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Self-knowledge and self-determination of the high school student in the perspective of the tutoring process. A theoretical-empirical analysis

Samowiedza i samostanowienie ucznia szkoły średniej w perspektywie procesu tutorskiego. Analiza teoretyczno-empiryczna

Abstract: The article presents a theoretical-empirical analysis of the meaning and presence of self-knowledge and self-determination of high school students in the tutoring process. The theoretical foundations of self-knowledge and self-determination related to the philosophical and pedagogical personalist tradition are presented. The interrelation of these categories was verified in the research "What is school tutoring?" carried out on a group of 437 students from 18 high schools. As a result, it was shown that this form of work with a student is perceived positively by 78.5% of the study's participants and significantly activates the presence of their self-knowledge. This proves the vital importance of tutor accompaniment for building student well-being at school. It was concluded that the lower presence of self-determination as an effect of tutoring suggests the need to pay more attention to this aspect in the tutoring process.

Keywords: personalized education, tutoring, self-knowledge, self-determination.

Introduction

The modern form of personalized education, which is tutoring, is associated with the teacher-tutor's support of the personal, as well as academic, development of the participant in the tutoring process in the area of their chosen developmental goals. This is served by a trusted, partner relationship, the tutor's coaching interventions, and the tutor's sharing of their own knowledge, skills, and experience (cf. Traczyński, 2009, p. 37). Participation in the tutoring process yields significant results. These include the recognition and expansion of participants' knowledge of their individual internal and external conditions, which shape their identity. Additionally, it enhances their ability to act independently, effectively, and self-creatively, particularly in the context of school tutoring, focusing on their school performance.

The purpose of the article is to show how:

– self-knowledge, e.g. knowledge of the tutee's personal resources and development opportunities, and
– self-determination, e.g. gaining the ability to set personal development goals, or selecting methods to achieve them using one's own potential,

make themselves present during tutoring processes.

In order to achieve the above goal, in the following three subsections, the theoretical basis of tutoring is described, self-knowledge and self-determination are defined on the basis of selected philosophical propositions, and the methodology and research procedure adopted in the study are specified. Furthermore, the results of the analysis of the research material related to the implementation of the tutoring program in high schools are presented. The article concludes by highlighting the conclusions that are important for understanding the possibilities of tutoring as an element of school education, and providing recommendations that can optimize the effectiveness of tutoring interactions.

Theoretical foundations of school tutoring as a form of personalized education

The turn to personalized education in Poland and around the world, which places individual intellectual, emotional, existential, as well as personal needs and values of the student at the center (Musaio, 2021, p. 18), has already resulted in many structural-institutional solutions (e.g. systemic solutions in the form of inclusive education) and ideological and methodological solutions (models of personalized education, e.g., the model of Maria Montesorii, Rudolf Steiner, Janusz Korczak, teaching methods and models, e.g., tutoring,

mentoring and educational coaching). The source of this turnaround was, among other things, the progress in the field of education sciences, which turned to an interdisciplinary approach integrating achievements from various fields of human sciences, e.g. the holistic understanding of human in personalistic philosophy and humanistic psychology (cf. Śliwerski, 2015).

In the perspective of the personalist current in philosophy, which reached its fullest expression in the 20th century with the works of French thinkers of neo-Thomist provenience, Jacques Maritain (1981) and Emmanuel Mounier (1960), human is understood as a person (*persona*), who, thanks to their metaphysically complex structure, is autonomous from physicalistic regularities, as well as historical and cultural conditions (cf. Teddy, 2006, p. 173). The human person is recognized in personalism as a subject (*suppositum*), because they are an individual in objective dimension (*hyposthasis*) through their physical characteristics (e.g., body characteristics, appearance), psychological characteristics (e.g., temperamental, personality), social functions (e.g., life roles, professional roles) and hence is independent of others' subjective evaluations or interpretations. As a subject, a person also has a subjective dimension of reference (*prosopon*) due to the mediation of their relations with the world and themselves through the sphere of their perceptions, impressions, emotions, volitional states, or beliefs that make up an individual's inner mental life. The human person is also a subject of social relations (*communis*), since a person's unique characteristics, identity and life history affect the way they establish and maintain relationships with others. And finally, the subjectivity of the person finds its expression in an attitude of faith – in an individual relationship with God (*fide*), through which a person can find the justification of their existence in transcendent values (cf. Wojtyła, 2019, 2001; Crosby, 2007).

