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Adoptive Youth Ministry of Chap Clark.
A Critical Appraisal from a Catholic Perspective
Adopcyjne Duszpasterstwo Młodzieży według Chapa Clarka.
Krytyczna ocena z perspektywy katolickiej

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Abstract: Based on the two fundamentals in Youth Ministry, namely the role of the youth in Youth Ministry as protagonists and subjects, as proposed in *Christus Vivit,* the apostolic exhortation on the Youth, a fresh thinking has been taking place in the Church. This study explores Youth Ministry based on the theology of Adoption propounded by Chap Clark, a Presbyterian Pastor from the United States, who has been in the field of Youth Ministry for the past 27 years. He proposes a Christian spirituality which is found in one's belongingness to a community, which he terms as "Adoptive Youth Ministry." The objective of Youth Ministry as adoption is for every child, every adolescent, and every young adult, to be so embraced by the community of faith that they are assured a home, a people, and a place where they can discover who they are and how they are able to contribute. It proposes a concrete step towards a process of integrating the youth in ecclesial life. A Catholic perspective on his method is an enrichment in the Church's theology of Youth Ministry.

Keywords: Youth Ministry, Adoptive Youth Ministry, Chap Clark, Ecumenical Youth Ministry, Christus Vivit, Catholic Youth Ministry, Ecclesio-centric Youth Ministry, Intergenerational Youth Ministry

Abstrakt: W Kościele pojawia się obecnie nowy sposób myślenia wynikający z dwóch fundamentalnych założeń duszpasterstwa młodzieży, a mianowicie postrzegania roli młodzieży jako podmiotu i przedmiotu owego duszpasterstwa według tego, co przedstawiono w adhortacji apostolskiej o młodzieży *Christus Vivit*. Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje temat duszpasterstwa młodzieży w oparciu o teologię adopcji głoszoną przez Chapa Clarka, prezbiteriańskiego pastora ze Stanów Zjednoczonych, który zaangażowany był w działalność związaną z duszpasterstwem młodzieży przez ostatnie 27 lat. Clark propaguje duchowość chrześcijańską opartą na przynależności do wspólnoty, którą on sam określa mianem „Adopcyjnego Duszpasterstwa Młodzieży". Celem duszpasterstwa młodzieży rozumianego jako adopcja jest stworzenie takich warunków dla każdego dziecka, nastolatka i młodego dorosłego, by wstąpienie do wspólnoty wiary dawało im możliwość znalezienia domu, własnej społeczności i miejsca, w którym mogliby oni odkrywać, kim są i jaki wkład mogą wnieść do tej wspólnoty. Duszpasterstwo młodzieży wskazuje konkretny kierunek procesu włączania młodzieży w życie kościelne. Z punktu widzenia Kościoła Katolickiego metoda Clarka stanowi cenne rozwinięcie kościelnej teologii duszpasterstwa młodzieży.

Słowa kluczowe: duszpasterstwo młodzieży, Adopcyjne Duszpasterstwo Młodzieży, Chap Clark, ekumeniczne duszpasterstwo młodzieży, Christus Vivit, katolickie duszpasterstwo młodzieży, eklezjocentryczne duszpasterstwo młodzieży, międzypokoleniowe duszpasterstwo młodzieży

INTRODUCTION

Youth have been one of the main focal points of the Church in recent years. After exhorting the faithful about the importance of the proclamation of the gospel in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), on family life in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), on the call to holiness in *Gaudete et exsultate* (2018), Pope Francis promulgated his apostolic exhortation focused on the Youth, *Christus Vivit* addressed to the young people and the entire People of God on March 25, 2019. This apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit* recalls the fact that "the entire community has to be involved in evangelizing the youth and in this urgent requirement the young people take on a greater role in pastoral outreach" (Francis 2019, 202). It further states that "young people themselves are agents of Youth Ministry" (Francis 2019, 203).

Based on these two fundamental elements, namely the role of the youth and their being themselves the subjects of Youth Ministry, there emerged a fresh thinking in the Church's ministry with the youth. The focus on youth in the Church has also been a concern among other Christian denominations in the West, who can be placed under the Protestant umbrella. Faithful to the mission of the Church for the young and with the young, this paper addresses this challenge following the approach of Chap Clark, a Presbyterian Pastor working in the United States, who has been engaged in Youth Ministry for the past 27 years. The main thrust of Clark's approach is that "God adopts us in Jesus Christ, his Incarnate Son and we as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, help the young to discover this gift" (Clark 2018, 1).

Hence, Clark has rightly named his approach as Adoptive Youth Ministry. He lays emphasis on the fact that Adoptive Youth Ministry is not so much about performing Youth Ministry, but rather about thinking of Youth Ministry in a new way with the objective of assimilating young people into the Body of Christ, the Church and helping them to realize their identity as adopted children of God (Clark 2018, 2). Much of his thinking comes from his analysis that today youth are facing a certain sense of abandonment, hence, they feel isolated. In his book, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (2011) he describes the systematic abandonment of the young (Bonner 2016, 32).

In *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry* (2001), Clark speaks about individuation as the key to understand adolescent development. Here he states, "As relational creatures, adolescent women and men are called to both care and to need care, instinctively long to connect to others, and yearn for a connection to the God who has created them. Thus, theologizing on this theme must guide one as he or she considers the implications of adolescent individuation" (Clark 2001a, 50). Therefore, the challenge before the Christian community is to present to the young a sense of closeness and a sense of belonging which is based on the Mystery of Christ and the Church.

1. The Contextual Emergence of Adoptive Youth Ministry

Chap Clark has been actively involved in the field of Youth Ministry for more than a quarter of his life. In his preaching and internet interviews he has manifested his preferential love for ministering among the young and helping them in their journey of faith. This is also demonstrated in his writings. Earlier, when he spoke of Missional Youth Ministry he developed a theological reflection on the need and method to present the church community as the end of Youth Ministry and not just another activity or a community in the Church (Clark 2001a, 92). This helped him in his later development of the concept of Adoptive Youth Ministry. He proposed the theological metaphor of "adoption" for Youth Ministry. After years of research and ministry among the youth, Clark concludes that not only do the youth feel alone, but they also face a sense of an increasing collective individualism and atomization in the society (Clark 2016a, 8). This has been a motivating factor for him to think of a Youth Ministry offering the youth a sense of belonging, despite the changing situation in the society.

1.1. Need for an ecclesio-centric approach

Evaluating the Youth Ministry in the American context, Clark feels that at certain points in the Youth Ministry landscape, a book or a leader would come along and propose to a perceived movement or trajectory, a pragmatic, strategic or programmatic type of a method. The main focus was to help the young person to develop a maturing individual relationship with God. The common complaint among the Youth Ministers was that they wanted to teach their children about community (Clark 2015, 79). According to him there was no deeper thought in Youth Ministry and hence, everything remained only at the superficial level. This section deals with the various models which he has observed, followed by the common threads and finally by his assumptions on the crisis of Youth Ministry. Keeping this crisis in mind, Clark suggests an ecclesio-centric approach in Youth Ministry. He proposes an Adoptive Youth Ministry. Youth Ministry understood as "adoptive" first of all means an attitudinal change. The structure follows later. It calls Youth Ministers to move from the historical complacency of institutional and programmatic defensiveness into the uncharted, mysterious and uncontrollable waters of abandoned life together in Christ (Clark 2016a, 13). He further explains that Youth Ministry as adoption is best conceived as a bridge ministry intent on moving the young beyond peer-experienced faith, by leading them into the welcoming arms of the adoptive family of faith (Clark 2015, 88). Hence, in this approach it is not just the pastors or Youth Ministers who are involved in serving the youth, but rather the whole believing community exercises this service as their vocation from God.

1.2. Understanding Adoptive Youth Ministry

Situating himself in the American context and based on his analysis made along with other Christian groups, Clark wishes to instil in the young a sense of

belongingness to the Church. He opines that the Church as a family of families has the task to relate to all her members, especially those who have been alienated. He therefore, uses the word "adoption" to describe the familial privilege which all have with God and with one another in Jesus Christ (Clark 2015, 85). The entire faith community, and the Church has the task to commit herself to a long-term inclusion of children, adolescents, emerging adults and everyone else who calls Christ the Lord, to provide the emotional and relational environment that God has for all. Founded on the understanding of the mystery of Christ, the Church and the Spirit, he proposes that the objective of Youth Ministry as adoption is for every child, every adolescent, and every young adult to be so embraced by the community of faith that they are assured a home, a people, and a place where they can discover who they are and how they are able to contribute. In short, for him, Youth Ministry is adopting young people into the family of God (Clark 2015, 82).

Clark focuses on strategies both from the individual and communitarian perspectives of Adoptive Youth Ministry. He strikes a healthy balance between the two in order to help both adults as well as the youth to first "think" and then "do" Youth Ministry. Its objective is to recognize that the whole believing community are God's children and consequently siblings to one another in the journey of the faith. From a broad spectrum it calls in for a greater understanding of the whole phenomena of youth abandonment and discovers the means by which Youth Ministers can accompany the young in their faith journey, while being enriched in one's own. It gives equal importance to each and every member of the Church, acknowledging the special privilege that all have in Christ. It also calls in for a spirit of openness and collaboration with all those who are on a similar journey.

From the individual perspective, Clark lays emphasis on inclusiveness, empowerment, discipleship, nurture and leadership. The need to include is based on his findings that adolescent youth feel a sense of abandonment and hence, they should be included both in the Church as well as in the society. He also broadens the term inclusion to mean, including people who can be of help in Youth Ministry. Empowerment is for those whom the community considers as "outsiders." This strategy seeks to involve the whole community to empower the young to become chain leaders and help them to develop their vocation (Clark 2018, 42). Discipleship is about being an authentic follower of Christ among their own peers and the community at large. It helps to nurture the faith experience of the young as well. Finally, when he speaks of leadership, he proposes a partnering leadership, where the leader recognizes the gifts of all his or her members (Clark 2015, 88). His strategies are focused and call in for a lot of creativity on the part of the whole community to reach out to the individual youth.

While considering the communitarian perspective, Clark lays emphasis on participation in the Church mission, partnering among the faithful, reaching out, formation of a ministry team and strategic planning. Being an integral part of the Church, he invites the faith community to channelize the youth to participate in the mission of the Church. Partnering among the faithful deals with collaborating

with parents, volunteers, non-volunteering adults and other parents in order to achieve the goal of Youth Ministry. Reaching out to the young means in terms of helping the young, reaching out to those youngsters who are outside the sociological and physical boundaries of the Church. A Ministry Team includes adults, youth workers, youth leaders, parents and all other faithful who could help out in reaching to the young. Finally, based on the contextual need of the place, Clark calls in for a strategic planning which is essential for efficacy. In general, his communitarian perspective is inclusive and collaborative.

1.3. Catholic Assessment of Adoptive Youth Ministry

From the Catholic point of view the Adoptive Youth Ministry proposed by Clark is very much relevant today. It brings about a new way of thinking about and living in the Christian community. As Clark states, "Adoptive Youth Ministry is not so much a model, rather a way of thinking and living as a community" (Clark 2018, 21). According to his proposal, Youth Ministry is about inviting the young into the calling, life and work of the Kingdom as members of the family of God (Clark 2015, 109). The Catholic Church wishes to be in the world as the mediator par excellence for service, fellowship, proclamation and celebration in analogy with the four fundamental anthropological categories of action, relationship, thought and celebration (Vallabaraj and Fernando 2015, 72). There is an echo to this desire in the approach made by Clark in his proposal of Adoptive Youth Ministry.

Clark explains that the goal of Adoptive Youth Ministry is to create an environment where young people are encouraged to live into their calling in Christ as agents of the Kingdom within the household of God (Clark 2018, 60). Thus, creating an encouraging environment, recognizing one's vocation as an agent of God's Kingdom and acknowledging the common belongingness to God's household form the three aspects of the goal of Adoptive Youth Ministry. He gives importance to the believing community in the goal of Youth Ministry. While exposing the goal of Adoptive Youth Ministry he enumerates the three tasks which are part of this goal. The first is to consider the young as the "Church of today." The second is to welcome them. And the third is to bridge the gap between those who feel abandoned and the community of the faithful (Clark 2018, 3). Based on the accomplishment of these three tasks he has formulated his goal of Adoptive Youth Ministry. Thus, actualizing it would be the involvement of the believing community in the creation of an encouraging environment, living their vocation as agents of God's Reign and acknowledging their common belongingness to God's household.

Clark explains that since the society has abandoned the young, the task of Adoptive Youth Ministry is to create an ambience where the youth are nurtured, empowered and included. He connects the recognition of the call to be God's agent on earth with Christian discipleship. This calls in for a responsibility as a co-worker in God's mission here on earth. Belonging to God's household is about the communitarian commitment which all have in the Church, as well as the society. Each of the three aspects of the goal are interlinked. He maintains a balance

between the role of the Church, the uniqueness of the Christian vocation and the singular belongingness to the family of God. He honestly affirms that if Youth Ministry has failed to develop familial relationships with God's people, then it has only brought that person halfway. Clark inquiries if the Christianity handed to young disciples is deep and relationally embodied enough in God's family for them to rely on it in the years to come (Clark 2015, 84). Here one finds an originality in his idea, where the community of believers share in the faith life of the young. He gives a new vision to Youth Ministry through his practical theological thinking. He upholds that the goal of Youth Ministry must shift away from segmenting young people off from everyone else to offering them a mutual, empowering, engaging and supportive new family (Clark 2015, 85). This is the basic thrust of his goal of Adoptive Youth Ministry.

Theological thinking of Adoptive Youth Ministry is made concrete when it is lived in practice. Clark envisages strategies which help the believing community to seek out the weak and empower all (Clark 2018, 9). The objective is to live according to the mutual adoption in Christ. The strategies proposed by him are not so much to change a person or an institution, but rather to help the whole community to reach out to the vulnerable youth. These strategies were presented from individual and communitarian perspectives. The individual perspective dealt with those strategies which the community member as an individual person can adopt in order to help the youth. The community perspective dealt with strategies where the whole community contributes to help the youth.

From a Catholic viewpoint, Youth Ministry as it was traditionally conducted, has been significantly affected by social and cultural changes. Young people frequently fail to find in the usual programmes a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems and issues (Francis 2019, 202). They have often faced discouragement. Engaging families to foster the Christian faith is a real pastoral challenge. Hence, the Adoptive Youth Ministry approach with its strategies is of help in strengthening the involvement of families in Youth Ministry. Here the three fundamental facts that were noticed in the early Apostolic and post Apostolic Christian communities need consideration. Firstly, the families were faithful to the teachings of the apostles. Secondly, they knew the importance of a witness value as part of their faith. Thirdly, they took up the challenge of handing on the faith to their own and to others with a deep faith that generations following them would be gifted to respond to the perennial truth of the gospel and be able to make it their own for their time and for generations to come (Vallabaraj and Fernando 2015, 121). Fidelity to the teachings, witness value and contextual response are fundamental to analyse the strategies of Adoptive Youth Ministry.

Clark's insights on Youth Ministry can be a launching pad for Catholics to engage in ecumenical dialogue with other Christian Churches and ecclesiastical communities. The Vatican document *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), the Directory on Ecumenism (1993) and the encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) are some of the important ecclesial documents which spell out the need,

method and principles for ecumenism. The Directory on Ecumenism (161-218) delineates some concrete guidelines with regard to ecumenical dialogue. More specifically, article 214 speaks of a common discernment which different Churches and ecclesiastical communities need to make of social and ethical nature. In the *Final Document* (2018) of the Youth Synod, the need for accompaniment focuses specifically on the relationship with diversity that sees it as a mutual enrichment and a possibility for fraternal communion, against the twofold temptation of retreating within one's own identity and of relativism (Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly 2018b, 94).

Clark cites the model of the early Church (Acts 2). It did not have a preordained plan or an organizational structure in place. All that is known about the early Church is that they quickly bonded to one another, and the family grew (Clark 2016b, 15). Thus, the need for communion or unity is essential for a good Christian witness. For this, constant dialogue and interaction with one another is needed. In dialogue one becomes aware of the contingency and the historical conditioning of one's tradition. Since the ultimate reality is ineffable, being beyond all doctrinal categories, it can be achieved only with an attitude of total humility. This attitude helps one to understand that truth is something dynamic (Anthony 2012, 179).

Dialogue is a further impetus to enter the social and cultural realities around. Entering into the social and cultural realities around is essential for every evangelizer and pastor. A Church too rooted and institutionalized, being too secure and independent from the socio-cultural context would spoil the experience of evangelical hospitality (Anthony 2012, 181). Keeping these things in mind this section concentrates on Christian youth as a theme for ecumenical dialogue, the significance of Christian discipleship, along with ecumenical and social initiatives based on ecumenical dialogue.

2. Strengthening Catholic Youth Ministry from an Adoptive Approach

Ecumenical dialogue is of help to discover what God is bringing out in the members of other Churches and ecclesiastical communities. It is a motivation to bear joint witness. Such a joint witness of holiness, as fidelity to the one Lord, has an ecumenical potential extraordinarily rich in grace (John Paul II 1995, 11). It is a call to be open to work with one another for a common goal. Catholics are called to gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from a common heritage which are found among their separated brethren. It is right and valuable to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood (Vatican Council II 1965, 4). This is because all belong to the same body of Christ. The idea behind an Adoptive Church is that any Church or organization can embrace an Adoptive Ministry model that will help young people and others to experience full inclusion in the one body of Christ (Clark 2018, 13).

Youth Ministry in the Catholic Church has got much attention since the Vatican Council II. Theologically speaking, it is not a chronological event, but rather a causative expression to mean "because of Vatican Council II" (Sebastian 2018, 32). And hence, it is the renewal the Church makes reading the signs of the time. The 15th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is an expression of this. This was immediately followed by 300 representatives of young people from all over the globe including non-Catholics and non-Christians in order to get them involved in this process of the Church (Sebastian 2018, 51). There were also some challenges that evolved from the synod. Challenges with regard to the understanding of Youth Ministry, formation of personnel, new outlook on youth services, new research in Youth Ministry in view with other sciences and finally, the process of discernment and accompaniment of youth (Sebastian 2018, 55). There are six areas within the Catholic Youth Ministry which can be enriched from Clark's theology of Adoptive Youth Ministry.

2.1. Animating Presence among the Young

Clark spoke of entering the world of the young and being present there in a creative and an active way. The process of helping an adolescent to develop a consistent faith takes time, patience and perseverance. Faith is a long, complex journey and adolescents need someone who will walk alongside them as long as it takes (Clark 2011, 189). To be present among the young in an active manner needs true accompaniment. The Catholic Church in all her latest synods laid an emphasis on it. It also stated that a good accompanier is a person who is balanced, a listener, a person of faith and prayer, who has the measure of his or her own weaknesses and frailties. Hence, he or she knows how to be accepting of the young people he or she accompanies, without moralizing and without false indulgence. The one who accompanies should know how to offer a word of fraternal correction (Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly 2018b, 102). It should also be noted here that some young people find family traditions oppressive, and they flee from them under the impulse of a globalized culture that at times leaves them without a point of reference. In other parts of the world, it is observed that there is even more than the generational conflict between young people and adults, there is a mutual estrangement. A fact which was observed by Clark as well.

2.2. Role of Significant Adults in Church Ministry

Along with the family members there are also others who play a significant role in the lives of the young, such as teachers, mentors, pastors, relatives, etc. Clark states that developing faithful adults for the future requires surrounding those youth with adults who themselves are people with faith and who are interested in them (Flies 2016, 234). The role of the adult is to help young people to grow in their human maturity. The adult manifests this maturation by the authenticity of his or her faith (Pollo 2003, 337). Faith helps to live a radical and an authentic human life and makes the adult educator an integral worker in God's Reign (Pollo 2003, 343).

This helps both the adult as well as the young in their faith journey. Adults are to bear a testimony to their faith by a pastoral presence which they give. The characteristic of a pastoral presence is that it is a physical presence, constant and active, friendly and loving, educative and evangelising, preventive, witnessing and therefore helping the young to make life choices (Vallabaraj 2012, 331). Adults guide young people towards connections within the larger faith community. Their role in Youth Ministry as adoption is to be agents in the adoptive process (Clark 2015, 88).

2.3. Prospects for an Intergenerational Youth Ministry

For Clark, if the Church wants to create a community where every voice is heard and every person is valued, it needs to foster a kind of environment where intergenerational relationships flourish (Clark 2018, 148). As he rightly puts it "the driving idea behind Adoptive Ministry is intergenerational ministry" (Clark 2018, 171). This aspect can be integrated in the Catholic Youth Ministry. The Catholic Church recognizes the reversal in the relationship between generations. Today, adults often refer to young people as role models for their lifestyle, within a global culture that is dominated by an individualistic focus on the self. As a Vatican Dicastery states, "the problem here is the dismissal of adult life, which is the true hallmark of the Western cultural universe. Not only there is a lack of adults in the faith. There is a lack of adults «period»." Many are of the opinion that today there is not so much a generational conflict between young people and adults, but rather a "mutual alienness." Adults are not interested in conveying the founding values of our existence to younger generations, who view them more as competitors than potential allies. In this way, the relationship between young people and adults risks being purely affective, without involving any educational and cultural dimension. From the ecclesial standpoint, involving young people in the Synod was seen as an important sign of intergenerational dialogue. As one of the youth expressed, "we have been thrilled to be taken seriously by the hierarchy of the Church and we feel that this dialogue between the young Church and the old Church is a vital and fruitful listening process" (Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly 2018a, 14). Thus, the Catholic Church sees a dire need for an intergenerational interaction in her ministry to the young.

2.4. Youth as Protagonists in Youth Ministry

Clark spoke of biblical discipleship as creating an environment where growth takes place in the context of God's household with other siblings on the same faith journey. Young people help other young people in their commitment to Christian faith (Clark 2018, 49). Youth themselves are protagonists in the service of the youth has been a dominant theme in *Christus Vivit*, the post synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis on the youth. He clearly states that young people themselves are agents of Youth Ministry. They need to be guided and formed in this venture. Further, their insight, ingenuity and knowledge to address the issues and concerns of other young people in their own language needs to be seriously considered (Francis 2019, 203).

For a continual Youth Ministry, along with the intergenerational aspect of it, there should be the dimension of intragenerational ministry, which is ministry among peers. There are areas in the contemporary world where only the youth participate, which is reserved only for their age. If there is anyone who can reach out to them in this place, it is the peers themselves. This calls to mind that groups, movements, associations for the youth should not be a closed place, but rather open to all those whom the youth can reach. Here the role of social communication through the internet, or telephonic messages, radio, and other such virtual platforms, where the youth are more competent can be considered (Anthony 2003, 108).

2.5. Qualitative Presence in the Educational Field

Clark suggested that children need support from people who speak for more inclusion in sports, more reasonable and accessible school environments and regular meetings where all those who work with adolescents come together and help one another to assess their unique and collective efforts to care for each child and adolescent in the community (Clark 2011, 192). When he speaks of a presence among the youth, he indicates a qualitative presence, more specifically a nurturing presence among them. The family is the first place where one learns the wise use of freedom (Francis 2016, 274).

However, the educational process that occurs between parents and children can be helped or hindered by the increasing sophistication of the communications and entertainment media. When used well, it can be helpful for connecting family members who live apart from one another (Francis 2016, 278). For the Catholic Church, to educate by evangelizing and evangelize by educating is at the heart of the proclamation of God's Reign already made manifest in and through the person of Jesus Christ. Although the two activities by themselves seem distinct, they are substantially one. They are two forces which help to generate a new person (Vallabaraj 2012, 62).

Education means restoring to each person the awareness of their dignity, the freedom to look to the future with active hope, the ability to recognize oneself as a protagonist in the complexity of human existence, both personally as well as collectively. For the Catholic Church, education is about restoration of a full human dignity through which the Church exercises her fidelity to the Lord (Tonelli 2003, 79). Catholic Ministry among the young needs to strengthen the area of qualitative presence in the life of the young which will be holistic in nature. The focus should not be limited to only academics and professional training, but the overall development of the young.

2.6. Strategic Planning for Youth Ministry Initiatives

Clark indicated that the role of Adoptive Youth Ministry in the twenty first century is to equip believers to be the voice of adoption and to be the catalyst for the dual task of nurturing and empowering participation (Clark 2016a, 4). As seen in his ideas, strategic planning in Youth Ministry is needed to be effective.

Youth Ministry also needs to become more flexible, inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God (Francis 2019, 204). From a Catholic perspective the Church's dynamic identity impels her towards the world and makes her missionary and outgoing. Without feeling the need to be at the centre, she is called to succeed with humility, to be the leaven even beyond her borders, knowing that she has something to give and something to receive in the framework of exchanging gifts (Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly 2018a, 140). This requires openness and sharing as strategic plans are made to strengthen Youth Ministry.

Conclusion

The key findings in this study are the discernment of youth potentiality, the role of adults in Youth Ministry within the action of the believing community and the discovery of the paternity of God through one's relation with His Son within the framework of Practical Theology. Considering the potentiality of the young, Adoptive Youth Ministry points out that even adults have a lot to learn from their children. Today, the Christian adult needs to consider the child as a partner in the life of the community and not just a person who must be formed. The child is a model to imitate, not only as a neighbour to be accepted, but also as a legitimate representative of the Lord (Mt. 9: 37) (*Young People: Faith, Vocation, Discernment* 2018, 220). Further, even Jesus proposes children as models for those who exercise authority in the community (Mt. 18: 1-4). He inculcated in his disciples a personalized attention towards children, spending time with them and blessing them. He also defended them as spokespersons of God (Mt. 21: 14-16) (*Young People: Faith, Vocation, Discernment* 2018, 215).

Jesus in the Synoptic gospels focuses on their social marginality. Personal immaturity and social insignificance appear to be a prototype of a disciple. Jesus places the child as a metaphor for the acceptance of God's Reign. This choice of Jesus also reveals the new conception of the child and the young (*Young People: Faith, Vocation, Discernment* 2018, 219). Thus, acknowledgement of the potentiality of children, the young and emerging adults in the mission of Christ is essential today in Youth Ministry.

Regarding the role of adults in Youth Ministry within the action of the believing community, Adoptive Youth Ministry has much to offer. Biblically speaking, much of the New Testament literature underlines the insertion of the child into the Christian community where they belong. The healing miracles of Jesus also demonstrate that the healing was not a result of a special affection of Jesus for children. Rather, it expresses the closeness of the God's Reign and God's saving power in response to their parents' faith, which is shown in the ministry of Jesus. It is not the children, but rather the adult member of the family who asks for healing (*Young People: Faith,*

Vocation, Discernment 2018, 214). A closer look at the theological insights of Clark tends towards such a holistic understanding of Youth Ministry in the Church where the role of adults within the believing community is highlighted.

Finally, Adoptive Youth Ministry reveals the paternity of God, who does not exclude anyone. The abandoned condition in which the Christian youth finds himself or herself, both in the society and the Church, was the basis for Clark's creative theological envisioning of a holistic Youth Ministry. It recognizes that in Jesus, all are children of the same Father. The end of every Church ministry is to lead all to an awareness of the great Mystery of God. It includes both, the ones who exercise this ministry as well as the beneficiaries of this ministry. It is a mystery which is inexhaustable and ever appealing. This aspect of the theology of Adoptive Ministry resonates with what the Indian sages had meditated upon centuries ago, which is found in the Iśa upaniśad – *Om purṇamadah purṇamidam, purṇāt purṇamudacyate. Purṇasya purṇamādāya, purṇamevavaśishyate*[1] which considers God as an inexhaustible mystery which does not exclude anyone and which is not confined to human limitations.

The whole of humanity is on a common discovery as it approaches the mystery of God. A mystery which Christians claim to be revealed in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. As a Christian believer who labours among the young and with the young, he or she is forever enchanted with this Divine Mystery, which encompasses all. Adoptive Youth Ministry is a reminder that, Youth Ministry has this theological end, through Christ, guided by the Spirit, for the Church and in the context of the society.

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[1] ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥ which translates as – Fullness here, fullness there, fullness everywhere. Take fullness from fullness**.** Fullness still remains (Iśa upaniśad, verse 1).

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Negative News about The Catholic Church as A Challenge for A More Active and Critical Reading of The News

Negatywny obraz Kościoła katolickiego w wiadomościach jako wezwanie do bardziej aktywnego i krytycznego podejścia do przekazu

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Abstract: Media content is not the facts that happened, but the media's representation of these facts. The media report and narrate reality in a way that is as interesting as possible for the audience. Because media content contains exaggeration, drama and speculation and frames facts in different contexts, consumers of media content rightly feel that the media distort the truth. We find that there is a very large discrepancy between the life of the Catholic Church (and Catholics) and the news we find in the media, and that the line between fake news and convincing news is very thin. In order to ascertain the facts in media news (and to distinguish between facts, exaggerations and representations), it is necessary to critically evaluate media content. This requires a high level of personal engagement and knowledge of the topic, but also professional expertise in media content. As a result, most users do not analyse media content, but interpret it intuitively or take it literally. Our 2019 survey shows that the media in Slovenia most often associate the Catholic Church with sexual abuse, money and politics. In an analysis of 3735 articles, we examined these topics in detail and found that the connotations of these articles are polarised: half are positive, half negative. Furthermore, in these articles we find no reports on serious socio-political problems and the positive solutions offered by the Catholic Church.

Keywords: media, social representations, Church, fake news

Abstrakt: Treści zawarte w mediach to nie fakty, które miały miejsce, ale medialne przedstawienie tych faktów. Media relacjonują i przedstawiają rzeczywistość w taki sposób, aby były one jak najbardziej interesujące dla odbiorców. Ponieważ media posługują się przesadą, dramatyzmem i opierają się na spekulacjach, zarazem przedstawiając fakty w różnych kontekstach, odbiorcy słusznie uważają, że zniekształcają one prawdę. Widać to na przykładzie tego, jak wielka jest przepaść pomiędzy życiem Kościoła katolickiego (i katolików) a wizerunkiem Kościoła przedstawionym w mediach. Widzimy ponadto, jak cienka linia oddziela fałszywe wiadomości, tzw. *fake news*, od wiadomości wiarygodnych. Aby móc odróżnić fakty od ich przesadnej interpretacji i reprezentacji, należy krytycznie podchodzić do przekazu medialnego. Wymaga to jednak dużego zaangażowania osobistego i znajomości tematu, jak również fachowej wiedzy w zakresie treści medialnych. Z tego powodu większość odbiorców nie analizuje wiadomości, opierając się jedynie na ich intuicyjnej interpretacji lub odbierając je w sposób dosłowny. Z przeprowadzonego w 2019 r. badania wynika, że wiadomości medialne w Słowenii najczę-

ściej przedstawiają Kościół katolicki w kontekście wykorzystywania seksualnego, pieniędzy i polityki. Szczegółowa analiza 3735 artykułów pod kątem tych tematów pokazała, że ich wymowa jest mocno spolaryzowana: połowa jest pozytywna, połowa negatywna. Ponadto w artykułach tych nie ma doniesień o poważnych problemach społeczno-politycznych i pozytywnych rozwiązaniach proponowanych przez Kościół katolicki.

Słowa kluczowe: media, reprezentacje społeczne, Kościół, *fake news*

INTRODUCTION

The media facilitate the "circulation" of information among people, thereby shaping and reinforcing individual and societal representations, not just public opinion. Just as the problem of media propaganda was addressed 70 years ago, today we are dealing with the problem of increasing violent statements, transparency (Miklavčič 2023), provision of a positive environment (Nežič Glavica 2023) and the crisis of authority (Vodičar 2023). What do the media of the past and the media of today have in common when they report on the Catholic Church? They co-create, influence and shape opinions, attitudes and the image of the Church. They influence the formation of media representations (MR), especially in the news media, and social representations (SR) that people receive.

An Italian sociologist, Gianni Losito emphasises that the impact of the media should not be seen as a general theory of impact or as a theory of the social impact of the media, but precisely as a theory of the impact of the media on specific opinions, attitudes and behaviours of individual members of the public, each of whom has a particular psychological profile and social experience (Losito 2004, 49-50).

SRs go deeper into the human psyche than public opinion. Sergei Moscovici, the founder of the theory of social representations, defines them as a set of theories and ideologies that are linked in the interaction of individuals in a society or group. They are characterised by the fact that they convert (transform) individual ideas into collective experiences and interactions into collective behaviours. Social representations have their origins in modern society, in the political, scientific and human environment. They are dynamic, as rapid changes in society do not allow them to remain permanent and unchanging. SRs directly increase heterogeneity in society and change "standardisation systems" (of official sciences, religions, ideologies). Where they bring about change, they become collective realities. The mass media accelerate the emergence of SRs by fostering heterogeneity in society and further multiplying the changes, creating the need for connections between completely abstract "sciences" (or collective beliefs on the one hand) and concrete activities of social individuals on the other (Moscovici 2005, 29).

This SRs dynamic represents a major "risk" for the acceptance of fake news as true. This news is harmful. A communication scientist, Professor Peter Lah describes fake news as a form of propaganda. "They contain a grain of truth [...]. Manipulators use this fact to make claims that are logically false in order to mobilise people for their own goals. People fall for propaganda claims because

they cannot find a logical flaw, but mainly because they want to believe them" (Lah 2018, 2).

Ultimately, such falsehoods lead to mistrust and have a negative impact on young people and education (Vodičar 2023, 1038). In addition, news outlets that use artificial intelligence and chatbots can target people with such fake news and present it in a way that appeals to a specific user and is highly engaging (Centa Strahovnik 2023, 863).

News media creators are looking for different techniques to make the news as interesting and appealing as possible to consumers. But at what cost?

More aggression, less transparency and less trust. A survey of 428 young people (and 214 parents) in the United States found that a quarter of young people had been directly or indirectly involved in aggression on social networks. In addition, a third of young people had experienced aggression. Almost a third of parents said they were unsure whether their child had been involved in social media or had been a victim of aggression (Barry, Briggs and Sidoti 2019).

In our study, we limited ourselves to exploring only the themes and connotations of media content in which the Catholic Church is mentioned, and we set three initial hypotheses. First, news content mentioning the Catholic Church is related to ethical issues, religious holidays (Easter, Christmas), sexual abuse and finance. Secondly, negative associations predominate in this content. Thirdly, among the contents of the news media, we will not find topics that have a positive connotation and propose solutions to social problems from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church.

1. Research

We analysed 3735 articles from print, radio, television and online media in four trimesterly analysis periods in 2019. Kliping d.o.o., a company for monitoring and analysis of media, provided us with the articles in which the Catholic Church was mentioned on a daily basis. The quantitative analyses were carried out using the SPSS programme.

1.1. Purpose and objectives

The news media often present their own interpretation of the news. Therefore, one cannot read the news literally, but should look for the deeper meaning of it. In this study, we have not contented ourselves with the literal meaning of the texts but have also looked for connotative and ideological messages in them. The aim of this analysis is to highlight the problem of "too much freedom" in the expression of the news: Exaggeration, attraction, drama and framing.

1.2. Methods

The analysis includes newspaper articles from the print media, radio and television news from the news programme and online news from the Slovenian

Press Agency (Kraner 2021). The analysis includes newspaper articles, radio and television reports from the news programme and online news from the Slovenian Press Agency (STA). Different types of texts are referred to below as "articles", even if they are radio or television reports. In order to facilitate data processing, we have categorised local media into the following categories: "Other-print," "Other-radio," "Other-TV" and "Other-web." The question we wanted to answer was how the Slovenian media portray the Catholic Church. We assumed that their representations of the Catholic Church have the potential to influence the social perceptions that people have of the Catholic Church.

The questionnaire was designed to answer the following research questions: What topics do they address in relation to the Catholic Church? What connotations do the articles have? We will limit ourselves here to connotations and topics.

1.3. Results

The representations of the Catholic Church in the media during the study period are divided into extremely negative and extremely positive connotations (Table 2).

Since users are more sensitive to surprising and negative news (Newman et al. 2022, 10), we assume that the media emphasise the Church's problems in order to attract more users (Wróbel 2017). Exploitation of the three pervasive themes (sexuality, finance and politics) is present in different waves throughout the year (Table 2). These topics are the main topics for framing. A concrete example are articles that report on a positive topic (e.g. Catholic Easter) but are placed in a negative context (sex scandals, financial crisis, etc.). To this, media content creators add narrative drama: the content must be interesting and attractive to media consumers.

At this point, we would like to emphasise the following results of this study: 1) the connotations of the content depending on the medium and 2) the topics covered.

1.3.1. Connotation of content by medium

In the analysis, the texts of the articles are evaluated according to four different connotations of the articles: positive, negative, balanced (positive and negative at the same time) and ideological (interest-related). The criterion for an article with a positive connotation presupposes that the text of the article describes the Catholic Church in an overall positive way. A text with a negative connotation is a text that describes the Catholic Church in a purely negative way. The highest number of articles with a positive connotation can be found in the local press, while the highest number of articles with a negative connotation can be found in Dnevnik, Delo and Sta.si. (Table 1).

Table 1. Connotation of articles by medium

The number of articles with a positive and negative connotation is balanced:
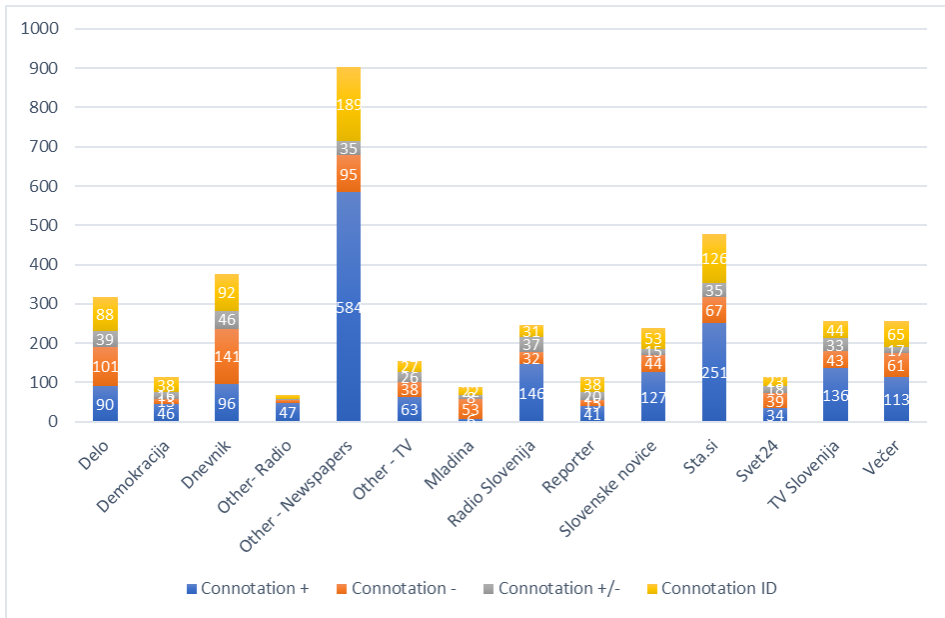
roughly the same number of articles with content about the Catholic Church have a positive connotation as the number of articles with a negative connotation. Articles with a balanced connotation are most frequently found in Dnevnik, Delo,[1] Radio Slovenia, TV Slovenia[2] and Sta.si[3] (Table 1).

The term "ideological" is used for all those articles that contained neither positive nor negative descriptions of the Church, but only general, indifferent content. Most articles with ideological connotations in the analysis were found in the local press, Sta.si, Dnevnik and Delo.

Media with individual connotations comprising more than 60 articles were found in Delo, Dnevnik, Druze Press, Radio Slovenija, Slovenske novice, Večer, Sta.si and TV Slovenija.

Highly critical and negative opinions towards the Catholic Church contained in the analysed articles convey a subtle demand that everyone must agree with the prescribed public opinion. Individual opinions of influential people are presented in the Slovenian media as the only true ones. The ideological and negative connotations of the articles increasingly spread fear among dissenting voices and keep them trapped in a spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann 2002, 18-21).

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[1] *Delo* was the most important Slovenian newspaper of the social communists from 1920 to 1940. Today it represents liberal ideas, most of which are at odds with Catholic morality. *Dnevnik* covers the same political topics and is the local newspaper of the municipality of Ljubljana.

[2] *Radio Slovenia* and *TV Slovenia* are national media.

[3] STA is the Slovenian news agency.

To summarise, the local media most often write and report about the Church with a positive connotation because they are in direct contact with the local Church (parish priests and the parish) and because they report on specific events. Dnevnik, Delo and some other media write and report about the Church with a negative connotation, because they have no contact with concrete people or witness events in the Catholic Church and stick to their editorial policy rather than the reality of events.

1.3.2. Topics related to the Catholic Church

The range of topics that appear in the media is limited. Topics relating to the Catholic Church can be classified into 14 groups. Most articles describe Catholic events or rites. This is followed by topics related to sexual abuse, politics and money. (Table 2)

Table 2. Topics related to the Catholic Church
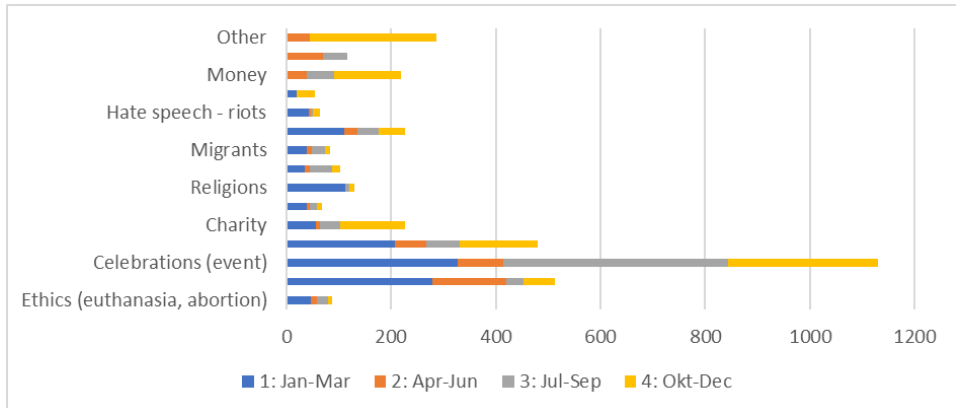
2. DISCUSSION

In our study we can confirm two hypotheses and reject one. First, the news media report most frequently on Church events (holidays, celebrations), followed by sexual abuse, politics, finance and ethics. Secondly, we assumed that negative connotations dominate this content. Although there is a high proportion of articles with a negative connotation in all media, the number of articles with a positive connotation predominates in all media. Thirdly, we have confirmed the assertion that we will not find any topics among the content of the news media that propose solutions to social problems from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church.

In our study, we do not and cannot look for a causal relationship between negative news and vandalism, but it is nevertheless necessary to show the context in which the Catholic Church finds itself and what Christian's experience is.

2.1. Vandalism and violence

Words can also be a form of violence and they can be used in defence or attack. A French sociologist and anthropologist, Phillipe Breton writes about three ways in which words can become different types of violence.

"The first concerns irrational violence, that of the serial killer or homicidal madness, but also that of the 'serial tormentor', the social pervert. This violence, whether physical or moral (psychological), is very little at odds with speech, which is therefore not a possible alternative. The fact is that in this case, the victim's word has no status: for the aggressor, it is not a word, but an object. Salvation can only come from the application of a stronger violence or escape, when possible. [...] The second configuration concerns physical violence exercised as a mode of action. Taking the floor, in this case, can be a practical means of opposing violence, using it as a space for transposition. War can thus result in a cease-fire and then be the subject of negotiations. Physical aggression can be interrupted to make way for dialogue and reasoning. A violent person may accept the process of controlling his impulses by putting his violence into words in order to diminish its scope. [...] The third configuration refers to the situation in which violence, used as a mode of action, passes exclusively through the use of speech. In this case, the aggressor exploits all the resources of speech, especially those that enable him to exercise power, or rather dominion over the other. Three major categories of behaviour then come into play: coercion, bullying and harassment" (Breton 2004, 79-81).

