

## CHAPTER 1

# FACTORS CONDUCTIVE TO CHILD AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION SYSTEM: SOURCES OF WELLBEING

## INTRODUCTION

Modern times offer new challenges for education designers. On the verge of the second millennium, efforts were made to come up with an adequate paradigm to embrace human functioning in a lifelong learning situation. The prevailing ways of thinking and asking questions about the goals and areas of education have been found inadequate. In the field of education, these doubts have been addressed among others by the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy, Cooper 2011) or the 21st Century Education. Both perspectives specify fundamental skills of a 21st century pupil together with indispensable changes that must be made in the way educational facilities operate or the way knowledge is transferred.

A shift in education paradigm also involves changes in the understanding of the role and tasks of a teacher. It has been emphasised that a failure to pursue such changes may produce a tension in people performing this job, resulting from the observed discrepancy between expected results and actual capacities, which may in turn have negative consequences, such as for example the burnout effect and compromised welfare in adults or adjustment disorders in children (Poraj, 2009).

The issue of learning and functioning in a professional role can be approached from the perspective of personal development (Rongińska, 2013), quality and meaning of life (Liberska, 2014) or specific problems inscribed in functioning in the role (Poraj, 2009). In all approaches, the underlying goal of teacher's work is to shape pupil's perception of self-identity, key values being here: (1)

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civic cooperation, (2) productive independence, (3) critical thinking and (4) rich repertoire of behaviours. If these assumptions are to be met, all actors of the educational system must be actively involved, i.e. educational authorities, teachers, pupils and their parents/carers (see Brzezińska, 2005). What we are dealing with is a lifelong learning situation and personal development of people who become architects of this process, namely teachers. Through such understanding of their work, they create conditions to assume responsibility and sense of control and set goals, thus embarking on what burnout prevention experts term as protective mechanisms (Moos, Scheafer, 1986, Sęk, 1991).

## EDUCATIONAL SITUATION

In this approach, the educational situation appears to involve the capacity to ensure such elements within the learning environment that would further aforementioned functions both in pupils and teachers. In the present study, this problem is approached from the perspective of the pentabasis method. The latter was put forward by Ganzen (1984) as a model for systematic description of complex phenomena. He suggested describing the functioning of a given psychological object in four dimensions, i.e. time, spatiality, energy and information. If we adapt the above model to problems involved in the functioning of an adult in the role of a teacher, we observe that these dimensions reveal how an individual functions in a given role. The importance of the role for an individual is defined by the time allocated to perform it, the way this time is utilised (flexibility, open-mindedness, passiveness) and involvement in the role (individual activity, effort, withdrawal, passiveness). The chosen way of functioning in the role and the ethos attached to it are described by the information dimension which points to knowledge development and sharing between the individual and the environment (recognition and approval of the state of things, disregard of differences, sensitivity to changes).

The space dimension pertains not only to physical, material conditions and the distinctive and specific nature of the venue where tasks are performed, but also psychological dimensions, like distance, openness, control or lack of control, loneliness vs. presence of others. What should be emphasised is that these dimensions are both created in the teacher's mind (involvement, information) and found in the material world (space, time). It is worth noting that suggested dimensions not only show how the role is understood; they may also serve for the assessment of functioning in a given environment. Crucially, time is understood here not only as a period; it is precisely in a unit of time that one may observe variability or recurrence of certain phenomena. In order to meet these goals

and proceed in line with adopted values, the education process (by definition) must be founded on individual activity of the pupil and the teacher, take place in the right time (ecological transition) and develop the skills of critical thinking, cooperation, creativity, reflection and responsibility.

## TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHER'S TASKS

With the emergence of new media, and the resulting unlimited access to information, a change in culture and, what follows, in education, is a fact. According to the assumptions behind the concept proposed by Maria Tyszkowa (1988, cf. Farnicka, Liberska, 2014), culture is the source of potential experience that can only be gained through individual's activity. It means that cultural changes (like research development or technological progress) trigger changes in the field of individual's activity and its forms, directions and pace, including the way of interpreting the world and the way of experiencing values, both in the individual and supra-individual dimension (Farnicka, 2011, Liberska, 2014). In the process of gradual acquisition and transmission of all-human experience, it is a specific form, while being a psychological development mechanism at the same time, in particular with reference to social behaviour patterns. It must be noted that teaching takes place within the process of development by virtue of intermediation in the time of individual's activity and their contacts with other people, as well as contact with manifestations of culture. Therefore, it is assumed that a pupil is not being taught; instead, learning is a process based on individual activity (Tyszkowa, 1988) of all education actors (teachers and pupils) (Melosik, 1995).

