times. For example, J.D Nicols, sharing the results of his research, wrote:

The results appear to offer an argument to support the need for extended discussions with teachers to reflect on the classroom learning environment and motivational factors that can be encouraged or discouraged in the classroom. The initial findings suggest that classroom structures can be defined in terms of motivational boundaries along a relationship and empowerment continuum that could well encourage the exploration of additional instructional formats that support student ownership of achievement while setting the stage for an internal motivational structure to develop. Additionally, the results provide support for the development of a learner-centred classroom [...]. Providing a classroom environment or community culture that is based on positive social relationships, while encouraging the empowerment of students, could well be an initial step towards improving student motivation and achievement (Nicols, 2006, p. 158).

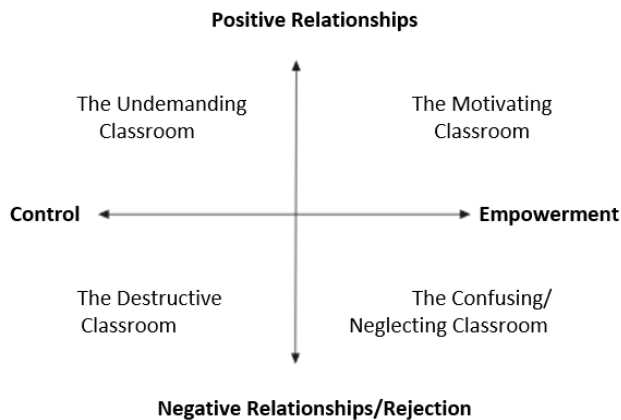
The author also developed a diagram showing the dependence between the relationships in the classroom, the style of the teacher's work (from controlling to reinforcing) and the atmosphere and motivation prevailing in the classroom, and thus – effectiveness (Figure 1).

Anne K. Reitz, Julia Zimmermann, Roos Hutteman, Jule Specht and Franz J. Neyer wrote about the importance of peer relationships themselves for personality development:

The importance of peer relationships and particularly peer groups sharply increases during the transition from childhood to adolescence. About 75% of preschool children are involved in reciprocal friendships with their peers, which rises to 80–90% in teenage years when adolescents enter larger peer ecologies during the transition to middle school [...]. When adolescents shift their attention from parents to peers, peers become

a core influence for their development [...]. This is in line with group socialization theory that proposes that peer groups play a major role in children and adolescents' socialization, which goes beyond dyadic relationships [...]. This is reflected in findings showing that adolescents spend an increasing amount of time with peer groups, and they become highly, and more than people of other ages, concerned with obtaining social acceptance in peer groups [...]. In addition to peer groups, close dyadic relationships with peers also increase during the transition from childhood to adolescence. Adolescents start to form close ties with peers, which prepares them to engage in important relationships later on, such as with romantic partners (Retz, Zimmermann, Hutteman, Specht, Neyer, 2014, p. 280).

The above citations clearly indicate the importance of personal contact (and its quality) between all subjects of the learning process. In the event of distance learning, this contact significantly changes the character. It stops being direct, and many nuances related to interpersonal communication (especially non-verbal) may be blurred. Thus, one can risk a statement that its educational, didactic, and developmental value is diminished, and in extreme cases - it disappears. Obviously, the above considerations are not intended to lead to the conclusion that distance learning cannot effectively achieve all the goals that are achieved in traditional education. However, it must be emphasised that this is a much more difficult and demanding task for which the majority of people directly involved in the educational process were not sufficiently prepared to.



*Fig. 1*

An example of a quadripolar classroom dimension model

Source: Nichols, 2006, p. 154.

The change of learning conditions, the organization of the day, and the weakening of the possibility to contact friends was perceived differently by pupils and students. As in any other case, it can be marked on a continuum, where on one side there are those who handled the new situation perfectly and on the

other side there are those for whom it has become extremely difficult. The author of this article, as an academic teacher, had daily contact with students who dealt with the new situation relatively well, but also with those for whom it was so difficult that psychological intervention was needed.

Among the many factors from the perspective of which it is worth to analyse the way such difficult situations are dealt with, one should focus on one of the branches of the concept of transactional analysis. These are life positions. The transactional analysis itself was developed with psychotherapy in mind. At present, after many years of development, it is also successfully used in such areas as working with organisations, consulting, or education. Initially, it was used mainly by practitioners. Currently, it is more and more appreciated by the scientific community as well. One of its features is specific and relatively simple terminology. Thanks to it, studies and scientific research based on transactional analysis are easier to understand by recipients, and the results of analyses can be more effectively translated into specific practical activities. D. Pankowska states:

[...] especially for people who do not have extensive psychological knowledge, looking at the psychological and social reality from the perspective of transactional analysis will allow them to understand more and act more effectively. Teachers are in such a situation, who acting in a complicated social and interpersonal reality face everyday problems that require making decisions that are extremely important from the point of view of the development of adolescents\* (Pankowska, 2010, p. 105).

Life positions in the transactional analysis is the attitude of a person to themselves and their surrounding. They are sometimes like the feeling of being OK. There are 4 basic life positions differentiated:

1. *I am O.K. You are O.K.* – cooperation; belief in our values as well as in values of other people.
2. *I am not O.K. You are O.K.* – avoidance; belief in the values of others and undermining ourselves.
3. *I am O.K. You are not O.K.* – rejection; belief in our values, undermining others.
4. *I am not O.K. You are not O.K.* – hopelessness (deadlock); undermining ourselves and other people (Stewart, Joines, 2009, p. 117–118).

Of course, depending on various factors, such as time or environment, there may be situations in which a person feels different and has a different attitude towards themselves and a different vision of their surroundings. I. Stewart and V. Joines note that

Each of us arrives in adulthood having written a script based on one of the four life positions. But we don't stay in that position every hour of the day. Minute by minute, we shift between positions (Stewart, Joins, 2009, p. 119).

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\* All translations – A. Machnia.



However, the same authors emphasize at the same time that although everyone switches between life positions, they also have their “favourite”, base position in which most time is spent (Stewart, Joines, 2009, p. 122).

Relating the issues of life positions to the issues of relationships that occur in the teaching process, it is easy to notice that the preferred position here is *I am O.K., You are O.K.* – both concerning the teacher-student relationship and peer relationships. Therefore, a hypothesis can be drawn that it is people with such a basic life position who will be the most dissatisfied with online education. On the other hand, people who perceive themselves or others as “not O.K.” may consider compulsory online learning as a situation that gives them more comfort and a sense of security. The interpersonal relationships themselves may be of secondary importance for them – less important or difficult.

When examining life positions, one can rely on behavioural indicators or on the analysis of beliefs, opinions, or emotions that an individual relates to themselves and other people. In quantitative research, questionnaires are used that incorporate the Likert scale or semantic differentials, allowing for the assessment of the respondent’s attitude towards themselves and other people (compare, inter alia, Pankowska, 2010, pp. 230–233). In the study analysed in this article, semantic differentials containing 15 pairs of adjectives were used. This tool is a slightly modified version of the tool that the author of this article used in the research published in the book “New Technologies – New Times – New Generations. Characteristics of Young Users of New Media from the Perspective of Transactional Analysis” (Łęski, 2018, pp. 95 and 182–184). The difference is that in the present study, each subject filled not one, but two differentials. The first differential was to define the “I” position, while the second one related to “You” (the other people). In addition, the questionnaire included a number of additional questions that made it possible to assess the attitude of the respondents to online learning.

The said tool was published on the online questionnaire website of the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa (<https://ankiety.ujd.edu.pl>). The link to the study was then sent to schools and other academic centres across the country. The study was available from April to June 2021. In response, a total of 129 fully completed questionnaires were obtained which were suitable for further analysis. The respondents included 107 women and 22 men. 22 people were students of humanities faculties, 68 – were students of social studies, 21 respondents were students of science, 18 people were students of secondary schools.

The results of studies show the following life positions of respondents:

- *I am O.K. You are O.K.* – 60 persons (46%);
- *I am O.K. You are not O.K.* – 57 persons (44%);
- *I am not O.K. You are O.K.* – 2 persons (2%);
- *I am not O.K. You are not O.K.* – 10 persons (8%).

At the same time, no significant correlations between the life position of the respondents and their sex, age or study profile were observed.

When analysing the said values, on the one hand, it is satisfactory that most of the respondents have a healthy, basic life position – *I am O.K., You are O.K.* At the same time, a very small percentage present positions in which they do not perceive themselves as OK. However, at the same time, a significant percentage pointed to the position “*I am O.K., You are not O.K.*”, in which there is a belief in self-worth, while undermining other people. The question is whether such a result is one of the effects of the pandemic and the resulting limitation of relationships and, in a way, forcing actions taken in isolation from other people. Such a thesis would be confirmed by the comparison of the above result with the research carried out earlier by the author. Results of studies published in 2018, conducted on a sample of 391 persons (including students and pupils), show that the life position *I'm O.K., You're O.K.* obtained 52%, the life position *I'm O.K., You're not O.K.* obtained 22%, the life position *I'm not O.K., You are O.K.* obtained 14%, and the life position *I am not O.K., You are not O.K.* obtained 12% (Łęski, 2018, pp. 110–112). These results cannot be strictly compared and they cannot be used for calculations and analyses, as the research procedure was different in both cases. Nevertheless, the differences are so large that it seems that there is a clear tendency to increase the importance of the position *I am O.K., You are not O.K.* during the pandemic.

The analysis of the collected research material did not show much correlation. The respondents were asked, inter alia, whether after the end of the pandemic, online learning should remain the dominant form, whether it should be balanced, or whether direct-contact teaching should regain its dominant form. The summary of the obtained results is presented in Table 1. Statistical calculations did not show any significant correlation here. It can be seen that most of the answers indicate the willingness to return to direct-contact teaching. The answer in which direct teaching should significantly prevail was ranked second. The desire to maintain a balance between online learning and direct learning was ranked third by the respondents.

A slight correlation was observed concerning the statement “*I feel safer studying at home in front of the computer than in the classroom at school/university*”. The respondents referred to it by marking the answers on a standard five-point scale – from “*definitely yes*” to “*definitely not*” (Table 2). Spearman's correlation coefficient was  $-0.218$  and it is statistically significant. The analysis of the distribution of answers clearly shows that people who perceive others as *not O.K.* feel safer in online learning than in direct contact. The difference is most noticeable between the two largest groups – *I am O.K., You are O.K.*, and *I am O.K., You are not O.K.*. In the latter one, noticeably more people chose the answer “*definitely yes*” and noticeably fewer chose the option “*no*”.

Table1

Summary of the analysed life positions with their relation to online and traditional teaching

	Life position:				Final sum
	I+ You+	I+ You-	I- You+	I- You-	
Direct teaching should be a dominant form	18	13	1	1	35
Direct teaching should significantly prevail	15	10	1		26
Direct teaching should prevail only to a little degree	1	1		1	13
There should be a balance	11	12		1	24
Online teaching should prevail only to a little degree	2	1		2	1
Online teaching should significantly prevail	1	1		1	11
Online teaching should remain a dominant form	1	1		2	12
<b>Final sum</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: own study 2021.

Table 2

The feeling of safety in online teaching and direct teaching in comparison with life position of the respondents – 2021

Life position	I feel safer studying at home in front of the computer than in the classroom at school/university					Final sum
	Definitely yes	Yes	I have no opinion	No	Definitely no	
I+ You+	1	15	13	21	1	60
I+ You-	17	15	11	12	2	57
I- You+	1			1		2
I- You-	1	2	1	1	1	10
<b>Final sum</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: own studies.

The obtained result confirms that only a fully healthy life position is associated with the willingness to establish and maintain positive relationships with others. A position in which others are *not O.K.* leads to rejection and isolation. Others become a threat or an unnecessary element, and therefore staying at home in a remote relationship is more comfortable and safer.

In the study, the respondents were also asked about several features of online learning. Their summary, together with the obtained correlation coefficients concerning the life positions of the respondents, is presented in the Table 3. Statistically significant results are highlighted in red and italics.

Table 3

*Features of online teaching – correlation coefficients concerning the life positions of the respondents*

<b>Online teaching:</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient with <i>life position</i></b>
Effective	.056
Interesting	.009
Annoying	-.039
Engaging	<b>.232</b>
Comfortable	<b>-.204</b>
Tiring	.003
Attractive	.151
Demanding	.071
Pleasant	-.027
Allowing being loose	-.130
Ineffective	-.146
Tedious	.048
Allowing for an objective evaluation of progress	.039
Flexible	-.049
Injustice	-.101

Source: own studies 2021.

As seen in the presented table, the correlation with such features of distance learning as “engaging” and “comfortable” turned out to be statistically significant.

Online learning is “engaging” much more often for people with the life position *I am O.K., You are O.K.* (Table 4). It seems that, apart from the relational aspect, there is also the issue of approach to duties and responsibilities.

Table 4

*The summary of declarations of online teaching as “engaging” with the life position of the respondents*

<b>Life position</b>	<b>Online teaching – engaging</b>					<b>Final sum</b>
	<b>Definitely yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>I have no opinion</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Definitely no</b>	
<b>I+ You+</b>	1	18	1	18	9	60
<b>I+ You-</b>	2	9	11	20	15	57
<b>I- You+</b>				2		2
<b>I- You-</b>	1	2		1	1	10
<b>Final sum</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: own studies 2021.

The above thesis seems to confirm the correlation with the adjective “comfortable”, which, in turn, was more often chosen by persons for whom others are *not O.K.* (Table 5). Of course, comfort also correlates with the previously observed correlation with the sense of security, but as a broader term it may also refer to such issues as, for example, no necessity to appear at classes on time, access to home entertainment

Table 5

*The summary of declarations of online teaching as “comfortable” with the life position of the respondents*

Life position	Online teaching – comfortable					Final sum
	Definitely yes	Yes	I have no opinion	No	Definitely no	
I+ You+	24	29	2	1		60
I+ You-	38	12	1	1	1	57
I- You+	2					2
I- You-	1	2		1	1	10
<b>Final sum</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: own studies 2021.

