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## **Theory of education and pedeutology in psychological approach - the perspective of personality and socio-emotional competences of the teacher and their importance in the educational process**

### **Teoria wychowania i pedeutologia w ujęciu psychologicznym – perspektywa osobowości i kompetencji społeczno-emocjonalnych nauczyciela oraz ich znaczenia w procesie wychowawczym**

**Abstract:** This article presents considerations on the significance of a teacher's personality in the educational process. The starting point was reflections on the special role of the modern teacher, and then – against the background of assumptions specific to the psychological orientation in the theory of education – the basic assumptions of classical pedeutological concepts of a teacher (J. Mirski, S. Szuman, Z. Mysłakowski, B. Nawroczyński, J. W. Dawid, M. Kreutz and S. Baley) were discussed. Particular attention was paid to the numerous references to the desired personality traits of a teacher and to the expectations formulated towards him regarding his broadly understood ability to establish positive relationships with students. Then, the results of these reflections were compared with the Big Five personality traits in terms of the Five-Factor Theory of Personality and with socio-emotional competences as a group of key competences from the perspective of building both intra- and interpersonal potential of a teacher.

**Keywords:** theory of education, pedeutology, teacher, student, personality, socio-emotional competences.

## **Introduction**

One of the key questions in contemporary education, which determines the directions of numerous discussions, debates as well as theoretical and empirical analyses conducted within the discipline, is undoubtedly that of: “How/who should a teacher be in order to effectively perform the duties ascribed to his or her professional role?”. This question may of course be formulated in numerous different ways – and regardless of their final content, they have a common denominator that is difficult to overlook, namely – an attempt to define (understand) what should characterise the person to whom we entrust the fate of successive generations of children and young people (cf. Szuman, 1959, pp. 73, 85-96). As for the great role, which teachers play in the lives of young people (with particular emphasis on their pre-school teacher and early childhood teacher-educator) (cf. Przetacznik-Gierowska and Tyszkowa, 2006, p. 68-70), there should no longer be any doubt in the light of the existing knowledge.

Naturally, reflections on this issue are not only typical for the present day – they can or even should be perceived as timeless and universal observations, as it would be difficult to indicate a place or a historical period, in which reflections on this issue would not accompany both the individuals employed in the broadly understood educational system or engaged in theoretical reflections on this matter (cf. Szuman, 1959, p. 73), as well as people who, not having any professional connections with this system, were keenly interested in its condition and its numerous consequences (both short- and long-term), reaching far beyond the walls of educational institutions and beyond the present, thus determining the future fate of the entire society. However, this question is gaining contemporary relevance, becoming even more applicable than before, as the world in the third decade of the 21st century – extremely complex and undergoing dynamic changes at a previously unknown rate – has become an arena of constant transformation in almost every sphere, and its reality is becoming more complicated day by day at an exponential pace (cf. Kwiatkowski, 2021, pp. 89-91). As a result, it requires an individual to have a broadly understood ability to adapt to new conditions and to react quickly and, above all, effectively to the changes taking place around them, to include new actions into their behavioural repertoire or to continuously modify or create from scratch the cognitive schemes/scripts within which they are implemented each day. Young people need, perhaps more than ever, help in confronting the numerous challenges resulting from the uncertainty accompanying them in their everyday life (rooted both in the unstable and changeable economic and political situation, as well as in

the social area becoming more complicated with time) and the ambiguity of various aspects of the surrounding reality. As a result, the scope of teacher's responsibility expands significantly (cf. Kwiatkowska, 2008, p. 12-14, 40-46) – representatives of this professional group are certainly among those who, while ensuring comprehensive development of children and youth, should equip young people with knowledge, skills and competences necessary to enable them to cope in everyday confrontation with the demands placed on them by their environment, as well as to be able to make the most of any opportunities they encounter in the course of their life.

Conducting considerations on the topic outlined above, it is certainly possible to adopt a variety of theoretical perspectives, characteristic of particular educational subdisciplines – from didactics, through work or intercultural education, to social education, however, in this article the focus is on the perspective introduced from the theses inherent to the theory of upbringing and pedeutology (also entering to some extent the area specific to the history of education). For both in the area of pedeutology and the theory of education, what is crucial from the analysed perspective, exists the psychological approach (psychological orientation) (Kwiatkowska, 2008, pp. 29-34; Śliwerski, 2021, pp. 231-233; cf. Nowak, 2008, pp. 88-89) – this is all the more important because, in the case of both of the aforementioned subdisciplines, the adoption of this interdisciplinary approach is related to the emphasis on the primary role of the teacher's personality in the educational process, defined as one that relates primarily to the emotional and motivational sphere of children and young people, consisting of making changes in its area and developing it through the influence on the psyche and behaviour of individuals (Łobocki, 1992, p. 10; cf. Zaborowski, 1967, p. 7; Przetacznik-Gierowska and Włodarski, 2014, p. 22). It is also worth referring to the definition proposed by Wincenty Okoń, according to which:

Education is one of the fundamental factors in the development of any society. It fulfils its tasks when it prepares the young generations to participate in the life and culture of society, the nation and humanity, to the wise reconstruction of this life and this culture, when it contributes to the production of socially desirable bonds that integrate a society, a nation, humanity. Imperfect or bad education – by being in conflict with these aims and contributing to social decay – becomes a contradiction in itself, for it is in the essence of education to make people better and societies better organised (Okoń, 1959, p. 5).