An important common element of philosophical concepts from the personalist current is addressing the issue of upbringing, resulting in the formation of personalist pedagogy. Marian Nowak argues in this context that „personalism in pedagogy becomes (...) a «fighting thinking», which has its center in the person seen in multiple dimensions" (2018, p. 15). Prominent Polish pedagogues drew inspiration from the personalist tradition, including Janusz Tarnowski, who sees upbringing as a type of interaction that supports individuals in discovering their humanity (1993, p. 66). The basic goals of upbringing in the pedagogical perspective outlined by him are linked to the tradition of philosophical Christian personalism. This perspective also integrates existentialism, immersing it in the concrete aspects of life. These goals aim to direct individuals towards an increasing actualization of the

unique structure of their humanity. Simultaneously, they emphasize the assimilation of cultural and social values. This is to be accompanied by their stimulation of the educator's achievement of transgression by transcending the boundaries of the „surface self" towards the development of the „deep self", i.e. true identity and conscious shaping of life in accordance with inner convictions and goals.

School tutoring, which has been developing in Poland since 2008, is situated in such a theoretical context, and is one of the education system's responses to the need to move in teaching away from the traditions of author-itarianism, massification, and the resulting oppressiveness (Sarnat-Ciastko, 2016). The phenomenon of tutoring itself has a centuries-old history in the field of education, dating back to the practices of ancient Greek sophists, Roman rhetoricians, or medieval *escalastre* or teachers of good manners (Gordon and Gordon, 1990, pp. 2–5). The modern form of tutoring follows the tradition of Anglo-Saxon sixteenth-century university colleges, in which it consisted of a dialogue-based collaboration between professor-tutor and student (Traczyński, 1996, p. 39; Brzezińska and Rycielska, 2009, p. 19). In the field of education, two forms of it prevail. Firstly, developmental tutoring aimed at supporting the tutee in the realization of any goal chosen, based on a needs analysis. And secondly, developmental-educational tutoring or its counterpart in higher education – developmental-research tutoring, which also implies the advancement of knowledge and critical thinking in the tutee's chosen field of study (Karpińska-Musiał, 2016, p.18). Anna Brzezińska and Karolina Appelt consider the presence of tutoring in education as „a method of teaching and education that is highly effective from the point of view of achieving educational goals and beneficial to the development process of both the tutor and the student" (2013, p.16). The effectiveness stems from the student-empowering nature of the tutor-tutee interaction, as the rela-tionship is usually voluntary on the part of both the student and the tutor, laying the groundwork for sharing responsibility. The direction and pace of development of the relationship, as well as of both its subjects, is based on their real needs, abilities, values and beliefs, and through the development of the tutee's self-knowledge and the specificity of the tutor's interventions, the student becomes independent in dealing with challenges and difficulties and, with this, becomes an informed and competent change-maker.

Self-knowledge and self-determination as philosophical categories and sources of empowerment in tutoring

The category of self-knowledge is one of the key issues in philosophical thought going all the way back to Socrates (Plato, 2017). Both this precursor of human philosophy and his disciple Plato (2022) understood self-knowledge as a kind of knowledge gained in deep insight into one's own soul, which results in understanding the basis of one's beliefs, talents, abilities, and character traits. Robert Piłat states (2013, pp. 13–18) that the philosophical tradition of considering self-knowledge has identified six areas of human functioning in which self-knowledge is indispensable: establishing one's own identity; issues of moral responsibility for actions; issues of human prospective attitudes; realization of self-improvement, and, finally, self-knowledge is a condition of linguistic competence.

This specific kind of self-knowledge is one of the basic results of the tutoring process. Its interventions are intentionally aimed at motivating the tutee to explore the sphere of their internal states, including cognitive aspects such as perceptions, impressions, beliefs, and assertions, as well as emotional-motivational aspects like emotions, feelings, needs, desires, and goals, or axiological aspects related to values and dreams. The facilitation of this process on the part of the tutor involves elements of accepting, reassuring, and encouraging attitudes toward self-inquiry. This is achieved through appropriately chosen questions, which consolidate the tutee's insights, or by the tutor sharing their personal perspective as an example. The subject of self-knowledge in tutoring is also the perception of progress being made, discoveries being made, and changes taking place in the tutee (Graessel, D'Mello and Person, 2020, pp. 370–372).

Although in the philosophical tradition the concept of self-knowledge has taken on various characteristics, for the purpose of treating it as an empirical category, we adopt here its understanding proposed by Anita Pacholik-Żuromska, who states that:

> self-knowledge is the subject's knowledge of their own mental states with a certain content, which includes, among other things, judgmental attitudes. A subject's self-knowledge is characterized by the fact that they have direct access to their own mental states and have the ability to formulate first-person reports such as «I believe that... », «I think that... » (2008, p. 53).