None of the three types of violence are found in the articles analysed. However, we do find it in society, which is why we want to mention it here.

We need to relate our research to the European and Slovenian context in which it was conducted. A report by The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe shows that there was a 70% increase in discriminatory acts against Christians in Europe between 2019 and 2020. The areas of life most affected are Church life, education, politics and the workplace. For example, in the field of education, it is noted that Christian university students are unable to freely discuss certain topics or express their opinions without condemnation or negative consequences, leading to the crippling effects of self-censorship (Chavez-Reder et al. 2012, 6).

In Slovenia, the number of recorded cases of Christianophobia during our survey has doubled compared to the previous year. In its Annual Report 2019, the Catholic Church in Slovenia cites six cases of vandalism, most of which involve destruction of religious symbols (crosses, chapels and other objects) and one case of offensive writing by a journalist from Mladina magazine (SŠK 2019, 154-160).

In academia, there is no new research related to Christianophobia and media representations of the Catholic Church. Older European research on this topic looks at media representations of Muslims in Europe (Baker et al. 2013; Ameli et al. 2007). Slovenian research, however, only addresses the problems of representations of ethnic small groups in Slovenia (Petković et al. 2009) and Catholic Church finances and media ownership (Bašić-Hrvatin et al. 2007).

2.2. Missing positive news about the Catholic Church

Socio-political issues, where the Church could make an important contribution to improving society, are not included in public discourse. This is confirmed by the results of connotation analyses, which show that such topics are neglected or negatively connoted in the media. This type of reporting on the Church in the media leads to the Church being removed from the public discourse and only being portrayed as a negative institution.

The results of the above-mentioned analysis of media coverage in Slovenia certainly provide a reflection of today's European society and its attitude towards the institutional Church (Sadowski 2021). It is not a novelty that the media are not favourably disposed towards the Church.

News about the Catholic Church that appears negative at first glance because it criticises a certain behaviour is not always negative. Dulles has already pointed out seven conflicts between the Church and the media: The mystery of the Church versus the investigative research of the media; the eternity of the truth of the Gospel versus the novelty of the media; the building of unity in the Church versus the disunity and contention of the media; the abstract language of the Church versus the concrete, specific and practical language of the media; the hierarchical order within the Church versus the democratic equality of all citizens; complex and intricate theological content versus simplistic interpretations of the media; faith-based justification versus a secular interpretation of reality (Dulles 1994).

Furthermore, it is important to consider the different ways in which media consumers are influenced by the media. Just to mention the theory of agenda setting. The process of agenda setting is a constant endeavour by the proponents of the cause to gain the attention of three social actors: Media professionals, the public and the political elite. This process helps us to explain why, in democratic countries, some issues are in the public eye and others are not. It also helps us to understand how public opinion is formed. An agenda is a collection of issues. Depending on how important individual issues are, they are communicated to the public over a certain period of time. Since time periods are not static and agendas are the result of dynamic interactions, certain topics appear and disappear at different times depending on their importance. Agendas therefore provide snapshots of this fluidity (Dearing and Rogers 1996, 42).

2.3. Reframing religious content

The topics of sexual abuse, money and politics mentioned above fall under the heading of crisis communication. For more than thirty years, we have been aware that we live in a fluid modernity and in a society of uncertainty (Bauman 1999; Bauman 2012). Church documents encourage Catholics to use media content thoughtfully, carefully and actively (CI 2002; PK 2021).

This environment has brought with it a different way of communicating. Before the internet, institutions (including the Church) could remain silent in crisis situations. Today, silence is the worst possible response to a crisis. (Platovnjak

2024, 201-203). De La Cierva, an expert on crisis communication in the Church, argues that institutions need to monitor their actions in four areas: Prevention (what to do to avoid a potential crisis), Planning (how to prepare for a potential crisis), Communication (how to implement a communication plan in the times of crisis), and Evaluation (how to assess the organisation's response and how to bring about recovery) (De la Cierva 2008, 44).

All of this requires great wisdom, truthfulness, but also an awareness that media messages are not always well received by users. Hall discusses three hypothetical positions for decoding media discourse. The first is the dominant-hegemonic position. The viewer fully and directly accepts the meaning conveyed by the media and decodes the message according to the reference code in which it was encoded. The second position is the negotiating position. Most users of media content understand what is dominantly defined. Decoding within the conformist and oppositional elements recognises the legitimacy of the hegemonic definition to create an overarching label, while creating its own rules of the game on a more limited, situational level. The third element is the oppositional code. The user of media content fully understands both the literal and connotative emphasis of the media discourse but decodes the messages in an oppositional sense (Hall 2012).

The very lukewarm reaction of Catholics to articles with negative connotations could indicate that Slovenian Catholics decode media content in a "negotiating" way: Most of them understand what the media want to convey, but they think in their own way. They do not publicly show what they think. Young Catholics are more active and dare to take to the streets and show their faith publicly (Šegula 2018; Merše 2023).

The UK is a very good example of a forward-looking response to the media. In 2012, the international Catholic Voices project was launched. The motivation for the project began in 2010 as the UK prepared for the visit of Pope Benedict XVI. Under the leadership of the project's initiator, Dr Austen Ivereigh, a group of lay people, Catholics, students and employees decided to train in public speaking in the media. The results were excellent. The group helped to change the coverage of the Pope's visit and the perception of the Church. Ivereigh then pointed out one of the key ways we respond to the media. When we communicate in the media, we should not expect everyone to be ready to listen to us immediately, because people have too many philtres that prevent this. This is a process that takes time because the same event needs to be presented in a completely different light (Ivereigh 2023, 9-11).

Ivereigh summarises this process of reframing in the ten principles of good communication: 1. Do not get angry. Change. 2. Be a light, not a fever. 3 Think in groups of three. 4. People do not remember what you said so much as how it made them feel. 5. Actions count, not words. 6. Remember to say "yes". 7. Compassion counts. 8. Numbers are not everything. 9. It's the testimony that counts, not the victory. 10. It's not about you. Because Catholic Voices was independent of the bishops, even though it had their blessing, it was accepted by editors as media-friendly, studio-appropriate and not at all pretentious.

We have a similar example in the Islamic world. There, Salafist groups have "conquered" supremacy in the media world. They disseminate their views through topical commentaries on current affairs. Urška Jeglič, an expert on religions, states on this topic: "At the same time, they are very active in social and communication networks. Thanks to their frequent postings, digital algorithms help them to achieve a higher volume of posts and consequently more views. They are known for their interpretation of holy Islamic texts and the publication of sermons and prayers. Anyone who answers certain questions about Islam via the World Wide Web will sooner or later read or see articles published by members of Salafist groups" (Jeglič 2023, 953).

In a broader pedagogical context, educator and Gestalt trainer Iva Nežič Glavica argues that it is necessary to create a positive climate: "In a globalised, rapidly changing world, it will not be enough for them to impart different knowledge, but it will be equally important for them to create a space in which individuals can develop their personality, their individual potential, their social and emotional skills" (Nežič Glavica 2023, 1052).

In today's Western culture, three typical types of communication and social relations can be recognised. The imperative-obligatory type of relationship is characterised by imperative (monological) communication, the contractual type of relationship (overlapping individual/party interests) by debate and rational explanation. However, neither the one nor the other mode of communication makes it possible to develop a genuine culture of encounter, mutual recognition and the joint search for the truth about a phenomenon: Such a dynamic requires a genuine dialogue, an awareness of at least some points that are common and unifying: According to Sorokin, this is the predominant mode of communication in the true community-like type of social relations (Bahovec 2015).

The media space, which is saturated with negative and false information, should become more transparent: with clear sources and without anonymous texts on the internet. Jonas Miklavčič, a researcher in ethics and artificial intelligence, underlines the complexity of the relationship between transparency and trust (Miklavčič 2021) and argues that "transparency should not be taken for granted as a value that should be maximised in all areas and at all costs. Transparency is indeed often the best route to trust, fairness and accountability [...]. But as such, it should not be absolute, but should be demanded in the right form, in the right areas and for the right purposes" (Miklavčič 2023, 837).

Conclusion

Although much of the news about the Catholic Church is negative, there is still more positive news, in all media. In view of the increasing vandalism in Slovenian society, it is important that hostility, denigration and labelling do not yet appear in the news. It should also be remembered that not all news with a negative connotation have a bad effects but it can even have a positive effect if it helps a community to right wrongs.

When lies, inaccuracies and manipulated truths appear in the news, media consumers may react. Such news must not be taken literally and must be decoded in an oppositional way. If all media consumers reacted to all negative news and all fake news in an oppositional way, media policy would change quickly.

How can you express your opinion in public? It takes at least three elements: decision, content and attitude. Deciding to take the ten steps suggested by Ivereigh is crucial. It helps readers to calm down their emotions which will make it easier for them to focus on arguments, to remain respectful and friendly in a dialogue and to realise that they do not have to "win" everywhere. Content: The opposing opinion should be expressed in a reasoned and professional manner. As long as a personal opinion is not expressed, it cannot become a public opinion. Attitude. The news is always about people: the media, social groups, those responsible in various institutions. Transparency and creation of a positive public atmosphere are important attitude-shaping factors. Teaching respectful attitude must start in schools and educational institutions. These three steps are important so that our citizens begin to approach the media content more critically, become more attentive and dare to take an oppositional stance in the face of injustice.

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Educational and Therapeutic Intervention in the Context of the Profile of Characteristics of Children with Down Syndrome

Interwencja edukacyjno-terapeutyczna w kontekście profilu cech dzieci z zespołem Downa

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Abstract: This article addresses issues concerning the nature of the most common chromosomal disorder. It indicates the causes, characteristics, behaviors and problems that make up trisomy of chromosome 21.

The learning and functioning process of people with Down syndrome (DS) is not determined solely by an extra chromosome. The need to identify the factors and conditions that need to be taken into account in the process of activating individuals burdened with an extra chromosome seems therefore legitimate. Theoretical inquiries into the similarities and differences of children affected by Down syndrome have important implications in the areas of education and rehabilitation. The cooperation of parents with the school promotes the dynamization of the child's development in both environmental contexts. The choice of the form of special education (in an inclusive, integrative or segregated stream) should be an expression of a thoughtful decision by parents, taking into account a number of factors, such as: the profile of the characteristics of the child with DS, the effects of previous support for his development, parental involvement and expectations, and the availability and conditions offered by a particular school.

As more and more pupils with Down syndrome are being placed in mainstream institutions, it seems that the need to promote knowledge of their development and how to take educational and therapeutic measures is still relevant.

Keywords: Down syndrome (DS), pupil, education, therapy, special education, parents

Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje zagadnienia dotyczące istoty najczęstszego zaburzenia chromosomalnego. Wskazuje przyczyny, cechy, zachowania i problemy składające się na trisomię chromosomu 21.
O procesie uczenia się i funkcjonowania osób z zespołem Downa (ZD) nie decyduje jedynie dodatkowy chromosom. Potrzeba określenia czynników i warunków, które należy uwzględnić w procesie aktywizowania jednostek obarczonych dodatkowym chromosomem wydaje się zatem zasadna. Teoretyczne dociekania dotyczące podobieństw i różnic dzieci dotkniętych zespołem Downa mają istotne następstwa w obszarach edukacji i rehabilitacji. Współpraca rodziców ze szkołą sprzyja dynamizowaniu rozwoju dziecka w obu kontekstach środowiskowych. Wybór formy kształcenia specjalnego (w nurcie inkluzyjnym, integracyjnym czy segregacyjnym) powinien być wyrazem przemyślanej decyzji rodziców, uwzględniającej szereg czynników, np.: profilu cech dziecka z ZD, efektów dotychczasowego wspomagania jego rozwoju, zaangażowania i oczekiwań rodziców oraz dostępności i warunków oferowanych przez konkretną szkołę.

Ponieważ coraz częściej uczniowie z zespołem Downa trafiają do placówek ogólnodostępnych, wydaje się, iż potrzeba propagowania wiedzy na temat ich rozwoju oraz sposobów podejmowania działań edukacyjnych i terapeutycznych jest ciągle aktualna.

Słowa kluczowe: zespół Downa (ZD), uczeń, edukacja, terapia, kształcenie specjalne, rodzice

Introduction

The selection of characteristics of people with Down syndrome (DS) was contributed by the classification of races by Johann F. Blumenbach, who in the 19th century identified the following races: Mongolian, Aztec, Caucasian, Malay, and Ethiopian. In 1866, John Langdon Down identified the characteristics of individuals belonging to the Mongolian race. Until 1961, the term "mongolism" was used. In the early 1960s, a group of geneticists coined the term "L. Down syndrome," which caught on and is still used today (Bolińska 2015, 41).

DS is one of the most common chromosomal abnormalities. Three types can be distinguished: simple trisomy (95% of cases), translocation trisomy (3-5%), and mosaicism (1-3%) (Sadowska et al. 2009, 9-10).

The mother's age, and also the father's age, is a factor contributing to the birth of a child with Down syndrome. The importance of environmental factors is not excluded. According to the current state of knowledge, the lifestyle of parents, medications they are on, or the diet they follow do not have an impact on the occurrence of trisomy in a child (Chowaniec-Rylke 2016, 95). Very rarely is DS hereditary (Rożnowska 2007, 34).

It remains unexplained how the extra copy of chromosome 21 leads to brain disorders, causing cognitive, language, and motor dysfunctions. It is unclear why some children with Down syndrome develop relatively well, while others are less capable (Jędrzejowska 2017, 18).

1. Overview of Characteristics of Individuals with Down Syndrome

DS is usually diagnosed immediately after birth, as the child has characteristic facial features. Typical external symptoms include a small and short head with a flattened occiput and small low-set rounded ears. Narrow and slanted palpebral fissures, epicanthal folds, and small discolored spots on the iris of the eye are characteristic. The lips and tongue are thick, and the protruding tongue (due to a high-arched palate) is wide, furrowed, with numerous grooves. Most individuals have a defective bite and a high propensity for caries and periodontal disease. The nose is flat and short. The chest is sometimes flattened. The upper and lower limbs are short, with wide, fleshy, and red hands and feet. The characteristic palm and sandal gaps are present. Individuals with Down syndrome have dry, rough skin and sparse, coarse hair. From the age of 4, they are significantly shorter and lighter in weight (Zasępa 2012, 13-14). With the development of research on people with

Down syndrome, two clinical variants have been identified: the pituitary and thyroid types. Children of the thyroid type are short, often obese, and their speech development is weaker. They are cheerful and open. Children representing the second type are usually thin, restless, better at speaking, but also more stubborn and rigid in their behavior (Sokołowska and Kociubińska 2022, 177).

Certain typical behaviors have been noted in people with Down syndrome. For example, infants are usually calm, cry little, and sleep through the night. Older children (2-9 years old) are less emotional and aggressive, less demanding, more pleasant, and affectionate compared to healthy children. There is considerable variability in temperament among children with Down syndrome, ranging from quiet and attentive to impulsive and active. It is also noted that a mild temperament and emotionality are more characteristic of older children. A correlation between temperament traits and the level of intellectual development has been demonstrated. Less capable children are more impulsive and energetic, while the more capable ones are quieter but more restless and moody (Zasępa 2012, 71).

Individuals with Down syndrome are characterized by central nervous system (CNS) structural abnormalities and defects in other systems and organs. Compared to the brains of children with a normal karyotype, the brains of children with Down syndrome achieve smaller volumes and masses (Popowska 2020, 384). Mental illnesses are less common in individuals with Down syndrome than in other cases of intellectual disability. Studies report that 2 to 10% of individuals with this syndrome meet the diagnostic criteria for autism. These individuals are characterized by hypotonia, contributing to postural defects (Żyta 2011, 36).

The same regularities are observed in mental development as in the development of all other children. Differences mainly concern the final outcomes and the time required to achieve them (Grzybowska 2014, 184). Most individuals in the discussed group have mild or moderate intellectual disability. IQ decreases with age. Intellectual disability is accompanied by thought process and attention disorders, as well as poorer self-control and memory (Minczakiewicz 2001, 20). Problems often arise with speech fluency, tone and quality of produced sounds, articulation, and the ability to pronounce sounds in the correct order (Jankowska 2019, 295). The language of people with Down syndrome is largely telegraphic. Their utterances contain fewer adjectives, adverbs, and abstract concepts. However, word order in short and simple utterances is usually correct (Jędrzejowska 2017, 42).

The strengths of most people with Down syndrome are in emotional and social development. Zasępa (2012, 109), characterizing the development of social competence, notes that: a) the level of adaptive behavior development is higher than the level of intellectual functioning; b) the best results are in the areas of socialization, responsibility, and contacts; c) there is more focus on positive than negative emotions. Jankowska (2019, 297-298) adds that most children with Down syndrome are interested in their surroundings and enjoy the company of other children.

Given the significant intragroup differences in the area of relations with others, individuals with Down syndrome can be identified as sociable, kind,

affectionate, with good relational skills and a tendency to smile, as well as stubborn, not adapting to social partners. About 8-15% of people with Down syndrome exhibit behavior and personality disorders. According to Zasępa (2003b, 40), children with Down syndrome are more withdrawn, with more motor stereotypes and strange movements, and deviant sexual behaviors.

Literature analysis allows identifying several strengths and weaknesses of children with Down syndrome in other areas of functioning. For example, a strength is the ability to learn signs, gestures, reading, and writing (Jankowska 2017, 298). These children find it easier to reason when task content relates to everyday situations and contains concrete concepts (Zasępa 2003a, 162).

On the other hand, weaknesses of a child with Down syndrome include (Jankowska 2017, 298): problems with auditory perception and memory, shorter attention span, increased fatigue, quick discouragement from more demanding tasks, poor tolerance for failure, and difficulties in generalizing, abstract thinking, and weaker mathematical skills. Children with Down syndrome are accompanied by sensory, balance, motor coordination, and visual-motor integration disorders. There is also slower activity execution, especially those requiring precision, and difficulties in adjusting muscle strength to the task. Particularly poorly developed in children with Down syndrome are abilities to sequence, classify, and count with understanding (Zasępa 2003a, 157).

Undoubtedly, the course of each person's development is individually variable. The psychological and social situation of individuals with Down syndrome can be diverse (Sadowska, Mysłek-Prucnal and Gruna-Ożarowska 2014, 51). Genetic factors and additional defects and diseases do not define the child as a person but are accompanying disorders.

2. Therapy and Education of PUPILS with Down Syndrome

A child with Down syndrome undergoes medical, psychological, speech, and pedagogical diagnosis from the first days of life. In the child's development, identifying the zone of proximal development is also required, as understanding the range of the child's capabilities will enable surpassing current cognitive abilities (Skrzetuska 2020, 212).

Identifying developmental difficulties requires immediate initiation of therapy — a comprehensive work with the child. According to Wolska-Długosz (2007, 645), therapy is a process of organizing educational-therapeutic situations planned according to diagnosis, influencing the child primarily through pedagogical methods and means. According to Skałbania and Gretkowski (2018,12), therapy is understood as supporting the child's psychomotor and emotional development, correcting developmental delays and disorders. If psychomotor functions are not improved, there is a risk of worsening deficits.

Children with Down syndrome especially require motor improvement and manual stimulation. The therapist should consider several recommendations to

enhance the effectiveness of the intervention. Work on balance, postural control, movement planning, and precision is needed. Exercises reinforcing body schema knowledge and self-care activities are expected. Manual tasks should be preceded by providing the child with a large dose of proprioceptive stimuli (Jankowska 2019, 300).

Given the multitude of defects accompanying Down syndrome, systematic repetition of individual exercises, provoking questions, and discussing new information in various ways is essential. Memory processes should be stimulated not only during educational or therapeutic activities at school but also at home. Therefore, from the first days after the child's birth, parents should receive specialist support and learn proper therapeutic work methods, especially speech stimulation aimed at preparing the articulatory apparatus (Kuśnierz and Orłowska-Popek 2019, 352).

In working with a child with Down syndrome, multisensory psychomotor and social stimulation and association methods are particularly recommended (Jędrzejowska 2017, 37). Unquestionable therapeutic values have methods such as: Veronica Sherborne's Developmental Movement, Marianna and Christopher Knill's Activity Program, Marta Bogdanowicz's Good Start Program (Łoś and Wrońska 2014, 212-214). To stimulate the oral-facial area, the Castillo Morales method is used in working with a child with Down syndrome. Kinesiotaping is gaining increasing popularity as a solution supporting and maintaining the work and function of the muscle area subjected to taping (Dubiel-Zielińska and Zieliński 2017, 175). Sensory integration, especially linear vestibular system stimulation, has fundamental importance for the development of a child with Down syndrome (due to the hypotonia present in this group). Determining the optimal level of tolerance for each child in terms of the time dimension of activities, speed of movements, and postures developing balance reactions is required (Uyanik and Kayihan 2010).

Arranging situations where children can choose activities is valuable, making them more motivated. Interventions should be based on positive reinforcement (Jankowska 2017, 299). Children with Down syndrome learn most easily through imitation (Wlaźnik 2019, 48).

According to Żyta (2016, 278), effective learning strategies for children with Down syndrome include using visual support (photos, pictograms), teaching aids, aids (e.g., calculators), and picture-word instruction for taught skills. Children with Down syndrome better remember information provided through different channels (Zasępa 2003a, 158).

Sandy Alton (Żyta 2011, 46-47) developed several guidelines for teaching children with Down syndrome. Due to hypotonia, she recommends: activities strengthening hand and finger dexterity, occupational therapy, supporting independence in self-care activities, and physical education exercises. The author sees the necessity of supporting speech with visual elements and using printed words to aid language and speech development. She emphasizes the effectiveness of supporting the child in using language in social situations by: a) encouraging loud statements in class, b) using a diary to record experiences; c) creating opportunities for interaction with other children without adult involvement. Alton advocates

for exercises related to classifying objects, pictures, and using memory games. The author highlights the importance of breaking activities into short segments and switching to a different activity when the child shows signs of fatigue. Daily attention to the strengths of pupils with Down syndrome helps increase their self-awareness of having abilities, positively affecting their self-esteem (Popowska 2020, 387).

In the process of mastering reading and writing skills by pupils with Down syndrome, the role of strong motivation and the application of an appropriate teaching method is emphasized. Grzybowska (2014, 187) provides arguments for considering global methods in the education of children with Down syndrome because: 1) visual functions, compared to auditory ones, are better developed in them, and 2) global reading promotes better comprehension. This is important as most pupils with Down syndrome do not understand what they read (Brynard 2014, 1889). If learning to read produces little effect, teaching children "functional reading," such as using a phone, is worthwhile. If "functional reading" is also impossible to master, children should be taught to recognize basic signs (e.g., the word "PHARMACY") (Wlaźnik 2019, 48).

Successful rehabilitation involves actions that engage pupils, strengthen the need for self-realization, and create conditions for increasing self-esteem (Głodkowska 2014, 90). Supporting pupils with Down syndrome should be combined with providing them with conditions to: 1) communicate on the basis of individually selected communication systems; 2) make decisions in various areas; 3) communicate their choices; 4) participate in social life, have a say in matters concerning themselves and other people (Żyta 2016, 278).

Comprehensive therapeutic intervention places particular importance on parents, especially the impact of their psychological well-being on the emotional development of the child with Down syndrome. Therefore, ensuring parents receive appropriate assistance and counseling should result in proper problem-solving, which will, in turn, affect the mental health of their child (Danielewicz 2011, 76).

3. Special Education for PUPILS with Down Syndrome

In Poland, children with Down syndrome are covered by special education within inclusive, integrative, and special education systems. Ultimately, the choice of special education form is made by parents. Choosing the appropriate school (kindergarten) is usually not easy for them. Some pupils with Down syndrome attend special schools. These are usually pupils with moderate, rarely severe intellectual disabilities. These pupils follow a different curriculum than their able-bodied (or with mild intellectual disability) peers.

Integrative education, as an intermediate form of education, fills the gap between mainstream and special schooling (Gajdzica 2014, 57). Currently, it is one of the most popular forms of non-segregated education for pupils with disabilities in our country. However, Grzyb (2013, 32) signals the disappointment with integrative education expressed by many parents of disabled children. Reasons

for their dissatisfaction include programmatic and organizational flaws, applied methods, and educational outcomes. Integrative efforts often lead to prejudices, reinforce negative stereotypes, and become sources of social exclusion.

In the education of pupils with Down syndrome, the importance of developing inclusive schools is emphasized. Inclusive education is currently one of the increasingly applied forms of education for children with Down syndrome (Żyta and Ćwirynkało 2014, 186). As Chrzanowska (2014, 112) notes: "The path to full inclusion seems to be the only right direction in education." However, the author simultaneously highlights the "wishful" assumptions of inclusion, namely: 1) as a society, we are ready for inclusion, 2) we have a qualified staff, 3) the educational outcomes of inclusive education for disabled pupils will be better than in other forms.

Inclusive education will be implemented if teachers support its idea (Mudło-Głagolska 2021, 264). It is important for them to believe in the success that children with Down syndrome can achieve in a classroom group. It turns out that the way and frequency with which a teacher reprimands, praises, or encourages a child with Down syndrome affects the type of relationship that will be established between the disabled pupil and their classmates. Therefore, it is necessary to develop inclusive programs that address the issue of interaction between the teacher and pupils in the classroom (Carbone 2023).

An obvious expression of parents' concern for the effective inclusion of a child with Down syndrome into mainstream school will be taking care of building proper relationships with peers (Brynard 2014, 1895). Sobolewska (2002, 203), the mother of a girl with Down syndrome, notes: "The biggest worry is the lack of true partnership in contacts with other children." This problem can result from the child experiencing a lack of acceptance. Such circumstances make parents refrain from communicating sensitive issues about their child, as they may reinforce negative perceptions, and thus inappropriate behavior from peers and teachers towards them (Lipińska-Lokś 2014, 238).

Certainly, every form of education has both advantages and disadvantages. What is optimal for one pupil and their parents may be unacceptable for another. Therefore, it is worth reflecting on this issue and identifying essential elements for the effective functioning of pupils with Down syndrome in school.

Żyta (2016, 227) signals the positives of learning for pupils with Down syndrome in mainstream schools, such as improving language and speech, which positively affects their social and emotional functioning level. The author also sees several other positive effects of children's stay in mainstream schools: better results in reading, writing, and counting skills, and general knowledge.

Extremely interesting data was provided by the results of research conducted in the UK by Johnson (Żyta 2011, 47). The author found that parents of pupils with Down syndrome attending mainstream schools indicate many advantages of this form of education: progress in school skills, better social integration, better speech and language development, greater independence. On the other hand, parents included among the disadvantages: a lack of understanding and

appropriate knowledge among some school staff, difficulty obtaining support at subsequent educational stages, too difficult homework, often a lack of additional speech therapy or physiotherapy classes, and a lack of training for teachers. The inclusion and participation of pupils with Down syndrome in the classroom are hampered by their language and communication problems, which affect all aspects of learning and development, including access to the curriculum, socio-emotional development, and behavior (Boundy 2023).

In other studies, the achievements of teenagers with Down syndrome learning throughout their schooling in mainstream classes and special schools were compared. Regardless of the type of facility, all pupils made progress in speech, language, writing and reading skills, socialization, daily skills, and behavior. Only communication improved solely for pupils in inclusive schools. No significant differences were found in daily skills or socialization. Pupils in mainstream schools had fewer behavioral problems. The only area where special school pupils achieved better results was interpersonal relationships. It was shown that young people in special schools had more opportunities to form friendships with peers of similar functioning and interests. The research indicates that education in mainstream schools does not contribute to better social integration. Daily contact with able-bodied peers at home and school did not result in forming friendships. Teenagers with Down syndrome learning in mainstream schools also had fewer friends among disabled people, were less likely to have crushes, and participated less independently in social life (Żyta 2011, 48).

Ćwirynkało and Żyta (2014, 193-196) found through research that, for some mothers of children with Down syndrome, the primary determinant for choosing a school was its proximity and the belief in the right of disabled children to be educated among healthy peers. Respondents addressed the problem of acceptance of children with Down syndrome by their healthy peers. They see it as the main obstacle to non-segregated education. They fear their child's isolation by able-bodied peers and their poorer well-being due to "always being the worst" in class. Another problem with non-segregated education for a child with a disability may be the burden of responsibilities on the child and the parents themselves. The surveyed mothers expressed favorable opinions about special schools. In their opinion, these facilities offer an educational program tailored to the capabilities of disabled children.

Jędrzejowska (2022, 115), based on research in a kindergarten, found that children with Down syndrome were not attractive partners for their peers, were not considered in various activities, and communication from able-bodied children to those with Down syndrome was exceptionally rare.

According to Kruk-Lasocka (2017, 132), currently, in Poland, the introduction of full-scale inclusive education is not possible. Rożnowska (2007, 82) believes that only 5-10% of children with Down syndrome are suitable for learning in a normal school. Therefore, integrative education is being implemented.

According to Bełza and Prysak (2014, 30), there is a fear that education for a disabled person may be an area of daily functioning where they experience

humiliation. The multitude of actions and apparent proposals means that a person with a disability cannot meet the challenges, thus not fully and freely benefiting from various aspects of social life. The authors note that inclusive efforts, aimed at normalizing the lives of disabled people, "are, in reality, further apparent actions with often the opposite effect." Jędrzejowska (2022, 115) expresses the need to organize groups of pupils with homogeneous disorders (children with Down syndrome alongside peers similar to themselves). The belief in mutual similarity brings people closer, builds a sense of security, and conditions the development of a person in all aspects (Jędrzejowska 2022, 115).

Integrative and inclusive education should not be seen as a panacea for everything. In the name of integration, good special schools are sometimes closed down. However, despite building an atmosphere of understanding and well-being among pupils, even such schools do not protect against stereotypes and do not allow pupils to forget their differences (Bełza and Prysak 2013, 31). According to Żyta (2016, 277-288), special schools offer better conditions for peer contact. However, the author notes that children with Down syndrome, due to the characteristics of the chromosomal disorder, have a chance for success in inclusive education because they present a higher level of social functioning than, for example, their peers with intellectual disabilities (Żyta 2011, 49).

Therefore, it is worth quoting Rożnowska (2007, 119): "Different schools are needed for different children so that each can find a place for optimal, comprehensive development." It is essential that a new quality in education is expressed by moving away from a focus on knowledge towards the self-realization of the whole person. Working with children with Down syndrome should aim towards active participation in social life and achieving possible independence in every area of functioning. The priority task of education and rehabilitation is to develop life skills and instill a sense of agency, building the pupil's self-confidence. This is an essential foundation on which a satisfying life of an adult person is built. This requires systematic and often challenging work from teachers, specialists, and parents, guided by a reliable, thoughtful, and interdisciplinary diagnosis, considering the needs, interests, and personal development of the child with Down syndrome (Maciąg 2022, 62).

Conclusion

Each individual with Down syndrome undergoes a developmental process that is disharmonious. Fulfilling the role of a pupil is a challenging task for a child with Down syndrome, their parents, and teachers. Supportive and accepting attitudes, mainly presented by the home and school environment, based on a thorough understanding of the pupil and the accompanying disorder, are crucial. Work with the pupil should constitute a maximally adapted proposal for improving and stimulating development. The aspects of working with a child with Down syndrome presented (within the article's limits) can be seen as a base shaping and guiding efforts undertaken at subsequent stages of their development.

Krauze (2009, 14) made an accurate observation, highlighting the need to find a compromise between revalidation and normalcy in the life of a disabled person. Even the best rehabilitation programs, conducive to building competencies in children with Down syndrome, do not guarantee optimal conditions for development. Much more important is the involvement of able-bodied individuals in matters concerning their integration. Development is possible, as Jędrzejowska (2015, 344) argues, only with another person.

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The Role of Conscientiousness in the Religious and Moral Functioning of Young Adults

Rola sumienności w religijno-moralnym funkcjonowaniu młodych dorosłych

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Abstract: According to the Five-Factor Model of Personality by Paul Costa and Robert R. McCrae, a conscientious person is strong-willed, self-motivated, persistent and dutiful. All these predispositions can also be used in the religious and moral sphere. The period of early adulthood is a developmental period abounding in tasks that require conscientiousness, and, at the same time, it provides many opportunities to make moral and religious choices.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the relationship between conscientiousness as well as moral and religious functioning of young adults. This study juxtaposes in a theoretical way conscientiousness as a personality trait as well as moral and religious abilities of those in early adulthood. For this purpose, a qualitative analysis was conducted based on scientific psychological theories and the results of sociological and psychological studies. The comparison led to the conclusion that conscientiousness is linked with the moral and religious aspect, and that its factors such as dutifulness and self-control can support religious and moral functioning of young adults. Dutifulness can support an individual in striving for consistency between professed norms and decisions made. Self-discipline allows for the realization of these norms, especially when a person must confront them with other life challenges. It also paves the way for further research and helps create effective methods to aid in the fulfilment of developmental tasks during early adulthood.

Keywords: conscientiousness, morality, religiosity, early adulthood, personality

Abstrakt: Według Pięcioczynnikowego Modelu Osobowości autorstwa Paula Costy i Roberta R. McCrae osoba sumienna charakteryzuje się silną wolą, jest zmotywowana do działania, wytrwała i obowiązkowa. Wszystkie te predyspozycje można wykorzystać także w sferze religijno--moralnej. Okresem rozwojowym, który obfituje w zadania wymagające sumienności, a jednocześnie stanowi okazję do dokonywania wyborów moralnych i religijnych jest okres wczesnej dorosłości.

Celem niniejszego artykułu było zaprezentowanie roli, jaką sumienność może pełnić w moralno-religijnym funkcjonowaniu młodych dorosłych. W pracy zestawiono w sposób teoretyczny sumienność jako cechę osobowości ze zdolnościami moralnymi i religijnymi charakterystycznymi dla osób znajdujących się w okresie wczesnej dorosłości. W tym celu zastosowano analizę jakościową w oparciu o teorie naukowe z dziedziny psychologii oraz wyniki badań socjologicznych i psychologicznych. Zestawienie to dało podstawy do sformułowania wniosku,

iż sumienność łączy się z aspektem moralno-religijnym, a jej czynniki, takie jak obowiązkowość i samodyscyplina, mogą pomagać w religijno-moralnym funkcjonowaniu młodych dorosłych. Obowiązkowość może wspierać jednostkę w dążeniu do spójności pomiędzy wyznawanymi normami a podejmowanymi decyzjami. Samodyscyplina pozwala realizować te normy, zwłaszcza gdy osoba musi konfrontować je z innymi życiowymi wyzwaniami. Otwiera to także pole do dalszych badań oraz do tworzenia skutecznych form pomocy w realizacji zadań rozwojowych w okresie wczesnej dorosłości.

Słowa kluczowe: sumienność, moralność, religijność, wczesna dorosłość, osobowość

Introduction

Theories of personality constitute an important area of study in psychology. Those theories may be presented through a variety of models, but still one of the most popular is the Five-Factor Model of Personality by Costa and McCrae's (Łaguna et al. 2014, 404). This model includes such factors as neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The main characteristics attributed to a conscientious person include a strong will, motivation to act, and perseverance in pursuing designated goals (Zawadzki et al. 1998, 94). Such predispositions can be an indicator of an individual's professional fulfillment or satisfaction with life, but they also characterize people who are guided by moral norms in their choices.

The developmental stage in which such predispositions can especially manifest themselves, precisely due to the presence of many psychological, social or moral challenges, is the period of early adulthood. Young adults, taking up professional activity or starting a family, face a number of developmental tasks related to the fulfillment of new social roles, i.e., that of an employee, spouse, parent. Research conducted in this age group shows that conscientiousness is related with dependability, striving for achievement, and the ability to plan (Barrick, Mount and Judge 2001, 11), as well as obedience, honesty and a tendency to follow rules. (Hogan and Ones 1997, 852). Thus, by shaping in themselves a trait such as conscientiousness, young adults are in a better position to cope with the challenges of this period of life.

The purpose of this article is to show the role conscientiousness can play in the religious and moral functioning of young adults. This goal will be pursued in three stages. In the first stage, the article will discuss the theories describing the issue of conscientiousness as well as provide an overview of research on conscientiousness in the field of psychology. In the second stage, the article will conduct a brief characterization of the period of early adulthood, taking into account also the moral aspect. Finally, an attempt will be made to juxtapose conscientiousness with the religious and moral sphere of young adults in the context of various psychological concepts and current sociological research.

1. Conscientiousness as a personality trait

Traits, as nomothetically captured interpersonal characteristics, have become one of the basic concepts used in the psychology of individual differences, as well as in personality psychology. It is assumed that by means of a common set of traits shared by all people, it is possible both to compare people among themselves and to characterize individuals (Cieciuch and Łaguna 2014, 240).

The model using trait theory that is currently most popular is the Five-Factor Model of Personality. As early as the 1960s, in the first phase of research on this concept, that Warren Norman, after conducting a factor analysis of the results of research previously conducted by Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal, obtained five factors, among which he distinguished conscientiousness. They became part of the basic taxonomy of personality (Siuta 2006, 12). Meanwhile, from the late 1970s, questionnaires began to be constructed to measure the five personality factors. The authors of the best-known tool were American researchers Paul Costa and Robert R. McCrae, who in 1992 constructed the Revised NEO Personality Questionnaire, abbreviated NEO PI-R (Siuta 2006, 15). The conscientiousness dimension, which is part of the Big Five, can be divided in this approach into the following sub-dimensions: Competence, Orderliness, Dutifulness, Achievement Striving, Self-Discipline and Deliberation.

In 1995 Piotr Szarota developed the Polish Adjective List, characterizing the individual factors of the Five-Factor Model of Personality in a unipolar manner. These adjectives best reflect the content characteristics of each of the identified factors. With regard to conscientiousness, the following adjectives were used: diligent, meticulous, thorough, systematic, reliable, diligent, dutiful, conscientious, precise, hardworking, prudent, responsible (Szarota 1995, 234).

There is also a bipolar characterization of NEOAC factors (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness), where conscientiousness is characterized in terms of trait severity. "Individuals with high conscientiousness show a strong will, are motivated to act and persistent in achieving their goals. They are also usually meticulous, dutiful, punctual, considerate and reliable in their work, and have high academic and professional achievements. A high intensity of this trait is also associated with workaholism, a tendency to keep things in order and perfectionism" (Zawadzki et al. 1998, 94). At the other extreme are people with low conscientiousness, who "tend to show low conscientiousness in fulfilling duties and low motivation for social achievement, a hedonistic attitude toward life, a lack of clearly defined life goals and laziness, and impulsiveness in decision-making and spontaneity in action" (Zawadzki et al. 1998, 95).

Some theorists link conscientiousness with Cattell's g-factor, or "superego force." This dimension, however, focuses more on a person's attitude to work, so some researchers are reluctant to explicitly identify it with at least such an area of human action as morality. It seems, however, that a well-organized, disciplined and meticulous person is likely to be more scrupulous in adhering to the moral code

than a person with the opposite personality traits (Szarota 1995, 234), especially when this system of rules is internalized by this person.

Numerous studies conducted in the United States on behavioral criteria in work organization have shown a significant relationship between personality dimensions from Big Five and work efficiency. Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge (2012, 47) report that "each of the five traits has been shown to be useful in understanding individual behavior in organizations." Conscientiousness as a personality trait is most strongly associated with efficiency at work. It also regulates behavior in the context of achieving long-term goals. However, due to their high degree of orderliness and organization, conscientious individuals are less able to adapt to new environmental conditions (Kraczla 1993, 204).

On the Polish ground, a study was conducted, which sought answers to the question of whether personality type, related to the traits an employee manifests, is related to the professional path chosen by the employee. To this end, 113 employees of the Accounting, Finance and Sales Departments were surveyed according to the MBTI model. The study showed that there is a link between an employee's personality traits and the choice of occupation. The conscientiousness factor was found to be a desirable competency in the finance profession (Kilian 2020).

Research on conscientiousness is not limited to a person's attitude to professional work. A group of 111 second-year psychology students were surveyed at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The study found that the higher the level of conscientiousness in the students, the better their academic performance, as measured by average exam grades. Conscientiousness is also a predictor of transitive and moratorial orientation (the higher the conscientiousness, the stronger the transitive orientation and the weaker the moratorial orientation). On this basis, it is predicted that people with high conscientiousness will enter adulthood with greater self-discipline (Rękosiewicz 2020).

The theme of conscientiousness also appears in research on quality of life. To this end, a group of 219 students at the Gdansk University of Technology were surveyed in an attempt to explain the psychological determinants of the feelings of the quality of life. The research confirmed the hypotheses established at the beginning, namely, conscientiousness is associated with the quality of life (positively with well-being in both genders, and negatively with depression tendencies in women) and conscientiousness influences the choice of task-based coping with stress (Mroczkowska 2013).

The above-mentioned examples of research show that, in addition to the basic reference of conscientiousness to a person's work and his or her drive to gain achievements, this trait can also be related to other psychological characteristics. This is evidenced, for example, by quantitative studies on the relationship between moral and spiritual intelligence and personality traits, which have recently been conducted in Poland on a sample consisting of 160 young adults aged 18-35. They showed that conscientiousness is an important predictor of the personal dimension of spiritual intelligence, and that a conscientious person relates his or her actions to

professed values (Dacka and Rydz 2023). This, therefore, provides an opportunity to broaden this topic to include the concept of morality and religiosity as well.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY ADULTHOOD PERIOD

The period of early adulthood is between the ages of 20/22 and 35/40 (Gurba 2011, 287). This entire developmental stage, especially the first part of it, is the period when the individual has the greatest physical and mental capabilities. Physical development during this period is noticeable in both women and men. This can be seen, among other things, in studies of men's grip strength and women's reproductive abilities (Kallman, Plato and Tobin 1990; Bee 2004).

In addition to physical development, young adults are also affected by changes related to their sense of identity. Individuals at the stage of early adulthood are forming their own self, searching for their place in the world, entering various life roles and facing specific developmental tasks, mainly related to the performance of these roles (Gurba 2011, 287). Identity assessment is then necessary, as individuals may need to make adjustments to previously established commitments when confronted with the new realities of work and family life (Eriksson et al. 2020, 1968). Difficulties in making necessary life changes in the face of new tasks in daily life can lead to a "crisis of closure," characterized by a sense of being stuck in a relationship or trapped at work (Robinson and Wright 2013, 413). In addition, many young adults when they become parents face the problem of how to balance work and family life, which can promote the emergence of role conflicts (Amstad et al. 2011, 164). Adjusting commitments made and developing an identity can continue to be a challenge during this period.