Despite the years that have gone by, this definition very accurately reflects the essence of the analysed process, and the elements it contains can certainly also be applied to the above-mentioned challenges of the present day.

### **Psychological approaches in the theory of education as a starting point for an analysis of pedeutological concepts of the teacher**

According to the definition of W. Okoń (2001, p. 401), already mentioned in the introduction, the theory of education is “one of the fundamental educational sciences, dealing with the problem of aims, content, methods and organisation of moral, social, aesthetic and physical education”. Bogusław Śliwerski (2021, p. 206) develops this definition and notes that the object of research of the theory of education is “systematised, coherent and ordered knowledge about education, its aims, contents, methods, forms, means and conditions” – it is the last of these elements that is of particular importance from the perspective of the considerations presented in this article, since the previously mentioned teacher’s personality (along with numerous internal factors/properties related to it) can unquestionably be included among the key determinants of the course of the process of education, the effectiveness of the actions undertaken within its framework and the nature (positive vs. negative) of its consequences. For it seems natural that who a person is and what he or she represents, is the central – from the point of view of causation – element of this process, determines in an obvious way the results achieved within its scope (cf. Kreutz, 1959, p. 122-123). It is also worth referring in this context to the view of Marian Nowak (2008, p. 131), who, in reference to the essence of the subdiscipline in question, emphasised that it focuses on “human personality and goals related to its development, on individual spheres of personality (including the emotional and motivational sphere) and on individual elements of the structure of the educational process” (ibid., p. 16). On the one hand, there can be no doubt that what is at stake here is, first and foremost, the personality of the student-pupil and the inner qualities connected with it, which, together with the central psychic construct, i.e. personality, determine both the level of pupils’ school achievements related primarily to their cognitive sphere, as well as their extra cognitive development in the broadest sense, with the social and emotional sphere at the forefront, which is of paramount importance – also from the point of view of school achievements. On the other hand, however, it is fully justified to state that it is also about the personality of the teacher-educator, which, as mentioned above, should not only be described – e.g. in terms of a set of

ideal qualities (cf. Kwiatkowska, 2008, p. 29), which he or she should possess, but also analysed from the point of view of the importance of its structure (i.e. the intensity of particular traits comprising it) for the quality/effectiveness of the teaching-learning process, or – to put it in a somewhat broader perspective – for the process of education, although, as Mieczysław Kreutz stated, “with regard to children and young people, teaching merges with education into a single, inseparable entity” (1959, p. 128). For the teacher’s personality determines not only his or her general ability to exert the desired influence on pupils, but also, and of no less significance, by determining a number of his or her internal qualities which are fundamental from an interpersonal point of view, is a key factor determining the nature of the relationship he or she establishes with them over time. It should also not be forgotten that “the educator with his or her personality forms and shapes the personality of the pupils” (Szuman, 1959, p. 97).

The value of the teacher-student relationship is reflected in the core assumptions of the psychological orientation inherent in the theory of education – it emphasises the special place of the educational setting, seen as a set of interactions (various stimuli and factors) with the pupil, undertaken in order to achieve previously set educational goals (cf. Nowak, 2008, p. 311-314). Of great relevance, within the framework of the discussed approach, are the interpersonal relations between the educator and the pupil (teacher and student) considered to be a factor of central significance, crucial from the perspective of the effectiveness of the educational process (Śliwerski, 2021, p. 232). At the same time, it should be borne in mind that it is the teacher-educator is the adult participant in this relationship who, on the one hand, respects the younger interaction partner, of course, and does not question his or her subjectivity and active role in the dialogue, while, on the other hand, takes on the main part of responsibility of establishing this relationship and successively maintaining and strengthening it. Thus, he or she should have the competences necessary to achieve this fundamental goal (the group of competences on which special emphasis should be placed in this context is described later in the article). It should be made clear that failure on the part of the teacher in this sensitive area, resulting, among other things, in his or her inability to create an atmosphere of security, mutual understanding and trust in the school classroom and in the individual relationship with each pupil, can have extremely negative consequences, not only in the sphere of the pupils’ cognitive development, but also in terms of their abilities, which are rooted in the broader social and emotional sphere. It should be emphasised that deficits in each of these areas may entail a reduced ability

of students to face – both during their school years and later in life – the aforementioned challenges and threats in the dynamically changing fluid reality surrounding them.

Moreover, according to the fundamental assumptions adopted within the psychological orientation in the theory of education, the objectives of the activities carried out in the area of this subdiscipline include, among others, a description and classification of various facts and educational phenomena as well as identification and explanation of existing relationships between them on the one hand, while on the other a formulation of various directives of practical nature, aimed not only at enriching the knowledge of the widely understood educational process, but also at shaping the attitudes of the pupils (Śliwerski, 2021, p. 231). Such an approach to the discussed issues provides a complete justification for considerations and analyses relating to the teacher's personality in the broadest sense and the internal properties related to it (especially those that condition his or her ability to build desirable relations and shape the already mentioned emotional and motivational sphere of the students entrusted to his or her care). The reason behind it is that this construct exerts an influence that is difficult to overestimate on the implementation of the aforementioned tasks defined within the psychological perspective on the theory of education, especially when it comes to recommendations for educational practice (e.g. with regard to the inclusion of personality diagnosis of candidates for teacher preparation studies – cf. Kwiatkowski, 2019). At the same time, it should be noted that – as Bogusław Śliwerski emphasised referring to the position adopted by Mieczysław Łobocki (2021, p. 232) – “the source of the theory of education should be (...) diagnostic studies of the features and dynamics of the functioning of educational facts and phenomena (...), as well as one's own pedagogical experience in the education of children and young people”. Therefore, it is worthwhile to give due attention to the already emphasised issue of the personal ideal of the teacher, which occupies an exposed place in the psychological approach characteristic of pedeutology. It can be assumed that it is the teacher's personality that is the key factor conditioning the educational activity undertaken by him or her. This personality, taking the form of, among other things, shaping attitudes and characters of children and young people, as well as activities aimed at creating conditions for young people's self-development and strengthening their potential in the mental or social and emotional area, can be treated – according to the position expressed by M. Nowak (2008, p. 135) – as the primary object of interest of the theory of education.