To sum up the considerations and study results presented in this article, it should be emphasised that the study on life positions using quantitative methods is still in the phase of research and experiments. Transactional analysis has been used for years on a practical basis, where the identification of the problem is usually based on qualitative procedures and refers to individuals or small groups. Therefore, the author treats this study as a pilot study on the way to a larger and more complex research project. Nevertheless, it was possible to observe some interesting interrelationships and draw some interesting conclusions. First of all, an alarmingly large number of people was observed amongst the respondents with the life position *I am O.K., you are not O.K.* This number is significantly higher than in other studies conducted by the author before the pandemic and the resulting limitations in interpersonal relationships. This conclusion certainly requires further exploration and confirmation, nevertheless, it points to possible areas of necessary preventive and therapeutic measures after lifting of restrictions and full return to pre-pandemic education.

In addition, research has shown that online learning is for people for whom others are *not O.K.*, less engaging and more comfortable. These persons also pointed out that with this form of teaching they feel safer than in direct contact. This result, together with the conclusions cited in the previous paragraph, should be disseminated amongst people directly involved in the education pro-

cess at various levels. It can have a direct impact on the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the student or student, as well as on the quality of peer relations and the functioning of groups. And this, in turn, will probably have a direct impact on the effectiveness and quality of the entire teaching process.

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## Nauczanie zdalne z perspektywy pozycji życiowych uczniów i studentów. Raport z badań pilotażowych

### Streszczenie

Pozycje życiowe w analizie transakcyjnej pozwalają na określenie stosunku człowieka do samego siebie oraz do swojego otoczenia. W artykule autor podejmuje próbę analizy, czy przyjmowana przez respondentów pozycja życiowa może w jakiś sposób wpływać na ich stosunek do wymuszonego przez pandemię nauczania zdalnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pozycje życiowe, nauczanie zdalne, pandemia COVID-19.

**ON THE BORDER**  
NA POGRANICZU DZIEDZIN







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## The Pandemic as an impulse for the reflections of pedagogy students – the point of view of qualitative analysis

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### Editorial preface

This paper is about how we respond in situations of threat and social, enforced isolation. The results of the qualitative research are about the sense of identity in a threatening situation. From the perspective of transactional analysis, it can be seen as the re-creation of a life script. The re-creation of a self-image altered by an emergency situation. The young people who were included in the research had a renewed appreciation for life and a sense of security. For many, this evolved into an internal integration similar to the development of an Adult Ego State that benefits from access to the other Ego States. Forced isolation proved to be the impetus for positive personality transformation and internal integration of Ego States for many.

Zbigniew Wieczorek

### Abstract

The article presents selected extracts of qualitative research results on the psychological and social situation experienced by people during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic in the opinion of pedagogy students. An attempt to prevent the virus from spreading by introducing lockdown

confined millions of people in their homes, limited their freedom and interpersonal contacts. For many, this time was an impulse for a more profound existential reflection. The researchers, interested in the issue of students' reflectiveness, asked a group of them to prepare short essays collecting reflections dating back to the first wave of the pandemic. The research involved 36 students of the Academy of Special Education, in two age groups – those beginning their studies and those heading towards the end. The gathered texts were subject to an analysis complying with the methodology of the grounded theory. The discourse analysis performed from the interpretative perspective allowed for selecting 4 key categories in the students' comments, and then for pointing to differences between the groups as far as the issues discussed were concerned. This article presents the results of the research encompassing two categories: reflections of the subjects on their own subjectivity and reflections concerning their ecological identity. The younger subjects demonstrated a bigger concentration on the personal perspective and their comments were more emotional and optimistic. The older ones, more distanced towards reality, more often reflected bitterly on social policy, consumerism and egotism of modern societies, more frequently treating the pandemic not as a goal on its own but as a starting point for broader social and ecological criticism.

**Keywords:** the pandemic, COVID-19, lockdown, reflectiveness, subjectivity, nature, environment, the grounded theory.

## Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19, which at the beginning of 2020 spread all over the world, putting even the biggest economies to a halt, forcing partial or total lockdown on further countries, and first and foremost taking a toll of 4.5million of victims (as of 01.09.2021, WHO), undoubtedly shook the civilisation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As time went on, science offered new means of combating the disease, giving hope for coming back to normal life, and societies, at different pace and using various strategies, adapted to new circumstances. However, the very moment of the pandemic outbreak was a real shock for the continuously developing, satiated and self-assured Western community.

The pandemic must have become a unique experience for young people, entering adulthood and collecting first life experiences. The world that was supposed to welcome them with open arms suddenly shut off, locking them in their countries, places they lived, houses. Borders were closed as well as most shops and meeting places or amusement parks, some countries introduced the curfew. Education, administration, trade and social life moved to the Internet. The threat violated the feeling of safety and generated anxiety about one's own and one's relatives' fate and about the future – what it would be like and if there would be any. Anxiety about survival, lying at the foundation of human needs (Maslow, 1986), was accompanied by more complex anxiety about ontological safety, understood by sociologists as a feeling of meaning of one's existence and activity, world continuity and order of events (Giddens, 1990, 2010; Steele, 2008; Bauman, 2006).

One of areas of special social significance, whose functioning had to be completely re-organised at the time of the pandemic was education. Ensuring the continuity of the education process in the situation when school and academic buildings were closed, attempts to maintain the quality of teaching and learning in the conditions of working online, became key tasks for the education system. That is why the selection of teaching tools and methods, preparing the system of education for online learning, and the outcomes of this learning were a key focus of researchers from the field of pedagogical sciences (Buchner, Majchrzak, Wierzbicka, 2020; Jaskulska, Jankowiak, 2020; Pyżalski, 2020; Ptaszek et al., 2020). In this extremely difficult situation, less emphasis was put on the issue of mental health of the most important subjects of the education process – pupils and students. This situation can be explained by, among all, an elementary difficulty of conducting online research on personal matters, requiring special trust of the researched subject in their researcher and openness difficult to achieve in online communication. While in many cases the virtual world was an ally for researchers conducting quantitative research as it gave them access to large groups of respondents (being aware of their non-representativeness for many research topics) or tools facilitating fast data collection and analysis, qualitative researchers were deprived of the possibility of conducting many types of research. It did not mean that such research was not conducted at all – there were qualitative analyses of internet entries content (Damiano, Allen Catellier, 2020; Nowicka 2021; Troszyński et al., 2021; Komuda, Rajda, Szczepkowski, 2020; Halagiera, 2020), quantitative and qualitative research were combined (Tsoa, Chen, Tisseverasinghe, Yang, Li, Butt, 2021), ethnographic and auto-ethnographic research developed on the Internet (Roy, Uekusa, 2020).

This report is an inherent part of qualitative research yet it reaches for other sources of data than the Internet. It constitutes the presentation of partial results of the research conducted from the interpretative perspective, concerning reflections of pedagogy students learning at the Academy of Special Education on the psychological and social situation people experienced because of COVID-19. Contrary to the structural orientation, they are based on the observation that, as Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz (2021, pp. 125) writes, “social reality is socially constructed by the same social actors – these are individuals, their groups, different kinds of communities and relations among them create what we traditionally call a social structure or a social world.” The respondents’ remarks, prepared by them in the form of essays are at the same time an attempt to look into the authors’ emotional state, an expression of their reflectiveness encompassing questions about their place in the world, but also about the relevance of the current hierarchy of values, i.e. about what is transient and what is universal. The written responses were prepared by two groups – students beginning and finishing their studies.

## Subjectivity, identity, responsibility

The students, in majority belonging to the generation of digital natives (Prensky, 2001), handled the technical intricacies of moving to a digital functioning mode well, yet mentally they found themselves in a very difficult situation. These young people, barely entering their adulthood, have been trained to function in the education system promoting competition, to collect points and occupy better and better places in various rankings, the system that defined goals clearly but left no space for any more profound reflection. Meanwhile, in the situation of the pandemic, they were faced with the perspective of a radical life change, very often experienced alone and accompanied with anxiety. The rushing world came to a halt and young adults had to confront their own thoughts. Reflection was facilitated by isolation that whole societies had to comply with during the first lockdowns in order to limit the number of infections. People locked themselves in their flats and many young people came back to their family homes which they had left not so long ago. In an anthropological meaning we came back to the cave – a primeval shelter of humanity and its earliest temple (Laoupi, 2007). Ethnography, followed by psychology, sees in the cave a symbol of mother's womb – a place where a human being develops safely till they are ready to face the world (Eliade, 2001). In many cultures, beginning with Paleolithic times, an adult man comes back to the cave to seek wisdom, contact with their predecessors, answers to burning questions, to find help or to find themselves (Eliade, 2001, pp. 16 et al.; Laoupi, 2007; Górzyński, 2018). The cave is the place of healing and sacred rites, including the most important ones – rites of passage allowing an individual to be welcome to society or to change their status in it. It constitutes a symbol of change, being an essential element of self-development and self-awareness.<sup>1</sup> Confinement caused by lockdown in combination with the situation of danger accompanying it favours reflection – stopping, being alone, examining the order of the world. Already Leibniz noticed that infinity of information excludes clarity of cognition (cf. Sytnik-Czetwertyński, 2008, pp. 38). Stopping halfway brings back an acute meaning of seeing, enables the man – hermetic Leibnizian monad – to look into oneself, to find internalized needs, rights and obligations (Leibniz, 1969; Senczyszyn, 2015). It is a process that requires concentration, a very intimate one, often touching hidden or forgotten emotions and full of personal reflections. Looking inside it requires mutual trust between the researcher and their subject, which makes it possible to open up

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<sup>1</sup> Sensory deprivation practised in many tribes, where a man closed in a dark cave is exposed to it, is supposed to draw them into a trance in order to, paradoxically, see further and more clearly. Among many examples, Mircea Eliade quotes the one referring to the Greek oracle Pythia who went underground to enter into a trance that would allow her to generate prophecies about the future (Eliade, 1988, pp. 191).

to another human being and let them in one's intimate world, and, on the other hand, to conduct a given research ethically, caring about this subject's well-being. Due to this reason, the researchers decided on a deliberate choice of a sample group and its considerable limitation. Drawing their inspiration from a very personal essay *A New World Through My Window* by Olga Tokarczuk (2020), being an intimate record of her reflections from the beginnings of the pandemic, they asked the students to write their own essays based on their current reflections accompanying lockdown. The research engaged 36 students of pedagogy from the Academy of Special Education – those beginning their studies of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree in 2019/2020 (their opinions are marked with EME code in the text) and of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree (code PEK), studying in two related faculties specializing in pedagogy of media. These students demonstrate a special interest in culture and social issues, are keen observers of reality and its representation in the media. During many meetings, the students participating in the research had an opportunity to get to know the members of the research group and they gave their full consent to complete the task they were given. It made it possible to give a positive answer to the question about the ethics of the research conducted among people in the situation of/ feeling danger (Turton, 1996, p. 96). Some researchers try to avoid this obstacle by focusing their attention on autobiographical and auto-ethnographic research (Roy, Uekusa, 2020). In case of the research presented in this article, the students' trust gained by the researchers guaranteed the research ethicality. The students were informed about the aim of the research, its course and results. The very form of the research, i.e. free written production let the students open up.

In order to avoid looking at the collected texts through the filter of their own expectations, the material was analysed in accordance with the rules of the grounded theory (Glaser, Strauss, 1967; Glaser, Holton, 2004; Konecki, 2018). A looped comparative data analysis resulted in the emergence of codes allowing for precise, not preceded by forming hypotheses, description of key categories. Collected material made it possible to analyse the reflectiveness of the pedagogy students in the face of the global crisis situation, to determine key areas of that reflectiveness and to detect differences in experiencing it, existing between two age groups.

An initial material analysis resulted in 381 coded phases, on the basis of which the researchers selected 16 main subcategories. Out of them, 4 main categories were chosen in the course of the analysis. Due to a personal, nearly intimate nature of the respondents' statements, all the essays had a common denominator – they showed the relation between "I" the writing subject and the world – both the internal and the external one that they look at attentively. Thus, the aforesaid four categories have a relational character and were ordered in accordance with the proximity of the circle composed by various elements to

the writing subject. In this way, four versions of *self* were selected: *subjective self*, self-reflective, focused on the reflection on one's own person, identity and internalized system of values; *self – relatives* – focused on contemplating values and assessing the quality of primary social links (family, friends, neighbours); *social self* – concerning widely-understood social relations and their state in the modern world, covering reflection on human attitudes towards the pandemic threat, the role of social links, responsibility for the fate of others, criticism of the state and society, etc.; *self – the environment* – regarding ecological awareness of the respondents, their attitudes towards nature and man as its part.<sup>2</sup>

This article concentrates on presenting the results regarding two categories, which constitute a certain threshold defining the boundaries of the students' reflections. In *subjective self* – self-reflective and intimate, there emerges the process of auto-narrative creation of one's own identity, an attempt to understand oneself, one's needs and possibilities triggered by the pandemic, including one's influence on one's and others' fate. Remembering one's own and others' subjectivity, looking for universals which decide on an unchangeable nature of an individual – a subject in the course of changing life circumstances – these are indispensable components of the process of constructing and deconstructing an individual's identity (Melosik, 2001, pp. 17) in the situation of an abrupt social change triggered by the pandemic. The other natural pole of this reflection, opposite to this individualized scrutiny of one's internal world is looking at an individual in the global context, perceiving oneself as a member of a human community and continuation of the process of developing one's identity as a member of a bigger group and finally a global citizen worrying about the state of the environment which they inhabit. As Ewa Karmolińska-Jagodzik (2014, pp. 116) remarks, the concept of identity “can be personal, social, can be defined by an individual as well as by people who matter to that individual. What is more, identity can be given from the outside as an individual's identification, which this individual does not have to always agree with, but identity is always the outcome of a multi-factor structure of an individual's interaction with their surroundings.”\* Thus, the process of forming one's identity cannot be completed in social vacuum. Isolation caused by the pandemic can intensify it, giving time and motivation to release an impulse for self-reflection in an individual, yet awareness of belonging to the group is an indispensable element of this process, as well as awareness of being part of nature, a responsible host of the planet shared with other species. Identity is developed not only in the context of sub-

<sup>2</sup> Two of the selected categories – the relation of “self” of the respondents to their relatives (family, friends) and society (“social self”) were presented in the article entitled *Students of pedagogy on social relations at the beginning of the pandemic – in the light of a qualitative analysis of their personal and social reflectiveness* (Galanciak, Siwicki, 2020).

