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## **Managing own development in the experiences of candidates for the teaching profession**

### **Zarządzanie własnym rozwojem w doświadczeniach kandydatów do zawodu nauczyciela**

#### **Introduction**

The teaching profession, being immersed in the ongoing socio-cultural transformation, is constantly susceptible to change. If teachers are not initiators of change, they must react to change the educational reality (pupils, teachers, school, parents, social environment, etc.) and undertake wise constructive actions. This means that in the everyday process of “becoming” (Kwaśnica, 2004), teachers possess competences which enable them to become rooted in change and focused on development. According to Zbigniew Pietrasiński (1990), in order to develop beyond various external conditions, individuals should have appropriate qualities, the activation of which provides an internal guarantee of development. These are qualities in the sphere of motivation and life aspirations, in the structure of personality, as well as in the structure of cognitive and intellectual abilities (cf. Pietrasiński, pp. 75–76).

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More importantly, human development is triggered by life practice and/or influenced by “special educational procedures, whose main goal is to introduce beneficial behavioural and personality changes” (Pietrasiński, p.77). Also, the developmental incentives for future teachers contribute to changing their interpretive and practical-moral behaviour (Kwaśnica, 2004), as well as their reflective (Nowak-Dziemianowicz 2001,2008, Mizerek 2021, Perkowska-Klejman, 2019) and self-creative potential (Dudzikowa 1990, 1985, Czerepaniak-Walczak, 1994).

The presented article focuses on the category of development and self-management in the candidates for the teaching profession who have had the opportunity to participate in personal development classes in the first year of their undergraduate course and then in the first year of their graduate course. The course of personal development has been permanently introduced into the curriculum of the Academy of Music in Krakow as part of artistic education (individually in the first year (two terms) at each cycle, 5 hours per term per one student). The aim of the article is to show the value of such self-development management activities in individual experiences of the students participating in coaching classes within the “New model of music teacher education” project: POWR.03.01.00-00-KN26/18-00 from January 1, 2019 to September 30, 2023 at the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Krakow.

### **Competences determining development from the perspective of its management**

L.J. Seiwert believes that managing one’s own potential “is a consistent and goal-oriented application of proven techniques in practice, in an easy, optimal and sensible manner” (Seiwert, 1998, p. 14). According to the author, when focused on development, people manage their potential and time better, undertake and implement new tasks and challenges with less effort, organise their work in a more efficient way and achieve better results. Thanks to this, they feel contentment and satisfaction, which in turn strengthens and increases their motivation and sharpens their focus on effective implementation of professional and personal goals (ibid.).

Teachers can develop the above-mentioned skills by means of appropriately selected psychological and pedagogical methods. Therefore, it can be assumed that in the process of training for the teaching profession, it is possible

to develop self-creative, reflective, interpretative and other competences necessary for teachers' conscious self-development and their responsibility for the development of their students within the dynamics of the ever-changing world (Łukasik 2018, 2020). According to Robert Kwaśnica (2003, p. 300), interpretative competences are extremely important for modern teachers, as they make it possible to perceive the world as a reality that requires constant interpretation to reveal its meaning, as well as to enable us to ask questions that make understanding the world a never-ending task. Without them, teachers fail to develop themselves and influence the development of their pupils. The author also points out that practical and moral competences are equally important in the teaching profession. When combined with interpretative and developmental competences, they bestow teachers with moral legitimacy of their actions. Therefore, it is important that they are contained in teachers' questions to themselves, about themselves and about their roles.