**A psychological (personalistic) approach in pedeutology – the teacher as a structure of ideal personality traits**

Józef Mirski, one of the pioneers of Polish pedeutology, stated almost a century ago (referring to a central concept in the theory of education) that ‘the second monumental discovery in the field of education – next to the child – is the discovery of the personality of the educator’ (1932, p. 852). This reference to the breakthrough discovery of the child, which occurred at the end of the 19th century for modern education, vividly demonstrates the importance that was already attributed to the personality of the teacher at that time (cf. Baley, 1959, pp. 185-186). Reflecting on the essence of the teacher’s work and dividing the activities carried out within its framework into those undertaken on the basis of the technical principle and those undertaken on the basis of the creative one, J. Mirski clearly indicated that the more creative character the teacher’s activity has, the greater, from the point of view of its results, is the importance of his or her personality (*ibid.*, p. 848). Referring to the considerations in the introduction, it should be strongly emphasised that in the era of the exponentially complicating and extremely complex reality of the 21st century, which consequently makes the teacher’s everyday work increasingly vague (cf. Kwiatkowska, 2008, p. 11), and this entails a natural and unavoidable gradual decrease in the importance and frequency of activities of a technical nature, consisting of repetitive, imitative activities undertaken on the basis of previously created schemes, it is the teacher’s creative activities, rooted in his or her personality and drawing on its richness (cf. Szuman, 1959, p. 98), that come to the fore, constituting the basic and most desirable type of behaviour for representatives of this professional group. It should therefore be assumed that, as time passes and the world around us continues to change dynamically, the significance of the teacher’s personality will only increase – in direct proportion to the gradual reduction of the role of teaching activities of a strict technical nature, resembling in their essence activities performed at the factory production line.

Therefore, it is worth referring to the views and theses of the most prominent representatives of the psychological approach in pedeutology, which, despite the time that has passed, remain in many respects relevant and can serve as a basis for building a kind of matrix – a model of an ideal teacher (cf. Wołoszyn, 1993, p. 11; Okoń, 1959, pp. 5-15).

The first of them, Stefan Szuman, used the already mentioned term of “richness of personality”, and in his reflections on the teacher he referred – similarly to the already mentioned J. Mirski – to the category of creativity. He stressed that “educational activity is, to a greater or lesser extent, an



autonomous creativity, and in this, again, it is similar to artistic creativity, in that one has to have something to say, something to give, something to express, something to do, in order for a work of art to come into being, and certainly not if one wants to educate (...). A work of art emerges from the artist's personality as a 'child of their psyche', as an expression of something they possess" (Szuman, 1959, p. 101). Therefore, S. Szuman perceived the effects of pedagogical activity, which can be identified with the already mentioned educational activity in terms of the theory of education, as a specific work of art – in other words, he defined a work of art as the results of the teacher's positive influence on the students entrusted to his or her care, rooted in his or her personality. He strongly emphasised that:

In the teaching profession, the personality of the educator plays a significant role. For the teacher is not a soulless reservoir of knowledge, nor a spoken textbook, nor a vessel in which knowledge is mechanically deposited and accumulated so that it is, as it were, poured out again mechanically into – for the time being – even less capacious vessels, which are the minds of the pupils. (...) A real teacher and educator is not just a mere intermediary between knowledge and the pupil, between the curriculum and its execution, between the social aims and norms of education and their implementation, but an autonomous educating individual who teaches and educates always with his or her style and manner, with his or her personality (Szuman, 1959, p. 90).

Significantly, when describing the model of a teacher, S. Szuman applied the category of talent (*ibid.*, pp. 78-85), which he defined as a set of certain abilities that enable an individual to perform particular activities at a high level, stressing at the same time that "one of the measures of ability is the above-average intensity of a trait" (*ibid.*, p. 78) – at the same time, it should be strongly emphasised that he linked the talent for teaching precisely with the teacher's personality, as evidenced by the following words:

Yes, I admit that some people are more predisposed to the teaching profession than others. They are outstanding teachers not only on the basis of their education and training in this area, but because of their innate nature, which makes it easier for them to do so, against the background of a special personality structure that is in perfect harmony with the functions and aims of the teaching and educational profession. The question of pedagogical talent can therefore



be reduced to the question of the teacher's personality, from which, if it is adequate, the talented teacher, as the main source, draws the possibility of outstanding activity in his or her profession (Szuman, 1959, p. 83).