\* All translations – E. Haberko.

jectivity, agency, but also in the context of social relations, belonging to a community. It depends on an individual and their experience how they should define this community, where they should look for it and how broadly it should be identified. It can be a local, caste, national community, or in a broader meaning, a community of human species. Globalisation trends in particular (Bauman, 1999) make the world shrink, which makes it easier to look at reality adapting a broader context than the local one. An ecological discourse developing recently, the threat of climate catastrophe make young people perceive reality with broader horizons. They are global citizens and feel responsible for this world. Apart from variants of national discourse, those concerning universal human condition and state of our planet gain significance. These aspects are tackled by the respondents in the category of *self-the environment*, proving the respondents' ecological awareness.

### ***Subjective self***

Among the four main categories selected during the analysis, the category of *subjective self* is the first one with regards to the number of phrases attributed to it. All in all, 184 fragments of the respondents' opinions belong there, and they are grouped into the main theme blocks:

*Subjective self* dominates among coded phrases of the responses of the students from the younger group – 128 phrases, 52% of the total. The respondents entering adult life are still at the stage of developing their own identity so there is a tendency in their responses to focus on themselves and perceive reality in the light of their own subjectivity. The responses of the first year students are more personal than those from the older group, where such opinions are less numerous (56 phrases, 38% of the total).

The young people, **contemplating values**, write about beauty of life, peace and happiness. "I believe that because of the situation nowadays (and maybe thanks to it), people will notice real beauty of life again. They will start noticing what is most important in life, without which nothing else makes any sense," writes an EME1 student. "I feel full of energy again, I can spend more time with my interests and I am happy," adds another EME16 student. An EME9 student, evaluating her behaviour draws her attention to suppressing one's introvert nature – in accordance with culture's expectations. "For a longer period of time, my soul of an introvert has been suffocating with the phenomenon of big parties, artificial crowds, desire to spend time outdoors actively in the biggest group of people possible or to melt in the crowd in cinemas or shopping centres. This addiction of others to work, discos, shopping scared me while I needed calming down, but, at the same time, I was afraid that I would stand out from that

crowd" (EME9). Other respondents, revising their hierarchy of values, write about the fragility of life, losing awareness of real values, which happened as a result of operating in constant rush and striving for mundane goals. "However, people will always look for closeness, acceptance or understanding. Sometimes it is worth asking oneself what is important in life" (EME22). "Our life is fragile like china" (EME13). "People live in neglect. Everyone works a lot. [...] We were living in the super fast 21<sup>st</sup> century and because of it we have completely forgotten about very simple, but very important things. We have forgotten that we should appreciate everything that is in us" (EME22). The students find it harmful when they have to fight their own introversion, postulating their right to individualism, to keep their sense of identity and to stay different among current trends and canons. They negate the narcissism of modern, replete societies, similarly to understanding success as something that an individual's happiness depends on. They also notice an educative dimension of the pandemic and emphasise its value. "We were used to being divided into better and worse ones, but a given personality type does not depend on us" (EME8). "Let everyone keep their own pace, without pressure demanding impossible. The cult of greatness, superiority, speed is not achievable to everyone, and it is not desirable either, as success is not equivalent to fulfillment and happiness. This simple truth, like many others, escaped our notice a long time ago" (EME8). "The current situation in the world gives us an opportunity to get out of the fog and appreciate what we already have, what we have achieved and what we do not have to constantly strive for" (EME9). "I started regretting that I was not born in other times. Far from busy streets, noisy car horns, a spider-web of telephones and skyscrapers that obscure the sky" (EME9). "The pandemic has given me a chance to remember what is important and what is not. Our career and success – it is nothing in our life. It is just a part of us which once is here and once is not" (EME1). Contemplation and calming down, "enforced" by our confinement and emphasized in many coded phrases encourage us to reflect not only on our resentment concerning the influence of the external world on an individual, but they also introduce a thread of hope – thinking positively about the future, dreaming and believing that we will be able to mentally bear the load of the pandemic. "The sun encourages us to go out and experience adventure. I am sitting at home and experiencing my adventure in my boundless imagination" (EME23). "No possibility to go out awakens human imagination. Certainly, many people guess that this confinement shall contribute to more broken homes, divorces, suicides, etc. In fact, it might happen, but why should we accept the worst scenario? If we think in this way, we'll really get crazy" (EME16).

The group of younger respondents asks the biggest number of questions about the "meaning of life", expressing it in numerous phrases which were categorized in the area of reflection on **stagnation and life fragility**. "Let us appre-



ciate what we have” – such an attitude dominates among the students after a dozen or so days of the pandemic, proving their understanding of the severity and seriousness of the situation concerning the virus threat. “We lose so many precious moments when we chase... What do we chase actually?” an EME22 asks rhetorically. “Let us appreciate what we have. A roof above our heads, family, friends. Maybe now people will be more courageous to express themselves, to fulfil their dreams. This world standstill will end one day,” an EME22 concludes. An EME14, keeping a distance to herself and life, emphasizes that “Having poor eyesight I don’t need glasses to notice that the whole world has slowed down, has come to a halt.” An exaggerated pace of life before the pandemic and tiredness, lack of time for oneself and re-scheduled, shortened moratorium on adolescence makes us aware of the meaning of stopping in this rush. “We used to live on a day to day basis, having our duties and no time for ourselves – to vent out, develop our passions or learn something new. We were getting more and more tired and time was marching inexorably on. There was no time for a brief respite” (EME6). “Such things seemed less important to us, as you won’t get any prize for sitting in the park in fresh air and it just seems a waste of time” (EME 12). “We are indecisive... When we work hard and live fast, we miss rest and spending time together. And now, when it is almost obligatory, we don’t benefit from it but we keep complaining,” an EME17 tries to understand. “We don’t need pessimistic thoughts now. Personally, I think it is a time of <stopping for a while>, learning humility, a time to think about our conduct” (EME 17). Will the COVID pandemic change us? Maybe, as some respondents’ remarks suggest, we should be grateful for this pace of life slowed down by the pandemic? “Finally it dawned on all of us that we are not immortal, that our time might come to an end in the blink of an eye,” an EME13 writes. “It is important to draw conclusions from this situation. Everyone should individually think about what the coronavirus made them realise and how to use these conclusions in everyday life. This time seems to be a moment everyone needed. We were given a moment of respite, time to reflect on our life”(EME21). “Probably, in a few months’ time, we will look back on the coronavirus period and each day will be something more for us than just a tangle of routine activities, we will appreciate “normality” and conventionality in life. The presence of the virus makes us aware of many other things apart from the nature of everyday life, it is worth paying attention to human fragility, their inner life susceptible to threat” (EME20).

The students’ reflections, full of careful but nevertheless clearly expressed **feeling of anxiety** regarding their fear of sickness and death as well as the future are equally frequently and usually coherently pronounced. A note of optimism rarely accompanies them. Fear of sickness and death often equals fear of people, deriving from the fear of getting infected. “Once joyful and smiling. Now somehow stooped, they walk lonely in silence. I look into their eyes and I can

see fear. Are they afraid of me? We have become strangers to one another. We don't want any help from someone met on the street. We keep ourselves to ourselves. We are mistrustful of every person we encounter. Somewhere, at the back of our head, there is that fear of getting infected with the coronavirus," an EME10 student writes. With apprehension, the respondents notice gradual disappearance of human kindness which gave them strength at the beginning of the pandemic. The outcome of this observation is growing distrust, fear, pessimism... The observation of an EME18 student is symptomatic and profound: "People passing us on the street are not our friends any more, there are fewer and fewer smiles, nodding at our neighbours. What if they are infected too? Our minds are not as open as before the pandemic. Now, everyone is our potential enemy. Even we are enemies to ourselves." We do not trust anyone any more. "Thus, I am wondering why no one talks about emotional crises which shall come if they are not there yet. It may turn out in a while that psychoactive drugs shall become to us the so-called pills of happiness that we shall swallow like painkillers," they conclude with concern. The respondents are torn between the belief that the pandemic is just an intermediary stage and the fear of permanence of occurring changes. "The only things you can hear are sounds of nature and police announcements warning us against going out. Is it already new reality? Or maybe just a temporary phase?" an EME15 student asks. Another respondent notes emphatically, "Our time can end in the blink of an eye. We are living in constant fear and panic, we worry about ourselves, our parents, grandparents. No one thought that we would experience the time when going shopping for groceries could make us anxious" (EME13). The respondents do not only reflect on the reaction to the pandemic, their own and their environment's, but they also wonder what its long-term, global consequences might be, which proves their maturity and remarkable perceptiveness of the situation. "Fear of getting ill as well as consequences of the epidemic. The crisis that should affect not only Poland but the whole world's economy. Everyday news that we are bombarded with by the media makes us lock ourselves within the four walls of our flats, not trusting anyone. Maybe it is good? Maybe it is the only solution to control the epidemic? The next issue is uncertainly about what each next day shall bring. How long shall we stay isolated? How much time shall it take? When will there be the epidemic peak? [...] Every cloud has a silver lining, we just have to be patient" (EME11). "Our optimism falters a bit," alarms an EME18 student though. Prolonged lockdown makes people worry that the situation will never come back to normal. An EME9 student draws our attention to the growing threat of dehumanization of our civilization due to social isolation, and she conjectures, "We can already replace so many things... So, shall we not get an idea one day to replace human relations, feelings with something else?" (EME9).

Pointing to the inconveniences of **social isolation**, the respondents demonstrate their **longing for the past** – especially early childhood as a kind of lost paradise, the anchor of carefree days and safety. The pandemic and the loss of freedom being its consequence let the respondents appreciate the taste of freedom and independence, unnoticed in the rush of everyday life and taken for granted and transparent as such. “The virus takes our freedom away. People lose their jobs, opportunities to learn, they cannot move freely. And this is what independence is about,” an EME5 writes. Social isolation affects the young and triggers a need to talk about the meaning of injustice deriving from the necessity to verify their plans, short-term ones and maybe also life plans too, which arouses the biggest anxiety. Moreover, the world’s lockdown is not a good time for extroverts. “Although I am aware we are not guilty of it at all, the time of the pandemic and forced <imprisonment> can be a tiring and horrible perspective. Our plans for the long weekend in May, our flight to the unknown regions of the Pacific Ocean which have always fascinated us and for which we have been collecting money for years got lost together with our dreams. The soul of a traveller, extrovert, who needs contact with other human beings to survive, has been crashed by the vision of the illness,” writes an EME23 student. Forced isolation generates aversion to their place of residence, especially in those respondents who particularly need space and contact with other people. In their eyes, their home becomes their trap, prison, confinement which fuels longing for lost normality, and also inspires to appreciate what was underestimated before. “We are closed in our own homes, which we created. The place, which was supposed to be our oasis, something safe, turns out to be a space that many of us would like to run away from,” (EME21). “We become aware of the fact how much we miss that routine that we used to complain about,” (EME20). Rarely is there a conviction about the provisional character of the crisis, linked with lack of faith in maintaining the reflexive outcome of our thoughts about the pandemic. Yet, it has its good sides too – these reflections are filled with acute fear and uncertainty. “One day, everything will come back to normal. It is not pure guesswork but a fact that there must be no doubt about. The economic crisis will be settled and our minds will come back on the right track despite earlier pessimism and anxiety,” an EME18 student states with conviction. The students go back to their childhood and look at deserted streets with nostalgia and sadness. “Kids spent their free time with other kids, meeting them at the playground, playing in fresh air, their time was filled with physical activity. However, it has changed now. They stay at home, most often left to their own devices, which results in more frequent “staying” in the virtual world,” an EME17 student worries. Another student, recollecting her childhood pays attention to a difficult situation of children locked at home: “Deprived of my playground, garden and a small pond, I’d feel like in prison” (EME14). However, recollecting one’s childhood does not always

refer to the pandemic times. It also gives an opportunity to reflect on the rush of the pre-pandemic life. "I'm thinking how slowly holiday time seemed to flow when we were children, and now years pass in the blink of an eye. We eat fast, sleep and rest ....I wonder how to live slowly nowadays," asks an EME15 student.

Reflections on "**activities for oneself**", on the other hand, go round the need to make some self-development effort there has been no time for so far. The pandemic is also an opportunity to do something pleasurable, to take care of ourselves. "Maybe there is something you have always wanted to learn? Painting? Maybe, it will turn out it is something that really gives you pleasure. And maybe you've been dreaming about watching a series but you couldn't do that due to lack of time?" an EME6 student suggests to look at lockdown like at an opportunity. In this emotionally difficult situation, it is very important to take care of our mental well-being. "It's not important how you'll spend this quarantine time. It should give you pleasure. Let us not treat it as a kind of 'punishment' for someone's mistake. Let us not blame anyone for this obligation to stay at home," suggests an EME6 student. An EME12 student echoes her: "I am very happy to see on the Internet who and how spends their quarantine." "Maybe it is the moment to catch up and use that time for old/ new passions, to strengthen our bonds with the closest family, to work on ourselves, to relax," suggests an EME16 student. Yet, it is also a time for self-reflection, for expressing one's suppressed feelings freely, which is not common in the culture of success that does not allow us to show weakness. "We can focus on our desires, we can talk to ourselves, listen to ourselves, burst into tears," an EME21 student states with relief.