During early adulthood, moral development is dominated by the Kohlbergian conventional level (relating to social conventions). The moral order at this stage takes on a form that is supra-individual, but consistent with the social group. Characteristic of an individual functioning at the level of this stage is an attitude of loyalty to society and, at the same time, perpetuation and strengthening of the social order (Spławska 2008, 108). However, an individual at this stage of life has the opportunity to develop toward the post-conventional level. This type of development is mainly influenced by cultural factors, such as the vision of social relations or the idea of a certain ideal state in this area held by the person under study (Czyżowska 2008, 98). Post-conventional moral development and post-formal reasoning (i.e., transcending the reductionism of the level of formal operations, but preserving its achievements) is illustrated, among other things, by the growing ability to understand and peel off the perspectives of other entities, the progressive hierarchical complexity of thought work, contextual thinking, wisdom, spirituality, pluralism, dialogicality, integrative consciousness or a high degree of maturity (Kielar 2016, 171). Thus, when attempting to solve moral problems, young adults appeal mainly to the wisdom and knowledge they possess. Gilligan and Attanucci (1988, 223) conducted a study differentiating by gender

the level of morality of young adults. According to them, men are more likely to use an orientation of justice (emphasis on reciprocity, equality, respect), while women are more likely to have an orientation of concern and responsibility for the other person (Czyżowska 2008, 97). Current research, however, does not make it clear whether there are significant differences between males and females in moral reasoning during this period (Gurba 2011, 304).

In addition to the moral sphere, the religious sphere also undergoes specific development during this period. The period between the ages of 19 and 25 is associated with an increased intensification of exploratory dimensions. The variety of social, relational and professional interactions that a person experiences during this period projects on the individual not only from the outside, but also touches the person's interior. This includes the area of his or her religious experiences. Leaving the family home provides new opportunities for exploration of the world, including new ways of thinking about one's own existence and religious reference (Wieradzka-Pilarczyk 2015, 107). Some people move away from religious practices or seek other forms of spirituality. The religiosity of people at this time is very often individual and fluid in nature. In practice, it is expressed in the attitude of seeking religious impressions or discovering them in religious events. It is difficult in this case to speak of an intense commitment based on an internalized and stable system of values (Wieradzka-Pilarczyk 2015, 108). At a later stage of early adulthood (usually the moment of establishing one's own family or the appearance of children), an individual who perceives himself or herself as a religious person seems to return to the religiosity brought from his or her own family home, motivated by the need to pass on moral and religious values to the next generation. Individuals are also able to achieve the so-called mature religiosity, based on the autonomy, centrality and authenticity of religious beliefs (Roof 1993). This is fostered by an ongoing process of cumulative vitality and maturation of the personality to achieve an Erikson's sense of intimacy, allowing the individual to form the capacity for love, including with regard to God (Zagórska and Łączynski 2020, 71). Studies have been conducted, among others, on the phenomenon of religious experience, which have shown that it occurs in young adults as an experience of God's presence and reality, as God's action in difficult moments, or as an experience of His attributes. However, these experiences are not as well-established as in middle or late adulthood, but are subject to constant change (Rydz 2012).

When looking at morality and religiosity in early adulthood, it seems helpful to observe the changes that also occur in the structure of personality during this time, especially juxtaposing them with those seen in the adolescent stage. This is because they contribute to more positive relationships, professional success and better health. Among other things, conscientiousness plays a significant role here (Roberts et al. 2007, 338). An analysis from the theoretical side of the fundamental processes taking place in the moral sphere in early adulthood allows us to see if and how they are connected in young adults with conscientiousness as a personality trait.

3. Conscientiousness and the religious-moral functioning of people in early adulthood

Among the numerous attempts to define the personality dimension of conscientiousness, most treat this trait as the individual's degree of organization, persistence and pursuit of his or her chosen goal (Cervone and Pervin 2011, 313-362). The components of conscientiousness, such as orderliness, dutifulness, self-discipline or deliberation, appear to be consistent with the moral principles present in most religions and faiths. Framed in this way, the issue allows researchers to look at it from many different perspectives. Among them may be religious and moral aspects. Furthemore, certain psychological theories and sociological studies establish a foundation for associating the moral-religious realm with the notion of conscientiousness and expand prospects for subsequent investigation.

3.1. Conscientiousness and selected concepts of personality

One of the basic theories on the concept of personality is the theory of internal consistency and congruence (Rogers 1950). It assumes that proper functioning of a person is conditional to consistency between the image derived from self-perception and that person's individual experience (Oleś 2003, 304). A person, striving to maintain homeostasis, experiences reality, but also has the ability to transcend it in order to construct the most effective solutions to achieve this balance again. Another theory, namely the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), leads to similar conclusions. It assumes that people perceive as unpleasant the state when the cognitive contents they process are contradictory. The dissonance is greater the more important the cognitive data are in relation to one another (Łukaszewski 2004, 436). In this case, the psychological mechanism responsible for this kind of attitude may be the aforementioned self-perception (Bem 1967) and the rule of commitment and consistency based on it (Cialdini 2009). People agree with certain theories and make specific decisions in their lives. Some choices may turn out to be wrong in retrospect, but the sheer commitment to previously propounded ideas causes them not to back down from their position. Finding no sensible external explanation, people tend to conclude that their own views underlie the decisions they make (Doliński 2005, 84-85). Studies of the relationship between cognitive dissonance and the Big Five personality traits in college students have shown that the conscientiousness dimension cofirms the logical relationship between conscientiousness, as a positive trait, and its inverse relationship with the cognitive dissonance, as a process motivative to anxiety and mental imbalance (Al Otaibi 2012, 623).

In both psychological and religious contexts, coping with cognitive dissonance can be done at the level of valuation. This is clearly seen when that highest value for a person is God, the Absolute, the sacred. Research suggests that such factors as the feminine dimension of psychological gender, sensory sensitivity, agreeableness, extroversion, but also conscientiousness can facilitate the expression of a person's

spiritual life (Mateusiak 2004). In connection with the previously mentioned rule of reciprocity and consistency, the religious choice prompting a person to show love and respect to God (as the highest accepted value), at the same time demands from him the realization of obligations flowing from the accepted faith and professed worldview.

3.2. Dutifulness

The component of dutifulness is particularly noteworthy here, as it is based on the guidance of conscience, and people scoring high on it, among other things, adhere to ethical standards in their lives (Mroczkowska 2013, 206). During early adulthood, we can speak of stabilization of the identity of the self (Bockneck 1986). It consists in the fact that the individual acquires greater independence from transient influences and the ability to better define his or her attitudes and preferences (Matuszewska 1997, 36). This stabilization also translates into an understanding of concepts and the guidance of principles derived from them - including moral norms. Although quantitative studies conducted in Poland in recent years show that in many situations of ethical dilemmas, the choices made by adolescents and young adults contradict the principles of their professed faith, the percentage of such inconsistencies is significantly lower in those who declare themselves to be deeply believing and practicing (Boguszewski and Bożewicz 2019, 48). In the process of identity formation in early adulthood, there may be a clash between previous norms and the demands imposed by the new situation in which the individual finds himself. Moral and religious values are also subjected to this test, and they slowly begin to take on an autonomous character, although in emerging adulthood they will still be strongly influenced by the individual's environment and surroundings.

With regard to religious-moral functioning and conscientiousness, the 2020 CBOS (Bożewicz 2020) survey may prove helpful. They included questions about the characteristics of one's faith. 66% of respondents said: "I was taught my faith at home and uphold the tradition handed down to me", but more key to conscientiousness are statements like "My faith once weakened, once strengthened, and today I know that the principles of faith must be reconciled with life" (12% of all respondents, of which ¼ were responses from students) and "Under the influence of a deep experience, I chose faith and decided to subordinate my life to it" (3% of respondents). Also, the results of Boguszewski and Bożewicz's (2019, 49) analysis, based on sociological research, enrich this issue with important information. Although they show that in many ethical issues in young people there is usually a separation of the moral and religious spheres, this split is not so great in those who are deeply religious and who practice regularly. With greater consistency in declarations of faith and moral attitudes, the correlation of the attitudes of non-believers and believers is gaining strength, which may indicate, on the one hand, secularization, atheization and anti-clericalism, and, on the other hand, a religiosity that is more aware, deeper and consistent (Boguszewski and Bożewicz 2019, 50).

Analysis of quantitative research conducted among Polish youth shows that while the number of non-believers and non-practitioners is increasing, the percentage of firm believers and those who practice several times a week remains stable (Boguszewski and Bożewicz 2019, 38). Thus, it seems that the component of dutifulness could help young adults put into practice accepted and already well-known moral-religious norms and protect them from inconsistency and dissonance when confronted with new developmental challenges.

3.3. Self-discipline

Another psychological component that is realized in moral life is self-discipline. This dimension is inextricably linked to conscientiousness, as it requires an individual to be self-controled and deliberate, which are key components of this personality trait (Mroczkowska 2013, 206). The ability to make prudent decisions and persistently pursue designated goals, including those of a moral nature, often goes hand in hand with a personal struggle with various distractors, often hindering the realization of the individual's goals. The source of these distractors can be external (negative stimuli), but also internal (cognitive dissonance, problems with one's own identity). Helpful in solving such problems can be, for example, properly formed moral intelligence, along with its essential components (Lennick and Kiel 2007; Kornas-Biela 2020; Śmiałek 2023). The time of early adulthood is fraught with a number of developmental tasks that, on the one hand, put the individual's hitherto formed principles and views to the test, and, on the other hand, provide an opportunity to use the physical, mental or moral resources acquired, and, as a result, can lead to the formation of a mature personality. As Lennick and Kiel (2005, 7) point out, moral intelligence during this period does not refer only to knowledge of moral principles but enables their practical application in real situations. Tanner and Christen (2013, 120-121), on the other hand, add that a morally intelligent person is someone who is endowed with the desire to pursue moral goals and use moral principles and self-regulation skills to do what is good for society and individual humans and living beings. The developmental tasks of the early adulthood period touch the personal sphere of the young person, but they also challenge the young person to find his or her place in society. Thus, they make it possible to achieve an appropriate level of self-knowledge and self-identification in dealing with others (Sikorska 2003, 5). Conscientiousness (including self-discipline), therefore, is a trait that can help accomplish these tasks, both in the personal and social space, while taking into account the religious and moral sphere.

Consequently, conscientiousness can refer to the issue of professing faith and consistently embodying the norms contained in it. Religiosity and morality combined with conscientiousness allow a person, on the one hand, to assimilate certain norms and values flowing from a previously formed conscience, and on the other hand, to realize these norms in the form of empathetic behavior towards other individuals.

At this point, questions may arise: Do people who differ in their level of consentiousness also differ significantly in their practice of the faith and fidelity to their faith commitments? If so, can regular practice and living in accordance with the requirements of faith influence the growth of consentiousness in these individuals? What level of consentiousness and religiosity is optimal for proper functioning in early adulthood? This issue is so broad that it continues to open up the field for new research, and at the same time offers hope for the creation of effective forms of assistance in life tasks for young adults.

Conclusion

The theoretical juxtaposition of consentiousness as a personality trait with the religious and moral development of a person in early adulthood can provide important practical implications:

(1) Consistency and congruence between self-image and self-experience appear to be helpful in proper human functioning. On the moral and religious level, the lack of dissonance between professed norms and decisions made can lead a young adult to personal development, but also affect the transition from a lower moral level to a higher one, not excluding the achievement of a post-conventional level. The consentiousness component of dutifulness can play a significant role in this process.

(2) The period of early adulthood is associated with the prospect of undertaking developmental tasks, such as starting a family or starting a job. These tasks also require the individual to be able to make the right choices, in accordance with the accepted hierarchy of values or the religious system being pursued. In this area, it seems useful to develop moral intelligence, which helps the individual develop in accordance with moral norms, both personal and social. Meanwhile, among the components of consentiousness that young adults can also use in this aspect is self-discipline. It allows the realization of norms, especially when a person has to confront them with demanding life challenges.

(3) In individuals in early adulthood who have already developed a stable self identity, one can see the ability to consistently follow one's own beliefs and preferences. On the moral and religious level, this can translate into acting in accordance with professed norms that have been reasonably adopted by the individual. As indicated, among other things, by a study conducted in Poland in 2020, this type of consistency applies primarily to such young adults for whom God is a supreme value and whose faith goes hand in hand with regular participation in religious practices. The question arises, however, whether, in these individuals, it is not precisely a strong and consistent religious faith that is a morally motivating factor, and at the same time enhances consentiousness...?

The way young adults combine the religious and moral spheres with consentiousness, and the way this translates into their daily functioning in the environment, can help create effective forms of psychological and therapeutic

assistance, as well as pastoral care. By reaching out to the psychological mechanisms that support the moral-religious area, as well as using personality traits such as conscientiousness, it is possible to help young people perform their life tasks to the best of their ability.

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Protection of Human Life in the Daily Existence of Christian Youth in the Face of the Civilisation of Death

Ochrona życia ludzkiego w codziennej egzystencji młodzieży chrześcijańskiej w obliczu cywilizacji śmierci

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Abstract: The article addresses the protection of human life in the daily existence of Christian youth in the face of the civilisation of death. In view of the fact that to a large extent contemporary media and public opinion promote abortion as a human right and further attempts are being made to legalise abortion, it seems to be an urgent need to awaken in young people a sensitivity to the life of another human being and to show them the truth about the origins of human existence from conception to natural death, thanks to which they will be able to consciously opt for the civilisation of love. Pointing to Christ as the fullness of life, inviting young people to active participation in Him and recalling the examples of saints offering their lives for others are to encourage teenagers to follow in their footsteps. Pointing out the forms of personal commitment, creating the appropriate conditions for action, as well as accompanying them and taking them on in the wider pro-life work will not only enable young people to discover the sense of helping others, but will also become an important contribution to their personal and spiritual development.

Keywords: young people, abortion, conceived children, human and Christian values

Abstrakt: Artykuł porusza problematykę ochrony życia ludzkiego w codziennej egzystencji młodzieży chrześcijańskiej w obliczu cywilizacji śmierci. Mając na uwadze fakt, że w dużej mierze współczesne media i opinia publiczna lansują przerywanie ciąży jako prawo człowieka oraz podejmowane są kolejne próby legalizacji aborcji, naglącą potrzebą wydaje się być budzenie w młodych ludziach wrażliwości na życie drugiego człowieka oraz wskazanie im prawdy dotyczącej początków ludzkiego istnienia od poczęcia do naturalnej śmierci, dzięki czemu będą mogli świadomie opowiedzieć się po stronie cywilizacji miłości. Wskazanie na Chrystusa jako pełnię życia, zaproszenie młodzieży do czynnego w Nim uczestnictwa oraz przywołanie przykładów ludzi świętych ofiarujących swe życie za bliźnich mają zachęcić nastolatków do pójścia ich śladami. Wskazanie form osobistego zaangażowania, stworzenie odpowiednich warunków działania, jak również towarzyszenie im i podjęcie współpracy w szeroko rozumianym dziele pro-life nie tylko pozwoli młodym ludziom odkryć sens niesienia pomocy bliźnim, ale również stanie się ważnym przyczynkiem do ich osobistego i duchowego rozwoju.

Słowa kluczowe: ludzie młodzi, aborcja, dzieci poczęte, wartości ludzkie i chrześcijańskie

Introduction

No one needs to be convinced of the enormous potential of the generation of young people. Openness, energy, courage, ideals or spontaneity in action are just a few of the many characteristics with which we could describe them. Pointing out the right directions and appropriate life models can contribute to the extraordinary personal and social development of teenagers. In turn, if left to their own devices[1] they run the risk of adopting the reprehensible attitudes that, both in the dimension of their private lives and in their interpersonal relationships, will lead to impoverishment and, not infrequently, to problems and life tragedies. This is because "human beings are influenced by different patterns and models of behaviour depending on their position in the structure of a given situation or social system" (Stanowski 2011, 79). Both positive and negative values acquired from the environment orient the adolescent towards specific life values and influence the lifestyle he or she chooses.

John Paul II was well aware of this, and this is probably why he saw in young people the strength and hope of the Church. In his apostolic letter to the youth of the whole world *Dilecti Amici*, the Pope addresses these words: "You young people are the ones who embody this youth: you are the youth of the nations and societies, the youth of every family and of all humanity; you are also the youth of the Church. We are all looking to you, for all of us, thanks to you, in a certain sense continually become young again" (John Paul II 1985, 1). However, this fact does not escape the consciousness of individuals or entire groups of people whose aim is to promote disinformation about the dignity and value of human life by leading, still naively trusting, adolescents to live in a false image of themselves and of others.

This is achieved, among other things, by promoting unlimited sexual freedom, changing the model of the traditional family into partnerships or homosexual relationships, the widely developed lie about the origins of human life and the fight for the "right" to abortion, or the promotion of a hedonistic lifestyle (see Mroczkowski 2014, 14-39; Półtawska 1995, 155-202). Aware of these threats and the battle that is being waged for the lives and futures of entire generations of still minors, a number of efforts are being made to protect them. The Catholic Church, too, is not passive in the face of this state of affairs and is making efforts to address the needs, concerns and anxieties faced by today's young people and is seeking the most appropriate ways to recommend them for the future.

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[1] By "leaving them [teenagers] to their own devices", I mean the problem of both family upbringing, which is very much lacking today for a number of reasons, e.g. a broken family and the absence of either parent, emigration, the lack of a parent's physical presence at home, or the lack of adequate time owed to young people. Another question is the issue of free, often unrestricted access to the Internet and leaving teenagers without adequate control. In such a situation, adolescents assimilate all kinds of harmful content often without realising the dangers of it.

1. Identifying the problem

A deep analysis on the mystery of human life was submitted by the Church at the Second Vatican Council when it adopted the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*. It reflects on the situation of the human being in general, but with a fundamental consideration of their condition today. The fundamental issues addressed by the Council Fathers included the question of the person's temporal life, their dignity or contemporary social and political problems. And although many years have passed since the end of the Council, the concerns and worries of humanity detailed then remain relevant. Of the many appeals made to the world today, one concerned respect for the human person. The bishops gathered at the Council called on all of us to "absolutely consider every neighbour without exception as another self." They also stressed that "whatever is opposed to life itself (1), whatever violates the integrity of the human person (2), and whatever insults human dignity (3) – all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator" (Second Vatican Council 1965, 27)[2].

1.1. The civilisation of death

It is not without reason that the phenomenon of abortion is referred to as the third world war, which is taking its "toll" considerably greater than the previous wars combined. According to statistics made available by the World Health Organisation, approximately 73 million unborn children die each year through abortion, which amounts to approximately 200 000 interventions per day (*Abortions worldwide this year* 2023).

From the beginning, the Catholic Church has proclaimed the truth of the inviolability of every human life. Although in the early centuries there was a difference as to the understanding of the moment of animation of the fetus conditioning the consent or not to abort a pregnancy (see Smolinska 2018, 79-85), the perception of human life being a creature of God has always been sacred and inviolable. It is also in this spirit that we read the teaching of the Catholic Church today. The Constitution *Gaudium et spes* leaves no doubt on this point. It reads that "therefore from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes" (Second Vatican Council 1965, 51). The concern of both the Church and all people to cease abortion is of significance because "the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping" (Second Vatican Council 1965, 31).

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[2] Acts that can be attributed to the above groups of unspeakable behaviour are: (1) genocide, abortion, euthanasia, wilful self-destruction; (2) mutilation, torture inflicted on the body or mind, and attempts to coerce the will itselft; (3) subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons.

Although abortion is not a new phenomenon, its particular intensification occurs in the 20th and 21st centuries. On the one hand, it is linked to the legalisation of abortion in the Soviet Union in 1920 and, on the other hand, to the anthropological crisis and the shaken faith and sensitivity to God of modern human being (cf. John Paul II 1995, 22; 38). The lack of a clear purpose in the lives of many young people, the confusion of their sense of purpose, and the array of information capturing abortion as a legitimate human right make minors easily succumb to the suggestions and even manipulations of some media circles promoting abortion as a fundamental human right, while its prohibition as some form of restriction leading to hell, above all for women (Budnik 2016, 87-92). A survey conducted earlier this year by IBRIS for the Ordo Iuris Institute shows that in the 18-29 age group, when asked the question "Do you support a ban on abortion, with preservation of the life of the mother if it is endangered?", as many as 55% of respondents answered "Definitely not" and 32% indicated the answer – "Rather not" (Gęsiak 2023). Thus, it can be assumed that if the survey also included respondents under the age of 18, the group opposing the abortion ban would, if not larger, remain at a similar level (approximately 87%).

Is it necessary to be concerned about existing trends? It seems that they are to be looked at calmly and observed closely. According to the Stefan Batory Foundation's report on the issue – "Youth 2020 – in search of identity" – "although Polish society participates in gender emancipation processes with some delay, it demands the recognition of the equality of all regardless of gender identity choice or, finally, the full acceptance of civil rights as superior to various ideologies or political orientations" and that the emergence of movements such as the "All-Poland Women's Strike" or the "Black Protest" "has changed the nature of the building of a new awareness of women" (Sajkowska 2021, 47-47). Such phenomena should be a cause for concern, since any action in favour of a freedom which does not recognise the dignity of another human being, especially a defenceless child conceived, undermines the basic understanding of the concept of freedom. This, in turn, may have disastrous consequences for individuals (degradation of conscience, lack of discernment as to what is good and what is evil, indifference to others, etc.) and for society as a whole in the future.

1.2. Factors threatening the development of the young generation

Referring to No. 27 of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, John Paul II pointed out that these disturbing phenomena threatening human life have not only not disappeared, but have transformed themselves into new forms, thus spreading their influence. The Holy Father mentioned here, among other things, the progress of science and technology, the cultural situation, state legislation, modern medicine and the moral crisis of man (John Paul II 1995, 4). It is the weakening of the condition of the human spirit expressed in the disappearance of sensitivity to God that has caused a modern human being to fall into the trap of practical materialism. In turn, it gives rise to attitudes such as individualism, utilitarianism and hedonism (John Paul II 1995, 23).

Although these phenomena in themselves do not pose a threat to children conceived, they direct the life of the individual towards an attitude of having rather than being. The aim of the person's existence becomes his or her own well-being, and indifference to the fate of others develops. Many succumb to the fashion of a "quality of life" characterised by excessive egocentrism, which subordinates everything to one's own feelings, directed towards one's own comfort, pleasure, fulfilment, while rejecting any kind of obligation or sense of duty towards fellow human beings. Moreover, the deeper dimensions of human existence, i.e. spiritual, religious or relational, are also marginalised. The human being alienates themselves from others, the ability to build relationships both with God and with others disappears in them. The whole of life and experience is reduced exclusively to corporeality, in which even sexuality "is deprived of its personal dimension and is treated instrumentally" (John Paul II 1995, 23).

Sketching a panorama of these phenomena makes us all aware that the young generation faces a huge task in protecting itself from these dangers, while adults face the need to manage them wisely. Negligence in upbringing occurring at some stage of life can result in a person not only forgetting, but never learning, that "he or she is more than he or she is" and facing, as it were, himself or herself. Years ago, the eminent psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm warned that an excess of goods and their overabundance result in human passivity in the face of the challenges of the world, that boredom overtakes the individual, that he or she begins to create artificial needs, negating the actual state of reality, which consequently leads to the undermining of the existing social order, the rejection of any form of religiosity and, ultimately, may also give rise to a desire to transcend the "impossible limits of human development." Fromm concluded as follows: "human beings waste their lives when they pursue goals that are inconsistent with each other and fail to see that they conflict with and exclude each other" (Fromm 2022, 13-54). Is this not the danger facing today's youth?

2. Education for life according to the criteria of the "civilisation of love"

It seems a matter of course, then, that a concrete attitude must be taken towards such dangers, for otherwise everyone subjected to the "elements of this world" runs the risk of falling into spiritual corruption, which, as Pope Francis teaches, is worse than the fall of a sinner. According to the Holy Father, spiritual corruption consists in "a blindness of comfort and self-sufficiency, with which, in the end, everything seems acceptable: deception, slander, selfishness and many subtle forms of self-centredness" (Francis 2018, 165). An attitude of indifference, fear or withdrawal can make modern people unable to resist the temptations of this world and succumb to them. Therefore, heeding the very timely words of saint Paul to Timothy – "preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tim 4:2) – it is necessary to make every

effort to prevent young people from being lost by forming the right attitudes in them and educating them to live their values in a spirit of Christian love.

2.1. Shaping appropriate values and attitudes

Nowadays, life shows that it is much easier to talk about the need for integral education than to do it in practice. This is for several reasons. First of all, upbringing is not confined to a single action of the individual, but commits to a continuous process of guidance which is a kind of educational process. Upbringing consists of "a totality of endeavours aimed at forming a person physically, morally, religiously and mentally and preparing him or her for life among others: in the family, in the homeland, in the world" (Sikorski 1998, 657).

Moreover, the system of human values is a correlation of many factors both internal and external occurring in the life of an individual. The changes taking place within both spheres of human existence are so rapid nowadays that people's living conditions are undergoing a dramatic transformation. This forces repeatedly to take alternative paths of solution, which are sometimes risky and uncertain (Smyła 2020, 52-53).

This is the result of the social changes that are taking place in front of our eyes. The laicisation of society, the change in attitudes towards the traditional role of marriage and the family, the transformation of social roles, the disappearance and rejection of authority among teachers in favour of celebrities and influencers who have a considerable influence on the thinking process, or finally the uncontrollable influence of the Internet on the perception of the world, of others and of oneself (see Adamski 2021, 167-186; 234-279).

The Christian, however, does not fall down, but rises anew each day and turns to the One in whom all things are possible, to the One who strengthens – Christ (cf. Phil 4:13). He or she also benefits from the help of their neighbours – near and far – in their journey of personal growth. Among the many guidelines necessary in the process of transformation and entering the path of development leading to the fullness of humanity, it is important to become aware of one's feelings and to discover the defence mechanisms at work in the human being. The individual must also develop the ability to accept themselves and others, to verbalise their feelings and to be able to use the various moments of daily life as a pathway for development. The following can be mentioned here: moderation, awareness of duty and the need to dream, a balance between work and rest, making the most of successes and failures. Irreplaceable, however, is the interpersonal encounter, maintaining a living bond with loved ones, seeking authority, submitting to the guidance of teachers or, finally, personal commitment, kindness and charity (Wieczorek 2019, 33-99).

In addition to humanly developed techniques for learning the right attitudes and values, there are also those that the Church points to and encourages. These are first and foremost prayer and works of charity. In addition, undertaking fasting, resisting temptations or self-limitation are the simplest way to achieve an

inner freedom aimed at "recreating in oneself the likeness of God, working out a genuine humanity, and this to the measure not only of the human being, but of God" (Muszala 2022, 112-128). This, on the other hand, is the path leading to the acquisition of the fullness of humanity – the harmonious development of personality both in the temporal (physical, psychological) and spiritual (eternal) dimensions. For these realities are not only not mutually exclusive, but on the contrary complementary.

2.2. The right to life as a fundamental value

Considering this issue – the right to life as a fundamental value – it would be worth asking at first why there is all the jurisdiction if life is denied to those to whom it is addressed? Who would it actually serve? After all, the task of the Church, being "the defender of authentic human values" (Paul VI 1968, 18), is not only to remind and instruct about the sanctity of human life, but also to expose the truth that every human being, despite the struggles and uncertainties he or she may experience, when showing "sincere openness to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and under the influence of the mysterious action of grace, recognise in the natural law inscribed in the heart the sacredness of human life from conception to the end, and come to the conviction that every human being has the right to expect absolute respect for this his or her essential good" (John Paul II 1995, 2). Admitting the validity of this thesis, as it were, guarantees the preservation of interpersonal peace and lays the foundations for harmony and proper coexistence. This, in turn, does not only apply to believers, but to all people equally.

This is known, for example, by the doctors who undertake to save the lives of children conceived in their mothers' wombs. The condition thus expresses the truth that life is a fundamental value and to which everyone is entitled from the moment of conception. If not only prenatal examinations, but also full treatment (which should not be confused with medical experimentation) carried out under double anaesthesia is subsidised by the National Health Fund, then the argument attributing to unborn children the full right to life, the possibility of being born and the right to a dignified life after birth (*Treatments in the womb* 2023) remains unquestionable. Since the human being under the mother's heart is not being saved in such a case, one would have to ask – who would doctors be treating then?

A similar situation applies to aborted and stillborn babies. Rev. Jan Dziedzic, reflecting on this issue, writes: "The corpse of an aborted and stillborn child should be accorded the same respect as the corpse of an adult. There can be no doubt that the same respect as any dead person is also due to the corpses of embryos, human fetuses or prematurely born children" (Dziedzic 2021, 132). The above cases provide an important argumentation in the conversations undertaken with teenagers and give the idea that both the Church and various state institutions and their representatives treat conceived children with seriousness and respect. Hence the clear conclusion that they should be entitled to life from the first moment of existence.

2.3. "Fullness of life" in Christ

The discord that exists in the hearts of many who reflect on the origins of human life has its foundation nowhere else but in humanity's relationship to God, from whom all creation originates and for whom all things exist (1 Cor 8:6; Rom 11:36). In disregarding this truth, a person condemns themselves to wandering in search of the meaning of their existence and, as it were, blindly pursues happiness. For this reason, the Church defends life from conception, since she knows that "the human being is called to a fullness of life" that transcends the dimensions of earthly existence, which is directed towards participation in the life of God Himself (John Paul II 1995, 2). This fullness applies both to children threatened by abortion and to those who distance themselves from the fullness of life in Christ by spreading the "civilisation of death."

At the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II pointed out that "the human being remains incomprehensible to themselves, their life is meaningless" if they do not experience Love, if they do not find their participation in it. In uttering these words, he spoke of Christ – the Redeemer of the human being. In Him only can the lost individual of today find oneself (John Paul II 1979, 10). Every human being – the most "concrete" and the most "real" – has been chosen by God and destined for the fullness of life in Christ already at the moment when he or she was conceived under his or her mother's heart (John Paul II 1979, 13). Therefore, if we wish to speak of educating the young generation to live in accordance with the criteria of the civilisation of love, moreover, to live in the fullness of their humanity, then in addition to developing appropriate attitudes and general human values, it is necessary to show them the way to God and to encourage them not to be afraid to open the door of their heart to Christ. For this living encounter and experience is essential, because, as Pope Benedict XVI writes: "At the beginning of being Christian there is no ethical decision or some great idea, but instead there is an encounter with an event, with a Person who gives life a new perspective and thus, a decisive orientation" (Benedict XVI 2006).

3. PERSONAL COMMITMENT AND WITNESS OF LIFE

One who has genuinely experienced Christ cannot remain indifferent to the affairs of fellow human beings. A beautiful testimony of this attitude is left to us by the apostles Peter and John, who, when confronted by the pharisees and scribes, clearly state: "for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The proclamation of the Gospel is the pressing need of our time. But alongside proclamation, there can be no lack of witness. For this reason, Paul VI, in *Evangelii nuntiadi*, left the following message for the Church – "Man of our time listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (Paul VI 1975, 41). It is important that all people, especially the younger generations, heed this call and follow it.

3.1. Servants of life

In Polish, the expression "servant" has pejorative overtones. It can evoke not only a certain aversion to serving, but also cast a bad light on the reality of service understood as a selfless gift of self. However, the examples of life that holy people have left behind over the centuries and the heroic nature of their attitudes not only do not deter from looking at their profiles, but can arouse a desire to imitate them.

Pope Francis, in his Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, writes: "The heart of the Church is also full of young saints who devoted their lives to Christ, many of them even to dying a martyr's death. They were precious reflections of the young Christ; their radiant witness encourages us and awakens us from our lethargy. The Synod pointed out that «many young saints have allowed the features of youth to shine forth in all their beauty, and in their day they have been real prophets of change. Their example shows what the young are capable of, when they open themselves up to encounter Christ»" (Francis 2019, 49).

They were various saints – boys and girls – who left a beautiful testimony of life. To name at least a few: saint Sebastian, saint Francis of Assisi, saint Joan of Arc, blessed Andrew Phû Yên, blessed Karolina Kózkówna or blessed Carlo Acutis, and many others. History also teaches us that there were also those who sacrificed their lives to save the conceived child. Saint Joan Beretta-Molla gave her life so that the child under her heart could be born. But also Agata Mróz, the Polish volleyball player, gave witness to a love greater than death when she decided to sacrifice her life in order to give birth to the child she was carrying in her womb. Aware of the risks of childbirth and the necessity to refuse medical treatment, she rejected the abortion suggested to her. This year marks the 15th anniversary of her death. And finally, the blessed Ulma family from Markowa near Rzeszów – beatified for their heroic act of love in saving Jews during the German occupation. In the litany to blessed Joseph and Wiktoria Ulma with their children, martyrs, we pray such invocations: blessed Joseph – guardian of conceived life, and blessed Wiktoria – servant of life, and blessed Child under the heart of the Mother – pray for us (Jastrzęski 2023, 56-57). Witnesses and servants of life who, out of love for Christ, gave their lives for their fellow human beings. Here are examples to inspire

3.2. Indispensability of personal testimony

Nevertheless, nothing can replace personal testimony. And although it is the most difficult to bear, because it expresses the Gospel message that only the seed that dies yields a rich harvest (Jn 12:24), it is not impossible to fulfil. At the same time, it must be remembered that the affirmation of being a witness and servant of life is not accomplished only through martyrdom or great, extraordinary deeds, but is fulfilled by faithfully following the guidance of Jesus in everyday life in small things (cf. Lk 16:10).

Today, young people have a full range of possibilities for personal commitment to save the lives of children conceived. The first of these is always to pray for the unborn, as well as for the parents of these children, doctors and all those who

promote the "civilisation of death." An example of such a commitment is the work of the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child, which consists in praying a decade of the rosary every day for nine months for the intention of one child, whose name is known only to God, in order to save it from abortion (Filipiuk 2020, 83-92).

Other forms to which young people can be encouraged include, among others, involvement in the activities of Polish movements, foundations and associations working for the defence of life, e.g. PEROŻ or Pro-Right to Life, as well as personal support for single mothers' homes, places where so-called "windows for life" function, giving public testimony by taking part in the March for Life, sharing one's talent articulated in the words of a song or presented in a particular work of art (Filipiuk 2020, 92-100). One should not narrow down all possibilities of personal involvement to those mentioned here, but open oneself to the action of the Holy Spirit, who will show each individual the direction in which he or she should go. However, will He find an open heart and a will ready to cooperate?

Conclusions

Paraphrasing the words of the eminent educator and social activist Janusz Korczak, it can be said that "children and adolescents cannot think «like adults», but they can, as children, reflect on serious adult issues. It is their lack of knowledge and experience that forces them to think differently" (*25 Golden Thoughts of Janusz Korczak* 2023). This quotation even emphatically expresses the truth of the situation of today's world, when young people, bombarded with all kinds of information on abortion from the world of the media and often deprived of a solid foundation of upbringing in the family home, follow blindly, as it were, the fashion of today promoting abortion as a human right.

Nevertheless, soundly educating them about the dangers of participating in abortion, as well as pointing out to them the witnesses to life and the practical tasks they can undertake during their adolescence, can become an extraordinary contribution to their personal development. Involvement in life-promoting works and drawing closer to Christ, who is the "fullness of life," is an excellent way of leading young people to maturity and the fullness of humanity. Will parents, guardians, educators and pastoral workers reach out to them in the right way and at the right time during their adolescence and lend a helping hand by showing them the right paths and enriching them with beautiful examples? It is to be hoped that they will, and that the efforts made today will bear fruit in the future.

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Religion Lessons and Existential Questions of Children at the Early School Stage. Case Study of a Gifted, Asynchronously Developing Child

Lekcje religii a pytania egzystencjalne dziecka na etapie wczesnoszkolnym. Studium przypadku ucznia zdolnego, rozwijającego się asynchronicznie

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Abstract: In a dynamically developing world, undergoing continuous cultural, social, economic and political changes, people for centuries now have been looking for answers to basic questions relating to the human lifecycle of birth – existence – death. Children, who are in the identity-shaping phase, experience even more acutely than adults lack of a well-established structure of thinking in terms of the continuity of their being, the meaning and purpose of life, their own death and that of those close to them. They should, therefore, be given an opportunity to find their own way in this respect during school catechesis. This article presents the importance of school catechesis in the search for answers to existential questions posed by primary school children.

The presented research was based on a case study of an 8-year-old boy, a second-grade student, whose existential functioning in the period of two years of schooling was determined by school catechesis. It is characterized by continuity in the questions posed by the child as well as a change in experiencing the sense of the lack of meaning and purpose of life, death, searching for and evaluating the elements of good and evil. In the first year of catechesis, the boy "eased" his fear of the end of human life, and in the second year he realized that the source of answers to the questions bothering him were values, principles and examples promoted in the Catholic faith and the community of God.

Keywords: didactics, early childhood education, existentialism, school catechesis, identity

Abstrakt: W dynamicznie rozwijającym się świecie, pełnym zmian kulturowo-społecznych, gospodarczych i politycznych człowiek od wieków poszukuje odpowiedzi na podstawowe pytania odnoszące się do: narodzin – trwania – śmierci. Dziecko, kształtując swoją tożsamość, mocniej doświadcza braku ugruntowanej struktury myślenia w zakresie ciągłości jego bytu, sensu i celu życia, śmierci własnej i bliskich mu osób. Powinno mu się umożliwić odnalezienie własnej drogi w tym zakresie w takich przestrzeniach jak szkolna lekcja religii, której znaczenie w poszukiwaniu odpowiedzi przez ucznia klasy II szkoły podstawowej na pytania egzystencjalne przedstawiono w niniejszym artykule.

Badania oparto na indywidualnym studium przypadku: 8-letniego chłopca, ucznia klasy II, którego funkcjonowanie egzystencjalne zostało zdeterminowane przez szkolną lekcję religii w okresie dwóch lat nauki. Charakteryzuje się ono: ciągłością w konstruowanych pytaniach oraz zmianą w doświadczaniu: poczucia braku sensu i celu życia, śmierci, poszukiwania i wartościowania elementów dobra i zła. W pierwszym

roku szkolnej lekcji religii chłopiec „wyciszył" strach przed końcem bytu ludzkiego, a w drugim uświadomił sobie, że źródłem odpowiedzi na nurtujące go pytania są: wartości, zasady i przykłady zawarte w wierze katolickiej i wspólnocie Bożej.

Słowa kluczowe: dydaktyka**,** edukacja wczesnoszkolna, egzystencjalizm, szkolna lekcja religii, tożsamość

Introduction

All humans, regardless of their age, search for the meaning of their life and face problems related to the process of birth – existence – death. People shape their identity through experiences, recognition and internalization of values which includes search for answers to existential questions. The family as well as the broader society with which people interact through school, or cultural and church communities provide the base for those processes. Children tend to feel the sense of lack of meaning and loss more acutely than adults, that is why, in the process of growth they should experience as many situations as possible that would allow them to build their identity (Wadowski 2003, 177).

The aim of this article is to present research results on the role of school catechesis in the search for answers to existential questions posed by a second-grade primary school student. The core curriculum as well as didactic methods used in teaching religion at schools should focus on helping children to structure their existential world. Analysis of this process took into account both continuity and changes – the student's questions and answers before he started religious education at school and, later, during his education in grades 1 and 2.

The research used a case study of an 8-year-old boy. In line with the adopted research problem, the following areas of research have been distinguished: existential questions asked by the respondent in the home environment before starting religious education at school and existential questions asked by the respondent under the influence of both the content and methods used during school religion lessons in grades 1 and 2.

The research was conducted based on a partially guided, problem-focused interview (Rubacha 2016, 279) and observations of the boy in the home environment. The interviews were conducted at the respondent's place of residence and at school (first recorded on a dictaphone and then transcribed). They were conducted with the child, the child's parents, and a religion teacher (7 years of experience in grades 1-3; 22 years of experience in teaching religion). During interviews with adults (three meetings with each of them), emphasis was put on creating a relaxed atmosphere conducive to free expression of thoughts and opinions (Palka 2006, 102). Meetings with the respondent were organized in his room (6 meetings). Detailed research problems were reflected in the instructions prepared for the interviews – 10 open questions with respondent's particulars and instructions. The observation was carried out using a questionnaire form with distinguished research areas congruent with the research problem (2-3 hours three times a month).

Data collection and analysis were carried out using a coding system (Pilch and Bauman 2001, 252): no./child (I/C); no./mother (II/M); no./father (III/F); no./religion teacher (IV/RT). Observation included preparation of notes related to the area of observation. This gave basis for creating a raw text, which was then shortened with a view to specifying analytical categories. Each category was assigned appropriate meaning, which allowed to locate the variables specified in the research problem (in the process of stratified sampling). The units (after their identification) were analysed to extract the information contained in the collected texts, which constitute the context of the data. The method of analytical induction was used to verify the data, based on comparing hypothetical data with all encountered cases (Rubacha 2016, 282).

1. Case study

The method of individual cases was adopted in the undertaken scientific investigations, as the method of research focusing on the analysis of the fate of an individual "entangled," as Tadeusz Pilch puts it, in characteristic educational situations. Pilch points to this method as the one suitable for analyses of specific educational phenomena, taking into account individual human biographies. It allows the researcher to pursue a diagnosis of a given case or phenomenon in order to initiate therapeutic activities (Pilch and Bauman 2001, 78).

Robert Stake (1997, 127) considers case study as an approach aimed at identifying the complexity, uniqueness and exceptionality of a single case, which constitutes an integrated whole in various contexts. It is therefore a system with clearly marked boundaries – patterns.

In line with the above methodological assumptions, the characteristics of the research case are as follows: the respondent is a 2nd grade, primary school student in the Archdiocese of Warmia – he started school in 2022. He was born in 2015 and has no siblings. The boy was diagnosed at a psychological and pedagogical clinic as a gifted child developing asynchronously. Such students differ in their reception of the reality and, despite having extensive knowledge or skills, they are characterized by dysfunctions or disorders obstructing their learning. They require special support in the process of upbringing and teaching, and their susceptibility to social and emotional trauma is determined by the level of development of their intellectual abilities. They are distinguished by a high potential for creative achievements, but at the same time they reveal problems related to speech, emotions and language disorders (Limont 2020, 19-21).

The respondent experiences adaptation difficulties and has a negative attitude towards school duties. He is characterized by a high degree of emotional sensitivity, which results in over-responsiveness to stimuli and information received from the environment as compared to his peers. He often gets distracted, and his thoughts escape into the world of dreams. At the same time, he is characterised by a slow pace of work and a low level of understanding the teacher's instructions. He also demonstrates a rebellious attitude towards performed tasks, which is manifested by such statements

as: "I can't read it; I can't calculate it" – I/C. The boy is able to do exercises correctly, providing there is complete silence in the room. The respondent does not like school "because it is boring" – I/C. The child lacks motivation to take on school challenges. He is also convinced of his lack of skills and of his "being worse than his colleagues" – I/C.

The boy's abilities fall into the scope of artistic and linguistic competences. The respondent's language skills were examined by specialists from a non-public language school. The diagnosis revealed that the child has listening and speaking skills, can engage in a conversation and use grammar at the level of the 8th grade of primary school. The boy is interested in English language and culture. He willingly engages in conversations with children from other countries via online games.

Moreover, the respondent has achievements in art competitions. In the years 2022-2024, he won 4 school competitions for children from grades 1-3, and in grade 3, he took the second place for children from grades 1-4. He had achievements at the provincial level: the second place in a photography competition for children from grades 1-6 and the third place in an art competition for children from grades 1-3.

2. Existential questions in children's lives

Human curiosity spurs all individuals to search for the meaning and purposefulness of the entities surrounding them. Aleksandra Pałka (2022, 28) emphasizes that this curiosity is most vividly manifested in childhood, and it has a tendency to disappear during the period of growth. According to Jaspers, this type of search is conditioned by people's ability to reflect on themselves and on the entire world around them (Jaspers 1999, 29).