S. Szuman further stressed that the essence of the talent of teaching lies in the ability of the educator to emerge his or her own pedagogical talent from the personality structure at his or her disposal (*ibid.*, p. 89; cf. Baley, 1959, pp. 186-190). He also emphasised that the image of outstanding teaching and education does not consist of the specific didactic or educational methods that a given teacher applies on a daily basis, but "his or her personal way of using the methods addressed theoretically by general and specific didactics and the theory of education of the student's personality" (Szuman, 1959, p. 86). At the same time, he pointed out that while, on the one hand, the personality structure does not have to be identical or even similar in all teachers who can be described as gifted (*ibid.*, pp. 81, 89), yet in order to be able to speak of an outstanding teacher, such person should have a rich personality (*ibid.*, pp. 98-99), encompassing its extensive resources, and the ability to use these resources effectively during work with students, based on the willingness of the teacher to share what he or she has at his or her disposal along with the necessary competences to do so, and whether he or she enjoys and is satisfied with the activities undertaken in this area. With reference to the considerations developed later in this article, it should be emphasised that among all the types of competences that can be considered decisive in terms of a teacher's ability to share "the richness of his or her personality" with students, the most prominent is undoubtedly the social and emotional competences that determine, among other things, the quality of the interpersonal relations established by the teacher.

Yet another from among Polish pedeutologists, who – like the already mentioned S. Szuman – used the category of talent in the model teacher's description, was Zygmunt Mysłakowski. He proposed a different definition of talent, according to which it is "an innate psycho and physiological disposition, due to which an individual is able to perform certain specific types of activity or production more efficiently than when engaged in something else" (Mysłakowski, 1959, p. 61). As can easily be seen, in contrast to the concept of S. Szuman, in Mysłakowski's approach talent is not a malleable construct that can be shaped and developed through well-chosen interactions, which makes it easy to associate it with those contemporary approaches to personality in which the traits forming it are not subject, apart from exceptional situations, to changes resulting from external influences (cf. McCrae, Costa, Ostendorf,

Angleitner, Hrebickova, Avia, Sanz and Sanchez-Bernardos, 2000, pp. 175-176; see also Szuman, 1959, p. 80; Kwiatkowski, 2018, pp. 189-192). It should be emphasised, however, that both the aforementioned pedeutologists agreed that the talent for teaching is determined not so much by the teacher's resources – which, naturally enough, must nevertheless be quite significant, but above all by the teacher's inherent ability to make use of them in the course of his or her daily school work. According to Z. Mysłakowski – it was to be made possible by the disposition he referred to as contactability, defined as a factor determining the establishment of a close, personal and authentic relationship with another human being, or – in other words – a peculiar “harmonisation of the person educating with the person being educated” (Baley, 1959, p. 192). Such an understanding of contactability consists of the following components: (a) the parental instinct, enabling the teacher to participate in feeling and going through the experiences of his or her pupils, (b) the ability to express feelings, making the teacher perceived by his or her pupils as an authentic person, which makes him or her likely to become close to them, (c) vividness of imagination, which facilitates understanding and empathising with the mental state of the pupil as a partner in the interaction (this component can be identified with empathy, which is essential when working with others), (d) outward orientation of the psyche, which – with reference to the concept of the Big Five personality traits mentioned later in this article – can be identified with extrovertedness (cf. Baley, 1959, p. 192) and with at least one of the components of agreeableness, altruism, as it conditions the teacher's various prosocial behaviours (Mysłakowski, 1959, pp. 66-67).

The category of talent and the underlying personality also appeared in the deliberations of Bogdan Nawroczyński (1996, pp. 822-823), who defined it as a permanent disposition “to efficient and effective fulfilment of teaching and educational activities”, comprising of five components: a) bodily and psychophysical conditions, b) emotional dispositions, c) social dispositions, d) intellectual, manual and technical dispositions, e) organisational and administrative dispositions.

Referring back to the earlier considerations, such as those conducted with respect to S. Szuman's approach, special attention should be paid to the fact in which B. Nawroczyński also placed particular emphasis on those elements of the talent for teaching, which, according to the psychological orientation in the theory of education, determine the teacher's ability to establish such a relationship with students, which in a specific educational situation will enable him or her to optimally implement the educational aims he or she has set. These are, of course, the aforementioned social and

emotional dispositions, which can be identified with both personality (as its foundation) as well as social and emotional competences, which are largely built on the basis of this construct. It is also worth mentioning that in the approach proposed by B. Nawroczyński, talent is inextricably linked to the teacher's ability and readiness to share with the students entrusted to his or her care something that he described as "a part of one's own soul", which evokes natural associations with the key elements of the approach proposed by S. Szuman.

During an analysis of the visions of the ideal teacher conceived within the psychological framework of *pedeutology*, it is undoubtedly impossible to omit its pioneer, Jan Władysław Dawid, who emphatically stressed that "in no profession is a human being so important as in the teaching profession" (1912, p. 5), because it is no one else, but the teacher, who is unquestionably the causal factor of the entire process of education. The term that constitutes a kind of keyword to describe J. W. Dawid's views is undoubtedly the "love of human souls", which he defined as the central point (core/essence) of an authentic teaching vocation, encompassing a sense of spiritual togetherness and unity with other people. Referring to the model teacher, he stated the following:

If one had to choose between a teacher who has a great deal of professional knowledge, who has learned the psychology, methods and techniques of education, but to whom this love of souls is a complete stranger, and one who, on the other hand, having very little knowledge and a lack of methodical preparation, has in himself a lively and practised sense of spiritual community, who embraces the souls of his pupils with his own and loves them as his own; if one had to choose between the two, the priority would absolutely go to the latter. But there is no need to choose, there is no either/or. On the contrary, a teacher who has a well-developed inner life and feels his spiritual fellowship with his pupils, has at the same time a strong sense of responsibility, duty, the need for perfection (Dawid, 1912, p. 9).