On the other hand, as a result of **value contemplation, constituting a significant component of the older group's responses**, there is a feeling of anxiety, emotional crisis triggered by isolation, loneliness, disappointment with it. "Even the most optimistic persons have negative and inexplicable thoughts" (PEK3). Yet, there are also good sides of the pandemic-suspended reality. Even if it is just a reflection that one has to look for optimism as only then their life can have any meaning. In her coherent reflection, a PEK3 student combines threads belonging to three main categories: **activities for "oneself"**, reflection on **the meaning of life** and **social isolation**. She combines them and writes that being with oneself during the pandemic is a perspective of boredom and routine, resulting in loneliness. "We can now concentrate on ourselves. Come back to what we wanted to do when we didn't have time. But how long can we get occupied with these very things? Meditation, cooking, reading, wardrobe browsing [...] Routine becomes boring and after some time everyone starts feeling lonely in their own flat" (PEK3). The pandemic is also a good time to think about one's life so far, discerning what is important. At the same time, the responses of the older respondents more often and more forcibly demonstrate lack of faith in coming back to life before the pandemic. "Nothing will come back to normal," a PEK1

student writes, “as the norm is being established in our times.” However, in the respondents’ opinion, people do not always notice even such a big change. Instead of understanding the situation and empathizing with others’ needs, they keep chasing “money, shopping trophies and political games” (PEK2). The students’ reflections based on their own observations frequently take the form of severe social criticism. “Meritocratic society [...] has always striven for wealth. Success, money, own well-being. I am surprised how much people are concentrated on themselves” (PEK3). In their opinion, the pandemic has not taught us anything – we still ooze egotism “...as all that hectic life before the virus put pressure of success on people” (PEK3). We are stuck in the vicious circle instead of breaking free and developing new, better solutions. We shall not come back to a normal “pace of life but we have created a new rhythm, adopting to the situation” (PEK3) and adopting new solutions to old needs.

The time of the pandemic lets the respondents protect their intimacy, even though loneliness may be its side effect. “I feel stronger and calmer. No one will see that I didn’t sleep yesterday. No one will ask,” a PEK5 student describes his feelings. One can finally give up on the obligation to act and compete, which one is taught from early childhood. “We don’t have to rival anyone,” states a PEK5 student with relief. “I can calm down, slow down [...],” a PEK4 student accompanies him, “At that time, it is a good idea to devote time to one’s passions.” However, one has to be careful in this area too. Some respondents used to living in constant rush try to fill up their isolation days with intense activities as if they were afraid to face their own thoughts. “I fell into that trap of hyper-productivity. Doing the same every day,” confides a PEK6 student. Being with oneself requires courage but also entails a big value, i.e. it allows an individual to listen to their inner self. “Let us think and talk to ourselves, which will make us happy now,” appeals a PEK6 student. Writing about the meaning of life, a PEK9 student notices, like others, a sudden slowdown of its pace and in this well-felt pandemic silence reflects uncertainly: “Suddenly, the omnipresent rat race was no longer a priority. There is no hurry and noise. Cities, roads, districts and houses became quiet. One cannot hear children playing outdoors, couples quarreling, neighbours discussing the latest discounts in a nearby shop, cars passing. There is only silence... Peace mixed with fear filled people’s hearts. [...]” How to live! There is only one answer: I don’t know. We’ve never been in such a situation before. And here panic comes in” (PEK9). In this context it does not come as a surprise that there is a need to deafen one’s own thoughts that finally, in this sudden silence, could resurface. These feelings are strengthened by uncertainty concerning the future. “We feel helpless, we feel anxiety and fear of the nearest future. Nothing is certain any more,” writes a PEK7 student. The need to deafen one’s fear and anxiety triggers defence reactions. “For some it is lying in bed wrapped in a blanket with a laptop for an entire day [...], for others it is cooking and baking, and

for someone else it might be cleaning their flat [...] None of these activities is bad if they make someone feel better" (PEK6).

The students cope with confinement and anxiety in different ways. Some of them throw themselves into work, whereas others gradually start feeling numb due to the monotony of consecutive days. A PEK11 student accurately describes this state: "The same walls, the same furniture, the same people and even the same clothes that I have been wearing for a few days to maintain monotony. Several times a day I pass every smallest piece of litter on the floor, hair, spider's web, speck of dust and a spider, being "imprisoned" in my own house. This day, one of those in a row, has exhausted my list of planned and invented tasks. When will all this finally end?" (PEK11). Their general attitude is far from apathy though. Keeping a sharp, fascinated eye on events and society's reactions to the sudden crisis makes one draw also positive conclusions. We shall survive as we can adapt to new circumstances. "This situation showed us clearly how we, the humans, are able to adapt in difficult and sudden situations," states a PEK4 student.

The reflections of the students from the older group are characterized by maturity of observations and conclusions, and more interest in a broader context of the pandemic development. Their reflections do not regard current events but use them as a pretext to make more universal observations on the human condition, or a set of values and rules dominating culture. They are aware of the fact that this world standstill, abrupt in their opinion, offered them an opportunity to develop their reflectiveness. "The virus makes it possible now to stop and think – about what is important in life," states a PEK10 student. It is an opportunity to "realise that the most important thing in life is life" (PEK10). "That is why every moment has to be used as if it was the last one," a PEK11 student writes in the conclusion of her essay.

### ***Self – the environment***

This category, in comparison with *subjective self* (and *social self*), which from the quantitative point of view turned out to be crucial for the respondents, is not represented numerously in the texts. However, the significance of diagnoses produced within its framework as well as noticeable differences in the approach of students from both age groups to the questions of nature and man as its part make it an area of valuable observations.

The group of *self – the environment* phrases contains 30 fragments described with the help of three main codes: "The beauty of nature," "Ecological identity" and "Ecological criticism." However, the percentage analysis demonstrated that Tokarczuk's essay constituted a much stronger impulse for ecological reflection in the case of the older group. The students in the younger group,

concentrated on their own subjectivity, contemplating still developing identity, mentioned their relation with the environment barely 10 times, which constitutes 2.5% of all selected thematic phrases in their essays. In the case of older students – as the aforesaid analysis showed – more focused on analysing *social self* and general observation of social relations in the reality of globalised digital society touched by the pandemic, ecological threads occur 20 times, which, concerning fewer texts written by this group, translates into 15% of all phrases attributed to them.

What is interesting, differences are also noticeable in the frequency of the occurrence of particular codes categorized as ecological reflection. In the group of younger students, the “**beauty of nature**” code definitely dominates (6 out of 10). The respondents show the beauty of the spring blooming world watched out of the window, emphasizing the discomfort of “imprisonment’ in their houses, and paradoxically contrasting the view of nature coming back to life after winter with the fate of people under threat of death. “The beginning of April, spring, everything awakens. In the current situation it is a bit difficult to talk about “awakening” as on TV we keep hearing about more virus victims. It is absurd, contradiction of reality we find ourselves in right now, to nature” (EME1). Thus, nature does not participate in human drama, it is indifferent to it. On the other hand, due to the pandemic, we have time to notice it. “It’s the beginning of April, the weather is beautiful, and looking through the window I can see the beautiful, blue and cloud-free sky”(EME15). “Maybe right now we open our eyes and notice all that beauty which was so difficult to notice before?” (EME1). Nature and its beauty help to survive. It is true about those that live close to it and can feel privileged. “I don’t look out of the window, as I contemplate the views on the terrace at the back of my house. I sit comfortably, swinging in a garden armchair, and it can be easily said that it’s nice stuff, I’m not talking about this piece of garden furniture but about my own garden with the terrace and the view on the forest emerging from the lake’s horizon. The weather in the Sejny region is fantastic, the whole garden is coming back to life, there are green leaves on fruit trees in the orchard, one can feel long-awaited summer in the air” (EME14). Others are in a worse situation, one look out of the window makes them notice the change of view, acute emptiness of the street landscape created by people and deserted by them. “The weather outside is gorgeous. There are warm rays of the spring sun penetrating my room. In ordinary circumstances I would be sitting on the river bank, watching people walk by me. And now I’m looking through the window and all I can see are empty streets” (EME23).

The thread of **ecological criticism** is definitely less marked. Few students (5 out of 24) conclude that human activity is harmful for the environment, and limiting its expansion brings relief to nature. “The whole world slowed down, came to a halt. An advantage is a definite improvement in air quality” (EME14).

Nature regains territories deserted by man, it can be seen and heard: “The only thing you can hear are sounds of nature and announcements of the police warning us against going out” (EME15). These observations combine with a general, identity reflection on the necessity of changing our attitude to the environment we live in. “The world is beautiful, is waiting for us and our ideas” (EME22), “And when the world regains the old order of things, let’s hope [...] that we’ll be proud of the fact that we are humans and we live on the planet called Earth” (EME3). “We suffocate in our homes. The Earth takes a full breath. Let’s hope that once the pandemic is under control, we won’t forget about our planet and we’ll let it function the way it wants as a lot depends on it, and we have to remember about it above all. There is no other one like this,” concludes an EME21 student in her exceptionally mature reflection.

The essays written by the older respondents demonstrate completely different proportions representing particular codes from the *self - the environment* group. It should be mentioned that ecological threads occur in seven out of ten essays, and one of them is almost entirely devoted to that theme (in case of EME, there were 6 essays out of 24). Out of 20 selected phrases, only one is strictly connected with the **nature contemplation** thread. “What is amazing? Even birds began to sing in the morning and you feel like in the countryside, in some forested area. Living on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor now offers you long sunsets. During these sunsets, there are beautiful colours in the sky and they merge together. The horizon beams with perfect peace that one wants to become immersed in,” a PEK3 student describes the change after the world freezing due to the pandemic. As for other essays, even if they contain descriptions of nature, they are just an excuse to criticize human activity or reflect on our place in the world of nature. That is what happens, e.g. in an essay written by a PEK5 student, who describes his view from the window in the following way: “I’ve started watching the same magpie that my cat saw. I guess it’s building a nest in a nearby tree. I know that it’s creating something beautiful and functional at the same time. Deserted magpie nests serve other birds as well. In this case, the bird turns out to be a helpful friend. It leaves the fruit of its own beak and talons instead of appropriating it for good. It is an artist that I can watch live and save a bit of this view as my memory exhibit and respect for nature.” The magpie’s work – beautiful, useful and selfless to some extent becomes a symbol of the direction that human activity should follow. The text finishes with a moving conclusion emphasizing how deceptive our conviction of ruling the Earth is: “Everything depends on nature, and we are only scared guests on a walk” (PEK5).

There are many similar threads mentioning the question of **ecological identity**, the human fate combined with the planet’s future. “We are [...] fauna, diverse, inhabiting the whole world,” a PEK2 student writes. These threads usually also criticize people’s approach as the Earth hosts, who exploit and ruin it with-



out any limits, and this category of **ecological criticism** is the most numerously represented in this group of essays (13 out of 20 coded phrases). The same student points out further on, "There has always been too much of the world [...]. We could deal with it too well. But it was too well for us only. We moved forward, developing ourselves and our surroundings. But surrounding development is not the right expression here. In fact, we changed it to suit ourselves, to fulfil our expectations, needs and desires" (PEK2). In this light, the pandemic seems to be a natural consequence of human misdeeds towards nature, its excessive, ruthless exploitation, human egotism. What is characteristic, the respondents do not perceive the occurrence of the virus as punishment sent by the world, they do not look at it in terms of an apocalypse. For them, it is rather a logical consequence of disastrous activities undertaken by man. They cannot shoulder responsibility, they are not puppets, they only bear consequences of our own actions. "I'm criticizing us. Including me. I'd be a hypocrite if I didn't mention myself. The world gave us a task to complete, but I have an impression we brought it on us. [...] The virus attacks us just like people attack the earth. Can you see that? I can see that clearly and vividly," a PEK2 student writes. Another student's remark shows a similar mood: "The pandemic was an eye-opener, we saw that the planet will manage without people, but people will not survive without the planet. People's egotism has skyrocketed and Mother Nature says STOP! It gives us time to reflect. There is no doubt that this is a draconian lesson but it seems necessary. But, will we, people, great leaders of the world, draw any conclusions from it?" (PEK7) As the students point out, the catastrophe which touches people is nature's rescue. This shows how far we have drifted apart from our natural environment, in some sense, choosing the other side of the barricade. As a PEK9 student writes, "...there is a clear improvement in air quality, less water pollution and nature comes back to life. This enforced standstill, when people had to stay at home, showed their influence on the planet. But thanks to this, the planet got a second chance and the Earth breathed with relief." This touching way in which the human fate is juxtaposed with the fate of the world strongly resonates in the respondents' comments. A PEK7 student writes, "The world of nature takes a deep breath now. When people were locked at home like in a cage, turtles came back to the beaches in India and they lay eggs in great numbers, dolphins came back to Italian ports, and in Venetian canals one can see swans and fish not seen for a long time. Now, we, people, feel like small, defenceless animals, and animals finally feel at home." "It is a paradox that people die and suffer from pulmonary diseases, and at the same time they start to breathe" remarks the same author. The pandemic time is the last call to shake off the frenzy of consumerism and compulsive realization of one's egoistic needs, and to save the planet. "Humanity got the disease it needed – we stopped respecting nature only to learn how priceless it is,"

concludes her essay a PEK10 student. "Maybe it is a sign to start caring just a little bit about the environment we live in? Maybe it's worth thinking before we go shopping once again. Do we really need all those things?" a PEK11 student echoes her friend. Do the students believe in the possibility of change? The opinions are divided. "Everything will be fine, there is still hope! And hope dies the last..." a PEK9 respondent states perversely. Yet, her voice contrasts with a sad remark of an author whose essay was entirely devoted to the theme of ecology: "I am tired of walking my dog, which should be like an oasis on this closed desert. Constantly watching if it hasn't caught any disposable gloves thrown away in front of a shop. There should be fewer people outside. And maybe there are. But they leave more traces than ever..."

There is no doubt that the older respondents dealing with the question of nature take a more critical stance towards human activities concerning nature, which is strongly integrated with the conviction that other species are on a par with the human one. It is a sign of a potential, radical cultural change taking place in Western societies, i.e. moving away from the anthropocentric point of view regarding people's place and role in the world, showing their superiority and emphasising the mission of the message contained in the Biblical appeal to subdue the Earth (also noticeable in the pedagogical reflection in the form of non-anthropocentric pedagogy, emphasizing the significance of natural environment as well as, among all, the world of things for shaping human subjectivity – cf. Chutoriański (2021). In place of this vision, ecological communities propose ecocentrism – the so-called "deep ecology" aiming at environmental protection, ensuring the well-being of species, reflecting on the relation between man and nature (European Green Party, 2014). These issues seem particularly valued by the older respondents, demonstrating their broadened horizons and the way in which they look at the pandemic in comparison with the younger respondents who devote more attention to self-reflection.

