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Development through Interaction

Abstract

The essential feature which decides upon human effectiveness and competitiveness in the outer world, is competence. Competence, therefore, is an attribute of an adequately or well qualified human being who, due to this feature, can be easily distinguished from other individuals. Moreover, the possession of knowledge and an array of qualifications is beneficial not only to the distinguished individual but to the environment in which he actively functions, playing various social roles. Nevertheless, competence is not a gift given to us at birth. Instead, we are born as "tabula rasa" and with time, while developing physically, we also develop intellectually. Therefore, human development is an element of human life: each individual person is involved in a life-long transformational process characteristic of interaction and socialization, which in consequence enables people to reach a level of competence and competitiveness. Hence, the present article is concerned primarily with discussing the selected stages of human life and activity which foster personality through transformational development.

Keywords: *interaction, transformational development, socialization, competitiveness, competence, Buildung*

Abstrakt

Zasadniczą cechą, która decyduje o ludzkiej efektywności i konkurencyjności w otaczającym nas świecie, jest wiedza. Zatem, wiedza jest atrybutem stosownie wykształconego człowieka, którego można dzięki tej cesze z łatwością wyróżnić z jego otoczenia. Ponadto, stopień kompetencji i kwalifikacji stanowi korzyść nie tylko dla samego posiadacza wiedzy ale też dla środowiska, w którym on czynnie funkcjonuje, pełniąc różnorodne role społeczne. Niemniej jednak, wiedza nie jest darem danym nam w dniu narodzin. Przeciwnie, rodzimy się jako „tabula rasa" i z czasem,

wraz z rozwojem fizycznym, rozwijamy się intelektualnie. Zatem, rozwój człowieka jest elementem ludzkiego życia, w trakcie którego ludzie poddani są procesowi transformacji, charakteryzującego się interakcją i socjalizacją, co w rezultacie wzmacnia ich wiedzę i konkurencyjność. Z tej racji, niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest zwięzłemu omówieniu wybranych stadiów ludzkiego życia i działalności, które wpływają na kształtowanie osobowości w procesie rozwoju transformacyjnego.

Słowa kluczowe: *interakcja, rozwój transformacyjny, socjalizacja, konkurencyjność, kompetencja, Buildung*

Development

The development of Man is immanent in human nature. Actually, human life is a continuous process of changes resulting not only in the physical development of the individual but in psychological and intellectual growth as well. Moreover, human beings experience life span development, ranging from the very first day till the very last moment of existence. On taking careful and detailed consideration of the development process, we easily come to understand its true nature. Thus, we come to understand that evolution appears to be an irreversible and neatly ordered structural and functional sequence of changes which depend on both internal and external causes affecting living organisms (humans, in this particular case) and directing them towards higher and more mature stages of personality. Therefore, developed individuals create developed social communities.

In general, the idea of development is not monolithic. Rather, it is far more complex than we usually assume because it covers both living creatures and the non-living constructs created by them.

Depending on one's point of view and approach to the idea of development, it is possible to distinguish its three fundamental models concerning an individual's evolution: linear, dynamic, and transformational. The linear model is perceived as a unidirectional increase in a sequence of irreversible and interrelated changes affecting a human being. All the determinants resulting in the changes are of external character and contribute to the developmental progress of the individual through his activity and interaction. The dynamic model resembles, to some extent, the linear one by being also viewed as a sequence of irreversible and unidirectional changes neatly ordered in time. But in the dynamic model more attention is paid to interaction between the subject and the environment. In consequence, what counts in this specific model is the pyramid of stages which marks the le-

vel of development, ranging from the least developed to the most advanced. Moreover, the dynamic character of the various changes and their internal differentiation caused by interaction, are taken into full account. As far as the transformational model is concerned, it is necessary to distinguish two phases: micro and macro. Nevertheless, the transformational development is fundamentally a stage which constantly undergoes changes on a micro scale, that is a change related to an individual subject or subjects who are analyzed solely, as well as on a macro scale when the developmental process is viewed through the prism of changes and progress attributed to a group of subjects considered as a whole. Regardless of the phase, the quality of development is measured by the effectiveness of interaction which is responsible for the degree of transformation taking place over time and creating a dynamic construct composed of interrelated human beings. In consequence, such constructs are created for the purpose of sociability (cf. Lerner, 2002; Rice, 2001). Hence, individuals who compose dynamic social constructs are characteristic of a tendency or disposition to be sociable in order to undertake a variety of interactions resulting in human development.

Hence, if we only analyze briefly the three presented models of development, we can easily find one element in common – this is the process of interaction which is a distinctive element of sociability.