Thus, J. W. Dawid emphasised that a teacher characterised by love of souls is capable of surrounding pupils (and others) with genuine care and of undertaking disinterested actions on their behalf and for their good, and it is natural for him or her to have the ability to "sympathise, mutually permeate, give their own and participate in others' spiritual states, striving for conformity, harmony and unity with the spiritual life of others" (Dawid, 1912, p. 6; cf. Okoń, 1993, p. 44). It is difficult not to see in his views a particular focus

on the interpersonal sphere and on the importance of those inner qualities of the teacher that play a decisive role in building relationships with students. For only a teacher with the appropriate intensity of social and emotional competences (or dispositions, as B. Nawroczyński called them) will be able to achieve such a level of understanding of the significance of his or her actions and involvement in work with students that will allow him or her to meet the model outlined by J. W. Dawid.

It is also worth referring – as if in relation to the definition cited earlier – to J. W. Dawid's view of education, which he defined as follows:

Education is a natural process, something that becomes what it only can and must become according to the laws governing the physical and spiritual organism of a human being. But in the whole matter there is at the same time an active guiding force to which the causally and mechanically conditioned forces are subordinated: a plan, a pattern and an idea of what is to happen, what should happen. This model, this idea, is personified by the educator – who consciously, or most often unconsciously, wants the pupil to become like them, to make their type real, only more perfect, without their shortcomings and weaknesses, richer and higher by the experience that life has brought them (*ibid.*, p. 5).

The quoted words of J. W. Dawid undoubtedly confirm his view on the subject of teacher selflessness, and, moreover, they express his conviction about the necessary altruism among the representatives of this profession, which was already mentioned when discussing the concept of Z. Mysłakowski. Referring to the already mentioned, one of the main tasks facing the contemporary teacher, i.e. to prepare students to effectively face the challenges characteristic of the surrounding reality and to respond to the dangers inherent in it, it should be emphasised that this mission can only be properly fulfilled by a teacher in whom there is not even a shadow of jealousy of his or her pupils – of their potential or of the opportunities they face – only then will he or she be able to fully share with them all that he or she has to offer, regardless of whether we call it, following the example of S. Szuman, the richness of his or her personality, or in any other way, and thus enable them to achieve a higher level of excellence than he or she was given. This is why, among other things, J. W. Dawid so strongly emphasised the fact that “the teacher – bad man is a contradiction in the term itself, an impossibility” (*ibid.*, p. 6; cf. Śliwerski, 2009, p. 38).

The focal point of J. W. Dawid's concept was referred to by the aforementioned M. Kreutz, who – assuming that the love of human souls has too narrow of a scope of meaning – proposed the notion of love of “people together with the soul and the body, which constitute an inseparable psychophysical whole” (1959, p. 133), reflecting the causal power of the teacher's influence on his or her pupils. In his proposed approach, M. Kreutz attributed great value to the so-called propensity for social influence (agitational propensity) – according to his definition: “one who possesses an inclination to influence, who likes to influence others, that is, who performs the relevant activities willingly, with pleasure, and not only out of duty, but at every opportunity, and even independently seeks opportunities to influence others, and this regardless of age, degree of education, etc., as widely as possible” (Kreutz, 1959, p. 140). An important element of the approach proposed by M. Kreutz is also the so-called suggestive ability, which he referred to as a personality trait of foremost importance for the educational influence of the teacher on his or her pupils and defined it as a disposition that makes it possible to realise the teacher's potential, thus determining the strength of his or her educational prowess. Crucially, he emphasised that the love of people, central to his approach, together with the inclination to social influence, can only be activated and used in a desirable way by the teacher if he or she possesses a high level of the ability in question (1959, pp. 149-159). It is also worth noting that, similar to S. Szuman, M. Kreutz was of the opinion that “outstanding teachers may have very different personalities, and only a few traits must be the same, namely those traits which condition educational influence” (1959, p. 126).

In the line of pedeutological considerations outlined so far, there is also an undeniable approach proposed by Stefan Baley, who made the focal point of his author's concept of the ideal (model) of a teacher the so-called educational ability (suitability) which enables representatives of this profession to effectively influence pupils in a way that will optimally contribute to their comprehensive development, which is “a set of all characteristics that enable and facilitate education” (Baley, 1959, p. 192). Among the components of the ability defined in this manner, he included (*ibid.*, pp. 196-204): a) sympathy for pupils (friendliness towards them), b) sympathy towards children and the ability to understand the mental states experienced by them (which can be regarded as the ability to empathise), c) an approach focused on taking care of the pupils in a systematic manner, d) being one of the so-called social types (people belonging to this group find contact with other people rewarding) (cf. Kwiatkowski, 2018, p. 200), e) feeling a spiritual affinity towards

pupils, f) patience, g) tactfulness, understood as “the ability to interact with people in such a way that does not lead to conflicts nor to offending those involved in the contact” (ibid., p. 201), h) the ability to firmly demand certain things from pupils, which can also be described as assertiveness (nowadays seen as one of the components of extrovertedness), i) persuasive abilities and finally – j) enthusiasm. S. Baley was of the opinion that a teacher who possesses an above-average level of each of the distinguished components constituting educational ability can be described as an “integral educator” (ibid., pp. 206-207). It should be noted, moreover, that in his proposed view, “the teacher-educator is not a collection of these or other qualities, but is a certain personality with a specific, more or less homogeneous structure. (...) The simple compilation or enumeration of a long series of traits, supposedly characteristic of the teacher-educator’s psyche, gives the impression of something artificial, soulless. The qualities of a human being in general, and thus also of a teacher-educator, are not separate entities, enclosed in themselves, but enter into various relationships and dependencies with each other” (ibid., p. 183).