The origins of philosophical reflection on the category of self-determination can be found in the sophist Protagoras. For it is he who introduces

the principle of *homo-mensura* capturing the individual man as the only criterion for determining the truths about the world, himself and the sphere of transcendentals (Reale, 1993, pp. 247–249). Man, being the measure of all things, should, according to this sophist, actualize their subjectivity in action „in private matters...as well as in public" (Plato, 1958, p. 42) striving to achieve *arete* understood as proficiency or dexterity in the actions undertaken. Socratic thought takes up the idea of the central role of the human individual as the basis for the determination of all meaning, linking it to *enkrateia*, or the ability of the individual to control themselves, in particular, based on reason to restrain biologically determined human tendencies. This self-control becomes, in Socrates' view, the source of the possibility of fully autonomous human action – *autarky* – allowing for its development towards the attainment of moral perfection (Reale, 1993, pp. 336–338).

In the tutoring process, the aspect of self-determination emerges as the tutee deepens their relationship with both the tutor and themselves, enabling them to utilize their internal resources for decision-making and action planning to meet personal needs and goals. This development is nurtured by fostering a relationship based on shared responsibility between tutoring partners, along with tools that encourage the tutee's active engagement, instilling courage and self-assurance (Hong and Park, 2012, pp. 134–138). Another influential factor is the quality of the relationship with the tutor, characterized by attentiveness, responsiveness to the tutee's thoughts and experiences, openness to risk-taking or exploring new solutions, and acceptance of imperfections or failures in their endeavors (Drozd and Zembrzuska, 2013, pp. 177–197).

The understanding of self-determination has changed through the meanderings of various philosophical perspectives. Hence, for the analysis of the research material, we will rely on the term proposed by Karol Wojtyła:

> the definition of self-determination in the experience of the human act includes a grasp of the causality of the personal «self»: «I act» that is, «I am the causal cause» of my action (...). The grasp of the causality of the acting subject in relation to their action is closely connected with the grasp of their responsibility for the action, which concerns above all the axiological and ethical content of the act. (...) The greater the awareness of action and the awareness of values, the more clearly the man-subject experiences self-determination (1981, p. 6).

Methodology and research procedure

Previous research observations related to the implementation of tutoring (cf. Sarnat-Ciastko, 2015; Karpińska-Musiał and Panońko, 2018) allow us to consider that the tutor can become a catalyst for the development of students by, among other things, strengthening their ability to make self-insights. The effectiveness of the tutoring relationship, however, is embedded in the reality of schools, which face many changing challenges. This calls for renewed research exploration in this area. Such an opportunity was provided by the evaluation of the preventive recommended program „School Tutoring – a program of dialogue pedagogy" conducted by the Institute of School Tutoring. This activity entitled "What is school tutoring like?" aimed to test the effectiveness of the program and provide insight into the tutoring currently happening for the purpose of identifying challenges and needs.

The achievement of this research goal was supported, among other things, by an author-designed survey allowing to determine opinions about tutoring that is implemented in educational institutions. In response to the questions therein, the respondents were able, among other things, to explain why tutoring is or is not necessary for them, or what they think might be positive or negative about tutoring. This provided significant material for analysis, which allowed for the pursuit of research paths not initially anticipated. This is because it proved essential to determine the extent to which changes arising from the impact of the tutoring relationship on the student can be observed in the conducted narratives. It was assumed that the key variables to verify this would be the tutee's self-knowledge and self-determination. This led to a new research problem, which took the form of: how is the self-knowledge and self-determination of the student made present during the tutoring process? In order to verify the above problem, for the purpose of this article, it was decided to analyze the open statements (Kubinowski, 2011, pp. 226–227) of 437 students from 18 high schools. The establishments that took part in the research procedure were selected purposively, as each of them was implementing the aforementioned recommended program at the time of the research, and expressed willingness to cooperate in the research. These were high schools from all over Poland (Wrocław, Częstochowa, Gdańsk, Warsaw, Pszczyna, Białystok, Kraków, Kędzierzyn Koźle, Tczew, Hrubieszów, Zielona Góra, Łomianki, Herbów, Lubliniec and Płock) either public or run by non-governmental organizations including: high schools, technical schools, trade schools, but also schools located in the Youth Education Center and the Youth Sociotherapy Center. Each of the establishments willing to participate in the research selected a leader to contact, through

whom the key moment of the research began, which consisted of handing over to those implementing the tutoring (students and teachers) the dedicated research tools, which were made available via the Internet. Thus, the study included people who were willing to share their thoughts about the tutoring they experienced. The table below indicates the number of students participating in the research by school type and class. It can be seen here that the study primarily involved students in grades I (44.9%) and II (26.3%).