The educational process can be divided into a couple of levels on which both the teacher and the pupil must exercise their individual activity. The three levels, on which people involved in the educational process meet, are presented below. These include: cultural level, with challenges and expectations of the environment related to civilisation developments such as the emergence of new media, functioning in the online world, availability of different forms of learning and need for new competences; relational level, with all kinds of relationships entered by people involved in the educational process, and the operational level, which is about using skills and tools in order to meet goals and complete tasks the teacher and pupil are faced with, to the best degree possible.

At each educational level, i.e. cultural, relational and operational, the teacher shares knowledge and experiences necessary for performing social roles, building pupil's identity and the concept of one's own life. Thus, a number of interactions are triggered at each level, leading to the development of further changes in the system

and within individuals, as well. Bronfenbrenner (1976, p. 537-549) calls this process 'ecological transition', and considers it both a factor and consequence of development. Thus, the presented approach to the educational process presumes that recognized environmental pressures define current tasks, provoke new problems and stimulate the activity of all participants in the educational process. However, if a given system is to respond properly to perceived pressures, it must exhibit a certain readiness measured by motivational factors within the system itself, namely maturity, economic capacity and acknowledgement of social expectations that create a unique climate of changes that are being introduced. This moment can be called a sensitive period. It means that the same pressures or a similar configuration of pressures at a different time of development may bring about different changes in system functioning. Thus, it is this developmental readiness that determines which paths of change are chosen and what tasks and challenges are taken up. It goes for all types of developmental learning, i.e. identification, imitation, transmission, duplication and individual activity. The individual activity of a child is here perceived not only as an inalienable need of a child, but as a process conditioning other conscious processes. It is the case both for processes that are involuntary and those that are controlled by the learning individual.

Given the assumption that there is a need to stimulate individual activity in the learning process, we treat this process as a learning process by definition. Moreover, it defines the role of the teacher as a supporter of this process. This way, the teacher becomes responsible for bringing to the educational environment proper elements that foster pupil's individual activity. In order to experience educational contact, each person involved in this interaction (parent – child) must show individual activity (its scope is marked in shadow). The individual is going to internalize only those experiences they have gone through and worked through in their own psychic system. The rest will remain in the sphere of pressures, which are constantly exerted upon an individual anyway. The underlying assumption of the described model is that not all phenomena, events and contents from the surrounding reality (both in the family and in school environment) are being incorporated into individual's experience. It is the activity of individual that decides whether the individual makes the effort of changing their cognitive structures or behaviour. The more a person is involved in activities, the stronger is the impact of the latter on their psychic structures. In this respect, involvement is/can be a protective factor because it makes work meaningful and may produce a positive feedback loop concerning individual activity; however, it may as well lead to stress overload<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> In reference to the burnout syndrome, as regards involvement it is justified to say that „he who has not been burning, is not burned out”, because in a burnout situation, if persons

The manner in which an individual acquires cultural tools for structuring individual experience is similar (Tyszkowa, 1988). If they get actively engaged in the process of learning and acquiring those, they may change the way of individual's functioning. If not, despite living among given pressures, the latter become barely relevant for their development. Examples to illustrate this process can be found in developmental psychology handbooks (e.g. Bee, 2004). One of them is speech acquisition in twins. First of all, they usually stick to their own communication longer than single-born children who tend to communicate with their careers in the language of the latter earlier. Secondly, it is very often the case that one child acquires the language of adults and takes up the role of an intermediary. A yet another example is about language acquisition. Despite living in an English-speaking culture, a person is not going to speak this language if their experience of the language is passive and they have no need of understanding it or using it actively.

The process described above holds true also for experience sharing between family and society members. It does take place though established contact, and yet requires activity on part of the learner. If it is not there, the experience, values or standards of a given family may be denied incorporation into the psychic structures, and thus stay 'outside' the individual's personal experience. Therefore, it is approach-specific here that the learning process is treated as a series of changes taking place in the psychic system, which consist in internalizing experiences gained from individual's activity in the environment.