Self-creative competences are manifested in self-transcendence and self-creation through personal searching, discovering, identifying, recognising resources, potential, strengths and weaknesses, methods, action patterns, etc., explaining them, giving meaning, understanding and designing changes, undertaking actions and making decisions. According to Tucholska, self-creative competences require appropriate cognitive competences (2007, p. 54), because they make it possible to perceive difficult and problematic situations and their essence. They also facilitate a creative search for solutions and an ability to make alternative decisions. According to M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, self-creative and cognitive competences are an inherent element of development, of seeing ourselves as living in a dynamically changing reality, as open and accepting to new things, as brave enough to ask questions, seek answers and make unconventional decisions (1994, p. 60). A reflective attitude is necessary to fully develop, i.e., the ability to critically reflect on one's own actions and conclusions, a sort of "dialogue with oneself" (Dudzikowa 1994, p. 128). According to Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz, reflective teachers understand the meaning of what they experience and learn, at the same time being:

- agents of change, with a sense of influence on educational situations, events, modifying them and increasing the degree of management of their own mental activity;
- open-minded, which means that they "bracket" the existing reality and critically analyse everything that is usually treated as a natural and "true" order of things;

- internally controllable, i.e., they undertake actions for sake of actions themselves and are guided by competences, rather than prohibitions or orders. If teaching is treated as an internal dimension of teachers' own existence, then it stimulates reflection and contemplation;
- creative, innovative (creative), i.e., they cross barriers, patterns and break routines, but "do not force open doors" (build new patterns of thinking and acting on knowledge, skills and experience);
- responsible, i.e., they consider the consequences of their actions;
- honest in analysing and assessing the goals and consequences of their own actions (Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2001, p. 176; Bruner 2006, p. 126).

The competences indicated above can be developed in the course of training for the teaching profession. This requires initial recognition of personal potential, definition of predispositions and characteristics, formulation of short- and long-term goals, followed by their implementation with an option of correcting actions in the event of unsatisfactory results. At university, this may take the form of organised classes (including individual developmental coaching) and informal non-academic activities which require the students to manage their free time and themselves efficiently, and to be motivated to act and change, and thus to develop. However, self-knowledge and self-esteem, as well as working methods during coaching sessions and activities are of key importance.

### **Self-knowledge (self-esteem) and openness to new experiences in managing development**

Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz emphasises that people can fully work for the sake of their own development and manage it properly only when they know the truth about themselves (2008, p. 143). According to the author, the individual and social price of inaccurate knowledge and unreliable self-assessment is high, and may result in alienation, personal and professional failure and lack of fulfilment. She also believes that self-knowledge "makes it possible to overcome one's own flaws and weaknesses, develop positive personality traits and increase control over one's behaviour. It allows individuals to choose their own life paths, and lets them build self-understanding competences, both in the sphere of recognising needs, aspirations or motives, as well as in relation to the methods of satisfying and implementing them" (ibid.).

In the article, the meaning of self-esteem was adopted from Koziellecki and is understood as knowledge about oneself (Koziellecki, 1981). J. Koziellecki uses this concept interchangeably with the term “self-portrait” and defines it as information that individuals have about themselves and their competences (skills of acting in various spheres of social life), i.e., about their emotional maturity (1981, p.10). As such, self-esteem serves several functions which assist people at defining their place in the world and their relationship to it. The most frequently mentioned functions are: cognitive, awareness-raising, evaluative and consolidating. Moreover, self-esteem serves as protection against anxiety, stress, misfortune or social exclusion and supports goal-achievement (cf. Szpitlak, Polczyk, 2015). For the candidates for teaching profession or teachers themselves, from the perspective of their work with pupils, it is important this self-assessment to be adequate. As Jamka (1997) notes, teachers with adequate self-esteem perceive themselves objectively (knowledge, skills, real possibilities), both in terms of their resources, as well as in terms of their deficiencies or weaknesses (they are not afraid to look at them honestly and change or develop). They can use their strengths, as well as their own developmental strategies (personal and professional), to act for themselves, as well as for those they work with, which is additionally reinforced by their internal motivation and goal orientation.