Existential questions, defined as philosophical questions, express the meaning and goals of human life, determine the perception of death – the transience of existence and its fragility. They refer to the issues of moral good and evil, faith, existence of God, as well as the origins of all things (Szczepska-Pustkowska 2019, 52). Reflection on the meaning of life, including the sense of the lack of it, constitute a vital problem at both social and individual level and are related to human multidimensional, natural life activity. People make a conscious effort to satisfy their needs which they emancipate by asking questions and searching for answers (Meissner-Łozińska 2011, 70).

Attitudes aimed at shaping the meaning of life and the need for meaning in life appear already in childhood. It is when children formulate questions relating to the essence and genesis of things, phenomena and their own person. Their natural interest in the world result in their noticing everything that is obvious to adults. It is also a period when children experience frequent crises of values, as well as a significant weakening of sense of the meaning of life and a simultaneous need to search for that meaning (Kozubska and Ziółkowski 2012, 110).

Reflection on death, suffering, and the transience of human life often appears in exceptional moments, but also in difficult ones, in borderline situations and at turning points in the life of an individual. In various periods of life, human functioning is determined, to a higher or lower degree, by the prospect of death

regardless of the fact whether this death is perceived as the end of life or as the beginning of the next, new stage of existence. It is due to the fact that the meaning of individual experiences occurring in the process of human life cannot be explained unless its end – death – is known (Yalom 2008, 11).

Death gives rise to questions about the meaning of human existence and allows us to understand that everything has a beginning and an end. People who are aware of the transience of life are able to attach value to experienced events, while acceptance of death is a sign of maturity. Even though death constitutes a certain mystery and arouses the feelings of fear and helplessness, everyone must come to terms with it in order to obtain answers to basic philosophical questions. Children start their inquiries related to those questions in the stage of their early development, but it is most often unnoticed by parents or guardians. By facing death, children enter the path that leads to maturity and readiness to create their own hierarchy of values. Only then is the child able to move from the way of being in everyday life – being delighted with things in the world, in the state of escape, or even artificial peace – to ontological being – authentic life, to wondering at things as they are in their essence (Heidegger 1994, 18).

Jan Wadowski states that "all questions, including questions posed by science and metaphysics, are existential questions, although existential questions are, par excellence, those asked by man in the face of ultimate matters" (2003, 168). The most difficult existential questions cannot be resolved by natural reason. Wadowski creates a "network" of existential questions that result from all spheres of human research, i.e.: World, Man, God. He states that ancient times "dealt with the world, the Middle Ages dealt with God, and modern times deal with man" (Wadowski 2003, 169). Wadowski also points to the one-sided approach of particular epochs as regards the raised issues, at the same time acknowledging the bases for such an approach. In his reflections, Wadowski emphasizes that "when we deal with the world, there inevitably arises the question of God, and the same is true when we deal with man" (Wadowski 2003, 169). It is beyond question that each epoch developed its own procedures, including ways and means of solving existential questions. Moreover, all epochs pointed out the solutions to "one's own most important questions" (Wadowski 2003, 169).

The issue of existential questions is emphasized in the *Fides et Ratio* Encyclical, in which truth occupies the central place. John Paul II points out that every human existence is guided by questions such as: Who am I?; Where have I come from?; Where am I going? Why is there evil?; What is there after this life? (John Paul II 1998, 26). The encyclical constitutes the rooting of existential questions in the ultimate truth. Man strives for truth through various paths: love and wisdom. No one can avoid searching for answers to the issues that concern him (John Paul II 1998, 27). Religious faith is an existential value in which the correlation of meaning and truth plays an important role. Truth, however, is a unique gift inscribed in God's Revelation, necessary in shaping the sense of the meaning of human life. In the order of cognition, an individual formulates questions relating to himself, his identity. People constitute a mystery to themselves, and a wish to solve that mystery inspires them to constantly search for answers relating to the most important areas of their existence. The process of discovering meaning

takes place through a gradual pursuit of truth, present on the philosophical and anthropological level, covering the issues of meaning, purposefulness, and nature. Each human person must exceed his or her own cognitive limitations (Kopiec 2020).

Truth enables people to achieve moral (existential) certainty allowing them to make decisions in fundamental aspects of their lives (Kopiec 2020). This cognition determines all important dimensions of human existence, such as: feelings, body, world of spiritual and emotional values, will, intelligence, senses. Truth, then, is an interpretation of being – the meaning of everything that lives – contained in the being itself through a specific message. Faith is here an appeal and a certain proposal of an answer (Kopiec 2020).

According to Matthew Limpan, Ann Margaret Sharp and Fredirck Oscanyan (1997, 30) the world of children's imagination comprises concern, or inquiry focused on understanding and meaning, as well as active discovery of what can give meaning to their experiences. When obtaining answers to existential questions, children make an effort to interpret and understand them – they are ready for the unknown. In a way, they organize their world of experiences, thoughts and reasoning. All human beings are born, live and then die and those fundamental facts entirely define their philosophical questions. It is a lifelong process, and it may vary depending on the method of abstraction, ways of searching for or types of references specific to a given individual. Children feel the lack of meaning in existence more acutely than adults, they are open to the unknown and therefore more actively pursue experiences that could fill this void. They pursue this goal in scientific, symbolic and, most importantly, philosophical spaces (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan 1997, 53-54).

Even though children's world of references is not fully formed in relation to their life experiences, they formulate metaphysical, logical and ethical questions. It is as if they demanded an explanation of what was incomprehensible for them due to their lack of knowledge, certainty or ability to give meaning to the "incomprehensible." Looking for possibilities (circumstances) of interpretation, they delve into the planes such as religion that would explain their doubts and answer their questions (Szczepska-Pustkowska 2019, 55).

While observing his own children, Erich Stern (1957) noticed the dynamics with which they asked questions relating to everything that exists, including God – a supernatural being. At the same time, he highlighted the ease of generalizations made by children in their philosophical investigations focused on religion and God's place in the world.

Research on existential questions and philosophy in the life of children and adolescents, initiated in Sweden in the second half of the 20th century, showed that young people, regardless of age, are looking for answers to several basic philosophical issues such as race, sexuality, love, responsibility, but also suffering, values and norms, as well as trust, guilt and punishment, community and loneliness, as well as good and evil. The research also indicated that existential reflection is an important aspect in the lives of preschool and early school children (Szczepska-Pustkowska 2019, 55-58).

3. Assumptions of school religion lessons in grades 1-2

School religion lessons in Poland are conducted based on the core curriculum: approved on June 8, 2018 at the 379th Plenary Meeting of the Polish Episcopal Conference; prepared on the basis of: the Act of December 14, 2016 – Law on School Education (Dz.U. poz.59) and the Act of December 14, 2016 – Provisions introducing the Act – Law on School Education (Dz.U. poz. 60).

Religious education in primary schools should pursue didactic, practical, educational and formational goals. Its most important aspects include acquisition of religious knowledge by students and gradual incorporation into their own experiences and thoughts, values and moral norms, as well as conscious deepening of understanding of themselves as moral individuals, responsible for their humanity in many fields of moral life (*Core curriculum* 2018, 29-30). In turn, in *Curriculum for the Roman Catholic Religious Instruction in Kindergartens and Schools* (*Roma Catholic Religion Curriculum* 2018, 39-60) specifies the catechetical goals characterized in Table 1.

Table 1. Catechetical goals for grades 1-2

Grade 1	Grade 2
introduction into the life of the class – catechetical community of God's children	representation of God who out of His love desires man's salvation
familiarization with secular and Christian greetings	familiarization with the reality of sin and the truth about the Incarnation
building an attitude of respect towards other people; the Holy Scriptures; the sign of the Cross; church – the house of God	showing the fullest revelation of God in Christ and of Jesus – the promised Saviour
shaping appropriate peer interactions and contacts between children and adults	showing Jesus present in the events of the liturgical year; the value of His words, deeds and love visible in the forgiveness of sins
realizing the truth about the closeness and presence of God in the life of every person	indicating the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection
getting acquainted with God's commandments; the biblical account of creation; the meaning of signs, gestures and liturgical symbols	presenting Jesus' public ministry and the pattern of prayer based on His example
gaining awareness of God's presence in the liturgy and His words in the Holy Scriptures	explanation of the royal dignity of Jesus, revealing the will of God, transmitting it in the attitudes of listening to the word of God, trusting and confessing faith in God
awareness of the value of the Church community – the family of God; forming attitudes of trust towards: Mary – the Mother of Christ and every person; God – leading people along the path of commandments	presentation of the Holy sacraments – the ways of Christ's presence and the saving truth about Jesus' activity in the Church and His second coming
indicating the importance of school in creating interpersonal relationships and working on the ability to assess behaviour in accordance with the commandments	outlining the value of Jesus' teaching (in the Church, which is His kingdom) and the Decalogue leading to Christian life

presenting the value of family in human life; the importance and place of the child in the family – the dignity of the child of God	awareness of the importance of God's grace needed for salvation and ways of caring for life in a state of grace and love for one's neighbour – the consequences of God's love
shaping proper bonds in the family and Church community – showing prayer as a conversation with God	pointing to the value of human freedom and the consequences of human choices – faith which is the basis of Christian behaviour
presentation of God: the Creator of all things; as a merciful Father and His goodness	discussion of human conscience and the way of shaping it as well as obligations towards oneself and others
awareness of God's love during the act of creation – the source of human life	presentation of the truth about the Holy Spirit and His role in the Church: openness to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. and prayers for His gifts

Source: own study based on *Program nauczania religii rzymskokatolickiej w przedszkolach i szkołach* 2018, 39-60.

Catechetical goals are complemented by the methods of education, which are subject to criteria relating to the ideas and situations catechized. Selection of those methods is based on: the level of intellectual development and well-being of students, varying levels of knowledge, varying levels of faith, religious experiences, responsibility for others, and the way of communicating and establishing relationships. The personality of the catechist (professional experience, gender, age), personal approach to the truths of faith and appropriate adaptation of didactic methods to the content of the lesson play an important role here (Łabendowicz, 2019, 29).

Religion teachers in grades 1-2 use didactic methods and techniques corresponding to early school education, i.e., description, guided conversation, storytelling, artwork, educational and physical play, staging, singing, presentation, simple didactic games, playing short film fragments, performance. In the 2nd grade, short lecture methods are introduced together with activities aimed at attempts to imitate personal role models in minor life tasks, using comparisons from students' everyday lives to convey information preparing for confession and First Holy Communion. (*Roman Catholic Religion Curriculum* 2018, 59). The task of religion teachers is to lead students to a closer contact with God using the described forms and methods of work, and to inspire and enhance their internal motivation. At the same time, they help children initiate their dialogue of love with God, and shape their conscious activity, independence and commitment (Łabendowicz, 2019, 29-33).

In grade 1, the adopted forms and methods of work are aimed at developing children's beliefs and attitudes as well as a sense of trust and readiness to offer the gift to giving themselves to others. They enable children to develop their ability to plead and joyfully participate in the life of the school, family and parish community, as well as effectively assimilate the value of admiration for the work of God – the Creator. In grade 2, the aim is to imitate Jesus Christ, develop the attitudes of faith and prayer, and bring out joy in students. School religion lessons, which have an evangelizing function, should be continued in the student's family environment (*Roman Catholic Religion Curriculum* 2018, 60).

The core curriculum and teaching methods are reflected in the education program, which in grade 1 of primary school focuses on inspiring children to find traces of God in various situations and environments, i.e. at school, family home, Church and nature. In grade 2, the curriculum focuses on helping students to discover the selfless and unconditional love of God, to which children should be open. It reveals God's closeness to man and highlights the fact that God, out of love, sent Jesus Christ His Son. It also supports students in making friends with Jesus and discovering His gifts (Table 2).

Table 2. Curriculum for grades 1-2

Grade 1	Grade 2
Community as the student's closest environment	Jesus, the beloved Son of God the Father
Basic places and signs that appear on the path of a believer	Jesus is man's best friend
Man – a being created by God	Jesus is the creator of the Kingdom of Love
The world of angels – gifts of God's love	Jesus inviting children to work in His Kingdom
God who loves man and cares for His family, to which every man belongs	A gift for believers in the form of the Holy Spirit.
Occasional catechesis	
the most important events in the liturgical year – a symbol of common celebration	

Source: study based on *Program nauczania religii rzymskokatolickiej w przedszkolach i szkołach* 2018, 41-60.

In the Archdiocese of Warmia, the first grade uses a textbook titled *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* and in grade II: *This is my beloved Son.* The books are complemented with a calendar of Church and state holidays, worksheets, a songbook and occasional catechesis – relating to the cultural specifics of the region (Table 3).

Table 3. Textbooks grades 1-2

Grade 1	Grade 2
Part I	
Let's meet in our community	Jesus the Beloved Son of God the Father
God created me	Jesus is my Friend
God loves me	
Part II	
God cares for me	Jesus my King
We are God's family	The Kingdom of Jesus – the Kingdom of Love
	Jesus invites me to work in His kingdom
	Jesus gives the Holy Spirit
Occasional catechesis	
Christmas in Warmia; Old Warmia customs of the Holy Week	Holidays – The Kingdom of God among us. Marian sanctuaries in the Archdiocese of Warmia

Source: own study.

Each textbook is accompanied by a home workbook titled *Domownik* containing tasks for the whole family: descriptions and explanations of topics, questions and issues to think about. Its content complements the topics discussed during school religion lessons. Its aim is to encourage the family to search for manifestations of God's presence in everyday life and help to combine community life with faith. *Domownik* contributes to a deeper, religious reflection on human existence. It is a tool encouraging the family community to consciously and actively participate in its functioning. The workbook assigns the children's parents a place in their religion lessons reminding them that they are the first teachers and preachers of faith, the experience of which takes place most fully in the home and parish environment.

4. Existential questions in the child's home environment before starting religion lessons at school

Based on the interviews conducted with the child's parents, it can be concluded that the boy began searching for answers to questions related to the end of human life from the moment he reached preschool age. At the age of 5/6, those questions began to be the source of big emotional problems. There were periods when his thoughts about death were especially intense. In result, the boy had nightmares and would cry all day long. "My son couldn't calm down. He kept thinking about his own death" – II/M. The boy's words indicated his fear of death. Those thoughts returned when the family celebrated one of the parent's birthday, and they caused much anxiety – "I was afraid that mom or dad were old and would die" – I/C. On perceiving the child's high sensitivity, the parents made various attempts to accustom him to the fact of human mortality. They focused on emphasizing the length of human life, as well as the pleasure and happiness of being with family and friends. They talked about adventures awaiting every person at various stages of education or in adulthood. It can be stated that the approach to existential dilemmas in the respondent's home environment focused on presenting life as a value in itself and on explaining the fact of biological mortality of human beings. The pivotal point in the question of life and death was the feeling of happiness by being part of a specific community or belonging to a given cultural group and the possibility of remaining in it.

Family discussions on the topic of faith revolved primarily around the question of life after death. Here, the parents pointed out to the boy that according to the Catholic faith which they confessed, people after death go either to hell or to heaven. This was presented as conditional to human behaviour, their deeds: "if children listen to their parents, study conscientiously, they will definitely be taken to heaven after death" – II/M.

The boy began to raise existential questions related to good and evil along with his growing awareness of experiencing pain and discomfort caused by the behaviour of other people in his environment. Such experiences involved in particular situations

taking place in kindergarten and contacts with the peer group. They revolved around helping the weaker, showing tolerance towards people who were physically different, and respecting other children and adults. As a highly sensitive child, the respondent was much affected by every argument among his peers, inappropriate interactions among them and especially by ridicule and mockery. In conversations with his parents, he sought answers to the question – "How can someone be mean to other people or laugh at them when, for example, they fall down or don't have such nice things as they do" – I/C. The parents emphasize that such dilemmas required primarily explaining to the boy the complex nature of the society in which he lived and pointing to the diversity of human behaviours. Questions focused on the purpose of human existence appeared when the boy started school. This time, the parents used elements stemming from being part of the Church community – content conveyed during religious education at school combined with their own life experiences. They also emphasized that every person has their own conscience and free will. It depends on them how they will direct their lives.

5. Existential questions of the second-grade student versus methods and content of religion lessons at school

As the respondent developed and began school, the scope of existential questions asked by him did not change thematically, but he deepened his inquiries into the aspects of life and death. The boy was still preoccupied with questions about the meaning of human life: "I was afraid what I was for. Why did grandpa have to go to heaven? And did he meet my old doggy there? And most of all, I am afraid that after death I will not be with my parents" – I/C.

He also wondered about good and evil: whether hell and heaven really exist. "If I am good to mom and dad, will God help me with math? And most importantly, will I have friends? Because I would like to have lots of friends" – I/C.

The research shows, on the one hand, continuity of dilemmas impacting the boy's functioning and, on the other hand, change in the explanations he formulates and the values he begins to accept as regards the concept of man as a mortal being who undertakes the hardship of living in between good and evil. The experiences of the parents and the religion teacher made it possible to build a model of the relationship between the boy's existential questions – and the examples, the content, presented to him in the space of religious education at school due to the adopted methods – and the explanations that he considers correct (Table 4).

Table 4. Model of the relationship between the respondent's existential questions and religious teaching at school based on data from interviews with the child, parents, and the religion teacher

Existential dilemma	Method (content) determining explanation	Domownik	The boy's explanations considered correct	grade
death	description and conversation: family, school class	+	belonging to the family of Jesus Christ	1
	artwork		man was created by God, who is always near	
	guided conversation: life and death	+	Jesus Christ will come again at the end of the world – one should not be afraid of death, but put hope and trust in God	2
	story: resurrection of Jesus Christ		man is part of the Kingdom of Heaven – he learns through the testimony of the Lord Jesus present in the Eucharist and God's gifts in the form of the Holy Spirit how to stand before God at the moment of death and enter the Kingdom in heaven	
good and evil	singing and presentation	+	the world is not perfect – God gave us conscience and the ability to renounce sin	I
	artwork		we must love others as much as ourselves; take care of our soul and body, which are gifts from God	
	guided conversation: conscience		the Lord Jesus forgives us and teaches us to apologize	
	artwork	+	God wants us to be happy and do good – staying in friendship with the Lord Jesus helps us make the right choices promises a Savior who defeated the evil spirit that separates people from God's love	II
	imitating the mercy of God, the goodness and friendship of Jesus Christ in everyday contacts with colleagues		God is merciful and forgives our sins – He teaches us how to apologize to family and colleagues for our mistakes	
	description of God's mercy		The Decalogue and the teachings of the Lord Jesus are the source of the rules of conduct; all children are disciples of the Lord Jesus, they care for their neighbours and are grateful for the good they receive	
life goal	artwork	+	staying in the family is the way to God and the Church is God's family	I
	guided conversation: family		faith and love can be shared with others	
	description of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ		Jesus Christ died for us on the cross so that we could live	
	imitation of Jesus Christ in contacts with colleagues	+	Jesus Christ is present in the life of every person, who as a friend teaches us how to become full members of the Kingdom of Heaven	II
	guided conversation: man's perseverance in the Kingdom of God on earth		everyone is part of the Kingdom of Lord Jesus on earth and in heaven; Jesus sends each person to work in the Kingdom on earth	

Source: own elaboration.

The respondent's search for answers to existential questions was possible thanks to the combination of religious education at school supported by the *Domownik* home workbook, in particular: works of art, guided conversations and

discussions, presentation of events from the life of Jesus Christ, but also from the lives of people imitating God and Jesus with the aim to teach the child how to follow these examples in his functioning at school and at home. "It makes me feel better when we talk about the Family of God at school and at home, that I am a part of it. I already know that I will be with my parents in heaven if I am good. I am glad that there is Jesus, who loves me and that thanks to Him we can all live here on earth and that I can go with my parents to various nice places" – I/C

The methods and content used in grade 1 were supplemented in grade 2, which allowed the boy to discover in a conscious process the "sequence" of human fate: birth-life-death-eternal life. "I like drawing and it is cool when we draw saints and the teacher at school tells us about their lives, what good things they did. I like it the most when she talks about Jesus, because I always pray to Him, because it helps me when I feel bad or nervous or when I worry, when grandma is sick" – I/C.

The changes occurring in formulating and obtaining answers to the existential questions asked by the respondent, in the process of participating in a school religion lesson, are illustrated by the analysis of the model (Table 4) of the relationship between the existential questions of the respondent and the teaching of religion at school based on data from interviews with the child, parents, and the religion teacher, with particular emphasis on the boy's statements.

At the same time, the religion teacher points to the *Domownik* home workbook as a tool to arouse a sense of meaning in the child's life by consolidating and directing it towards perceiving the world as the Kingdom of God. "Parents receive a tool from us to help the child find their way in a dynamically changing reality" – IV/RT.

Based on the collected material, it can be concluded that *Domownik* provides an invaluable aid in building a family space that the respondent could recognize as safe and at the same time sufficient for considering his own existential problems. The most frequently mentioned activities contained in the *Domownik* home workbook that, according to the parents and the religion teacher, enable the child to understand human fate include:

- attending Sunday mass;
- learning about the wonders of God's world through films and trips around the area – visiting churches;
- introducing conversations about the world, the pressing problems of all household members, faith and its significance in the life of every person in the family;
- discovering signs of faith in family life: related to the baptism of the parents and the respondent;
- seeking answers to the questions bothering the child in the Holy Scriptures;
- morning and evening prayer undertaken by the whole family; thanking God for the gifts of other people, life, water, animals and plants, the closeness that He offers to man;
- joint learning: *5 conditions of the sacrament of penance; Commandments of love; To the Guardian Angel; Act of Love; Prayer to the Holy Spirit*;

- creating questions for examination of conscience based on a film conveying a Christian message.

The boy emphasizes that the suggestions contained in *Domownik* made it easier for him to understand how "the world works. Why are there churches and what are they for? What is baptism and communion for? And why do I have to learn these prayers by heart?" – I/C. The films and trips made the child aware of the church community and showed the purpose of participating in the Holy Mass as well as of prayer as ways of meeting God and Jesus. Such meetings "make me feel good, I am no longer nervous, and I don't cry that much when I remember that we can die" – I/D.

During the interviews, the respondent pays special attention to discussions held in the home environment. He recalls situations in which, together with his parents, he considered various ways of solving problems, behaving in a specific situation, using for this purpose the tips and questions added to each school religion lesson in *Domownik*. "Thanks to religion, I know that I have to help others, because it is good. I know that Jesus is my friend, and that He will always help me" – I/C. He also notices the differences between grade 1 and grade 2: "In the beginning, there were a lot of short tasks in the book, a kind of "challenges" to do, and then there was a lot of talking. Sometimes talking helps, because you can say what you think. Talking helps to say that you are afraid that you will die and will be gone. But then you can talk to Jesus. It is good, because I know that even if I die, I will be in heaven" – I/C. According to the religion teacher, most children at the first stage of education ask themselves many questions of an existential nature. However, few have the courage to formulate them in front of the class or a group of peers. "Fear of death is common among children who are afraid that they will die or that people whom they love will die. They are also afraid to express thoughts about death in their statements, questions and descriptions. Students find it easier to express such thoughts when they talk about unreal characters or people unrelated to them. More students from grades 1-2 decide to talk about the questions of good and evil" – IV/RT. What the catechist emphasizes is the sensitivity and reflection on the problem of mortality and human conscience, which emerges in the statements of the respondent. These reflections and a "certain adult-like maturity" in the statements formulated by him indicate an internal experience and a search for understanding the human essence – stronger than in other children of his age. According to the religion teacher, this is related to the sensitivity characterising the respondent as well as to his direct reception of stimuli. This is confirmed by the following statements made by the boy: "When someone is sick in a film or a fairy tale, my heart hurts. I always think that it is real and worry what will happen to him. Was he good or bad? Will he go to heaven or hell? Did he talk to Jesus?" – I/C.

The change that took place in the way that the respondent finds himself in the space of existential problems was induced by his conscious and full participation in religious education at school and at the same time by his acquisition of new knowledge and skills allowing him to actively participate in religious life. "When

I went to school, I couldn't pray. I didn't know so much about Jesus, about God. I didn't even know that there were holy people who helped others. Well, now I know" – I/C.

Praying together in the home environment, the use of the *Domownik* home workbook and the discussions stimulated by it, helped develop in the boy: sensitivity to distinguishing good from evil, searching for the purpose and meaning of life in the love for God, solving problems based on the wisdom of Jesus Christ. "Now I know that God loves me, that Jesus loves me. And I know that if I die and my parents die, we will be together in heaven. But you have to be good all your life to get there" – I/C.

Conclusions

Questions about the meaning of human life, about human place in the world, community, family, or about distinguishing good and evil inscribe in the natural process leading to the formation of each person's identity. This also includes children who in the process of growth draw on their various experiences. The possibility to find answers or paths of searching for answers in this area are conditional to proper human development in the emotional, personality and social spheres. Children who experience the world through the prism of their feelings have a heightened sense of meaninglessness and loss and thus more eagerly seek answers to questions about the structure of their existence, origin, supernatural beings, and God (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan 1997, 53-54). Based on the conducted research, the school religion lesson, or more precisely didactic methods such as: description, guided conversation and discussion and the content conveyed through them, should be considered a success factor determining stability of the path in searching for answers to the child's philosophical questions. They allowed to stimulate the boy's motivation, sense of commitment and directed him towards the meaning of human existence, which he will discover throughout his life. Of particular importance were the methods and content related to artwork, but also to examples and stories from the life of Jesus used by the boy in his living environment. During the analysis, it was found that the respondent gained knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ and the saints as well as of the places of their worship. It was also noted that the child developed an awareness of the possibility of starting a conversation with Jesus through prayer, turning to Him in difficult situations, as well as of the feeling that Jesus was his best friend. The research results in this area are best illustrated by the model (Table 4) of the relationship between the respondent's existential questions and religious education at school based on information from interviews with the child, parents, and religion teacher, with particular emphasis on the analysis of the boy's statements.

At the same time, the *Domownik* home workbook which provided an extension of educational and teaching work in the home environment, provided the child with a sense of stability and allowed him to find his way in the existential

structures of life. On this basis, the religion teacher could establish a dialogue with the parents of the respondent and introduce this form of work as an element consolidating the deepening of knowledge and skills acquired during religious education at school, focused on searching for manifestations of the love of God and Jesus as the meaning of human existence. This is evidenced by the child's statements in which he expresses his conviction that after death, people find their place in the Kingdom of God where they meet their loved ones and that they go there thanks to the testimony of their lives (filled with goodness) that they lead on earth and to their being part of the church community through participation in masses and prayer, i.e. conversation with Jesus.

It should be noted that the school religion lessons, together with the employed methods and the presented content helped the respondent to organize his sensations related to: a sense of lack of meaning and purpose in life, death, as well as the search for and evaluation of the elements of good and evil. Religion lessons in grade 1, helped to quieten the emotions "governing" him, i.e., deep fear of his own death and that of his loved ones. In grade 2, they directed the boy's existential searches to values and examples stemming from the Catholic faith and the principles governing the community of God. The analysis of the interviews with the boy shows that he currently feels a part of the community of God's Church, which makes it easier for him to cope with aspects of illness and death and the dying of family members. His approach to the experiences of human fate also changed. He is convinced now that it should be directed towards the feelings of love and friendship towards others. Such a path should allow him to become part of the Catholic community and guarantee his friendship with Jesus, to whom he can turn at every difficult moment in life. These statements are also reflected in the analysis of the model of the relationship between the respondent's existential questions and religious education at school.

The presented investigations should be expanded to include a larger research sample, qualitative and quantitative research, as well as case studies that show no changes in the existential perspective under the influence of school religious education.

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Importance of Teacher's Personality in the Process of Establishing Proper Relations with Students – Experiences of Adult Pupils

Znaczenie osobowości nauczyciela w procesie budowania relacji z uczniami – doświadczenia dorosłych wychowanków

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Abstract: The predominant goal of this article is to elaborate on the importance of teacher's personality in the process of establishing proper relations with students. The theoretical part of this paper incorporates definitions pertaining to the very profession of a teacher, its specificity, a brief description of competences of a proficient tutor, as well as the explanation of stages of establishing relations with a specific group/class. The examined issue has allowed the author to draw a conclusion that one of individuals having a remarkable impact on the upbringing of young people is a teacher, with whom a lot of time is spent on daily basis in a school-specific environment. The research problem has been approached by formulating the following questions: How do teachers establish relationships with their students? What personality traits should a modern teacher possess? The starting point for the analysis have been outcomes of empirical examinations pertaining to the examined issue. To gather the required empirical material, the author has opted for the case study method and problem-focused narrative interview technique. The examination has been carried out among students from the Warmian-Masurian Province and Masovian Voivodeship.

Keywords: personality, teacher, student, relationships

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest ukazanie znaczenia osobowości nauczycieli w procesie budowania relacji z uczniami, a także ukazanie szkicu pożądanych cech współczesnego nauczyciela, które ujawniają się w doświadczeniach uczestników badania. Teoretyczny namysł obejmuje definicyjne ujęcia zawodu nauczyciela i jego charakterystykę, krótki opis kompetencji nauczycielskich oraz opis etapów budowania relacji z grupą/klasą. Refleksja nad podjętą problematyką wskazuje, że jedną z osób mających znaczący wpływ na wychowanie młodego człowieka jest nauczyciel, z którym uczeń spędza w szkole dużą ilość czasu. W związku z tym powinien on posiadać odpowiednie kompetencje, aby właściwie kształtować swoich podopiecznych. Problematyka badawcza została ujęta w postaci następujących pytań: W jaki sposób nauczyciele budują relacje ze swoimi uczniami? Jakie cechy osobowości powinien posiadać współczesny nauczyciel? Punktem wyjścia do podjętych analiz były wyniki badań empirycznych dotyczące wskazanego problemu. Na potrzeby zgromadzenia materiału empirycznego wykorzystano metodę studium przypadków oraz technikę wywiadu narracyjnego skoncentrowanego na problemie. Badania zostały przeprowadzone wśród studentów pochodzących z województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego oraz województwa mazowieckiego.

Słowa kluczowe: osobowość, nauczyciel, uczeń, relacje

Introductory remarks

It can be stated without a doubt that the profession of a teacher is currently perceived in a variety of ways. In some cases, such a person is seen as a respectable intellectual equipped with extensive knowledge, whereas in some others – as an individual who is characterized by well-developed caretaking capabilities and practical mind (Nosek-Kozłowska 2021). The profession of a teacher is highly specific, as it requires certain personal predispositions. It is a job requiring ambivalence, uniqueness, and communicative character (Wyszyńska 2008). A modern teacher is a person having a proper, field-specific education, as well as equipped with highly varying competences (interpersonal, intrapersonal, communication-specific, technology-oriented, etc.). He or she is a person constantly pursuing knowledge and improving his or her skills. It is caused by varying expectations towards him or her pertaining to upbringing, taking care of, and educating both children and teenagers. Such an individual strictly connects the education of a new generation with his or her hopes for a better future. What is more, working with young people is his or her passion. A teacher should feel the calling, be a reflective yet practical person, know how to spot talents in young individuals, as well as identify a myriad of positive traits in them. It should also be a person, for whom his or her work is the art of literally and figuratively shaping another individual (Nosek-Kozłowska 2021). Wenacjusz Panek (2001) states that „A modern teacher we want to create and be able to take advantage of his or her creative capabilities must be characterized by the following traits: openness when it comes to discovering the world, originality of thinking, and tolerance for cognitive discrepancies, which optimally satisfies the motivation of curiosity" (Panek 2002, 233).

The profession of a teacher is a form of public service. Teachers are required to not only have high professional qualifications, but also – to showcase certain stances and behavioral or moral patterns. The efficiency of educating young generations is to a notable extent dependent on the attitude and personality of teachers. Guidelines pertaining to teacher-specific education are predominantly oriented towards pointing to certain professional qualifications, considering them to be hallmarks or good or even above-average educator. As argued by Krystyna Mihułka (2018), while delving into pedagogical considerations on teachers, one has to above all else take into account opinions voiced by children and teenagers. They are the active participants of the didactic process, who have a lot to say about key features of a remarkable or even ideal teacher or educator. The predominant aim of this article is to elaborate on the importance of the personality of teachers in the process of establishing relations with both children and teenagers. The creation of the aforementioned bonds is not an easy task in the modern world characterized by the ever-growing number of issues young people have to face and deal with. Yet another key goal of this paper is to elaborate on most desired traits a modern teacher should possess that have been discussed by the examined individuals.

1. MODERN TEACHERS – THEIR IMAGE, COMPETENCES, AND DESIRED PERSONALITY TRAITS

It is a general consensus that a teacher is a person working in a school. Wincenty Okoń (2004) points out that a tutor is: „One of the most basic elements of the educational process, a professionally qualified pedagogical employee, who is also co-responsible for the preparation, management, organization, and results of the education-oriented process" (Okoń 2004, 266). Teachers are representatives of a socio-professional group that is exceptionally varied. As a result, numerous teacher-specific typologies are being developed. The most commonly known is the one dividing teachers basing on the type of school they work in and the level of education they offer. The so-called initial teacher training is the preparation of a teacher to educate others on the basis of graduate or postgraduate course resulting in obtaining teaching-specific qualifications by a particular person. It has to be mentioned at this point that the manner and level of such preparation highly impact the quality of work of a teacher. Teaching is a profession that cannot be taught comprehensively or learned. Teaching goes far beyond the preparatory course. As specified by Robert Kwaśnica (2014, 300): „Studies, or more precisely, education obtained by a teacher-to-be, as well as courses that a professionally active teacher can take part in and that are organized by institutions aiming to further educate and develop the competences of educational staff can at best initiate or support the already started process of becoming a teacher. Said process covers the teacher's entire personality and continues – in the form of personal development – even when a given tutor already has formal qualifications. A tutor becomes a teacher by practicing his or her profession. He or she becomes a teacher primarily thanks to his or her own effort to understand and change himself or herself, mainly by self-reflection and personality changes."

The perception of a teacher as a central figure in all institutional undertakings carried out by educational units has not resulted in the specification of most vital aspects of such a person that would be widely accepted (Nosek-Kozłowska 2021). Basing on the words of Maria Grzegorzewska (2021), it can be assumed that key factors that have to be taken into account are: the morality of a teacher, the level of development of his or her personality, the extent to which he or she is truly interested in his or her pupils, a proper stance, a clear goal, and a highly specific mode of operation. Other important aspects that cannot be neglected are selflessness and willingness to support young people in their self-development. Those are all features that can be ascribed to a true teacher who bases his or her actions on love, care, as well as on willingness to help, and who creates the mood of positivity, order, and kindness.

It is worth pointing out that philosophy, psychology, and pedagogical studies have been dealing with the topic of human personality for many years. Therefore, said considerations can be perceived as interdisciplinary in character (Lasota and Pisarzowska 2016). The personality of a tutor and a pedagogue has been touched

upon in numerous works published by estimated experts of pedagogical studies. Typically, such texts tackle the notion of an ideal teacher, describing the most desired features and traits that may be remarkably useful in said profession (Lasota and Pisarzowska 2016). When it comes to a pedagogical approach, personality is a term that is utilized in various contexts. Quite often, it refers to a set of qualities and psychophysical processes making a given individual stand out from the crowd of others. It may additionally impact to a notable extent one's behavioral patterns, ability to obtain and then classify experiences, messages, or skills, as well as the capability of reacting emotionally to others and being determined when it comes to the selection of goals and key values (Okoń 1987, 215). According to Czesław and Małgorzata Kupisiewicz (2009, 128), a particular personality is a set of features typical for a given individual, making it possible to distinguish him or her from others. The pedagogy-oriented approach assumes that the initial years of the life of a given person are most vital when it comes to shaping his or her personality. It is of paramount importance with regard to the profession of a teacher. Wincenty Okoń (1959) additionally points out that personality affects the system of values and life-specific goals. Furthermore, it shapes the willingness to establish valuable and satisfying relations with others. Jan Żebrowski (2007) states that the personality of a teacher is subject to changes as a result of the impact of societal, environmental, cultural, intentional, educational, and self-realization factors.

A teacher is an extremely important figure when it comes to the lives of his or her students, who attempt to describe and create an image of a given tutor, basing on his or her key features, personality, and behavioral patterns. He or she should also be equipped with proper competences, being the combination of professional skills, knowledge, values, and stances that each and every tutor should have in order to be able to perform his or her job in a proficient manner (Prucha 2006). In the literature of the subject, two groups of teaching-specific competences are touched upon, namely – personality-oriented and professional ones (ibidem).

According to the concept of two rationalities, human experiences are created in two spheres: in the practical and moral knowledge one, as well as in the technical knowledge one. To distinguish between knowledge types, two groups of competences can be identified: practical and moral (interpretative, moral, and communication-oriented), as well as technical ones (methodical and realization-specific). Robert Kwaśnica (1987) points to them as to competences being of vital importance for teachers. The life experience of every person constitutes of both practical and moral competences and those strictly technical ones. They are necessary in virtually every profession, but when it comes to teaching, it has to be stated that practical and moral competences take precedence (Kwaśnica 2014). It is caused by the specificity of the profession of a teacher. The aforementioned are more important than technical competences, as the latter cannot be utilized without their consent. As specified by R. Kwaśnica (2014, 302): „All the goals, methods, and approaches must obtain practical and moral acceptance before a teacher uses them. In order to take advantage of them, the teacher must first validate them by himself or herself.

He or she must, basing on both practical and moral knowledge, answer the following questions: What should I do to prevent the goals, methods, and approaches I would like to opt for from becoming tools for manipulation and enslavement of other people? Can I use them in a specific educational situation? If so - how? The issue that precedes and allows technical competences to be taken advantage of is defining the educational situation. Furthermore, understanding said situation is possible thanks to the utilization of both practical and moral competences."

Due to the specific duties they have to fulfill, teachers nowadays may support societal and emotional development of their students. Each day, they meet their pupils, have a remarkable knowledge when it comes to the development of children, and can identify challenges that young people have to face.

„Within the last thirty years, an increasingly greater focus is being put on upbringing on each stage of education. We have improved our understanding of the fact that many children have to face certain problems, which may result in issues regarding discipline and learning. We have become more aware of the needs of such students" (Hornby 2005, 9). Teachers are also required to cooperate with both parents and professionals, including psychologists, therapists, and social support workers.

Communication-oriented and therapeutic skills have become important in educational work, as teachers and educators have been identified as individuals having a remarkable impact on the upbringing of children and teenagers (Hornby 2005). A question can be formulated: What features and skills should a modern teacher possess? Personalities of various individuals working in said profession can be studied by taking advantage of two major methods, namely: deductive (a priori) and inductive (empirical) one. K. Mihułka (2018) states that the least error-prone pieces of research seem to be the ones in the case of which pupils or students describe a good or even an ideal teacher they would like to be educated by. Therefore, let us consider expectations students have of teachers, their most valued traits, and their proposals pertaining to possible changes that could be introduced.

2. Class as a societal and educational group

In its initial phase, a class is made up of a group of people not knowing each other very well. As a result of both formal and informal relations between students, a cohesive societal group is created over time. It then incorporates pupils showcasing a similar level of physical, emotional, and mental development. Within individual classes, social structures start to be formed basing on positions certain students have in contrast to other ones. Pupils additionally create behavioral norms, based on preserving certain recurring societal phenomena. Nevertheless, for such processes to emerge, a teacher has to go through all the stages of group development, which may be a challenge for such a tutor, having to face highly varying behavioral patterns of students included in a particular class. One can identify certain fundamental societal features of a class, which in turn shape the behavioral patterns of both teachers and students. They are as follows (Arends 1995, 123):

a) Multidimensionality – school class is a rather crowded space, within which individuals characterized by remarkably varying psychophysical capabilities attempt to achieve certain goals. There are numerous tasks that a given teacher has to accomplish in said space. He or she has to, among others, keep up with the schedule, supervise pupils, and assess their assignments.

b) Simultaneity – when it comes to a class, numerous occurrences typically happen at once. While taking care of the needs of an individual student, a teacher also has to maintain order and supervise other pupils. He or she additionally has to moderate discussions taking place and plan further work.

c) Promptness – in a class, numerous actions and events may happen at once, so a teacher has no time to think, but rather has to act in an immediate manner.

d) Unpredictability – events in a class tend to unfold in an unexpected manner or steam from one another. Therefore, it is rather troublesome to predict how students may behave and work on a given day.

e) Transparency – class is a public place and students are witnesses of all events taking place within its framework.

f) Togetherness – students spend a remarkable amount of time with each other, which results in developing certain customs and norms, as well as obtaining mutual experiences.

A class is a group consisting of various young people. Quite often, there are strong bonds identifiable between its members. Students are capable of organizing, making decisions that are vital for them, and function within the scope of set rules. It is worth indicating that a school class is considered a public space, within which vital developmental processes take place that are simply impossible to reproduce in private spaces. Upon entering a classroom, a given person has to come to terms with the fact that his or her individual personality becomes less important than the one of the group (Zawada 2013, 82). A class is a part of a school that is close to students and that is co-created by them. Pupils are involved in both fortunes and misfortunes of a given educational unit, requiring a teacher or an educator to take a proper care of it (ibidem, 92).

When it comes to pedagogy, it is not about what current teachers are like, but about what they should be like. The common consensus seems to be that they should exert a strong educational influence on young people. Working in said profession, a teacher should try to expand the knowledge of his or her students, instill certain views in them, develop their abilities, passions and interests, focus on their distinctive traits and, as a result, positively change the personality of his or her students. If the intentions of such a teacher lead to positive results and if the intended changes occur in his or her students, one may claim that such a person is a remarkable teacher and has a strong educational influence (Kreutz 1947).

The personality of a teacher is to a certain degree a vital factor while working with students. What is more, carrying out examinations pertaining to the aforementioned matter seems to be especially valuable and necessary nowadays. Together with constant changes in social structure, school-specific organization,

curriculum, and education standards, both management-oriented and educational role of a teacher are subject to constant modifications, requiring never-ending self-improvement.

„Both students and teachers bring their experiences to school: their mood and memories (both positive and negative). All of said individuals bring their worries, joys, feelings, needs, fears, expectations, statements, dreams, and wishes to the educational unit in question as well" (Góralczyk 2007, 35).

3. Establishing and developing interpersonal relations between a teacher and pupils/a lecturer and students

One has to note that interpersonal relations have always been perceived as one of the most basic elements of educational processes. School life is gradually becoming more and more devoid of closeness, factual bonds, as well as empathy between students and their teachers (Śnieżyński 2009).

