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Self-authoring characteristics of the Montessori School graduates**

Summary

The modern world requires a new mindset for people to enable them to become self-evaluating human beings. Kegan (1994) termed this complex system of mind the self-authorship. This is the ability to generate belief systems and intrapersonal states internally. The self-authorship analyses are culturally diverse. This paper presents two theories, namely the concept of self-authorship by Baxter Magolda (1998, 2001) and Obuchowski's (2000, 2006) theory of self-authoring personality. The latter remains a framework of the description of central psychosocial attributes for the self-authoring personality of Montessori School graduates. The self-authoring studies of diagnostic character aimed at qualification of the authoring personality standard as well as subjective denotations of authoring attributes of the Montessori School graduates. The study covered 69 former students (56.5% women, 43.5% men) of the state Primary Montessori School in Lublin. The self-authoring personality standard was qualified using The Self-Authoring Personality Questionnaire elaborated by Obuchowski and colleagues (Blachnio & Obuchowski, 2011). The personal denotations conferred on authoring attributes were examined by means of the questionnaire My Experiences based on the adaptation of Self-Confrontation Method by Hermans (1991). The level of self-authoring personality in female and male groups was high and characterised by similar values. In the personal statements the persons being examined described themselves as those who perceive themselves as a source of behaviour and the own aims were object of their projects designed for accomplishment in relation with the other people. As follows from the data, the participants of the study acquired skills indispensable for making individual decisions about themselves and the outer world.

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Introduction

The aim of the paper is to analyse the issue of the person-creating idea of man and its application to confirm the Montessori's education assumptions (1967, 1975, 1992, 2007). The theory of self-authoring person is developed in world psychology. Therefore, in the first part of the paper the above mentioned idea is presented to realise the interpretive perspectives of human development. The fundamental approach for this study is grounded in the optics of Obuchowski's theory. However, the Author provides a broader outlook, referring to the concepts of Kegan (1982, 1992) and Baxter Magolda (2001, 2009, 2014).

The intended effect of the Montessori education is to gain independence and mature personality of self-authoring type. That is why it was Montessori Primary School graduates in the late phase of adolescence that were studied, which is the subject of the second part of the paper. The exploration objective was to find an answer to the diagnostic problems: What is the level of the self-authoring personality of the Montessori Primary School graduates? and What subjective meanings assigned to the self-authoring characteristics do the Montessori school graduates have? The study covered 69 former students (56.5% women, 43.5% men) of the only state Montessori Primary School in Poland, located in Lublin. The self-authoring personality standard was qualified using The Self-Authoring Personality Questionnaire elaborated by Obuchowski and colleagues (Blachnio, 2003; Blachnio & Obuchowski, 2011). Moreover, the personal denotations conferred on the authoring attributes were studied using questionnaire My Experiences based on the adaptation of the Self-Confrontation Method by Hermans (1991). The attained results were discussed in the third part of the paper. Based on the obtained results the members of the group studied can be considered to possess self-authoring characteristics. They assigned original meanings which make the theoretical model of authorship personal.

The concept of self-authorship

According to Kegan (1982, 1994) a contemporary man needs a new mindset to enable him or her to become a self-initiating and self-evaluating human being, ready to develop values, beliefs, convictions, standards of their lives. Thus a man achieves a personal authority (Kegan, 1994). Kegan (1994) called this complex organisation of mind *self-authorship*. He defined it as the capacity of internal generation belief

systems, intrapersonal states and interpersonal loyalties. Self-authorship is a result of a shift from allowing the external authority to influence one's decisions, values, and beliefs toward the internal ownership of one's values and beliefs (Ashlee et. al., 2017–2018).

According to psychologists, exploitation of the mind does not only refer to cognition. It embodies the capacity to build and organise meanings in the process of thinking, feeling, and relating to the self and others. The organising principles used to assign meaning are based on the subject–object relationship (Berger et. al., 2007).

The theory of self-evolution in the adulthood is rooted in studies of Jean Piaget. It is of constructive-developmental character showing how individuals construct meaning-making. According to Kegan, individuals determine meaning in the space between their experiences and reactions to them. “In each meaning-making structure, there are elements individuals are aware of and have control over (what Kegan calls object) and elements that have control over them (what Kegan calls subject)” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007, p. 495).

Kegan reviewed the development of consciousness understood as the level of mentality including the organisation and interpretation of experiences. He distinguished five levels of the consciousness order from the birth to the adulthood. The first three are consistent with the main stages of development described by Piaget (Luken, 2009). Kegan claims that people can reach the fourth level: the self-authoring mind, and sometimes even the fifth stage of development: the self-transforming mind. However, this is only at the fourth level that people can take up an intellectual approach “apart” from their roles as well as others' expectations and search for own identity. The ability to generalise across abstractions is evident. One can free himself from social influences of parents, friends and other authorities. Moreover one can construct his/her own vision of the world and himself.