For teachers, adequate self-assessment translates into adequate actions towards their pupils, whereas overestimated or underestimated self-esteem may result primarily in excessive demands, lack of requirements, dissatisfaction with pupils’ achievements, excessive criticism or negativism, but also in lack of own achievements and successes, in undertaking tasks beyond their potential, in perceiving the causes of their own failures in external factors or in inhibiting their own development (cf. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2008, p. 143), as well as in their personal lives.

Openness is most frequently identified with the ability to absorb what is new. It is oriented towards knowledge, initiative, self-change and transformation of the surrounding reality. According to Maria Szyszko (2007, p. 210), open people approach acts of understanding themselves, understanding the world and understanding themselves in the world more creatively, and their interpersonal relationships that they establish are not distorted by prejudices or stereotypes. As a competence, openness is desirable in the world of dynamic changes, especially for teachers, as they function within the dynamics of change

in their everyday classroom practice, i.e., they experience change and prepare their pupils for the change.

In this study, the definition of openness was adopted from G. Goleman (1999) and Strumska-Cywik (2005). Strumska-Cywik understands it as readiness to adopt new perspectives, knowledge, thinking or strategies, which is equivalent to going beyond patterns and specific frameworks, and focusing on responsible unconventionality and entrepreneurship (2005, p. 123). The author stipulates three types of openness that constitute a basis for the teaching profession: 1) openness as sharing oneself with others and the world; 2) openness as focus on others and the surrounding reality; 3) self-openness as a tool for introspection, readiness to discover the truth about oneself (Strumska-Cywik, 2005, p. 310). This understanding is supplemented by a definition proposed by G. Goleman. In his opinion, open people have certain predispositions and competences, which include: 1) innovation (searching solutions in various sources of knowledge, skills and experience); 2) original solutions to problems; 3) undertaking new initiatives and submitting new ideas; 4) adaptation to change, new requirements, changing priorities (cf. Goleman 1999, p. 140).

Personal and professional development is based on reliable self-assessment and depends on openness. If present in the candidates for teaching profession, these competences, together with interpretative, reflective and self-creative potential, may become an inspiration for the activities within educational programmes. Namely, as research shows (Knight 2013, 2018, 2019; Łukasik 2019, 2020; Łukasik i zesp. 2018), each of these competences can be stimulated to develop in the process of consciously and appropriately constructed study programs. Teaching profession, being one of the most responsible professions, is a determinant of changes and development, both for pupils themselves and for the world in which they live, create and will continue creating.

### **Methodological research assumptions**

The article undertakes research on the development of students participating in coaching classes (personal development training). The classes were conducted as obligatory courses for the students preparing to become music education teachers.

The aim of the research was to determine the level of understanding development and its importance for achieving personal and professional goals. Qualitative content analysis of mini-essays on “Personal development: what is

it for me and what is its value?” was used (Denzin, Lincoln, 2009; Kubinowski, 2011; Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2016). The adopted strategy made it possible to highlight individual, subjective and unique experiences of young trainees for the teaching profession. Moreover, it made it possible to identify individual meanings (categories and subcategories) and analyse them in the perspective of all individual and common experiences (possibility of universalising descriptions in the perspective of a visualised categorisation key).

Six graduates from a full teacher-training cycle participated in the research conducted in June 2023. The selection of such a research group was purposeful. The respondents’ statements were coded with the first letter of their name and the order in which their statements were returned. The analysis and interpretation of the research material focused on answering the following questions:

1. How do you define personal development?
2. What is the value of personal development?

In accordance with the qualitative research strategy adopted and, within it, the interpretative paradigm, the determination of the research objective and problematic occurred in the course of tracking the data that had emerged from the empirical material collected (by means of written mini-essays) and analysed. In the course of multidirectional analyses of the statements of the participating female graduates, the value of coaching classes for personal development proved to be of paramount importance (Gibbs, 2011)

The procedures of text analysis and interpretation included the following stages: formal content analysis of the mini-essays; selection of categories and subcategories; development and interpretation of the meanings of personal development (an attempt to define models); creating comparisons and pointing out differences (contrasts, grid of codes). The procedure of coding meanings was preceded by defining the content scope of the utterances and discovering their partial meanings without isolating them from the narrative as a whole. This was followed by a search through the transcriptions in order to assign a code to the data (Charmaz, 2009), which led to the creation of a grid of main codes.