## Conclusion

"A thought grows in silence, but the world sows it," wrote a great Polish poet and publicist, Feliks Chwalibóg in the 20s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1929, pp.6). Almost a hundred years later, reality illustrated his remark in a surprisingly literal way. Human emotions linked with the occurrence of an unknown disease spreading like fire to other parts of the globe, after a few days of obligatory isolation gradually turned into a reflection – this intimate one concerning the meaning of one's life and personal system of values, and also the one on "the state of the world," order and condition of our civilization. The texts analysed in this article reflect that moment. The students entering adulthood, forced by the situation,

stop in that rush and look at each other and the world, sometimes with awe, sometimes with a big dose of criticism. There are noticeable differences in how both groups perceive the situation. The younger respondents emphasise the value of life, its beauty and beauty of the world where that life goes on. At the same time, they see that their life so far, full of hurry, functioning in the culture promoting extrovert patterns of behaviour resulted in constant, unbearable pressure. Now they postulate to give them back their right to individualism and being introvert, to live at their own pace and in accordance with their needs and choices, to give up socially promoted patterns of successful life. Taking a broader perspective, they also negate narcissism and egotism characterizing modern civilization, together with understanding success as a condition of an individual's happiness. They also notice an educative dimension of the pandemic and emphasise its value. However, they take this broader perspective relatively rarely, concentrating on their own experiences. What is characteristic, their reflections clearly express hope, optimistic thinking about the future and possibility of repairing all the mistakes made by people so far, which have brought them to the edge of the catastrophe.

The younger respondents ask the biggest number of questions about the meaning of life. Almost as often they reflect on anxiety accompanying them, which is linked with their fear of sickness and death, but also of the future. They declare that they miss the past, especially early childhood perceived like a paradise lost, carefree time and a feeling of safety in their parents' arms. They also emphasise that lockdown was their opportunity for self-development, for bringing back their dreams and abandoned plans, for making an attempt to realise them. The pandemic also offers time for pleasures, taking care of oneself, i.e. activities there was no time for so far. However, it should be emphasised that many essay authors try to go beyond the perspective of their own biography and they maturely reflect on global consequences of the pandemic.

On the other hand, the reflections of the older respondents are dominated by the feeling of anxiety, emotional crisis triggered by isolation, loneliness and disappointment with it. Although the students' reflections depart from autobiographical threads or their own observations, quite frequently they take a form of severe social criticism. There is more criticism, anger and disappointment in the observations of the older respondents.

Some respondents, writing about the situation from a personal perspective, emphasise that being used to living in a constant rush, they try to fill up their isolation days with intensive activities as if they were afraid to confront themselves. They try to appease loneliness, filling each moment with new tasks. There are also people who gradually sink into the state of apathy caused by the monotony of passing days.

The reflections of the older students are characterised by high maturity of observations pertinence of drawn conclusions, and more interest in the cultural and social context of the events. Their reflections usually go beyond their personal perspective, and the pandemic itself gives a pretext for presenting universal reflections on human condition or for criticizing the current axionormative order. The older respondents particularly value ecological threads that occur in seven out of ten essays, including one in which ecology is the main topic. The sickness is perceived as a result of mindless exploitation of the Earth, lack of respect for laws of nature, ignoring the needs of other species, and last but not least, overpopulation. Yet, the respondents, with high maturity, avoid looking at the virus in terms of punishment inflicted on humanity, they do not judge the situation in apocalyptic terms. For them, the pandemic is rather a logical consequence of disastrous activities undertaken by people. The thread of ecological criticism is represented in the observations of the older students definitely more numerously than in the other group, where it occurs incidentally, mainly in remarks that human expansion limited by the pandemic brings nature some relief. The reflections of the younger students focus on self-thematic threads, and their perspective is clearly more personal.

Regardless of the respondents' age, their essays clearly demonstrate that the time of the pandemic has constituted an impulse for more profound existential reflection. The maturity of their observations, remarkable insight and readiness to formulate constructive conclusions show how much intellectual work they have done to confront the pandemic which will definitely become a generation experience for them, and maybe even an impulse to make an attempt to deal with the mistakes made by the older generations.

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## **Pandemia jako impuls dla refleksji studentów pedagogiki – w świetle analizy jakościowej**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule przedstawiono wybrane fragmenty wyników badań jakościowych na temat sytuacji psychologiczno-społecznej, w jakiej znaleźli się ludzie w czasie pandemii COVID-19 w opinii studentów pedagogiki. Próba ograniczenia transmisji wirusa poprzez wprowadzenie lockdownu zamknęła w domach miliony ludzi, ograniczyła ich wolność i kontakty międzyludzkie. Czas ten dla wielu osób stał się impulsem do pogłębionej refleksji egzystencjalnej. Badacze, zainteresowani zagadnieniem refleksyjności studentów, poprosili ich grupę o przygotowanie krótkich esejów gromadzących refleksje z czasu pierwszej fazy pandemii. Badaniem objęto 36 studentów z Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, w dwóch grupach wiekowych – zaczynających studia i zbliżających się do ich końca. Zgromadzone teksty poddano analizie zgodnej z metodologią teorii ugruntowanej w badaniu. Analiza dyskursu, prowadzona w perspektywie interpretatywnej, pozwoliła na wyłonienie w wypowiedziach studentów 4 kluczowych kategorii, a następnie na wskazanie różnic pomiędzy grupami w podejściu do poruszanych kwestii. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje wyniki badań obejmujące dwie kategorie: refleksję badanych na temat własnej podmiotowości oraz przemyślenia dotyczące ich tożsamości ekologicznej. Młodszy badani wykazywali większą koncentrację na perspektywie osobistej, a ich wypowiedzi cechowała większa emocjonalność i optymizm. Starsi, bardziej zdystansowani wobec rzeczywistości, poddawali ją częściej gorzkiej refleksji ukierunkowanej na kwestie polityki społecznej, konsumpcjonizmu i egoizmu współczesnych społeczeństw, częściej traktując kwestię pandemii nie jako cel sam w sobie, ale jako punkt wyjścia dla szerszej krytyki społecznej i ekologicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pandemia, COVID-19, lockdown, refleksyjność, podmiotowość, przyroda, środowisko, teoria ugruntowana.



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## **Efektywność treningu kompetencji społecznych w profilaktyce zachowań agresywnych dzieci i młodzieży – przegląd literatury. Możliwości, ograniczenia i nowe perspektywy badawcze**

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### **Wprowadzenie redakcyjne**

W poniższym artykule znajdziemy ciekawe opracowanie dotyczące efektywności treningu kompetencji społecznych i ich powiązania z zachowaniami agresywnymi. Wskazano, że metody bazujące na propagowaniu właściwych zachowań nie przynoszą oczekiwanego efektu. Autor podaje przykładowe sposoby nabywania kompetencji społecznych. Czytelnik zainteresowany analizą transakcyjną powinien z pewnością zwrócić uwagę na powiązanie opisów z kluczowymi dla AT elementami, takimi jak skrypt czy postawy życiowe. Autor opisuje wyniki badań, które mogą być tłumaczone obecnością silnego stanu Ja-Dziecko. Rozwój kompetencji w tym obszarze może skutkować umiejętnościami manipulacji i wysoką efektywnością. Z tej perspektywy połączenie profilaktyki społecznej z analizą transakcyjną jest nowym, ciekawym polem badawczym.

Zbigniew Wieczorek

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule podjęto próbę oceny efektywności treningu umiejętności społecznej w profilaktyce społecznej zachowań agresywnych dzieci i młodzieży, wykorzystując przegląd polskiej i międzynarodowej literatury badawczej. Głównym celem artykułu jest wskazanie możliwości i ograniczeń

stosowania treningu umiejętności społecznych w profilaktyce zachowań tejże grupy społecznej. Głównym założeniem jest weryfikacja efektywności w perspektywie różnych przejawów zachowań agresywnych dzieci i młodzieży. Punktem wyjścia do analizy jest koncepcja *evidence-based practice* w profilaktyce społecznej, która zakłada uzyskanie maksymalnej efektywności opartej na empirycznych dowodach naukowych, które pochodzą z wdrożeń i badań eksperymentalnych. Efektem pracy jest wskazanie obszarów niższej efektywności i próba wyjaśnienia ich przyczyn oraz wskazanie dalszych perspektyw badawczych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kompetencje społeczne, trening kompetencji społecznych, profilaktyka zachowań agresywnych, profilaktyka *evidence-based practice*.

## Wprowadzenie do profilaktyki społecznej

Profilaktyka społeczna jako nauka zmienia się dynamicznie; obecnie wyróżnić można kilka modeli urzeczywistnianych w działaniu. Jeszcze do niedawna w rozwiązaniach praktycznych dominowała tzw. profilaktyka defensywna zwana też negatywną (Kania, 2017, s. 255–262). U podstaw tego podejścia funkcjonowało założenie, że najważniejszym celem jest propagowanie przekazu, czyli dostarczanie informacji. Na gruncie tej koncepcji wykreowała się charakterystyczna metodyka profilaktyki szkolnej, czyli różnego rodzaju prelekcje, pogadanki i tablice informacyjne. Stosowane metody nie przynosiły jednak znaczących rezultatów, gdyż polegały na biernym przekazie, mało angażującym słuchaczy. Działania – w myśl profilaktyki defensywnej – opierały się głównie na przekazywaniu wiedzy o zagrożeniach zdrowia psychospołecznego i uświadamianiu w kwestii zaburzeń (Ostaszewski, 2006, s. 6–10). Jednak największą wadą tej ideologii było działanie na zasadzie akcji–reakcji, gdzie działania nie były systematyczne, często powstawały pod wpływem pojawiającego się już problemu. Powyższe podejście, ze względu na niezadowalającą skuteczność, zostało zastąpione przez profesjonalną profilaktykę. Model ten zwiększał skuteczność działań, wprowadzając selekcjonowanie odbiorców, dostosowując inicjatywę do warunków psychospołecznych adresatów, którzy podlegali selekcji na grupy niskiego, podwyższonego czy wysokiego ryzyka (Ostaszewski, 2005, s. 40–41; Michel, 2013, s. 104–18). Pozwoliło to na zintensyfikowanie działań o charakterze uprzedzającym, wprowadziło również metodykę warsztatów i konwersatoriów. Profesjonalna profilaktyka, wdrażając strategię edukacji w standard pracy profilaktycznej, wprowadzała elementy uczenia się, wspomaganie rozwoju i właściwego postępowania w środowisku społecznym jej odbiorców (Kania, 2018, s. 468–475). Pomimo wielu zalet i skuteczniejszego podejścia niż profilaktyka defensywna posiada ona również swoiste wady, np. selekcjonowanie względem grup ryzyka do prac grupowych, mogące prowadzić do treningu dewiacji (Depułta, 2013, s. 344–349). Problemy te próbowano rozwiązać w profilaktyce pozytywnej (Gaś, 2006, s. 30; Ostaszewski, 2006, s. 6–10), która, akcentując potrzebę uczenia się społecznego, dążyła do wzmocnienia pozytywnej adaptacji społecz-



nej za pomocą angażujących odbiorców metodyk, jednocześnie wzmacniając potrzebę działań konserwujących ich zdrowe funkcjonowanie (Ostaszewski, 2016, s. 5–10). Podkreślając istotność działania na poziomie uniwersalnym w zapobieganiu problemom (Grzelak, 2015, s. 26), selekcjonowanie pod względem ryzyka, pomimo że utrzymywane i stosowane w praktyce, nie stanowiło już o wymiarze skuteczności podejścia (Woydytło, 2003, s. 30).

Powyższe pobieżne omówienie modeli umożliwi zaobserwowanie zmian zachodzących w obszarze praktyki działań profilaktycznych. Zmiany te podyktowane są zwiększaniem skuteczności oddziaływań profilaktycznych (Kania, 2018 s. 468–475), które obecnie rozumiane jest jako zwiększanie przejawów zachowań prospołecznych dzieci i młodzieży z jednoczesną zdolnością radzenia sobie w obliczu natężenia czynników ryzyka.

Nowym trendem, mającym na celu dalsze zwiększanie skuteczności profilaktyki, zaczerpniętym z nauk medycznych, jest model *evidence-based practice*, czyli działanie oparte na dowodach naukowych (Barczykowska, Dzierżyńska-Breś, 2013, s. 131–135). Profilaktyka realizowana w tym nurcie nie faworyzuje żadnego z modelu, teorii czy metodyk działania, a jej głównym założeniem jest takie konstruowanie procedur, by uzyskać możliwie trwały efekt przy możliwie najniższym poziomie zaangażowania zasobów realizatorów. *Evidence-based practice* wydaje się być kolejnym etapem rozwoju profilaktyki zachowań ryzykownych dzieci i młodzieży jako dziedziny wysokospecjalistycznej, która akcentuje współpracę środowiska naukowego z praktykami. Powyższe podejście ma stanowić przestrzeń dla swobodnego mieszania sposobów działania, uzasadnionego efektywnością, a nie zgodnością założeń. Przykładowo, w przypadku stosowania profilaktyki pozytywnej usytuowanej antagonistycznie do profilaktyki defensywnej unikane było stosowanie strategii informacyjnych o zagrożeniach, pomimo tego że ich efektywność w zestawieniu ze strategią edukacyjną została potwierdzona (jako strategia wspomagająca) (Ostaszewski 2003).

Odwolując się do powyższych ustaleń, podjęto próbę analizy skuteczności działań profilaktyki adresowanych do dzieci i młodzieży. Ze względu na zbyt szerokie spektrum możliwości interpretacyjnych pole analizy zawężono do inicjatyw szczególnie zorientowanych na zachowania agresywne tejże grupy społecznej. Współcześnie uznaje się wspieranie kompetencji społecznych dzieci i młodzieży za jeden z ważniejszych czynników chroniących w wygaszaniu zachowań ryzykownych, w tym zachowań agresywnych i przemocowych (Fergus, Zimmerman, 2005, s. 400–402; Urban, 2012; Szymańska, 2012, s. 40–42; Mudrecka, 2013, 57–59).