### **Teacher personality from a contemporary perspective with reference to the Five-Factor Theory of Personality**

From a contemporary point of view on teacher personality, an interesting perspective can be provided by referring to one of the most popular personality concepts of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, namely the Five-Factor Model of Personality (FFM) of Paul T. Costa and Robert R. McCrae (McCrae and Costa, 1987, pp. 81-89; cf. McCrae and John, 1992, pp. 175-194) and confronting its assumptions with the previously cited depictions of the teacher as a set of ideal traits – while taking into account the aforementioned view of S. Baley, according to which it is not necessarily the traits themselves that should be analysed, but rather the potential relationships between them.

Within the FFM, five traits (the so-called Big Five personality traits) have been identified as the basic building blocks of personality which are found in all people (McCrae and John, 1992, pp. 171-181): Neuroticism, Extrovertedness, Openness (to experience), Agreeableness and Conscientiousness – each of these traits represents a dimension on which it is possible (based on the results of a test conducted with an appropriate diagnostic tool) to place each person tested – regardless of their gender, age, background, etc. Low scores indicate proximity to one end of the continuum, while high scores indicate proximity to the opposite end. It should be added that each of the

Big Five traits is made up of six components (building blocks), indicating specific aspects and areas of each trait (these are listed within the bullet points outlined below). We will not go into a detailed description of the Big Five traits and what results from a particular intensity or configuration of these traits, as many studies have been devoted to this issue so far (cf. Polczyk, 2009; Szpitalak and Polczyk, 2009; Siuta, 2009; Ziółkowska, 2009; Hołda, 2009), however, from the point of view of the reflections included in the earlier parts of this text on the desired shape of the teacher's personality, it is certainly worth conducting a kind of confrontation and considering what – in the light of the presented pedeutological concepts – the intensity of each of them should be (cf. Kwiatkowski, 2018, pp. 193-215):

1. **Neuroticism** should, without a shadow of a doubt, score as low as possible – it is suffice to say that highly neurotic people (also referred to – quite significantly – as emotionally unstable/unbalanced people) are characterised by a high tendency to nervousness and to experiencing negative emotions (anger, guilt, sadness, fear, embarrassment). They also manifest a tendency to react with strong anxiety, tension and to worry, in addition to frequently experiencing anger and hostile states. And if we take into account the components of neuroticism – anxiety, depression, impulsivity, hypersensitivity, excessive self-criticism and aggressive hostility – it seems obvious that a teacher – especially one whose profile the aforementioned researchers tried to outline – should not have them at his or her disposal in high intensity – both for his or her own sake and, crucially, for the sake of the children and young people entrusted to his or her care.
2. **Extraversion** is undoubtedly one of the characteristics of the Big Five to which reference can be found in each of the pedeutological concepts cited above – in the light of their theses, both this characteristic and each of its components (activity, assertiveness, sociability, friendliness, positive emotions and sensation-seeking) should exist in the teacher in the highest possible intensity. Naturally, one cannot go so far as to say that an introverted teacher will not be successful in his or her profession (cf. Baley, 1959, p. 185; Szuman, 1959, pp. 92-94) – this would be a far-reaching abuse and an unauthorised generalisation. Referring to S. Baley's position referring to the components of contactability in Z. Mysłakowski's view: "vividness of imagination and emotional excitability do not necessarily coincide with extroversion; in the



same way, an increased degree of parental instinct does not seem to be the monopoly of extroverts” (1959, p. 192). However, if we look at the problem from the point of view of a purely technical compatibility with the pattern presented earlier, the emphasis on a high level of extroversion seems more than justified. It is enough to say that both according to the concept by J. W. Dawid and the love of souls postulated by him, as well as following M. Kreutz’s approach and the tendency to social influence described by him, according to S. Szuman and the outward orientation of the psyche he mentioned, or educational tact requiring, among other things, a sense of humour and distance from oneself (Szuman, 1959, p. 95), or, finally, in the context of sociability as defined by Z. Mysłakowski, it is difficult to expect the criteria they set to be met without a sufficiently high level of cordiality, sociability or experiencing positive emotions such as happiness, joy, excitement or, finally, love, so strongly present in the concepts described. Furthermore, and crucially in the light of the preceding discussion, extrovertedness can be seen as a factor that has a considerable impact on the development of social and emotional competence.