## **Personal development in the light of research results**

Development is an important issue, especially from the perspective of preparing young students for the teaching profession (Łukasik 2018, 2020). One of the respondents approached development metaphorically, comparing it to

the growth process of a plant: “Development is a process that can be compared to the growth of a plant – expanding internal tissues, getting stronger and at the same time reaching further and higher” (A1).

Table 1 presents excerpts from written statements (mini essays) on development and its importance for humans, written by the participants of coaching classes.

**Table 1.** The definition of development and its meaning in selected excerpts from respondents’ statements

Understanding	Meaning
<p>Personal development: “for me, it is, firstly, going deep into myself and, secondly, ‘expanding’, taking up more and more new space, opening up to the world”. (A1)</p>	<p>Going deep into oneself means “getting to know oneself in a broad sense – what drives me in life, what my values are and why, what is important to me, what has had an influence on who I am and what I am, what are my strengths and weaknesses, what I like about myself, what I would like to change, what I dream about”. (A1)</p>
<p>Personal development is “a process that takes place throughout adult life and leads to an improved sense of life satisfaction, both in the private and professional fields”. (M4)</p>	<p>Opening up, the “outward vector”, means “consciously choosing the areas in which I want to know and be able to do more – acquiring new skills and knowledge about the world, using them in practice, managing my resources, setting my priorities”. (A1)</p>
<p>“Personal development is an accompaniment to every stage of life, thanks to which I can acquire additional knowledge, expand the knowledge I already have and practice using my skills and talents”. (J5)</p>	<p>“For me, personal development is developing my skills and talents and getting to know myself” (M2).</p> <p>“Personal development is working on weaknesses and broadening horizons”. (M2)</p>
<p>“Personal development means acquiring new skills in both my field of study and other interests”. (K6)</p>	<p>“It is also important for me from the point of view of gaining new experiences” (O3).</p> <p>“Managing one’s own development means asking yourself questions, looking for answers, making decisions and making choices. It is giving direction to one’s own growth, while taking into account two vectors: inwards (who I am) and outwards (what I can give to the world)”. (A1)</p>



	<p>“Managing one’s own development during studies is an ability to plan and lead your way to your intended goal. By managing my own development, I can decide for myself which classes or workshops will help me achieve the goal I am striving for”. (M2).</p> <p>“The competences acquired during my studies correlated with other goals in my personal development. Studying was an integral part of my development”. (M4)</p> <p>“Having studied for several years, I can happily say that I have developed a lot during this time. However, the time spent within the walls of the university most often gently satisfied and stimulated my hunger for acquiring knowledge”. (K6)</p> <p>Effect of studies: “I have signed up for various courses, competitions and taken part in projects. Such comprehensive acquisition of knowledge has resulted in me gaining new skills, in making one hundred percent my own decisions, time management, fluency in conversation in foreign languages and cooperation with people”. (K6)</p> <p>“Appropriate guidance during my studies allowed me to take care of my own development and shape my activities”. (O3)</p> <p>“Personal development is very important in every person’s life. It is worth developing the skills and talents we already have and looking for new interests. We often do not know what skills may be useful in our professional work, so it is worth using various forms of development activities”. (J5)</p>
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Source: own research

The analysis of the content of the mini-essays reveals that development is a life-long process for the respondents. It is based on self-knowledge