Table 1. Number of students surveyed by school type and class (N=437)

	I class	II class	III class	IV class	V class
High schools	144	87	41	47	0
Technical schools, trade schools	29	8	10	9	11
Youth Education Center or Youth Sociotherapy Center	23	20	6	0	2
Total	196	115	57	56	13

Source: self-research.

The key activity, resulting from the adopted research procedure, was the analysis of the respondents' statements requiring its reduction through coding (Rubacha, 2008, p. 263). This was done by searching for the categories indicated in the research problem (Kubinowski, 2011, p. 245) and assigning them an appropriate code based on the theory (Gibbs, 2018, p. 90) and the resulting definitions of self-knowledge and self-determination presented in the first part of this article. This made it possible to adopt a key to identify them in the tutoring experienced by the subjects. In the case of self-knowledge, statements were searched for: referring to the respondents' own mental states, e.g.: I have a sense of being taken care of, I feel at ease, I feel safe, etc.; stating being in a certain situation, e.g., I was supported, listened to, treated in an individual way; attributing characteristics, skills, abilities to the respondent, e.g., I gained self-confidence, acquired regularity in learning, etc.; judgmental, i.e., presenting beliefs about oneself, e.g., I think I can, I think I will do well.

In the case of self-determination, the data analysis paid attention to the following statements stating: awareness of the goals of action, e.g., I know my goals, I know what to do; awareness of the value of actions taken, e.g., I know it will help me, it is valuable to me, it is worth doing, I want it;

a sense of responsibility for action, e.g., it depends on me, I have influence on; causation of action, e.g., I chose it, it is my goals, it is my values, etc.

It should be noted that the verification of the collected data was based on their validation conducted separately by the researchers and triangulation resulting from the possibility of additional quantitative analysis of selected variables (Kubinowski, 2011, p. 163).

Analysis of survey results

The positive perception of tutoring was revealed in the clear willingness of students to provide information to justify their opinions about it. The research analyses showed that the majority of students surveyed were in favor of the need for tutoring and positive perception of tutoring concerned 343 respondents (78.5%). For 20 respondents (4.6%), the perception of tutoring was found negative, while the answer „I do not know" was determined by 74 people (16.9%).

After the analyses, it was possible to assume that self-knowledge was revealed in the statements of 189 people (43.2%), while self-determination in a group of 43 respondents (9.8%). In a slightly larger group of 51 people (11.7%), both categories occurred together. However, it should be noted that no manifestation of self-knowledge or self-determination could be seen in the responses of 120 respondents (27.5%). At the same time, there were people who clearly indicated a lack of interest in tutoring, justifying this with arguments pointing to self-knowledge (15 people – 3.4%)[1], self-determination (17 people – 3.9%)[2], or both categories together (2 people – 0.5%)[3].

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[1]   A sample statement indicative of self-knowledge negating the need for tutoring: „I don't feel any great need to have tutoring".

[2]   Example statements evidencing self-determination negating the need for tutoring: „I am an intelligent person, capable of thinking rationally and minding my own business. I am a tutor myself, and I think that people like me should not be forced to have a tutor".

[3]   A sample statement testifying to self-determination and self-knowledge negating the need for tutoring: „I do fine without a tutor, I don't need much help with school tasks. But it's good to have someone to possibly help or talk to".
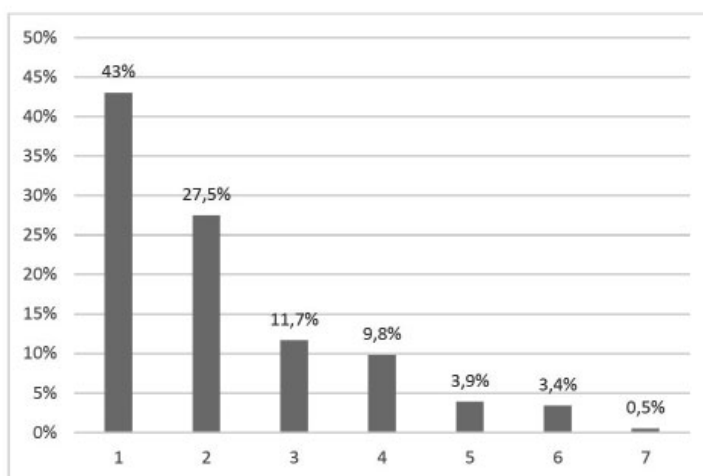
Figure 1. Presence of self-knowledge and self-determination in respondents' statements (N-437).
1 - self-knowledge, 2 - no indication, 3 - self-knowledge and self-determination, 4 - self-determination, 5 - self-determination witch negation of tutor need, 6 self-knowledge with negation of tutor need, 7 - self-knowledge and self-determination with negation of tutor need
Source: own research

