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THE NEED FOR AUTHORITY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN EDUCATION AND AT A WORKPLACE

INTRODUCTION

The current pace and conditions of people's lives, the orientation towards consumptionism and the general turn to materialistic values make people be subject to the situation of constant change. The number of models of good behavior is reducing. The crisis of authority and reluctance to establishing relations with an authority cause the abandonment of traditional values in favor of the ones which are directed at achieving success. The postmodern concept of upbringing and education and all the actions involved in it cause the present-day younger generation to see authority as an obstacle, which prevents their personal development, or even hinders carving out their careers. The changes occurring in societies are creating a new quality of life. The mass culture has a considerable share in shaping people's views, attitudes and behaviors. A new hierarchy of values is developing, as well as a new approach to the matter of education and career. It is very often the media which create the images of idols, in many cases regarded as authorities or masters. A frequent matter of discussion nowadays is the crisis of authority, especially in the case of moral authorities. These are being substituted by the values represented by the authorities promoted in the media. Following all the assumptions above, there appears some questions: Does any need for authority exist nowadays? Who needs authorities and where are they needed? Do they still have any significance in education, including the university level and after graduation, or at workplace?

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THE TEACHER AUTHORITY AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

The word *authority* comes from Latin and means the influence, importance, respect which is attributed to particular people (Jasiński, 2012).

Today's educational system very often favors the matter of didactics over the matter of upbringing and is mainly focused on the development and repeated improvements of the curriculum. Various tests and exams check the students' ability to think schematically and retrieve their knowledge. As it comes to the teachers, the requirements include high qualifications, which should be constantly developed, as well as expertise on a particular subject. There is a tendency to forget the fact that the key to success is human personality and the ability to teach norms and values, which actually means upbringing. At the initial stages of education, the essential condition for students' engagement is their belief that the person who provides them with knowledge is not only an expert on the subject, but, above all, a human, who is trustworthy and acts according to the promoted values. Considering the teacher an authority, children and adolescents are more willing to study and want to deepen their knowledge. Nowadays, the teacher authority is subject to a certain kind of "erosion." The profession itself is a challenging one, which requires patience, understanding and professionalism from its representative. It is not easy to be a teacher, and it is even more difficult to be a real authority for the pupils. This is because the trick is not to enforce obedience using one's power or obligation. The trick is to live and work in a way that students, without any compulsion or obligation, would lay their trust in their master (Kołodziej, 2015). Therefore, the teacher authority should be constantly shaped – it is fostered by getting to know and understanding students, as well as getting to know and understanding yourself.

In the specialist literature numerous typologies of authority can be found. For the earliest stages of education, these are, among others: enslaving authority (non-authority), apparent authority (kind-of-authority), formal authority (anti-authority). To distinguish, the real authority, posing as a desirable quality in upbringing and education, is described as the pedagogical one (Jazukiewicz, 1999). The situation looks slightly different at the university level. Śnieżyński (2000), basing on the components of the authority of a university teacher, distinguished three types of authority: the knowledge-based authority, the authority based on the ability to teach knowledge and the personality-based authority. Developing authority by university teachers is a very difficult and complex process. The students, as people seeking their own path of life, set higher and higher requirements for their mentors. The challenge of the present-day higher education is to prepare young people for their best possible functioning in society and meeting the high requirements of the job market. It is important to shape students' personality in the direction of their multilateral and life-

long development. Success is possible to achieve only when interaction with a student is based on relations characterized by openness and respect (Kaczyńska, 2012).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AUTHORITY AT WORKPLACE

The authority at workplace might be based on:

- experience – when it stems from knowledge and skills;
- function – it is “specified” and is the result of the role performed by a given person;
- informal commitments – it is the result of agreements made in human relations;
- advantage and strength – it results from the relation of subordination and domination (Olender, 2012).

Employees frequently identify authority with an authoritarian personality. Authoritarian personality in practice does not mean a person who has an authority but a one who has got a specific attitude to the power exercised by themselves or others. It is usually an unyielding person, someone who feels secure when they have their own position in the social hierarchy, who is submissive to those at a higher level of hierarchy and who is domineering towards the others. In reality, the stronger a person's authority is, the less frequently one is forced to rely on their authoritarianism (Jazukiewicz, 1999). In large corporations, in fact, there must be appropriate distribution of roles, which is the direct consequence of the power of authority. In such a case, it is possible to base on both the authority given by organizational hierarchy (resulting from the position) and the authority which results from power (advantage and strength). However, ethical power should not be associated with a negative or even pathological desire to exert pressure on other employees, but with inspiring people's creativity as well as arousing their engagement. All these factors influence both the perception of the manager by employees and the improvement of an employee's effectiveness. A manager should provide favorable conditions for cooperation, not by the demonstration of power, but by adjusting the style of management to the organization and particular people (Ulrich, 2001). Therefore, similarly to the teacher authority, the manager authority is not permanently attributed to the occupied position. It is necessary to work on it constantly in order not to lose it.

THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

The crisis of authority may appear in the case of a young man at various stages of life and for a number of reasons. Following the development of personality, a human changes respected authorities. In the childhood, one is convinced about the effectiveness and reliability of the people from the closest environment. At this stage, a young man, usually without awareness, recognizes the authority of the parent, who is a person showing a greater effectiveness of actions, as well as having profound influence on the child's behavior, mentality and the overall life situation. The awareness of parental authority occurs only after the age of seven. It is also when the teacher authority begins to exist. The first symptoms of a critical attitude occur in the period of adolescence, when the willingness to criticize the immediate surrounding world strengthens. At this stage of life, situations, which require reasonable solutions from young people, tend to appear. Since they are not always able to manage these on their own, they often adopt ready solutions, even at the price of submission to another person. Such subordination to the will of the authority lasts until one finds a better, more effective and more comfortable way of solving a difficult situation. In this way, a human can follow one authority after another all life long. It is best if, doing so, one makes choices which can add to the enrichment of their personality. On account of these facts, the mental and physical development of a human being gives some assumptions for repeated cases of the crisis of certain authorities and adopting new ones. This process is considerably influenced by the mass culture and the media, which create images of idols, often identified with authorities. However, choosing one's idol not necessarily has a positive effect on a young man's personality.

An equally frequent problem occurring in the case of adolescents and adults could be the lack of models of good behavior to follow. The phenomenon of the disappearance of certain authorities occurs when the role played by the particular authorities is no longer up-to-date from the point of view of the dominating members of a group and their interests. Then there is a necessity to seek other models of behavior to follow – those who perform their functions better and meet adequate requirements (Kosmala, 1999).

PERCEPTION OF AUTHORITY IN PRACTICE – A SURVEY REPORT

The aim of the study was to investigate the significance of the authority for working students at a workplace and also their perception of the authority in education. The research problems were to:

- analyze if people nowadays need authorities and who it can be, in comparison to the past time;

- identify features of personality a teacher or a pedagogue should have in order to be regarded as an authority;
- analyze how the own authority can be build.

The survey was conducted on the students of the Management and Pedagogy course at Gnieźnińska Szkoła Wyższa Milenium. The questionnaire was responded to by 85 students, 62.4% of whose were students of the Pedagogy course, and 37.6% the students of the Management course. The majority of the respondents were women (85% of the surveyed). Taking into account the age of the surveyed, the most numerous group were people under the age of 25 (43.5%), followed by the age group 31–40 (27.1%) and 26–30 (24.7%). The least numerous group were people over the age of 40 (4.7%). The majority of people were employed in education (34.1%), office administration (18.8%) and state administration (14.1%). The respondents mostly worked in organizations employing 10–49 people (48.2%) and 50–99 people (20.0%).

The survey was conducted between 8th and 17th January 2016. It was based on a self-formulated questionnaire called *Authority in the Modern World*, which consisted of 12 questions and an index. The questions concerned the concept of authority, the matter of having an authority by the surveyed, the ways of developing one's own authority and the significance of authority at workplace. As for the index, it included questions which allowed to verify the respondents' sex, age, university course, employment branch as well as the size of the organization where they were employed. On account of the broadness of the study concerned, only partial results of the mentioned survey are presented in this article.

By most respondents, authority is identified with a person worth following or a model of behavior. On average, one of three of the surveyed understands authority as social credit and respect, which are attributed to a given person. A similar number of the respondents think such person is distinguished by a strong personality and intelligence. Also, one out of three of the surveyed is of the opinion that authority possesses broad knowledge in an area. For a small proportion of the surveyed, being an authority equals being an idol or having power. Detailed results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. The concept of authority from the respondents' perspective

Authority	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
A person worth following, model of behavior	81	95.3
Social credit and respect attributed to a given person	31	36.5
Being distinguished by a strong personality and intelligence	27	31.8

Authority	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Being distinguished by broad knowledge in an area	22	25.9
Ability to exert strong influence on others and convince them to his/her opinion	9	10.6
Connected with having power	4	4.7
Idol	4	4.7
Celebrity	0	0

Source: study of authors based on the survey.

According to an overwhelming majority of the respondents (over 94%), in order to be an authority for the others, you need to deserve it, whereas all the people surveyed answered that the modern society needs authorities.

For the majority of people, the past authority was a person from the close family. It is worth mentioning that for half of the surveyed that was a teacher at school. Moreover, one out of six people thinks their authority was a person from the world of culture and science as well as a university teacher. The results are displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Past authority in the respondents' opinions

In the past my authority was	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
A person from close family	57	67.1
School teacher	41	48.2
A person from the world of science and culture	14	16.5
University teacher	14	16.5
Employer	11	12.9
A person from the clergy	9	10.6
A person from the world of entertainment	8	9.4
Co-worker	7	8.2
Politician	4	4.7
Another person	4	4.7
I did not have an authority	2	2.4

Source: study of authors based on the survey.