3. **Openness to experience**, similarly to extraversion, should be on a high level in the case of teachers, as it determines their curiosity – both about the external world and about themselves, i.e. the internal world (this intrapersonal aspect should be connected to a high level of self-awareness, which is one of the components of social and emotional competences), and it is also connected to the tendency to search for diverse experiences and to value them positively, which appears to be an extremely important element of coping with the dynamics of the modern world, which teachers should constantly strengthen in their pupils. Each of the components of openness, i.e. openness to new activities, ideas, values and feelings (experienced emotional states), imagination and aesthetics, should be present in the teacher in high intensity. At the same time, it is worth emphasising that openness to experience can, at least to some extent, be identified with vividness of imagination in the view of Z. Mysłakowski, which may also constitute a significant argument in favour of the presented position.
4. **Agreeableness** is a trait to which special attention should be paid in the analysed context, because next to extroversion, which plays

the role of unquestionable leader in this area, it is significantly related to the individual's interpersonal tendencies. Since agreeable people can be described as altruists (which easily links this trait to the opinion expressed by J. W. Dawid in his definition of education cited above) ready to help people and give them sympathy, it seems natural to conclude that this trait should be present in high intensity in the case of teachers. In support of this, there is a list of components of this trait for which it is impossible to find a single one that could be considered desirable other than a high level: trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty and sensitivity. Referring again to the approach proposed by J. W. Dawid and to the point of view of M. Kreutz – is it possible to imagine the love of human souls or the love of human beings without the participation of agreeableness so understood, constructed from such significant elements? The same is true of the parental instinct as understood by Z. Mysłakowski or the disinterested sharing of the riches of one's own personality in the perspective adopted by S. Szuman.

5. **Conscientiousness** is a personality dimension that reflects an individual's attitude towards work in the broadest sense (cf. Kreutz, 1959, p. 126), by determining the degree of perseverance inherent in it, the level of organisation of the activities undertaken and the motivation manifested by the individual in activities directed towards the achievement of an accepted goal. Moreover, if we take into account the fact that a strong intensity of this trait goes hand in hand with broadly understood reliability, sense of responsibility, productivity, perseverance, prudence or a high sense of self-efficacy and own competence, as well as the ability to plan, organise and diligently implement a variety of tasks, it seems natural to conclude that a modern teacher should absolutely possess it. Otherwise, it is difficult to imagine an optimal performance of the tasks ascribed to his or her professional role and meeting the needs of contemporary children and young people – also in the context of preparing them for future challenges and threats – without having each of the above characteristics and the individual components of conscientiousness at his or her disposal (self-discipline, rationality, competence, striving for achievement, dutifulness and orderliness).

In reference to S. Baley's thesis quoted above, it should be emphasised that the proposal presented above should be approached holistically – the individual traits, together with the ascribed desired intensity, should therefore be treated not as separate characteristics of the individual, but as basic elements of his psychic structure, remaining in inseparable relations with one another, forming a specific structure. Of course, it should also be noted that the appropriate intensity of the Big Five traits should be treated in terms of a kind of starting point – a foundation on which teachers can build their individual talent for teaching and the educational influence rooted in it, in order to then successfully perform the various functions ascribed to their professional role (cf. Nowak, 2008, pp. 309-310).

Each of the Big Five personality traits may play a huge role in the work of a modern teacher, however – referring again to the psychological orientation in the theory of education and to the interpersonal aspect of each of the cited pedeutological concepts – special emphasis should certainly be placed on those that play a key role from the perspective of the key factor critical for the effectiveness of the educational process, which is building and then maintaining and strengthening the interpersonal relationship between the teacher-educator and the pupil-student. It does not change the fact, however, that each of the Big Five personality traits (in the case of neuroticism, of course, it is its low intensity equivalent to emotional stability) can be treated as a factor significantly conditioning the group of competences determining the shape and quality of the teacher-student relationship, which are the already mentioned social and emotional competences, which can be seen as a prerequisite for establishing such a relationship with students, which in their concepts were mentioned by the pioneers of Polish pedeutology.

### **Teachers' social and emotional competence as a foundation for positive relationships in the classroom**

The subsection on the theory of education points out that, while the focal point of this subdiscipline is – within the area analysed here – the personality of the pupil, when it comes to influencing pupils in the broadest sense, the personality of their teacher-educator is also undoubtedly of key importance. An analogous relationship can be found in the case of social and emotional competences rooted in personality, as the main emphasis in the literature is, of course, on developing them in children and adolescents (cf. CASEL, 2015), however, in order for this to be possible, this process must certainly be the responsibility of a teacher who has a sufficiently high level of them on their own (cf. Olechowska, Szplit and Zbróg, 2024) – otherwise it

would be difficult to expect significant success in this highly sensitive field. Just as it would be difficult to require an illiterate person to teach someone to write, it would be unrealistic to expect someone lacking empathy or awareness of his or her own emotions to successfully develop this type of competence in anyone else.

Social and emotional competences are defined as the attitudes, behaviours and skills that both children and adolescents and adults should possess in order to effectively manage their cognitive, social and affective spheres (Yoder, 2014, p. 2; cf. Kwiatkowski, 2021, pp. 101-104) – with reference to the considerations in the introduction, it should be noted that they serve an immensely imperative role in an individual's coping with the broader demands of their environment. There are five core social and emotional competencies, consisting of a number of components (CASEL, 2015, p. 9; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich and Gullotta, 2015, pp. 4-5).

**1. Self-awareness**, including:

- accurate estimation of one's own strengths and weaknesses,
- labelling of emotions (identification of positive and negative, favourable and unfavourable emotions, etc.) and knowledge of the triggers,
- a sense of self-efficacy and realistic self-evaluation,
- recognising the interrelationships linking emotions, thoughts and behaviour,
- optimism.