The development of cognitive patterns pertaining to other people is based on the so-called priority effect. There is a reason why we do our best to make the most optimal impression possible on newly met individuals. Pieces of information gathered during initial contacts are very strong emotionally and can shape the opinion of a particular person. With time, the first impression may be to some extent corrected or amended, but it requires regular contacts and the willingness to truly understand the other person (Góralczyk 2007). A vital role when it comes to perception is played by attitudes, which follow the compatibility rule. Despite information received pertaining to a given individual being different from his or her image created mentally beforehand, people try to maintain a more or less coherent perception of him or her. Therefore, people tend to ignore information that they consider uncomfortable. What is even more, the perception is also influenced by the hidden personality theory, which allows to draw conclusion about others basing on rather small chunks of data, utilized to then develop comprehensive and rich images of other people. In the course of education, socialization, and acquiring new experiences, students tend to also acquire certain behavioral stereotypes (Góralczyk 2007). The hidden personality theory may affect our behavior, being the cause of numerous mistakes and misunderstandings, including those in student-teacher relations. They result in the feeling of being hurt, improperly judged, and neglected, which may in turn lead to various conflicts. Conclusions drawn basing on acquired stereotypes may initiate hurtful behavioral patterns, which may in turn directly translate into the inability of a teacher to create a mood of trust and safety in a class. Without being aware of processes taking place within himself or herself, a tutor may not know why students in class are focused on defense rather than on cooperation. Attitudes, beliefs, reactions, and behavioral patterns of both teachers and students are the result of many factors and are more or less conscious (Góralczyk 2007). When one starts working with a given group, the phenomenon referred to as the group process occurs. The created group

(class) starts developing and changing, going through consecutive stages of the process which is unavoidable and takes place in stages. Members of such a group are frequently unaware of its existence and are not familiar with the mode of its progression. Said process should, however, be carefully monitored and studied by the teacher, the goal of whom is to introduce the group (class) to the consecutive phases of the group process (Hornby 2005):

Orientation (shaping, resonance) phase/Initial phase

The orientation phase is the beginning of the group process and occurs at the very start of cooperation between a given teacher and a new class, in the case of which anxiety and the lack of specific goals being set can be identified. The students do not know what to expect from the teacher and are to a remarkable extent dependent on him or her. They attempt to test the limits of what they can and cannot do. They follow norms that have been acquired in the process of societal development. Their task-oriented activeness is dominated by orientation. Such people try to specify their goals, methods of achieving them, specificity of a particular task, as well as requirements that are being set for them. They expect the teacher to provide them with proper explanations, calls to action, clearly set rules, as well as goals to be achieved (Sobek 2009). Working on in-class coherence is of utmost importance during the discussed stage. The teacher has to create an environment allowing class members to get to know one another better and search for similarities between them that would help consolidate the group. The teacher should also learn about students' expectations and goals, additionally informing them about their impact on lesson planning.

Attrition (storm, conflict, differentiation) phase / Confrontation phase

The attrition phase is characterized by conflicts, rebellions, and emotional tensions. The impulse that starts the entire crisis is frequently the sudden expression of emotions of a single person. After a short time, others join the conflict. Groups and coalitions are created. What is more, opinions tend to polarize then. There is a visible rebellion against the teacher and his or her attempts to teach or to maintain a relative order. He or she starts being assessed, criticized, and sometimes even humiliated. The attrition phase is typically identified during fourth-sixth meeting with a particular group (Sobek 2009). During the discussed period, the students tend to be bolder, more open, more expressive, and opt for more controversial views, while at the same time still seeking a place for themselves in the social structure of the class (Rozłucka 2022). In the phase in question, the task of the tutor is to find common denominators for different views and opinions, model active communication, express his or her feelings, and opt for constructive forms of solving conflicts. Some, especially less meaningful issues, should be left for students to solve among themselves. It will improve their self-reliance and will not cause the conflict to spread among the entire group (Rubaj 2015).

Normalization (standard establishment) phase / Need meeting and compromise phase

After the attrition phase, the class enters the so-called normalization period – bonds between its individual members become stronger, mutual support can be seen, as well as there is the constantly increasing sense of identity. Specific roles tend to clarify and behavioral patterns start to emerge. The task-oriented activeness is then characterized by planning and cooperation. Opinions and views are exchanged more frequently, leading to work efficiency increasing. A clear leader emerges. He or she becomes treated by the group as a partner, who is co-dependent and co-reliant for the actions performed by the entire group (Rubaj 2015). It is undoubtedly the most advanced phase of the group process, during which the members of the group meet their needs by opting for task-oriented undertakings. During the normalization phase, the teacher limits imposing certain methods of solving problems to a great extent, focusing rather on proposals of the students. He or she focuses on improving cooperation within the team, models feedback provision, helps improve coherence and attractiveness of the group while juxtaposed with other ones, as well as identifies potential and creates opportunities for remarkable achievements (Rubaj 2015).

Action (action proper, cooperation) phase / Realization phase

The so-called action phase is characterized by self-reliance, high efficiency when it comes to learning, as well as productiveness with regard to in-class life. Interpersonal issues have been dealt with, mutual trust can be identified, together with trust in the success of undertakings being carried out. Students are open and willingly express their feelings or motivations. The teacher is treated as a partner worthy of cooperation, who checks whether tasks are realized in the most optimal manner (Sobek 2009). During the action phase, the teacher actively supports the class, but sometimes – he or she backs down and listens to the ideas of others, which improves active communication, feeling expression, as well as constructive forms of conflict solving (Rubaj 2015).

Conclusion (change, separation) phase / Parting phase

During the conclusion phase, the teacher shows students that the parting period is important. He or she should also allow for emotions to flow freely and sum up the achievements of the entire group, discuss the most vital moments of its existence, as well as provide each and every student with positive feedback (Rubaj 2015).

The role of the group process, as well as its importance for both the teacher and involved students, cannot be underestimated. The group process allows not only for pupils to change, but also – for the class as a whole to transform. Knowledge about perception principles and mistakes that can be made as their result may be of exceptional importance for individuals who would like to analyze their process of perceiving both the world and other people, in result developing the ability to make well-thought-out decisions. When it comes to teachers, such knowledge may turn out to be simply invaluable.

4. Research method and sample specificity

For the purpose of gathering empirical material, the case study method has been taken advantage of (Stake 2010), together with the interview technique. It has been a problem-oriented narrative interview (Chase 2009). At the beginning of each and every meeting, an interviewed person has been presented with both the goal and key matters pertaining to the examination: „The goal of the examination is to understand methods of establishing and developing teacher-student relations, as well as obtaining knowledge about vital personality traits characterizing modern teachers. I would like to learn more about your personal experiences and thoughts related to the subject. Your participation in the examination is more than valuable and will make it possible for me to understand the importance of said relations in an educational environment better." The research problem has been approached by formulating the following questions: How do teachers establish relationships with their students? What personality traits should a modern teacher possess? The above questions have been asked during the course of the interview. Examinations on the importance of the personality of teachers with regard to establishing relations with students were conducted from July to September 2023 among students from the Warmian-Masurian and Masovian Provinces. They have been BA students studying at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn and at the University of Warsaw. They have been on second and third year of their pedagogy oriented BA courses. The starting point of the examination have been the results of empirical analyses pertaining to the discussed problem. The selection of individuals for the sample has been determined by cognitive aspects. The purposeful selection of candidates has been opted for, oriented towards the examined issue. Students have been invited to take part in the study during classes at their universities. After expressing their consent, they have participated in the empirical interview. The achieved results are presented within the scope of this article in a selective manner and have the form of a concise narration. By utilizing such an approach, the author would like to attempt to recreate the interpretation of reality by the examined individuals basing on their statements (by comparing them) and by utilizing descriptive method of text interpretation (Nosek 2018). In total, 15 students have taken part in the examination. Some of their statements are included within the scope of this paper. The selection of the statements to be included in the paper has been well-thought-out in nature. It has been based on principles of selectivity and coherence, allowing to gain valuable and diverse insights into the examined issue. Statements that, according to the author, have been most in line with the research problem and provided some new pieces of information or conclusions pertaining to research question and goal have been chosen. The sample has included 12 women and 3 men, aged 20 to 23. The number of women and men included in the study has varied as pedagogical courses have been exceedingly popular among women. The respondents' statements quoted in the empirical part have been coded. Their opinions have been coded with labels

ranging from S1 to S15 (student 1, student 2, etc.). The code also includes the K or M letter, pointing to the gender of surveyed individuals (K – female, M – male).

5. Methods of establishing teacher-student relations – education-oriented experiences of the examined individuals

Personality traits and attitudes towards other people are closely related to behavioral and cognitive skills. When a mood of trust and mutual care is created in the classroom, young people experience many opportunities to develop their widely-understood interpersonal skills (Everts 2005). Teacher-student relationship plays an important role when it comes to education. There are numerous ways allowing for building establishing and maintaining positive relations between tutors and pupils that have been mentioned by the examined individuals. It turns out that the vital role when it comes to establishing contact with young people is played by the communicativeness of the teacher, his or her openness to others, as well as his or her availability when the pupils feel the need to talk or when they seek advice.

It is important for a teacher to be available and open to communication. (S1,K)

Listening to the opinions and views of the students makes them feel understood and respected. While referring to their educational experiences, the students have mentioned that the authentic attitude of the teacher has been of importance to them. It has been vital for them whether or not a given tutor has been honest, reliable, and his or her actions have been in line with his or her words. Such people have been perceived as more preferable to establish relations with.

In my opinion, it is crucial to build trust through consistency of behavior and honesty. Fulfilling promises, providing honest assessments, and ensuring clear communication help establish a solid foundation of trust between young people and a given teacher. (S3,M)

The basis for trust has turned out to be fair assessment. Students have stated that they had always wanted to be treated equally, without distinguishing some people and diminishing the achievements of others. Each and every one of them has stated that they had wanted to obtain a fair grade basing on comprehensible and sensible assessment criteria.

Ability to build trust, maintain contacts, and encourage cooperation is also essential in the work of a modern teacher. Tutors should develop awareness of their own mental processes, learn to control emotions, as well as practice their mind, intelligence, and interpersonal contacts. It is also of remarkable importance to recognize students' individual skills and successes, as it can in turn encourage them to continue their efforts and develop their talents. One should also not forget to support students with learning issues.

Capability of creating a proper mood in the classroom also plays a vital role when it comes to relations established between a tutor and his or her pupils. (S5,K)

A given teacher should strive for cooperation, respecting differences, and promoting mutual respect. For young people, it has been noteworthy if a tutor has shown interest not only in education, but also – in their everyday life, problems, and successes.

> *I would love if there were more teachers simply showing interest in the lives of their students and in their everyday affairs. More teachers should learn about our fields of interest and try to understand them. (S8,K)*

A teacher should be an authentic person. Showing pupils his or her personality, passion towards learning, and true engagement may result in establishing a more valuable and inspiring relation with them. It additionally seems important to engage in talks about difficulties faced by a particular teacher while working with children and teenagers on everyday basis, as it may help students notice a real person in the tutor and to see that he or she has his or her own successes, as well as failures.

> *A teacher is a human being just like us and sometimes he or she may ask his or her students for assistance. It has to be noted that each and every relation is unique in character, so it is worth being flexible and adapting the approach to individual needs of students. (S2,K)*

Students have on many occasions specified that pupils on various levels of education expect teachers to be flexible, as well as to adjust to the needs, capabilities, and possible limitations of young people. Aside from that, they have wanted to perceive teachers as normal human beings, facing difficulties, issues, and other problems requiring them to seek assistance of their students.

6. Desirable personality traits of a modern teacher – as perceived by the examined individuals

A teacher is often perceived by students as a guide showing them the vast world of knowledge. He or she should be patient, flexible, as well as always willing to explore or learn something new. Other important aspects, as perceived by the examined pupils, have been just approach to issues and a sense of humor.

> *It is great if a teacher has some sense of humor and is fair towards his or her students. (S4,K)*

A modern tutor should be just like a hero when it comes to education – flexible, open to innovations, and ready to learn throughout all his or her life. He or she should also be a person that is optimistic, positive towards others, and willing to take up various challenges. He or she should additionally be equipped with knowledge pertaining to various styles, methods, and techniques of learning in order to support his or her students in their educational endeavors. Young people also value opting for stimulating teaching techniques, as then they can learn analyzing problems and searching for their most optimal solutions.

A teacher should be capable of adjusting to various styles of learning of his or her students and inspire them to think for themselves. (S6,M)

It cannot be overstated that a modern tutor should have knowledge on innovative educational techniques and abilities of using them in practice. Lessons based on the utilization of newest technological achievements are typically more interesting in the perception of students taking part in such classes. What is more, a teacher using them seems to be knowledgeable when it comes to the world of modern technologies used nowadays.

Patience is a quality that is required in teachers. Sometimes, they may have to repeat certain things and explain the presented material in different ways for each student to be able to understand it. (S7,K)

Young people are a very diverse group and may often struggle with certain problems. I think that a teacher should be patient and grant such individuals some time not only to learn, but also - to get to know each other a bit better. (S10, M)

A teacher should be a person characterized by personal strength, resilience to stress, as well as understanding of others. There are also situations when there is a lot of chatter in the class and students are not willing to focus entirely on the education-oriented prices. Pupils tend to be preoccupied with solving group-specific problems, organizing important events, and social life-related issues. Patience and understanding of the teacher may be of immense help in such situations, making his or her work remarkably easier and less stressful.

The examined students have also pointed out that understanding the pupil's specific situation is an important skill that a teacher should possess. It should apply to both school-specific and life-related situations. It is important for a given teacher to be able to show empathy and to understand what is important for students at a given moment. „We assign a teacher the role of an active creator of the student's personality. It is not only about professional activities and transfer of knowledge, but also – about spiritual support, ability to communicate, and the willingness to show empathy" (Lasota and Pisarzowska 2016, 80).

Understanding that each and every student has his or her own style and pace of learning is a key to success when it comes to teachers. (S9,K)

A teacher should adjust his or her approach to the varying level of his or her students, supporting their individual needs. Such cases make the profession of a teacher truly exciting, as each and every day is a new challenge, as well a new opportunity to discover how to help students in their educational endeavors.

To sum up the statements of the examined students, certain traits and abilities that are of importance when it comes to teachers can be identified:

1) True passion that a given teacher has and is willing to share with his or her students.

2) Empathy, thanks to which the teacher understands both feelings and the perspective of a given student, allowing for establishing positive relations.

3) Patience towards students, their behavioral patterns, learning styles, and issues.

4) Factual interest in students and their everyday problems.

5) Creativity, allowing to make the educational process more varying and create interesting lesson plans.

6) Fairness while assessing students, their capabilities, and achievements.

7) Openness to developing his or her skills and obtaining new knowledge throughout his or her life.

8) Remarkable oratory skills allowing to clearly share knowledge with others, as well as the ability to listen.

9) Motivation to work, inspiring students to achieve the peak of their capabilities.

10) Knowledge when it comes to technology – ability to utilize innovative educational tools.

The personality of a teacher, regardless of the degree and extent of its understanding, has a notable impact on students/pupils affected by it. Personality is nothing more and nothing less than a set of specific features of a given individual. A kind, patient, devoted, and constantly developing teacher is an ideal one in the eyes of students. The pedagogical role of universities cannot be neglected or underestimated as well. The age of a pupil/student does not release a given teacher from his or her educational responsibilities (Żywucka-Kozłowska 2014).

Conclusion

The major cognitive aim of the research carried out has been to gain insight into principles governing the establishment of teacher-student relationships and personality traits that a good teacher should have, at least according to the interviewed students. A modern teacher should be able to deal with a number of tasks at once. He or she should be able to manage his or her time like a true professional, be flexible, as well as have a knack for detective work to be able to identify individual needs of his or her students. He or she should also be well-versed when it comes to new technologies, as there are many tools that may make education process easier, especially when taken advantage of in a proper manner.

Children and teenagers frequently have to face various challenges, either educational or emotional ones. A modern teacher should be able to help his or her pupils deal with such obstacles. Some of most common problems young people face are peer pressure, learning difficulties, family-related issues, as well as problems strictly connected with mental health. It is important for a teacher to be empathetic, open, and willing to support his or her students not only in education, but with regard to personal growth as well.

A modern teacher should be characterized by empathy, allowing him or her to understand and identify feelings of the students, which will surely be of use while establishing strong relations with them and improving the overall mood in the classroom. A contemporary teacher should be an open person, ready to implement new ideas and accept diversity. Such an attitude can be inspiring for students and

at the same time make them feel accepted. A tutor should be an authentic person establishing factual, deep relationships with his or her students, based on positive energy, enthusiasm, and motivation for teaching. The aforementioned approach can inspire students to actively participate in the educational process. When establishing relations with pupils, consistency in applying rules and fairness are also important. Consistency in teacher's behavior contributes to the establishment of deep relationships with young people.

A teacher – „A pedagogue has to showcase traits of a great advisor, so take care of others, respect them, be honest, utilize proper intervention methods encouraging students to open up, understand himself or herself, be able to take advantage of his or her knowledge on daily basis, be open, understand others, accept their differences, and be able to make use of such identified differences" (Everts 2005, 126).

Ludwik Bandura (1972, 186) points out that: „Among teachers […], there are those who have made a long-lasting impression on us and whose words and wisdom are still with us. We can feel that they have directed us on our path and have taught us a lot. We do not forget such teachers, but rather remember them fondly, because their words have the power and still lead us in our lives."

Examination results may turn out to be of use when it comes to ensuring a more accurate perception of endeavors of teachers. They may also inspire such individuals to undertake self-development and supportive actions, positively affecting their professional growth. The teacher's personality can create a kind of bridge, allowing him or her to connect with his or her students. If a teacher is able to demonstrate understanding, authenticity, and has a positive attitude towards young people, his or her relations with students can be positive, as well as based on mutual respect and trust. Said relations are the very cornerstone of the education and upbringing process.

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Difficulties in choosing a secondary school in the opinion of parents

Trudności w wyborze szkoły ponadpodstawowej w opinii rodziców

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Abstract: The current state of knowledge indicates that the decision-making process related to the choice of a secondary school involves not only students, but also their parents whom young people perceive as their best advisors. The article presents the results of the author's own research conducted in Polish secondary schools. The research was aimed at identifying the difficulties and accompanying circumstances related to the choice of a secondary school in the opinion of parents of first-grade students at technical schools. The conducted qualitative research was based on the interview method. The research sample was N=53. The analysis of the research material was carried out using the MAXQDA 2022 program. The analysis of qualitative data allowed to identify the determinants of difficulties or lack of difficulties related to choosing a secondary school.

Keywords: vocational education, reasons for choosing a secondary school, Polish secondary school, technical school student, parents,

Abstrakt: Stan wiedzy wskazuje, że w proces decyzyjny związany z wyborem szkoły ponadpodstawowej zaangażowani są nie tylko uczniowie, ale także ich rodzice postrzegani przez młodzież jako najlepsi doradcy. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań własnych przeprowadzonych w polskich szkołach średnich, których celem było rozpoznanie trudności oraz okoliczności im towarzyszących związanych z wyborem szkoły ponadpodstawowej w opinii rodziców uczniów klas pierwszych technikum. W badaniach jakościowych wykorzystano metodę wywiadu. Próba badana wynosiła N=53. Analizę materiału badawczego przeprowadzono z wykorzystaniem programu MAXQDA 2022. Analiza danych jakościowych pozwoliła na wskazanie uwarunkowań występowania oraz braku występowania trudności związanych z wyborem szkoły ponadpodstawowej.

Słowa kluczowe: kształcenie zawodowe, motywy wyboru szkoły średniej, polska szkoła średnia, uczeń technikum, rodzice, Polska

Introduction

When choosing a secondary school, students for the first time in their lives, have the opportunity to decide whether to continue general education in general secondary schools or vocational education in stage I sectoral vocational schools or technical secondary schools.

In this decision-making process, students can often count on the support of their parents, who commonly adopt a supportive attitude towards their children's creativity starting from their first years of their lives (Łukasiewicz-Wieleba 2013, 175). Children can manifest their creativity in various fields, i.e., scientific, artistic, social, but also technical (Dobrołowicz 1993, 108-110; Perleth, Sierwald and Heller 1993, 149-155). This creativity provides grounds for outstanding achievements in areas in which individuals demonstrate their specific capabilities (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell 2015, 27). Supportive parents, regardless of their children's age, always help them in defining and achieving their goals, carefully observe the changes taking place in their children's development and demonstrate readiness to engage in a dialogue with them or intervene in difficult situations. Parents are involved in the decision-making process related to the choice of a school which is guided by the idea is that it should facilitate acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as promote children's creative self-realization (Łukasiewicz-Wieleba 2013, 183). Individuals who in their childhood demonstrate creativity in construction and technological activities, manifested, among others, by inventing machines, building new things according to their own ideas and using a variety of materials, those who show creative imagination, and maintain their interests in their teenage years, most frequently decide to choose a secondary school of a technical profile (Łukasiewicz-Wieleba 2013, 182, 185).

Although, as evidenced by the Central Statistical Office research (GUS 2013, 89), parents and grandparents account but for a small percentage of those influencing the choice of a school by young people, they still occupy a high, second place in the ranking, right after the students themselves. Children point to themselves as the main decision-makers (85,67 % percentage points – "myself" and 9.19 % percentage points – "parents, grandparents"). In most cases, parents have more or less clearly formulated views as regards the professional future of their children, but they involve them in the decision-making process in order to let them share responsibility for the choice (Łukasiewicz-Wieleba and Baum 2013, 91). Some students feel apprehensive about making their own decision regarding the choice of a secondary school because they perceive this choice as final and irrevocable and they are therefore willing to shift the responsibility for it to other people, e.g. parents (Pisula 2009, 86-87).

Important factors influencing the choice of a profession correlated with parents include: the level of parents' or older siblings' education, professional family traditions, parents' social position aspirations and the level of their knowledge about the profession proposed to the child as well as about the ways of gaining it, parents' attitude towards education and various types of professional activity, their

level of propriety, financial situation, and consideration of the child's health and physical development (Duda and Kukla 2012, 34).

When choosing a secondary school and the field of education, primary school students together with their parents can use professional help provided by a career counsellor employed at a primary school or in a psychological and pedagogical counselling centre. This position is held by people who have appropriate formal qualifications as well as a number of desirable personal characteristics (openness, kindness, empathy, communication skills, patience) conducive to establishing a positive relationship with both students and their parents, and who are able to recognize children's capabilities in order to work out an individual action plan (Olszewska-Gniadek 2021, 225, 231-232; Rozporządzenie 2019). Young people aged 15 to 24 may experience profession-related problems due to: "getting to know themselves, choosing education paths, choosing a profession, improving qualifications, looking for a job, unemployment, choosing a life partner" (Wojtasik 2011, 50). A career counsellor who tailors educational choices to children's strengths can ensure that children will pursue education in fields consistent with their capabilities (Chilewa and Osaki 2022, 180). However, as hardly anyone may know a child better than parents, it is parents who are considered the best advisors (Wojtasik 2011, 107), since they have the strongest influence on the choice of educational and professional paths by young people (Hurlock 1965, 269-270). Parents participating in the decision-making process regarding the choice of a secondary school and profession can be classified in three categories. The first group, i.e., directive parents, are convinced of the correctness of their decision and thus impose it on the child; the second group, i.e., parents who enter into a dialogue with their children and treat them as independent and creative individuals capable of taking control of their own destiny, they are ready, if necessary, to provide their children with help; the third group, i.e., liberal parents who leave their children freedom of action. Two subgroups can be distinguished in this group, namely, passive parents, i.e., those who lack knowledge about educational offers or fields of further education, and supportive parents, i.e., those who believe that children can cope on their own and that it is enough to just stimulate them to action and listen carefully to their views and opinions and who with their attitude give their children a sense of security and trust in their own strengths. Most parents (98%) take a very serious approach to the choice of a secondary school and profession being aware of the consequences it will have for their children's further personal and professional life, as well as of the fact that it will determine their children's future well-being (Wojtasik 2011, 107-108).

1. Results of own research

The article presents selected results of the author's own research carried out from January to June, 2023[1]. The qualitative study was based on the interview method,

where the research technique consisted in an individual, standard, categorized interview, and the research tool was a self-developed Interview Questionnaire.

The research was carried out in three technical secondary schools in Warsaw, i.e. Technikum Mechatroniczne nr 1, Zespół Szkół Licealnych i Technicznych nr 1 (Mechatronics Technical Secondary School No. 1 in the Secondary and Technical School Complex No. 1), Technikum nr 7, Zespół Szkół im. inż. Stanisława Wysockiego d. „Kolejówka" (Technical Secondary School No. 7 in the Stanisław Wysocki Secondary and Technical School Complex formerly "Kolejówka") and Technikum nr 8 im. Jana Karskiego, Zespół Szkół nr 42 (Jan Karski Technical Secondary School No. 8, School Complex No. 42). The director of the fourth selected school refused to take part in the research.

The research covered 53 parents of first-grade students pursuing education in the following professions: rail transport electrical engineering technician, electrical technician, IT technician, logistics technician, mechatronics technician, programming technician, tourism organization technician, railway transport technician and renewable energy equipment and systems technician. According to the forecast for the demand for employees with vocational education on both national and provincial labour market announced by the Minister of Education and Science (Monitor Polski 2023), the above-listed vocational qualifications are of particular importance for the development of the country, and it is envisaged that they will be in great demand in future. However, research results should not be generalized to the entire population. It is only a fragmentary view limited to the group subjected to the research. The analysis of the research material was carried out using the MAXQDA 2022 program. The interviews were given consecutive numbers from R1 to R53.

The aim of own research was to identify the difficulties as well as the accompanying circumstances related to the choice of a secondary school in the opinion of parents of first-grade students at technical secondary schools. The subject of the research were parents' experiences regarding the choice of a secondary school by young people.

Reflections on the difficulties prompted the author to formulate the following main problem: What difficulties are related with the choice of a secondary school by young people in the opinion of parents? The following detailed questions were formulated in connection with the main problem:

1. How many students (do not) experience difficulties in choosing a secondary school?

2. What type of difficulties are related to choosing a secondary school?

3. What circumstances accompany students when choosing a secondary school?

4. What is the attitude of parents towards their children's choice of a secondary school?

Using a tool supporting the analysis of qualitative data, i.e., the MAXQDA 2022 program, the focus was on the difficulty category, for which a total of 163 interview fragments were coded. The MAXQDA program enabled a detailed analysis of the

research material, as well as selection of statements that were precisely quoted in the article. The article presents the most characteristic statements of the respondents.

The majority of parents included women (87%). Most interviewees were born in the 1970s (62%), fewer in the 1980s (36%), and the fewest number in the 1960s (2%). Most of them have higher education (83%), decidedly fewer have only secondary education (13%), in barely a few cases only vocational and primary education (2% each). The largest groups include parents with two (53%) and three children (20%). 13% of parents have one child. Even fewer interviewees have four, five or six children (6%, 6%, 2% respectively). Children attending the first year of a technical secondary school are in most cases first in the order of birth (60%). Fewer children were born second (36%) and the fewest were born third (4%). Most interviewees are inhabitants of Warsaw (53%), although the number of those living outside Warsaw is only slightly lower (47%).

The category of difficulty allowed to select a group of interviewees who either experienced or did not experience problems in choosing (by their children) an educational and professional path. Moreover, this category allowed to understand the nature of experienced difficulties as well as to define the circumstances in which the decision-making process took place.

Most interviewees stated that their children did not experience any difficulties in choosing a secondary school (64%). Based on 49 fragments of interviews, it can be concluded that difficulties were avoided due to the fact that children had their own interests and a chosen school and profession, which took place in the early years of their childhood or in the last years of primary school. Sample interview fragments: "We knew that it was to be a technical one [secondary school – author's note]" [R14]; "He said he was interested in circuits, electricity" [R19]; "In the 6th grade, my son planned which school he wanted to go to, so we didn't have to think too much about it" [R38]; "My son was very specific about what he wanted to do next and what school he wanted to go to" [R50]; "He knew since the 7th grade. He wanted to go to an IT technical secondary school. It's just the question of where he will be accepted" [R50]; "From the very beginning he was determined which school he wanted to go to [from early childhood – author's note]" [31]. One of the interviewees emphasized that even though the child had a specific educational plan, an important criterion was meeting the condition of the required GPA: "He wanted to go to a railway school. We discussed what grade average would be needed. My son had good grades. It worked" [R21]. Another parent commented in a similar tone: "He got accepted to school on the first try" [R42].

As one of the parents noted, his child did not experience difficulties in choosing a secondary school because he was familiar with educational offers: "There is a lot of information everywhere, I would say I didn't [R18]."

Most parents actively support their children in their choice of a school and adopt an attitude which proves that they feel confident in this role and are able to help their child choose a school (Ericson 2017, 497). Parents involved in the decision-making process regarding their children's choice of a school collect

information about schools from various sources, most often school fairs, social networks, and school visits, which play a leading role here (Stewart et al. 2009, 15; cf. West et al. 1995, 33, 37). Among the most important factors in parents' search for information about secondary schools is the desire to obtain information about the school's reputation, location, and teaching achievements (West et al. 1995, 36).

Some interviewees referred to their attitude towards their children's choice of a secondary school. Some of them did not participate in the decision-making process: "No, because it was my child who chose" [R15]; "We chose the school for our elder daughter, which proved to be a big mistake. From then on, we did not interfere" [R16]; "We had no difficulties because our child chose a school on his own" [R32]. They left the choice of a secondary school to their child, who was fully responsible for the decision. Perhaps this argument was used by parents who were not involved in choosing a school or a profession. As Rose and Milton Friedman note, parents who are not involved in choosing a school are in the minority, "some parents are not interested in their children's learning nor in their ability or willingness to make a rational choice of a school. However, they are in the minority (Friedman and Friedman 1980, 160, West et al. 1995, 36). People bearing the greatest responsibility for the decision about choosing a secondary school for children included the mother (46%), both parents (20%), both parents and the child (11%), the father (7%), the child (7%), the mother and the child (4%), other people (4%) (West et al. 1995, 30).

There was a single statement made on the part of the interviewees that this stage of life may be free from tensions and unpleasant experiences or that it could even be a positive experience: "It was pleasant for me to observe my child" [R37].

This stage, however, was not pleasant for everyone, as evidenced by 7 coded interview fragments. Respondents whose children experienced difficulties in choosing a secondary school even estimated the degree of those difficulties: "Enormous" [R2]; "There were huge difficulties" [R19]. Students did not have to face those difficulties on their own, as they experienced them together with their parents: "Choosing a secondary school is a big difficulty for both parents and children" [R40].

We learn about the types of difficulties that the interviewees and their children encountered from 68 interview fragments. Parents express a conviction that one of the difficulties was lack of defined interests in children, e.g.: "My son has no specific interests and he basically didn't know where he wanted to go" [R1]; "My son has very limited interests" [R13]; My child didn't know what he wanted to do" [R17]; "Choosing a profession was the biggest difficulty [R13]."

Others pointed to the lack of knowledge about secondary schools, fields of study and recruitment rules, or lack of skills in using the electronic recruitment system: "Navigating this system was not easy" [R28]; "I'm not from Warsaw, so this choice was difficult for me, too. No orientation, no knowledge; I wasn't able to advise" [R1]; "At that time, we didn't know anything about the technical secondary school" [R6]; "We didn't know, and neither did our child which school to choose" [R14]; "He decided on his own that he wanted to go to a technical secondary school, but he didn't know which one to choose" [R19]. Not all parents or children have reliable and complete

knowledge about educational offers, but experts (e.g. career counsellors) could develop an appropriate database of educational offers and make it available to all interested parties, which would facilitate the choice of a school (Buckley and Schneider 2003, 121-145). One respondent expressed doubts regarding the type of school: "We had difficulties deciding whether our son should choose a general secondary school or a technical secondary school" [R34]. In addition, the respondent pointed to the fact that primary schools failed to disseminate information about secondary schools, their profiles and professions: "There were no profiles of technical secondary schools discussed at our school" [R28]. Pursuant to the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of February 12, 2019 on career counselling (Rozporządzenie 2019, point 1), career counsellors are obliged to coordinate information and counselling activities carried out by the school, including collecting, updating and providing educational and professional information appropriate for a given level of education, as well as to conduct systematic assessment of students' needs as regards activities related to the implementation of career counselling and related services. The way students perceive the help of career counsellors in choosing a secondary school and profession is presented in the publication "Pomoc doradcy zawodowego uczniom w wyborze szkoły ponadpodstawowej oraz zawodu poszukiwanego na rynku pracy" (Career counsellor's help to students in choosing a secondary school and a profession sought on the labour market") (Pardej 2024, 89-106).

In the interviewees' statements, there was also a thread regarding the circumstances of the problems they described related to choosing a school, e.g. children's immaturity, health problems, educational offer, requirements of a given school and a large number of candidates for the selected school. Students of this age tend to change their minds: "Children at this age change their mind all the time" [R2]; "First he wanted to go to a sports school, then he thought that it might be better to go to a general secondary school" [R2]. They may be indecisive: "She couldn't make up her mind" [R44]. They may also be emotionally immature to make decisions: "Emotional immaturity. He started school a year earlier" [R25]. The conducted analysis of the collected material shows that children's health and personality problems created additional difficulties in choosing a field of education: "My child was diagnosed with nystagmus during medical examination, and with a visual defect, he was not admitted to the railway technical secondary school, and we had to change his field of study to another one" [R11]; "My son has a short-lived enthusiasm. He has linguistic, manual, technical and sports talents" [R13]; "He wanted to become a pilot, but he was disqualified due to health issues" [R23]. There was also a case when a child, having decided which profession he wanted to learn, could not find it among the offers of technical schools: "He wanted to become a carpenter, but there was no such a technical secondary school" [R19]. High requirements for school candidates (high GPA) and a limited number of places in schools were other sources of difficulties: "Admission requirements were raised" [R13]; "There is only one such school in Warsaw, the other one is in Siedlce" [R21]; "Too many children to get to the school" [R22]; "We first chose IT in Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, but he didn't qualify" [R22]; "He preferred to study renewable energy, but

he wasn't accepted because he didn't score enough points" [R25]; "There was a double cohort. Ukrainian children arrived, there was a problem with places" [R43]; "He wasn't accepted during the first recruitment, not because of the points, but due to the lack of places" [R43]; "My son made the choice, but the problem was to meet a number of requirements" [R48]; "We applied for a logistics one at first and we weren't accepted" [R5]; "He wanted to study rail transport, but there was a problem, because he was accepted for a different field, logistics. He wanted to become a conductor" [R11]; "He didn't get into a general secondary school" [R13]; "They wanted to go to Wiśniowa, but they didn't score high enough and they didn't qualify" [R29]. The choice of a given school is often determined by its high quality of teaching, commonly identified with high scores achieved by children in school tests, but also by subjects/facilities or the atmosphere at a given school, etc. (Gross and Denice 2017, 12-16; West et al. 1995, 31). The choice of a secondary school sometimes implies the need to make certain concessions. Reasons behind resignation from applying for admission to a given school include high tuition fees, lack of places at a given school, admission criteria (religious denomination), too long commuting time to school (West et al. 1995, 31).

In their statements, parents also expressed lack of acceptance for their children's choices issuing from the fact that educational and professional plans for their children did not coincide with those of the children themselves: "My son had some ideas regarding a secondary school and he was in denial that it might not be the best choice" [R4]; "He accepted no arguments that there might be better options" [R4]; "He was adamant that he didn't want to go to a general secondary school, but now he wants to be transferred to a general secondary school" [R6]; "I told him that maybe he should go to a culinary technical secondary school. He said he liked it, but he didn't want to go there" [R14]; "I wanted my son to follow in my footsteps and become a dentist, but he was interested in engines and soldering" [R35], "The difficulty was that my son wanted to go to a general secondary school [and not to a technical secondary school, as his parents wanted – author's note]" [R43]; "Both my husband and I graduated from a general secondary school and so did our daughter, but he had friends at a technical secondary school [the child wanted to study at a technical secondary school, while his parents wanted him to study at a general secondary school – author's note]" [R6]. This is confirmed by the research conducted by Amy Gutmann (2003, 126-148), according to which some parents have their own vision of a "good life" for their children, which results in their choosing a school for them regardless of either the children's or the society's needs.

Sometimes it was difficult for parents to help their children choose a secondary school or a field of study when they knew that their children were not interested either in learning or in a particular profession: "My son does not particularly like studying" [R18]; "I have a gifted child, but he hates writing and learning. However, he has very good manual skills" [R19].

Parents, moreover, provided various motivations for choosing a secondary school by their children: "My sons chose this technical secondary school because of good transport connections" [R29]; "My son was looking for a school on his

own. He wanted to find a school where he could learn a specific profession that would be marketable and would provide him with solid skills" [R52]. According to their beliefs, the reasons behind choosing a school were location and a possibility to acquire the skills needed to perform a given profession. One of the parents did not really know the motivation behind: "He wanted to study mechatronics. I don't know if he came up with it himself or heard it from his friends" [R39].

Other statements refer to the consequences of the choices made (6 interview fragments): "Everyone, as I later realized, said it was a cool field of study" [R1]; "We came to the conclusion that renewable energy is a good profession" [R6]; "He is not good at physics, mathematics, or chemistry, so the choice of school was made in line with his capabilities. And now there aren't many of these subjects, and he is coping well with professional subjects. So, I think we've solved this problem quite well" [R10]; "I tried to help as much as possible and it probably went well as he doesn't complain" [R10]; "He was accepted to a technical secondary school and he is happy now" [R13], "My son is relaxed now, and we he is coping very well" [R40].

2. Final reflections

Most parents (64%) stated that their children did not experience any difficulties in choosing a secondary school. Such difficulties do not occur when:

a) children have their own interests (thanks to which the decision regarding the choice of a school and a field of study had been made much before the beginning of recruitment to secondary schools)

b) children obtained the required number of points during recruitment to the selected secondary school (they met the so-called point thresholds, i.e. obtained appropriate results in the eighth-grade exam, had the required GPA in the primary school leaving certificate).

It is worth mentioning that not all parents participated in the decision-making process and then, total responsibility for making the decision rested with children (9%).

Respondents whose children experienced difficulties in choosing a secondary school were in the minority (36%). We can distinguish the following types of difficulties associated with the choice of a secondary school:

1) factors inherent in the student:

a) lack of interests;

b) frequent change of decision;

c) health problems;

2) external factors:

a) insufficient knowledge of parents and their children about the educational offers of secondary schools;

b) high requirements of a given school;

c) a large number of candidates for the selected school and for the selected field of study;

d) considerable distance from the school to the place of residence.

At the time when the surveyed parents and their children were faced with choosing a secondary school, serious phenomena occurred in the education system:

a) secondary schools were applied for by young people from the so-called double cohort (Sewastianowicz 2022);

b) state policy and providing assistance to citizens of Ukraine which led to increasing the number of students applying for admission to secondary schools (Ustawa 2022);

Some parents had their own plans as regards their children's education and career that did not coincide with the choices made by their children. Parents also complained that it was difficult to choose a secondary school or a field of study when their children were reluctant to study.

The prevailing belief among the respondents is that the decision led to the right choice because their children would be able to acquire professional qualifications allowing them to perform a specific profession and this belief brings them satisfaction.

Conclusion

Each individual who has to choose a secondary school should be aware of the advantages offered by education in today's demanding and competitive world. Well-thought-out, accurate decisions regarding the choice of a school, and especially a technical secondary school, will ultimately translate into the formation of an innovative generation equipped with specific competencies.

Conducting research on the choice of a secondary school – a technical secondary school is extremely important because it contributes to the identification of areas requiring specific changes, e.g. dissemination of knowledge regarding educational offers and recruitment rules for secondary schools among parents, expanding practical knowledge about professions among career counsellors, so that they can prepare students to make an informed choice of a secondary school in accordance with their capabilities.

Ultimately, their implementation will ensure a better adjustment of a secondary school – a technical secondary school to each student and prevent students' educational failures. This research will help to understand students' first career choices.

Parents should actively participate in the decision-making process regarding their children's choice of a secondary school – a technical secondary school by observing their children and making them aware (in daily conversations) of the various options for further education as well as of the consequences of the decisions made. Parents should take into account and respect their children's interests, capabilities and health condition, at the same time, they should avoid being guided only by their own aspirations and expectations if those differ from children's preferences. Parents should take time before the final decision is made to gain knowledge that will help their children choose a secondary school – a technical secondary school by establishing intensive cooperation with a career counsellor.

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SEMINARE

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Foster Care in the Light Charter of the Rights of the Family and Other Selected Documents: Polish Initiatives and Solutions

Piecza zastępcza w świetle Karty Praw Rodziny i innych wybranych dokumentów: polskie inicjatywy i rozwiązania

Abstract: There is a constant need to provide children with foster care in its various forms, both family and institutional. Situations where natural parents do not want or cannot take care of their children show an increasing trend. The issue of foster care should be known to society and be the subject of research exploration. The following article is part of the necessary and ongoing discourse on foster care. The main considerations are the assumptions regarding foster care included in the Charter of Family Rights. The entities and principles of foster care were presented in a synthetic way, and the assumptions regarding foster care found in other legal documents, both international and Polish, were described in more detail in the context of the postulate expressed in the Charter of Family Rights, which is the adoption of appropriate solutions regarding foster care and respect for natural rights of parents. In preparing the article, the method of analysing selected documents in the field of law and literature on the subject was used, as well as the method of content synthesis and the historical method.

Keywords: foster care, Charter of Family Rights, child, family

Abstrakt: Nieustannie zachodzi konieczność otaczania dzieci pieczą zastępczą w różnych jej formach, rodzinnych i instytucjonalnych. Sytuacje, gdy rodzice naturalni nie chcą lub nie mogą sprawować pieczy nad swoimi dziećmi, wykazują tendencję wzrostową. Problematyka pieczy zastępczej powinna być znana społeczeństwu i być przedmiotem eksploracji badawczych. Niniejszy artykuł wpisuje się w potrzebny i podejmowany dyskurs o pieczy zastępczej. Główną osią rozważań są założenia w zakresie pieczy zastępczej ujęte w Karcie Praw Rodziny. W syntetyczny sposób przedstawione zostały podmioty i zasady pieczy zastępczej, a szerzej opisane założenia w zakresie pieczy zastępczej znajdujące się w innych dokumentach prawnych tak międzynarodowych, jak i polskich, w kontekście postulatu wyrażonego w Karcie Praw Rodziny, jakim jest przyjęcie odpowiednich rozwiązań odnośnie do pieczy zastępczej oraz poszanowania praw naturalnych rodziców. W przygotowaniu artykułu zastosowana została metoda analizy wybranych dokumentów z zakresu prawa oraz literatury przedmiotu, jak również metoda syntezy treści oraz metoda historyczna.

Słowa kluczowe: piecza zastępcza, Karta Praw Rodziny, dziecko, rodzina

Introduction

On October 22, 1983, the Holy See announced the Charter of Family Rights. As written in the introduction to it, it was created at the request expressed by the Synod of Bishops, which took place in Rome in 1980 and was devoted to the tasks of the Christian family in the modern world (Charter of the Rights of the Family, 1983, Preamble). His Holiness Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation Familaris consortio took up the wish of the Synod and obliged the Holy See to develop a Charter of the Rights of the Family so that it could be submitted to interested circles and authorities.

The essence of the rights formulated in the Charter of Family Rights is perfectly explained by Henryk Skorowski. In his opinion, they are aftermath and a simple consequence of a specific vision of man and family. This document draws attention to the fact that every human being, from the moment of conception, is a person characterised by self-possession, belonging to oneself, self-governing, and non-transferable responsibility for oneself. The Charter of Family Rights emphasises that each human as a person has a unique value, the justification of which is not only natural, but also supernatural. Through the prism of such a vision of man, this document recalls the fundamental theses regarding the family as a unique community of people. These are theses stating that the family is a natural, basic, indispensable and necessary community for the emergence of a new human being, as well as a necessary and indispensable community in the overall integral development of a person and an environment for the person to realise his or her human subjectivity. In this perspective of the Charter of Family Rights, family is not only a biological, psychological, ethnological and cultural reality, but also a social, ethical and religious one. As such, it is also, on the one hand, a fundamental value of the human person and, on the other hand, a fundamental value of every community. And this is the first element of its importance, and it is to remind and thus make all those responsible for the shape of social life aware of the indisputable value of the family, thanks to which a person lives his or her life to the fullest and the community becomes a community that is dynamic in its existence. The second dimension of the meaning of the Charter of Family Rights should be seen in the content of the rights formulated therein. However, the full content of these rights is clear only on the basis that the family is not only the basic social unit that must be protected, but that real social life can be meaningfully built only based on the family. This thesis affects the content of the rights contained in this document and their specific character (Skorowski 1995, 71-72).