## CONFLICTS AS CATALYSTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

In the view that education is to be founded on such values as: critical thinking, cooperation, independence and creativity in developing a repertoire of behaviours, there is an implied assumption that one has the capacity to further those. Thus, a person who is functioning in the role of a teacher should have conditions in place to activate and further the aforementioned values which can be considered goals and attributes of contemporary education, as well. Selected conflicts that are inscribed in the role of a teacher are presented below. Conflicts inherent to the very role of a teacher and to the needs, values, goals and expected education results have been considered significant and essential to the functioning in the role of a teacher.

The systematic approach to the learning process (in childhood and adulthood) identifies spheres of influence important due to relationships present in there.

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are strongly involved, fatigue produces the perceived lack of positive reinforcement and further reduces self-esteem.

One is family, while the other is an institution, such as school/kindergarten/nursery, etc. The third is the environment created in individual's psyche through their own activity. A yet another is culture, which makes a somewhat broader environment affecting all of the above. In each of the identified educational environments, different assumptions, goals and work methods can be observed. Parents seek to socialise the child into their sphere of values, and strive to share the knowledge about the family along with necessary life skills essential from their point of view. They teach the child factors that make the child different from others as well as factors on the basis of which they can identify with their own family group. The learner is primarily interested in fulfilling their own developmental needs connected with the process of individuation and separation, being separate from others. Depending on the sensitive moment (op. cit. Bronfenbrenner, 1976) the child will exhibit individual activity and curiosity of the world on their own terms.

At the same time, the educational facility environment aims at socialising the child to a certain set of norms and rules, teaching how to function within the said set, and transmitting a predefined range of knowledge and life skills, both individual and social, useful in the later educational process. It should be emphasised that tasks the teacher faces may often cause a conflict between work based on processes of child's individual contribution and work based on team-building processes, where the latter involve necessary utilitarianism and giving up one's own needs or aspirations. This conflict, in the area of a single role, is interesting, and has been addressed among others by H. Rudolph Schaffer (1994, p.150-188). On the role of conflicts in the learning process (see Farnicka, Liberska, 2014). The authors identify conflicts within the role, educational goals, as well as between the potential and the abilities, which reveal inhibitors and catalysts of the development of learners.

For the aforementioned lack of synergy, manifested in the lack of cooperation, together with differences at the level of operationalised and expected results of the learning process between actors of the educational situation (teachers, parents, pupils) often mean that their potential is left untapped. And this very process of *'throwing away pearls'* can be considered the third factor inhibiting the functioning of the organization of learning. Instead of cooperating, preparing and trying to use most of the time they have got, persons involved in this situation either withdraw (*"only to survive, e.g. till the end of the school year"*), struggle (*"just you wait"*, *"I am going to prove him wrong"*) or compete (*"we will see what he is going to say, when..."*), all because of the lack of communication, lack of problem recognition or its misrecognition. On the other hand, the very same situation can have a growth potential, and there are many examples where pupil's development is followed by a growth in the potential of other persons

involved in this pupil's educational process. Mirosława Nyczaj – Dług (2010, p. 92-99) wrote about difficulties in tapping the potential of parents and about the isolation between them and teachers.

## FACTORS CONDUCTIVE TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Factors conducive to the development in the role of a teacher were traced in proposals within the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy model and the Bruner's model.

The *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (CRP) model shows that education as a system is intrinsically bound with the environment (Brown-Jeffy S., Cooper J.E., 2011, op.cit.). Its adequate diagnosis reveals essential assets, advantages and challenges of educational facilities. The model itself is based on five independent, yet indispensable elements that can be compared to pillars. The first one is **identity development** in learners and identification of their culturally expected attainments. The second pillar of the presented approach is **assessment equity** and equal access to knowledge. The third one is about **developmental appropriateness**, i.e. taking into account the developmental potential of pupils and teachers through application of such tools and working methods that are adequate with their psychological needs and capacities. The next pillar concerns the **philosophy of education**, here manifested in a holistic approach to human being. The last element is involved with school and classroom **interactions and atmosphere** building.