(going deeper into oneself, self-recognition), self-creation (expanding one's own developmental space, new knowledge and new skills) and openness (to the world, to new things), which has consequences for quality of life and satisfaction with life. The respondents believe that the development which accompanies people at different stages of their lives assumes various forms and displays its own specificity. They see it as a condition for life satisfaction, both "in the private and professional fields" (M4). Hence, for them, development is a prerequisite for happiness, self-satisfaction, achievements and used opportunities. They state that the opportunity to direct and expand development areas, conducted in a purposeful, highly personalised and profiled manner during their university coaching classes, was a starting point for their acquisition of self-awareness. They add that the classes revealed their own potential and resources, as well as provided them with adequate tools to implement self-projects and consciously pursue distant and close goals. They also point to enhanced accuracy in the assessment of their self-esteem, which for them translates into enriched potential to function in all professional and personal areas of their lives.

The respondents notice several important issues concerning development. First of all, people first need to discover and/or develop key competencies which are necessary for their conscious development, such as reflectivity and creativity, which coincides with research conducted in this area by Duda et al. (2019) and Perkowska-Klejman (2019). In addition, internal motivation, awareness of oneself and one's own needs, as well as an appropriately shaped system of values (hierarchy of values determining the purposefulness of one's actions, behaviours and choices) are necessary – it is confirmed in the research of Jim Knight. (2013, 2018, 2019), D.S. Knight and team (2018), by Joanna M. Łukasik (2016, 2017, 2019, 2020) and her team research on teachers' pedagogical competences (Łukasik et al., 2018). According to the respondents, by asking oneself questions and searching for answers, reflexivity serves to "go deep into oneself". This is consistent with scientific interpretations of development by M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz (2008) and Koziński (1981), for whom reflective questioning constitutes a starting point for accurate self-knowledge and reliable self-assessment. Such questions make it possible to recognise one's own strengths (skills, talents, resources, passions, personal characteristics) and weaknesses ("working on weaknesses" (M2).

Moreover, it is possible to recognise the factors and conditions that guide choices and decisions, as well as to draw conclusions from choices, goals

and consequences. This confirms that reflexivity and self-esteem support the achievement of life goals, becoming their driving force (Szpitlak, Polczyk, 2015; Łukasik 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020). Thanks to reflexivity, self-awareness precipitates in two areas: “I know who I am” and “I know what I can give to the world” (A1). Development understood in this way shows both its condition and potential, related to openness or its acquisition during the process. In the statements, openness refers to both knowledge and skills, as well as to building relationships (new horizons and planes) with oneself, with other people and with the changing world. Research into the understanding and practice of being open is confirmed in research by Strumska-Cywik (2005) and D. Goleman (1999). This means that the respondents are able to adopt new perspectives, knowledge, thinking and strategies, thus to go beyond specific patterns in order to become unconventional and responsible for their own choices and actions (cf. Łukasik 2016; Perkowska-Klejman, 2019).

Professional support during studies in the form of individual coaching classes made it possible for the respondents not only to take care of their development and shape their activities during their studies, but also after their completion. At the beginning of their careers, the respondents are in possession of awareness, knowledge, skills and tools which allow them to manage their resources, to set their own priorities, to consciously choose areas of development, to identify places of support, as well as to plan and implement own ways of pursuing goals. This confirms the theses in the research by L. J. Seiwert (1998) on managing one's own potential and studies by J. Campbell & C. Van Nieuwerburgh, (2018) and J. Hattie & S. Clarke. (2019). When combined with internal motivation to meet higher-level needs (self-creation), high self-awareness and recognition of one's own capabilities, as well as following appropriate values, constitute the added value of coaching classes. Their effects are visible in internal motivation and involvement in developmental activities, as well as in attitudes and behaviour characterised by openness to what is new and unknown, constantly measuring and confronting oneself, the world and oneself in the world, in order to gradually become “better selves” (O3). Such attitude is described by J. L. Seiwert (1998) as skills and abilities of sensible and optimal use of time (cf. Seiwert, 1998, p. 14).