The Charter of Family Rights contains an extensive catalogue of rights of the family that relate to various aspects of life and development of both the entire family community and its individual members. It is thus an expression of the Catholic Church's commitment to protecting the dignity and well-being of the family, which were among the priorities of the pontificate of St. John Paul II. The significance of its publication by the Holy See can be considered in various aspects,

in particular theological, pastoral, philosophical, legal, political, sociological and as an international event. Studies on the content of the Charter of Family Rights have led to the conclusion that this document is fully relevant nowadays, in some aspects perhaps more relevant than at the time of its publication (Zamelski 2015, 271, 289).

Zbigniew Babicki also draws attention to the validity of the Charter of Family Rights, pointing out that despite the years since its publication, it has not lost its relevance. On the contrary, all the indications contained therein retain their importance and the strength of argumentation of the problems raised. Firstly, it clearly defines the identity and essence of the family as the environment for the child's development. Secondly, it is an extremely important appeal and encouragement addressed to governments, international organisations responsible for creating pro-family policies and appropriate programs to strengthen their commitment to defend family rights and strengthen as well as support the institution of the family (Babicki 2021, 148).

The Charter of Family Rights has universal and timeless standing. Therefore, it is worth returning to it, reminding about its importance, referring to it in various general and specific aspects regarding the family. The aim of this study is to analyse its indication regarding care for children deprived of the care of their natural parents by providing them with foster care, as well as finding in other official legal documents, both international and Polish, to what extent they meet the demand expressed in the Charter of Family Rights to adopt appropriate solutions. regarding foster care and respect for the rights of biological parents. The following research problem was adopted: What dispositions regarding foster care are included in the Charter of Family Rights and how consistent are the solutions adopted in Polish and international legal documents with these? The ongoing scientific discourse is important because more and more children are raised outside their natural families, when biological parents do not want or cannot take care of their children. Then we consider their social or natural orphanhood, partial or total, which results in the need to provide the children with foster care in various forms, from family to institutional. The situation is illustrated by the latest statistical data, which show that at the end of 2022, there were 72.8 thousand people in foster care, children deprived completely or partially of the care of their natural family, including 56.2 thousand in family care and 16.6 thousand in institutional care. Compared to 2021, the number of children in foster care increased by 0.7% (Foster care in 2022). At the end of 2023, there were 75.3 thousand minors in foster care, including 58.2 thousand in family care and 17.1 thousand in institutional care. Compared to 2022, the number of children in foster care increased by 3.5% (Foster care in 2023). The number of children requiring foster care is increasing, and this places demands on the system to provide room for children in need of care and its appropriate quality, in particular adapting it to the needs of children, but also organising it in accordance with the applicable rules.

The implementation of the adopted goal and research problem required the use of appropriate methods, namely the method of analysis of selected documents in the field of law and literature on the subject, as well as the method of content synthesis and the historical method. Analysis, according to Stanisław Krawczyk, is

"a thought process consisting in breaking down a certain whole into its component parts and considering each of them separately." Synthesis, according to the same author, is "combining factors, elements, parts, features and relationships from the structure of the problem isolated by analysis. Synthesis, using such mental operations as comparison, abstraction and generalisation, aims to detect significant properties and relationships in the new whole that the component parts did not have" (Krawczyk 2016, 74). According to Elżbieta Osewska, "a comprehensive presentation of the issue requires the use of appropriate methods: the method of critical analysis and synthesis. The method of critical analysis of source materials will allow for the review of legal documents and selected studies, while the synthesis method will enable the collection and systematic ordering of scattered content regarding the issue being discussed" (Osewska 2020, 25). The historical method allowed to show the development of legislation in the field of foster care.

1. The concept, entities and principles of foster care

The very term "foster care" implies that this care is only "substitute" in the sense that it replaces the natural family, which is considered the best care and upbringing environment for a child, even though some families actually do not have such an attribute, because they neglect children, harm them, abandon them, or for other reasons want or need to give up custody of children. This replacement may last for a shorter or longer time, even until the child reaches the age of majority, which often occurs, but this cannot invalidate the assumption of only a substitute form of care.

This should be related to the "right to be raised in a family", which should be understood as the child's right to be raised in it, and at the same time, the parents' right to the child to be raised in a natural family. It is guaranteed by legal provisions that do not, because they cannot have, decisive significance. It is necessary to shape the way of thinking about upbringing in the family as a right of parents, who should not deprive themselves of it, much less their children. Any deviation from this, apart from situations over which the parents had no influence, such as their illness or death, should be treated as a failure of parents and society, where the former were unable or unwilling to raise their children, and society failed to protect them from this or was unable to support them in this task (Krajewska 2020a, 141,152,163).

When a natural family is lacking or does not fulfil its functions and does not support the proper development of the child, and is even a source of negative and often traumatic experiences, substitute care and educational environments appear which try to compensate children for the lack of their own and properly functioning family (Błasiak 1999, 143-144). These are primarily foster families, related, non-professional and professional. Professional foster families are ordinary professional foster families, professional foster families serving as family emergency services, and specialised foster families. In addition, there are family orphanages which, together with foster families, co-create family foster care. The entities of institutional foster care include socialisation, intervention, specialist-

therapeutic and family care and educational facilities, as well as regional care and therapeutic facilities and pre-adoption intervention centres.

They all create a complex subjective mesh of foster care, differing in details in terms of competences, which should be distinguished from adoption. This involves accepting the child into the adoptive family permanently and breaking off formal relations with the natural parents. It is therefore a more advanced form of replacing the natural family and providing the child with care and upbringing compared to foster care.

Adoption means establishing a legal family relationship between adopters and the adopted person, similar to the relationship between parents and natural children, but it should be emphasised that this relationship is similar, but not the same, when it comes to its details and different types of adoption (Smyczyński 2009, 251). However, adoption is tantamount to accepting the child into the family and granting it all rights and obligations (Gołąbek 1999a, 3).

Foster care is based on several extremely important principles. At this point, due to the limited scope of the study, they can only be indicated by referring to a separate study devoted to them. These are the principles of: the good of the child and family covered by foster care, subsidiarity of foster care, its temporary nature, priority of family foster care over institutional care, application of foster care based on a court decision, hearing of a child placed in foster care, placing a child in foster care foster care as close as possible to his or her current place of residence, the right of a child in foster care to contact with natural parents and other close relatives, not separating siblings in foster care, not separating a minor mother in foster care and her child (Krajewska 2020b, 12-24). The gravity of each of them for the functioning of the foster care system is different in the sense that the principles indicated first are priority, and those listed later complete their entire roster. This is how they should be perceived in the context of the Charter of Family Rights and other documents important for foster care.

2. The assumptions of the charter of family rights regarding foster care

Article 4 point f of the Charter of Family Rights states that "orphans and children without parents or guardians should be provided with special care by society. In matters relating to adoption or the acceptance of children for upbringing by another family, the state should introduce appropriate legal acts that will make it easier for families able to accept children in need of care, permanently or temporarily, while taking into account the natural rights of parents."

The Charter of Family Rights treats orphanhood and the situation of parental deprivation separately, although in the literature on the subject they are understood to be the same. Namely, according to Wincenty Okoń, orphanhood is a state in which a child is deprived of parents. When both parents are deceased, the child is an orphan, and when one is, a half-orphan. A distinction is made between natural

orphanhood as a result of the death of parents and social orphanhood, which involves depriving a child of a normal family environment as a result of the breakdown of the family or its dysfunction (Okoń 2004, 369). Małgorzata Kupisiewicz puts it in a similar way, namely that orphanhood is a condition in which a child is permanently or temporarily deprived of the opportunity to grow up in a biological family due to the lack of appropriate care and educational conditions. A distinction is made between natural orphanhood caused by the death of parents and social orphanhood, when parents, for various reasons, do not want (e.g. abandoning a child), are unable (e.g. deviant way of life) or cannot (e.g. long stay in hospital or emigration) fulfil parental duties (Kupisiewicz 2014, 325). Wiesława Gołąbek's characterisation of orphanhood also fits into this understanding. The author indicates that orphanhood is the situation of a child who has lost its parents due to death, abandonment or deprivation of parental rights by court decision. A natural orphan is a child whose parents have died, and a half-orphan is one who has only one parent. In the legal sense, an orphan is also a child whose parents have been legally deprived of parental authority (Gołąbek 1999b, 422). It seems that when the Charter of Family Rights mentions orphanhood, it refers to natural orphanhood, and when it refers to the situation of parental deprivation, it refers to social orphanhood. In fact, however, there is no difference in this respect as to the need for particular care for children. This care should be special, i.e. greater than the standard care that all children should receive. This is understandable and necessary because children deprived of the care of their natural parents are unguided and in need compensation regarding various emotional, living and other needs.

The Charter of Family Rights expects such care from society. This can be understood as meaning that at various levels of social organisation, people should provide support to children deprived of the care of their natural parents. This role should be assigned to local communities, but in Poland, poviats have the main competences in this respect. Other communities, including religious ones, and non-governmental organisations also have an important role to play in this area. However, in general, and in the context of the Charter of Family Rights, the activity of the state must be of particular importance in this perspective, as it should introduce appropriate legal regulations to make it easier for families able to accept children in need of care, permanently or temporarily, and at the same time, taking into account the natural rights of parents. The Charter of Family Rights therefore requires, on the one hand, the adoption of solutions that will encourage and facilitate taking up foster care, which in Poland should focus on its family forms, i.e. foster families and family orphanages, and on the other hand, on the rights of natural parents being respected. As for the latter, what is most important is the temporary nature of foster care, which gives prospects for the child's return to the natural family when it regains the ability to care for them, as well as the right of natural parents to have contact with the child in foster care, if said contact does not conflict with the child's welfare or threaten it, or placing the child in foster care as close as possible to his or her current residence, also facilitating contacts with natural parents.

It is worth emphasising that the Charter of Family Rights distinguishes "adoption" from "adoption for upbringing." The latter should be identified with foster care, which, unlike permanent adoption, is supposed to be temporary. The indication of this document is that the solutions adopted at the state level make it easier for people willing to adopt and take on the burden of being a foster parent. Facilitation means the shape of the regulations in question in such a way that, taking into account the best interests of the child, they do not require from future foster parents who are foster families and run family children's homes, as well as from persons employed in institutional foster care entities, anything that is not necessary to ensure an appropriate standard of this care. It must also be about appropriate material incentives to undertake such responsible tasks, because good hearts alone are not enough to support themselves and the children entrusted to the care of such individuals, but also appropriate financial resources for ongoing maintenance and in the form of decent remuneration.

In accordance with the Charter of Family Rights, legal regulations regarding foster care should take into account the rights of natural parents. This must be related to the provisions of Article 5 of this document, according to which "parents, because they have given life to children, have the original, inalienable right and priority to raise their offspring and therefore must be recognised as their first and main educators." This is because the natural family is the first, natural environment, characterised by the bonds between parents and children, bonds that cannot be built elsewhere. These bonds are why the family is called a community. It is ahead of other environments, and at the same time, due to the fact that it is a specific social system, it is a school preparing for life in society (Stala 2001, 199). Foster care is therefore of a subsidiary nature when natural parents cannot or do not want to enjoy caring for their children, accompany them in their development, form them in accordance with their good, growing themselves thanks to this role. Care and upbringing in the family is a two-sided gift of humanity, because thanks to parents, children can understand who they are and why they live, thanks to them they can learn about their dignity and identity, as well as learn responsibility for themselves and others. However, thanks to children, parents learn about humanity, learn sensitivity, sacrifice and are enriched with new experiences (Olearczyk 2007, 106-107). If, for any reason, all this cannot be realised in the natural family, it must be replaced by foster care providers or an adoptive family, respecting the special and priority role of the former.

Therefore, we must agree with Agnieszka Regulska that among the purposes of organising foster care for a child by state authorities, the need to ensure comprehensive protection of the child's rights and well-being, not only as an independent subject of rights, but also of the child as an integral part of the natural family, becomes particularly important. Family and child care, as an element of state social policy, aims to emphasise the autonomy of the family and the primacy of parents in raising children, as well as the right of the child and family to help and support from public institutions. A child has the right to care and upbringing in foster care, but first of all he has the right to be raised in his natural family.

Therefore, foster care is secondary in nature in relation to the child's right to be raised in a natural family. This means that all forms of substitute care for a child have an auxiliary or subsidiary character in relation to the natural and primary care of biological parents (Regulska 2022, 137-138).

3. Foster care in the convention on the rights of the child

On November 20, 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Journal of Laws of 1991, Issue 120, Item 526). It is referred to as the international constitution of children's rights, and its main assumption is that the family is the basic educational environment ensuring the proper and comprehensive development of children and satisfying their fundamental needs: love, security and belonging (Janus 2006, 81). This corresponds to the standard of the Charter of Family Rights, even though these documents are completely independent of each other.

Pursuant to Article 20 Section 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, "a child who is temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment or who, for his or her best interests, is unable to remain in that environment, shall have the right to special protection and assistance from the state." Paragraph 2 of this article provides that "States Parties shall, in accordance with their domestic law, provide alternative care for such a child." His mouth 3 specifies that "this type of care may include, inter alia, placement in a foster family, kafala in Islamic law, adoption or, when necessary, placement in an appropriate institution established for the care of children. When selecting appropriate solutions, appropriate consideration should be given to guidelines for maintaining continuity in the child's upbringing and his or her ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic identity." This indication is similar in essence to that provided for in the Charter of Family Rights, being slightly more extensive when it comes to the continuity of the child's upbringing, which is so important for the child's well-being.

The regulations of this international document regarding foster care go even beyond the standard expected by the Charter of Family Rights in the sense that it only requires individual countries to adopt appropriate legal regulations. However, the international community and its institutional entities are also interested in their creation, which is also reflected in the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which does not forget about children deprived of the care of their natural parents.

4. Guarantess regarding foster care in the constitution of the republic of Poland

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997 (Journal of Laws of 1997, Issue 78, Item 483, with later amendments) in Article 72, Paragraph 1 states that "The Republic of Poland shall ensure the protection of children's rights.

Everyone has the right to demand that public authorities protect children against violence, cruelty, exploitation and demoralisation." Paragraph 2 of this article specifies that "a child deprived of parental care has the right to the care and assistance of public authorities." The Constitution gives children a special status as a starting point for adopting the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and makes the obligation to ensure the protection of their rights a principle of state policy (Garlicki 2021, 116). Katarzyna Bieniek discusses the subject constitutional and convention regulations together (Bieniek 2019, 112), which confirms their common importance for foster care.

The protection of children's rights must be seen in a broader perspective of the protection of family rights, which is guaranteed by the constitution. In Article 18 it states that "marriage as a union of a woman and a man, family, motherhood and parenthood are under the protection and care of the Republic of Poland", and in Article 71, Section 1 that "the state takes into account the good of the family in its social and economic policy."

All this, to some extent, meets the standards guaranteed by the Charter of Family Rights, and during the preparation of the draft constitution, various existing legal documents of the international community were taken into account, including the Charter of Family Rights, which was taken into account in the course of work on the draft constitution. However, it does not express the personalistic concept of man on which the Charter of Family Rights is based, i.e. as a "persona" but as an "individual" (Stadniczeńko 2023, 288), which, however, would be an excessive expectation when the constitution as the most important legal act in the state it should unite and not divide all people, including believers and non-believers, and the former belonging to various churches and religious associations. However, when it comes to foster care standards, the provisions of our Constitution, although more modest than the provisions in this respect of the Charter of Family Rights, remain consistent with them. However, there is no provision in the constitutional norms at all, which would also be important for foster care, about the fundamental and primary role of the natural family in the care and upbringing of children, for which the Charter of Family Rights could be a good inspiration.

5. Foster care in the family and guardianship code and the act on family support and the foster care system

The Polish legislators have adopted appropriate legal regulations regarding foster care, thus meeting, perhaps unrelated to the call for it in the Charter of Family Rights, but it is good that it does, the standard expected by this document. The first legal act containing provisions in this regard is the Family and Guardianship Code of February 15, 1964 (Journal of Laws of 2023, Item 2809), jwhich in Articles 112^1-112^8 contains provisions regarding foster care. Due to the space limitations of this study, it would be impossible to attempt to characterise them in any detail. Suffice it to point out that they provide in particular that a child may be placed

in foster care only after the possibilities of supporting the natural family have been exhausted, on the basis that they are of primary importance in the care and upbringing of the child, and that such placement may continue until such time as conditions enabling the child's return to the natural family or placement in the adoptive family.

Family and Guardianship Code in Article 113, Section 1 also provides that parents and children have the right to maintain contact, which is independent of their parental authority. Further provisions of this legal act provide for the possibility of depriving natural parents of this right, but only if their contacts with the child threaten or violate the child's well-being.

Detailed regulations regarding foster care are included in the Act of June 9, 2011 on family support and the foster care system (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 177). It is an extensive legal act that contains over two hundred and fifty extensive articles, which makes it impossible to discuss them even briefly. Therefore, we need to focus on those that are particularly important from the perspective of meeting the standards of the Charter of Family Rights. Its Article 4 indicates, among others, that "when applying the Act, the subjectivity of the child and the family should be taken into account, as well as the child's right to be raised in the family, and, if necessary, to raise the child outside the family, to care and upbringing in family forms of foster care, if this is consistent with the well-being of the child, as well as the right to return to the family." This respects the only temporary nature of foster care and the primary role of the natural family in the care and upbringing of children. This is confirmed by Article 32, Section 1 of the Act, according to which "foster care is provided in the event of the parents' inability to provide care and upbringing to the child."

The relevant provisions of this act provide for appropriate support for people undertaking the task of foster care. These include, in particular, remuneration for them, financial resources for maintaining the children, but also cooperation with the organisers and coordinators of foster care, as well as the possibility of using the support of support families who can temporarily replace foster parents. It is a whole conglomeration of incentives and assistance, which also corresponds to the vision of foster care expressed in the Charter of Family Rights.

Foster care also becomes the subject of scientific discourse, which, through the so-called scientific evidence, i.e. data from public statistics or social research, can provide arguments for implementing political programs (Racław 2019, 64). The interpretations and evaluations of aspects of foster care are expressed in numerous publications. The results of these explorations may influence changes in the field of foster care, regarding its preferred forms, appropriate organisation, and those that best respond to the needs of children. Moreover, legal regulations are important, and this is the task of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, which is the appropriate and responsible state office for shaping foster care. Through a government program, the Ministry also supports counties in organising and creating family forms of foster care, securing appropriate funds for this purpose.

There is a constant need for educational impact in order to build or increase social awareness of the organisation of foster care, its ideas, and, consequently, for individuals and families to make decisions about active participation in foster care. In this area, the Ministry also undertakes activities, such as a competition for offers for a social campaign promoting foster parenthood.

The adopted legal regulations expressed in various documents, the demands included in the Charter of Family Rights regarding foster care, as well as social sensitivity to children's harm and concern for their well-being are certainly the premises for properly organised foster care. Considerations undertaken in research explorations and conclusions from the social debate on child care in general, and foster parenting in particular, are also important.

Summary

The Charter of Family Rights sets good standards for the family in general and foster care in particular. They are important because "the life of the family, as the first and basic social unit, is under the influence of increasingly greater social changes that have their sources in many factors of the dynamically changing everyday reality of the world. These changes have different impacts on family life, and not all families are able to cope with them, maintaining their identity and fulfilling their basic tasks" (Brzeziński 2014, 75-76). Unfortunately, there are often situations when the natural family must be replaced by foster care providers, although their role is only temporary and not permanent, and the rights of the natural parents are respected.

Saint John Paul II, in the Encyclical Evangelium Vitae, published on March 25, 1995, Issue 93, wrote that "a particularly eloquent sign of solidarity between families is the adoption or taking into care of children abandoned by their parents or living in difficult conditions. Regardless of the bonds of flesh and blood, true paternal and parental love is also ready to accept children from other families, giving them everything they need for life and full development" (John Paul II 1995, 93). It is good, therefore, that the current priority is to prevent children from being removed from their biological families, and, if necessary, to quickly reintegrate members of the nuclear family. Moreover, the process of de-institutionalisation of foster care is important, which focuses on the development of family forms of foster care and, consequently, on limiting the role of institutional forms in this space (Skalec-Ruczyńska 2023, 75,78). In practice, it works out differently, but practice requires good legal foundations and unquestionable guidelines, which also come from the Charter of Family Rights. Therefore, it is worth recalling it after forty years of its validity and exploring its individual provisions, including those relating to such an important area of family and social life as foster care.

The growing need to place children in foster care who cannot be cared for by their natural parents forces it to be evaluated and improved. Based on statements, reports or statistics, analyses are undertaken and a system image is created. This

picture shows that family forms prevail over institutional ones, which is consistent with the goal and assumption of care policy. Unfortunately, there are not many forms of family foster care, and there is a lack of foster families and family orphanages where children who have experienced a difficult childhood should be placed. Therefore, we should recommend continuous promotion of foster care, take care of its quality, but also talk about the difficulties occurring in modern families and the forms of their support in these situations, so that family problems can be solved quickly and effectively, and thus do not generate the need for foster care towards the children raised there.

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Gifted Students in the Light of the Statutes of the Commission for National Education

Uzdolniony uczeń w świetle ustaw Komisji Edukacji Narodowej

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Abstract: The idea to undertake the research presented in this article was sparked by the 250th anniversary of establishing, on October 14, 1773, the Commission for National Education, which was the first in Poland state office for education. The establishment of the Commission gave rise to great hopes for education of new generations of Poles, whose future activities were meant to help the country rise from the fall after the first partition of Poland carried out by Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1772. The research aimed to analyse the conditions created by the Commission for National Education for gifted children and youth in the educational system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The article discusses the research findings which provide an answer to the question about educational solutions introduced in the provisions of the Statutes of the Commission of National Education to support the development of students' abilities. The research used the documentary research method. The content of the Statutes of 1783 published by Stanisław Sobieski in 1872 in Lviv was qualitatively analyzed. The original version of the document is currently kept in the digital resources of the Greater Poland Digital Library. The research showed that although the Statutes of the Commission contained no separate chapter devoted to specific provisions regulating education of gifted students, the Legislator still allowed for some organizational, financial, personal and methodical solutions which offered opportunities for the development of students' abilities. The article provides an overview of the regulations concerning the system of school awards, institution of tutors and instruction of teachers with the resulting benefits for gifted students.

Keywords: Commission for National Education, school reform, gifted student, teacher, school awards, tutor

Abstrakt: Impulsem do podjęcia badań prezentowanych w niniejszym artykule stała się 250. rocznica powstania Komisji Edukacji Narodowej powołanej 14 października 1773 roku, jako pierwszego w Polsce państwowego urzędu do spraw oświaty. Z działalnością Komisji wiązano ogromne nadzieje na wychowanie i nauczanie nowego pokolenia Polaków, których działalność na rzecz ojczyzny podniosłaby kraj z upadku po pierwszym rozbiorze dokonanym przez Rosję, Prusy i Austrię w 1772 roku. Celem badań było poznanie warunków rozwoju zdolnych dzieci i młodzieży stworzonych przez Komisję Edukacji Narodowej w szkolnictwie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje wyniki badawcze stanowiące odpowiedź na następujące

pytanie badawcze: Czy i jakie rozwiązania edukacyjne sprzyjające rozwojowi zdolności uczniów zawarto w zapisach Ustaw Komisji Edukacji Narodowej? W badaniach wykorzystano metodę badania dokumentów. Analizie jakościowej poddano treść Ustaw Komisji z 1783 roku publikowanych przez Stanisława Sobieskiego w 1872 roku we Lwowie. Oryginalna treść dokumentu znajduje się w zasobach cyfrowych Wielkopolskiej Biblioteki Cyfrowej. W wyniku badań stwierdzono, że warunki kształcenia uczniów zdolnych nie zostały wyodrębnione w Ustawach Komisji jako odrębny rozdział. Ustawodawcy wprowadzili jednak rozwiązania organizacyjne, finansowe, personalne i metodyczne, które mogły sprzyjać rozwojowi uczniowskich zdolności. W artykule opisano regulacje dotyczące systemu nagród szkolnych, instytucji tutorów oraz standardów kształcenia nauczycieli i wynikające z nich korzyści dla uczniów zdolnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Komisja Edukacji Narodowej, reforma edukacji, uczeń zdolny, nauczyciel, nagrody, wychowawca-korepetytor

Introduction

The first partition of Poland in 1772 by Russia, Prussia and Austria shocked part of the society of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A group of magnates headed by the king and wealthy noblemen, for whom the welfare of the country was the highest value, took actions aimed at strengthening the state in terms of its organisation, operation of the power apparatus, law enforcement, and education (Bartnicka 2015; Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Kot 1996; Mizia 1975). The partition of Poland and the dissolution of the Jesuit Order, which, alongside the Piarist Order, had in its hands the supervision and running of schools, were a direct impulse for the undertaken reform of education. Its sources can also be traced back to the new philosophical trends of the Enlightenment, education reforms carried out in Western Europe, the lively intellectual movement of the Stanisław August Poniatowski era or the activities of Stanisław Konarski and the Cadet Corps (Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Koźmian 2014). Polish reformers perceived education as the main tool in their fight to build a new, strong Republic of Poland and change social mentality. Their aim was to shape a new generation of Poles, such citizens who would not only understand the significance and necessity of carrying out political reforms but who would also be able to implement them.

The establishment by the Sejm on October 14, 1773, of a state office for education, i.e., the Commission Having Supervision on the Education of the Youth of the National Nobility, commonly referred to as the Commission for National Education, was a unique phenomenon on a European scale (Bartnicka 2015; Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Bednarski 2009; Kot 1996). So far, it was the Church which played a dominant role in education in Catholic countries. It should be noted, however, that the idea of secularizing education was not a novelty. The necessity to involve the state in the upbringing and education of the young generation of Poles was proclaimed as early as the mid-16th century by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (2023). Responsibly pursued educational policy was meant to be the means of lifting the country from its collapse and, in the long run, of facilitating its development. According to the authors of the Statutes, supervision and care for education was the primary duty of the state.

The Commission for National Education also played the role of the state ministry, a centre for pedagogical thought and a decision-making authority as regards educational practice (Bartnicka 2015; Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Bednarski 2009). Due to its activities over the next 21 years, i.e., until the second partition of Poland, many innovations were introduced in Polish education, both in terms of organization, administration, financing and supervision of schools; goals and methods of teaching and upbringing; curricula; school textbooks and methodological materials for teachers; issues related to the academic estate as well as living problems of students and teachers (*Ustawy* 1872).

The Commission operated in conditions of social, political, economic and cultural backwardness. The changes proposed by the Commission encountered numerous obstacles posed by groups of fierce opponents, consisting of the clergy, magnates and wealthy nobility, who perceived the new direction of educational policy as a threat to their own interests and social position. The introduction of new educational plans, giving a chance to rebuild the Republic of Poland, required many compromises. Not all the planned changes were implemented in their intended form, and the regulations governing school matters had to be completed and amended in subsequent years (Bartnicka 2015; Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Bednarski 2009). There is no doubt, however, that the reform carried out by the Commission had a great impact on Polish education as it introduced many changes in the areas of organisation, ideology and curriculum, as well as in the teaching content, or in methodological and personal aspects.

1. Research procedure

The presented research aimed to find out about the conditions for the development of gifted children and youth created by the Commission for National Education in the education system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This article focuses on presenting research findings that answer the research question about educational solutions introduced in the provisions of the Statutes of the Commission of National Education to support the development of students' abilities.

The research used a non-reactive method of examining documents (Krüger 2007). The source basis for the study were the Statutes of the Commission for National Education for the Academic Estates and for the Schools in the Lands of the Commonwealth of Poland of 1783, published by Stanisław Sobieski in 1872 in Lviv. The document is available in the digital resources of the Greater Poland Digital Library. The decision to refer to the content of the Statutes of 1783 resulted from the fact that they provided the full picture of the changes that took place in Polish education as a result of the Commission's activities. As Kalina Bartnicka (2014, 109) notes, it was the most important document issued by the Commission, constituting the "code of school regulations".

The content of the Statutes (1872) was subjected to qualitative analysis. The frame of reference were the studies from the area of gifted education psychology

and pedagogy, in particular those regarding the conditions for development as well as methods of teaching gifted students. In the work on raw material, hybrid coding was used, in which the leading role was played by etic codes, derived from the source literature, supplemented by emic codes, emerging from the content of the Statutes. In the next step of working with the data, thematic analysis was used (Glinka and Czakon 2021; Maison 2022).

2. REGULATIONS CONCERNING GIFTED STUDENTS INCLUDED IN THE STATUTES OF THE COMMISSION FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION

The Statutes of the Commission for National Education of 1783 (*Ustawy* 1872) do not contain a separate chapter devoted to creating special conditions for the education of gifted students. Information on students' abilities and possibilities of their development can be deduced indirectly. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the term "capacity" which can be understood as "gift" recurrently appears in the Statutes (cf. Dutkowa 1973, 161).

The conducted analyses showed that the Statutes of the Commission for National Education (1872) contain three key regulations that address the topic of gifted students. They concern the school awards system, the institution of tutors, teacher education and the requirements placed on them.

2.1. School award system

The Commission for National Education developed a system of awards for students achieving outstanding academic results. The types of awards and conditions of granting them are described in Chapter 24 of the Statutes of 1783 titled "Courts, penalties, awards" (*Ustawy* 1872, 115-117). The awards were divided into ordinary and extraordinary. Ordinary awards included praise added to reports submitted to the Main School; oral praise passed to the student's family by the school prefect; reading out the student's name during the ceremonial inauguration of the school year; entrusting the functions of the tutor and decurion; the right to wear a blue or crimson ribbon on a student cap; displaying the student's name on the board in the classroom or the school corridor. In turn, the extraordinary awards included: a letter of commendation to parents, publishing information about the student's results in newspapers and sending it to national schools; and exemption from the obligation to pass a defined part of the educational material. In the case of poorer students, an extraordinary award for outstanding study results was admission to the group of funded students.

The highest form of award was granting students the privilege to participate in public performances where they could display their knowledge. This type of award was available only to the best students. The performances were usually organized at the end of the school year, but in some schools also at the end of the first half of the year. They are described in Chapter 17 of the Statutes, specially dedicated to this topic, titled "Examinations and performances" (*Ustawy* 1872, 89-91). This

tradition was taken over from Jesuit and Piarist monastic schools. The students' performances had a very solemn, public character and they were given in front of the gathered audience, consisting of the students' parents and prominent guests. The students' performances took various forms, usually, of public examinations, essay readings or speeches prepared by students on a predefined topic. However, there were also student performances in the form of public assemblies, tribunal meetings or other gatherings of nobility (Wołoszyński 1973). The Commission recommended that in the case of older students, the performances should be organized according to subject groups, and for younger students - according to school classes (*Ustawy* 1872). As Ryszard W. Wołoszyński (1973) notes, students' public performances had two basic functions. Firstly, they were aimed at monitoring the level of education in the schools controlled by the Commission as they allowed presenting to the general public, as well as to the Commission inspectors, the high level of students' knowledge as well as their civic attitude. Secondly, they served a popularizing function - allowing wide social circles to learn about the latest scientific achievements, current problems and ways of solving them. It is worth noting that some schools, especially those from larger research centres, published student papers in the form of brochures ranging from several to several dozen pages in length, which were even used by teachers in parish schools.

2.2. Institution of the tutor

The network of secondary public schools was organized in such a way that individual school centres were located in cities, therefore most students were forced to live away from their family home. To ensure proper upbringing of young people deprived of parental care and supervision, the Commission for National Education established the institution of tutors. The duties, requirements and recommendations regarding tutors' work with their charges are included in Chapter 20 of the Statutes of 1783 (*Ustawy* 1872, 96-102). Tutors served on the one hand, as caretakers of the boys entrusted to them, and on the other, as their teachers. One tutor commonly looked after several students, taking over the family's role of upbringing and taking care of his charges, living with them and sharing everyday life matters (Mizia 1975). His basic tasks included caring for the moral and intellectual development of students, as well as their proper nutrition, clothing, hygiene, health, and valuable leisure time (*Ustawy* 1872). What should be noted here is the small age difference between tutors and their charges, as tutors usually took up their positions at the age of 19-21 years old (Mrozowska 1985). The legislator's intention was to foster interpersonal relationships and better communication between tutors and their charges and at the same time shape the civic attitudes in young men. Tutors were usually recruited from among older students, graduates or candidates for teachers who, as they have already had the experience of attending the public schools run by the Commission for several years, were imbued with its ideas (Ratajczak 2020). It should be emphasized that the parents of students were obliged to pay the tutors. Moreover, it was the Commission's recommendation to entrust the position of

tutors to students from poorer families, which opened for them the possibility to commence university studies. Tutors' activities were subject to direct supervision by the school prefect. He was the one who selected the tutors from among the applicants. The prefect was responsible for monitoring the care provided by tutors, as well as for improving their educational skills by providing advice and recommending the study of appropriate literature. Failure on the part of the tutor to fulfil the duties entrusted to him was subject to financial penalties. The way tutors treated the students entrusted to them was also subject to control. Excessive severity or callous treatment of charges was punishable and led to the loss of the position or complete exclusion from holding it in the future (*Ustawy* 1872).

2.3. Regulation of questions related to teacher education

Establishment of state schools implied the necessity to acquire well-prepared teaching staff adequately qualified to implement the new direction of educating and upbringing children and youth. Pursuant to the Statutes of 1783, the Commission for National Education established the Academic Estate, which was a secular form of the teaching profession. The Academic Estate encompassed all teachers of secondary and main schools along with candidates for the profession of teachers (Ekiel-Jeżewska 2012; *Ustawy* 1872). The establishment of the Estate brought two consequences. On the one hand, it gave teachers autonomy guaranteed by law (Kot 1996), and on the other hand, it was an expression of deep respect and appreciation for teachers who were responsible for the future of the young generation of Poles (*Ustawy* 1872). The mission of educating secondary school teachers was entrusted to the reformed universities - the Academy of Kraków and the Academy of Vilnius, which were respectively transformed into the Main Crown School and the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The schools were incorporated in the structure of the school system and took over administrative functions in relation to the lower-level schools subordinated to them (Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Ekiel-Jeżewska 2012). The Commission, realizing the importance of tasks faced by teachers, defined in detail the procedure for accepting candidates for public teaching positions. The procedure is described in Chapter 5 of the Statutes titled "Candidates for the Academic Estate" (*Ustawy* 1872, 43-48). Candidates for the profession had to be at least 18-year-old, graduates of a 6-year education cycle with proven track record of impeccable moral attitude, high academic achievements, exemplary behaviour and good health. Candidates were subjected to a multi-stage qualification procedure. The process of teacher education covered 4 years with the first year treated as a trial period. In some cases, the costs of candidates' education were covered by the Commission. In turn, students who received such a scholarship were obliged to work for 6 years in state schools. The rest were educated at their own expense (Szybiak 1980; Szybiak 2014; *Ustawy* 1872).

New teachers were expected to be fully aware of the role they were undertaking and to demonstrate a number of positive qualities. These included the attributes of the mind (insight and clarity of thinking, knowledge of human

nature), which were supposed to be helpful in reflexive and critical observation of the surrounding reality, as well as in proper understanding of students; as well as the qualities of the heart (in particular sensitivity, kindness, sincerity, justice, steadfastness, understanding and concern for students' well-being) conducive to effective teaching and upbringing of young people (Mizia 1975; *Ustawy* 1872).

Chapter 14 of the Statutes of 1783 titled "Teachers" (*Ustawy* 1872, 74-78) stipulated rules for teachers' conduct towards students. The Commission for National Education paid much attention to teaching methodology. It was recommended that teachers, rather than follow the method of a one-way transmission of knowledge, should instead strive to stimulate students' cognitive powers and abandon tasks based on memorizing the material. It was postulated that teachers should develop students' critical thinking, reflexivity, logical thinking and independence by encouraging them to ask questions and express their doubts. One of the tasks set for teachers by the Commission was to "test the ground", i.e. learn about individual characteristics of the student, such as "tendencies, passions, receptiveness of mind, specific combination of abilities and skills" (Mizia 1975, 289). Based on this knowledge, the teacher trained in line with the recommendations of the Commission for National Education should adapt the scope and degree of difficulty of the educational material as well as the methods of its implementation to the student's educational needs. It should be emphasized that the Commission placed great emphasis on changing the teacher's attitude towards students and building relationships with them. Teachers were encouraged to establish deeper bonds with students based on honesty, kindness, respect, friendship, and even fatherly love (*Ustawy* 1872). The Statutes of the Commission of 1783 also contain recommendations on how to address students in a polite manner. The teacher was also obliged to constantly improve himself by reading literature, talking to his superiors and colleagues, and, above all, to reflect on his own teaching and educational behaviour (*Ustawy* 1872).

3. Discussion of findings

During the period of activity of the Commission for National Education, the question of gifted students was not yet subject to systematic scientific research as it was initiated by Francis Galton 100 years later (Gardner, Kornhaber and Wake 2001; Simonton 2010). It was a period in which perception and interpretation of the phenomenon of giftedness was burdened with a number of speculations and conjecture. It should also be emphasized that it was only in the second half of the 20th century that researchers first pointed out the differences between the abilities of children and adults (Feldman and Goldsmith 1986; Tannenbaum 1983). In the case of young children, abilities take the form of potential, which in subsequent years, under favourable development conditions, transforms into competencies and expertise to achieve the final level of excellence in adult age. A developmental approach to abilities, which emphasized their dynamic and interactive nature,

dominated the way the abilities of children and young people are perceived in the 21st century (see, e.g., Gagné 2005; Gagné 2016; Mönks and Katzko 2005; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell 2011; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell 2015; Ziegler 2005). In connection with the above, it is particularly noteworthy that in the second half of the 18th century the creators of the new state education system introduced by the Statutes of the Commission for National Education for the Academic Estate and for the schools in the lands of the Commonwealth rewritten from the 1783 text (*Ustawy* 1872), did not remain indifferent to the issue of student abilities. And although, as it should be emphasized, the conditions for educating gifted students were not addressed separately in the Statutes of the Commission for National Education, the legislators introduced a number of organizational, financial, personnel and methodological solutions that can be considered as conducive to the development of students' abilities.

It is worth analysing the way that gifted students were perceived at that time which can be deduced from the provisions of the Statutes. The attitude to gifted students was in line with the ex-post-facto approach which assumes that the term "gifted" may be applied to those who manage to achieve the best results in the areas of their activity (Szumski 1995). The prism of high or even outstanding academic results was highlighted in many passages of the Statutes of the Commission for National Education (*Ustawy* 1872). The level of students' school achievements was a decisive factor and, as it seems, the sole indicator of their abilities. Excessive focus on the level of student achievement also confirms the tendency to limit students' abilities to the academic area.

A qualitative analysis of the content of the Statutes of the Commission for National Education of 1783 (*Ustawy* 1872) indicates that the issue of gifted students is reflected in the provisions regulating the school award system (ordinary and extraordinary awards, public displays), the institution of tutors (i.e. caretakers and teachers) as well as the system and teacher education strategy.

When analysing the school award system from the perspective of the conditions created for the development of student abilities, it is necessary to emphasize its motivating nature. Contemporary source literature highlights the importance of motivation for school success achieved by gifted students (see, e.g., Dyrda 2006; Klinkosz 2010; Limont 2010; Łukasiewicz-Wieleba 2018). Initially, awards shape the student's external motivation related to responding to specific stimuli. Over time, however, it may develop into internal motivation, understood as self-direction and self-determination of goals. This is facilitated by strengthening the power of the reward by creating conditions for students' activity and independence. Students can engage in both teaching and learning processes because they want to it, not because they feel the pressure to do it (Brophy 2002; Tokarz 2005). The motivating nature of the school award system should also be considered from the perspective of systemic and developmental theories as well as ability models. Their authors consider motivation to be the key element of the abilities structure, which plays an important role in the processes of their transformation (Gagné 2005, 2016; Mönks

and Katzko 2005; Renzulli 2005; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell 2011, 2015; Ziegler 2005).

The role of the institution of the tutor in creating conditions for the development of students' abilities can be viewed from the perspective of both the student subjected to such care and the tutor providing it. In the case of the first one, it is worth mentioning the potential role of this institution in expanding the knowledge and developing the skills of students under the supervision of an older colleague, who is more advanced in studies. The position of the tutor was assigned only to students who achieved outstanding school results. Therefore, it was a kind of scientific tutoring aimed at preparing the charge for exams or helping him to gain deeper knowledge in a specific area (Czekierda 2015). The purpose of the tutor's work was to convey defined information and to develop in his charges the skills of independent thinking, analysing, interpreting, drawing conclusions, arguing and formulating their thoughts in writing (Stańczak 2015). The activities undertaken by tutors could also include elements of developmental tutoring which involves supporting students in their development processes, planning their educational and professional paths and helping them reach independence and maturity (Czekierda 2015). The Commission obliged tutors to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their charges in order to adapt appropriate developmental and supportive activities in their teaching (*Ustawy* 1872). In turn, in the case of tutors, the fact of performing this function had a motivational character as it was assigned as a form of award for achieving high academic results, as well as a social one as students' parents paid for their work.

The last area in which conditions for the development of talented students can be sought as regards the Statutes of the Commission of National Education of 1782 (*Ustawy* 1873), are regulations regarding the new system and standards of educating the teaching staff responsible for the intellectual and moral development of young citizens of the Republic of Poland. The legislators not only defined a multi-stage qualification procedure as well as the path and scope of educating future academics, but also defined the threshold requirements as well as the desired personal profile of candidates. Future teachers had to be gifted individuals themselves and this was to be confirmed by the fact of their graduating with high results, enjoying an impeccable reputation and good health, and by demonstrating a number of virtues of the mind and heart (*Ustawy* 1872). The importance of a teacher's individual personal profile is confirmed by contemporary research conducted among talented students and their teachers. It is worth emphasizing that for gifted students, the teacher's character profile was more important than his knowledge and ability to convey it (see, e.g., Cieślikowska 2005; Croft 2003; Giza 2006; Vialle and Tischler 2005).

Another important point are the new rules of conduct regulating teachers' behaviour towards students defined in the Statutes of the Commission for National Education of 1782 (*Ustawy* 1873), which inscribe themselves in the modern catalogue of teaching competencies. Many studies confirm that the level and type

of teacher's competencies are the key condition for effective education of gifted students (see, e.g., Cieślikowska 2005; Croft 2003). The Commission for National Education recommended changing the methods and forms of teaching from one-way instruction to stimulation of students' cognitive abilities, development of their logical, critical and independent thinking skills and readiness to express their own opinions. We are clearly dealing here with didactive competencies related to the knowledge of the methodology of the taught subject and the ability to construct the educational process. They are, apart from substantive competencies, the teacher's basic resource, indispensable for effective work with students in general, and even more so with students who demonstrate academic abilities. Teaching competencies also include the ability to recognize talented students and adapt appropriate methods and forms of education to their abilities and needs (Stańczak 2020). A teacher educated in accordance with the new standards introduced by the Commission for National Education was expected to adapt his education strategy to the individual needs of students. Nowadays, the basic solutions used in working with gifted students include expansion and acceleration of education (Limont 2010; Worrell et al. 2019). Activities consistent with the first of the above-mentioned solutions were included in the Statutes of the Commission for National Education of 1782. Professional competencies required by the Commission from new teachers also include social competencies (related to building a committed interpersonal relationship with the student) as well as communication skills (related not so much to the quantity but to the quality of verbal interactions). The last of the teaching competencies referred to in the provisions of the Statutes of 1782 are development competencies. Teachers educated under the Commission system were obliged to undergo continuous professional development.