Interaction

To understand the notion of interaction it is necessary to take for granted that this process covers both mutual and reciprocal action of an individual with his social environment, and admits casual actions between physical events, between mental events, and also between mental and physical events (cf. Webster's Third ..., 1993).In this encyclopedic definition which is commonly referred to, we find an indication for viewing interaction as an inter-relational process which influences both the individual or individuals participating in an action and the environment upon which the individual's activity is directed. Hence, interaction viewed in this way covers the widest possible range of evoked and produced effects. For example, any act of cooperation between two or more individuals may and should result in the exchange of experience and knowledge, and thus ought to affect each individual involved in this cooperation. Also, a teacher, interacting with a teaching environment composed of the teaching material, classroom and students, learns positive and negative features of the locality. Thus, interacting with the surroundings, the teacher, being a fully blown professional, draws conclusions resul-

ting in the deepening of his knowledge and also is expected to change and thus improve the environment. In this respect both the individual and the environment develop because both mental and physical events are being affected.

The entire process of human contacts with the surrounding world turns into a series of clashes which change and develop every participant of this process, due to his or her involvement in learning activity through either interaction or classical teaching (such as a lecture, for example). Thus, it comes out that learning can be either expansive or defensive. No matter which of these two kinds of learning the individual experiences, it can be taken for granted that learning as such greatly contributes to his or her expansion of knowledge and intellectual horizons and views. Moreover, it can also be assumed that learning contributes to cognitive skills development, and especially:

1. The ability to pay and sustain attention that is required to focus selectively and generally on events, actions, and information in the environment;
2. The ability to be alert, which involves mental processing speed, and the ability to respond effectively to environmental cues and stimuli that cause or allow appropriate behavioral adaptation, which facilitates optimal positive outcomes and minimizes negative outcomes;
3. The ability to employ memory skills that include acquiring, storing, and recalling information;
4. The ability to use thinking skills, which means that the individual has knowledge of specifics (store, recall, retrieve), is able to comprehend information (oral, written, and through all senses), and can apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate that information;
5. The ability to solve problems and make decisions;
6. The ability to perform multiple cognitive and functional tasks simultaneously. (Encyclopedia of ..., 2006, p. 29)

Being aware of the fact that learning usually takes place in the social environment and thus is the integrative part of interaction within the surroundings, of paramount importance is the individual's awareness of his or her inner development and ability, which requires a selective approach and analysis of any event or information encountered in the learning environment. Moreover, functioning socially in the locality requires every participant of the learning process to be sensitive and adaptive to the outer world. In this

case exchange of information and experience both on a micro and macro scale is likely to prove a great asset. In addition, what we find in the above presented features of human contacts is the stress put on cognition and the use of thinking skills. Only then can we say that interaction of any nature makes sense when it utilizes the individual's knowledge and makes him function due to the growth and level of his creative communicative competence (Zygmunt, 2016; 2017). As we can see, competence in general and creative communicative competence in particular determine the outcome of interaction as far as negotiation, instruction or exchange of information are concerned. Moreover, this is only fully developed competence which allows the individual to perform multiple cognitive and functional tasks or solve problems and make decisions both on a micro and macro scale.

Needless to say that competence and interaction walk hand in hand to foster not only a competent individual who can freely function in the social environment but also allows him or her to function competitively in terms of performing tasks successfully on both a micro and macro scale. We must not forget that the contemporary human race creates the world of competition and constant struggle in order to fight for a better or higher social position. The position you take in the social hierarchy of the modern world is usually the result of your personal, inner values; consequently, such values, among which knowledge is the greatest asset, should be given priority in the process of human development.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is directly associated with struggling or some sort of rivalry for supremacy and thus – for a better and more profitable position in society. The social life of wealthy and prominent people demands competition in order to win a better standard of living and to achieve ambitious goals. Competitive and therefore competent people have always been attractive to every sphere of human life and activity. Since competitiveness is not equally perceived by people representing different spheres of human life, it deserves explanation:

> Competitiveness is understood as capability to achieve a set of goals. It is one of the basic criteria for distinguishing competitive position and is defined as property, which qualifies ability for:
> – development,
> – productivity increasing,
> – efficient growth of the market.

> Competitive advantage is not something constant. It has to be continuously checked and strengthened. It is important to identify its sources coming from outside and inside surroundings. Proper identification of chances and transforming them into further activities make a base for development. (Grabowska, 2006, p. 161; see also Borowiecki and Romanowska, 2001)

What essentially emerges from the above definition by Grabowska (2006), is the realization that a strong interrelationship exists between competitiveness and inside and outside factors coming from the environment in which the individual functions and develops his or her personality. Therefore, it becomes evident that human development can be identified with the inner, mental development and thus competence arises from the individual's functioning in, and interacting with the outer world. Moreover, the process of strengthening someone's competence is expected to continue over time without interruption if the individual's desire is to obtain competitive advantage in the nearest future.