## Kompetencje społeczne – ustalenia terminologiczne

Przed podjęciem próby definiowania kompetencji społecznych należy zaznaczyć, że znaczenie kompetencji samych w sobie, często ze względu na zakres de-

finicyjny, jest mylnie rozumiane (von Hamond, Haccou, 2007, s. 37). Współczesna literatura przedmiotu utrudnia wskazanie jednoznacznej definicji kompetencji społecznych (Zawisza-Masłyk, 2013, s. 17). Wyróżnia się dwie metody ich definiowania (Smółka, 2008, 27–28), w których podstawowym kryterium są potrzeby społeczne:

- jako umiejętności relacyjne – czyli zdolność zaspokajania potrzeby aprobaty i akceptacji, nawiązywania i utrzymywania relacji międzyjednostkowych w wymiarze pozytywnym (satysfakcjonującym);
- jako umiejętności realizacji własnych celów rozwojowych – czyli zdolność do zaspokajania potrzeby statusu społecznego i władzy w sposób powszechnie akceptowany. Jednostka kompetentna społecznie to taka, którą darzy się poważaniem i szacunkiem oraz pełni ona funkcję autorytetu w danej społeczności.

W literaturze przedmiotu nazewnictwo i próby definiowania kompetencji społecznych zaowocowały różnorodnością terminów, z których najpopularniejsze to: *umiejętności społeczne*, *inteligencja społeczna*, *inteligencja emocjonalna*, *kompetencje emocjonalne*, *umiejętności rozwiązywania konfliktów* oraz *wiedza społeczna*. Powyższy stan rzeczy utrudnia precyzyjne operowanie pojęciem *kompetencja społeczna* oraz pewna dowolność interpretacji przez badaczy, którzy mogą dopasowywać interpretacje terminologiczne kompetencji społecznych dla potrzeb uzasadnienia kontekstu rozważań własnych badań (Zawiszy-Masłyk 2011, s. 17). Chaos panujący w terminologii kompetencji społecznych, objawiający się szczególnie w ustaleniu wspólnego stanowiska (Heller, 2016, s. 18), może być pogłębiony, jeśli w analizie zostanie uwzględniona wielowymiarowość kompetencji społecznych zależnej od spektrum działań danej jednostki, co może sprzyjać akcentowaniu różnych jej aspektów jako odmiennych zdolności (Schaffer, 2006, s. 16). Niezwykle istotnym elementem, który również może utrudniać ich definiowanie, jest uwidocznienie skuteczności danej jednostki w stosowaniu kompetencji społecznych. Wykazanie sukcesu w stosowaniu kompetencji tzw. twardych utożsamianych z pracą zawodową, zwanych inaczej kwalifikacjami (Oleksyn, 2006, s. 20) lub czynnościami technicznymi, jest łatwiejszym zadaniem niż sukces społeczny w stosowaniu kompetencji społecznych. Ukazanie efektywności społecznej w obszarach mniej specyficznych, związanych z interakcjami spoza środowiska jednostki, utrudnia więc brak precyzyjnego określenia sukcesu społecznego (Arygle, 1991, s. 98–99). Samo pojęcie sukcesu społecznego może również być opisywane w dwóch perspektywach. Pierwsza – wewnętrzna (subiektywna) – jest poziomem satysfakcji z osiągnięć indywidualnych. Druga – zewnętrzna – jest oceną efektywności własnych dążeń poprzez pryzmat osiągnięć innych ludzi (Hildebramdt-Wypych, 2013, s. 82). Sukces społeczny jest zatem świadomością swojej skuteczności, która zależna jest od różnorodności doświadczeń własnych oraz jednostek z najbliższego otoczenia (Dudzikowa,

1993, s. 27). W tej perspektywie sukces społeczny, a tym samym poziom kompetencji społecznych, może być względny i zależny od tego, w jakiej rzeczywistości społecznej jednostka jest osadzona (Turek, Wojtczuk-Turek, 2008, s. 34).

Problemy interpretacyjne w obszarze kompetencji społecznych poruszane są przez większość badaczy tej tematyki, dlatego istotne wydaje się przytoczenie kilku definicji. J. Borkowski (2003, s. 108) za kompetencje społeczne uznaje:

spójny i funkcjonalny zestaw (układ) wiedzy, doświadczenia, wyposażenia osobowościowego, zdolności i umiejętności społecznych, który umożliwia człowiekowi podejmowanie i rozwijanie twórczych relacji i związków z innymi osobami, aktywne współuczestniczenie w życiu grup społecznych, zadowalające pełnienie różnych ról społecznych oraz efektywne wspólne pokonywanie pojawiających się problemów.

Powyższa definicja wskazuje również ważny aspekt zadowolenia społecznego z postępowania jednostki kompetentnej społecznie oraz na właściwości osobowe pozwalające kreować i dostosowywać kompetencje do wymogów habitatu społecznego. Ciekawą definicję podają także amerykańscy badacze S.A. Lynch i C.G. Simpson (2010, s. 2), określając je jako zachowania, „które promują pozytywne interakcje z innymi i ze środowiskiem”. W ramach powyższej definicji posiadanie kompetencji społecznych jest oznaką dobrych, czyli bezkonfliktowych interakcji z innymi uczestnikami życia społecznego.

W polskiej literaturze przedmiotu szczegółową definicję kompetencji społecznych podaje A. Matczak (2001, s. 7), według której kompetencje to „złożone umiejętności warunkujące efektywność radzenia sobie w określonego typu sytuacjach społecznych, nabywanych przez jednostkę w toku treningu społecznego”. Zatem przyjąć można, że kompetencje społeczne to umiejętności efektywnego poszukiwania i wykorzystania sposobów reagowania na zaistniałe warunki interakcji społecznych.

## **Kompetencje społeczne a zachowania agresywne**

Kompetencje społeczne, pomimo że towarzyszą im trudności definicyjne, utożsamiane są ze społecznie akceptowalnym, bezkonfliktowym funkcjonowaniem jednostki. Badania w tym zakresie są szczególnie bogate w perspektywie związków z przejawami agresji i przemocy (Frey i in., 2005, s. 171–175). Niski poziom kompetencji społecznych objawiać może się zachowaniami agresywnymi. Wspomniany wcześniej badacz M. Arygle (1991, s. 98–104) już samą zdolność do wyzbycia się agresji traktuje jako swoistą kompetencje społeczną.

Analizując związki agresji fizycznej i przemocy fizycznej z kompetencjami społecznymi, współzależności między tymi zmiennymi zostają już potwierdzone na poziomie teoretycznym. Stosowanie fizycznych środków przymusu w rozwiązywaniu sytuacji trudnych stanowi świadectwo niskich kompetencji społecznych

jednostki, a tym samym dowodzi pewnej formy trudności przystosowawczych jednostki. Szczególne znaczenie ma brak społecznej akceptacji agresji fizycznej i jej dostrzegalność. Przemoc fizyczną trudniej ukryć, jest aktem dość niewymagającym od jednostki ją przejawiającej, gdyż – w odróżnieniu od pozostałych form przemocy – poza siłą fizyczną sprawca nie musi posiadać innych szczególnych umiejętności czy predyspozycji (Tremblay, 2000, s. 134).

Niski poziom kompetencji społecznych powiązany jest również z odrzuceniem rówieśniczym (Volling i in., 1993, s. 459–463), które – jak wykazały badania – związane jest dwustronnie z wyższym poziomem agresji. Niektórzy badacze wręcz wskazują na to, iż przejawy agresji stanowią dowód na niekompetencje społeczną jednostki (Stump i in., 2009, s. 23–37). Niski poziom kompetencji społecznych utrudnia zdobywanie zasobów społecznych jednostce, co może warunkować powstawanie gniewu, wrogości i frustracji, które są podłożem zachowań agresywnych i przemocowych (Rubin i in., 2012, s. 26–28).

Inna perspektywa badawcza wskazuje na odrzucenie rówieśnicze jako mediatora zachowań agresywnych między kompetencjami społecznymi. Agresywność dziecka zwiększa ryzyko jego odrzucenia z grona rówieśników, co paradoksalnie może utrwalić tendencje do zachowań asocjalnych (Urban, 2012, s. 126). Może to powodować zainicjowanie błędnego koła, w którym powodem odrzucenia były niskie kompetencje, a samo odrzucenie rówieśnicze może pogłębiać ich niski poziom poprzez nabywanie aspołecznych strategii zachowań w różnych sytuacjach społecznych oraz zubożałe sytuacje społeczne wynikające z ograniczonych możliwości interakcji z rówieśnikami (Martowska, 2012, s. 130).

Silny związek kompetencji społecznych z zachowaniami agresywnymi i aspołecznymi wykazywały liczne inicjatywy badawcze (Inglés i in., 2003, s. 505–510). W tej perspektywie można przytoczyć metaanalizy związków interpretacji komunikatów społecznych z agresją (Yoon i in., 1999, s. 320–331; Samson i in., 2012, s. 331–342), wskazujące na istotnie ujemną korelację między wyższym poziomem wiedzy społecznej a zachowaniami agresywnymi. Wyniki badań podłużnych wskazały, że istnieje dość duża stabilność w zakresie poziomu kompetencji społecznych wśród młodzieży oraz potwierdzono istnienie dwustronnego związku między niskim poziomem kompetencji społecznych a zachowaniami aspołecznymi (Sørlie i in., 2008, s. 123–124).

## **Kompetencje społeczne a przemoc intencjonalna i relacyjna**

Wskazywanie na wysoki poziom kompetencji społecznych jako znaczący czynnik niskiego poziomu agresji nie obejmuje całego spektrum ustaleń badawczych. Niektórzy badacze wskazywali na wyższy poziom kompetencji społecznych wśród dzieci stosujących przemoc, tj. manipulowanie, wzbudzanie poczu-

cia winy czy wykluczanie, w porównaniu do dzieci stosujących przemoc fizyczną. Ustalono również, że manipulowanie może stanowić kompetencje o charakterze strategii agresywnej, zapewniając odpowiedni status społeczny jednostce je stosującej w grupie rówieśniczej (Sutton i in., 1999, s. 132–134). Badania te zostały również częściowo potwierdzone przez innych badaczy (Peeters i in., 2010, s. 1048), którzy wykazali, że uczniowie szkół podstawowych stosujący przemoc o charakterze manipulacji posiadają często profil dominujący w społeczności klasowej, a więc nie są odrzuceni rówieśniczo. Potwierdzono również ujemny związek wysokiego poziomu kompetencji z agresją, jednocześnie obserwując wyższy poziom kompetencji społecznych u rówieśników o dominującym statusie społecznym w grupie. Wyniki prac szwajcarskich badaczy weryfikujących powiązanie wyższego poziomu kompetencji społecznych z zachowaniem agresywnym wykazały jednoznacznie, że zachowanie agresywne wiąże się z mniejszym poziomem kompetencji społecznych. Jednak ten kierunek może ulec zmianie przy założeniu, że związek agresji z kompetencjami społecznymi może być moderowany przez jej funkcję dla jednostki ją stosującej (np. agresywne osiągnięcie celów, w szczególności celów społecznych). Może utrudniać to stwierdzenie wyraźnych związków agresji bez uwzględnienia jej funkcji w kontekście środowiska, w jakim się znajduje dana jednostka społeczna (Malti, 2006, s. 89).

Zachowanie agresywne może być również odczytywane jako kompetencja w stosowaniu środków przymusu, jeżeli wykaże się, że będzie to zachowanie świadczące o radzeniu sobie w sytuacji osiągnięcia zasobów w postaci przyjaźni, partnerstwa, informacji o znaczeniu społecznym (Hawley, 2002, s. 167–170). Potwierdzają to obserwacje dzieci w wieku 3–6 lat w zakresie sposobów uzyskiwania zasobów społecznych (dominacji, przyjaźni, popularności). Ustalono, że można zaobserwować cztery rodzaje związków kompetencji z agresją:

1. Pierwszy dotyczy sposobu kontroli prospołecznej (ang. *prosocial control*) – dotyczy grupy osób stosującej zaawansowane prospołeczne sposoby zdobywania zasobów społecznych z niskim wykorzystaniem strategii agresywnych. Grupa ta była odbierana przez rówieśników jako pozytywna i wykazywała się wysokim poziomem kompetencji społecznych.

2. Drugi to tzw. kontrolerzy przymusu (ang. *coercive controllers*), którzy stosowali środki przymusu relacyjnego (konflikt, wrogość, agresywność). Grupa ta w pomiarach kompetencji społecznych wykazywała ich niski poziom, który powiązany był z brakiem akceptacji rówieśniczej.

3. Trzecia grupa dwustrategiczna (ang. *bistrategic controllers*), określana również jako makiawieliczna (ang. *machiavellian*), stosowała zaawansowane metody prospołecznej kontroli oraz zaawansowane metody przymusu (np. intrygi), również o charakterze agresji i przemocy. Grupa ta uzyskiwała wysokie pozycje w popularności i akceptacji grupowej oraz wykazywała wysoki poziom kompetencji społecznych.

4. Ostatni rodzaj to grupa niekontrolująca (ang. *noncontrollers*), która była najmniej efektywna w działaniu społecznym, uzyskując niskie poziomy kompetencji społecznych i niskie wyniki w zakresie zachowań agresywnych (Halley, 2015, s. 31–38).

Prace badawcze P.H. Hawley (2002, s. 167–170; 2015, s. 31–38) wskazują na zaskakującą prawidłowość – nie wszystkie dzieci agresywne muszą być niekompetentne społecznie. Przemoc intencjonalna, chłodna i manipulacyjna, dotycząca intrygowania, ostracyzmu czy wykluczania rówieśniczego wymagać może wyższego poziomu kompetencji niż stosowanie przemocy o charakterze bardziej widocznym i bezpośrednim. W analizowanych badaniach związku z niskimi kompetencjami społecznymi dotyczą jedynie dzieci i młodzieży przejawiających zachowania przemocowe inne niż te intencjonalne. Badania prowadzone przez Hawley dotyczą dzieci małych przedszkolnych i wczesnoszkolnych, co uzasadnia się łatwością obserwacji strategii zdobywania zasobów społecznych (Hawley, 2007, s. 1–29).

## Trening kompetencji społecznych – opis strategii

Aleksander Kamiński (1974) w swej pracy *Funkcje pedagogiki społecznej* jako jeden z pierwszych polskich badaczy określił działalność profilaktyki społecznej przede wszystkim jako wspieranie kompetencji społecznych. Popularność treningów kompetencji – implikowanych jako profilaktyka zachowań ryzykownych – współcześnie osadzana jest w odrębnej strategii działania profilaktycznego, określanej jako uczenie umiejętności życiowych. Strategia ta w znaczącej mierze jest oparta na badaniach i teorii zachowań problemowych Richarda Jessora (1987, s. 331–342). Przejawianie zachowań ryzykownych – w myśl ustaleń Jessora – jest jedynie pewnym poziomem niekompetencji społecznej, która wyraża się nieumiejętnością bezkonfliktowego zaspokajania potrzeb. Adekwatną więc formą profilaktyki społecznej jest uczenie dzieci i młodzieży kompetencji, które pozwalają w sposób akceptowalny społecznie na zdobywanie zasobów społecznych.