The fact that others question the subject's ideas does not necessarily create a feeling of loss of self-esteem. The subject appreciates the positive aspect of the conflict, the criticism and the differences. They feel responsible, for their own state of mind as well. They see themselves (also) ‘through their own eyes’. They are able to define boundaries. The subject will determine his or her own (learning) career based on a personal vision and will take on challenges to develop even further. They are able to switch easily between roles (Luken, 2009, p. 91).

The process of control comes from the inside of a man (Kegan, 1994; Luken, 2009,). According to Kegan (1994), this transition from the third to the fourth level of thinking is the breakthrough in the adulthood. As a result individuals achieve a new identity: self-authorship.

Baxter Magolda (2001, 2008) advanced the Kegan's constructive developmental theory supplementing it with epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions that conceptualise people's interpretation and analysis of their experiences. Self-authorship is defined as a holistic, meaning-making capacity (Boes et al., 2010), and also an internal ability to construct one's beliefs, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2014).

It is characterized by the internal generation and coordination of one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties, rather than depending on external beliefs, values and interpersonal loyalties (Boes et al., 2010, p. 4).

Self-authorship extends beyond critical thinking or making informed judgments because it is not a skill; it is rather a way of making meaning of the world and one's self (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 6).

According to the researchers (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 2001; Kegan, 1994), a developmental path to self-authorship leads from the reliance on external rules and roles to the internal reasoning standards. Baxter Magolda (2004) includes four stages of reaching self-authorship. They are based on the external formulae and crossroads as well as the author's own life development and internal foundations (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Baxter Magolda et al., 2012). In the process of authoring one's personal life, there must be developed three different foundations: a cognitive system as well as intra and interpersonal domains (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004). The cognitive dimension of self-authorship refers to: "How do I know?" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 15; Synsteliën, 2013, p. 46). Self-authorship requires trust in one's ability both to construct knowledge and establish personal values, as well as "to commit to both" (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 147). In turn, the crucial question of self-authorship's intrapersonal dimension is: "Who am I?" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 15; Synsteliën, 2013, p. 46). The identity aspect includes establishing an "integrated identity characterized by understanding one's own particular history, confidence, capacity for autonomy and connection, and integrity" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 6). The third interpersonal dimension of self-authorship asks: "How do I want to construct relationships with others?" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 15; Synsteliën, 2013, p. 46). The goal is to enter into "mature relationships, characterized by respect for both one's own and others' particular identities and cultures and by productive collaboration to integrate multiple perspectives" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 6). All three dimensions change with the increasing individual's self-authorship process.

Kazimierz Obuchowski's theory of the self-authoring personality

In the second half of the 20th century the evolution of self-determination called a revolution of subjects by Obuchowski (2000, 2001, 2006), began (and is still in progress) in the consciousness of a significant number of people. The transformation represents a response to the conditions created by global, fluid reality. People took over normative functions of culture building personal standards of behaviour and developing their creative potential. The creation of culture in oneself consists in organising adequate universal knowledge. Thus personally determined meanings can compensate for the inability of modern civilisation to provide standards of right and wrong. Universal knowledge enables the search for solutions to the fundamental questions: What is man? Who am I as a human being in this world? Independent thinking is necessary for values reconstruction. Additionally, one must possess the ability to act according to the personally planned and future-oriented tasks. A person characterised by a self-authoring personality transforms and interprets the information affecting him or her. As a result plans of life can be developed.

The self-authors develop as subjects depending on their standards. They do not approve of the role to objectify them even in extremely absorbing activities (identified with an established concept of themselves). However, if identification takes place, it is conscious and reflective, out of choice and a subject to control (Blachnio, 2003; Obuchowski, 2000, 2001, 2006).

Characteristics constructing a self-authoring person help to describe unique dimensions of its functioning such as: being a subject and being a person as well as a subjective evaluation standard. Abstract thinking, necessary in creating various flexible models of the world and personal identity, is a core of being a subject. This is a fundamental, permanent and dynamic process of critical interpretation of the outside world. At the same time it establishes attitudes towards it and designs appropriate plans of actions (aiming at a personally created vision of the world and himself). The self-author changes as she or he operationalises his or her complex visions of the world and themselves and gets involved in the tasks resulting from the personal philosophy (not only the wish to transform). The self-empowerment is a necessary condition to deal with oneself in the more and more permissive society and indifferent reality (Blachnio, 2003; Brygola, 2016; Obuchowski, 2006).

The essential characteristics of the self-authoring and the status of a person are: the psychological distance, the on-going development of personality, and a distinct purpose of life. An individual becomes a person as soon as he or she learns how to maintain psychological space and how to develop personality naturally following the chosen goal of life (Blachnio, 2003). The psychological distance defines the cognitive skills of personal control of characteristics that come from both the