The following question concerned present-day authorities and where these can be found. Half of the surveyed think such people can be met anywhere. One out of three of the surveyed stated it is actually the area around us where authorities can be found. Slightly more than 10% of the respondents are of the opinion that peo-

ple involved in education are those who are worth following. However, it must be mentioned that one out of ten people claims there are no real authorities nowadays. Detailed results are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Authority nowadays in the respondents' opinions

Where can a real authority be found?	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Anywhere	43	50.6
In the area around us	31	36.5
Among people involved in education	11	12.9
There are no real authorities nowadays	9	10.6
At workplace	5	5.9
In the world of the media	4	4.7
In politics	2	2.4
Somewhere else	1	1.2
In church	0	0

Source: study of authors based on the survey.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (92.9%) are of the opinion that a teacher should be an authority for students. Nobody answered in the negative and only a little over 7% of the surveyed had no view on this matter.

The results appear slightly different when it comes to the matter if an employer should be an authority for employees. Slightly more than 74% answered in the positive, but as much as nearly one in four respondents (23.5%) did not have a specified opinion on the issue. Also, two people answered that an employer does not need to be an authority for employees.

The authors were also interested which features of personality a teacher or a pedagogue should have in order to be regarded as an authority. It is worth mentioning that it was an open-ended question. A vast majority of the respondents think the most important feature is honesty, mentioned alternately with fairness (61% of the surveyed). One out of three people believes it is important to be an empathic person and to possess a broad knowledge in a given area. Slightly fewer of the surveyed indicated consistency (27%), being hard-working, optimism (15% each) and creativity (14%).

The final question concerned developing one's own authority in the eyes of others. The respondents were asked to specify in what way, while performing various roles at present and in the future, they are trying to build their authority. An overwhelming majority of the surveyed (nearly 90%) believe it is the most important to gain knowledge and education. One out of three people thinks it is behavior in accordance with generally respected values which is significant. The most frequently mentioned val-

ues were: the good, the truth, respect, responsibility, justice, empathy and tolerance. 20% of the surveyed stated that while developing your authority, you cannot neglect the features of personality. Among the most important features, the following ones appeared: fairness, optimism, sincerity, conscientiousness, patience, consistency, persistence and sensitivity to other people's needs.

SUMMARY

By a vast majority of the respondents, authority is identified with a model of behavior, a person worth following. A minimal number of the surveyed adopts the view that a synonym for an authority is an idol or celebrity. Similarly, few people identify authority with power. The survey confirmed that the contemporary society needs authorities and nowadays seeks them in the area around them.

The surveyed agreed that a teacher should be an authority for students, whereas only half of the surveyed met such a person over all the years of their school education. There appears to be a considerable change in this matter, since only one in ten respondents thinks people deserving to be called authorities might nowadays be found among educators. Such a person, in the respondents' view, should above all be characterized by honesty and empathy. What is also important is consistency in actions, which involves setting clear rules and enforcing them. One in three of the surveyed, beside significant features of personality necessary to deserve being called an authority, also mentioned knowledge in a given area. Also, university teachers are frequently perceived as a model of behavior for students, but in this case the requirements set for an authority are more specified. Apparently, the knowledge-based authority is the most important.

There also appears to be a crisis of authority, mainly associated with seeking new models of behaviour to follow. What is significant, seldom could such models be found at workplace. Although a vast majority of the respondents think an employer should be an authority, only less than 6% of the surveyed find authorities at workplace.

The situation looks different when it comes to developing their own authority by the people surveyed. What is worth consideration, the overwhelming majority of the surveyed want to build their authority by gaining knowledge and education, and to a lesser extent by behaving in accordance with generally approved values or by developing desirable features of personality.

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Keywords: authority, authoritarian personality, authority crisis

Abstract: This article addresses the issue of authority and explains its significance for a contemporary school, university and workplace. It briefly presents the theoretical aspects of authority together with their determinants. The problem of authority crisis has been addressed, as well as the role played by authority in the past and nowadays has been presented, in the context of the education and workplace of the people surveyed. The survey was conducted on professionally active students and was aimed at presenting the modern perception and position of authority in young employees' hierarchy of values, drawing attention to the connection between authority and power, and also showing the basis for building the authority of a teacher and an employer in the view of the people surveyed.

ZNACZENIE I POTRZEBA AUTORYTETU W EDUKACJI I W MIEJSCU PRACY

Słowa kluczowe: autorytet, osobowość autorytarna, kryzys autorytetu

Streszczenie: W niniejszym artykule poruszono problematykę autorytetu oraz wyjaśniano jego znaczenie we współczesnej szkole, na uczelni i w miejscu pracy. Pokrótkce zostały przedstawione teoretyczne aspekty autorytetu wraz z ich determinantami. Poruszony został problem kryzysu autorytetu, a także ukazana została rola, jaką odgrywał on kiedyś i jaką odgrywa obecnie w kontekście edukacji i miejsca pracy osób badanych. Badania ankietowe przeprowadzone wśród aktywnych zawodowo studentów miały na celu ukazanie współczesnego rozumienia i umiejscowienia autorytetu w systemie wartości młodych pracowników, wskazanie związku autorytetu z władzą, a także ukazanie podstaw budowania autorytetu nauczyciela i pracodawcy w opinii badanych osób.