The model proposed by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (op.cit.) takes into account changes taking place in the environment (similar pillars have been described and analyzed in Polish literature by Farnicka (2011), Farnicka, Kowalski (2012), and Farnicka i Liberska (2004, 2014, 2014a). In this approach, school emerges as an institution allied with parents and the local community for the benefit of a developing person (Mead, 1978, Brzezińska, 2005). Implementing this objective helps school to become a true place for enhancing functions and activities, namely learning and studying. This approach abandons operationalised knowledge as an indicator of educational success, and focuses on skills that reveal internalized knowledge and practice.

Another proposal for creating an environment conducive to learning is the psychocultural approach to education by J. Bruner (2006). A detailed analysis of this approach can be found in the books written by Jeronimo Bruner (2006) and Maria Dudzikowa and R. Wawrzyniak – Beszterdy (2010). Bruner assumes that there are nine universal tenets that suffice to describe the education system.

They form the basis to draw nine guidelines on how to create an environment conducive to development. The said guidelines define the assumptions of individual's functioning, the philosophy of education, as well as the organization of the very process itself (see Bruner, 2006; Farnicka, Liberska, 2014a; Kosikova, Liberska, Franicka, 2014). According to these guidelines, every institution has and will always apply its own frame of reference (**Perspective tenet**), and any educational institution has its constraints, resulting from different factors as well as historical and social implications, along with personal constraints of the staff (**Constraint tenet**). The third guideline is the acknowledgement of the **Constructivism tenet**. Adopting it, we agree with the statement that reality is 'out there', and from the moment it is entered by interaction participants it starts to be created in its own specific way, which is emphasized not only by the constructivism and interactions of the educational situation. The next principle, namely **Externalization**, postulates the necessity to operationalise the effects of educational activities, as they should be first and foremost evident for the community/environment in which the educational process is taking place. The **Instrumentalism tenet** argues that every activity should be considered both from the individual (personal) and social (group) perspective. The last three tenets focus on the organisation of the learning process. First of all, Bruner assumes that education, even the informal one, will always be institution-based. In this principle (**Institutional tenet**), he points out that societies need institutionalized places and certain institutionalized forms of education, attesting, etc.

The remaining principles address education results and criteria of their assessment. The first tenet is about developing pupil's/individual's identity and self-esteem. Maria Dudzikowa paraphrased this principle and stated that the principle of **developing the phenomenon of self** in the individual's experience is a prerequisite for the sense of control and as such contributes to pupil's activity (Dudzikowa, Wawrzyniak-Bassterdy, 2010, p. 6-224). The second tenet points to the need to develop and build a **narrative approach** to self. It is precisely in this constant process of self-becoming that future is planned and achievements are evaluated. For this reason, pupils should be taught how to properly employ this function/construct in the evaluation of their behaviours or attainments and the same should also be required from adults. It is through using our narrative self that we can raise and understand our own responsibility and control.

## CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The impact of the broad sociocultural context on the process of organizing education is irrefutable. Changes in the modern world require adults to be fully



mature and capable of lifelong learning. Models conducive to such development assume a symmetrical 'self-world' relation. The individual's needs and capabilities along with social requirements the individual faces are treated and interpreted as a whole, governed by the unity principle. This approach to human being emphasizes their sense of meaning, dignity and universal values, together with the need to go beyond one's own limitations. This need is a result of living and being set within a certain culture. The values that have been stressed in both models focus on the responsibility for one's life, other people and hometown, the surrounding nature or, globally, the future of the world. Suggested behaviours would be in line with the slogan: 'think globally, act locally', where the individual recognizes and cares not just for their own place in the world, but rather tries to recognize consequences of their activity in a wider scope.

Tools that can be used in such thinking involve the processes of involvement, activity, creativity and reflection. It is worth noting that reflection is not treated as a goal or a value, but most of all as a process constantly employed in learning.

The proposed models are highly humanistic in their assumptions and emphasize the unique nature of the learning process and the educational interaction itself as well. So how can you change school to make it meet the assumptions of an institution conducive to learning? One solution can be to adopt or adapt one of the suggested models, along with framing the functioning of educational institutions with a liability structure. A closer look at the liability structure in given institutions will mean that evaluated results of pedagogical and psychological activities would be linked to persons, thus making the 'learning relationship' more personal and giving its participants the sense of being subjects, and not objects.

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