Uczenie się kompetencji społecznych odbywa się za pomocą treningu społecznego, mogącego przybierać dwie podstawowe formy: naturalną i laboratoryjną (Martowska, 2012, s. 25–27). Trening naturalny kompetencji społecznych odzwierciedlony jest w każdej sytuacji społecznej, wynikającej z naturalnego funkcjonowania jednostki. Poprzez naturalny należy rozumieć, że nie został zmodyfikowany tak, by jednostki w niej uczestniczące nabyły doświadczenie własnej oraz cudzej skuteczności wpływania na zachowania. Konsekwencją zaistniałych sytuacji społecznych jest nabycie doświadczenia, które może być wykorzystane w udoskonaleniu własnych postaw i zachowań. Trening naturalny jest zatem

zbiorem doświadczeń jednostki testującej swoje dyspozycje w sytuacjach osadzonych w niewykreowanej sztucznie rzeczywistości społecznej. Za najskuteczniejszą metodę naturalnego treningu społecznego uznaje się obserwację osoby kompetentnej społecznie oraz metodę własnych prób i błędów. Skuteczność treningu społecznego zależy jest w dużej mierze od stopnia zaabsorbowania jednostki sytuacją społeczną, gdyż sama sytuacja jest jedynie potencjalnym środowiskiem umożliwiającym zdobycie doświadczenia. Zaangażowanie jednostki zależy jest od występowania i częstotliwości informacji zwrotnych, które pozwalają na systematyczne konfigurowanie wzajemnych oddziaływań międzyjednostkowych. Istotne znaczenie ma również zdolność danej jednostki do rozumienia informacji zwrotnych – jest ona różna w zależności od doświadczeń własnych oraz dyspozycji do jej rozumienia. Efektywność treningu naturalnego jest więc zależna od częstotliwości danych sytuacji społecznych, dotychczasowych doświadczeń czy samych zdolności jednostki do przetwarzania informacji zwrotnych o własnej skuteczności lub też nieskuteczności. Trening naturalny jest zatem uczeniem się kompetencji społecznych, jednocześnie umożliwiając weryfikację ich adekwatności do potrzeb sytuacji, dając większą szansę na ich przydatność i powodzenie.

Trening społeczny w warunkach laboratoryjnych jest natomiast formą doświadczeń zdobytych w sztucznie wykreowanym środowisku, w którym wyeliminowano szereg zmiennych, mogących stanowić utrudnienia dla jednostki uczącej się danej kompetencji społecznej. Są to różnego rodzaju oddziaływania korekcyjne z zakresu ponownej socjalizacji, terapii czy też nowoczesne, intensywne formy treningowe, tj. *coaching* (Martowska, 2012, s. 26). Trening umiejętności społecznych w związku ze sztucznym środowiskiem wyposażony musi być w obszary pozwalające na wykorzystanie w jego toku nabytych kompetencji do naturalnych sytuacji społecznych (Potempska, Sobieska-Szostakiewicz, 2008, s. 21). Trening w warunkach laboratoryjnych jest więc specyficzną formą doświadczania wykreowanego przez trenera. W jego ramach pojęciowych wyróżnia się trening metapoznawczy oraz tzw. trening specyficzny.

Trening specyficzny obejmuje nabywanie i podnoszenie konkretnych umiejętności społecznych (np. takich jak umiejętności nadawania i odbierania komunikatów niewerbalnych, udzielania wzmacnień społecznych, nawiązywania rozmowy, umiejętności auto-prezentacyjne, asertywne), a także oduczanie nieadekwatnych zachowań – agresywnego tonu, nadmiernego potakiwania, nerwowego śmiechu, czy niepotrzebnego usprawiedliwiania się (Martowska, 2012, s. 26).

Trening specyficzny jest zatem laboratoryjnie zorganizowanym oddziaływaniem mającym na celu wykreowanie takich sytuacji społecznych, w wyniku których możliwe będzie doświadczenie określonej umiejętności społecznej z niskim ryzykiem niepowodzenia.

Drugą formą laboratoryjnego treningu społecznego jest trening metapoznawczy.

Jego głównym celem jest dostarczenie trenującemu odpowiedniej wiedzy na temat reguł i zasad społecznych, dotyczących również takich spraw, jak adekwatność ubioru w zależności od typu sytuacji, czy zasady używania form grzecznościowych z jednej strony, z drugiej zaś pomoc w rozwijaniu ogólniejszych umiejętności społecznych, takich jak percepcja społeczna, rozumienie sytuacji społecznych, autorefleksja, czy odbieranie informacji zwrotnych (Martowska, 2012, s. 27).

Jest to więc taki rodzaj oddziaływań, który ma na celu przekazanie określonej wiedzy społecznej, stanowiącej punkt wyjściowy do kreowania kompetencji społecznych, jak również zmieniający pewne postawy rozumiane jako niespecyficzne kompetencje społeczne.

## **Skuteczność treningów kompetencji społecznych**

Badania wdrożeniowe treningów kompetencji społecznych wykazały w zdecydowanej większości efektywność laboratoryjnego treningu umiejętności społecznych, gdzie dzieci poddane nauce konstruktywnego radzenia sobie z konfliktami i agresją deklarowały spadek tendencji agresywnych (Aronson i in., 2012). W badaniach międzynarodowych nad skutecznością treningu umiejętności społecznych wykazywano szczególne związki postaw agresywnych z deficytami w umiejętnościach komunikacji (Babakhani, 2011, s. 1565–1570), deficytami rozumienia społecznego w sytuacjach społecznych (Alavi i in., 2013, s. 1169). Badania eksperymentalne na dzieciach przedszkolnych wykazały, że treningi kompetencji społecznych typu laboratoryjnego były efektywniejsze niż uczenie drogą naturalną. Spadki zachowań agresywnych obserwowane były zarówno w grupie kontrolnej, jak i eksperymentalnej, jednak im dłużej trwało wprowadzanie specjalistycznego treningu, tym spadki zachowań agresywnych były większe (Vahedi i in., 2007).

Realizowanie treningów kompetencji społecznych dla dzieci w wieku szkolnym również wykazywało skuteczność. Zdaniem autorów programu „Dokonaj wyboru” każde selekcionowanie uczestników na mniej agresywnych i bardziej agresywnych pozbawia tych bardziej agresywnych modeli poprawnego zachowania, co może zmniejszać efektywność samych treningów. Jednak – jak wykazano – na poziomie profilaktyki uniwersalnej, gdzie nie prowadzi się selekcji, trening kompetencji był najefektywniejszy. Skuteczność była szczególnie obserwowana u dzieci z grup podwyższonego ryzyka znajdujących się w ogólnej populacji odbiorców. Efektywność objawiała się zarówno większym wzrostem poziomu kompetencji społecznych oraz większym spadkiem agresji niż u dzieci z grup niskiego ryzyka. Program „Dokonaj wyboru” wykazywał skuteczność w przypadku



agresji jawnej, nieznane są jednak efekty dla innych rodzajów zachowań agresywnych (Smokowski i in., 2004, s. 233–251). Najbardziej rozpoznawalny program treningu kompetencji społecznych, Aggression Replacement Training (ART) (Goldstein i Glick, 1994, s. 9–26), doczekał się licznych implikacji w wielu krajach, w tym znajduje również zastosowanie w Polsce (Morawski, 2005, s. 21–25; Pawliczuk i in., 2015, s. 33–37; Czarnicka-Dziulak i in., 2015, s. 15–49). Metaanalizy skuteczności programu wykazały przydatność ART w zwiększaniu umiejętności społecznych wśród dzieci i młodzieży, obniżaniu ryzyka przestępczości i zapobieganiu powtarzania przestępczości poprzez obniżanie poziomu złości oraz impulsywnych zachowań, w tym zachowań agresywnych (Kaya i Buzlu, 2016, s. 729–735).

Wysoką efektywność treningu laboratoryjnego kompetencji społecznych dla dzieci z grup ryzyka potwierdzają metaanalizy wykonane przez Wilson i Lipseya (2005). Zwiększoną skuteczność dla dzieci i młodzieży z grup ryzyka można wyjaśnić większą labilnością behawioralną niż u dzieci nieklasyfikowanych jako grupy ryzyka, a więc ich większą zdolnością do zmiany. Trening umiejętności społecznych również okazał się skuteczną metodą w wygaszaniu zachowań agresywnych u 8–10-letnich uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Dzieci zostały poddane treningowi Social Skill Training Program autorstwa Guglielmo i Tryona (2001, s. 158–175). Badając grupę eksperymentalną i kontrolną metodą pre-test i post-test, wykazano, że trening kompetencji społecznych istotnie wygasił zachowania o charakterze agresji słownej i agresji fizycznej (Alavi i in., 2013, s. 1169).

## Nieskuteczność treningów kompetencji społecznych

Niektóre wdrożenia jednak wykazały, że laboratoryjne treningi umiejętności społecznych mają ograniczone oddziaływanie. Badacze z Teheranu skonstruowali cykl 12 sesji treningowych dla grupy 30 agresywnych nastolatków z ośrodków dla sierot, następnie metodą pre-test-post-test wykazali, że trening umiejętności społecznych istotnie obniżył skale występowania agresji słownej, ale dla agresji fizycznej nie zaobserwowano istotnego spadku (Babakhani, 2011, s. 1569). Analizy przeprowadzone na wdrożeniach treningów umiejętności społecznych dla dzieci i młodzieży z zaburzeniami zachowania wykazały skuteczność w zakresie łatwo dostrzegalnej agresji, np. agresji fizycznej, jednocześnie wykazując niską skuteczność w zakresie obniżania agresji relacyjnej (Sukhodolsky i in., 2016, s. 4). Warto również przytoczyć efekty eksperymentalnego programu Student Success Through Prevention (SS-SSTP) skierowanego do młodzieży szkolnej. Ewaluacja treningu umiejętności w tym programie wykazała spadek agresji słownej o 42%, jednocześnie nie zaobserwowano żadnych istotnych efektów w perspektywie agresji relacyjnej (Espelage, 2013, s. 180–186).

## Podsumowanie

Związki kompetencji społecznych z agresją w większości przywoływanych ustaleń zostały potwierdzone zarówno w perspektywie teoretycznej, jak i empirycznej. Kierunek związków jednak może być różny i zależny od rodzaju analizowanej agresji, gdyż kompetencje społeczne mogą być dodatnio powiązane z agresją intencjonalną i przemocą relacyjną. Zdecydowana większość ustaleń w perspektywie działań profilaktycznych potwierdza dodatnio związki między niskimi kompetencjami a agresją fizyczną i słowną, czyli tzw. agresją jawną. Przywołane analizy natomiast pozostawiają teoretyczne oraz empiryczne możliwości zaistnienia związku dodatniego między wysokim poziomem kompetencji społecznych a stosowaniem agresji o charakterze intencjonalnym, co umożliwiłoby obserwację niskiej efektywności treningów kompetencji społecznych dla obniżenia zachowań agresywnych dzieci i młodzieży.

Działania profilaktyczne zmierzające do wygaszenia negatywnych strategii reagowania w sytuacjach społecznych wśród dzieci i młodzieży oparte na laboratoryjnych treningach kompetencji społecznych mogą okazać się nieefektywne. Nieskuteczność ta może uwidaczniać się szczególnie w perspektywie pracy z dziećmi i młodzieżą posiadającą dobry dostęp do zasobów społecznych (dominacja, popularność, przyjaźń) oraz pracy profilaktycznej zorientowanej na wygaszanie agresji intencjonalnej i przemocy relacyjnej.

W powyższej perspektywie niezwykle ważne wydaje się pogłębienie dalszych metaanaliz uwzględniających szczegóły programów profilaktycznych oraz procedury zastosowanego laboratoryjnego treningu kompetencji społecznych dla dzieci i młodzieży. Zasadne wydaje się podkreślenie istoty diagnozy klasyfikacyjnej z uwzględnieniem grup ryzyka oraz typów przejawianych zachowań agresywnych. Dalsze badania efektywności treningów kompetencji społecznych w profilaktyce zachowań agresywnych dzieci i młodzieży w tym zakresie powinny obejmować także inne typy przemocy, w tym dotychczas mało zbadane związki ze stosowaniem przemocy emocjonalnej (Karakurt, Silve, 2013, s. 804–806) czy przemocy proaktywnej (Ross, Babcock, 2009, s. 607–609).

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## **The effectiveness of social competence training in the prevention of aggressive behaviour of children – a review of the literature. Opportunities, limitations and new research perspectives**

The article attempts to assess the effectiveness of social skills training in the social prevention of aggressive behaviour of children and adolescents, using a review of Polish and international research literature. The main goal of the article is to indicate the possibilities and limitations of using social skills training in the prevention of behaviour of this social group. The main assumption is to verify effectiveness in the perspective of various manifestations of aggressive behaviour of children and adolescents. The starting point for the analysis is the concept of evidence-based practice in social prevention, which assumes obtaining maximum efficiency based on empirical scientific evidence that comes from implementations and experimental studies. The work results indicate areas of lower efficiency and an attempt to explain their causes and indicate further research perspectives.

**Keywords:** social competencies, social competence training, prevention of aggressive behaviour, evidence-based practice prevention.







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## Gratitude in Terms of Transactional Analysis

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### Editorial preface

This paper deals with the topic of gratitude, an under-researched area that involves both transaction and script theory. The study is unusual in that it takes advantage of the capabilities of new technologies in the narrative. The author refers to the words of the creators of the transactional analysis theory, which are posted on YouTube. I invite you to take a look at this experiment.

Zbigniew Wieczorek

### Abstract

Gratitude is one of the rarest researched aspects of human interaction. Partially because in scientific reflection gratitude and gift-giving are generally treated as a sign of corruption. Research held in Polish public hospitals on the topic of gift-giving to medical staff shows that patients very precisely differentiate bribes from gifts as a token of gratitude.