Competitive advantage, as a matter of fact, is the quality of having a superior or favorable position in comparison to other people of the same social or professional group. This superiority is usually created in the process of the individual's active involvement in a variety of social events and actions. Undoubtedly, it is interaction which contributes to the deepening of the individual's knowledge. Therefore, through a series of active involvements in a variety of social events and actions the individual develops action competence which Mogensen and Schnak (2010, p. 60) perceive as a quality related to such spheres as "liberal education, democracy, human rights, sustainable development and equal communication". Moreover, some other researchers (Scott and Gough, 2003) are of the opinion that action competence is strongly related to cultural theory and the concept of *Buildung*, where the stress is put on "the development of the reflective individual who has the power to question assumptions, 'facts', agendas and opinions about current living conditions and activities" (in Bentham, 2013, p. 36). Hence, the above presented discussion, although sketchy, clearly indicates that whatever development we consider, the discussion concentrates on the human being as a social creature who through interaction and activity in the social milieu deepens his or her knowledge and expands his or her horizons in order to be competitive. It also becomes clear that action competence results from a development oriented education where among the many roles to be performed by the individual involved in human activities, the social role appears to be of paramount importance.

Development designed education

To initiate a discussion over development designed education, we have to realize that the very term 'development' does not only refer to the process of education but it is also associated with acquisition, empiricism, environment, learning and socialization (Lerner, 2002, p. 29). From this we can see that it becomes necessary to discuss each of the afore-mentioned processes of development associated with acquisition and learning, on the one hand, and empiricism and environment, on the other. Socialization will be discussed separately.

Acquisition and learning are two terms which are often used interchangeably, and thus incorrectly. As a matter of fact each of these two terms refers to a distinct process of overall human development. Hence, acquisition is characteristic of the subconscious gaining of knowledge and therefore – associated with the inductive approach founded on the behavioristic principles of stimulus – response. As such, acquisition has much to do with the kind of empiricism strongly related to John Locke's philosophy.

According to John Locke's philosophy, we are born as a "blank slate" *(tabula rasa)* and develop through practice. In this case practice makes progress, which means that the individual who initially is little more than "tabula rasa" can only develop if he or she accumulates knowledge or skills from direct participation in events or activities considered as processes existing in the surroundings. Hence, what we find here is an emphasis put on strong relationships with the process of acquisition, combining essentially progress with practice. As a matter of fact this is a point of view presented by empiricist philosophy and its doctrine which insists that knowledge derives from experience. The triumph of empiricism would not be possible without the involvement of the environment in which the process of acquisition identified with picking-up information and thus, the deepening of knowledge through practice takes place. Therefore, the environment is a designate area where learning, especially learning through interaction and socialization comes to pass.

Nevertheless, it has to be underscored that apart from a subconscious process of gaining knowledge, known as acquisition, a conscious process, standing in opposition to the former one, also takes place and is known as learning. So, the fundamental difference between acquisition and learning lies in a particular state of mind and ability or the lack of ability for abstract thinking. Abstract thinking is *conditio sine qua non* of learning perceived as a cognitive process founded on understanding and comprehension not only of the teaching material but also the surroundings which either facilitate or

hamper comprehension. This cognitive and deeply thoughtful process owes much to Renè Descartes' philosophy of rationalism based on his famous *cogito ergo sum*. Therefore, only human awareness of the surroundings composed of physical and human objects and the relationships between them, is a guarantee of understanding of any process taking place in the environment and thus, of knowledge derived from interaction and an active participation in such a process. In this respect interaction between human beings present in the teaching environment, on the one hand, and interaction between the same human beings and teaching material, on the other, is of vital importance to the effectiveness of teaching and in consequence – to human development. Moreover, we must not forget that the presence of human elements in the teaching/learning process makes it possible for individuals to digest the teaching material and interact and thus – socialize.