The respondents reveal features and attitudes typical of people who are responsible for themselves and others, individuals with “open minds”, self-directed, creative “agents of change”, who are honest with themselves in their

analyses of goals and assessments of consequences of their own actions. This confirms the assumptions of J. Campbell & C. Van Nieuwerburgh, (2018), M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz (2001) and J. Bruner (2006) that education for reflexivity and openness is possible.

### Summary

The developmental potential of candidates for the teaching profession is important for their future effectiveness in their teaching practice (cf. Knight 2019; Campbell & Nieuwerburgh, 2018). Teachers who know their strengths and the specificity of their own development perceive their pupils not as potential subjects to be shaped, but as entities that can be stimulated to develop in all spheres, not only intellectual, but also moral, aesthetic and psychosocial. Creative teachers who are open to development can create foundations for the development of their pupils. Knowing themselves, they know how to work with their pupils' resources and how to motivate them to overcome barriers and difficulties. Such teachers are also aware that their actions are not incidental, but planned and included in the specificity of their pupils' individual development processes (cf. Knight, 2018; Knight et al 2018).

However, if teachers have not undergone the process of self-assessment and development, if they are not open to change and initiative, they will not develop these skills in their pupils (Łukasik 2016). Hence, individual coaching classes for candidates for the teaching profession, conducted as part of their curriculum in the first year of their education, constitute a guarantee of teachers' personal fulfilment, followed by their pupils' successes (cf. Knight 2013, 2018, 2019; Campbell, Van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Hattie, Clarke, 2019). The already completed coaching classes and the described experiences of their participants confirm the value of introducing individual methods of student development. This brings visible effects during the teacher-training process, as well as after studies, in their professional work and personal life.

**Abstract:** The article focuses on the importance of managing personal and professional development. Based on pedagogical and psychological concepts, research on self-development, self-esteem and openness was undertaken among the graduates of teaching specialisation, all of whom had participated in university coaching classes on self-development.

The respondents were 6 art education graduates who had undergone a full cycle of training for the profession (these were all art education graduates who had taken coaching classes during their undergraduate and graduate studies). The study used qualitative content analysis of the mini-essays to answer the research questions: How do you define personal development? and: What is the value of personal development? The identified categories (according to the adopted qualitative strategy) made it possible to draw conclusions for teacher training as well as to permanently introduce developmental coaching into the curriculum of a certain art university.

**Keywords:** self-development, teacher, self-creation, self-esteem, openness

**Streszczenie:** W prezentowanym artykule skoncentrowano się na znaczeniu i wartości umiejętności zarządzania własnym rozwojem w rozwoju osobistym i w pracy nauczyciela. Bazując na pedagogicznych i psychologicznych koncepcjach: samorozwoju, samooceny, otwartości, podjęto badania nad wskazanymi komponentami wśród absolwentów specjalności nauczycielskiej, którzy przeszli podczas studiów zajęcia z coachingu rozwojowego. Badani – to 6 absolwentów edukacji artystycznej, którzy przeszli pełen cykl kształcenia do zawodu (byli to wszyscy absolwenci tego kierunku uczestniczący w zajęciach z coachingu podczas studiów licencjackich i magisterskich). W badaniu zastosowano jakościową analizę treści miniesejów dla uzyskania odpowiedzi na pytania badawcze: W jaki sposób badane określają rozwój osobisty? oraz Jaką indywidualną wartość ma dla badanych rozwój osobisty? Wyodrębnione w toku analiz (zgodnie z przyjętą strategią jakościową) kategorie umożliwiły wyprowadzenie wniosków dla praktyki kształcenia zawodowego oraz wprowadzenia na stałe do planów i programów studiów jednej z uczelni artystycznych treści wiedzy i umiejętności realizowanych podczas zajęć indywidualnych z zakresu coachingu rozwojowego, zarządzania własnym potencjałem/rozwojem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zarządzanie własnym rozwojem, nauczyciel, autokreacja, samoocena, otwartość

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