In TA it is very difficult to find any reflection about gratitude, however, Erskine admits that the need of showing gratitude appears to be one of the most significant relational needs he noticed. Gratitude is not easy to analyse in TA terms because it is both an emotional and a cultural attitude. As an emotion, it is a kind of joy, one of the four authentic emotions according to Eric Berne. As a cultural response it activated equally three Ego States: Parent, Adult, and Child. What is more – a need for showing gratitude in a form of benevolent action toward the person someone feels gratitude for and this is an occasion to take a step towards intimacy.

**Keywords:** gift giving, hospitals, gratitude, bribery.

In one of his interviews, which was recorded as a short film, Eric Berne explained the dynamics of the functioning of the Ego states using his example. It was when he bought a sports Maserati, which he drove from his home on the California coast in Mount Carmel to San Francisco to his weekly Transactional Analysis seminars. He said that on the one hand, he needed a car as a transportation mean (Adult), and at the same time, an expensive foreign car reflected his financial position (Parent). At the same time, driving this car gave him enormous pleasure, which came from the Ego state – Child ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_xF-2VH2q10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xF-2VH2q10)).

This is a very interesting example when the concept of the Ego states is used not only to analyse transactions between people but also to explain the dynamics of how people experience their decisions and their consequences. It is also interesting that, as opposed to the transactional analysis, there are times when we are not completely immersed in a specific Ego state, but instead, we are staying in all three states at the same time. It seems that one can find more such situations or internal predispositions when we are aroused in all Ego states truly experiencing a certain situation. In this article, the attempt is made to present one such example that stands out from the sharp division into three separate Ego states: gratitude.

Gratitude is described in the literature as

the joyful emotion that comes from recognizing that you have received favor or help from another person, or a positive emotion that you feel after recognizing the value of a particular situation in life, from a person, received from an action, or gained from an object [...]. People with high gratitude are known to have the ability to find positive attributes and reinterpret them in a good way, even in situations that are easily interpreted negatively because of their flexible attribution [...]. In addition, people with high gratitude appreciate external favorable attention [...] and have the ability to find positive aspects in stressful situations and reconstruct the event [...] (Chang Seek Lee, 2020).

The above definition treats gratitude as a joyful emotion, which is in line with the approach adopted in the Transactional Analysis, where joy is considered one of the four genuine emotions alongside sadness, fear, and anger (Steward, Joines, 2016, p. 292). Nevertheless, in the light of research conducted in the years 2015–2021 on expressing gratitude in hospitals, gratitude seems to be more a specific attitude than an emotion. It results from observations and literature that gratitude is deeply rooted in culture. Moreover, it has the character of a predisposition or an ability as it can be learned. Therefore, gratitude turns out to be a culturally defined response that stimulates people to culturally specific behaviours that are valued very positively, usually manifested as gifts giving understood as a material expression of gratitude.

## **Research process**

The idea of this article is based on the conclusions of research on showing gratitude in hospitals. During the research process, about 20 in-depth, partially structured interviews were conducted, of which 13 were selected for further analysis. The remaining interviews were rejected due to the lack of consent from the respondents or the lack of complete biographical data (some interviews were conducted spontaneously with unknown persons, in the car, and after the passenger left the car there was no chance to contact the respondent to obtain consent or information about him/her). The interviews were preceded by a several-year preparatory period full of many informal discussions on giving gifts in hospitals.

In addition, 109 questionnaires were conducted with young physicians during their specialisation training on their perception of the phenomenon of giving expressions of gratitude.

The research was also supplemented with studies on various forms of existing data, such as websites, blogs, journals, and other documents, such as codes of ethics.

## **Research problem**

Gratitude is an interesting subject for scientific analysis as it combines aspects of emotion and cultural construct.

Gratitude was neglected throughout the history of psychology. Recently many scholars pay great attention to gratitude because it is a virtue that is recognized in the major monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as are expressed variously by almost all cultures in the world and provide many benefits for psychological health (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). Gratitude is one of character strength that has the strongest relationship with global indicators of psychological health (Park, N., Peterson, C., Seligman, M.E.P., 2004); In facing difficulties, setbacks and challenges, young people who have character strength will experience fewer psychological and physical problems and will be helped in developing themselves to achieve expected outcomes such as school success (Park & Peterson, 2009). Roberts (2004) found that gratitude, as a virtue, increases or protects happiness and well-being. The grateful people tend to be satisfied with what they have and so are less susceptible for, even they have a more powerful resource for overcoming many of the circumstances that disappoint, frustrate, and anger (Wardhani, 2020).

Bibliographic research carried out on 22 September 2021 in the EBSCO database showed 1120 articles related to the term gratitude, thankfulness or gratefulness published in the years 2003-2021. There were 1,076 full texts in the database and 560 peer-reviewed articles. Most were in the field of psychology.

Even though the fact that gratitude is observed in many situations of everyday life, there is little reflection on it in other social sciences such as sociology, pedagogy, management science, let alone economics or legal sciences (the right to be grateful) (see Sypniewski, 2021). Even if behaviours connected with showing gratitude are common and well-known (e.g. showing gratitude in hospitals and schools), it is not reflected in research reflection, and even less so in organisational practice. Gratitude is ignored as a phenomenon accompanying stakeholder relations in the above-described organisations. It results from the fact that the phenomenon of gratitude and its various forms of expressions is commonly connected with corruption and giving bribes, regardless of the fact that these are completely different phenomena. Unfortunately, there is no definition in social sciences that clearly distinguishes a bribe from an expression of gratitude. In a sense, this can be understood as they both belong to one family of behaviours known as the gift exchange. The only field of social sciences dealing with the issue of gift exchange was social anthropology, beginning with the publication of Bronisław Malinowski's "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" ["Argonauści Zachodniego Pacyfiku"] and Marcel Mauss "The Gift". Unfortunately, other social sciences have described the exchange of gifts either from a legal position (as corruption, which is a violation of rules) or from an economic position (analysing financial and social costs of decisions made after receiving benefit given as an expression of gratitude). Even in discussions at scientific conferences, giving expressions of gratitude was most often associated with corruption (private talks at the EGOS and EURAM conferences, Brasov 2017, Tallinn 2018, Lisbon 2019).

Direct research in hospitals has identified four criteria that distinguish a bribe from an expression of gratitude. These criteria include:

- time;
- gift form;
- transparency;
- person.

The time of giving a gift refers to at what point in the relationship, process, or event the gift is being given. If the gift is given after completing an action for which the person wants to repay, it is an expression of gratitude. The key factor here is that the person who gives a gift does so without being forced by any external situation such as illness, dependence, or the expectation of benefits. On the other hand, a bribe is given in advance and has the characteristics of a commercial transaction – I'm giving it to you so you can give something back to me. The second criterion is that the expression of gratitude is an object or (less often) service, not money. In the event of a bribe, money is usually given in various forms. If things are given, their material value is emphasised. The gift which is given and which is an expression of gratitude, represents a person in

a way, and the respondents pointed out that the value of representing a given person may be more important than the material value. That is why, during interviews such things as, e.g., personally made handicraft (interview no. 16), drawings or portraits (interview no. 7), flowers from their garden, baked cakes or other products (e.g. sausage handed out by a farmer – interview no. 13) were mentioned. Obviously, there are things of high value – e.g., professional paediatric literature describes an expression of gratitude in the form of an expensive brooch given to the doctor by a couple of jewellers in gratitude for saving the child (Sharma et al., 2018). Another criterion is transparency or secrecy in giving the gift. A bribe is always secret or disguised, whilst people giving expressions of gratitude do it openly or do not care whether they will be seen as the most important thing is the relationship with the person to whom one wants to show gratitude. Moreover, giving an expression of gratitude is valued very positively, therefore the rules prohibiting giving the expressions of gratitude (e.g. in hospitals) are ignored. An important feature of gratitude is the fact that it is felt towards people, not institutions or organisations. As it does not directly affect activities of a given organisation (as it relates to decisions and actions that have already been conducted), it is very easy to ignore and, in principle, the administrative authorities ignored the facts of expressing gratitude in the inspected organisations. On the other hand, bribes greatly interfere with the activities of organisation, therefore they are given a lot of attention.

Gratitude is an interesting area for reflection when it comes to Transactional Analysis. First of all, it is because it cannot be associated with only one chosen Ego state. It can be also presented well and authentically from the point of view of the Parent, Adult, and Child. Probably the best qualification for gratitude will be to recognise that it has taken equally from each Ego state. Feeling grateful, we engage energy from both the Ego state – Parent (moral rule requiring the appreciation of the good that has been received), the Ego state – Adult (experience of objectively positive events and thoughts), and the Ego state – Child (feelings of joy). Therefore, even if a person that strongly experiences the feelings of gratitude in transactions with others at a given time will be able to genuinely enter into any complementary transaction without feeling dominated, and will not have problems with reactions in each of the Ego states. It is also an emotional state that stimulates to act, e.g., giving a gift as an expression of gratitude, though these may also be other activities aimed at other people, not necessarily those to whom one feels grateful. Even if being focused only on the efforts made to repay benefactors by giving gifts, it is very clear that people and possibly their loved ones invest a lot of energy, time, and resources to be able to express gratitude in a situation where they do not have to do so directly because the relationship and dependence of the person have ended (e.g. in the patient-doctor or teacher-student relationship). The fact that these people continue to put

a lot of effort into showing gratitude proves their emotional aspect (strongly engaging emotion of the Child), and the fact of connecting it with ethical attitude (Ego state-Parent) indicates the cultural aspects of this phenomenon. In terms of Transactional Analysis, the theses by Richard Erskine (the winner of, amongst others, Eric Berne Prize together with Marilyn Zalcman for the work "Script circulation: a model for the analysis of vicarious feelings"), in which he places the need to express gratitude amongst the 8 basic transactional needs (video entitled "The 8 relational needs - Richard Erskine - Transactional Analysis" of 10 January 2017 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwclJu1Hdfo&t=498s>) – read on 25.09.2021).

Giving expressions of gratitude can also be seen as a very healthy way of teaching people to enter into Intimacy-Closeness (in terms of the Structuring of Time). It is especially important in this aspect for people who wish to find an alternative to psychological games and who may already realise that entering into psychological games is a failed attempt to enter into Intimacy-Closeness. People may have difficulty entering into Closeness for various reasons (one of them may be script dependencies and vicarious feelings described by R. Erskine), however, transactional needs push them into interactions that may result in Closeness. Therefore, experiencing gratitude and entering into transactions with another person based on gratitude, for example by giving them a gift-an expression of gratitude, can be good training in dealing with the fear of being hurt that prevents an individual from entering into Closeness.

## **Limitations of gratitude and giving expressions of gratitude in social practice**

The positive effect of gratitude and the resulting need to show gratitude to a specific person can unfortunately be stopped or rejected due to at least several reasons. As already described in Transactional Analysis, an individual can enter into misunderstanding and ignore the situation that gives them a chance to feel grateful. This is where there can be mismatches at all levels of the mismatch matrix: a failure to recognise the fact, its meaning, the ability to react, and the person's ability to express gratitude. (Steward, Joines, 2016, p. 253). There may also be obstacles related to the limitations and failure to recognise the other person (refusal to accept gratitude, refusal to accept thank you, refusal to accept an expression of gratitude). There are also external obstacles for expressing gratitude that is imposed by the legal system, work organisations, or organisational culture of a given environment (e.g. a categorical ban on giving and accepting expressions of gratitude in some hospitals (<https://www.rp.pl/>

orzecznictwo/art15695001-czy-butelka-koniaku-dla-lekarza-to-lapowka – accessed on 25.09.2021).

## Conclusion

Gratitude as a very wide type of phenomenon includes emotional elements (as defined in psychology) as well as cultural aspects that are learned and socially transferred. The relationship between these aspects still needs to be studied - to what extent gratitude as a learned cultural attitude is the source of genuine emotion, and to what extent it is biologically assigned to our species. Most likely, however, the relationship between these sources of gratitude is very deep and the answer to this question will not be explicit. From the point of view of Transactional Analysis, gratitude also shows its extraordinary character, consisting in the fact that it can engage all Ego states of the subject and leads to the fulfilment of the need of showing gratitude, which can result in a very effective entry into a Closeness relationship with another person. When we deal with giving gifts that are not the result of gratitude but pure calculation, then the above-said emotional states do not take place, same as there is no gratitude. This is where the difference between gratitude and calculation and their practical manifestation is very clear: giving expressions of gratitude or a bribe. Despite the external similarity of these two gift-giving examples, they result from totally different attitudes and emotions. Nevertheless, the study of the practice of gratitude is a very interesting area and it is very possible that shortly it will be a consciously realised social need.

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## Wdzięczność w ujęciu analizy transakcyjnej

### Streszczenie

Wdzięczność jest jednym z najrzadziej badanych aspektów interakcji międzyludzkich. Częściowo dlatego, że w refleksji naukowej wdzięczność i dawanie prezentów są na ogół traktowane jako przejaw korupcji. Badania na temat wręczania upominków personelowi medycznemu, przeprowadzane w polskich szpitalach publicznych, pokazują, że pacjenci potrafią bardzo precyzyjnie odróżnić łapówki od prezentów wręczanych jako wyraz wdzięczności. W AT bardzo trudno znaleźć refleksję na temat wdzięczności, jednak Erskine przyznaje, że potrzeba okazania wdzięczności wydaje się być jedną z najważniejszych potrzeb relacyjnych, jakie zauważył. Wdzięczność nie jest łatwa do przeanalizowania w kategoriach AT, ponieważ jest to postawa zarówno emocjonalna, jak i kulturowa. Jako emocja jest rodzajem radości, jednej z czterech autentycznych emocji opisanych w teorii Erica Berne'a. Jako reakcja kulturowa aktywuje w równym stopniu trzy Stany Ja: Rodzic, Dorosły i Dziecko. Co więcej, potrzeba okazania wdzięczności w postaci życzliwego działania wobec osoby, do której ktoś czuje wdzięczność, to okazja do wykonania kroku w kierunku intymności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wręczanie prezentów, szpital, wdzięczność, przekupstwo.