In the material accepted for analysis, there was a significant number of references indicating the presence of self-knowledge and, to a lesser extent, self-determination (Figure 1). In the statements of the students, it was possible to discern a wide spectrum of experiences, which were assigned to particular categories in the analysis, and which referred to the very assessment of the usefulness of tutoring and the specific activities associated with it. In the case of self-knowledge, its presence among students was revealed by their recognition of tutoring as a space where they:
  – find a person to talk to, trust and get support: „I have an inner feeling that I am not alone", „I think it is a good time where you can let out a lot of emotions, bad and good.",
  – can feel comfortable and safe: „(The tutor is – add ASC) a person who does not participate in my personal life on a daily basis and can look at it from a different perspective, objectively and non-judgmentally", „I feel more taken care of as an individual",
  – are treated as individuals, experience respect: „I feel that there is one person with focus on me thanks to whom it is easier for us to focus on my needs",

–   they feel at ease: „one can spend more relaxed time alone with the teacher",

–   learn to communicate effectively and assess reality: „It teaches to talk and come to common conclusions.", „Honest conversation and the opportunity to objectively look at situations from another side.",

–   learn about school as a place for development: „The formation of a healthy relationship with teachers - not based on professional cooperation, but on nurturing.", „I don't know if it's needed but it's certainly better than the usual tutelage.",

–   have contact with an open-minded person who shares experience: „I need a person with life experience to push me in the right direction."

In the respondents' statements, the presence of self-determination was evidenced by the fact that tutoring:

–   motivates people to better organize their time and develop their interests: „My tutor helps me organize my study plan according to my strength and desire but also to realize myself outside of school.",

–   strengthens the subjects' level of determination to work on themselves and develop further: „It is necessary because it helps in self-improvement", „Tutoring allows me to develop on levels that would not be achievable outside of it.", „(...) the tutor's help was one of the foundations of balance in my life. ", „It is needed to increase self-discipline and things needed in the future."

–   allows for learning based on mistakes: „(tutoring is - add ASC) an individual relationship, thanks to which it is possible to make mistakes without irreversible consequences"; „It is needed because it helps me in math, and it is not judged whether I did the task right or wrong.",

–   enables more effective adaptation at school: „to get used to school standards and adapt.",

–   strengthens the potential to verify and be attentive to one's own value system: „Thanks to tutoring, I work on my value system and try to implement it in everyday life.",

–   enhances knowledge or skills in the subjects in question: „For me, tutoring is important because I understand the material better."

Given the above considerations, it should be assumed that tutoring becomes a space for the group of students who use it to make their self-knowledge and self-determination present. Statistical significance was

also found indicating that in groups of students in which self-knowledge and self-determination are simultaneously made present, there is the highest need for tutoring. This is evidenced by the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test conducted (H=176.78, p=0.000).

Conclusions and recommendations

The conducted research analysis becomes a contribution to the discussion of the role of tutoring at school in building students' maturity, their sense of autonomy and effectiveness, which are expressed in self-knowledge and self-determination. The above conclusions show that the use of this form of education can make the resources discussed here present, but at the same time, the significant number of students who could not identify the need to work with a tutor suggests the need to look at the conditions for its implementation. Indeed, it turns out to be important: proper education about tutoring, the time and opportunity to experience it (aspects related to the organization of tutoring at school), the quality of building a tutoring relationship initiated by the tutor themselves, as well as the recognition of students' needs and their expectations from tutoring itself.

At the same time, it should be noted that there is a significant prevalence of the presence of students' self-knowledge in relation to their self-determination. The statements of the respondents may suggest that tutoring becomes a place of meeting, accompanying, getting to know, which builds a sense of care, gives support (self-knowledge), but to a lesser extent, it is oriented towards undertaking activities that build conscious development and give a sense of agency (self-determination). This demonstrates the need for greater concentration of tutoring work on the stages of the tutoring process that involve the selection of developmental goals and their conscious implementation. Such a path, recommended in the literature, may direct students to the experience of one respondent, who stated:

> In my opinion, tutoring is necessary. When we have a problem with something and think what to do about it, it is good to get advice from your mentor, who is actually your friend. A tutor also helps you find yourself. In conclusion, it is good to have a tutor and I think it is necessary for every person and even more so for students who are just trying to understand themselves.

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