**2. Self-management**, consisting of:

- self-control (including control of attention processes),
- emotion regulation,
- coping with stress – generated by both intra- and interpersonal factors,
- setting, monitoring the implementation and then persistently achieving positive life goals (despite obstacles and difficulties),
- the ability to self-motivate (self-discipline/self-motivation) and to make constructive use of feedback on the level of performance of individual tasks – short and long-term (both personal and educational/school or professional).

**3. Social awareness**, the components of which are:

- feeling and showing empathy,
- showing respect for other people, as well as respect for diversity and difference,
- accepting and understanding different points of view,
- understanding social and ethical norms of behaviour,

- identifying potential family, school and local sources of resources and support.

**4. Interpersonal skills (relationship management),** including:

- communication competence,
- establishing and then maintaining interpersonal relationships that are positive and beneficial to all parties involved,
- cooperation and collaboration aimed at achieving common goals,
- preventing problems and conflicts from arising and, when they do arise, resolving them,
- adopting an assertive attitude (encompassing the ability to resist unwanted social pressure and to say no to others in a socially acceptable way) and the ability to take the initiative (leadership behaviour) when the situation demands it,
- seeking and offering help when needed by interaction partners.

**5. Responsible decision-making,** based on:

- decision-making that takes into account the well-being of oneself and others,
- awareness of one's duty to act in conformity with the ethical standards in force,
- being guided by considerations of safety in the decision-making process,
- assessing the potential consequences of possible behaviour,
- using problem-solving abilities – if necessary – during the decision-making process,
- analysing the current situation with a view to identifying the key problems to be solved or the main objectives to be achieved,
- making constructive, informed and safe choices for everyone involved, including generating alternative ideas and solutions.

Upon looking at the above list, it is quite easy to see how strongly the competences distinguished within its framework, together with their components, are related to the postulates contained in the aforementioned pedagogical concepts relating to who a teacher should be and what resources he or she should have available. The key connections in this area have already been hinted at earlier, but nevertheless it is worth making it clear at this point, as a kind of summary, that there are strong connections here with both the love of human souls as seen by J. W. Dawid, love of people and the tendency to social influence as seen by M. Kreutz or contactability as seen by Z. Mysłakowski (in each of these cases, it is primarily a matter of convergence with the area of social awareness and interpersonal skills,

although components of the other three core competences should also undoubtedly be taken into account here, to mention responsible decision-making, which is crucial from an interpersonal perspective), as well as with the richness of personality described by S. Szuman. Szuman, which – as can be assumed – may be largely determined by the level of his self-awareness and ability to manage himself, which may be seen in terms of the key sources of his intrapersonal resources that he can share with his pupils. On the other hand, referring to the concept of S. Baley's concept, it can be assumed that the elements of educational ability distinguished by him overlap to a significant extent with many components of social and emotional competences (e.g. the kindness/friendliness towards pupils mentioned by him, showing them sympathy/empathy or, finally, feeling spiritual affinity towards them can be logically juxtaposed with the components of social awareness).

## **Conclusion**

The considerations presented in the previous parts of this article make it possible – at least to some extent – to answer the question posed in the introduction. It can be assumed that a teacher – if he or she is to be able to fulfil the duties ascribed to his or her professional role in an optimal and effective manner – should be distinguished by such a personality trait and the intensity of the related social and emotional competences that will enable him or her to fulfil one of the basic goals of the teacher, which is to establish a relationship with his or her pupils based on kindness, understanding, sympathy, respect and empathy. As pointed out earlier, an appropriate and positive interpersonal relationship between teacher and pupil is considered a key factor from the perspective of the effectiveness and success of the educational process. In other words, in a situation in which a teacher is incapable of establishing them, then he or she cannot be expected to fulfil the aims of education. This interpersonal aspect is reflected both in the key definitions coined within the theory of education and in each of the pedeutological concepts presented – it thus constitutes their common denominator, which cannot be overlooked in analyses relating to any aspect of the teaching-learning process and the inextricably linked educational process. It is therefore necessary to make every effort to ensure that the teaching profession consists primarily of people who meet the criteria described in this article – only then the education system will be able, through the actions of its teachers – in a proper and desirable manner to meet the needs and expectations of today's children and young people, and thus equip them with knowledge, skills and social competencies necessary to meet the multiple demands of the

surrounding reality. For, as W. Okoń (1959, p. 15) emphasised, the outcome of a teacher's educational impact on pupils depends, on the one hand, on "the effectiveness of the teacher's efforts to transform the pupils" and, on the other hand, on the relationship between the two parties.

The considerations presented in the article are naturally of a theoretical character and it should invariably be kept in mind that the real challenge is undoubtedly to translate the postulates presented herein into solutions of a practical nature – both in the area of recruitment/selection for studies preparing for work in the teaching profession (this is primarily a matter of diagnosing the intensity of the mentioned personality traits in terms of FFM and the level of social and emotional competences), as well as in the area of study plans and curricula – above all in the field of continuous development/reinforcement of competences desirable in everyday school work, which can be achieved by greater inclusion of subjects aimed at shaping interpersonal competences in the broadest sense, and the introduction of classes (with particular emphasis on workshops and exercises) which enable the acquisition and continuous development of skills necessary in this regard throughout the entire period of study.

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