It is debatable whether the scope of regulations introduced was sufficient to ensure optimal conditions for the development of gifted students in schools operated by the Commission. When viewed from the perspective of contemporary achievements in the area of psychology and pedagogy of abilities, it has to be admitted that it was not. For once, the solutions introduced by the Commission embraced only the most talented students who revealed strictly academic talents, while they omitted students who had lower-level or other types of abilities. The second drawback was promoting gifted students only from a privileged social group, i.e., sons of magnates and wealthy nobility, who were being prepared in secondary schools and academies to hold the highest positions in the country and decide on its fate. Therefore, a significant group of talented children and youth of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth coming from lower social classes, i.e., peasants, middle-class bourgeoisie, as well as minor nobility, were not embraced by special solutions aimed at supporting students' development. Parish schools provided them with only basic education (Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018). One more argument against the implemented solutions was the exclusion of girls from the secondary and higher education system, who were thus deprived of the opportunity to develop their talents, even if only academic ones. In 18th-century

Poland, there was no formal system of state education for girls. Those from higher social classes gained education through home schooling, at convent schools and boarding schools for girls, while girls from peasant and middle-class bourgeoisie, or even those from poorer nobility could only attend parish schools (Jakuboszczak 2017).

However, if we evaluate the solutions applicable to educating gifted students from the perspective of the socio-cultural conditions of 18th-century Poland or from the overall level and quality of education at that time, they are undoubtedly extremely progressive. Firstly, the Commission for National Education appreciated the importance of developing the talents of the young generation of Poles. The best-educated graduates of state secondary and higher schools were expected to carry out political reforms in the country and thus strengthen the state. However, graduates of parish schools were also expected to contribute to the development of the country to the best of their abilities. The educational reform implemented by the Commission for National Education introduced an innovative curriculum that was not only progressive, but also practical. In parish schools, it combined elementary preparation with vocational knowledge (Mrozowska 1973). Moreover, the Commission sought to change the teaching methods also in the lowest-level schools. The new methods and forms of work implemented by parish schoolteachers were intended to activate students and thus support the development of their reflexivity, critical thinking and independence (Bartnicka, Dormus and Wałęga 2018; Dutkowa 1973). It is worth emphasizing that the creation of the new school structure meant offering a specific right to education for children from different social classes, thus giving them a chance to develop their skills. In principle, each type of school was addressed to a specific group of recipients, but in practice they were also available for students from other social groups, e.g. students originating from the middle-class bourgeois could study in schools for the nobility. The main obstacle here was the financial situation of the student's family rather, not the social class they came from. The introduced system of awards and penalties was meant to motivate students (not only the talented ones) to fulfilling their school duties conscientiously and to shape their civic attitude. As Kamila Mrozowska (1973, 18) writes: "Each student had to know, feel and remember the obligations he owed to his family, to the social environment, and finally, to the entire nation of which he was a part."

Conclusions

The presented research findings expand the state of knowledge about the approach to the abilities of children and youth and the conditions for their development in the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the period between the first and second partition of Poland. This topic has not yet been sufficiently covered in literature. The present research has not fully exhausted the possible areas of exploration related to the topic. The results presented in this article

concern the state postulated in the Statutes of the Commission of 1783 (*Ustawy* 1872). A more complete evaluation of the actual conditions conducive to the development of gifted students during the period of activity of the Commission for National Education would require reference to other documents, such as school or inspectors' reports created for the purpose of supervising the reformed school system.

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The Meaning of Symbolism of Colours in Fear-Themed Drawings of Polish and Turkish Children

Znaczenie symboliki kolorów na rysunkach o tematyce lęku dzieci polskich i tureckich

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Abstract: The aim of our research was to discover the symbolism of colours applied in fear-themed drawings. The research covered 482 children from Poland and Turkey, whose ages ranged from 6 to 10 years and who were of Polish and Turkish nationalities (purposive sampling, snowball sampling). The research consisted in comparing the range of colours used by the children of both nationalities in their drawings and in interpreting them, considering the respective cultural contexts. For the needs of the analysis presented in the article, we formulated the following questions: What colours dominate the drawings of children of both nationalities? What are the similarities and the differences between the colours applied in the examined drawings? How can the applied colours be interpreted, taking into account their symbolic meaning and function in the given culture? It was discovered that the predominant colours used by the group of examined children were black, red, and blue. Based on the conducted research the authors put forward the hypothesis that the use of these colours in children's fear-themed drawings is not accidental. They can be treated as colours of fear, which is ones that have a symbolic relation with this emotion. In the case of the colour black, this can be the fear of death, whereas the colour red can symbolize the fear of getting injured. On the other hand, the use of the red and blue colours can also be interpreted as a need to be protected against danger (apotropaic significance of colours).

Key words: colours, children's fear-themed drawings, 6-10-year-old children, cultural context, symbols

Abstrakt: Celem naszych badań było odkrycie znaczeń symboliki kolorów użytych na rysunkach o tematyce lęku. Objęliśmy nimi 482 dzieci z Polski i Turcji w wieku 6-10 lat narodowości polskiej i tureckiej (dobór celowy, metoda kuli śnieżnej). Badania polegały na porównaniu kolorystyki rysunków dzieci obu narodowości oraz ich interpretacji uwzględniającej kontekst kulturowy. Na potrzeby przedstawionej w artykule analizy sformułowaliśmy następujące pytania: Jakie kolory dominują na rysunkach dzieci obu narodowości? Jakie podobieństwa, a jakie różnice występują w kolorystyce badanych rysunków? Jak można interpretować użyte kolory, uwzględniając ich znaczenie symboliczne i funkcję w kulturze? Zauważono, że wśród użytych kolorów dominujące były czarny, czerwony i niebieski. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań stawiamy hipotezę, że użycie tych kolorów przez dzieci na rysunkach o tematyce lęku nie jest przypadkowe. Można je potraktować jako tzw. kolory lęku, czyli takie, które mają symboliczny związek z tą emocją. W przypadku koloru czarnego może być to lęk przed śmiercią, czerwonego lęk przed zranieniem. Użycie czerwonego i niebieskiego koloru można też interpretować jako potrzebę ochrony przed niebezpieczeństwem (apotropeiczne znaczenie kolorów).

Słowa kluczowe: kolory, rysunki o tematyce lęku, dzieci w wieku 6-10 lat, kontekst kulturowy, symbole

Introduction

Colours are present in everyday life and their function is related to the prehistoric culture of human beings. The common knowledge of the code of colours results in the fact that nearly every infant already at the very moment of entering the world is usually welcomed with a layette prepared in the colour corresponding to its sex (cf. Uzun 2022, 178-196). Colours also play a significant role at the initiation of successive stages of people's lives as well as during the ceremony at the end of people's worldly existence. Colours are perceived as a factor shaping individual or collective identity, they provide a kind of information communicating values, norms and behavioural patterns of a given community. Colours allow identifying with the community and building a commonwealth. They also serve the purpose of determining and delineating boundaries (physical, social, moral), point to the occurrence of cultural dissimilarities, or describe class differences and social distinctiveness. Colours can evoke clear associations and trigger reactions, which is made use of in many domains of life. C.P. Biggam observes that "the exact nature of the colours we see is the result of a complicated interaction between the physics of light, the physiology of the human eye, environmental conditions at the time of viewing, the physical properties of the object being viewed and the way in which our brains receive and interpret all this information" (2012, 2). In a simplified way, colour[1] "is an optically perceived property of an object dependent on the degree of absorption, dispersion or penetration of rays of light" (Sobol 2000, 337). The brief history of research on colours presented below will help explain the function which they perform in social life and in culture.

1. Research on colours

The history of colour is intricately linked to art, physics, medicine, psychology, sociology, anthropology, marketing, or even music (Whiteford et al. 2018). The first attempts at learning about the properties of colours were founded on observation of nature and experience of ancient artists who, through their own intuitive practice of applying hues, created a new palette of colours. The beginnings of research of scientific character, dealing with colour, are associated with Descartes and then Newton who experimented with dispersion of light by prism. Newtonian model of colours offered an inspiration and plane for polemics and further search by, among others, painters (e.g. Jacob Christoph Le Blon) and poets (e.g. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe). The cognitive value of their outputs in this sphere significantly outweighs the intuition connected with the art practiced by them. Such an interpenetration of knowledge on colours between different domains is clearly visible in the activity of French chemical engineer Michel Eugene Chevreuln, whose work titled *De la loi*

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[1] The scientific literature distinguishes between the two terms: colour and hue. Colour possesses several parameters, including a hue. This means that, in practice, a hue is one of the features of a colour (Gonigroszek 2008, 91-99, 94).

du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortiment des objets colorés (translated into English by Charles Martel as *The principles of harmony and contrast of colours*) (1839) had a strong impact on the development of art. In turn, achievements in the fields of anatomy and physiology enabled establishing the reaction of human eye to light waves evoking the impression of different hues in the brain depending on wavelengths. Towards the end of the 19th century, Albert Munsell elaborated one of the first numerical systems of colour description, which made it possible to launch a scientific debate on the subject matter. The system was based on the assumption that each colour possesses three characteristic features, namely: hue, chroma and value. Despite the fact that since that time there have appeared also other systems of colours (e.g. NCS, RAL, Colour Matching System), the system presented by Munsell is still in use nowadays (in its new version as Uniform Colour Scales) (World Museum 2024).

A scientific debate on colours is also conducted on the ground of linguistics. The theory describing the appearance of colours is of no importance in it, neither is it significant here in what way – from the point of view of anatomy – colours are perceived. The dispute concerns relations between language and thought, and more precisely – the influence that language exerts on thinking about colours. This oscillates most often between the universalistic and relativistic stances. The first group of researchers recognize the existence of a universal repertoire of thoughts and perceptions which find their reflection in all languages of the world. They claim that cognition of colours is an innate process, a physiological one, therefore it is identical to the whole humanity. On the other hand, the proponents of the relativistic standpoint maintain that our perception of the world is shaped by semantic categories of the mother tongue, while the changeability of terms connected with colours in different languages points to phenomena more specific of culture.[2] The present state of knowledge favours acceptance of a more balanced perspective regarding the influence of language on perception of colours. Authors of studies are inclined to accept the thesis that "colour naming reflects both universal and local determinants" (Kay and Regier 2006, 51-54).

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[2] The beginnings of the above-mentioned dispute among linguists stems from the *Basic Colour Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (1969) by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay. Making use of Munsell colours system, researchers established, among others, that in each language in which there appears the term describing "red", it corresponds to the same colour. They also established that in the languages examined by them it is possible to identify eleven basic categories of colours, such as white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange and grey. They acknowledged thus that language possesses a certain evolutionary pattern. In the situation where there are fewer than eleven terms describing colours available, it is possible to notice defined regularities. For instance, in each of the examined languages, there are "white" and "black" (or light and dark). In the case there exist three terms describing colours, the next one is "red". Then, there follow either "green" or "yellow" (four terms), which appear in the case where there are five terms in the given language. When there are six terms, then the language contains a term referring to the colour blue; consequently, in the case of seven terms – colour brown. Other colours occur only in languages which recognize eight or more terms describing colours (Berlin and Kay 1969, 2-4, cf. Kay and Regier 2006, 51-54).

At this point, we would like to refer to research on the relation between colours and emotions and to return to J.W. Goethe mentioned earlier. In the book dealing with the nature of colour Goethe connected the perception of colours with emotional experiences, classifying them in two groups. The first one, the "plus colours" is a group of lively, inspiring and warm colours evoking positive emotions. They include yellow, yellow-red and red-yellow. In turn, the other group, i.e., the "minus colours", make people feel restless, anxious and cold and it includes blue, blue-red, red-blue. This conception was developed over one hundred years later by Kurt Goldstein, who noticed that in his patients, contact with colours evoked physiological reactions in the form of clearly observable emotions (cf. Elliot and Maier 2014, 97).

The above-described relation between the colour, which is a psychic expression evoked in the brain by means of electromagnetic waves, and an emotion, being an affective psychic state of varying amplitude, does not seem too obvious. In reality, however, authors of studies notice that "the cross-modal association of colour with emotion is a universal phenomenon" (Jonauskaite et al., 2020, 1245-1260; cf. Spence 2011, 971-995), while studies on this issue indicate that colour choices are affectively driven: brighter colours are related to such emotions as exultation or joy, whereas darker ones link to fear and panic (Dael et al. 2016, 1619-1630). Research conducted among small children proved that it is three-year-olds who discover coherent relations between colours and facial expressions (Zentner 2001, 389-398). In a group of 5- and 6.5-year-old children, following the presentation of nine colours to them, they were asked the question "How does (the colour) make you feel?" All the children were able to express their emotional reaction to each colour and their responses pointed to a clear relation between the colours and emotions (Boyatzis and Varghese 1994, 77-85). In other research in the field of evaluation of colours and understanding of emotions, it turned out that 7-8-year-olds can associate colours with positive and negative emotions. The colour blue is identified with the feeling of happiness, whereas those of black, white, red, green, and brown are associated with unhappiness. The children were also able to assign colours to positive emotions more easily than to negative ones, which – according to the authors – suggests that there exists a specific schema of colour-emotion kind typical of this age group (Pope, Butler and Qualter 2012, 1-9). In another study, children at a younger school age indicated the dominant colours for love (red), death (black) and anger (red followed closely by black) (Byrnes 1983, 247-250).

In turn, intercultural research relating to semantic differential affective meanings revealed the occurrence of similarities and confirmed the existence of a universal model in assigning emotions to individual colours (Adams and Osgood 1973, 135-157; cf. D'Andrade and Egan 1974, 49-63).[3] According to authors of

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[3] Research carried out in 30 countries (including Poland) allowed observing global probabilities. Among the most significant pairs of associations of colour-emotion type, there were found the following ones: "black and sadness, black and fear, black and hate, red and love, red and anger, pink and love, pink and joy, pink and pleasure, gray and sadness, gray and disappointment, yellow and joy, orange and joy, orange and amusement, and white and relief." There were also certain slight

studies, the results suggest that the occurrence of intermodal associations[4] has its roots in "universal human experiences and in culture-specific variables, such as language, mythology, and literature" (Hupka et al. 1997, 156-171).

2. Own research into the symbolism of colours in fear-themed drawings

The research described in the present article was conducted by us in the constructivist paradigm which assumes that social reality is a structure created in someone's mind (a construct), formed based on experiences of an individual and their interactions with the surrounding environment. Since it is of subjective nature, it cannot be evaluated in categories of true/false or an absolute reality. The aim of humanistic studies is not endeavouring to reflect the reality in a cognitive manner, but rather creating it in the way of sociocultural discourse (cf. Rorty 1994, 284-285), while the obtained knowledge is an unending act of dialogue between participants of the research process (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 109-111).

Accepting the above-presented point of view allowed us to give answers to questions concerning the essence of the problem (ontology), the relation emerging between the cognizing and the cognized (epistemology), as well as research orientation covering strategies and methods appropriate for the given subject of research (methodology). Responding to questions of the ontological nature, we accepted the view that experiencing an artistic piece makes the starting point for reflection on the meanings of symbols of culture and including them in a comprehensive recognition of the world (Gadamer 2007, 135). In response to epistemological questions, we accepted that cognition of the reality proceeds through an attempt at interpreting and the sense of the piece being a set of certain cultural codes (Rapaille 2019) and the heritage of a given community. A researcher, initially limited by his lack of knowledge, looks for an answer in the common past, the tradition that allows understanding the surrounding world. Interpreting codes of diverse cultures occurs on the plane of a common language offered by motifs from fairy tales, literature, painting, mythology, religion. This is a process referred to as fusing of horizons by Hans-Georg Gadamer, meaning that "the old integrates with the new into a living sense" (2007, 420).

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differences noticed in this respect between Poland and Arab countries. Moreover, with reference to terms relating to colours, strong similarities between national and global models were found. The lowest variance in similarities in all the examined countries was connected with such colours as pink, green, turquoise and black, while the highest with purple and yellow (Jonauskaite et al. 2020, 1245-1260). In turn, research conducted between international students' community revealed that in each of the examined countries "anger" was associated with the colours of black and red, "fear" with black, and "jealousy" with red. Intercultural differences were also noticed, like, for instance Polish students associating the emotions of anger, envy, and jealousy with purple, while German ones connecting those of envy and jealousy with the colour yellow. In the case of Americans, envy was associated with black, green, and red, in turn, Russians identified it with black, purple and yellow.

[4] Intermodal associations are impressions arising from different senses (Rogowska 2015, 141).

The research presented here is of a qualitative character and refers to the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition. In practice, hermeneutics is a kind of peculiar discourse whose aim is to understand the sociocultural reality. In our studies, the understanding of it consisted in interpreting colours used in children's drawings. In hermeneutics, the ontological status of fear can be multi-contextual (it has a historical, cultural, social, political, individual dimension) and is a result of interpretation of the reality of the person experiencing it. Such interpretations are never ultimate and lead to other ones that make the beginning of a new and deepened understanding. Hermeneutic studies on symbolism of colours create a possibility of discovering the meaning which colours play in culture and in society. Gadamer believed that "art is a cognition, while experiencing a piece of art allows participating in this cognition" (2007, 153). We decided that artefacts can also include children's drawings being an act of communication, a universal means of free expression of innate reaction to phenomena that children make use of from their very early age (Mannathoko and Mamvuto 2019, 384; Farokhi and Hashemi 2011, 2219-2224). For this reason, they are willing to describe by its means their representations of the real world and supernatural phenomena, including fears.

The research dealing with fear-themed drawings was conducted in the years 2014-2022 on the territories of Poland and Turkey. Our goal was to find out about fears of children at a younger school age on the basis of symbols used. The total number of study subjects was 482 children at the ages ranging from 6 to 10 years, including 111 girls and 57 boys from Poland and 153 girls and 161 boys from Turkey, respectively. Purposive sampling was based on the availability of respondents and conducted using the snowball method (Babbie 2007, 204-205). It included children of the age mentioned above who wanted to participate in the study and whose parents gave their consent to it (for more, cf.: Konieczna and Talu 2022, 111-138).

The analysis presented here concerns only one fragment of the research on fear-themed drawings and concentrates on colours used in the drawings. The aim of it was to deepen our understanding of the meaning of colours, considering the ethnic, national and intercultural contexts. For the needs of the analysis, we formulated the following questions: What colours dominate in the drawings by children of both nationalities? How can one interpret the colours used, including their symbolic meaning and function in culture? The procedure assumed creating one drawing by each of the examined children. To this end, each child was given a sheet of paper of A4 size and crayons and then was asked to draw its fear. Upon finishing the drawing, the child was interviewed, which was meant to obtain additional information on the content of the work and complement the whole performance (cf. Konieczna and Talu 2021, 172-185; Konieczna and Talu 2022, 111-138).

At the stage of analysing the drawings, we availed ourselves of the theory of Erwin Panofsky (D'Alleva 2013, 25-34). As regards our research, the pre-iconographic (formal) analysis proposed by this researcher consisted in isolating the most significant features of the drawing, which can be determined without the necessity of making reference to other sources (e.g. the output of culture). On this

basis we elaborated a base of characteristics of drawings comprising, among others, age, sex, names of symbols of fear and all the colours which had been used by the examined children. Additionally, at this stage of the research, the authors were aided by opinions of competent judges[5] (cf. Brownlee 2016, 312-326). The purpose of these activities was to determine whether the symbol visible in the drawing corresponds to the intention of the drawer and the researcher's interpretation (cf. Deguara 2019).

It follows from it that in the pictures created by children of both nationalities the dominant colour is black (see Table 1 and Table 2). It features in almost every collected work either as one of the several colours (e.g. used to mark contours, to draw one or a few elements) or as the only colour used. The children also willingly reached for the colours of red and blue. Differences were related to the other colours identified in the drawings: the Turkish children more frequently applied the colours of yellow and then green, brown, orange, purple, grey, pink, whereas the Polish study subjects, more often than their Turkish counterparts, chose to use brown, less frequently used the colours of green, yellow, orange, grey, pink and purple.

Table 1. Classification of the colours used in the fear-themed drawings by Polish children

No.	Colours used in the fear-themed drawings	Child's age					Total
		6 years (n= 16)	7 years (n=47)	8 years (n=31)	9 years (n=37)	10 years (n=37)	
1	Black	15	39	26	35	34	149
2	Red	9	23	17	14	14	77
3	Blue	8	16	18	17	13	72
4	Brown	8	19	10	18	14	69
5	Green	9	18	10	13	14	64
6	Yellow	7	18	9	19	10	63
7	Orange	3	10	5	11	6	35
8	Grey	2	12	4	9	7	34
9	Pink	1	10	3	11	6	31
10	Purple	1	8	2	6	4	21

Source: E.J. Konieczna.

Table 2. Classification of the colours used in the fear-themed drawings by Turkish children

No.	Colours used in the fear-themed drawings	Child's age					Total
		6 years (n= 55)	7 years (n= 62)	8 years (n= 66)	9 years (n= 64)	10 years (n= 67)	
1	Black	55	61	64	62	57	299
2	Red	33	31	30	26	29	149
3	Blue	15	18	24	38	44	139
4	Yellow	24	22	22	15	9	92
5	Green	26	24	18	13	6	87
6	Brown	14	15	14	12	13	68
7	Orange	16	15	13	12	11	67
8	Purple	-	-	-	11	24	35
9	Grey	-	-	-	2	13	15
10	Pink	4	1	-	-	-	5

Source: E. Talu

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[5] The drawings made by pupils were evaluated by teachers of visual arts (Turkey) or teachers of early education and art (Poland).

The next stage of the research work was an iconographic analysis of the drawings, which consisted in seeking the symbolic and allegorical meaning of the main three colours applied to express fear (D'Alleva 2013, 27). Colour, as every symbol, possesses both literal and hidden meanings. Its symbolic meaning refers to the history of the given community as well as their social and cultural output. Therefore, the analysis of colours was to aid us in comprehending the fundamental values present in a given community. In turn, its allegorical interpretation (being a hermeneutic method) in our study consisted in discovering and deepening the cognition of children's fears (Gadamer 2007, 119-121). Anne D'Alleva believes that "both symbols and allegory are specific of a given culture and their meaning is not always obvious, even to representatives of the very culture" (2013, 28). It is for this reason that the third stage was indispensable to understand the meanings of the examined symbolism in a more comprehensive way, namely iconology based on establishments of iconography. The iconological interpretation consisted in examination of symbols and allegories with the aim to explain their sense in the cultural context.

3. The meaning and function of the colours used in fear-themed drawings

In the conducted intercultural research concerning associations between colours and emotions, the following predictors for similarity between the examined children representing different nationalities were taken into account: cultural similarities of both countries, linguistic distance and geographic distance. Many authors observe that the similarity of examined relations is greater when the nationalities remain closer to each other as far as their languages and territories are concerned (Jonauskaite et al. 2020, 1245-1260). In the case of Poland and Turkey, the cultural similarity is related to the influence of the Western culture and globalization processes with reference to both countries. On the other hand, the observed differences result from different histories, geopolitical situations, traditions, political and religious systems. Those pertaining to geographic[6] and linguistic distance[7] are also of significance. Despite the above-mentioned differences, children's drawings displayed common features, one of which is the colour scheme.[8]

As it follows from Table 1 and Table 2, the dominant colour in the examined fear-themed drawings is black, whose symbolism is not univocal, especially considering the intercultural context. An additional difficulty which we encountered

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[6] It is worth mentioning here the common border between the two states in the years 1478-1792, that is between The Polish Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire and its tributaries.

[7] The Polish language belongs to the group of Western Slavic languages, while the Turkish language – to the Oghuz languages (Majda 2015, 7).

[8] For more about similarities and differences observed in fear-themed drawings of the examined children, cf. Konieczna and Talu 2021, 172-185; Konieczna and Talu 2022, 111-138.

while interpreting the drawings is the fact that the meaning (of colours as well as of darker hues) evolved along with changing epochs. In antiquity, a psalmist wrote about deriving "from darkness and the shadow of death" (Psalm 107:14). The symbol of death was also a black (or purple) sail in the Celtic legend of Tristan and Isolde. In turn, "a black wind" is the infernal penalty for sinners in Dante's Divine Comedy providing a description of hell. Within the circle of European culture, since the 16th century the colour black has been associated with death, rituals connected with it and the spiritual state of mourners (the so-called "black despair", i.e. "the doom and gloom"). Nowadays the colour black still raises associations with desolation, mourning, funeral, depression and "something ominous". Its negative message was greatly strengthened with the onset of World War II, owing to the black shirts worn by members of the Nazi paramilitary organization (Kopaliński 2007, 48). At the same time, at the beginning of the 20th century the colour black became synonymous with elegance, luxury, sophistication, a good taste (Nęcki, Sowa and Rosoński 1999, 26-27), and also with power, superiority and dignity. In the symbolism of dreams, it is interpreted as the Shadow, dark side of personality and fear of death (Guiley 1997, 228). Apart from these, black is identified with sorcery and Satan – "the Prince of Darkness" to the honour of whom there are held "black services." A slightly different sense is offered by black coal transforming into diamond, which means a process of "germinating secretly" or revival (e.g. through penance). Black juxtaposed against white stands for dualism of phenomena of nature such as "life – death", "light – darkness", "appearance – disappearance" (Cirlot 2012, 186-189).

In Polish folk culture, black appears in opposition to white and means "death", "darkness", "a sin", "profane". Prejudice against this colour is visible in superstitions, according to which, for instance, a black cat brings bad luck. A chimney sweep dressed in their traditional black outfit raises associations with a devil, therefore seeing one, it is necessary to make a suitable gesture (gripping a button), which secures protection and good luck (Biedermann 2001, 60). The dislike of this colour is also present in the sphere of language: "a black character" means a bad man, "a black sheep" is applied to someone who is a disgrace to members of a community, "black soup" means refusal, rejection of one's courting, while "black hour" stands for time of hardship, poverty (Kuleszewicz 2003, 39). However, black is not only assigned the above-mentioned sense of ending (e.g. of a life). Tales and legends feature, e.g. a black knight (a rider on a black horse) who represents a new stage. Similarly, as the black raven appearing in the Bible in the role of a scout sent out by Noah in search of a new land, in Polish fairy tales, black birds can be a symbol of hidden wisdom, secret knowledge (e.g. Starling Mateusz of The Academy of Mr Kleks by Jan Brzechwa).

In Turkish tradition, the colour black is used in many different meanings, still most often in negative ones. Similarly, as in the circle of European culture, it is associated with fear, death, and also hell, devils and magic. It is a symbol of unhappiness, hopelessness and disappointment, too (Çelik 2010, 4). Since black is

the colour of eternal darkness of the universe and night (Yazmacı 2012, 15), it is identified with secrets, and it evokes fear. The reason for this is that dark night hides many unknowns, disorder, turmoil, chaos, and lawlessness. The colour black relates to eternal silence, damnation, no future and no hope. The essence of black is that is blackens and absorbs all other colours and shapes. Since nothing stands out in it, blackness is considered the colour of indifference (Sözen 2003, 101-102). When we look at idioms related to black in Turkish, their meanings are always negative. Terms such as "black day", "black magic", "black book", "black winter", "wearing black", "blackening", "black love" emphasize negative expressions (Mazlum 2011, 130). It is true, on the other hand, that in Turkish tradition, the colour black can have positive connotations as well – it is used as the symbol of greatness, sovereignty, and power (e.g. the epic of Karayılan). Despite this dualism of meanings, black is a lot more frequently used to express mourning, misery, sad days, and situations, as in the case of other societies (Yağbasan and Aşkın 2006, 127).

As regards Turkish folk tradition, black and darkness have always been perceived as evil, as unhappiness dwelling in people, therefore black is the colour of evil spirits, namely ghosts and jinn (Eyüboğlu 1998, 124). Such examples in the beliefs of Turkmen are "Black Kırnak", a creature living in a river, resembling a woman whose body is covered with hair, and "Black Kura", a creature that eats the lungs of women who have just given birth to their babies, causing them to have nightmares (Öztürk 2009, 556). In a similar way as Polish also Turkish folklore recognizes the superstition of black cat, which is popularly linked to the meaning of "bad luck" (Yazmacı 2012, 15).

In turn, the colour red, which was also present in the drawings of children of both nationalities, has an ambivalent meaning, which can be explained on the ground of evolution. It is associated with both a threat to life (blood) and with its beginning (sexuality). The above-mentioned association is pointed to by certain magical rites. The Neanderthal people believed that by smearing a dead person with ochre and red chalk (symbolizing blood) it will be possible to bring them back to life (Lurker 1989, 39). In Christianity, it is associated with Christ's blood, ardent love, yet also with paganism and wanton women. In the Book of Revelation, the Great Whore, clothed in purple and crimson, is a personification of depravation, evil and Antichrist (Rev. 17:1-18).

Culture-based convictions can tighten the relation between the colour red and positive emotions, while at the same time weakening those negative ones and the other way round. Additionally, differences in perceiving this colour may be strengthened through language and geographical locations (Jonauskaite et al. 2020, 1245-1260). For instance, in Poland, the colour red is associated with communism but can also be treated as an amulet bringing good luck (wearing red underwear while attending proms a hundred days before sitting secondary school leaving examinations is supposed to secure good results in the final exam). In folk culture, the colour red has an apotropaic significance. As a detail of Polish folk costume (e.g. red beads, bows in hair, ribbons on hats) red performs the protective function,

shielding against spells cast by bad people, including those cast on animals (hence petty red elements in horse tacks) (Piskorz-Branekova 2003; Piskorz-Branekova 2008). The custom of tying a piece of red thread/cord around a baby's hand or on prams has continued until our times (Jurek 2011 79-80; Pawlik 2022). A slightly different role was assigned to red Easter eggs which were the symbol of love and prosperity as well as imitations of brownies clad in red, the presence of which favoured augmentation of wealth and affluence of the master of the house. Yet, the folk tradition also includes a dislike of the fox or the squirrel due to their red coats (these animals can be suspected of having relations with the devil associated with the colour red). For similar reasons, red-haired people can sometimes meet with a dislike on the part of others (Biedermann 2001, 62). In turn, in Polish literature the meaning of the colour red has evolved from the symbol of sin, might, power, devil, through that of happiness, love, into the contemporary symbol of violence, subjugation or provocation (Popławska, Białek and Lech 2007, 55-58).

In the culture of the Orient, the colour red is identified with the colours of Ottoman Turkey and the Ottoman dynasties. Thus, it represents an immense value to the nation, since it is popularly believed that red is firmly connected with the protective spirit. This colour is a powerful stimulant and energizer (Sözen 2003, 95-96; Sun and Sun 1996, 86-87; Wills 1996, 116). Red expresses extreme emotions and, in the symbolic context, its meaning emerges in a more distinctive way compared to other colours. War, power, speed, seduction, love, childhood, festivity, greed, anger, charity, and benevolence as well as dedication-devotion, attack-aggression, desire-lust – all are identified with the colour red (Zuffi 2012, 27; Göktan 2010, 91). It is also the colour of desire, happiness and puberty, a symbol of excitement, power, raiding (Heyet 1996, 57-58), brutality, strength, masculinity, bravery, vitality as well as dynamism and acting ruthlessly. The polysemy of red is caused by its relationship with fire and blood. The red of our blood is the colour of the life water of all our cells. Its dark hue recalls associations with a desperate and demonic warrior (Yalman and Aktaş 2006, 197-198; Sözen, 2003, 95-96). It also carries a message about sin and prohibition which was breeched and about danger, too. According to tradition, the forbidden fruit, the picking of which resulted in the banishment from Eden, was red (Göktan 2010, 91). One of the Turkish superstitions observed already in ancient Turks (but present also in Polish folklore) derives from the belief in the spirit of the colour red (Genç 1999, 37). This concerns the fear of mother and her newly born child, who can be abducted by evil spirits. Such beliefs led to the appearance of the tale of "albastı" (or "alkarısı") in folk tradition. This is a figure most often represented as an old and exceptionally ugly witch dressed in red (Yıldırım 2012, 128-129). Some measures continue to be taken against the strong belief and "albastı" among people, the most obvious of which is tying a red ribbon on the head of the mother and her baby (Küçük 1989, 469). In Turkish tales, influences of the Western culture are visible as well, a good example of which is the acceptance of the popular tale of Little Red Riding Hood (Göktan 2010, 91).

The colour blue was the third in the ranking of colours used while creating fear-themed drawings by Polish and Turkish children. Going back to history, due to the lack of raw materials to produce this hue, it was rarely used by primitive people (Biedermann 2001, 38). In many cultures it is associated with the sky, water, transcendence, truth. This is also the colour of depth, spirituality, immensity, endlessness, and air. In the popular perception, it symbolizes stability and peace, therefore, it can be found on the flags of the European Union, NATO, and the UN. As regards European art, blue/azure accompanies representations of beings and fantastical animals. Blue quite often appears paired with white ("heavenly colours") juxtaposed against green, red, and yellow ("terrestrial colours"). A good example in the iconography are pictures which present St George fighting the dragon – a symbol of the Devil, Satan. The Saint's blue attire stands for the spiritual existence and purity, whereas the red colour of the dragon symbolizes deceit and evil. Generally, in Christian art, the colour blue (azure) of the robes worn by figures is an expression of lightness and immateriality (Pascual and Serrano 2008, 22). The Polish collocation "dream of blue almonds", meaning "to daydream", "to imagine", "to think of something unreal", functions in a similar way. In turn, the phrase "blue blood" which means belonging to the nobility, aristocracy (Kuleszewicz 2003, 22-23), has a different meaning. Contemporarily, in Polish society, blue evokes such associations as transparency, cold, sky, water, ice, depression, fear (Nęcki, Sowa and Rosoński 1999, 26-27). The colour blue is also that of some uniformed services (e.g. Polish police officers, and until recently the dominant one of Polish pupils' school uniforms). In fashion, it can be associated primarily with jeans which, in post-communist countries, has earned the position of a symbol of freedom (cf.: Pastoureau 2013, 181-195).

When it comes to Turkish culture, the colour blue has the characteristics of both the intangible nothingness and the tangible, like a transparent sky.[9] It is considered to be the colour of freedom, journey, sleep (which is a kind of escape) and dreams. Blue is used together with green in Islamic belief as a symbol of religious belief, sanctity, and heaven (Sözen 2003, 97). This colour frequently features in talismans representing the Blue Eye which, according to beliefs, keeps evil and bad energy away from people (Ersoy 1990, 59; cf. Kalafat 1995, 30). For this reason, the custom of wearing beads resembling such an eye or hanging them in houses to protect the inhabitants against the power of an evil look or the impact of bad energy is commonly practiced in Turkey.

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[9] Interestingly, the above-presented way of interpreting the meanings of the colour blue differs from the way in which we perceive the colour in the Western culture and the perspective of Turkish authors. According to one of them, in the past centuries, the colour blue was described by Europeans in a negative manner, being perceived as a colour closest to black, hence expressing death, mourning, pessimistic mood, melancholy, sorrow, and being felt as cold and distant. In his opinion, that this colour evokes such opposing associations in both cultures can stem from the fact that European sky is more often overcast and rainy, and the climatic conditions do not offer longer spells of clear and bright sky (Orçan 2011, 79).

Discussion

The aim of the research presented here was to find out about the meanings of symbols of the colours used in fear-themed drawings. We noticed that while creating their drawings on this theme, both Polish and Turkish children most frequently reached for black, red, and blue crayons. During our research, we tried to comprehend why the children living in cultures that considerably differ from each other, were using the same colours to represent their fears in drawings. Therefore, in interpreting the findings, we concentrated on the similarities between the meanings which the colours are invested with by both cultures discussed here.

The similarities noticed by us can result from many-century interpenetration of the cultures of the Orient and the Occident. The conditions behind the universalization of the meaning of a symbol ranging across borders will be in this case the phenomenon of globalization and the popular access to the Internet. In our opinion, what connects the meanings of the colour black in both cultures are the references to death, mourning, magic, sadness, but also seriousness, respect and power. The common recognition of the meanings of the colour red, in turn, relates to fire (and societal aspects of life) as well as blood (and biological aspects of life). The presence of this colour in respective traditions, rites and superstitions that protect the members of both cultures (the symbolic meaning of the red thread) is significant. The colour blue, despite producing a slightly different interpretation in each culture, holds a common symbolic meaning associated with freedom and protection against evil (in the case of European culture this can be robes of saints fighting with evil, while in Turkey – evil eye beads of Nazar Boncuk).

Based on our observations, we assume that the choice of colours used in drawings relates to the theme. Research conducted by E.J. Konieczna proved that in the case of drawings where children were free to choose any theme they wanted, the most often applied colour was blue (176 times), green (170) and red (150) (2022, 59-74). The colour black in that case took the next, the fourth, place (148 times). In turn, research dealing with support of neurological diagnosis proved that children, when asked to express their headache, used the colour black and red, which – in the interpretation of the researchers – meant strong pain (Wojaczyńska-Stanek et al. 2008, 184-191). We, therefore, suppose that the colours used by the children in their fear-themed drawings had not been chosen by them accidentally or merely in consequence of their preferences. There is a high probability that the colours of black and red, owing to their symbolic statuses, serve children to express states of negative emotions (fear, pain). That is why, we are of the opinion that these hues can be treated as colours of fear, which is ones symbolically related with this emotion. It needs noting, though, that both colours may perform distinct functions in drawings on the theme of fear: the colour black can express a fear of death, while the colour red – apart from fear of getting hurt – also the need for protection. Such an apotropaic role can also be played by the colour blue used in fear-themed drawings. Here, it is worth reminding that colours can hold several meanings and

associations at the same time, sometimes even extreme ones. Hence the necessity of creating interpretations which take into account individual manners of their application by examined children.

Based on our research, we were able to formulate conclusions regarding the considerations dealing with the relation of colour-emotion. As we proved, each of the above-described colours has at least several common and local meanings (sometimes ambivalent ones). Endeavouring to better understand the functions that they perform in children's drawings, it is indispensable, in our opinion, to recognize the relations which arise between a given colour and the fear symbol (cf.: Michera, 1987, 98; Kramer and Prior 2019, 1977-1983). Deepening our studies concerning inter-contextuality of the system of symbols will consist in seeking interpretations of the semantic relation between the colour black and the symbols of fear most often drawn by the examined children, that is the spider (Polish children) and the snake (Turkish children) (cf.: Konieczna and Talu 2021, 177). A black spider can express the feeling of threat posed by the unknown and/or the fear of death, similarly as a black snake, meaning a link with the underground, where the evil and what is unavoidable for man comes from. Since the colour black and symbols of fear hold similar meanings in both cultures,[10] this can mean that their joint use by the examined children is to emphasize the negative features of the spider and the snake. An illustration of this interpretation can be the legend of the Black Snake (Erbüke) that evokes fear in Turkish children. In folk tales, this creature is represented as a half-man half-snake being, living under the earth (Bayat 2012; Çoruhlu 2013; Karakurt, 2011; Seyidoğlu, 1998).[11] Both fear symbols can also be harbingers of existential dilemmas and fears appearing in children's consciousness. Therefore, we think that the presence of a black snake and a black spider in the drawings can testify to making an attempt at conforming with death, which results from the need to understand it and accept it as an inseparable element of life on earth. The above suppositions require conducting further studies and deepened research reflections, though.

As for the practical side of our research, it may be applicable to intercultural education. Because social experiences are located in the collective mind, explication

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[10] In ancient cultures, the snake was associated with danger due to its biting and the fatal venom. It was also identified with demonic forces. Although its relationship with Satan, as presented in the Koran, is not as obvious as in the Bible, orientalists do not doubt that it does exist in the former (Kościelniak 1999, 184, 186). The spider carries a similar meaning. It is the symbol of devil or, generally, that of the Shadow which stands for the fear of the unavoidable (*Pająk – symbol cienia* 2018; cf. Reagan 2012, 19-24).

[11] In the case of spiders, the dark hue is their natural colour. For this reason, it seems to us that drawing a spider in this colour is meant to reflect its real characteristics. Another reason can be the influence of mass culture on the typical representations of this arachnid. Black spiders featuring in horror or fantasy films are usually presented as scary and predatory creatures. An example to illustrate the above is the fictitious giant spider Shelob appearing in the second part of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and its film adaptation. A negative role is also assigned to Aragog, the Acromantula, and his children-spiders that attacked Harry and Ron – the main characters of the popular series created by J.K. Rowling. The spider is also a symbol of popular Halloween traditions as well as other contents and circumstances associated with death.

of the meanings of symbols in the context of the culture they refer to allows us to show the social construction of the world. Reconstruction of meanings makes it possible to move from the individual way of explaining the experienced reality to the content that exists beyond individual understanding. This way of collecting knowledge allows us to learn not only the subjective concepts of phenomena and their individual meaning. Learning through the cultural meaning of symbols also enables the reconstruction of intersubjective concepts relating to a given culture and understanding its social reality.

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SEMINARE

Cristo Rey Schools and the Preferential Option for the Poor

Szkoły Cristo Rey a opcja preferencyjna na rzecz ubogich

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Abstract: Cristo Rey schools are a unique and distinctive form of Jesuit education. They have been very successful since the mid 1990s and are deemed to be coherent with Jesuit educational principles and the preferential option for the poor. They are only available to young people from low-income homes and are open to young people of all faiths and none. The Cristo Rey schools offer an intense and supportive environment for the students and prepare them for admission to college and university. Nevertheless, there are critiques of these schools that focus on: the financial model that means that the students must work one day a week; the nature of this work and questions about the ethical perspectives of the employers. There are further questions about cultural dissonance between the students and staff of the schools. This article explores the sociological and theological foundations of the Cristo Ray schools, evaluates their effectiveness and success and analyses the various points that are raised in the critique of these schools.

Keywords: Cristo Rey, America, Jesuit education, preferential option for the poor, pope Francis

Abstrakt: Szkoły Cristo Rey są wyjątkową i charakterystyczną formą edukacji jezuickiej. Od połowy lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku odnoszą one duże sukcesy i są uznawane za spójne z jezuickimi zasadami wychowawczymi i opcją preferencyjną na rzecz ubogich. Są dostępne tylko dla młodych ludzi z rodzin o niskich dochodach i są otwarte dla wszystkich wyznań oraz niewierzących. Szkoły Cristo Rey oferują intensywne i wspierające środowisko dla uczniów i przygotowują ich do podjęcia studiów w college'ach i na uniwersytetach. Niemniej jednak spotykają się z krytyką, która koncentruje się m.in. na modelu finansowym, w którym uczniowie muszą pracować jeden dzień w tygodniu, na charakterze pracy uczniów oraz na zasadach etycznych pracodawców. Pojawiają się także pytania związane z dysonansem kulturowym między uczniami a personelem szkół. W tym artykule zbadano socjologiczne i teologiczne podstawy szkół Cristo Rey, oceniono ich skuteczność oraz przeanalizowano niektóre kwestie podnoszone w krytyce tych szkół.

Słowa kluczowe: Cristo Rey, Ameryka, edukacja jezuicka, opcja preferencyjna na rzecz ubogich, papież Franciszek

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Jesuit education has been conceived as empowerment of the poor and as a means of fostering social justice. This paper explores the example of the Cristo Rey Jesuit Network of schools in America as a model that coheres with Jesuit educational principles and enacts the preferential option for the poor. The paper begins with a concise overview of the scriptural roots of the preferential option for the poor which has become embedded in the theology and ecclesiology of the contemporary Catholic Church. This is followed by an examination of the Jesuit approach to education and considers the original focus of the Jesuits and how, over the ensuing 450 years, they have responded to and continue to respond to changing times and promote new perspectives in their educational work. The article then focuses on the origins and development of the Cristo Rey Network of Jesuit schools and the ways in which these schools are coherent with Jesuit educational principles. Two further sections discuss the effectiveness of Cristo Rey schools and provide a critique of the Cristo Rey schools. The article is completed with some concluding remarks.

1. PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

A key aspect of the papacy of Pope Francis is his commitment to the preferential option for the poor. This is easily discerned in the adoption of the name Francis, after St Francis of Assisi, and his lifestyle and teaching (Martins 2018). It can also be traced back to when he was the archbishop of Buenos Aires and his rejection of the traditional rich trappings and princely lifestyle of a prelate (Berryman 2016). The preferential option for the poor, or option for the poor, are contemporary terms for the care and compassion for the poor that is at the heart of Christianity (Gutiérrez 1996; Pope Francis 2020a). This can be seen in the life and teaching of Jesus. His three-year public life was that of an itinerant teacher and he did not seem to have a permanent home, nor any possessions. In his teaching Jesus drew specifically from the holiness code and other parts of the Hebrew scriptures that mandated care for the poor, the stranger, the widow and the orphan (Green 2014). All the four gospels, particularly the gospel of Luke, highlight that Jesus has come for all and especially the poor and the marginalised. The care of the poor was a concern of the early Church, and this was manifested in different ways through the history of the church. In the 1960s the term, preferential option for the poor emerged from Latin America as the churches in Central and South America sought to respond to the call from Vatican II to 'read the signs of the times'.

The Latin American bishops, faced with the destructive social injustice of the political, military and economic oppression of the poor in many parts of Latin America expressed a new commitment to the poor and social justice for the poor. This was not an abstract notion but a concrete commitment to the poor and a challenge to the oppressors. This approach was supported by the Catholic

theologians of liberation theology who were heavily criticised for being influenced by Marxism and adopting Marxist theory. After the late 1980s these criticisms could no longer be applied to many of the leading Catholic theologians in this field. Prompted by the publication of *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* and *Instruction of Christian Freedom and Liberation* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1984; 1986), many of these theologians ceased to use Marxism and Marxist theory. Nevertheless, deep-rooted suspicions remain and many Catholics, including academics, have an antipathetic view of liberation theology, often based on a very superficial reading and limited understanding of the writings.

One aspect of liberation theology that has survived the theological and ecclesial turmoil is the *preferential option for the poor*. This is not surprising given its deep roots in the Hebrew scriptures and the life and teaching of Jesus. As stated above, the preferential option for the poor has been a major focus of the life and work of Pope Francis, and this has been widely publicised. However, it should not be forgotten that the deep concern for the poor was also a feature of the papacies of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI (Pope John Paul II 1987). Pope Francis has focussed on the preferential option for the poor in *Evangelii gaudium* (see sections 186-216), *Laudato Si* and many of his addresses (Pope Francis 2013; 2015; 2020a). One good example is his *General Audience "Healing the world": 3. The Preferential Option for the Poor and the Virtue of Charity*. Pope Francis calls Christians to active service by challenging and changing 'unhealthy social structures' (Pope Francis 2020b). Written at the time of the pandemic, he condemns exclusion and inequality, and he invites Christians not simply to offer aid, but to 'nurture an economy of the integral development of the poor'. Moving forward, Pope Francis provides four criteria for industries best suited to accomplish this integral development of the poor: industries that 'contribute to the inclusion of the excluded, to the promotion of the last, to the common good and the care of creation'. The next section will closely examine the Jesuit approach to Jesuit education.

2. Jesuit approach to education

It is important to note from the outset that when Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus in 1540, it was never the intention to commit personnel and resources to run schools and universities (O'Malley 2000). The intended focus was global missionary work, to be 'men' for others (Whitehead 2007). This would be achieved by ensuring that they themselves were highly educated, flexible, mobile and available to go anywhere and face any task. The vision was that they would be focussed on active service and not tied to real estate, or to being static. Such men had to discern the signs of the times and meet the needs of the times.

However, the Jesuits were founding and running schools and other educational establishments even during the lifetime of Ignatius (O'Malley 2000). Requests came flooding in from Bishops and others, beseeching the Jesuits to

educate laymen. Ignatius understood the needs of the Roman Catholic Church and the wider world, and this led him ineluctably into the field of education and the founding of educational institutions. As demand grew, the Jesuits embraced this field of education fully and a system of education began to emerge, but not simply as a loose collection of schools (Whitehead 2007). Currently, there are 2,300 schools in the world-wide network of Jesuit schools and companion schools. These are in five continents and more than 70 countries, and Cristo Rey schools are part of this global network (Jesuits 2024).

The Jesuit Charism calls people to discern, to be 'contemplative in action', to 'listen for the call of God' in the world around them and, vitally, to actively respond to that call with a generous heart (Holman 2014). The Jesuits approach everything through the guiding principles of The Spiritual Exercises. This spirituality involves prayer and discernment that then galvanises and leads/calls to active service for the Greater Glory of God. Faith is to be experienced and lived; faith is to be nurtured.

The Jesuits became great innovators in education and set out a clear methodological approach to designing and delivering a curriculum and the educational practices of Ignatius and the Jesuits are located within seminal documentation (Whitehead 2007). Initially these were *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola*, The *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* and *The Ratio Studiorum* (Jesuits in Britain 2024; The Institute of Jesuit Sources 1996; Codina 1999) These were revisited in the 1970s and 1980s as the Jesuits read the signs of the times and changing circumstances, culminating in two further documents *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* and then *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* (Society of Jesus 1986; 1993).

The increasing role of the laity is acknowledged in these latter two documents, and both documents are rooted firmly in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius, which can be termed 'the Ignatian Paradigm'. These documents also incorporate a response to the tensions between the vision and practice of Jesuit education. The tensions exist between educating future leaders of society on the one hand and a preferential option for the poor on the other hand. In other words, there is a tension between the Society of Jesus providing ostensibly 'elite' education and being of service to the poor. This tension was highlighted at the 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits in 1975, the first general congregation post Vatican II (Cosacchi 2019). The 32nd General Congregation affirmed that 'the service of faith must also include the promotion of justice' for the Jesuits. However, there was, and has been, some critical debate on what is meant by justice.

Tensions also exist between a need for Jesuit schools to relate to the context of the local culture in which they operate, relate to and welcome other cultures and faiths and foster inter-faith dialogue. Arguably, the focus remains one that is profoundly spiritual, holistic, rigorous and innovative in nature. There was no intention to create a Jesuit 'blueprint' to be applied and replicated. Rather, the charism remains one of discernment, flexibility and adaptability. This enables the schools to be responsive to different cultures and circumstances and the end goal

is always empowerment. The documents cited above all reinforce the theoretical and the profoundly spiritual underpinnings of Ignatius and how such theory and spirituality then unfolds in practice in a contemporary context.

3. Cristo rey schools

Cristo Rey is a large distinctive network of Jesuit High Schools in the United States that blends the academic approach of Jesuit education with a professional, practical corporate work-experience component. The goal is for students to grow intellectually, personally, professionally and spiritually and to proceed to College and University. There are 39 Cristo Rey High Schools and 12,350 students, 99% of whom are students of colour (Cristo Rey 2023). Cristo Rey schools only serve students with limited economic resources and the schools are open to children of different faiths and cultures. The students belong to families that have an average annual family income of $43,000. Catholic students constitute 60% of the school population. Further, there are 2,700 corporate partners and 34 sponsoring religious organisations working with the network. This network has produced 25,800 graduates from 72 University Partners. The 2022 Report describes the Cristo Rey Network as,

> …the largest network of High Schools in the US, serving exclusively students from families in the lowest income quartile, our movement continues to demonstrate remarkable impact. Cristo Rey students and alumni are agents of change in their families, their communities and their workplaces.

The roots of Cristo Rey began in 1993, when the Jesuits of the Chicago Province gathered insights into the lived experiences of the marginalised and neglected residents of the Pilsen area of Chicago (an area of migrant population and multiple deprivation). They wanted to support the local community and so engaged directly with them to invite dialogue and give voice and representation to all who wished. The views of the community demonstrated strong feelings about education and, very quickly, the Jesuits determined the need for an affordable and accessible 'Catholic college preparatory high school' in the local community (Donovan and Thielman 2017). 'Cristo Rey' translates as 'Christ the King'; this nomenclature had important resonance for both the Jesuits and the Pilsen community – the bilingual nature of the school honoured the values and needs of the families and students, and it also respected Ignatius the founder of the Jesuits and his abiding reverence for Christ the King (Donovan and Thielman 2017, 5).

Cristo Rey, led by Fr John P. Foley, opened the first school, focussed on serving the marginalised working-class, Hispanic and Latino immigrant families living in poverty in Pilsen. This was the Chicago Province's strategic response to the call to serve the poor. To establish the school, the Jesuits approached local business and commerce leaders to seek their time, skills and, contentiously, their finance. The Jesuits set up a collaborative, a 'working partnership with local corporations

to employ the students in exchange for tuition payments' (Aldana 2015, 179). This model of funding for annual attendance at the school was agreed as follows: 60% from work placement, 30% from fundraising and 10% contribution from the families (equating roughly to $1000 per family) (Cristo Rey Netrowk 2023; Donovan and Theilman 2017).

The students attend school four days a week with one day on corporate placement (Cristo Rey 2022). Initially, students were offered relatively menial 'entry-level' administrative roles, with their pay being given to the school. This model of work-placement has evolved to work that is highly 'meaningful and transformative' and 'a self-esteem builder' as students experience the value of helping pay for their schooling (Donovan and Thielman 2017, 57). There is also evidence of a positive impact on student attendance because of the motivational work-placement element, with 97% of pupils attending Cristo Rey schools daily. From the class of 2022, 48% of senior pupils were accepted by one or more partner Universities (Cristo Rey 2022).

4. Cristo rey and jesuit educational principles

Cristo Rey schools, as Jesuit institutions, embody some of the key Jesuit educational principles. They represent a firm commitment to the preferential option for the poor and seek empowerment for the young people. Cristo Rey schools relate to the local culture in which they operate and include other cultures and faiths. The schools are characterised by Ignatian pedagogy, spirituality and relationships. The Cristo Rey Network is an expression of Jesuit spirituality and theory in practice; it is faith in action. It shows flexibility and adaptability to what has been discerned as a need; it is rigorous and innovate, working to activate positive change with the poor in a focussed manner. Targeting Black and Latino communities in deprived urban areas of the US is empowerment.

Building relationships with 'educators, businesses and communities' was one of the central aims of Cristo Rey schools (Cristo Rey Network 2023). Cristo Rey schools offer their students a unique work-study programme alongside a highly structured academic education. There is a 'culture of high expectation' in the schools, a culture that is new to many of the students (Bourbon 2015). This school and work experience provides opportunities to foster relationships with God, with self and with others, all of which supports active engagement in the 'mission of social justice' (Aldana 2015, 202). A network of interpersonal, professional expertise and tutelage is provided and one of the keys to the success of this model of schooling is the distinctive role of the mentor. Each student experiences a one-to-one corporate mentoring experience with a designated mentor (Bempechat et al. 2014). This is a significant relationship as Students from a low-income background are less likely to have an adult or peer to support them through the education system. Mentoring, therefore, 'can be a medium through which educational outcomes of low-income students can be positively influenced' (O'Sullivan et al. 2017, 115).

5. Evaluation of effectiveness

In 2006, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops charged Catholic schools to 'be available, accessible and affordable' (USCCB 2006, 266). Scanlon (2008), conducting research into fee paying Catholic schools in the United States, described the traditional 'grammar of Catholic schooling' as a 'cultural construction', one that is inherently exclusionary and elitist in nature and that acts as a barrier to those most in need. This is seen in those Catholic schools where pupils with additional support needs (physical, cognitive, linguistic or financial) and the poor and marginalised are not represented. Scanlon argues for a 'radical catholicity', one that champions the core values of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). This means a commitment to the human dignity of all, the common good and a preferential option for the poor. This 'radical catholicity' is in line with the vision of the US Catholic Bishops. By targeting those from more deprived backgrounds, the Cristo Rey network is a conduit for gospel values and CST to unfold in practice. Arguably, Cristo Rey schools epitomise such 'radical catholicity'. Further, as many Catholic schools in the US face an uncertain future, the popular and well-supported Cristo Rey network has been hailed as a model of sustainability.

Miller et al. (2022) also researched into Catholic inner-city/urban schooling, including the Cristo Rey Model. They acknowledge success in targeting, 'low-income students of colour when the model has been implemented with fidelity', that is, when all those in the community work in harmony for a shared goal; yet they also highlight potential structural and organisational barriers, writing of the 'significant social and financial resources required to operate these network models with (such) fidelity.' (Miller et al. 2022, 499). Some 39% of Cristo Rey students leave at some point during the intensive four years. The Cristo Rey network is fully aware of the hard challenges faced by many students, such as language acquisition, students from single carer/parent families, or from households where students are required to hold down part time jobs or be young carers (Donovan and Thielman 2017). Cristo Rey schools try to provide practical support in these circumstances, including an 'Academic and Support and Assistance Programme' in one school, and an 'Early Bird Academic Recovery Program' in another. This can result in long hours for all involved in the mentoring but the support and nurture for the social and academic development of the students is evident.

Overall, the 'multidimensional nature of relational support' emerges as a key element to the success of the Cristo Rey Network (Bempechat et al. 2014, 246). The positive influence of mentors taking a keen interest in the academic and skills development of their mentee can boost motivation and have mutual, all-encompassing benefits, reciprocal benefits. The opportunity for individual and social growth may occur for the student, with the programme also opening transformative opportunities for the mentor. Sweas (2016) notes that the mentorship programme, 'expands the horizons of white-collar workers as much as it does the students'. Mentors can deepen their skill set of collaborative and

leadership practices; indeed, some mentors even represent a 'father figure' to their mentee (Sweas 2016).

The Cristo Rey approach aligns with Pope Francis' vision of the preferential option for the poor. Pope Francis warns of the converse of this preferential option, the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, and a spiritual poverty which is becoming all too prevalent in current free-market economies (Sweas 2016). It is important to recall that spirituality remains a core element of Cristo Rey. Further it is clear that 'some of the very executives who welcome Cristo Rey students into their businesses and hearts may be challenged by Francis' social and economic views' This challenge can be understood to be a positive step. Working actively together *with* the poor and marginalised (not *for* them) combined with insightful and meaningful dialogue, learning, understanding and empathy can all shape the lived experiences of both the corporate mentors and the students. This leads to a culture of mutual enrichment in the mentoring approach of Cristo Rey.

6. Critique of cristo rey schools

While acknowledging the strengths of the Cristo Rey schools, there are critiques of this model of schooling. These can be categorised as: the inevitable engagement with capitalism and capitalist values; the expectation that school pupils will work for their education; two (three) tier system in Jesuit schools in America; tensions between insiders and outliers; clashes in cultural identity.

The financial business model approach to funding the Cristo Rey schools initially aroused disquiet and continues to fuel debate and strong views. The perception is that by engaging with businesses, the schools embrace capitalism and neoliberalist westernised ideology. Writers exploring Cristo Rey cite terminology such as economic viability, expediency, exigency and 'fiscal sustainability' (Burke 2012, 188). In a very striking criticism, Burke likened the approach to that of indentured labour, 'the non-reflective work of corporate drudgery…that prepares… for the docility of obedience rather than the thoughtfulness of leadership.' (Burke 2012, 190).

There are further searching questions about the fact that students are expected to 'work' for their education (Sweas 2016). There is serious dichotomy here in the justice-orientated approach of Cristo Rey schools: students who experience poverty are expected to pay for their tuition. This reinforces the perception that the engagement with unbridled capitalism is counterproductive and inconsistent with the CST and preferential option for the poor. This dichotomy can be analysed further by returning to the words of Pope Francis: industries that 'contribute to the inclusion of the excluded, to the promotion of the last, to the common good and the care of creation' (Pope Francis 2020b). For the purposes of this study, how far do these businesses/corporations aligned to Cristo Rey schools fulfil all four criteria? By participating in the programme, they may fulfil the first two criteria in some way, but questions can be asked about how they engage with the final two criteria.

Donovan and Thielman (2017, 4) point to a two-tier system in contemporary US Jesuit schools, where schools serving the upper and lower-income students continue to thrive, whilst those for middle income students from 'blue-collar families on tuition sensitive budgets' are in decline. It probably would be better understood as a three-tier system: the elite schools; the schools for blue collar families and Cristo Rey, as Cristo Rey schools are so distinctive. As the schools for blue collar families decline, the gulf between the elite schools and the Cristo Rey schools becomes even more marked and creates a strong sense of dissonance. This can be discerned in the early disquiet about the work programme in Christo Rey schools that did not exist in the other Jesuits high schools (Couture 2007).

The three-tier system creates external tensions but there are also internal tensions within the Cristo Rey schools. Kabadi (2015, 189) comments on elements of 'structural homogeneity, in-group thinking and insularity' in a research study on one Cristo Rey high school. 'Insiders and outliers' were evident in the school community itself, with a preponderance of 'insiders'. These insiders are core, loyal and highly committed staff coming from affluent, successful political, social and economic backgrounds. These are often 'white wealthy males' originating from the traditional Jesuit high school and university environment and exhibiting a strong sense of 'ownership.' (Kabadi 2015, 190). 'Outliers' were the minority and, 'community members who endeavoured to penetrate the insiders' contingent' (190). This is a manifestation of the tensions in Jesuit education (mentioned above) that exist between educating future leaders of society on the one hand and a preferential option for the poor on the other hand. Yet the narrative of the tension in Jesuit education and between insiders and outliers must be balanced with the willingness of the teaching staff in some Cristo Rey schools to accept lower wages than would be earned in other schools and, inevitably, longer working hours (Donovan and Thielman 2017). The insiders are young men and women who have accepted the Jesuit call to be 'men and women for others'. They are the embodiment of 'men and women for others'.

Nevertheless, this tension can clearly flow into relationships between the school and the very community is strives to serve. Tensions can emerge between the school and parental/community perceptions. For example, where a family in need wished their children to remain at home to help as carers or, indeed, to be the main breadwinner. This was perceived to be counter to the success culture of the school. Tension was compounded in the corporate work-experience environment too, where students experienced a 'homogeneity', very different from their own cultural norms and points of reference. Critics argue that 'they are exposed to a world of privilege where they may feel they have to sacrifice their cultural identity to assimilate to the white, wealthy, male world of economic success.' (Kabadi 2015, 195). An alternative view is that the young people need extra support to work across cultures and address the intersection between power and family relationships (Wyttenbach et. al. 2022). These are migrant family relationships which are more rooted in a strong sense of collectivism rather than the prevailing individualism of American life and, rather than be assimilated, can be aided to find some middle ground.

Conclusion

There are several (inter-connected) issues or tensions that have been explored in this paper. One tension is contained within the recognition of the achievements of the Christo Rey schools, countered by hard questions about the means by which these achievements are accomplished. The work programme comes under scrutiny in terms of the corporate ethics of some of the partners and the fact that the young people must work (not required in more prestigious Jesuit schools). However, in economic terms, these schools would not succeed without the income from the work programme, as this keeps the fees required from families on a low income to a minimum. One issue that needs to be highlighted is that Cristo Rey schools are a unique model of Jesuit schooling. They are *de facto* exclusive in that they are available to young people from low-income homes only, and they are also inclusive in that they accept young people of all faiths (and none) from low-income homes. These Cristo Rey schools are deliberate interventions to support the economically disadvantaged young people and support them into social mobility. Many of the other schools available to these young people do not offer the same possibilities and the same level of support. Further, unlike many government interventions for young people of low economic status in different parts of the world, the Cristo Rey intervention is a sustained intervention that has been successful for generations of young people. This being the case, these schools, even with some well-founded and documented misgivings, are coherent with Jesuit educational principles and demonstrate a radical commitment to the preferential option for the poor.

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A Report on the Activities of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society in 2022

Sprawozdanie z działalności Towarzystwa Naukowego Franciszka Salezego w roku 2022

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The activities of scientific societies constitute an important part of the national heritage. Based on the potential of their members, they undertake scientific research, conduct educational activities, disseminate scientific concepts and develop publishing initiatives. Nowadays, this activity should focus on contemporary issues stemming from global problems related to social, demographic, political, and scientific challenges. Scientific societies should support academic efforts in their pursuit of the highest value – truth.

The basic task and value of scientific societies is the dissemination of knowledge, which contributes to bolstering scientific creativity and the ability to apply their research for the greater good. A considerable challenge is to maintain a society's own consistent ethos without succumbing to the fleeting, often illusory, trends or changeable expectations of various academic bodies. The Francis de Sales Scientific Society (FSSS) shapes attitudes that are appropriate for researchers of social phenomena related to the youth and their world. It implements Christian axiology, the depreciation of which has become common. The FSSS is tasked with building civil society and promoting culture across people's personal and social lives. Members of the Society carry out this task in light of their freedom and responsibility. The FSSS Statute says that "The Society's objective is to conduct, support, and popularize scientific research, in the field of humanities in particular. Also, it is to support social, economic, and cultural activities based on knowledge, and to integrate the scientific milieu gathered around Salesian Society" (§ 6).

In the reporting period from January 1 to December 31, 2022, the activity of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society included the following areas and events:

1. The 14ᵗʰ FSSS Congress and General Meeting of the Society's members

Among the most important organizational activities of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society are the activities of the members and authorities, the coordination of various scientific activities, including those that popularize knowledge and matters related to the membership. The General Meeting, which is the highest authority of the Society, in line with its tradition, gathers its members at the annual FSSS Congress. In 2022, the stabilizing epidemiological situation made it possible to hold the Congress on May 19-20 in Ślesin near Konin with 27 members taking part in it. On the first day, a meeting of the FSSS management board and the editorial staff of the journal "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" [Seminare. Learned Investigations] was organized. In addition, an integration meeting for the participants of the Congress was also held. The second day started with a Holy Mass at the parish church in Ślesin presided over by Dr. Adam Popławski SDB, vicar of Piła province, who also delivered a homily.

The main scientific event of the Congress was a conference (as part of the series "Młodzież i jej świat" [Youth and its World]) entitled "Młodzież i jej popandemiczny świat" [Youth and its Post-Pandemic World]. In the first part of the conference, chaired by Prof. Zbigniew Łepko SDB, there were two lectures: "Młodzież w (po) pandemicznym społeczeństwie" [Youth in a Post-Pandemic Society] by Dr. Karol Leszczyński (University of Warsaw) and "Młodzież w popandemicznym Kościele" [Youth in a Post-Pandemic Church] by Rev. Prof. Dariusz Kurzydło (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, UKSW). After a coffee break, the second part of the conference (chaired by Prof. Sylwester Jędrzejewski SDB) included three reports: "Działalność oratorium praskiego w czasie pandemii" [Activities of the Prague Oratory During the Pandemic] by Prof. Hanna Markiewicz (The Maria Grzegorzewska University), "Szkoła i uczeń w czasach COVID-19 – implikacje na płaszczyźnie osobistej i dydaktycznej" [School and Students During Covid-19: Personal and Didactic Level Implications] by Rev. Prof. Bogdan Stankowski (Ignatianum University in Kraków) and "Objawy depresyjności u młodzieży 13-18 lat w czasie pandemii i ich konsekwencje popandemiczne" [Symptoms of Depression in Young People Aged 13-18 and Post-Pandemic Consequences] by Dr. Agnieszka Kulik (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin), Dr. Natalia Kajka (the Medical University of Lublin), Prof. Hanna Karakuła-Juchnowicz (the Medical University of Lublin), and Paweł Szewczyk (the Medical University of Lublin). After these reports, a discussion followed.

The General Meeting of FSSS members (of an electoral character) was chaired by Prof. Ryszard Sadowski SDB. As an introduction to the formal part there was a discussion on "Zadania i wyzwania TNFS" [Tasks and Challenges of FSSS]. Then, the following resolutions were adopted by vote: Uchwała WZ-2022/05/20/2 *W sprawie zatwierdzenia sprawozdania finansowego* [Resolution WZ-2022/05/20/2 regarding the approval of the financial statements]; Uchwała WZ-2022/05/20/3 *W sprawie podziału zysku* [Resolution WZ-2022/05/20/3 on the distribution

of profits]; Uchwała WZ-2022/05/20/4 *W sprawie przyjęcia protokołu Komisji Rewizyjnej TNFS* [Resolution WZ-2022/05/20/4 on the adoption of the proceedings of the FSSS Audit Committee] and Uchwała WZ-2022/05/20/5 *W sprawie przyjęcia sprawozdania z działalności TNFS* [Resolution WZ-2022/05/20/5 on the adoption of the report on the activities of the FSSS]. In accordance with § 20 of the FSSS Statute, all the resolutions had been previously recommended by the Management Board.

Subsequently, the new FSSS authorities were elected (see the FSSS Statute § 16, point 3). The elections were preceded by the adoption of Uchwała WZ-2022/05/20/1 *W sprawie powołania Prezydium i Komisji Wyborczej Walnego Zebrania* [Resolution WZ-2022/05/20/1 on the appointment of the Presidium and the Electoral Committee of the General Meeting]. The elected Presidium of the General Meeting included Kazimierz Misiaszek SDB as chairman, Stanisław Chrobak SDB as secretary, and Henryk Skorowski SDB as a member. The Electoral Committee of the General Meeting included: Ryszard Sadowski SDB as chairman, and two members: Krzysztof Niegowski SDB and Jan Niewęgłowski SDB. As a result of the elections, the following authorities of the Society were elected: the president of the FSSS was Rev. Jerzy Gocko SDB, and members of the FSSS Management Board: Rev. Ryszard Sadowski SDB, Rev. Sylwester Jędrzejewski SDB, Rev. Mariusz Chamarczuk SDB, Rev. Peter Mlynarčík SDB, Rev. Zbigniew Łepko SDB, and Rev. Stanisław Chrobak SDB. The General Meeting also appointed the following members of the Audit Committee: Rev. Krzysztof Niegowski SDB, Rev. Radosław Błaszczyk SDB, and Rev. Mirosław Wierzbicki SDB.

All elected persons accepted the results of the elections, and the General Meeting approved the authorities by way of the resolution Uchwała WZ-2022/05/20/6 *W sprawie wyboru Zarządu TNFS oraz Komisji Rewizyjnej* [Resolution WZ-2022/05/20/6 on the election of the FSSS Management Board and the Audit Committee]. Prof. Kazimierz Misiaszek, chairman of the General Meeting, congratulated the new FSSS authorities and thanked all members of the Management Board and the Audit Committee who were ending their current term. He bestowed special words of thanks to the secretary of the FSSS Management Board, Prof. Stanisław Chrobak.

2. Meetings of the Management Board of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society in 2022

During the reporting period, the FSSS Management Board met 8 times: January 11, March 8, April 29, May 16, 19 and 20, July 1 and October 15. The meetings were held remotely and in hybrid form.

2.1. During meeting no. 1/2022 on January 11, 2022, the most crucial issues discussed were:

– The program of the 14th FSSS Congress and related financial issues. The Congress was scheduled for 19-20 May 2022 to be held at Ośrodek Szkoleniowo-Wypoczynkowy "Gwarek" in Ślesin near Konin. As part of

the scientific conference "Młodzież i jej popandemiczny świat" [Youth and its Post-Pandemic World] two lectures and three reports were planned.

– The FSSS budget estimate for 2022 was approved with Uchwała 2022/01/11/01: *Przyjęcie budżetu TNFS na rok 2022* [Resolution no. 2022/01/11/01 on the adoption of the FSSS budget for 2022.] Also, the activities related to the preparation of the financial report (to be done by the accounting office "ALFA PLUS" Monika Dziuban in Warsaw) were discussed.

– Members of the Management Board discussed issues related to the FSSS journal "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" and the FSSS publishing series. As a result of the decision of the Ministry of Science and Education, the journal received 70 points. An application was submitted to the program of the Ministry, "Rozwój Czasopism Naukowych" [The development of scientific journals]. Also, the issue of moving "Seminare" to the UKSW journal platform was discussed. One publication was submitted to the "Studia i Rozprawy TNFS" [the FSSS Studies and Dissertations] publishing series.

2.2. During the meeting of the Management Board no. 2/2022 on March 8, 2022,

– The Management Board adopted the report on the activities of the FSSS for 2021 and adopted Uchwała nr 2022/03/08/01 [Resolution no. 2022/03/08/01] which recommended that the General Meeting accept the report.

– Preparations for the 15th Congress of the Society were discussed

– Further development of the FSSS journal "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" was discussed. Problems with financing the journal by existing donors (Salesian provinces) were underscored. Consequently, the importance of searching for funding from other sources was emphasized. A new graphic design was developed for the publishing series "Studia i rozprawy TNFS". Also, the question of cooperation with Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie [Salesian Publishing House] in the field of printing and distribution of publications by the FSSS and the journal "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" was discussed.

2.3. During the meeting of the Management Board no. 3/2022 on April 29, 2022:

– Preparations for the 15th Congress of the Society and scientific conference were discussed. The significance of preparing the Congress in terms of its graphics was also stressed.

– While applying for the program "Wsparcie dla Czasopism Naukowych" [Support for Scientific Journals], the publishing activities in 2019-2020 were also discussed. During this period, in the journal "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" 131 texts were published (97 scientific papers, of which 25 were in conference languages). 17 of the

authors had foreign affiliations. The process of internationalization of the review team continued. At present, 30 foreign reviewers from Italy, Slovakia, Benin, Ukraine, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Austria, Sweden, Israel and Great Britain cooperate with the editorial office permanently. The editor-in-chief of "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" applied to the DOAJ database and efforts are being made to apply to the SCOPUS database. In addition, a new layout of the journal was established. The fact that texts by foreign authors are too few posits a constant challenge. The editor-in-chief of the journal, Jerzy Gocko, drew attention to the need to reflect on narrowing the profile of the magazine. The issue of statutory obligations of FSSS members was also discussed.

2.4. During meeting no. 4/2022 of the Management Board which was held remotely on May 16, 2022, the FSSS financial report for 2021 and Uchwała nr 2022/05/16/01 *W sprawie rekomendacji przyjęcia sprawozdania finansowego TNFS za rok 2021* [Resolution no. 2022/05/16/01 regarding the recommendation to accept the FSSS financial report for 2021] by the FSSS General Meeting were adopted.

2.5. Meeting no. 5/2022 of the Management Board was held on May 19, 2022, in Ślesin before the 14th Congress of the FSSS.

    – The participants discussed organizational matters of the 14th Congress of the FSSS and the list of proposed members of the Presidium of the General Meeting, the Election Commission and candidates for the Society's authorities.
    – Jerzy Gocko, the editor-in-chief of "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe" together with Krzysztof Niegowski, the editorial secretary, presented a strategy for the development of this periodical. It includes, among others, changing its thematic profile, the internationalization of the editorial board, scientific council and team of reviewers, changing the publication frequency (semi-annual instead of quarterly), moving to the UKSW journal platform, increasing the number of databases and repositories indexing "Seminare", and a number of activities to increase the journal's recognition and its importance in the international academic community.
    – A discussion held within the Board also concerned the future publishing policy of the FSSS.

2.6. The next meeting of the Management Board no. 6/2022 was held on May 20, 2022.
    It was the first meeting of the newly elected authorities of the Society. It was presided over by the President, Rev. Prof. Jerzy Gocko SDB. In accordance with the Regulations of the General Meeting of TNFS § 9, point 6, the main purpose of the meeting was to determine functions within the new Management Board. After a discussion, Uchwała nr 2022/05/20/1 *O podziale funkcji w Zarządzie TNFS* [Resolution no. 2022/05/20/1 on the division of functions] was adopted. Rev. Ryszard Sadowski SDB was elected vice-president, Rev. Sylwester Jędrzejewski SDB

was elected the secretary, and Rev. Mariusz Chamarczuk SDB became the treasurer. Rev. Stanisław Chrobak SDB, Rev. Zbigniew Łepko SDB, and Rev. Peter Mlynarčík SDB were elected members (without functions) of the FSSS Management Board

2.7. The next meeting of the Management Board no. 7/2022 was held on July 1, 2022. It was held in-person with the remote participation of Peter Mlynarčík (Žilina-Slovakia). The following issues were addressed:

– The FSSS Management Board, based on the opinions of the participants of the 14th Congress in Ślesin, analyzed the Congress. The topicality of the issues discussed was emphasized: *Młodzież i jej popandemiczny świat* [Youth and its Post-Pandemic World] as well as the high quality of the presentations and lectures presented during the scientific session. Organizational issues for the future were also discussed.
– Possible locations for the subsequent year's Congress were discussed. The majority of members supported the idea of holding the Congress at Dom Polonii in Pułtusk. As for the topic of the 15th Congress, a reflection on the current situation of young people in connection with the war in Ukraine was proposed. The particular problems to be discussed were the war in the light of the social teachings of the Church, the sociological effects of the war, its moral and psychological consequences. The topic seemed all the more valid in light of the Salesian educational mission and the breadth of problems and challenges facing Poland and Ukraine. The reflection was to concern both people directly affected by the war (war refugees and their families) and people who receive them, in Poland and Slovakia in particular. As a conclusion of the discussion, it was stressed that this topic should be presented from the Ukrainian, Polish, and Slovakian perspectives. The topic of the symposium will be discussed at subsequent meetings of the Management Board.
– A new monograph was included in the publishing plans as part of the series "Studia i rozprawy TNFS". XXXV Lądzkie Sympozjum Liturgiczne [the 35th Ląd Liturgical Symposium] was granted scientific patronage.
– President Jerzy Gocko proposed organizing a symposium dedicated to the patron of FSSS, Francis de Sales, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of his death. Proposed speakers were discussed, and the following topic was suggested: "Franciszek Salezy – człowiek, myśliciel, święty" [Francis de Sales: Man, Thinker, Saint]. However, because of the pandemic, the symposium did not take place.
– The resignation of Dariusz Sztuk SDB, secretary of the Chapter of Adam Durak SDB Award was accepted. In his place, Radosław Błaszczyk SDB was proposed.

2.8. The last meeting of the FSSS Management Board in the reporting year 2022 was held on October 15, 2022, in Łomianki. Peter Mlynarčík (Žilina-Slovakia) took part in it remotely via the MS Teams platform. The following issues were discussed:

– Preparations for the 15th Congress of the FSSS to be held on May 18-19, 2023, at Dom Polonii in Pułtusk. The following topic of the conference within the Congress was approved: "Młodzież a wojna. Wyzwania w kontekście wojny na Ukrainie" [Youth and War: Challenges in the Context of the War in Ukraine]. The structure of the conference was initially defined. The symposium was to include two parts. The first one was to consist of two lectures: "Wojna z perspektywy katolickiej nauki społecznej" [The War From the Perspective of Catholic Social Teaching] and "Wyzwania dla polskiego systemu edukacyjnego" [Challenges for the Polish Educational System]. The participation of a representative of Biuro Analiz Ministerstwa Edukacji i Nauki [Analysis Office of the Ministry of Education and Science] to monitor the situation in connection with the war crisis in Ukraine was initially confirmed. The second part of the symposium was to focus on presenting activities for Ukrainian youth carried out by Salesian institutions and centers in Ukraine, Poland, and Slovakia. Due to the importance of the problem, it was proposed to publish the texts of the speeches in the journal "Seminare".

– Applications for admission of new members to the FSSS were positively considered. Consent was given for another publication in the publishing series "Biblica et Theologica TNFS" (7). Consent was given to grant scientific patronage to TNFS XI Międzynarodowe Sympozjum Resocjalizacyjne [The FSSS 11th International Resocialization Symposium] in Trzciniec and a liturgical symposium in Ląd.

– The budget estimate for 2023 proposed by the FSSS treasurer was considered, including funds for financing the domain, server, and website of the Society and "Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe".

– President Jerzy Gocko presented the effects of implementing the proposals developed by the working group for the new publishing strategy regarding "Seminare" which were discussed at the last FSSS Meeting and previous meetings of the Management Board. These included: migration to the UKSW platform, reorganization and internationalization of the editorial team, and the establishment of a new Scientific Council. These activities will be continued. Invitations to cooperation were sent, among others, to people in South Korea, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Management Board approved the presented activities and plans.

– Two events related to the presentation of jubilee books in honor of the FSSS members were announced: the 16th National Conference from the "Ekologia Humanistyczna" [Humanistic Ecology] series on October 26, 2022, dedicated to Prof. Zbigniew Łepko SDB, member of the Management Board of the FSSS, and the anniversary celebration of Prof. Henryk Skorowski SDB, to take place on November 7, 2022, at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

Pursuant to § 13 point 4 of the Regulations of the Management Board of the Franciszek Sales Scientific Society, an annual report on the Society's activities should contain a collective list of attendance of the Board's members at its meetings. In the reporting year 2022, the FSSS Management Board met eight times. Attendance at the meetings is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. The first one refers to the members of the Management Board of the previous term, the second to the current term.

Table 1:

Member of the Management Board	11.01.2022	8.03.2022	29.04.2022	15.05.2022	19.05.2022	Presence in total
Kazimierz Misiaszek	+	+	+	+	+	5
Ryszard Sadowski	+	+	+	+	+	5
Stanisław Chrobak	+	+	+	+	+	5
Mariusz Chamarczuk	+	+	Justified absence	+	+	4
Jerzy Gocko	+	+	+	+	+	5
Sylwester Jędrzejewski	+	+	+	+	+	5
Zbigniew Łepko	+	+	+	+	Justified absence	4
The number of members present	7	7	6	7	6	

Table 2:

Member of the Management Board	20.05.2022	1.07.2022	15.10.2022	Presence in total
Jerzy Gocko	+	+	+	3
Ryszard Sadowski	+	+	+	3
Stanisław Chrobak	+	Justified absence	+	2
Mariusz Chamarczuk	+	+	+	3
Peter Mlynarčík	+	+	+	3
Sylwester Jędrzejewski	+	+	+	3
Zbigniew Łepko	Justified absence	+	+	2
The number of members present	6	6	7	

Pursuant to § 27 point 5 of the FSSS Statute, representatives of the Audit Committee, the editor-in-chief of "Seminare" and other persons invited by the President of the Society may participate in the meetings with an advisory vote.

The presence of the members of the FSSS Audit Committee at the meetings of the Management Board in the previous term is presented in table 3; in the current one – table 4.

Table 3:

Member of the Audit Committee	11.01.2022	8.03.2022	29.04.2022	19.05.2022	Presence in total
Krzysztof Niegowski	+	+	+	+	4
Jan Niewęgłowski	+	+	+	+	4
Radosław Błaszczyk	-	Justified absence	Justified absence	+	1

Table 4:

Member of the Audit Committee	1.07.2022	15.10.2022	Presence in total
Krzysztof Niegowski	Justified absence	Justified absence	0
Mirosław Wierzbicki	Justified absence	+	1
Radosław Błaszczyk	Justified absence	Justified absence	0

The Audit Committee of the Society, at its meeting on March 31, 2023, adopted a resolution confirming that the activities of the Society in 2022 were in accordance with its Statute and Regulations. No irregularities during this period were detected. During the reporting period, at the invitation of the President of FSSS, representatives of the Audit Committee took part in the meetings of the Management Board as observers and provided advisory input in the decisions made by the Management Board. The Audit Committee did not submit any comments or recommendations.

3. Membership Matters

As of December 31, 2022, the Francis de Sales Scientific Society had 118 regular members. During the reporting year, Prof. Jadwiga Kuczyńska-Kwapisz and Prof. Barbara Baraniak passed away, and three people resigned their membership. Six new members were admitted. The current list of the FSSS members is available on its website.

The number of honorary members of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society did not change in 2022. The current honorary members are Rev. Dr. Pascual Chavez SDB, General Superior of the Salesian Society (2002-2014), and Rev. Ángel Fernández Artime SDB, the current General Superior of the Salesian Society. The

supporting members of the FSSS are the four Polish Salesian provinces and Wyższe Seminaria Duchowne Towarzystwa Salezjańskiego [the Higher Theological Seminaries of the Salesian Society] in Krakow and Ląd (since the 2022/2023 academic year, both seminaries have formed Salezjański Instytut Teologiczny [the Salesian Theological Institute] affiliated with Uniwersytet Papieski Jana Pawła II [the Pontifical University of John Paul II] in Kraków.

The Francis de Sales Scientific Society pursues its statutory goals based on funds from membership fees, subsidies, and donations. The annual membership fee is PLN 50. The income from contributions in the period in question is shown in the table below (payment status as of December 31, 2022).

Table 5: Membership fees 2022 (number of members: 118)

Payments made:	2900 PLN
Overdue payments:	3000 PLN
Percentage of arrears	50,8 %
Total amount of payments	2900 PLN

4. Scientific and publishing activities

In 2022, the scientific activities of the FSSS focused on research work conducted by its members around the issue of "Youth and their world" and on the annual scientific conference during which FSSS members had the opportunity to present their achievements.

The publishing activity of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society focuses primarily on the periodical "Seminare". In recognition of its growing scientific prestige, publishing level and growth, Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki [the Ministry of Education and Science] gave "Seminare" 70 points. The work of the editorial team and the previous editor-in-chief, Jerzy Gocko, together with the editors (who worked on the journal's development strategy) has largely contributed to raising the substantive and formal level of the journal. People representing foreign research centers were appointed to the new editorial board, scientific council, and team of reviewers. In the 2022 edition, 3 issues of the journal were published, the fourth one in *Online-First mode. They contain a total of 60 scientific texts, including 48 articles, 7 reports*, and 5 reviews.

In 2022, as part of the FSSS publishing series "Studia i rozprawy TNFS" [the FSSS Studies and Dissertations], we published a monograph by Marek Woś, "Aksjonormatywne wymiary wychowania do podmiotowości społecznej. Studium koncepcji wychowania Towarzystwa Salezjańskiego" [Axionormative Dimensions of Education for Social Subjectivity: A Study of the Concept of Education According to the Salesian Society], ("Studia i rozprawy TNFS", vol. 14, Warszawa: TNFS 2022, 335 pages).

As part of the series "Biblica et Theologica", we published a monograph by Daria Laura Gargała, "Narracja o działalności św. Pawła w Filippi (Dz 16, 9-40) w świetle starożytnej literatury greckiej" [A Narrative of the Activity of Saint Paul in Philippi (Acts 16:9-40) in the light of ancient Greek literature], (BiTh TNFS 7, Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, Warszawa 2022, 267 pages).

The FSSS took scientific patronage over two scientific symposia: XI Międzynarodowe Sympozjum Resocjalizacyjne [11th International Resocialization Symposium] in Trzciniec entitled "Wokół organizacji pracy resocjalizacyjnej w kontekście nowych wyzwań" [On the Organization of Social Rehabilitation in the Context of New Challenges] (November 18, 2022) and XXXV Lądzkie Sympozjum Liturgiczne [35th Liturgical Symposium in Ląd] entitled "Adwent mocnym okresem roku liturgicznego" [The Advent as a Vital Time in the Liturgical Year] (October 21, 2022).

Conclusion

In the reporting year, the Society continued its mission of being a platform for exchanging information on the research interests of its members as well as a forum for promoting projects that were implemented. With its publishing activity, it complements the activities of universities and scientific institutions in many fields and areas of Polish science.

The Management Board would like to thank all the members of the Society who, with their steadfast commitment, contributed to the functioning of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society in 2022.

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