Socialization

Since the process of socialization as well as the meaning of the very term is perceived differently, depending on the school of thought, it requires special attention for the purpose of clarity. Encyclopedias and dictionaries of terms and concepts used in English language teaching present a multitude of definitions of which the one below is particularly worth considering:

> Socialization is the process by which we become members of a particular social group. The social group may be the one we are born into, or the one that we aspire to belong to. Becoming socialized means adopting – or adapting to – the values and customs of the target group. The process inevitably involves language, and there is a growing school of thought that views second language learning not as a process of acquisition but one of socialization. ... (Thornbury, 2010, p. 206)

Undoubtedly, adopting or adapting to the values and customs of the target group develops personality in many spheres including social, cultural or linguistic. Hence, the developed linguistic knowledge becomes the tool of communication and thus enables functioning in the target group. The idea of functioning in the social environment viewed as the arena of growth was stressed by Vygotsky (1978) and presented as the ZPD (zone of proximal development). Therefore, human beings (especially children) develop through interactions and from simply functioning in the social environment and thus expand their zone or scope of development. Hence, interaction is vital

in the process of constructing and fostering human ego and identity. It is Vygotsky who was of the opinion that "children's thinking and meaning-making is socially constructed and emerges out of their social interactions with their environment" (in Kaufman, 2004, p. 304).

The above presented opinion greatly contributed to the origination and evolution of constructivism – the school of thought which tries to combine the two approaches to knowledge: inductive and deductive, and accordingly conjoining empiricism with rationalism. In combining these two approaches, constructivism derives a lot from John Locke's philosophy, especially its empiric basis, and also from Renè Descartes' philosophy which relies on the power of mind and cognition, which is responsible for the deepening of knowledge through reasoning. The richness of knowledge allows an individual a variety of maneuvers which can be applied in the process of acquisition and learning. The mingling of practical activities in a conscious, reasonable way results in constructing an individual pragmatic approach to a problem which a human being (student, for example) may encounter in the locality, especially in the teaching/learning process. Moreover, the very process of constructing an individual pragmatic approach to problem solving, provides the opportunity for a student to play numerous social roles and interact. The essence of the so prepared approach is the optimization of learning viewed as a hierarchically structured process – cognitive in nature (Dakowska, 2003).

> Such a view of the natural phenomenon leads to activating the learning processes on the basis of what we know and understand about the human learner, his mental equipment, the nature of social environment, the interaction between the two, and the nature of verbal communication employing a system of signs. (Dakowska, 2003, p. 160)

It can be easily deduced from the above-presented discussion, we interact, communicate, and hence, develop through functioning in the social milieu. Such functioning would not be possible without active participation in the social environment and the competent performing of a variety of roles such as, for example, husband, wife, father, mother, teacher, employee, journalist, politician, taxi driver, tourist guide or doctor, to name but a few. Role-play, as an educational technique, greatly contributes to the way in which we interact and construct the world surrounding us. While interacting we communicate and create social structures which require from us appropriate reactions and behavior in a hypothetical situation. In this way we create the hypothetical world we are trying to live in and experience it

through various forms of role-play. In consequence, while playing at different social roles we, in a very real sense, actively socialize and foster personality.

Fostering personality through transformational development

The cognitive approach, which owns much to Renè Descartes and his brand of rationalism is a form of rationalism in which emphasis is placed on intellectual development through reasoning. Hence, this kind of approach can be effectively applied both in a micro and macro scale. Fostering personality and expanding the cognitive development of students (although not exclusively), we have to be very careful in dosing the material to be digested. Hence, the very beginning of guided instruction ought to be carefully designed in the form of a micro process where the teaching material perfectly fits with the students' personality. With time, the amount of the offered material and the degree of its difficulty should be controlled and expanded in such a way as not to discourage students and make them defensive in learning. Only then can students undergo changes and develop on a micro scale and be gradually prepared for more demanding tasks with higher and higher levels of difficulty. Knowing that the teaching/learning process is not exclusively arranged to satisfy the needs of a single student, it is absolutely essential to consider and analyze the progress and development with reference to a group of students treated as a whole. In this case we perceive the process of education as a macro process where not a single student but a group of people undergoes transformation in relation to the group's dynamic, which should include in its scope interaction, behavior, emotion or mental and communicational development vivid in expressiveness. It has to be underscored that the group's dynamic is proportional to the degree of transformation, which means that the higher dynamic of the group, the more eminent its transformation. However, it is important to remember that transformation or more precisely – transformational development takes time, and also takes place on two levels: micro and macro, where the individual is expected to undergo a change. Such a transformation is perceived as a process of edification or "Bildung" – to use the term quite recently introduced through the literature (cf. Wardekker & Miedema, 2001a; 2001b; Nussbaum, 2010).

The term *Bildung* requires explanation as only recently, sophisticated transformations in education were simply labeled as "Bildung" (Jackson, 2016; Miedema 2017), which is a synonym of edification. However, the notion of edification – "Bildung" – (although often overused by politicians and school administrators) cannot conceal the fact that in educational policy and

practice the basics are still overemphasized to the detriment of the formation of the whole person – that is the student. Focusing attention on the use of the very concept of edification as part of the more encompassing concept of reflexivity, (see Jackson, 2016, 157-158 for a broad conceptualization of this term), it is possible to assume that "Bildung" is an internationally accepted solution to foster human personality (cf. Nussbaum, 2010). "Bildung", viewed as a process, concentrates on the personality formation through the penetration of subject matters that fit best with the students' own personality. Moreover, students, while coping with the given tasks, work on their own, satisfy their needs and discover their abilities and skills. In this way they are on a course towards hyper-individualization. Hence, the students should be able to discover who they essentially are and what their already existing capacities are or might be. Being involved in a process constructed in such a way, students become dynamic and develop through a variety of relationships, especially by exchanging information and engaging in dialogs with the other people whom they meet and cooperate with in their environment. In consequence, this kind of "Bildung" turns into a process of socialization and builds autonomy (cf. Wardekker & Miedema, 2001a; 2001b).

It has to be stressed once again that the student's autonomy is being fostered in the process of transformation through the sequence of interactions which contribute to the creation of a socially dynamic individual who is ready to play different social functions and thus – develop (Lerner, 2002; Rice, 2001). This is the approach which simultaneously develops the student's system of knowledge and mental dispositions. Hence, it can be deduced that the student develops action competence (cf. Miedema, 2017), and demonstrates a complex of attributes such as behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental that characterize his uniqueness. A student, fostered in such a way, becomes a unique and autonomous individual who, in the process of interaction and communication, demonstrates the full scope of creative communicative competence (Zygmunt, 2016; 2017) which is a peak achievement of his socio-cultural development.

Conclusions

The world in its spiritual and material form is subject to constant changes. Since the core element of the Universe is Man, the changes affecting humanity are of paramount importance. The above-presented discussion points to the role and significance of human development to the outer world which, as a matter of fact, is designed and developed by human beings. Moreover,

the discussion makes clear that human development parallels the growth of the material world since only fully developed individuals can have an effect upon their surroundings and control their vicinity.

Out of the three mentioned here models of development, the transformational model covering two phases – micro and macro – appears to be the most effective, especially that it refers both to the individual development and the group as a whole. Moreover, the transformational development relies on interaction and socialization which are fundamental components indispensable in personality fostering. Hence, a completely developed individual can be easily distinguished by his or her competence and competitiveness, which make him or her capable of achieving a set of ambitious goals and functioning socially. Nevertheless, it has to be reminded that competitive advantage is not constant and has to be continuously strengthened. In this respect, the only solution for keeping up with an adequate level of competence and competitiveness is to involve human beings in various activities and make them function on the micro and macro scale of the transformational development process. As a matter of fact, such a process turns into a teaching/learning process founded on the very premises of empiricism and rationalism, and thus represents the inductive and deductive approach to knowledge and education, in general. In this way theory actively combines with practice and makes the whole process of transformational development very pragmatic. Moreover, we can risk saying that such a course resembles the process of edification presented in the literature as "Buildung" (cf. Jackson, 2016; Miedema, 2017).

Since transformation is a human process which requires human contacts and therefore – communication – interaction at the linguistic level where the exchange of information and experience takes place, becomes a crucial element in the developmental construct. A thorough analysis of the transformational development undoubtedly favors interaction as a sort of technique which allows for adaptation of the values and customs of the interlocutors (viewed as a social group), and develops personality socially, culturally or linguistically. It has to be stressed again that interaction and communication deprived of the language use is impossible. Therefore, the developed linguistic knowledge is a great asset for every human being. Moreover, as Dakowska (2003) reminds us, through interaction at the linguistic level we come to understand our interlocutors, their mentality and the social environment they represent. In this way we deepen our knowledge about them and their social milieu.

In consequence, the present discussion depicts the transformational process of Man as a sequence of various events taking place at various levels of human activity. The human involvement in these events and actions contri-

butes to personality development. However, this kind of involvement would not be possible without interaction which, in turn, is impossible without a direct human contact at the linguistic level. Therefore, the process of edification which results in personality fostering is perceived as the process of transformation via a sequence of interactions which foster a socially dynamic character who is ready to play different social roles. An individual, fostered in such a way, is able to demonstrate his uniqueness and autonomy solely through interactions, thus demonstrating his creative communicative competence which is the hallmark of his socio-cultural development. In this respect, the present discussion parallels opinions presented by Crain (2016), Lerner (2002), Miedema (2017), Zygmunt (2017) and others.

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